



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Romans 12:3-8

"Advice for Charismatics"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We're looking at Romans chapter 12 of Paul's probably greatest epistle. And the Scripture reading for today is Romans 12:3-8, Romans 12, verse 3 through verse 8. The apostle writes,

"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office (that word is better function, the same function): So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with liberality or perhaps simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness."

These are some most interesting words that the apostle has given us, and we want to pay attention to them in our daily lives and also in the ministry of the word. May the Lord bless this reading of his word.

[Prayer removed from audio]

[Message] Our subject for this morning in the exposition of the Epistle to the Romans is "Advice for Charismatics." The apostle is still developing his theme of the righteousness of God. Remember that in the first chapter he has said that the theme of this great epistle is the gospel. And it is the gospel, because in the gospel there is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith, Just as it is written, the just shall live by faith. The good news is good news, because, as Paul has said, one may through the good news obtain the status of righteousness before the Lord God.

Now, the apostle is continuing. He has taken us through the strongly doctrinal aspects of the righteousness of God, dealing with justification by faith, and sanctification, and glorification. He has answered some questions that may have arisen, because it would appear that the day in which he wrote the Epistle to the Romans, the Jewish people seemed to be only a minority in the church of Jesus Christ. And that demands an explanation, since they were the ancient people of God. He has sought to explain what the Scriptures have said about that. And now he turns to deal with the question of the righteousness of God in a very concrete way. Doctrine becomes duty. Principles are seen as practiced. The credenda, the things that are to be believed, become the agenda, the things to be done. And, of course, as was said last Sunday, "That which God has joined together let no man put asunder."

We are not to think that it is pleasing to the Lord God to believe things that are not being practiced by us who believe them. The apostle says that this business of the ethics of Christian faith, the agenda, the doing of the things that are to be believed, begins with the spiritual offering of our bodies. He says, as he begins the 12th chapter, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of

God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice." So laying his hands upon the Old Testament and its teaching concerning the offerings and the sacrifices in the priesthood, he lifts out of it this metaphor and says that we are by the mercies of God to present our bodies a living sacrifice. And in this way we shall discover God's will for us.

Now, of course, he does not speak of God's will as that which is set forth in Scripture. That is his preceptive will, it is what is taught. We all know what that is, if we read the Bible. But he's talking about the special determination of God for each one of us. That is something that we cannot know beforehand. We learn as events transpire. That decretive will of God is beyond human understanding until the decreed events have come to pass. We learn them in our experience. So the Apostle Paul says that if we present our bodies a living sacrifice, we will see the will of God realized in our life, and that will be pleasing. Sometimes some of the things that are willed by God to happen turn out to be not pleasing to him, so far as his preceptive will is concerned. But if we offer ourselves as spiritual sacrifice, the will of God realized will be one that is pleasing to him.

Now he says that this pleasing will of God will be seen against the background of humble service to one another, to whom we are united and from whom we are divinely diverse in gifts. We are one in one body, but we are different in the possession of gifts. That brings us to the question of the problem of spiritual gifts. That's a question that is plaguing the church and has plagued the church for some time. It is really largely a 20th century problem, because we do not have any evidence of this question plaguing the church down through the centuries from about the time of the apostles until modern times. Evidently, the church was able to carry on its ministry, to go through its periods of great blessing, apart from the charismatic dimension. Just in the present issue of *Christianity Today*, there is an article by a highly respected evangelical professor, Dr. Clark Pinnock who is Professor of Systematic Theology at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario. And Dr. Pinnock has commented on the fact that what we really need today is the charismatic dimension in our churches. Dr. Pinnock is Baptist, but he insists that even in his own communion that is needed.

