***Spiritual Gifts
RO153-02***

**© Berean Memorial Church of Irving, Texas, Inc. (1988)**

Please open your Bibles once more to Romans 12:3-8. Our subject is "Service of the Body," and this is segment number two.

**The Christian's Body**

We have already found out that the Christian's body is a very sacred and important thing to God. It is the temple of the Holy Spirit. It is the instrument for doing God's work on this earth. It will exist forever, either in heaven or hell (for unbelievers), and it actually forms the body of Christ, the church, of which Jesus Christ is the head. For this reason, the human body of the Christian is not to be abused; it is not to be neglected; and, it is not to be devoted to sexual immorality. The Christian life is to be lived on the spiritual plain, where the believer is filled with the Spirit of God, because his known sins are confessed, and where he is then guided by the Word of God, the Scriptures, which he has learned. This enables God to bless the believer now, and to reward him in eternity. The believer's body is the vehicle that God uses to perform His work in this world.

We looked in the book of James to point out to you that God stresses the importance of increasing the faith that brought you into the Christian life. The book of James tells us that, as we serve God with divine good works, it increases the strength of our faith. God has a plan of divine good works which He proposes to accomplish through each individual believer. That's the first thing that we should be aware of. Ephesians 2:10 puts it this way: "For we (we be born-again, regenerated people) are His workmanship (God's workmanship)." We are in the Christian life because God sovereignly decided to bring us in: "We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus, unto (that is, for the purpose of good works), which good works God has before ordained that we should walk in them."

Now, that is a powerful declaration. Here, the apostle Paul points out to us that you are born again in the Christian life because God decided to bring you in. And he, furthermore, did everything that was necessary to justify you so that you were qualified to enter heaven. And the reason He did that is so that you could perform a series of good works for which He would qualify you with certain spiritual abilities, while you are here on this earth. And He has outlined and laid out those specific good works that you should be performing. That is an amazing declaration, and it gives us the reason why we are still breathing and kicking around here on this earth.

The implication of this verse is that you will stay alive just so long as there is any hope of you executing the works that God has designed for you to perform in His decree (in His overall plan). When the time comes that you have past the point of no return, and there is no hope of your performing the works that He has outlined for you, or that you have, as the apostle Paul could say, "I have finished my course; I've done what was ordained for me to do," then God will take you to heaven. But if, someplace along the line, even without finishing that course, you go to the point where you have so devastated your faith through lack of good words that you cannot execute the plan of God, then the Lord will decide that it is not worth your breathing any more oxygen on this earth, and He will take you to heaven. This verse says that God has made you a trophy of His grace, and it tells us that He has a plan for you to execute.

The previous two verses, Ephesians 2:8-9, declare that through faith in Jesus Christ, God has granted the sinner salvation for eternal life from the lake of fire. The reason for this grace salvation is so that we could, as trophies of His grace, execute the plans of His will, which He has before us. If you go back up a little further in chapter 2, to verses 4-7, you will see how God delights in declaring that He is going to show us off through all the rational creatures who will exist in eternity. He will show us Christians off as trophies of His grace (what He has done with us). He's going to be a lot prouder showing off those who have executed the plan of life that He has for them, as well as those that He has brought into a grace regeneration.

**Dead Faith**

So, the Christian, saved from sin, who is weak, however, in his faith in God, will not save the potential of his life. He will not save the value of his life for storing treasures in heaven through good works. James has pointed out that the way you make your faith stronger is by performing good works. The believer's faith in God is increased. It's made stronger by means of divine good works. He learns, because of that, that Christian service is the work of the Holy Spirit, just as salvation is. Therefore, when we see God working through us: not because we are clever; not because we are smart; and, not because we happen to be in the right place at the right time, but because God has brought it all together, it is awesome. And our faith is strengthened. He becomes very real to us as a result of these divine good work accomplishments. Confidence in God matures as a Christian sees His working through the individual. The lack of Christian service producing divine good works causes one faith to become weak and die. This, of course, I reiterate, has nothing to do with salvation faith. I'm talking about the faith for executing good works. Without that faith, and without nurturing that faith, you will stop performing God's plan for you.

The Christian then can end up, in fact, with a dead faith. And with a dead faith, he cannot serve God. And, as 1 John 5:16-17 point out, you may then cross the line into failure to obey the will of God, which is a serious sin, and that may be crossing over the line to the sin unto death where God simply removes you to heaven. The Christian with a dead faith, furthermore, cannot justify his regeneration in the eyes of people, because it is our works that do that.

**Abraham**

The examples that James used included Abraham, who was justified before God by faith in Jesus Christ; and, before people, by his good work of obedience to be willing to sacrifice Isaac. Faith in God, then, and was nourished in Abraham, and he matured in his walk with God. Abraham, of course, would have gone to heaven even if he had not obeyed God in offering up His Son. But Abraham's faith would have been enormously weakened.

**Two Kinds of Justification**

So, justification by faith in Jesus Christ is vindication before God, while justification by good works is vindication before people. James 2:24 puts it this way: "You see then that by works a man is justified (or vindicated), and not by faith only." It is two kinds of vindications: before men; and, before God.

**Rahab**

The other illustration that James used was Rahab the harlot, who was saved for heaven by her faith in Christ; and, then saved her life on earth through her good works of protecting the Israeli spies. She was saved by trusting in Christ alone. She was not saved by trusting in the coming Savior and her works, but only by the trust in Christ. But her works strengthened her faith in God, and they increased her capacity to do the work of the Lord. Her faith, furthermore, saved her actual physical life, because she directed the men of Jericho away from the Israeli spies. Hebrews 11:31 puts her as one of the heroes of faith, because of her good work of protecting those spies.

So, divine good works keep a Christian's faith in God alive and well. As the human spirit keeps the human body alive, so divine good works keeps your faith in God alive. An unused faith withers away, and it becomes nothing more than a creedal course. The Bible stresses the need for Christians to engage in good works. This is why the Bible comes down so hard upon that. And it is amazing how many Christians seem to miss this. They don't have the foggiest notion why on earth they are taking their next breath. And yet the Word of God constantly reiterates that the purpose is to increase your faith so that you may execute the plan of God for the good works that He has outlined for you. And the point of all this is to direct us to perform good works.

Hebrews 10:24: "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." It's a legitimate thing for you to love other believers and to encourage them in the good works that they are doing in Christian service.

Galatians 6:9: "And let us not be weary in well-doing in divine good works, for in due season, we shall reap if we don't fail. God we will not forget, and He will reward.

2 Thessalonians 3:13: "But you, brethren, be not weary in well-doing."

1 Corinthians 15:58: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as you know that your labor is not in vain." Now that is very clear. And I've only read you a few of them. So, it is clear from the Word of God that once you are a believer, your faith needs to be strengthened and increased. The way you do that is by good works under the guidance of the Spirit of God.

**Spiritual Gifts**

Paul explains the nature of serving God now as the exercise of spiritual gifts. And that's what we're getting into here in Romans 12. These are abilities to exercise one's faith in serving God. These are spiritual gifts which we receive from the Spirit of God at the point of salvation. These spiritual gifts are the basis for all Christian service in the church age. Natural abilities are not the same thing as spiritual gifts. Some of you are good at certain things. You were good at that before you were born again. You have certain abilities that just come naturally. Some of you can do things. You don't even have to think about it. That is not a spiritual gift. A spiritual gift only comes at the point of salvation. There are nine of them that are in operation today, and everybody has at least one, and many people have more. But it is these spiritual gifts that are the vehicle through which you perform divine good works, which increase your faith, and which builds your rewards in heaven.

Failure, therefore, to exercise one's spiritual gift weakens the believer's faith in God. It drains his zeal. What Satan does is to try to neutralize Christian service by causing Christians to be ignorant of the principle and the doctrine of spiritual gifts, or to cause them to ignore their spiritual gifts. Or worse, what he has done in the charismatic movement so beautifully he sends people chasing rabbits in the form of spiritual gifts that don't exist, and are not in operation anymore.

**Conceit**

So, we come to Romans 12:3, where we begin with a warning against conceit. Paul directs our attention to a realistic self-appraisal, because if you're going to serve God, the first thing you have to do is make an appraisal of yourself. Verse 3 begins: "For I say through the grace given to me." The word "for" is the Greek conjunction "gar." And what it does is introduces an inference which is based on what he has taught us in verses 1-2 about getting our minds transformed with doctrine from human viewpoint into divine viewpoint. Then he says something to us. He makes a declaration. This word "say" is really the Greek word "lego." This word stresses the content of what is being said, and it is like an admonition. So, Paul is saying, "I'm making an admonition to you."

