

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Romans 12: 7-8

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. Today, we will continue reading Romans chapter 12, verses 7 to 8.

The saints are the body of the church, members of the body; every saint should fulfill the function of a member. Therefore, every saint must experience grace and develop gifts. In Romans 12:6-8, Paul presents seven gifts. Of course, the church's gifts are not limited to these seven; every saint can, under the leading of the Holy Spirit, develop gifts according to their own burden. Generally speaking, in church life, the seven gifts mentioned by Paul are all necessary.

Yesterday, we already read that the most important gift is prophesying. This gift can bring the church into God's will and supply the church with God's word to build up the church. Today, we will look at the remaining six gifts in verses 7 and 8.

Verses 7-8: "or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness."

In these two verses, Paul mentions six gifts, which can be divided into two groups of three each; we will look at them group by group. The first group is ministering, teaching, and exhorting.

For these three gifts in the first group, Paul adds no modifiers; the "diligently" in the Chinese Union Version is added by the translators. Paul does not say that if one does this service, they cannot do others. Paul's meaning is simply to do it well. On one hand, it encourages saints with this gift to serve others wholeheartedly according to their gift when fulfilling their duty; on the other hand, Paul seems to

tell others not to interfere. Because these three gifts are for helping saints grow in spiritual life, they require specific gifted people to serve with targeted and continuous ministry. Saints not serving in this position should not interfere.

In the church, some saints do not faithfully fulfill their own office but always like to meddle in others' services—this not only disrupts the rhythm of the server but also leaves those being serviced confused. Especially in these perfecting services, a close relationship must be established between the server and the served, while maintaining a certain degree of privacy. Unrelated people should not join without invitation.

Let us look closely at these three gifts in the group. Ministering: Paul uses the Greek word *diakonia*, which is “ministry” or “service.” This should refer to certain works in the church to meet the needs of specific groups in the church. For example, children's service, youth service, couples' ministry, elderly ministry, etc. Each specific group has particular needs; burdened saints must first equip themselves and develop specific gifts to meet these particular needs.

However, meeting people's needs is only the beginning; this establishes a relationship of mutual trust between the server and the served. The purpose of service is to bring the served to God and help them establish a direct relationship with God. The principle of service is to influence life with life, supplying life through life's connection to bring forth life's growth.

A healthy church must attend to the needs of every group in the church. Burdened saints can, in the process of learning, on one hand receive God's grace and on the other hand receive specific equipping, thus developing gifts to serve that specific group and establish a specialized ministry. Generally speaking, nearby communities will also have people with the same needs, so once such a specialized ministry is established, it can also develop into an extended gospel work, helping seekers with the same needs to integrate into church life.

He who teaches, let him teach well. A normal, healthy church will regularly welcome newly joined saints. Newly saved saints need to know fundamental truths, learn to read the Bible, pray, sing hymns, praise God, etc. Therefore, the church

needs saints skilled in teaching to offer various courses, helping newly saved saints integrate into church life more quickly. Good teaching is not just transmitting knowledge and doctrine but also bringing forth exercise and practice, thus helping young saints establish daily Bible reading, prayer, and devotional life.

Teaching differs from prophesying. Teaching focuses on presenting fundamental truths and bringing forth exercise and practice; prophesying focuses on new light and seeing, bringing forth God's guidance and leading for the church. Every Lord's Day pulpit can be prophesying, truth teaching, or testimony to manifest God's goodness and faithfulness.

Third, he who exhorts, let him exhort well. The Greek word for "exhort" is a compound verb: *para* meaning "close beside," standing beside; the second word *kaleo* meaning "call," summon, speak, or counsel. The compound verb means standing beside and helping through speaking to him. In modern society, with broken family structures, moral decay, rampant drugs and pornography, some people with specific needs come to the church needing special help; thus, the church needs the gift of exhortation.

Modern seminaries often offer various counseling courses; burdened saints can learn and equip themselves. However, in the church, the gift of exhortation is completely different from secular psychological counseling. The purpose of the church's gift of exhortation is to bring people to God, help them receive healing from God, and appropriately integrate into church life. The premise is that the person needing help is willing to accept Christ as their lifelong Savior, actively seek help, and fully cooperate to rebuild a Christ-centered life.