We have been, in the Christian church, disturbed by the theology of Rudolf Bultmann, who insisted that we could not believe the Bible as it is written, but we must de-mythologize it. That is, we must take out of it those things that were religious myths in order to understand what the language means in our own day. Dr. Pinnock says that we have been upset by Bultmann's de-mythologizing, but there is a degree of de-mythologizing that has been going on in our own evangelical ranks. And what he means by that is that we have been de-mythologizing what the Scriptures say about the charismatic teaching, teaching on spiritual gifts. Now, it becomes evident in the remainder of his brief article that he's speaking about the sign gifts, the gifts of miracles, the gifts of speaking in tongues, and of interpretation of tongues, and so on. And then in the remainder of the article, expressing some views concerning the deadness of the church, Dr. Pinnock says that what we really need is the charismatic dimension in our churches. He says, "It is not a new doctrine that we lack. What we need is a new dynamism that will make all of the old evangelical conviction operational. We need not so much to be educated as to be vitalized. It is not a doctrine of the Spirit that we need, but a movement of the Spirit pervading and filling us, setting our convictions on fire.

Now, of course, no one would dispute that the Christian church will be profited when the things that they believe become vital in their experience. It is, of course, true that we must be educated, as he has said. But we also do need vitalization. Dr. Pinnock's solution is the charismatic movement, and we should open ourselves to that. He concludes this article by saying, "May we not be too proud or too fearful to recognize the testimony of our Pentecostal brethren and add their dynamism to our doctrine." I should like to disagree. I do not think that we need the charismatic dimension. I agree with Dr. Pinnock, and I agree with Dr. Pinnock so far as my own personal life is concerned. I constantly need vitalizing. I do need the things that I know to be operational in my life. And I think, as I look out over our congregation, that we can say the same thing. But I do not think that the answer to our needs is an appeal to a movement of men. The answer to our needs is found in an appeal to God. It is true that we may need things, but we do not go to men when we need things, we go to God. And I believe, with all my heart, that if we were to go to God with the

Scriptures in our hand, studying the Scriptures, asking the Holy Spirit to vitalize the word of God for us, we should find that our whole Christian experience will be improved. It will become more vital. We shall be greater witnesses for our Lord. We shall experience a deeper spiritual life. But the solution is not to go to men; the solution is to go to God. The solution is not even to go to the effects that we may think that we see in the bodies of Christians. It is to rather go to God.

Now, I'd like to say, before I say further comments on this point, that I do not in any way want you to think that what I'm doing is attacking any good that may have come from the Pentecostal movement. I'm perfectly willing to admit, I know some fine Christians who are in the Pentecostal movement. I'm perfectly willing to admit that a number of people have come to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ through the preaching of people who hold to charismatic doctrines, so-called. Actually, all spiritual gifts are charismata, and so we have charismatic doctrine in Believers Chapel in that sense. So I'm perfectly willing to grant that blessing has come, but what I would like to earnestly insist upon is that the blessing that has come to Pentecostal movement, where it is genuine blessing, is not the result of the charismatic sign gifts being practiced, but is the result of their preaching of the gospel. And so I would like to insist upon that, and so you'll have to understand that I am appreciative. I am thankful. Why would I want to stand up and argue against the things that God is doing, if it is really what he is doing? I wouldn't want to fight against the Lord God. That is one battle that I know the outcome of already. So I don't want to fight against the Pentecostal movement and the things that are good within it. But I would just like to say that the blessing that is there is not because of the charismatic sign gifts.

Now that, I say, brings us to the question of spiritual gifts, and I cannot tell you all of the things that I think should be said about that. Let me just give you a little cameo of it. If you are interested in further information, I suggest that you go to the tape ministry and ask them for the tapes on spiritual gifts. Now, I don't want to say anything about some of the other brethren who have said things about spiritual gifts. I suggest that you get the three tapes in the systematic theology series, which have to do with the work of the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts. And it is three hours of

exposition, both theologically and biblically, of the question of spiritual gifts. Now, I'm saying this because as you know, I've been teaching at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Chicago, and I have a lot of fine young students up there.

But there is an influence today abroad, coming from the Pentecostal movement, and they occasionally get upset when I say something in class to the effect that I'm not greatly impressed by some of the things that are claimed for the charismatic gifts. And since we don't have time to deal with the subject in a class for three hours, teaching all of the doctrines of Ecclesiology and Eschatology, I usually say, "If you want to have further information, write Believers Chapel and get the tapes, the three-hour tapes." And unfortunately, I said that to the class, and they wrote down here, and the tape ministry sent them the tapes of that day, in which the subject of tapes was brought up. And of course, they were not as satisfied as if they had had my three tapes on spiritual gifts. So I had to say, "Write back down there and say you want the real scoop, [Laughter] and to please give them the right tapes." Now, I don't know whether the tape ministry has received any of those letters yet, but they are going to be coming from them.

Let me just say a few things, because as I say, we cannot talk about all aspects of it. What are spiritual gifts? Now, Dr. Pinnock has said in his little article that spiritual gifts are intended to channel love to the body of Christ. And if they do not, something is wrong. Well, there is a sense in which there is partial truth in that statement, but spiritual gifts are not intended to channel love to the body of Christ. They are to be given in love. But spiritual gifts are spiritual abilities for Christian service. That's the point of spiritual gifts. Now, they should be ministered in love, but of course, there is a difference in channeling love to a congregation and serving a congregation, so spiritual gifts are divine abilities for Christian service; not Christian worship, and Christian service.

There are differences in spiritual gifts, too, that we need to bear in mind. Some of them are utterance gifts, some of them are non-utterance gifts, as we have seen in the Scripture reading. There are some of these gifts that are utterance gifts, and there are some that are non-utterance gifts. For example, giving is a spiritual gift listed here, but that's a non-utterance gift. Exhortation is an

utterance gift. Ruling is a non-utterance gift. But prophecy is an utterance gift. So there are the two types of gifts. Some of them are temporary and some are permanent. And by that we mean permanent in the sense that they apparently are being given through the whole of the age in which we are living. But some of them were temporary in the sense that they served a particular purpose at a particular time. And because one gift had been given historically, we are not necessarily to reason from that that it is given throughout the whole age. There were individuals who had the gift of miracles, and they were able to raise people from the dead. That does not exist today. There have been a few claims, which have usually been proven to be false upon closer examination. But there are permanent gifts, and there are temporary gifts. If you want further support of it, get the real scoop.

But just to give you the example that I think proves the point, apostles were given gifts of apostleship. We do not have apostles today. We have men who may be sent from one church to another, but that kind of apostleship mentioned in the New Testament is entirely different from the twelve apostles who have a special relationship to the Lord, and were the media of not only the teaching of the word but also divine revelation. Prophets was also a temporary gift. We do not have any prophets today. Unfortunately, there are a lot of people who claim the gift. The prophecy itself was a temporary gift.

Now, the things that I am saying to you, I think, are supported not only from Scripture but also from history and theology. If we do believe that God controls history and carries out his plan in history; if we believe that his control extends to all of the affairs of our human experience, and Paul appears to teach that, for he says, "God works all things according to the counsel of his own will." Then I think as we look over history we can learn a great deal about the purposes of God. Now, Dr. Pinnock is an Arminian, and of course, that doctrine is not palatable for him, and so consequently we should not expect him to argue this way, or even to appreciate the argument that I am giving to you. But if we are convinced that God is in control of the affairs of human history, and we look back and we see that approximately, since the days of the apostles to the present century, there has been no

manifestation of the sign gifts such as was manifested in the earliest history of the Christian church. That tells me an important point. And that important point, simply put, is it has not been God's will for the manifestation of the spiritual gifts. And as we look over the history of the Christian church, there have been many times when God has poured out great blessing upon the Christian church. Look only at the Reformation. Look only at the period of the Wesleyan revivals. We have had many occasions in the past where God's blessing was poured out upon us apart from any manifestation of sign gifts, charismata.

So I think as we look at what the Bible says, and what history tells us, what theology tells us, we can conclude that there are some gifts that have persisted. God is still giving us teachers. He is still giving us men with the gift of exhortation. He is giving us men with the gift of giving. He's giving us men with the gift of ruling and other gifts, but he's not giving those gifts. Remember this, the ability to speak in tongues, just to single that out, because that's so popular. The ability to speak in tongues is not the ability to give ecstatic speech, meaningless in a language that is not a language.