Furthermore, he says, "I want you to know the basis upon which I'm telling you this. I'm making this admonition to you through something." The word "through" is the Greek word "dis," which is a preposition which introduces Paul's authority – Paul's authority, he says, to be able to tell us these things is that God has exercised a certain grace upon him. The word "grace" is our familiar word "charis." "Charis" here is all that God has sovereignly chosen to do with the apostle Paul. It covers God's grace to this man from the point of salvation, from abject legalistic darkness into all of the spiritual gifts for service which he gave this man.

Paul says, "I say (I admonish you now) on the basis of a special grace authority which is given to me." This is the Greek word, "didomi." And this word is in the past tense, such that, at some point, Paul received this. When did Paul receive this special grace? It was at the same time all the rest of us do – when we are born again. Furthermore, it's passive voice, which means that Paul did not select this for himself.

I have sat in charismatic meetings, and heard people stand up and say, "I would like the gift of healing. I am a medical student. I'm going to medical school now. I'm going to be a doctor. And I think it'd be wonderful if I had the chemical capacity to heal people (the techniques of healing), and also I had the spiritual gift of healing." So, everybody stops and says, "Amen," and "Praise the Lord." And they all start praying for this man to get the gift of healing. Well, right away, we know that this man is totally disoriented to the Word of God. There is no such thing as anyone having the gift of feeling today. Furthermore, there is no such thing as asking God for it, or praying for it. It is very important that this word that Paul uses for something given to him is passive. You have nothing to do with it. It's just like Christmas Day. Every born-again person's spiritual birthday is Christmas Day. You stand there, and you wait and see what is God's present to you in the way of spiritual gifts. And you have nothing to do with getting it.

**The Gift of Apostle**

So, here is a principle. Paul says, "I'm speaking to you on the basis of a grace authority which God has given me as a person in the body of Christ." And what he is referring here to specifically is the primary grace gift that Paul was given. He had more than one. But the primary one was the gift of apostleship. And that is a very powerful gift. In Romans 1:5, Paul says, "By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name." The apostle Paul frequently had to reiterate to people this principle: "I am an apostle, because if you are an apostle, you have supreme authority in the early Testament church. A pastor has authority only over the church that has placed him in that authority in that pulpit. He has nothing to say to the church down the street. He can't call any plays for anybody else in town. But an apostle had supreme authority over all the churches in the area of his ministry, and the churches that he had brought into being. He was a very powerful pope-like character if he had the gift of apostle. Therefore, people were resentful, because an apostle could walk in and say, "You stop that, or you're out. That is sinful. And if you don't behave yourself, I'm going to send you home to heaven.

That would be a wonderful gift, I think, for pastors to have. It would improve things a lot right off the bat. You remember when Ananias and Sapphira came in, jet-set crowd, trying to deceive. Peter says, "That was a bad mistake. You did this when somebody has the gift of an apostle. Go home." And he sends them to heaven. An apostle was an impressive gift, and people resented being under its authority. So, the apostle Paul had to frequently reiterate that he knew what he's talking about. He had a direct line with God. That's what an apostle had. The pastor today has no direct line with God. He has to work from the written Scriptures. But the apostles had a direct communication with God.

In Ephesians 3:7-8, Paul says, "Of which I was made a minister (he's talking about the gospel), according to the gift of the grace of God." That is the same he's talking about here in Ephesians as he's talking about in Romans: "The gift of grace given unto me by the effectual working of His power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." And what he's referring to there is his gift of apostleship.

Notice also 1 Corinthians 15:9-10: "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God, I am what I am, and His grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." The apostle Paul said, "This is an amazing thing. I am an apostle. I do carry that supreme authority. And it is astounding to me because if anybody on the face of the earth does not deserve to be an apostle, it is I. I am the person who murdered Christians. I am the person who willingly and joyfully sent them to their death, supposedly as blasphemers because they called Jesus God, and they worshiped Him. And yet God has picked me up (that kind of a character), and He has given me the supreme authority of an apostle." And he said the only explanation for this is God's grace to me. That's what grace is. I don't deserve it. And we're back to this passive voice in "didomi" – God gave it to me. I didn't choose it. I didn't ask for it.

