

ROMANS - #12

ANTIOCH BIBLE CLASS

LESSON TOPIC

PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN LIVING

MEMORY VERSE: ROM. 12:1. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

INTRODUCTION

Therefore ----- since all of the foregoing is true ----- I beseech you to yield your entire being unto the Lord, which is, after all, only that which is reasonable for you to do. With this entreaty Paul begins a portion of his letter that sets forth in simple terms some very essential attributes and functions of the Christian life. Too much of our preaching today is centered either on major doctrinal themes or on themes that point to a free and prosperous Christian experience. Too little of it is centered on the many “gifts” of the Spirit that would enable us to be much better Christians.

The Christian life is much more than one single function. Paul describes this in the form of “gifts”, saying that we each have differing gifts and responsibilities within the body of Christ. The human body is a good analogy of this in its different members and their respective function and how they correlate together with one another. Thus it is also in the body Christ. “Gifts” of the Spirit is probably a subject that is better held for a lesson of its own, but it is for sure that the Christian body cannot function without “gifts from God”. The trouble is that gifts are too often construed to be applied for personal elevation instead of edification of the body.

This chapter includes as gifts some things that those who like to glory in their “gifts” or “talents” are likely not going to pursue. How many have you heard that claimed the gift of “generosity” or “preferring others above themselves”. Indeed, it is a real “gift” to be able to even attempt to “live peaceably with all men”. The challenge for us is to learn of the availability of each of these gifts and seek God that they might be a part of our lives.

DAILY SCRIPTURES AND COMMENTS

MONDAY. ROM. 12:1-2. TOTAL COMMITMENT

SCRIPTURES.

V1. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable and perfect will of God.

COMMENTS.

These are powerful and often-quoted verses of scripture. Paul is soliciting the total commitment of the Roman Christians (and us) of our entire being to Christ. Throughout the chapter he gives clear identification to this commitment so that it does not just become religious rhetoric.

In chapter 6, Paul spoke at length about the surrender of the members of our bodies to be servants of Christ. In chapter 8, he spoke of our groaning in this fleshly life and then described our hope in the redemption of “our bodies”. Now in this 12th chapter, he calls on us to make a living sacrifice of our bodies unto God. His description of this sacrifice is to be: “holy, acceptable to God, not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our minds in order that we may prove what is good and acceptable unto God. This, he says, is only our reasonable service. Can there be any other sacrifice of our bodies which would be acceptable to the Lord which does not include these qualities of heart and soul? Throughout this book and all of his writings, Paul exhorts to a life that is given to the Lord without any reservations and with all commitment of our entire being to him. Anything less is unacceptable to God and unworthy of his grace who has given everything to us.

TUESDAY. ROM. 12:3-5. “DIVERSITY WITH UNITY”.

SCRIPTURES.

V3. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think: but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. 4. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: 5. So we, being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

COMMENTS.

If we get the first part of these verses applied properly we won't have any problem with the rest of them. That is, we should not think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, but in soberness, think as God has dealt to each one the measure of faith to which they have attained. This is a forever problem in all church history: the holier than though, I'm better than you, my way is better than your way, I have more revelation than you, and so it goes.

Paul is teaching us that there surely are many members, offices, abilities that God has given to different ones, but none, that is N O N E, should have an attitude of superiority over another. Yes, there is diversity within the body of Christ, but only one body, with one mind and one purpose. In every congregation on earth one of the greatest needs is a spirit of unity and harmony. We are members one of another and we should believe and function that way.

WEDNESDAY. ROM. 12:6-8. GIFTS ARE FOR EDIFICATION – NOT DEMONSTRATION

SCRIPTURES.

V6. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith: 7. Or ministry let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth on teaching: 8. Or he that exhorteth on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity: he that ruleth, with diligence: he that sheweth mercy with cheerfulness.

COMMENTS.

Have you ever heard of anyone claiming a “gift” from God that was not one of the more prominent functions in the body of Christ? Another way to ask this question is: “have you ever heard anyone claim the “gift” of “giving” or the “gift of “showing mercy”? These gifts are not glamorous enough and people aren’t too interested in cultivating them. Most of the time the gifts that you will hear people claim is either the gift of healing or the gift of prophesy. These are crowd – pleasers and movers, not to mention the fact that they can be craftily handled.

It might help understand these “gifts” in this chapter if we look at the objective Paul is putting forth. He has first told us not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. Then he describes the unity of the human body in all of its parts and functions. With that in mind, he then talks about the functions of various offices, duties or gifts within the body of Christ. His list in this chapter has no intention of being all – inclusive of every gift of God. The gifts mentioned in these three verses are not the only ones included in the chapter. In fact the rest of the chapter deals with “gifts” of the body of Christ that affect its proper functions.

THURSDAY. ROM. 12:9-15. GIFTS OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

SCRIPTURES.

