

Romans 12:3-7a Answers

Spiritual Gifts: Prophecy & Service

Review: The last section of Romans is about Service (Ro 12-16). In Romans 12-13, Paul detailed our service in relation to God (12:1-2), other believers (12:3-16), our enemies (12:17-21) and the government (13:1-14). Romans 1 -11 is the “what”. Romans 12-16 is the “so what”. If you really believe Romans 1 – 11, then *this* (Ro 12-16) will be true in your life. Romans 1-11 is the foundation and Romans 12-16 the superstructure.

Introduction: In Old Testament days, God gave those who built the tabernacle supernatural abilities for its construction: masons, metal-smiths, carpenters, tailors, engravers, weavers, etc. (Ex 35:30-36:1). He also stirred up people to give silver, gold, special woods, linen and leather (Ex 35:29). According to the New Testament, we ourselves are living stones built together into a spiritual temple with Jesus as the cornerstone. Along with being born-again comes a spiritual gift for service to help other people, building up God’s spiritual house. This gift is a supernatural ability for service. Do you know what your gift(s) are? If not, imagine a gift for you under the Christmas tree left over from last year that you never opened. Wouldn’t you like to know what is in it?

Three Types: The various spiritual gifts have been divided into three categories: **Sign Gifts** (gifts with obviously miraculous manifestations, such as healing or tongues), **Service Gifts** (the more hidden, one-on-one gifts) and **Support Gifts** (the more public gifts such as a prophecy, apostleship and teaching). (Swindoll, p. 6).

******What important caution are we to remember as we use our spiritual gifts (12:3-8)?** No one should think more highly of himself than he ought to think. We are to be realistic. Don’t be a prima donna! People with the more public gifts may be tempted to get big headed. People with the more quiet gifts may see no need for the leadership gifts, resenting their influence for change.

1. What situation would prompt Paul to give this caution (12:3)? Evidently people with more public gifts could be tempted to think a little too highly of themselves.

2. What reasons did Paul offer to help the talented think with sober judgment (12:3-6a)? **1)** Any faith we have has been assigned from God (12:3b), **2)** Christ only has one body, each of us plays a different role in it and we are all in it together (12:4-5) and **3)** any our spiritual gifts we have come as the result of God’s grace (undeserved favor, 12:6).

3. Why did Paul preface his caution with “by the grace given to me” (12:1)? Each of us is to minister to others according to the spiritual gift of grace God gives us. Paul’s grace gift was to be an apostle and part of that was to warn and exhort people. A person who did think too highly of himself might resent Paul’s caution, asking when God died and left Paul in charge. Immature people often resent the admonishment of church leaders, seeing it as unsolicited advice. It was Paul’s God-given job to serve the church by admonishment. God’s grace to him was his authority for writing so frankly.

4. What comparison is made in 12:4-5? See *1 Corinthians 12:12*. Just as one body has many parts with different functions, so too all Christians, with many different grace gifts, make up the one body of Christ.

ESV **1 Corinthians 12:12** . . . just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

5. What does it mean to be individually members one of another (12:5)? See *1 Corinthians 12:14-30*. The idea is that we are all in this together, we are interdependent.

6. What is the overall command of 12:6-8? (*Reread*). The driving instruction is that no matter which of the gifts we have, we are to actually use the grace gifts given to us (as opposed to sit, soak and sour). We are to use our gifts without being conceited about it (any gift is the result of grace anyhow).

ESV **1 Peter 4:10** As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another . . .

ESV **1 Corinthians 14:12** . . . since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.

Word Study: “Gifts” (12:6) is from *charisma* (basis for charismatic, so-named for their emphasis on the more spectacular gifts such as tongues, healing, or prophecy).

7. How can we tell if this is a listing of all the gifts there are or not (12:6-8)? Compare *1 Corinthians 12:7-10, 28, Ephesians 4:7-11*. Two other places in the New Testament list spiritual gifts not mentioned here and some gifts mentioned here are not mentioned there. Don’t feel bad if your gift is not listed in Romans 12 (it doesn’t mean you don’t have one!). Paul’s purpose was to generally list some of the gifts, not to compile an exhaustive list.