However, the apostle Paul says, "I know I have it. I know that this has been given to me. This has been made clearly understandable to me by the Lord. And the result was that, because I am so undeserving, I was a better apostle than the rest of them. I was more dedicated to my job. I labored more abundantly than all the rest of them. I was in there night and day. I was a supreme example of devotion and dedication to executing God's plan in my life." Therefore, when we get to the last book that he wrote, 2 Timothy, and he's telling his associate, "This is the end, Timothy. This time, they're not going to release me in Rome. This time, God's going to take me home to heaven." But he says, "I have finished my course. I have fought a good fight." The reason he could say that is because he stayed on the job so abundantly and so diligently as a result of the grace given to him in this gift of apostleship.

So, the apostle Paul, in Romans 12, speaks about authority to instruct these people on the basis of this grace of apostleship which has been given to him. The gift of a ship was a temporary gift. It was one who had a special mission. The word "apostle" is "apostolos" in the Greek Bible. And the word actually means "one who is sent forth. So, an apostle was a certain special divine messenger. That's very important to remember, because it is the apostles, or those who are very closely associated under their direction, that were the means of giving us the New Testament. What they primarily were used of God to communicate was the whole gamut of church truth, which was unknown in the Old Testament.

So, an apostle was a very important divine messenger that the early church needed for us to get the information of what was going on, now that Judaism had been set aside. And Ephesians 4:11, therefore, gives us the communicator gifts that God provided so that God's people could learn what God thinks: "And He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastor-teachers (a combined gift). In order to communicate divine viewpoint truth, first of all, you had apostles. They spoke directly from God, and they recorded the books of the New Testament. The prophet, which we shall look at later, was a direct line of communication from God. The prophet was not primarily somebody who told you what was going to happen in the future. The prophet was primarily somebody who was a direct connecting link to what God was telling you. It was a direct phone line to what God wanted you to know, because there was no New Testament. Now, once the New Testament written, you didn't need prophets anymore, and you didn't need apostles anymore, because when they spoke, they spoke the truth of revelation to us. So, those gifts were phased out.

**The Gifts of Evangelist and of Pastor-Teachers**

So, you have only two communicator gifts left today. One is the evangelist who goes around to the unsaved. He is the pioneer missionary person. And he leads people to salvation. And then he hands them off to the local church, where the pastor-teacher takes up the job as the drill instructor to train them and to equip them for spiritual combat with instruction in the doctrines of the Word of God. It's a beautiful system, all based upon that grace system of being able to learn spiritual things. And when it operates, God creates a powerful force of people who can really change the records in heaven. It may not only change the face of this earth there. Very often they have a great influence there, but they do change the records in heaven.

So, the apostle was the gift that was needed at this point in time. Paul himself was a particularly special apostle that was given to the gentiles. Acts 9:15 and Romans 1:5 point out that the particular place of his ministry was to the gentile world. This is as Peter's ministry, for example, was to the Jewish world. Only God can sovereignly appoint an apostles. It is a spiritual gift for service in New Testament times.

**Can you have an Apostle Today?**

Can you have an apostle today? Yes, you can, providing that you can qualify in a certain way, and this is that you saw Jesus Christ alive after the resurrection. Those of you who have seen Jesus Christ alive after the resurrection, please raise your hands. We have no apostles here. That's a pity. I say that because there are churches who have said that Peter was an apostle, and he handed it down. I stood in St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome, and saw that vast plaque that they have there chiseled into the marble – the names of all the popes, one at the time, to whom each pope handed off apostolic authority. The church of Rome claims that the present pope is the current in the line of the apostles. And he dispenses to the cardinals, and he makes apostles as he chooses.

