

# Romans 12.<sup>1-8</sup>

## Serving

### Background

These verses set our *service* of God in its rightful context, as a response to, and indeed the result of, *salvation*. God's salvation. And at the heart of that salvation lies a mercy so great and expansive that, having expounded it at length in the previous chapters, Paul was constrained to offer that great paean of praise in [Rom.11.33-36](#).

Our service of God, therefore, is always both a response to, and a reflection of, the mercy of God shown towards us in the Lord Jesus Christ – who came, in His own words, “not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” ([Mk.10.45](#)).

Service is, from the start of Scripture, one of the ‘core values’ of the kingdom of God; it's important, therefore, that such service will be the hallmark of His church and will characterise both our lives as individuals and our life as a fellowship of His people.

A consistent note struck by all the writers in the New Testament is that each of us is uniquely made and (at least in terms of our gifts) uniquely saved by the Lord. The gifts which each of us has been given flow from, and are an expression of, His grace towards us: and the *exercise* of these varied gifts, undertaken in the power of His Spirit and in pursuit of His glory, is to be understood as His gracious work in our lives. We work out our salvation (of which the privilege of service is an enduring part) as God Himself works in us.

Two significant outcomes result from the exercise of our varied gifts (some of these gifts more *prominent* than others perhaps, but all alike *important*).

The first ‘outcome’ is that we minister to one another in a way that enriches our knowledge of Christ and enhances our service of Christ. It is God who, by His Spirit, makes us grow – but He does so by setting us in community, by our being part of the body of Christ each of whose members needs the ministry of all the others, each exercising their particular gifts.

The second ‘outcome’ is that we thus portray and proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ. Our service becomes the ‘sacrament’ of His saving grace, whereby those around experience the grace of the gospel in the costly, winsome service of Christ's church.

As you work through the different passages, therefore, it will be worth considering, first, how in your own individual life you may so use your gifts to those ends, and, secondly, how we as a fellowship in our corporate life may best serve the community in which the Lord has set us. To that end, although there's benefit in working through all the passages, I suggest that the three ‘days’ on which you might concentrate, or at least with which you might start, are ‘days’ **(1)**, **(6)**, and **(7)** – in relation to which there are additional questions.

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**1) Monday 1<sup>st</sup> November – mercy**

Read [Romans 12.1-2](#)

*".. offer your bodies as a living sacrifice .."* (Rom.12.1)

You are saved to serve. The order is crucial, and the statement is significant. Service (or ministry) is what salvation issues in, through all eternity. Such service involves the 'sacrificial' offering up of your body in the daily service of the Saviour.

Paul had already expounded at length the mercy of God in this letter: what has been your experience of the mercy of God?

God's transforming work in you will see you refusing to conform to the world's way of living: how does Paul see that transformation happening?

What did it mean for Paul to 'offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God'?

What might it mean for you as an individual, and for us as a fellowship, so to do?

**Prayer:** *How grateful I am, Lord, that Your mercies towards me are new every morning! Make me so mindful of Your mercy that I'm careful to reflect it the way I live today.*

## 2) Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> November – significance

Read [Romans 12.3-5](#)

*".. think of yourself with sober judgment .."* (Rom.12.3)

You are saved out of solitude. In Christ you no longer live life independently, but as part of His body, your service finding expression and significance as you recognise the particular gifts, personality and background which the Lord has given you

In what ways are you 'functioning' (v.4) as part of the body of Christ?

Because you 'belong to all the others', you're both responsible for them and accountable to them: how does this find expression in your life?

**Prayer:** *Help me, Lord, to be content with the person You have made me and called me in Christ to be: keep from trying to be someone else – and use me for Your glory!*

## 3) Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> November – gifts

Read [Romans 12.6-8](#)

*".. we have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us' .."* (Rom.12.6)

As a believer you are 'in Christ'. You are part of His body, with specific functions to fulfil. Paul's list here is illustrative rather than exhaustive: his intention is to exhort his readers to use their particular gifts and to do so to the glory of God.

What are your gifts and where do you 'fit in' to the body of Christ?

God in His 'grace' has made you who you are (see [1 Cor.15.10](#)): in what ways might you 'give yourself (more) fully to the work of the Lord' ([1 Cor.15.58](#))?

***Prayer:** Thank You, Lord, for the gifts which You have given me. Please help me never to belittle their significance: and show me today how I may use my gifts for Your glory.*

#### **4) Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> November – Jesus**

Read [1 Corinthians 12.1-3](#)

*".. no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit .."* (1 Cor.12.3)

The church at Corinth, enthusiastic as they were, had missed the point about a lot of things – including the matter of the gifts they'd been given by God. Their enthusiasm needed to be matched by instruction. Paul points here to the purpose of their gifts.

How do you understand your 'gifts' – as a gift from God for which you're thankful, or as an innate ability of which you're proud?

The Holy Spirit delights to point the spotlight always onto Jesus: does the exercise of your gifts prompt others to praise Him .. or you?

***Prayer:** Help me today, Lord, so to use the gifts which I've been given that in all I say and do others round about me will want to taste and see how good You are as Lord.*

#### **5) Friday 5<sup>th</sup> November – unity**

Read [1 Corinthians 12.4-6](#)

*".. there are different kinds of service, but the same Lord .."* (1 Cor.12.5)

Unity is not the same as uniformity. The gifts you exercise, the service you render, the work in which you're involved, will all be powered by the Spirit and, though peculiarly your own, will serve to magnify the greatness of your Saviour God.

Have you sought to learn from the Lord what the particular gifts are which he has given you?

How conscious are you day by day of God Himself being at work as you exercise the gifts He has chosen to give you?

***Prayer:** Thank You, Father, for the privilege You've bestowed upon Your people of sharing in Your work. Help me to cherish the gifts You've given and use them well!*

## 6) Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> November – brightness

Read [1 Corinthians 12.7-11](#)

“.. to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good ..” (1 Cor.12.7)

All the New Testament list of gifts (like this one) illustrate simply the kaleidoscopic variety there is in the Spirit’s sovereign bestowal of gifts. They are ‘the manifestation of the Spirit’: they are ‘for the common good’: and they are ‘the work of the .. Spirit’

What are the various points which Paul was concerned to emphasise here to the Corinthian believers?

In what ways does the exercise of your gifts show to others the activity and work of the Holy Spirit?

Why do you think Paul emphasises, at both the start (v.7) and close (v.11) of the passage, the fact that it is “**to each one**” that gifts are given?

The Spirit determines what gifts you are given: but how do you recognise what those gifts are?

**Prayer:** Help me so to gaze on Your kingly brightness, Jesus, that my very face may display Your likeness: may my daily living mirror Your glory and tell Your story.

## 7) Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> November – serve

Read [1 Peter 4.7-11](#)

“.. each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others ..” (1 Pet.4.10)

Peter underlines a key  *motive* for your serving (the end of all things is near) and the key *manner* in which your service is to be given (love each other deeply). Your service has its source in God’s grace and is to be directed to God’s glory. Make sure it is!

On this Lord’s day consider afresh – what gifts has He given you in His grace?

In 1 Corinthians Paul’s teaching on the use of our gifts is followed by a chapter on love, while here Peter’s teaching on our gifts is preceded by a summons to love: what does Peter mean by saying that ‘love covers over a multitude of sins’?

Why is the ministry (service) of hospitality so significant? And in what ways might our ministry of hospitality, both as individuals and as a fellowship, be developed?

What will it mean for you *faithfully* to administer God’s grace through the particular gifts He has given you?

**Prayer:** Send me out, Lord, day by day, to serve a world in need. You have been so generous in all that You have given. Help me to be faithful in the exercise of my gifts.