

“WHY DOES GOD GIVE US TALENTS”

Text: Romans 12:1-8

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INTRODUCTION:

1) The need of talents in today's church: On the first Sunday last month our church installed the Church Council of 2015. Through the past 20 years, as the needs of ministry grow, so has the church council. Now we have ten committees responsible for planning and implementing programs, projects and training for different areas of the total ministry of the church. There are over forty persons elected by the congregation to serve the church. Looking at the list of the ten committees, you can see that each is composed of people with different gifts or talents to serve the people and the church. Without the faithful service and high level of dedication, we won't have a church running smoothly as we have been in the past 20 years.

2) The need of talents in ancient church: Church organization, structure, ministry delegation, need people to get involved and dedicate their God-given talents to meet the needs. Since there wasn't any model of church 2,000 years ago and no one knew how to organize and manage a church, there is a real need to guide the church in this area. The Apostle Paul instructed the early church on the need of involvement of all members of the church, he said, “It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists and some to be pastors and teachers, to equip God's people for ministries of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.” (Eph 4:11-12) In our text today, Paul instructed Christians on how to get involved in serving God and his church, so the church may properly organized, function and grow in reaching people for Christ.

GOD WANTS US TO OBEY AND SERVE: (Rom 12:1-2)

1) A call to serve and sacrifice: “I urge you, all brothers (and sisters) in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.” (12:1) Anytime anyone answers the call to serve, it is a decision of sacrifice. This is certainly true when one is called to serve in the arm forces which may cost his life. Many answer the call to serve in law enforcement, civic duty, community, etc. they all have to sacrifice in order to serve their duties. Christians are in no exception: God is calling us to serve him and it takes sacrifice to answer his call and serve Him. Paul reminds us that Christian service is way above any and all civic calls of duty, because we are called by God and it is a holy sacrifice that makes God

happy and glorious.

2) A call to obey God's will: “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test what God's will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (12:2) In most cases, when Christians decline or shy away to answer the call of God to serve, they do so not by obeying the will of God but their own will to do their own things. You may not like what the Bible says, but it is true: You do not obey the will of God in your life. Ask yourself this question: How can your life be a witness or shining light for God when you run away from the will of God? In many cases, God's will is in direct contradiction with our own will, and in many cases, we follow our own will rather than obey the will of God. If you wonder why your life and those in your family are not productive, not smooth nor happy, remember this: the will of God is good, pleasing and perfect for everyone who will obey, v.2.

GOD WANTS US TO BE HUMBLE: (Romans 12:3)

1) The importance of humility in service: “By the grace given to me I say to everyone of you: Do not think of yourself higher than you ought.” (12:3) We all need to realize that whatever gifts or talents God may have given us, it is not for us to feel superior, puff up or proud. It also isn't for us to look down on others, those who may not have the gifts like you have. In 1 Corinth 12, using the analogy of a human body and the importance of each part in it, Paul wants us to know that all parts in God's church are equally important and each part is indispensable to the well being of the body. Pride is a cardinal sin that eventually could destroy the usefulness of anyone. Pride promotes selfish gain and division, but humility promotes cooperation and harmony.

2) The importance of faith in service: “But rather think of yourself with sober judgment in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.” (12:3) Many of us are afraid of stepping in to serve because we often feel inadequate in knowledge, skill or time to do a good job. We need to trust God and have faith in him when we step up to serve Him in his church. We need to know it isn't about how much we know or capable to serving, it is the portion of faith God will give us so we can serve him in his work. Our faith is never on ourselves, our ability but in God. “Sober judgment” means “clear mind.” This sober mind will direct us to God instead of ourselves or all on our own ability which is so limited and feeble. Trusting God in faith is another way to be humble when we serve Him in his church. Paul says: “We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not

from us.” (2 Corinth. 4:7) We are saved by faith in the Lord. We also serve by faith in the Lord. “Apart from him, we can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