No. When the early church faced the fact that Judas was a traitor, and that Judas would have been better off never to have been born, because of what he did, and therefore went out and committed suicide, they needed somebody to take his place in order to complete the body of the 12 apostles, who in the future will be ruling upon the 12 thrones over the tribes of Israel. So, in Acts 1:22, they proceeded to select a man, and they laid out the prime qualification: "Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken away from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection" – somebody who saw Jesus alive after His crucifixion. Anybody who had never seen Him alive could not qualify for the gift of apostleship. These men, in this case, did not give the gift of apostleship by a vote of other 11. As you read the passage, you will see that, for the last time, the Old Testament system of the lot was used. And they chose two men who were qualified, who had seen Jesus alive. And by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they were led to select these two men. They probably wrote their names on something (on a little stone probably); put it into a container that had a narrow opening; shook it apart; just turned it over; and, the first name that fell out was Matthias, by divine sovereign choice. He was the one that was then selected.

The apostle Paul was selected directly by God, as you know, and in 1 Corinthians 9:1, he said, "Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ, our Lord? Are not you my work in the Lord?" When did he see Jesus Christ? On the Damascus Road, when he saw the vision, and he looked up into heaven, and there was Jesus, standing alive. That's when Paul realized that the rabbis had lied. He had been stolen by the disciples. He really did rise from the dead, and there He stood. He really is in heaven. So, Paul qualified.

There is no one today who can possibly qualify for the apostleship. So, when the Episcopalian Church claims to have apostolic succession, it's a self-delusion. When the Methodist church says, "We have apostolic succession, and we appoint a bishop, and he has supreme control of all these churches," it is a delusion. None of these men have ever seen Christ alive.

However, the apostle did have great authority over all the churches that he had founded. For example, 2 Corinthians 10:8 says, "For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord has given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed." Here in verse 8, Paul is responding to attacks against him by the Corinthian Christians, challenging his right to tell them what to do (his right of apostleship), and Paul says, "I could boast indeed. I could really brag about the extent of the power that God has given me over you as an apostle, but He has given me that for your edification, not for your destruction. But I will tell you that He has given that to me, and I'm pleased that he has, and I'm not ashamed of it."

In 2 Corinthians 13:10, Paul says, "Therefore, I write these things being absent, lest being present, I should use sharpness." Paul says, "I'm coming. But I'm writing this letter now to straighten out the great immorality that exists within this church, and all the other things that you're doing – the terrible abuse of the charismatic gifts" that existed in the New Testament times, like the tongues gift, and the abuse that they were doing of them, and the degeneration of those into the same kind of babbling that was being done to the pagan temple. Paul said, "I'm fed up with this, and I'm really angry. I'm writing this letter. I want to keep things cool because I have a great authority, and I have a great power, and I can exercise it as the Spirit of God leads me to do so, but I have this power for your edification, not for your destruction. So, I'm not going to call lightning down from heaven to destroy you, but I am going to tell you that I will confront you when I arrive in Corinth."

So, this man had great power as an apostle. These powers were, as a matter of fact, supernatural, and they identified the fact that a person was an apostle. That's why the people who claim to have apostolic authority today are also shown to be false apostles.

2 Corinthians 12:12 tells us about some of those powers. Paul says, "Truly, the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, and signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." The apostle Paul was able to perform certain supernatural things. What could he do? He could take a person who was sick and dying, and he could heal him. And when he healed him, the person was totally healed. It wasn't just: "Oh boy, I'm getting to feel better now," and two days later, the person is on his feet. It was like when Peter healed his mother-in-law. She was in a fever, washed out like a limp dishrag. He healed her, and she hopped on her feet and proceeded to prepare a meal.

The man at the temple who was born lame was given healing by Peter and John. He leapt on his feet and went running off. It was not: "Oh, I'll feel better once the soreness gets out of this foot. It's been bad so long." He was completely healed.

It was the same for the man who was born blind. All of a sudden, his eyes snap open, like someone turns a light on in a room. Furthermore, it never reversed. They never had a relapse. They never went blind again. They never went lame again. That never got sick again with that disease. The only thing that hit them was the sin nature's inherent disease – the inherent death knell that was upon everybody.

However, Paul had these magnificent powers of healing. He had the power of speaking in foreign languages. Boy, would I like to have that! I wish somebody would invent something you could talk into in English, and you could push a button, so that it comes out in German. Or you could push a button, and it comes out in French. Those of you who are clever could become very wealthy if you will invent something like that. Then nobody would have to learn languages, and you could talk to anybody in the world automatically. And I suppose that somebody will come up with that.

