

Eternity Daily Bible Study

Romans 9-16 The Implications of Salvation

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE MINISTRY OF THE AIBI

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Verses: Romans 12:4-8

Topic: Spiritual Gifts

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Romans 12:4-8 MKJV *For even as we have many members in one body, and all members do not have the same function, (5) so we the many are one body in Christ, and each one members of one another. (6) Then having gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, if prophecy, according to the proportion of faith; (7) or ministry, in the ministry; or he who teaches, in the teaching; (8) or he who exhorts, in the encouragement; or he who shares, in simplicity; or he who takes the lead, in diligence; or he who shows mercy, in cheerfulness.*

Here Paul gives the Romans a condensed version on 1 Corinthians 12 and portrays the Church as a complex organic body of highly differentiated believers who serve each other diligently and possess a humble attitude (having a sober estimate of themselves – see verse 3).

We are members of the body of Christ – and also members of each other. I am a typical cerebral bible teacher, my wife Minda is a very organized “helper” with the gift of mercy. Minda would give away everything to the poor. I would make sure they had right doctrine! Yet I need her gifts to keep me in the real world and she needs my teaching so that she stays close to God and does not get totally wrapped up in “tasks” that always need to be done. I always feel guilty that I am not helpful enough, but Minda always feels guilty that she does not do enough bible study! We are not the same – and that is a good thing!

What I have applied to Minda and I can be applied to Christians as a whole. We each have a different personality, gifts and area of responsibility. Some people are great at helping alcoholics, others server God in universities while yet others are missionaries, evangelists, or pastors. Each of us has strengths and weaknesses, things we do well and things we continually feel guilty about. Many bible teachers are a bit “aloof” personally, many pastors are poor at handling conflict, many prophets are a bit tactless, many apostles are too driven and demanding. None of us has our act totally together so we all need each other and when all the colors of the gift rainbow are blended together a beautiful church results.

Paul tells us to stick to what we do best: *or ministry, in the ministry; or he who teaches, in the teaching; (8) or he who exhorts, in the encouragement;* - in other words enter fully into your gift and serve in that capacity fully and totally. It is often better to develop one gift deeply that to try and have “all the gifts”. Billy Graham perfected being an evangelist, John Stott perfected being a bible teacher – and so on and so forth. Do not try and win every race – just run your own race!

Now there are numerous (about 30 I think) different spiritual gifts listed in various places

in Scripture – tongues, prophecy, pastoring, apostle, encouragement, healing, leadership, faith, miracles, teaching, sharing, showing mercy, discernment of spirits, interpretation of tongues, wisdom, knowledge, helps, administration, speaking, serving, hospitality, among others (Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12-14, Ephesians 4, 1 Peter 4 among other references).

I sense that these are not in any way a complete list – the variegated grace of God as Peter calls it, can produce an infinite variety of spiritual callings – Sunday School teachers, workers with the disabled and so on. And some gifts seem to have numerous sub-categories 'apostle to the Gentiles', 'apostle to the circumcision' etc. Worship leaders are not even mentioned in the New Testament house church environment – but it is a gift that is well recognized today.

The idea is that God makes us mutually interdependent and gives us each a spiritual ability or calling that is our place, our niche, in the body of Christ. Some of these gifts are clearly supernatural – such as tongues, miracles and healing, while others are just the practical outworking of God's wisdom in our midst – wisdom, knowledge, teaching, administration, and leadership. Some churches emphasize the supernatural gifts and neglect the more "mundane" callings, while others do the reverse and are superbly administered but without the miraculous! However it is not a matter of either/or – but both/and.

if prophecy, according to the proportion of faith; - Our faith perception of God determines how we can "prophecy" - how we can hear Him and bring His words to others. We are not to prophecy "cool stuff" that we hear from others but according to our own faith, and our own individual understanding of God in the Spirit. We are simply to say what we ourselves see, and our spiritual "sight" depends on our faith.

or he who shares, in simplicity; or he who takes the lead, in diligence; or he who shows mercy, in cheerfulness. Some gifts require special precautions – the donor must do so simply and transparently without ostentatious "trumpet-blowing", the leader must knuckle down to the task diligently doing all that is required and not skipping out from under the unpleasant administrative tasks, and the person who shows mercy must not get all upset at things or moan about their lack of appreciation by those helped.

Sometimes we want the whole world to be like us – missionaries want everyone to go to the mission field, evangelists want everyone to share their faith, bible teachers want everyone doing deep bible study for hours on end, intercessors insist we fast and pray and pastors want everyone in a dozen church activities. This can be innocent enthusiasm but it can also be dangerous if we get angry and frustrated that everyone is not lining up with how we see things. I knew a wonderful lady who had a gift of mercy and encouragement who felt bad because she was not an evangelist. That is not the way we should feel! We ALL work together to lead people to Christ and her winning ways led many to like the church – and the pastor who was a great evangelist reaped the harvest.

Lets just "be what God has made us to be" and not question His goodness and wisdom in the matter but set out to perfect those gifts that He has given to us and to use them for His glory and for the upbuilding of His Church.

Blessings,

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