GOD WANTS US TO SERVE IN UNITY: (Romans 12:4-5)

1) The importance of diversity: “Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not have the same function.” (12:4) This is like a summary of the much longer passage in 1 Corinth 12, on the diversity of members in a human body and the necessity of each one of them. It is the same way in God's church as we serve him. There are a few important points we need to focus: a) We are in ONE body, the body of Christ. We need to see the oneness all the time. b) We have many members in the body, sometimes we may think it is too many, but they are all in this one body. c) Each one has his unique function for the well being of the body and it is needed to make the body function properly. This may be difficult for some to accept but it is from the wisdom of God who created the body and the church.

2) The importance of unity: “So, in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” (12:5) Just as God formed a body with many members, God also forms a church with many members, and each belongs to the others, he or she isn't a separate entity in the church. The fact we are diverse or different can never be the reason of segregation to split a church which had been tragically happened in many cases that brought deep shame and pain to many churches and Christians. Too often, people split the church by human pride, selfish intend, power struggle, not to glorify God but to satisfy selfish ambition. Before he went to the cross, Jesus' final prayer was for the unity of his people, “I have given them the glory you have given me that they may be one as we are one. I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity so the world knows that you sent me.” (Jn 17:7-8) The world may know Jesus better if we are in unity with one another.

GOD WANTS US BE FAITHFUL TO HIS GIFT: (12:6-8) Read the text

1) God gives us something unique: In these 3 verses, we have a list of six gifts from God to serve in his church, and each one is different from others. Too often, we love to serve God with people “just like us,” but God didn't work the way we want him to. Often times, we find ourselves serving God in a church with people so different from us in many ways and we are so frustrated. God does that because there are different needs in the church and we need different people to do different things. God did that also because we need to learn how to live and work with people of different background, way

of doing things, different values and approaches. God seldom put exactly the same kind of people in our surrounding, not even in our family. What God gives to each of us is unique but necessary for the good of his church.

2) But God requires us all be faithful: “If it is encouraging let him encourage, if it is giving to meet the needs of others, let him give generously, if it is in leadership, let him govern diligently, if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.” (12:8) In the Chinese translation, 2 words “Juan-Yi” were added after each gift was listed. “Juan-yi” means “faithful.” This inserts go well with the 3 adverbs in v. 8: generously, diligently and cheerfully, all means do it faithfully. No matter what your gift may be, or what position your service, God always requires all of us to do our utmost. Kathy Rigby, the US gold medalist winner in Olympic gymnastic in the 1970s said this when asked how she felt winning the gold medal: “You don't have to be the best, but you need to do your best every time.” I strongly believe we Christians need to have that same attitude in our service to the Lord in his church.

STEPS TO GET YOURSELF STARTED:

1) Seek: “Seek you first the kingdom of God.” (Matt 6:33) You can start first step by seeking God's will and mercy to reveal to you what he has given you the gift to serve. You are saved more than just to take a free ride to heaven but to help expand God's kingdom through your service in his church with all other Christians. Don't be a free-rider to heaven. God puts you here for good purpose: You are useful to his kingdom and his church.

2) See: Open your eyes and see if there is anything you can do to help your church, even it is a small thing like wiping clean tables after a meal, put the chairs back after a gathering. You also can open your mouth to ask leaders if there is anything you can do. I am sure they will be more than happy to show you things you can help. Be active in seeking and seeing and you will find a thing or two you surely can help.

3) Start: Don't just stay in the seeking or seeing stage: Get involved, start doing something. No need to wait for someone to ask you. This is your home church, like your own home. You are a member of the family, not a guest. So, take steps to start doing something today. Then expect the best in heaven. The Lord will be very happy to see your faithfulness in using his trusted gifts serving him in his church. Listen to what the Lord may say when you see him in heaven: “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful in a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your Master's happiness.” (Matt 25:21) Be prepared for that glorious day today.