However, in the New Testament, you had to have a special gift from God. And if you walked around talking in foreign languages, it was a sign that God was doing something with you, and you had an authority. There is serious question in Acts 2, on the day of Pentecost, when speaking in foreign languages first appeared. From the way it is presented in Scripture, there is some uncertainty as to how many of the people spoke in tongues. And there is good reason to believe that only the apostles spoke in foreign languages – not all the rest of the believers, but only the apostles. Eventually, more of the believers did, so it's irrelevant. But the point was that, at first, it seemed to be clear that speaking in foreign languages was a mark of an apostle.

An apostle had the capacity to cast the demon out of another person, and even to call them by name. It is a dumb and dangerous thing for Christians to think that they have that power to do today. You have power to pray that a person may be released from demon possession. However, the old charismatic preachers, commanding demons in the name of Jesus, to come out of a person – that was deceptive. I'm always watching on television, hoping that one of those demons will catch one of those preachers by his hair, and twist him around and twirl him, and say, "What did you say, fella?" That would make it clear as to how much authority they have over the demonic world.

Well, now, an apostle – the demons cringe at him. He had that kind of power. The problem is that what is being done today in the minds of the cults, and in the charismatic movement, and in Eastern mysticism, there are great forces going. But that's magic. That is not the supernatural working of God. That is superhuman, but it is the magic of Satan and the demon world that is operating. And Christians sometimes do not understand. Certainly, the charismatic people have never caught the difference between what is the power of God working and what is the power of Satan working – what is magic; and, what is a spiritual gift in operation.

**Moses**

This was made clear, for example, when Moses finally confronts Pharaoh. He walks in and demands that the people be released. And Moses then proceeds to demonstrate his authority that he really does speak from God, because that's the reason for miracles. It was the reason then, and it was the reason in the New Testament – that these men really were the communicators of God. And until the New Testament was established, what they said was all that there was that people had. Therefore, we had to be able to identify these men as really God's representatives.

So, Moses takes his rod, and throws it on the ground. It turns into a snake. Hicks it up, and it turns back into his rod. Pharaoh looks over at his magicians. The chief magician says, "No sweat." And he performs the same trick. He throws his stick down, and the thing becomes wiggly. He picks it up, and it's stiff again. Moses performed by the power of God, but the magician performed a counterfeit by magic – the black magic of Satan.

Moses says, "Well, try this fella." And he turns the water into blood. Pharaoh looks at his man. The magician walks up and says, "No problem." He puts the water out there; goes through his mumbo-jumbo; and, right before their eyes, that water turns into blood. Pharaoh reaches in. It's sticky. It's blood. And Pharaoh is hardened.

So, Moses steps up once more, and he brings frogs crawling out of the Nile River by the thousands. Pharaoh looks at his man. The magician goes up; snaps his fingers; says some magical words; and, out come the frogs all over, just like that. They were everywhere. Frogs were crawling out. So, Pharaoh is hardened all the more.

Now God says, "We've got them thinking that they've got us. Now we're going to crack them with one blow. We're going to bring them to their knees." This time, the Lord said, I want you to take the dust of the ground (inert, lifeless material), and you're going to turn it into lice. So, Moses walks in' pitches the dust; and, there are lice ever everywhere – all over the land, and all over everything. Pharaoh looks over at his man, and his chief magician indicates that now they have gone beyond the realm of what magic could do. Magic cannot create life. Only God can create life.

The reason the charismatics, in their claiming of healing, cannot do the ultimate act of healing is for this same reason. What they are doing is magic with Satan's power. Yes, they do make legs grow longer, and they do have these healings of one kind or another. But it is all magic of Satan. It is not the power of God such as the apostle Paul exercised, because magic cannot give life.

