

Grace Gifts

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[0 : 00] Father, we're very good at noticing the sins of other people, and we're not very good at seeing our own sin. And we're very good, Father, at seeing the horrible sins of other ages.

Father, we can be shocked that Christians would have ever owned a slave. But, Father, we can be completely and utterly, not can be, we are, Father, completely and utterly blind to the way that our own age and our own culture shapes us.

And leads us into sin. Father, a sin that if your son tarries in 100 or 200 years, people will look at us and say, how on earth could they do that?

Father, we want to live pure and holy lives that please you. We ask that you would gently but deeply lead us and guide us into all truth. Help us, Father, not to be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of our mind.

That we might live as disciples of Jesus, gripped by the gospel, who are bringing you glory. And this we ask in Jesus' name, your Son and our Savior. Amen.

[1 : 07] Please be seated. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. I've had, over the years, I've heard some really remarkable conversion stories.

I'm just going to share two of them with you very briefly, with the emphasis that definitely do not try this as a means to get to know Jesus. The first one is a fellow, both of these are people who no longer come to the church or some of the previous churches that I serve, so you don't have to look around the congregation wondering who it was.

And the first one was a fellow who was very, very heavily into drugs, and he went for a drive out in the country, and he took some acid. He parked by the side of the road, found a really nice spot, and he took some acid, LSD.

And he had a mom who was a believer in Jesus who was praying for him quite fervently. Those of you who are familiar with church history, he had a Monica who was praying for her wayward son.

[2 : 19] And while he was stoned, and he'd been stoned many, many, many times in his life, he had a problem with drugs. While he was stoned, Jesus came to him. And Jesus came to him, and the fellow told me after this, I met him about six months after this, he'd become sober.

Jesus came to him and talked to him. And the fellow said this was unlike any other trip or experience that he'd ever had, that somehow or another he knew that this was real, and that Jesus came to him to call him to be his own.

And, I mean, he didn't give up drugs instantly, but he got sober. He became a Christian, got involved in a church. I know another young woman, and she told me about how she came to faith. And she went to another city and rented a hotel room. And she rented a hotel room because she was going to commit suicide. And she had tried to think of a way to commit suicide that would inconvenience the least number of people.

And she felt that she didn't have any friends in the world. And she didn't want her mom to find her body. So she went to another city, rented a hotel room, and had enough drugs to kill five people.

[3 : 43] Because she did the research. And she took all the drugs and lay down to die. And as she's lying there, because she's going to sleep, she has a dream.

And she meets Jesus, who calls her and says he wants her to be his child. And the next morning she woke up. She didn't die. Like, enough drugs to kill five people.

She didn't die. She became a Christian. Eventually cleaned up her life. Now, you can see why I'm telling you, definitely do not try either of these things yourself as a way to meet Jesus.

Unfortunately, I've done lots of funerals for people who've committed suicide. And some of them buy lots of drugs. So definitely do not think this is what you do to meet Jesus. But sometimes, for whatever reason, God will use very, very unusual ways to bring people to himself.

Now, the question that, in a sense, for each of these people, after they become a Christian, the question could be, and the question that they both had was, well, what's next? How shall I, like, what do I now have to do to live?

[4 : 50] In both cases, I only met them, like, in one case, about a year after the person became a Christian. Another one about six months after they became a Christian. But, like, how do we live? After you have an experience like this, or after you come to know Jesus, like, what's next?

How shall we then live? Most of us, maybe all of us, have either far more common stories about coming to faith in Jesus.

Some of us have probably grown up in Christian homes, and we've, in a sense, always had a faith in Jesus. But the question is still a really good one, like, well, what's next? Given that we've given our lives to Jesus, what's next?

How shall we then live? So it would be a great help to me if you would turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 12. And we took a break for Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday, but we're still going through the book of Romans.

We're going to finish it in a couple of weeks, or six or seven weeks. And when I preached on Romans chapter 12, 1 and 2, as you're trying to find it in your Bibles, that was the Sunday that we had. Remember the time change in 9 a.m.?

[5 : 51] So I'm just going to, we're going to read Romans 12. Even though Nora didn't read verses 1 and 2, we're going to begin by reading verses 1 and 2. And Paul wrote, just as you're turning to it, the way Paul wrote the book of Romans is very, very particular.

