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| <h1>Your Ministry</h1> | | <p>Lesson #3</p> <h2>Prophecy</h2> |
| <p>Scripture: Romans 12:3-8</p> | | <p>Juniata Baptist Sunday School</p> |
| <p>Romans 12, as we have noticed already, lists for us seven gifts of the Spirit which are actually the <i>functions</i> of various “members” of Christ’s Body. The body of Christ is the church (compare vs. 4-5 with I Corinthians 12:12-31 and Ephesians 4:11-16), and each part of His Body has a function (“<i>office</i>”—v. 4) to perform. We begin functioning according to our gifts when we have surrendered our lives to Him for service (Romans 12:1-2). The seven function gifts of Romans 12 are examples of how different Christians are called to different things to minister to the rest of the body (Note v. 13). A big part of your ministry in life is your <i>function</i> in the body of Christ. For several weeks now, we will look closely at each of the function gifts. Perhaps the one we study this week is your gift.</p> <div data-bbox="84 1050 753 1106"> <h3>1. How to Know.</h3> </div> <p>Verses 3 through 6 tell us how to know what our gift and function is for ministering in and to the church. Each spiritual gift is given by “grace” (See v. 6 and notice also v. 3). Of course, grace is the unmerited favor of God. The Lord simply gives us a certain ability, a certain specialty in the ministry, not because of some worthiness in us, but by grace. Remember what I Corinthians 4:7 says.</p> <p><i>“For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?”</i></p> <p>You have natural gifts, which were given to you by God through your natural conception and birth (John 3:6), which help you to fulfill your God-given purpose in life. If you are saved, you have also received a spiritual gift, or several, which will give you supernatural enabling to perform a ministry for the Lord. These gifts were given to you by grace in the gift of eternal life (See Lesson #1) and the gift of the</p> | | <p>Holy Spirit, but they are not active in any practical way until you surrender for service. Verses 3 and 6 make it clear that we will know and can use our particular spiritual gifts <i>by faith</i>. As you begin serving God in absolute surrender (Verses 1-2, praying, studying the Bible, witnessing about Christ, getting active in church, obeying Christ’s commands), the Spirit of God will give you <i>faith</i> to understand our own calling and ministry. He will give you <i>confidence</i> in one or more areas of Christian service. Try several things. See how God uses you. Come to know your spiritual gift by <i>grace</i> through <i>faith</i> (Read vs. 1-6 again!).</p> <div data-bbox="850 940 1520 997"> <h3>2. It’s A Specialty.</h3> </div> <p>The list of functional gifts includes seen in this chapter: prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, ruling, an showing mercy (vs. 6-8). Think about the activities in this list. Every one of them is somewhere <i>commanded</i> for every Christian to perform. Do only mercy-showers show mercy, or only givers give? We will see week by week places in the Bible where all believers are told to do each of these seven things! So a function gift is actually a <i>specialty</i> in the ministry. All should prophesy (I Corinthians 14:1), but some specialize in prophecy.</p> <div data-bbox="850 1465 1520 1522"> <h3>3. What Is Prophecy?</h3> </div> <p>The first function listed is prophecy. According to the Bible, what is this gift? We usually think of prophecy as having to do with telling the future, but the Bible definition is clearly something else.</p> <p>In Numbers 11, we read about a time when God took the Spirit which had rested upon Moses (See vs. 16-17) and put Him also upon seventy other leaders among the people. In the record of this incident (Read the whole chapter if you have time) we read that when God’s Spirit “<i>rested upon</i>” these men “<i>they</i></p> |

prophesied, and did not cease" (v. 25). Then we read that Moses expressed the wish "*that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!*" (v. 29) In the centuries before Christ's resurrection (See John 7:37-39), God put His Spirit upon certain chosen individuals to empower them for certain specific tasks. Sometimes when this happened, they prophesied (Look up and look over I Samuel 10). One of the great changes at the dawning of the New Testament age, was that *all* of God's people are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, can be filled with the Spirit, and may prophesy (Study John 14:15-17, John 20:19-23, Acts 1:4-5, Acts 2:14-18, Ephesians 1:12-14, and Ephesians 5:18-20). I Corinthians 11 and 14 clearly teach that men and women and all kinds of believers may prophesy! In Matthew 23:34, we read that Jesus said,

"Behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes . . ."

Prophecy is clearly a New Testament as well as an Old Testament activity, and perhaps even more New Testament than Old! But what is it? Certainly some prophecy predicted future events (Ezekiel 12:27). However most prophecy in the Bible was not of this sort. Actually, the very writing of scripture is called a form of prophecy among common Christians whose words are not verbally inspired to be written down in scripture. The basic definition of prophecy is speaking under the influence of God. Every prophet who wrote scripture was writing under an intense influence of God's Spirit called inspiration. His very words were divinely-dictated. But ordinary believers may prophesy in the sense of speaking for God under the control and enabling of the spirit, short of direct dictation. Surrendered believers *should* prophesy, that is, let God use their speech to communicate messages to others (See I Thessalonians 5:19-21). But the specialty function of many believers is not in a speaking ministry. However, some find in prophecy (speaking in the power of the Spirit) their specific ministry.

4. Is This You?

The word "*prophecy*" has both the idea of saying before and speaking forth. We could say it is either foretelling or forthtelling, but (as we have learned) primarily *forthtelling*. From this we get the idea that a Christian gifted to prophesy will have a bold, declarative style in speaking God's truth. In soul-winning, he may be of the more confrontative type, although gently persuasive by the influence of the Holy Spirit. In speaking to a group, he has the *forthtelling* approach. Perhaps your gift is in this kind of speaking. Churches need prophets. As you serve the Lord, ask if prophecy is your gift. See if others are helped by your bold declaration of Bible truth. If this is your specialty, accept it as God's gift, and begin centering your ministry in the church around it!