

Sermon Series: *From Willingness to Giftedness*

Sermon title: Putting the Gifts to Use

Scripture Reading: Romans 12:1-2

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Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church

Pastor, S.C. Brown

Today, we want to get really practical. We've talked a lot about what the Bible says about the gifts and now we want to turn our attention to using our gifts.

What we know for sure is this:

- We have a gift. God gave you one or more than one.
- Our gifts are to build up others in the church.
- Our gifts are to be done in love or they're useless.
- We can't ever go wrong speaking to people from the Bible, though sometimes God might use our mere human words to encourage, uplift or comfort someone else.

- Lastly...today....here's what we know;

We are to put our gifts to use.

But if we are truly going to put our gifts to use, there needs to be some things happen in our hearts.

Romans 12 is one of the other passages that talks about spiritual gifts and verses 1 and 2 are particularly famous.

But did you know that what follows verses 1 and 2 in this passage is about spiritual gifts?

Romans 12 is a major transition from chapters 1-11. In the first 11 chapters of Romans, Paul has told us what God has done **FOR** us. He has told us the good news about Jesus.

He started out in chapter 1 by saying, **“the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.”**

And **“the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.”**

In chapter 3 it says, **“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”**

In chapter 5 he told us, **“God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”**

And **“by one man’s disobedience (Adam’s) the many were made sinners, so by one man’s obedience many will be made righteous (Jesus).”**

In chapter 6 we have those beautiful words, **“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

In chapter 8 he says, **“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”**

And, **“nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

In chapter 9, it says that our salvation **“depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who has mercy.”**

In chapter 10 it says, **“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”**

And in chapter 11, Paul finishes off the good news about what Jesus Christ has done for us with, **“From him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen.”**

So, that is what God has done **FOR** us.

Now in chapter 12 Paul shifts to what we are to do FOR God.

And as we will see, this famous passage tells us something about **how to put our gifts to use.**

Let's read **chapter 12:1-2** again.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

So, here is a big **THEREFORE**.

What he is saying is in light of chapters 1-11...in light of all that God has done for you by his mercy.....what should be the Christian's response to what God has done?

Not...how do we pay God back.

We can't pay him back.

In response to what God has done for us....

What should our attitude be?

What should our mindset be?

How should we live now?

What we will see in verse 1 and 2 are prerequisites for putting our spiritual gifts to use.

Let me give you 3 things from this passage that we must obey.

If we really want to know our spiritual gifts, if we want to use them and be pleasing to God in any way then this is the mindset we must have.

1. SACRIFICE YOURSELF.

Paul is using Old Testament language here to mean exactly what you think he means.

What God required in the O.T. was the sacrifice of animals on the altar.

They were living.

They were holy.

And God accepted these sacrifices as a temporary covering for sin.

They were an act of true worship in the old covenant.

Now, we are a sacrifice. Jesus was THE sacrifice.

In light of all that God has done for us by his mercy, we are to give up everything.

We are to crawl up on the altar and give ourselves to God.

Cause in fact, this is what Jesus did.

This means dying to self.

This means laying down our lives.

This means taking up our cross.

You want to know what it means for me and you to truly worship God? THIS!

You want to know what God wants?

Does he want church goers?

Us, sacrificing ourselves is true worship.
Sacrificing ourselves is a fragrant aroma to God.
Sacrificing ourselves. Sacrificing everything.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says this, **“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price (Romans 1-11). So, glorify God in your body. (Romans 12)**

But we struggle with sacrificing ourselves don't we.

Why?

Because we love the world too much.

So, now Paul tells us an integral crucial key to living a sacrificial life.

2. DON'T BE CONFORMED TO THE WORLD.

Verse 2- **“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind,”**

Paul only uses this word one time in all of his letters.
Once! Peter uses it once too. And it's a command.

It means 'do not be shaped by', 'do not be squeezed into the mold of' or simply 'be like the world.'

1 Peter 1:14 says similarly, “**As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.**”

1 John 2:15 says, “**Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.**”

Verse 1 and 2 of chapter 12 are inseparable.

If you want to truly worship God, If you want to lay yourself on the altar, sacrifice yourself, really give God everything...you must not be conformed to the world.

Stop living by the world’s standards.

Stop letting the world shape you.

Instead, be **TRANSFORMED** in your mind.

This word means the same as ‘transfigured’ like when Jesus was transfigured.

Can I say this very simply?

You want to know how to be transformed in your mind?

Renewed?

Just like Romans 12 says?

Then...here's what you do.

Meditate and embrace Romans 1-11!

Rehearse the good news all the time.

Soak in...what God has done FOR you and what you are to do for God....will become clear.

Then he moves on.

We sacrifice ourselves.

And in order to do this we must not be conformed to the world but transformed in our minds....and then he says that we must...

3. THINK RIGHTLY ABOUT OURSELVES .

Verse 3 says, **“For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. 4 For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function. 5 so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 6 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them; if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; 7 if service, in our serving; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.**

Oddly, Paul moves right into spiritual gifts in this passage. It has confused theologians and scholars because it seems not to fit. **Or does it?**

In light of what God has done for you (Romans 1-11) now offer your entire self on the altar, do this by being renewed in your mind and not conformed to the world. That is foundational to the Christian life.

But why now talk about spiritual gifts?
What is he saying here?

We all have faith and we all received it from the Lord by his grace and mercy.

We don't have anything that you didn't receive as a gift, even our faith.

So, be sober.

Be humble about your gifts.

And then he lists the gifts that we are to put to use.

Why move from such a powerful picture of the sacrificial life that we are to live for Christ to a spiritual gifts list?

There's only one answer.

Because putting our gifts to use in the body is God's will for us.

It is an integral part of our new life in Christ.

To be a gospel believing follower of Jesus means that we put our gifts to use for one another.

It's not optional.

It's not a side thing.

Part of what we give back to God is putting our gifts to use.

Yet, I think that we won't put the gifts to use if we don't first embrace Romans 12:1-2 !!

We will never proactively **BELONG** to the body and build up the body with our gifts unless we:

1. **Sacrifice ourselves on the altar as an act of true worship.** 100% for God. Your vocation. Your wallet. Your family. Your time. Your dreams. Everything.
2. **We will never sacrifice ourselves if we love the world and are shaped by it.** Are you dead to the world and alive to Christ? Are you being shaped by the world or are you shaping the world?
3. **The way to not be shaped by the world is to be renewed in our minds...**to eat, sleep and drink the gospel of God in Romans 1-11.

Here's a summary statement to take home with you:

Put your gifts to use by putting yourself to death.

Put yourself to death by poring over the gospel.

Here's a challenge:

Read Romans 1-11 this month over and over and see what happens!

You'll be renewed.

You'll not love the world.

You'll worship.

You'll be changed.

You'll start exploding in ways to build up others.

What are your gifts?

Are you putting them to use?

John Bunyan said this, **“The Holy Ghost never intended that men who have gifts and abilities should bury them in the earth.”**

**Put your gifts to use by putting yourself to death.
Put yourself to death by poring over the gospel.**