He basically, if you remember correctly, we're going to read it later on, Romans 1, he says, you know, hi, I'm Paul, blah, blah, blah, blah. Going to go there, going to do this. Looking forward to seeing you. Then Romans 1, 16 to 17, he basically gives the theme of the whole book, the message of the book.

And then from Romans 1, 18 to Romans 11, he basically says why we need the gospel and what the gospel is. He explains and defends the gospel. But now in chapter 12, verse 1, and right through the end of the book, he basically is going to address the question, how shall we then live? If the gospel is true, how do we live? What do we do? What do we not do? And Paul has actually written this last bit in a very, very particular way as well, because this in many ways seems to be his most thought out book.

Not that he didn't think about the other ones, but in all the books in the New Testament, this is very, very carefully crafted with certain features. And one of the features is that these two verses that I'm going to read to you in a moment, this gives you the basic principle of how you live as a Christian after you've accepted the gospel.

[7 : 09] And all of the rest of chapters 12, 13, 14, and 15 are Paul trying to flesh this out, but these first two verses are really key. So even though you have your Bibles open, Andrew, could you put it up on the screen?

We're going to read it together because if you get nothing else out of coming to sermons on the book of Romans but memorizing these verses, then I've done a great thing, or God's done a great thing in your life, because it's far better that you remember the scripture than you remember anything I say.

So if you read this with me, please. I appeal to you, therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, which is your rational worship.

Do not be conformed to this age, 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 pleasing and perfect.

So Paul's described the gospel, like in a sense, if I was to talk to that young man who had met Jesus on a drug trip or the young woman who tried to kill herself with drugs, and she was to say, well, what's next?

[8 : 19] I mean, on one hand, after you explain the gospel to them a bit, is you can look at a verse like this. These are two perfect verses to memorize for the rest of your life.

And you'll notice it goes, I appeal to you, therefore, brothers and sisters. You've heard the gospel. What's the therefore? Is there a certain way that we're going to be led to live if we've received the gospel, that Jesus has died for us on the cross, that he died in our place, that his death and resurrection is a power that comes from God, that if we put our faith and trust in him, a power comes from God to make us right with God forever, something that can be never taken away from us.

And does that then mean that we just do bad things? Or like, what does it mean in terms of how we live? Well, Paul says, the rational thing, as the gospel grips you, and you start to have this sense that Jesus left the Father's side, God, the Son of God, leaves the Father's side and comes and seeks us out.

He sets aside his riches and becomes poor for us so that we can become rich. He takes upon himself the doom that you and I deserve and offers to us the destiny that he deserves, that he takes upon himself our death and offers his life, that we can enter into him, that he only takes away the bad things that we've done, that his life of perfect obedience to the Father, his 100% with God, that he, in a sense, takes our exam results, which is, you know, maybe at the best is like 5%, and he gives us his, he takes the 5% paper, he takes 100%, all of these different images that as this grips you, the rational response is to want to offer your life to God.

That's rational. That's the rational response. As the gospel grips you, the rational response trickles into your mind is to offer your body, and the word body here means your real life, not your imaginary life, not just your feelings, although your feelings matter, not just your mind, although your mind matters, not just your imagination, although your imagination matters, not just your sensibilities, although those matter as well, as everything that makes you you in your embodied existence, everything that makes you you, your finances, your sexuality, your career, your IQ, your creativity, your wounds, your weaknesses, your illnesses, your sicknesses, your strengths, every single thing that makes you you, that as the gospel grips you, the rational response is that you would offer it to God.

[10:58] And when it says here living sacrifice, which is a very, very good translation in English, but the original language is that the sacrifice, it's the act of killing, a living killing, that we offer ourselves to God in such a way that he's going to kill things within us.

But as he kills things in us, we live more. You know, those of us who've struggled with addictions have a sense about what that means.

Those of us who've never struggled with addictions, I mean, we still can know it in other ways, but those of you, it's not that God gave you an addiction so that you would know something that other people don't know, but I'm just sharing with you, those of you, us who have known how alcohol or drugs or sex or gambling has completely and utterly bent our lives out of shape, that as we kill that, we discover that we're more alive.

That's the basic principle which is being talked about here. And the other basic principle which is being talked about here is the second verse, that this world forms us in different ways.

It forms us in ways that we're not even aware of. I don't know how many of you have ever shopped at Costco, but if you shop at Costco for the first time, you're going to mess up because there's a way of shopping at Costco.