I was in Costa Mesa, at Calvary Temple, at one of those Friday night meetings a few years ago when we had one of our tapers conferences out there. It was the night when you can do all the jumping and jiving. They don't allow that on Sunday because they are visitors in there, and that makes the charismatics look bad. So, they don't allow that on Sunday, but they do that all in their secret side-meetings during the week. And this one man got up. This was the very night that this man got up, and wanted, as a doctor, to also have the spiritual gift of healing. Another man got up and said, "Yes, I have prayed for the gift of healing, and God has given it to me. It did not come easy. The first four people I prayed for died. And I wondered, 'Why this was, Lord, that you've given me the gift of healing, and these people are dying?'" He said, "And the Lord spoke to me." I love that. You can always cover your tracks with: "The Lord spoke to me, and He gave me the understanding that what could have been a finer healing for these people than to have been taken home to His presence in heaven? So, I realized that when they died, God had performed the ultimate healing." I look at Mrs. Danish, and she looked at me. That was the dumbest thing. You can't believe that someone could seriously say something like that. It was all I could do to keep from saying out loud, "Ah, come on, fella. Give me a break. This is ridiculous." Everybody else, though, was praising the Lord, and feeling so wonderful that God that God is healing people by checking them out to the undertaker, so He can cover up the doctor's mistakes.

**Paul's Gift of Healing was Phased out**

Well, anyhow, there's a big difference between the power of God, such as the apostle had, and those who are mere magicians. Paul did have the signs of an apostle. He could speak in foreign languages. He could heal people. And he could indeed, as he did, raise them from the dead. And he could cast out demons. But I do remind you that after Paul's apostleship had been authenticated by these signs, he didn't need the signs anymore. They were authenticating his authority to speak for God. So, lo and behold, when the Philippian church sent him a large financial donation, and they deliver it through a Epaphroditus, Paul writes back the Philippian letter for Epaphroditus to take back to them, thanking them for their financial support, and telling them in the process that he was also grateful to God for God's healing of Epaphroditus, who had become terribly sick – as a matter of fact, to the point of death. And Paul said, "I thought he was going to die on my hands, so that with all the other burdens I carry, I was going to have this grief as well."

Now, what kind of talk is that for somebody who's been healing people left and right, anytime he wanted to use his gift? That tells us that the gift of healing had authenticated his apostleship, and God was phasing it out. When he talked about his man, Trophimus, one of the big men on his team of traveling evangelists, he said, "We had to leave Trophimus back at Miletus, because he was sick and couldn't travel." Now, why in the world would Paul leave one of his prime workers back at a port because he was sick, when they had to go on? Why didn't he just heal him and take him with him? Because the gift of healing was phasing out. As we approach the year 70 A.D., it was completely terminated. The New Testament was almost completely written. There was no longer any need for authenticating the writers. They were already authenticated. It was only necessary for them to finish their work.

So, Christians today, who may try to claim the power of an apostle, have got a lot of evidence to produce in order to convince us that they do have the gift of apostleship because they must verify that by the signs of an apostle. No one can qualify as an apostle today, nor can he convey this gift to another. There is no such thing as apostolic succession, but indeed there are a lot of false apostles, as 2 Corinthians 11:13 points out to us when Paul says, "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ." There are a lot who claim it, and it is absolutely not true.

We needed these key men to write New Testament Scriptures. We needed them to establish the New Testament church. Scriptures tell us that the church is built upon the apostles and the prophets of the New Testament. They have finished their work, and therefore, once they have been authenticated, the gift of apostleship was at an end. But when Paul speaks here, I hope you will appreciate with a new perspective when he says, "I am speaking to you through this spiritual grace (this gift that God has given me), and I am speaking," he says, "furthermore, to every man that is among you – every one of you Christians."

What is it that he is warning as an apostle? "Every one of you Christians, I am cautioning you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. The word is "huperphroneo." "Huperphroneo" means "not to have a lofty attitude," or "not to be shot-through with self-conceit." Paul says, "It is God's divine purpose that you Christians not evaluate yourself more highly than you ought to think about yourself, but to limit what you think about yourself in terms of the facts." He says that what he wants us to do is to think soberly: "To every man that is among you (to every person), not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly." The word "soberly" means "to think with a right mind." This same word is used in Mark 5:15, where it talks about the demoniac who was crazy. When Jesus healed him, it says that he sat there in his right mind – fully clothed, and in his right mind. Guess what word that is? It is "huperphroneo."

So, in effect, Paul says, "Christians don't be a bunch of crazy heads. Don't be thinking crazy things about yourself. Don't evaluate yourself higher than you should be, but look at yourself with sober thinking." In the Greek language, this is actually a play on words that sound alike. And trying to put it into English the way the Greek puts it, it sounds something like this: "that you are not to be high-minded above that which you ought to be minded, but to be so minded as to be sober minded." It keeps playing on the word "minded," the word "phroneo," again and again. The higher opinion of one's ability, then, as legitimate is an expression of carnality.

Moses, we're told, was a meek man. He was reluctant to lead the people of Israel to freedom, but God enabled him to find his niche, and gave him boldness so that he could storm into Pharaoh's court and pronounce the plagues of God. Christian humility, however, is not self-denigration. You should not think of yourself less highly than the spiritual gifts that you carry. You should evaluate yourself to what you really have the capacity to do.

What Paul is saying is that we should not view ourselves as Mr. Big with God. It takes a lot of gall to do that. I am always awed by the TV evangelists who look into that screen, and tell people that they have a great power that God has sent him to deliver to them. Last week, I watched one. He held his hand out there, and he said, "Now, put your hand on the television screen. I feel it. My hand is hot. It's warm. The power is flowing. Put your hand on the screen. God has sent me to send this to you. And if you will send your gift, then God will multiply your gift through the power which I'm sending to you through the screen." They must have gone to "gall school" or something, to have the nerve to talk to people like that. But they wouldn't talk to people like that unless they knew that there were a lot of suckers out there to be conned. And I know that the hands slapped the television screens all over the Dallas Metroplex. And checkbooks were opened, and the money was sent in.

**Spiritual Gifts**

This is the arrogance about which Paul says, "Evaluate what God has really given you in terms of spiritual ability. Self-conceit is a type of insanity because it is out of touch with reality. What he says is that: "We should think soberly, according as God has dealt to every man." And the word "dealt" is this word "merizo." The word "merizo" means "to divide;" "to deal out;" or, "to allot:" as God the Holy Spirit distributes to believers spiritual abilities (the spiritual gifts). What he's talking about here is: "Don't make the conclusion that you have some kind of spiritual gift that you don't have, but to judge accurately which of the nine spiritual gifts you have."

Furthermore: "You are to understand that God has given you these gifts as per the measure of faith." And here's where we come back. This is why I took you over to James. The word "measure" is "metron." And that refers to an amount (and apportionment) of faith. The word "faith" is the word "pistis." That is confidence in God: "According to the strength and confidence of your faith, God has given you a spiritual gift." You may have the same gift that any number of other people have. But God has given you a kind of teaching gift: a kind of gift of mercy; or, a kind of administration gift that is different than other people's according to the capacity of the strength of your faith, and of the quality that God knows your good works will produce. So, you have a reservoir of doctrine in your soul, such that your belief in the importance of divine good works and the reality of the rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ will cause you not to let your gift lie dormant.

When Christians understand that, it's not so hard for me to get them to serve in the local church. The people I have to pull teeth on, to try to get them to help us out, are those who have not made the connection between what God has called them to do; how He will enrich them in interpreting for the plan that He has for them, by identifying the spiritual gifts that they have; and, that they are functioning on that gift to their own edification, and to the blessing of all those around them. And at the Judgment Seat of Christ, God is going to take into account that He gave you a certain spiritual gift. He did not ask you to do more than your measure of faith could produce with that gift: other people are going to produce more; other people produce less; but, what you could produce with it. And He put this thing together in such a way that God the Holy Spirit can bless the body of Christ, and can do God's work in reaching lost humanity, and all those carnal Christians out there. When you use your spiritual gift that you really do have, your faith grows; your strength grows; your confidence grows; and, you increase in your capacity to do the job.

Now, having said that, Paul says, "I want to illustrate this." And we shall look at this next time. But the illustration is frightening. When Mrs. Danish was typing up my notes, she got to this next part, and she said, "Boy, this is really amazing. This is really frightening, because a Christian can miss the boat on his spiritual gift; on a true evaluation of himself; in doing it; and, doing it in the right church. How many Christians are going to find that they've blown themselves out of the water because they were not in the right church with their right pastor, or they were, and then they deserted, as if they could make these decisions, and God the Holy Spirit had suddenly checked Himself out, and His sovereignty no longer bore in the picture? There is a consequence to your not using your spiritual gift, not only to yourself, but to others. There is a consequence if you don't use it in the right place, to yourself, and to everybody else in the body. And we should look at that next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1988

[**Back to the Romans index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/romans.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)