The other day we were having some problems with our air conditioner. And the man who works on it came out, and I happened to walk over, and he said, "You're a preacher, aren't you?" And I said, "Yes." And he said, "Well, the other day," he's an Episcopalian. He said, "The other day I was talking to one of my friends who attends a meeting in which they speak in tongues. Do you speak in tongues?" And I said, "No, I don't speak in tongues, although north of the Mason Dixon line they sometimes think that I do." [Laughter] And he said, "Well I don't either. But," he said, "here is a group in my church who meet on Wednesday nights, and they speak in tongues." And he said, "The other day one of the ladies that I know on whose equipment that I work, asked me if I attend the Wednesday night meetings, and I said 'No, because I don't really feel attracted to speaking in tongues.'" And he said, "Do you speak in tongues?" She said, "Well, I don't speak in tongues but I sing in tongues. Would you like to hear me?" [Laughter] And he said, "What could I say? So I just said yes. And so she sang a little ditty. [Laughter] And when she finished I said to her, 'What did you sing?' She said, 'Well I don't know what I sang.'" He said, "Well now, let me ask you a

question." He said, "You don't know what you sang, and I certainly don't know what you sang [Laughter], what good is it to sing in tongues? And for the life of me I've forgotten the answer that he gave me, because I already knew the answer. It didn't do any good at all other than to give him the privilege of hearing a few little rhythmical sounds put together, which didn't mean anything.

So, what I'm saying then, is in essence, speaking in tongues is not the ability to offer ecstatic speech. That was done before the apostles came on the scene. In ancient eastern religions they spoke in tongues. The Mormons, who are not Christians, have as one of their fundamentals doctrines, the gift of speaking in tongues, that kind of tongues. Now, speaking in tongues was speaking in a known language, which one has never studied. Last Sunday night, many of you were here to hear Pastor Heinrich Jocheims, who had labored during the time of the Hitler regime and just barely escaped prison or perhaps death. And he spoke in German, and Dr. Cleon Rogers interpreted for him. Now, let's just suppose that Pastor Jocheims had preached last Sunday night, and suddenly, after he finished one of you stood up, who had never studied German, and you began to speak in German. And Jocheims were to say, "Well, I understand exactly what you're talking about. That's my language." That would be a miracle.

Well, if I heard someone doing that, I would say, that's such a miracle that God must be with that. Well, that is what was happening in the early church. Those individuals spoke in a language that they did not know in order that God may demonstrate to the nation Israel that he was with this new movement. For Israel had been the propagator and depository of the word of God. And now God was moving out in different ways, and it was necessary for authentication to take place. That's what speaking in tongues is. It is a miraculous thing, not the ability to sing a little ditty that no one understands. Now, that's the background of what I want to say. I don't want to say anything more about it. To get the real scoop, you know where to go.

Let's turn now to Romans chapter 12, and verse 3, and you'll notice verse 3 begins with a little conjunction, "for." "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as

God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." Now that little "for" is important, for he is saying, "I want you to offer yourselves a spiritual sacrifice to God, and in that you will realize the will of God, for." The first step in the realizing the will of God is to realize that we are to think of ourselves as we ought to think, think soberly of ourselves. Or to put it in other words, humility, that's what Paul begins with. In fact, it can be said, I think, this is the Christian offering. The offering of ones self to God as a humble servant of God to do his will.

Now he says, "I say this through the grace given unto me." He is talking about the apostolic gift that was given to him. He uses the similar expression in chapter 1, verse 5, and then in chapter 15, verse 15 and verse 16. He spells it out, the grace given to him that he might be a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. That was the grace given to the Apostle Paul. It was his apostolic gift. He says that we should not think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. This has universal application, incidentally, not just to an apostle, but to every single believer. Every single one of you in the congregation and it certainly has reference to me. He says that we are to entertain sober opinions of ourselves. It's universal because he says, "I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you." That is, to the men and to the women, you are to think soberly of yourselves.