We know that only God can change people, and a person's change is a long, arduous, and repetitive process. Those who exhort need to invest much time and energy; if they cannot complete it and quit halfway, it is better not to start. Therefore, both the exhorter and the exhorted need appropriate mental preparation. Once started, it must be firm and continuous until substantial change occurs in the person. Though the process is long and arduous, people's change is the best testimony of the gospel.

The three gifts in the first group are to help, perfect, and change people, bringing them to God. This is very important work in the church and the main purpose of the church's existence.

The three gifts in the second group lean toward handling church affairs: giving, leading, and showing mercy. Paul adds a modifier to each gift, indicating the spiritual character needed to exercise it. Let us look at them one by one.

He who gives, with liberality. Giving refers to helping others materially or financially. In the church, there will inevitably be poor people needing financial support. Therefore, the-recipe church needs to establish benevolence work: on one hand, collecting from those able and willing to give; on the other hand, distributing collected resources to needy saints. Acts 6:1 records the Jerusalem church's ministry of supplying widows, and this gift of giving includes those willing to give and those assisting in distribution. Those with the gift of giving must do so with liberality.

The Greek word for "liberality" has rich meaning: in English, "simplicity," "purity," "generosity"—pure, pure-hearted, generous. When we give, the motive must be pure, purely to help saints; thus, it is best to maintain the principle that the left hand does not know what the right hand does, and giving should be generous. Paul gives us clear principles in 2 Corinthians 9:6-8, "But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work."

He who leads, with diligence. The office of leading in the church is entrusted to the elders in the church. In Titus 1:5, Paul also instructs Titus to appoint elders in every city in Crete. Interestingly, among the church's various gifts, Paul places the gift of leading at the end. We all think elders are the most prominent in the church, but Paul places the gift of leading at the end. At the same time, the Greek word for "leads" is a compound verb: *pro* meaning "before," in front; the second word

histemi meaning “stand” or “standing.” The compound verb means standing in front as an example.

Leading in the church is not supervising but being an example in front. Jesus Himself says in Mark 10:44-45, “And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Thus, Paul says he who leads, with diligence.

Being an elder means being a servant of all. The most important character of a servant is diligence. Lazy people cannot be elders; undiligent people cannot lead others. Modern churches have developed elder boards like corporate boards, deciding church matters in meeting rooms—this is far from the biblical elder office. No wonder modern churches often have problems and even scandals. The main reason is that church leadership deviates from God’s ordination. A biblical elder lives among the saints and diligently serves all saints; such a church can bring heavenly blessings.

He who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Showing mercy refers to practical actions helping people. Thus, the gift of mercy may refer to helping the sick, assisting the elderly who cannot care for themselves, or caring for orphans without parents. Those with the gift of mercy willingly go to those needing help and show mercy with practical actions.

If the church cannot establish a mercy ministry alone, it can regularly visit nearby hospitals, nursing homes, or orphanages to share the gospel message and spread God’s love and peace. The spiritual character required for those with the gift of mercy is cheerfulness. Actually, the word “cheerfulness” does not fully express the Greek meaning; the KJV translates it as “cheerfulness,” joyful, uplifted. In mercy work, the server joyfully and upliftedly brings the served into God’s peace and rest, enabling them to feel joy and rejoice together. What a beautiful picture.

In Romans 12:6-8, Paul tells us the seven gifts the church should have. May every saint have some time of reflection before God to recognize their burden and bring this burden before God to inquire. Through experiencing God’s grace and through

personal equipping, according to our burden, develop gifts—this will become a blessing to the church.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You! After we were saved by grace, You placed us in church life and, under Your sovereign authority, placed various needs in our hearts. Help me today to examine what my commission is and, according to this commission, gradually develop gifts in me to bear God's commission. Help me become a functioning member in the church, able to build the church together with the saints around me. Bless the church and church life where I am. We pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ!