

As a sequel to the study 'Spiritual gifts - definition'<sup>1</sup>, which it would be best to read first, this study looks at what the Bible teaches in one of the two texts about the **spiritual gifts/presents out of kindness**.

### **The context (Romans 12:1-5):**

In the previous verse, Romans 11:36, Paul remarks:

- *For from him (Jesus Christ) and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen. (Romans 11:36)*

Put otherwise: Everything has its existence in Jesus Christ and to Him alone is all honour due.

Paul therefore goes on to say:

- *I Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to **offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God** - this is your true and proper worship. (Romans 12:1)*

If everything, ourselves included, exists through Jesus Christ, it is the logical for a disciple to make himself available to Him with his whole being, so that Jesus becomes visible in this world.

In order to achieve this a metamorphosis, a spiritual transformation, is needed, so that a disciple of Jesus is able to live in accordance with the will of God, as revealed in the Bible.

Paul writes about this as follows:

- *Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed (metamorpho-oo: change of appearance) by the renewing of your mind (thoughts, feelings, intentions, desires). Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:2)*

In the following verses Paul urges the believer therefore to always be true to himself and to realise that we are joined together in the body of Jesus Christ. Each person is given his/her specific task, together with the personal responsibility attached to it.

### **The text, Romans 12:6-9:**

Against this background Paul then goes on to say (in a more literal translation of the Greek, for this study):

- **We now have presents out of kindness (charisma/spiritual gifts), according to the kindness (charis/grace), which has been given to us:**
    - whether prophecy, in accordance with the correct proportion of our faith/trust;
    - whether serving, in serving;
    - whether teaching, in teaching;
    - whether admonishing (comforting, encouraging), in admonishing (comforting, encouraging);
    - giving (sharing), in simplicity (sincerity);
    - leading (providing leadership) diligently (earnestly);
    - showing mercy, in kindness.
- May love be sincere,**
- abhorring evil, clinging to what is good. (Romans 12:6-9)

<sup>1</sup> Study: Spiritual gifts - definition.

Paul assumes that anyone who has experienced the **kindness/charis/grace** of God and of Jesus Christ in his life will also be kind towards others, '*according to the **kindness/charis/grace**, which is given to each of us*'.

As a result, everyone who has experienced the kindness of God and Jesus in his life, is capable of doing something for someone else out of kindness, as a result of which the other person receives something, even if that is only in the form of two helping hands.

**In that sense the presents out of kindness/spiritual gifts are limitless.**

Paul resumes some of them, as far as the body of Jesus, the church, is concerned.

### **Explanation of the text:**

#### **Prophecy, in accordance with the correct proportion of faith.**

The Greek 'propheteia' has the meaning of prediction.

In the text this refers to prediction, or more in the general sense of 'speaking the words from God', by the person who pronounces the prophecy.

That person does this according to the **correct measure** (*Greek: analogia*) of **his/her** faith/trust.

The Holy Spirit is not mentioned in this respect. This prophesying must therefore not be seen as a divine revelation through the Holy Spirit.

It is therefore necessary to be cautious when accepting these prophetic words.

Someone may express his personal wishes and desires for the person or situation about which he is prophesying. These may be good words, but caution is advised when using them.

Paul probably has this kind of prophesying in mind when he says in 1 Corinthians 13:9 - "*For **we know in part and we prophesy in part***".

#### **Whether serving, in serving.**

It seems logical when Paul says that one has to be willing to serve when being of service to someone. What he means, is that one should not be of service with an ulterior motive.

Being of service to someone must proceed **from kindness**, as a **spiritual gift/present out of kindness**.

This is doing something as a friendly gesture and not expecting to receive something in return.

When serving one must therefore be sincere and totally focussed upon the other person.

#### **Whether teaching, in teaching.**

This is teaching in accordance with the lifestyle that the person who is teaching has acquired in his life, among other things through reading and studying the Bible.

Paul says in Colossians 4:6.

- *Let your conversation be always full of grace/kindness, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*

Everyone can do this, without necessarily having to be a Bible teacher.

And here too, this refers to a little bit of teaching, because someone needs it or asks a question.

Once again this is teaching to the best of one's ability, without expecting a reward.

**Whether admonishing (comforting, encouraging), in admonishing (comforting, encouraging).**

The translation of admonishing is easily interpreted as reproofing someone and pointing a finger at him.

The OLB translates '**parakaleo**' as:

- to call to one's side, call for, summon
- to console, to encourage and strengthen by consolation, to comfort
- to entreat, beseech
- to instruct, teach

These different translations could be summarised in one word: acknowledgement.

Acknowledging someone in who he is in Jesus Christ, by asking for help from him/her, or offering him/her help, by encouraging someone, or by comforting and encouraging.

In such a situation one might easily attach someone to oneself and manipulate him.

However, a '**present out of kindness/spiritual gift**' is a **kind gesture from a kind heart**, whereby one acknowledges, comforts and encourages someone else without ulterior motives.

**Giving (sharing), in simplicity (sincerity).**

**Giving/sharing:** in a literal translation this actually means 'sharing together'.

**Simplicity/sincerity** is described by the OLB as:

- the virtue of someone who is free of hypocrisy
- not seeking oneself, openheartedness manifested in magnanimity

Here too: 'a present out of kindness', **out of magnanimity, free from hypocrisy.**

Sharing in the sense of giving, sharing together, whereby the giver does not raise himself above the person to whom something is given.

What is given or shared is not described.

This can be material or financial support, even spiritual support, without necessarily thinking of teaching as well.

**Leading (providing leadership) diligently (earnestly).**

This does not refer to a leadership function, but providing leadership in a certain situation as a '**spiritual gift**', a '**present out of kindness**'.

For example: being asked to take on a task in connection with the organisation of an event. Or making a temporary effort in order to co-ordinate something.

Leadership needs to be provided in such a situation, so that everything will run efficiently.

This task, coupled with taking on responsibility, even if only temporarily, must be carried out earnestly, because others in that situation are dependent upon the person providing leadership.

**Showing mercy, in kindness (joyfulness).**

The Greek '**ele'eo**' that is translated as 'showing mercy' is translated by the OLB as:

- having sympathy with someone
- helping someone who is distressed or seeking help
- helping the distressed, providing help to whoever is unhappy

The translation speaks for itself.

Helping someone as a 'spiritual gift/present out of kindness' is **assistance out of the kindness of one's heart**.

Even if this is in a work situation, even then the work will only be able to be completed if it is done with a heart that is compassionate towards the person who needs (has to have) help.

### **Love must be sincere.**

Paul ends this chapter by remarking that one must be willing in God's Kingdom, **driven by love** from a sincere heart, honest, without hypocrisy.

He continues:

- *Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.  
Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves.  
Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, **servng the Lord**. (Romans 12:9-11)*

### **Note:**

When Paul writes in the chapter dealt with that **WE** have '**spiritual gifts/presents out of kindness**', he means that **we are able to share something with others out of the kindness of our hearts**.

Whereas the Greek text here does not give any reason to do so, some Bible translators interpret this to mean that 'gifts' are referred to: the gift of prophecy, or the gift of teaching, or the gift of service, as if someone would have received something special, in order to be able to serve someone else in the areas described above.

However, **Romans 12** appears to talk about the fact that everyone is capable of being of service with respect to what is needed at a specific point in time, out of the kindness of his heart, at any time and in every situation, even though he does not necessarily feel called to do so from above.

No-one can shirk from being of service at a particular time, because he **does not have that special gift** to do so.

This is about being prepared to be of service and being aware of others' needs, or of the situation in which they find himself at that time.

That is why Paul says:

- *And over all these virtues **put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity**.  
Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.  
And be thankful.  
Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach (educate) and admonish (warn, reprimand, encourage) one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.  
And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:14-17)*

See too the study: 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 – The spiritual gifts through the Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup>

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