V9. Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil: cleave to that which is good. 10. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another; 11. Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; 12. Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; 13. Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. 14. Bless them which persecute you; bless and curse not. 15. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

COMMENTS.

When you look at the human body it is easy to see how each member, organ, faculty and function adds its own special help to making the body work in a manner that proves that it is “fearfully and wonderfully made”. When you look at the Christian body you should likewise be able to see how the different functions, attributes, duties, etc, all add up to make one unit that brings glory to the God who made it and also aid and edify the body of Christ in all of its function. That is what Paul is talking about in this chapter; not about some presumed gift someone may have that gives them a special

place before God. The heart is arguably the most important organ of the human body and its function is vital to the entire body, even though it goes about its constant work without notice. It is when it does not function, silently, unseen, within our chest that it gets attention. Shouldn't every function of the body be that way; unseen until it stops.

While we look at these verses, consider them as "gifts" of the grace of God without which the body of Christ cannot properly function, if at all. Don't have a fragmented or partial love. Cultivate the gift of turning away from evil, while being true to that which is good. Have an attitude of kindness and brotherly love toward each other. Put the rest of the church ahead of yourself similar to the way that kidneys which are so vital but seldom talked about. How many lessons have you heard on being smart, responsible and not lazy in business matters? Do you possess the gift of fervency of spirit as you serve the Lord? Is your special gift that of always rejoicing because of the hope you have in the Lord? How about being patient when tribulations come your way? One of the most underrated gifts, and one that is so essential to the function of the body of Christ, is that of continuing prayer. Would you be interested in the "laying on of the hands of the elders" so that you could possess the gift of "distributing to the necessity of saints"? It was the gift of "hospitality" that made the "Shunamite" a great woman before the Lord. Maybe your calling is to simply be a "blessing to them which persecute you". Every Christian should be deeply endowed with the "gift" of "rejoicing with them that do rejoice and crying with them who are made to cry by the conditions of their lives.

Do we get the point?

FRIDAY. ROM. 12:16-21. GIFT'S OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER CONT'D.

SCRIPTURES.

V16. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. 17. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. 18. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. 19. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. 20. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. 21. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

COMMENTS.

In verse six of this chapter Paul began teaching about gifts within the body of Christ. We noted before that his discussion of these gifts was not an attempt to outline all of the gifts of God to the church, but he is using them to show the functions of the body of Christ in a manner of harmony and grace before the whole world. That discussion continued from verse six until we find it still in verse sixteen. The (human) body only has one mind and every member of the body operates according to the signals and directions of that mind. Thus Paul declares in verse sixteen: "Be of the same mind one toward another". The entire body of Christ should be permeated with the mind of Christ and every motive and function should emanate from the directions he gives (as outlined in his word, the Bible). The

mind of Christ in us will not cause us to be friendly with one Christian and ignore another. The counsel here is that we have the same way of thinking toward each other. No, this does not require that we condone or accept any wrong principals or attitudes of any other person; just how we feel and think and act toward them. In addition: don't feel like that you must be elevated to the company of those greater around you, while at the same time looking down on those of low estate. Instead, Paul says, do just the opposite. When someone does you wrong, don't get even by doing them the same way. And above all, be sure to be totally honest in the sight of everyone anywhere.

The next "gift" will be hard to carry out. Try to live in a manner of peace with everybody. Some will be so aggressive and self-consumed that it won't be possible; from such turn away. Give place to wrath is teaching us to endure hardness. Let the other person be wrong and, if vengeance is necessary, God will repay. If you do good to those who would do you wrong, it will set them on fire. That is not, however, why you should do them good. You should do them good simply because it is the right thing to do

Don't let the wrongs of others get the best of you and cause you to respond to them in kind. The best way to overcome evil is by doing them good.

SUMMARY

If the Christian characteristics which Paul has listed in this chapter are "gifts" of grace, then not very many people in the Christian community are endowed with many gifts. If we will look at the things mentioned in this chapter, whether or not we think of them as "gifts", two things will be evident. 1. The entire Christian church needs a double portion of them. 2. They are gifts in the sense that only God by his own holy inspiration can endow our lives with them. Televangelists and others seem to think that their credibility is enhanced if they can only convince their audiences that they have been gifted in some special way. I cannot think of a better way for them (and all the rest of we professing Christians) to have our credibility enhanced than for everyone to be "kindly affected with love one toward another", "provide things honest in the sight of all men", "not to be high-minded" or to "overcome evil with good old-fashioned Christian living". These will offer a better testimony of the work of Christ in our hearts than some of the more "demonstrative" gifts. (And that is not to discount or eliminate them). This chapter begins with Paul's entreaty for us to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, and for us not to be conformed to this world but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Then he proceeds to tell us why and how. It will work.

QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to make a living sacrifice of your body to God?
2. What is the function of differing gifts in the body of Christ?
3. Looking at this chapter, is only one gift sufficient?
4. Which gift do you feel is the most needful in your life?
5. What is the best way to overcome evil or wrong that is done against you?