Now, the apostle in order to make this very plain spells it out in paronomasia, playing on words. He uses one root over and over again in this statement, and I'm going to translate it in such a way that you will get it. This is what he said, "I want you not to be high-minded," the word that he plays on is a verb that means to mind or to think. "I don't want you to be high-minded above that which he ought to be minded, but to be so minded as to be sober minded." So don't be high-minded, don't think above that which you ought to be minded. But be so minded that you are sober-minded. He means, in effect, that we are to think of ourselves as we ought to think. That means, essentially, it seems to me, that we are not to apologize for any gifts that God has given us, and we are not to think, because he has given us these gifts, that we ought to be so humble as not to use them or even as not to recognize them. We should know exactly where we stand. We tend to apply

this simply to, "we ought not to be conceited." Well, of course, that's true, but God has given certain gifts to certain men and to certain women, and they should if they are to be successful in representing him, to use those gifts, to recognize that God has given them to them. Every gift that we have is a gift that has come from God. It is a gift. Everything that we have, we have received from God. We have no reason to boast in our gifts if God had given someone the gift to marvelously expound the word of God in clarity, and in conviction, that's not something of which he can boast. It's something that God has given to him in grace. God is to be thanked for it. He's not responsible for it. He's simply a servant of the Lord God.

This word "mind" incidentally, is a word that was used in ancient wills, which like ours read, "I so and so, being of sane mind and in my right mind." So a person, Paul says, ought to think of himself, just as he ought to think. We tend, of course, to be filled with egotistical kind of thinking. In *Aesop's Fables* we read, "'tis easy for me to curry favor with myself." "Walt Whitman wrote, 'I find no sweeter fat that sticks to my own bones.'" Max Stirner wrote a book on *The Ego and His Own*, in which he said, "Nothing is more to me than myself." Now, evangelicals don't say that, but the kind of things that they are doing today makes one wonder about it, whether they have bought that kind of philosophy. "Whether what I think and do in Christian, what do I care? Whether it is human, humane, liberal, or inhuman, inhumane, and illiberal, what do I care about that?" That's the voice of arrogance and pride. What Paul is interested in is that we think rightly of ourselves.

Now, that's the foundation of Christian ethics and Christian morality, to think of ourselves as God has intended that we should think of ourselves, and to be exactly what God intends us to be. Some of us cannot, however, help from creating the opinion of ourselves that we are cocky and conceited. I know that sometimes I create that impression, and I may be. But I know I have a lot of good friends in the ministry, and some of them create that impression, who are really not that way. The man who led me to the Lord was Donald Gray Barnhouse, and if you listen to him, many people were inclined to go out just as mad as they could be at Dr. Barnhouse. And someone would say to them, "Well, why are you mad?" "Oh he thinks so much of himself." Well, Dr. Barnhouse taught

with a great deal of dogmatism, but he was really, basically a very humble man. But he created this other impression. And there were a few who thought it was a true impression of Dr. Barnhouse. I've rarely run across any effective preacher who didn't have some people who were anxious to knock him down a peg or two. Well, Dr. Barnhouse died, and he had married a second time, and his second wife had not lived with him very long. And she really did not know him quite as well as others. A friend of both of them went to visit her, and she said, "Can you not imagine Donald now? Donald is sitting near the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ, listening to his word. Can you not imagine that?" And my friend who is a preacher said, "Well, no I really cannot. But I can imagine it the other way around." [Laughter] Well, that was not true of Dr. Barnhouse. He was a very humble man. I knew him well. But he did create that impression occasionally.

What I think our Lord is talking about here is we ought to think of ourselves as we really are. Dr. Barnhouse was one the great preachers of his day, one of the clearest I've ever heard. And in the preaching in the doctrine of justification by faith, well, I'd give my right arm to be able to preach it as well as he preached it. But God's given me certain gifts. He gave him certain gifts, and his was an outstanding gift. The apostle says that we are "to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." In other words, we are to think of ourselves just as the standard of faith given by God. And you'll notice again the apostle stresses that faith is a gift. So we're not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, but we're to think soberly, have true opinions of ourselves, just as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith, the standard of faith, the faith by which we believe, given by God.