[12:30] You have to show your card at the beginning you have to let go of your cart at the checkout counter. We get addicted to holding on to our cart and you have to actually put the cart on the other side and walk away from it.

There's things like that, right? And then after a while you just realize you've been conformed to how to shop at Costco. When I went to England, I'm used to waitresses or waiters coming to the table and in a lot of places they don't come to the table.

You have to, if you sit there for a long time they'll keep looking at you but they won't come and serve you because it works different and we get conformed to this age. And so the Bible here in the next part is saying that one of the things that's going to happen as we're gripped by the gospel is that we have to in a sense regularly say to God, God, this age is conforming me in different ways and I don't want to be conformed to this age in ways that aren't honoring to you but may you transform my mind.

I want to let you transform my mind and how I think and how I see the world and I don't want to just sort of sit here waiting until you do it like just sort of by magic.

I want to test it. In other words, the word testing here doesn't mean that God's testing you. It's a little bit as if let's say you're with somebody and an accident happens and there's no cell phone coverage but this is like in early March and you're on the bank of a river and the river's frozen and you can see on the other side of the brief river that there's a phone that you can use to call for help because you need to get an ambulance to this person right away and so you test the ice as you walk across and that's sort of the image here for testing is that you get up off your butt and you actually do something and God isn't expecting to get it perfect.

[14 : 30] He's not saying just sit on your butt until you get it 100% sorted out in your head that you actually do stuff and you try to sort it out as you go along and as you're moving God will begin to and you want God to transform your mind he'll start to transform your mind.

That's his basic principle. All the rest of the book of Romans is going to unpack it because we need to have a bit of a better idea about what this is going to look like and so Paul is going to try to unpack this for the rest of the book of Romans but you can see basically that I know that memorizing isn't like very cool or hip or anything anymore like I know if you go to school I don't think they'd like you to memorize they don't even want you to memorize the times tables a little bit of a non-Bible rant if you're a parent and you have kids have them memorize the times tables like it's just smart okay it doesn't matter if a whole pile sorry I'm going to get people mad it doesn't matter if a whole pile of people with PhDs at the school of education say that it's not good to memorize memorize your times tables okay have your kids anyway sorry that's a bit of an aside but you know it'll help for the rest of your life it's painful watching somebody trying to do the simplest math in their head if they just knew it would be anyway never mind so but if you want you know this is a verse these are two verses to memorize and to think about and to meditate upon and to pray over for the rest of your life so it's very very precious but now the question then is what does this look like like if in counseling one of the things they teach you if you take a courses in counseling is so somebody comes to you because they have some problems and maybe one of the things they say to you early on is you know

Fred hates me that's I don't know how to handle it because Fred hates my guts and it's just causing me a lot of distress and so one of the things that they teach you in counseling is well what does that mean okay don't assume that when somebody comes to you for counseling and they say Fred hates my guts that you know what that means precisely you need to get them to talk to flesh that out a little bit like like are they physically abusing you are you misreading situations like what does it mean don't assume you know what it means so you normally and you in counseling as well they try to ask you they try to teach you to never ask why questions because why questions for modern and post-modern North Americans can feel threatening to a person who's feeling weak so they try to train you then to try to get you want to ask why but you can't use the word why so you say something like well can you give me an example of how you know they hate you or can you give me a couple of incidents or for instances or something you get them talking and then as they start to flesh it out you get a bit of an idea so that's what Paul's going to be doing throughout the rest of the book of

Romans he has these two this basic understanding of what it means how shall we then live after we've given our lives to Jesus it's very very brilliant because it doesn't matter if you went back in time and you're in the year 1000 in Europe it doesn't matter today if you're in China where there's persecution of Christians it wouldn't matter if you are in Alabama doesn't matter if you're in Ottawa this is like a brilliant way to communicate how you begin to live which is culturally flexible and appropriate but gets right to the heart and so Paul's going to now start to flesh it out and it's very very interesting the way he begins to flesh it out is by getting us to think about how we think about ourselves because one of the fundamental human problems is that we measure everything by how it affects us and often a common problem it doesn't matter if you're a person with low self-esteem or high self-esteem one of the things which unites people with low and high self-esteem is that we can't get over ourselves and so

Paul is going to right away begin to address our thinking so verse three goes like this Romans 12 three for by the grace given to me and that's going to be really important okay everything that he's going to say is coming from the perspective of God offering us grace in Jesus he's not saying that okay if you receive the gospel now you're going to live as if Jesus didn't live and die for you you're going to live as if God doesn't show you grace you're just going to live by rules and techniques that you can follow I mean that's how we North Americans we love techniques we love practices we love

seven simple steps or five simple steps or three habits or whatever it is we love things like that and Paul is going to say no no no grace okay in a sense when you wake up in the morning don't think what are the six simple steps I need to succeed think of the mercies of God think of the gospel think of grace earlier on I joked about how

[19 : 58] I love reading the old colics because it makes you realize that God is the guarantor of the church that if I screw up my sermon today it's not as if the Christian gospel collapses if Joey screws up one Sunday it doesn't mean the gospel collapses the fact of the matter is that God is going to love me today when I give my faith and trust put my faith and trust in Jesus and he takes my doom upon himself and he offers me his destiny he offers me his destiny which means that my slate is wiped clean and the perfect rule keeping so to speak that's needed is accomplished by him as well and that extends from the moment of my conception to the moment of my death nothing will surprise God about anything in the future I just experienced my life as a moment in time he sees the whole thing he takes the whole thing Jesus dies and pays and covers the whole thing with nothing left over and it means that whether I do a good job this morning or a poor job this morning God still loves me I will still go to the new heaven and the new earth the entire

Christian life emerges not out of a desire to manipulate God or make God love me or notice me or show how I am more special or choice that's the devil at work in our lives to undermine our faith the whole Christian life flows out of grace and gratitude for grace nothing nothing can separate me from the love of God not because there's something special about me but because Jesus took me as his own and when Jesus takes me as his own nothing can separate me from the love of God and that's the promise for you too that's Romans 8 so let's look at verse 3 again it's really it begins by grace for by grace 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 now this is very very good but it's easy to be a little bit confused about it at the heart of the text is how do I think about myself well the fact of the matter is you know

I'm a middle-aged male who lives in Canada and so my tendency is to think of myself in terms of the number of toys I have and the tendency of how I evaluate myself is maybe how many degrees I have how much money I've made depending on the type of middle-aged guy the number of sexual conquests that I've had in my life or better hopefully the success of my marriage and that my kids still talk to me don't hate my guts but how do I evaluate myself and what the text is here saying about it is that there's a basic problem is that we think too highly of ourselves we can't get over ourselves we evaluate everything from our own perspective the ancient Christians understood pride as the deadliest of the seven deadly sins because at the heart of pride is an over concern with the self so that the self becomes like a black hole you know a black hole is where the matter is so dense that even light can't escape from it the light is bent towards it because the matter is so dense and the gravitational field is so powerful is that pride and self centeredness when it becomes so unbelievably strong we become like a walking black hole we suck life and light into ourselves and we only think about ourselves humility isn't thinking badly about ourselves but it's the freedom of self forgetfulness it's the seven month old child who can be completely and utterly enraptured by something out there and you can sort of tell that for a brief moment because children can be unbelievably self centered and self preoccupied but for a brief moment you can look at that child and realize that that child no longer realizes that it exists because it is he or she is so completely enraptured by that which is outside and that is a brief image or glimpse or snapshot of what the Bible is calling for in humility the freedom of self forgetfulness as Tim

Keller put it and so if you look at this text again here for by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself or herself more highly than he ought to think of and more often and all of that but to think with sober judgment in other words what's sober judgment sober means that you're in touch with reality right that's what sober means amongst other things it not only means that you're in touch with reality it also means that you're not driven by compulsions that's another aspect of what sober means I'm not driven in the real world God exists like in the real world I'm a creature living in a created order where there's a creator who sustains his created order as I'm gripped by the gospel and I start to have a greater comfort with saying

I am not a God I am not the center of life I am not the center of things that are most important I'm a creature I'm sustained by a creator I have one who's created me I am not God as these things enter into us we're becoming sober we're becoming realistic we're entering into the real world the gospel leads us into the real world not away from the real world if there really is a God who does exist to

live as if there isn't a God or to live in rebellion against God is to be consumed with a compulsion and we'd want to say you need to be sober so as we're gripped by the gospel the gospel is going to help us to not be driven by compulsions and it's going to help us to live in the real world where God really does exist where you can call out to God in prayer and he does things not everything you want thanks be to God grade 12

[26 : 37] I dated a girl for 10 months and she broke up with me and I prayed for years that she would get back to me and I am so thankful God said no to every one of those prayers because he had Louise in mind for me that I didn't even know existed and she has been the perfect wife for me I can multiply it examples so look at verse three again 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 and what this isn't saying that God's given a different measure of faith to every person the word measure can also be translated as standard so in other words not only are we to not think of ourselves too highly but the standard by which we are to think about ourselves is the gospel message the faith that God exists that human beings have been in rebellion against God and when

God saw our great need he did not turn away from us or hate us but in love and mercy by still being just he sent his son to die upon the cross to take upon himself the doom that we deserved and that we were facing and that we could not avoid and God takes upon him Jesus takes upon himself our unavoidable doom and offers us freely by grace his destiny in an exchange and when we put our faith and trust in Jesus that's what's happening the death that we cannot avoid by our own power that we needed a miracle from God we put our faith and trust in Jesus and that doom is on Jesus that's why he dies and his destiny is now ours and that is to be the standard and the lens by which we are to understand the meaning of our life and the significance of our life you see this is profound news because if you think that having toys is the measure of your life's success you will always be unhappy and just think about this when this letter written to

Rome archaeologists and anthropologists estimate that 70% of the people in the church of Rome hearing this letter were slaves they don't have to measure themselves by their owners they have the destiny of Jesus that's their destiny they can measure their significance by the gospel that the God who has created and sustained all universes the true God who has shown that all of the idols of Rome the pretensions of Nero who thinks that he's a God that those are all lies they're fantasies they're illusions they are people who need to sober up but the God of the universe loved them so much that his son died upon the cross for them a slave in Rome and he died for them and that is how they are to understand and see their life and for us not old not sick not dying not fat not strong not beautiful not young not successful not unsuccessful not a failure not any of those things the gospel invites us as we're gripped by the gospel to have the gospel be the way that we understand our lives

I put it in a prayer if you could put it up dear Lord please make me a disciple of Jesus gripped by the gospel who can think about myself with sober judgment by the light of the gospel see that that's what God is speaking to us through his word and he wants us to listen to him and he wants us now to speak to him and he'll continue to speak to you dear Lord please make me a disciple of Jesus gripped by the gospel who can think about myself with sober judgment by the light of the gospel some of you are a bit surprised because I only have about ten more minutes left in the sermon I haven't even got to the gifts part and you know the really hard part about us North Americans is that we want to get to the practical techniques and applications really quick and we're really hoping that George will give the six simple steps by which you understand your gift and the five simple practices by which you'll do them really really well and we want to we don't even realize how deeply addicted we are to that we're deeply addicted and here's another thing if you're a non-Christian who's here this morning

I want to tell you one of the things about us Christians is that we're blind to how deeply driven we are by consumerism that consumerism shapes us regrettably lamentably just as much as it shapes you and most people in our culture that we're not aware of the fact how we view everything in terms of what we can consume and how we can evaluate the consumption experience and we are so increasingly deeply formed by that we rarely think of how we can serve or how we can give and even when we think of giving we think of giving in a consumerist way like how can I give in such a way that when I apply to medical school it will look really good or how can I give in such a way that when I go to that party for the hip person within the hip person's house that I can tell them about this

thing that I'm doing to give back that everybody will go wow that's pretty we don't even realize that often our giving isn't a dying to self but an asserting and exalting of ourself that we have a hard time figuring out how to serve without also figuring out a way to assert and exalt ourselves that's why we need sober judgment that's why we need to measure ourselves by the gospel that's why the Bible is smarter than our culture and it starts with verse 3 and doesn't go right to verses 6 to 8 what precisely is prophecy how exactly no no no no sober judgment okay sober judgment in light of the gospel and this consumerist mindset is one of the reasons why most of us can't figure out our spiritual gifts or many of us not most many of us can't figure out our spiritual gifts because when you have a consumerist frame by which you understand the world and a consumerist frame by which you understand the church and a consumerist frame by which you're going to understand your gifts in a consumerist frame which means that you're looking in the wrong spot and you're missing simple steps to try to discover it but verses 4 and 5 so think about soberly what's the first thing you have to think about soberly look at verses 4 and 5 for as in one body we have many members and the members do not all have the same function so we though many are one body in

[34 : 03] Christ and individually members one of another remember I've shared before we enter the Jesus way one by one by faith in Jesus we enter the Jesus way one by one but we walk the Jesus way with Jesus and others and if we're not walking with Jesus and others we're on our duff or we're going somewhere else but we're not on the Jesus way we enter by grace God keeps us there by grace it's not a new type of legalism it's just a way to understand things that being a Christian being connected with others is is not a negotiable part of the Christian faith it's part of how the Holy Spirit will lead us to want to be involved in the lives of others and one of the reasons that many of us can't discover our spiritual gifts is because we're not even dating the church but we're like a man who goes to bars looking for sexual experiences a different sexual experience or pleasurable experience every night but not looking to find a person that he can marry and be with for the rest of his life and we come to church as consumers we come to church for a while because maybe the band is hot and we really like the songs they sing or maybe I don't know they like the speaker but then you know there's a better speaker there's a better band there's a better experience there's a cooler venue or there's something more traditional

I want to get away from all that contemporary stuff I want to go back to something a little more traditional and you go to the traditional for three or four months or five months and then you go to another spot and without realizing it we have a consumerist mindset we don't move to a city looking for a church that we can call home warts and wrinkles and not perfect and if it was a perfect church and you joined you just made it imperfect and if we're not actually part of a local church of body it's going to be hard to actually ever find our spiritual gifts because our consumerism is so deeply embedded in us that we're not even conscious of it I put it this way in a prayer if you could put up the second prayer dear Lord please make me a disciple of Jesus gripped by the gospel and deliver me from all consumerism individualism narcissism and judgmentalism so that I can commit to a local church and its people see that's all part of consumerism consumerism fits in with narcissism being overly in love with yourself or you can never get over yourself and it's inherently judgmentalism

I don't know if I like that Joey and the way he sings I don't know you know just that song I don't like the way that George preaches and you know you know it's always you're looking you don't realize you're walking around unbelieving unbelievably judgmental I'm walking around judgmental I don't go into it saying I get to spend time with Jesus in the presence of his people and I know that some of these people bug me but gosh it never dawned me that I'm bugging some of these people bugging works both ways I'm thinking of leaving the church because of that person they're thinking of leaving because of me we both end up at the same church in three months and we both leave because we're bugged with each other you know like get over yourself George get over yourself you know that's this prayer we rarely pray that God will deliver us from consumerism and maybe that's the big message for you who have given your life to Jesus consumerism doesn't mean consuming a lot although it might mean that it means something very different it means this exaltation of the self and everything is viewed from the perspective of the experience of consuming how demons think it shows it's devilish

I just very briefly if you know it from this perspective that for many of us the first step of discovering our spiritual gifts is committing to a local church as a disciple of Jesus gripped by the gospel let's look at these gifts very briefly verses six to eight having gifts that differ according to the grace given

to us and the word gift and grace are basically coming from the same word and it's telling us that every person who comes to Jesus he gives them gifts and just as a bit of an aside nobody gets all the gifts one of the gifts mentioned in the bible is celibacy so all you married people you didn't get that gift okay those of us looking for marriage we might have it for a season but then we don't have it so nobody gets all the gifts but everybody gets some gifts and everybody needs people to use their gifts like

I need other people to use their gifts to help me and I need to use my gifts to help others having gifts that differ according to the grace that given to us so they differ okay it's like a rainbow it's like light coming into a crystal it comes into the crystal but it goes out in multiple colors we all get the same grace but the same grace that comes into our lives is going to give us different gifts let us use them in the blog today in the bulletin I give you some I think six or seven simple pointers about how to discover your spiritual gifts so you can look in that to get just take that home or it's also going to be online on Monday and you can read it if you'd like if prophecy in proportion to our faith and prophecy here could mean that God gives you spiritual and supernatural knowledge into another person's life or situation that you couldn't have naturally that is a possible meaning to it probably the more common way that we experience prophecy is that it's

[40:17] Holy Spirit driven speech with Holy Spirit authority that touches our hearts like you should pray that every Sunday morning whether it's me or whoever is up opening the word that you won't just be opening the word it'll be prophecy which only you know one of the things I try to pray every week as I'm preparing for this I'm very conscious of John the Baptist speaking about how he can baptize with water but only Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit and in my mind I envision you know when you get a bag of onions and you take the onions out and the bottom of the bag are all these little bits of onion skins and I picture that in my mind and I think to myself if God doesn't pour out his Holy Spirit on a Sunday morning all of my accomplishments are the onion skins left in the bottom of the bag it doesn't matter how logical how brilliant how entertaining how winsome

I am if it isn't the Holy Spirit moving through in us through the word then all it is onion skins at the bottom of the bag good for nothing hard to clean up throw out that's all it is and in terms of in proportion to our faith in other words that it's ordered it's in proportion to the Christian faith if service then we should serve serve others to teach then we should teach others to exhort and the word exhort is very similar to the word paraclete from which some of you know is one of the words for the Holy Spirit which can also mean comfort can also mean counsel and some of us are just really good at encouraging at counseling at coming along beside people about putting our arms around them so to speak about praying for them and that's the gift here that's being talked about the one who contributes in generosity some people are just so good at giving not only financially but that's part of it as well that some people just have a great confidence in

God's provision that they can just be financially generous generous with their time and if you have that gift you should do it with great generosity you know one of the things that we should all pray about that they say at our funeral like wouldn't it be really nice if we die and we get to listen in at what they're saying at our funeral service was a bit too generous like over the top like wouldn't you rather them say that about you than saying boy George was so cheap like he's the cheapest tight bleep bleep bleep guy I ever met in my entire life so which mistake would you rather make in your life what would the complaint about you what choose the way you want to have people complain or put show us your faults when you die too generous too cheap you choose the one who leads with zeal the one who does acts of mercy with cheerfulness here's here's the here's just sort of I've gone over my time just to sort of you know wrap up actually Andrew could you put up the theme verse for all of the book of Romans it's Romans 1:16 can you say this with me we say it every Sunday if you're a guest here we say it every Sunday can you say it with me for I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes to the Jew first and also to the Greek for in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith as it is written the righteous shall live by faith so here's the big thing that all of these gifts it's very easy for us to get into any of these gifts and we leave the gospel behind that prophecy is all just about speaking into people's lives and you're not really doing anything different than Maya Angelou or Oprah or Dr.

Phil and service is just really a matter about doing whatever it is of the culture it's easy to get into these gifts and lose the gospel and so this is to faith in the gospel is to characterize and color and shape every aspect of the gift if it really is from God could you put up the third prayer Andrew I have

to race through these I don't have to but we'll go through them quick dear Lord please make me a disciple of Jesus who is gripped by the Jesus you teach to lead people to Jesus you learn from Jesus about how to teach you want to be led by Jesus as you're reading the word and the service and the generosity what does it profit to be unbelievably generous and all it does is lead people away from Jesus and Jesus is the source of grace in our lives he died for you he died for me it's because of him and

[45 : 39] I don't have to do these things in such an exemplary way that God will notice me that I can have a freedom of self forgetfulness that I can have a freedom of no longer having to justify myself because I've been justified in Jesus and the final prayer if you could put it up please and this is in terms of these gifts so the first danger of the gifts is that we can use them in a way that's completely devoid of grace and completely and utterly devoid of bringing people to Jesus and the second one is we won't even use them at all we use them for our own exaltation dear Lord please make me a disciple of Jesus gripped by the gospel who uses the gifts you have given me for the good of people and for your glory those of you who are interested in any of these points they all go on the webpage tomorrow or sometime soon and you can always get them later on if you want let's just spend some time with the

Lord before we go into a time of intercession let's pray Father there's good things about our age that are wise and beautiful and and we can be thankful for the prosperity of our city we thank thankful Father that we have religious freedom we thank you Father that it's pretty safe for us in this city most of the time and we thank you for it but Father in other ways we know that this age and this city forms us in ways that lead us away from you and in particular Father we lift before you the way that consumerism to love our spouse to even have a spouse to love our kids to be committed to a local church Father there's ways beyond our imagining that consumerism shapes us and we ask Father that you would make us disciples of Jesus who are gripped by the gospel and as we are gripped by the gospel that we will die to consumerism that we will see the world from the perspective of the gospel and we ask

Father that you help us to commit to a local church and its people and we ask Father that your Holy Spirit would move deeply and fully in our lives so that whether we're teaching or serving or speaking or giving or helping that everything Father will be driven by your Holy Spirit driven by grace in a way that is good for people and brings you glory Father we ask that you would do this wonderful work in our lives for your glory and we ask it in the name of Jesus Amen