Prophecy

8. What is the grace gift of prophecy (12:6)? See *John 4:17-19, Acts 11:27, 15:32, 1 Corinthians 14:24-25, 31*. The word prophecy remains an untranslated word in our Bibles. It is transliterated from the Greek *propheteia* and was taken letter for letter over into English. A prophet is a person who has insight from God about the future or about another person’s secrets or who speaks forth any message from God. It is from two Greek words, one (*pro*) means either before or forth and the other word means to speak. Thus, it means to speak things before they happen, to predict, to tell the future. Perhaps a modern translation for prophet would be fore-teller, seer, soothsayer or clairvoyant. A true prophet is an inspired spokesman.

Stereotype: Experience has suggested that those with this gift often feel a burning compulsion to give a word (from God). They tend to be black and white types (no shades of gray). They are often so straightforward as to be seen as harsh. Their compelling desire to speak truth may make them appear to be poor listeners.

a) We think of the Old Testament prophets (such as Daniel or Isaiah) as people who predicted the future. This is true of the New Testament gift of prophecy as well:

ESV **Acts 11:27** Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius).

b) Another feature of prophecy concerns supernatural insight into other people's lives:

ESV **1 Corinthians 14:24-25** . . . if all prophecy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.

ESV **John 4:17-19** The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet."

c. Much more of the content of the writing of the Old Testament prophetic books consists of sermons of judgment against the Hebrews for not obeying God. In this sense a prophet is also a forth teller, speaking forth God's truth. This is true of New Testament prophets also:

ESV **Acts 15:32** Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words.

ESV **1 Corinthians 14:31** . . . prophecy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged . . .

9. What difference is there between an Old Testament prophet and a New Testament prophet? D.A. Carson has pointed out the vast difference in authority between an Old Testament prophet and a New Testament prophet. Old Testament prophets wrote Scripture, but it was the apostles who wrote the New Testament. If an Old Testament prophet was ever wrong, even once, he was to be stoned. New Testament prophecies were to be judged as well, but the penalty for error was simply to be declared in error, not to be stoned nor even put out of the fellowship.

10. What is the connection between prophecy and the proportion of our faith (6:12)? There are several ways to interpret this. Paul's use of the word our instead of his indicates any prophecy must be in accord with "our" Faith — the body of doctrine once and for all delivered to the saints. Prophecy must be within the bounds of accepted Faith.

11. Is the gift of prophecy still operative today (12:6)? Many would say it is not still operative (cessationism teaches this gift died out with the completion of the Written Word). Others would say some modern preacher embodies this gift (a forth-teller). Others would say it absolutely is still operative just as we see it in the New Testament.

Can a sister have this gift? Absolutely! Biblical examples include Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Anna and Philip's four daughters.

12. What cautions about prophecy do 1 Corinthians 14:29 & 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21 offer?

Much of what passes for prophecy from God is bogus. It must be judged and not accepted uncritically. It must be received with discrimination.

ESV **1 Corinthians 14:29** Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. ["pass judgment", NIV]).

ESV **1 Thessalonians 5:20-21** Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good.

Service

13. What is the grace gift of service (6:7)? See *Luke 10:40, Acts 6*. Service is from *diakonia* (basis for deacon). This word was commonly used outside the Bible with reference to service necessary for preparation of a meal (BAGD, p. 184). This sense of kitchen work is seen with Martha:

ESV **Luke 10:40** Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me."

In Acts 6 the men appointed to oversee the feeding of the widows are often seen as the church's first deacons.

Leaving the kitchen, the word *diakonia* simply refers to service, helping, aid and support. This gift refers to someone who has been given the gift of serving or helping other people. People with this gift like to help prepare for or clean up after church. They like doing things for others. They are true servants. They keep things working smoothly.

Some grace gifts are more visible (public); others are more behind the scenes. Those who have the gift of helping serve God in a very practical, behind the scenes and often one-on-one ministry. They may paint a widow's house or repair her roof, clean up the church meeting room, cook for fellowship meals, keep the records, meet transportation needs, help keep small children occupied during church, etc.

14. Why did Paul state the obvious in 12:6, that a servant use his gift in serving? Perhaps the point is that he should actually use his gift. He should not just sit, soak, sour. Also, he should not operate outside of his gift (such as trying to be a teacher).

Stereotype: Someone with this gift is typically very sensitive to the needs of others and are always on the look-out for ways to help someone else.

So What?

15. No matter what your grace gift, what caution must we heed from 12:3?

16. Even if one is gifted in neither prophecy nor service, what can he learn from those so gifted?

Note: All stereotypes were taken from material given out at a Basic Youth Conflicts Advanced Seminar.

**** = ask this question before reading the text aloud. Doing so will cause focus.

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Stephen E. Atkerson
www.NTRF.org
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