Well, that's the first exhortation, the second exhortation is the exhortation to unity, and the apostle begins again with a "for." He's explaining, "For as we have many members in one body and all members have not the same function: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another." The only self-existent isolated being in this universe is the Lord God. Now, he is excused from humility and from the necessity to be in unity with others. But he's the self-existent being. He's the being who is isolated. He dwells in heaven alone, but we are not

isolated. We are members of a human race, and in the body of Christ, we are members of a particular body, and we are not self-existent. We depend upon God, and we also depend upon the manifestation of his grace through our fellow believers. And so, the apostle exhorts to unity. I don't think, personally, that he's agreeing with C. E. B. Cranfield in his recent commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. I don't really believe that the apostle is expounding the church as the body of Christ at his point. I think he's just using the simile of one body.

This simile, incidentally, was used in the ancient world by the pagans. They, in order to illustrate unity, spoke of the fact that we humans were one body. Or the Greeks, in order to illustrate unity in the Greek, people would speak of one body. They would illustrate the truth of unity. It might be national unity or other forms of unity by one body. And I think the apostle is speaking about that when he says, "For," to explain, "we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same function." Now, just like a human body, we have different members. Not every member has the same function. With hands we do certain things, with feet we do certain things, with our ears we do certain things, with our eyes we do certain things. There are different functions. Now, some of these functions are more important than the others, although all of necessary. Most of us would grant that we could get along without a hand, but it would be very difficult to get along without our eyes. In other words, there are relative degrees of importance, but in the body of Christ, these are things that are determined by God. He has set the members in the body according to his will.

But Paul, I say, is just simply illustrating by this figure of the one body. He says that if all the body were an eye, where is the hearing, over in 1 Corinthians chapter 12. Now, we are one body in Christ. I say, I don't think he's speaking specifically of the church as the body of Christ, simply using the simile, but he's teaching unity. Now, one phrase, however, distinguishes his illustration from the ancient pagan illustrations. He says we are in body *in Christo*, or in Christ. That's the thing that distinguishes the body of Christians from the body of the pagans. One of the commentators at this point says that "We get up on Sunday morning, and we sing 'we are not divided, all one body we;

One in hope and doctrine, one in charity,' as we sing “Onward Christian Soldiers.” But we are divided. Well, in one sense we are divided. We are divided in our denominational affiliation. We are divided in some of the doctrines which we hold. Some are Arminians and some believe the things that Paul writes. [Laughter] I just wanted to see if you have a sense of humor. You're still with me. We do have differentiating view points on biblical doctrine. It's true; we are divided in that sense, even among the believers. But at the same time there is a unity which transcends our relative disunity, and that unity is our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some of the finest fellowship I have is with Baptists believers, with Presbyterian believers, and with Anglican believers. I enjoy, they do communicate some things that are significant, it seems to me. So we are, in that sense, divided, but at the same time there is a basic unity that has been created by God the Holy Spirit, and touch who is a genuine Christian and finally you will touch that very critical point. And there will be that manifest itself. Touch an Anglican, and sooner or later you will get to the point, if he's a believer, you will find that there is a unity. And then a Baptist, they are more difficult I grant you, [laughter] but nevertheless, just kidding again. I have to say this for the radio, because I know that I will probably get a letter over that. You will find also that when you get down to the realities of relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, there is something upon which we can agree and agree heartily.

Paul says we are one body in Christ. In many of our churches on Sunday morning, we repeat the apostle's creed in which it says, "I believe in the holy Catholic church. And some evangelical churches when they get to that, they say, I believe in the holy mmmmm... church, because they find it difficult to say holy Catholic Church, since they think this means an affirmation of faith in the Roman Catholic Church. No, no the term catholic, of course, means simply universal, as you know. And so we could strictly speaking, we could say if we wanted to speak about the Baptist church, it's the Baptist Catholic church. It's the Presbyterian Catholic church. It's the Anglican Catholic church. We are talking about the universal church. So Paul says we are one body in Christ.

Now, he talks about the diversities. He says, "Don't confuse, first of all, I say, we should not confuse the gifts of the Spirit with the original gift." The Holy Spirit is given to every believer, and every believer possesses the presence of the indwelling Spirit the moment he believes in Christ. But we also have in addition spiritual gifts, abilities to do service in the church of Jesus Christ. And out of this gift arises the function of that particular gift. Now, we have differing gifts. Paul says, in the 6th verse, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us." Some of have the gift of ruling, some of us have the gift of giving, some have the gift of exhortation, some have the gift of ministry, some have the gift of pastor-teacher. These are gifts that differ according to the grace that is given to us.

Now over in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, Paul looks at it from the divine side. From the human side, it's gracious of God to give us any gift. But on the divine side he says, "He divides to each man severally, as he wills." In other words, it's his sovereign determination. It was his sovereign determination in ages past that I preach the Bible, with the gift of teaching. I didn't determine that, it was God's sovereign determination, and it was gracious of him to do that. I intended to be, first of all, a lawyer. And then since my father had an insurance business in Birmingham, Alabama, and on representative of the family was there, I determined to go into his insurance business. That's what I intended to do. But God intended that I preach the word and teach the word. And so he had given a particular spiritual gift before I was born, and then, directed me into the exercise of it. He's talking about gifts for service. They are different. They are different in importance. Just as natural parts of the body are, but all are necessary. And these are universal among the church. Every one of us has a spiritual gift. Listen to Paul's statement of them here. He says, "Whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith."

Now, that is an important gift, it is listed second in the lists of gifts in 1 Corinthians 12. It had a two-fold significance. The distinguishing feature of prophecy was the utterance of particular revelation of God. It wasn't teaching. It was the utterance of divine revelation, particular divine revelation. The definition of prophecy is found in its original mention. God said to Moses, "I've

made you a God to Pharaoh, and Aaron shall be your prophet." So what was the prophet? Well, the prophet was a person, and God spoke to Moses, the prophet Aaron was person who went to Moses who was a god, and he got his message from Moses who felt he couldn't give it, because his speech was not all that great. He took the message from Moses, and he gave it to Pharaoh. So the prophet took the message from God, and gave it to men. That's what a prophet does.

That's why we don't have any prophets today; no new divine revelation is given today. Oh, I know that there are a lot of little things that people talk about prophesying. I said this the other day in Chicago to my students, and several of them got up at arms, you know, friendly arms. [Laughter] And one of them said, "I'd like to bring you some of the prophecies in our church." And I said, "Well, I'd be most happy to read those prophecies, because I don't think that there's anything significant in them." So he brought me a whole page or two of prophecies. Well, I must say, he is one of the better students in the class, and I love this young man. He's going to make a good man as soon as I try to purify [laughter] him of a few things. But he's really an outstanding young man. But I read through those prophecies of two pages, and I must say to you. There wasn't anything significant on those two pages that was anything more than just a little word of advice or counsel that someone could give. I can assure you that there is no new book of the Bible being written by those prophets. There was nothing to it.

What did prophets do? Well, they did two things. They foretold the future, but they also, in the present situation in which they lived, they gave forth God's particular message for them. Read the New Testament. Agabus was one of them. He said, "Paul if you go to Jerusalem, you're going to be taken captive." He also said to the church, "Look, there's going to be a famine." And the Scriptures say, "Which came to pass." That's what a prophet does. He tells us what's going to come to pass, and it comes to pass. That's what a prophet is. You won't find any of these modern-day prophets sitting in the charismatic churches telling us things that are going to come to pass, and that do come to pass. And if you're listening to me radio or over the tapes, send me some of your

prophecies, I would like to read them to my congregation, because I do not think that they will be the kinds of prophecies found in the word of God.

Now, of course, in the church Paul said discriminate, "Despise not prophesying." Let the prophets speak, but test the prophecies by the word of God. So even in the local church, when the gift of prophecy was uttered, and the other gifts were uttered. Paul said, "Use discrimination. Prove all things. Hold fast to that which good." That was an indication, incidentally that they did have open speaking in their meetings. Now, Paul goes on to say, "According to the proportion of faith." What does he mean by the proportion of faith? Why, he means according to the objective rule of faith. So, "whether prophecy, let it be prophesy according to the proportion of faith," the objective rule of faith. That, I think, is a very important thing, because strictly speaking we have here the key to systematic theology. No alleged Christian tenant can be correct, which conflicts with other Christian tenants. All Christian truth must be consistent with Christianity. For example, the deity of Christ supposes the doctrine of the trinity. If we believe in the doctrine of the deity of Christ, that's harmonious with trinity. If we don't believe of the doctrine of the deity of Christ, we cannot believe in the doctrine of the trinity. There is a unity. Monergistic regeneration involves the doctrine of election; an infinite atonement for sin involved or implies an infinite penalty for sin. So the proportion of faith is the standard of the revelation of the word of God, and that's the key of systematic theology. And so, in the exercise of the gifts, we are to exercise them according to what the Bible teaches. Don't forget that.

Well, Paul goes on, I'll read some of the others and just make a quick comment. He says for ministry, "Let it wait on our ministering." That's similar to a deacon's duty; we have ministry gifts here in Believers Chapel. Later on, I think they are referred to more specifically. He's talking about general service. Do you know, the other day, a couple of members of the office said, "We ought to consider such a person for deacon." I said, "Why?" I'm no longer one of the elders, but they said maybe you can tell the elders about this. They said, "Well, because he ministers. He ministers to the elderly. He ministers to those who are in difficulty. He's a young man, too. He has evidently the gift

of ministry. And he is ministering his gift. And there are some people who are appreciating it to. Paul says, "Or ministry let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching."

The prophet is immediately inspired, but the teacher is illumined as he studies the word of God, and he expounds the Scriptures. He doesn't give us revelation. He gives us instruction. He gives us teaching. That's the teacher. Paul says, "Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation." That's similar to teaching, but with a different emphasis, it seems. There's a different kind of method. His eyes are on the concrete situation. When he teaches the word of God, he thinks of its application to particular points. And he exhorts the believers. So I say to you this morning, stepping on the toes of some of the brethren who have greater gifts of exhortation than I. If we want to have vitality in the word of God, if we want to have reality in Believers Chapel, go to the word of God, and study the word of God, and pray that God may move upon us as a congregation, and give us vitality. And we shall it as we wait upon him. I personally, confidently believe.

Giving, "Give in simplicity," Paul says. What does that mean? No ulterior motives? Why do you give to the church? So that maybe the deacons can appreciate. There was a large congregation in Fort Worth that had this principle of giving. If you gave a dollar it was Amen. The men along the side, the ushers, said Amen. One dollar was amen. Five dollars was hallelujah. Ten dollars was glory. This was back in the days when ten dollars was ten dollars. So they said, "Let have the congregation give." And as they gave, you could hear over the radio. I heard it. "Amen. Amen. The ushers are saying, Amen. Amen. Amen. Hallelujah. Glory! Amen. Amen. [Laughter] "That is not what Paul is speaking about here. Let him do it with liberality or simplicity, no ulterior motives, no ostentation.

Listen, one of the leading German commentators has put it about as well we can put it. I think Cranfield is right in saying it. He says, "Giving requires the simplicity, which without ulterior motives or secondary purposes is wholly directed toward the other person's need and has no other consideration than that of relieving the need." That's good giving. That's the gift of giving.

Finally, he says, "showing mercy." He says, "He that ruleth, with diligence," I think he's speaking about the elder, "he that sheweth mercy," that appears to be something like the deacons' office, but it is of course opened to all of us, "with cheerfulness." So when we show mercy not with a glumly lugubrious countenance, but with cheerfulness, minister to the needing, minister to the poor, minister to the sick, minister to the weak. These are the things that make for the kind of congregational life that the apostle would have us to have, in which we each give ourselves as spiritual sacrifices in order to realize the will of God. May God help us to do it.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for the opportunity to study the words that the apostle gave to the church at Rome. We thank Thee for these very concrete suggestions in the ethical outworking of the righteousness of God. Oh God, help us as a congregation to realize these things in our congregational experience, unity and yet diversity, in the midst of humble service, for him who loved us and loosed us from our sins in his own blood. If there is someone here who does not know Christ, O God...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]