

Talents: Using What God Has Given You

(Romans 12:1-8)

INTRODUCTION:

1. Today I am going to talk about talents, or the ability(s) God has given us in this life to use.
 - A. I want to do this because their proper use is how we offer our bodies as living sacrifices to God (Rom. 12:1-2 – “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice**, acceptable to God, **which is your spiritual service of worship.** ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”).
 - i. Using our talents properly will insure we are offering our bodies as pleasing sacrifices to God.
 - ii. So, we must think of our talents as God desires, and not be conformed to the world and its way of thinking in evaluating the gifts, or talents, He has given us.
 - B. I want to talk about our talents because we are growing as a local church and as we do, our talent pool is also growing, which means many blessings for this congregation as well as some challenges for the leadership and those who want to use their talents here in service to God.
 - C. I want to talk about this because God wants us to use the talents He has given us the best way we can for His glory, the good of His people, and the unity of the church! To do that requires:
 - i. An honest evaluation of our abilities/talents
 - ii. A realization that different people are given different talents.
 - iii. Determining to use our talents, or abilities, whatever they may be, the best way we can to glorify God and further His kingdom.
2. So, as we talk about our talents and how to use them...
 - A. I hope that you will think of your talents in new ways and be better able to know and appreciate your talents for what they are and develop them to their fullest.
 - B. For, it is only when you truly know what talents God has given you that you can do the greatest work you in His service.

BODY:

- I. **Talents must be honestly assessed** (Rom. 12:3 – “For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.”).
 - A. Note that Paul begins by speaking of God’s grace indicating that he understood that the talents he had and their use were by God’s grace, a gift given him in Christ.
 1. This must be the beginning of any sound approach toward our talents.
 2. For, proper evaluation and use of our talents requires that we know they are not about us, but *about glorifying God* for His grace in our lives.
 - B. God expects **sound** [reasonable, sensible] **judgment** in assessing our talents.
 1. This requires some extent of experimentation with various works and opportunities.
 - a. For, until we tried an area of service, or some similitude of it, it is hard to say, but not impossible to say, whether we have a talent for it.
 - b. As we try various things, we must not rely on our feelings, or whether we feel comfortable doing a particular work.
 - i. For, there are many things that must be done in the Lord’s kingdom that are naturally going to be uncomfortable, at least upon starting out.
 - ii. The question that should be asked, instead, is whether you have a talent for it and are willing to put forth the effort needed to develop that talent.
 2. Sound judgment requires honesty with the results of our experimentation.
 - a. We need to take seriously the warning **not to think too highly of ourselves** and assess ourselves and our talents above and beyond our real capabilities.
 - i. This is easier than we think, especially when one has zeal for the Lord and His work.

- ii. Care must be taken that *personal pride* and *ambition* do not get in the way of using our gifts for the edification of the church, which was the problem at Corinth around the *gift of tongues* (1 Cor. 14:1-5 – “**Pursue love**, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but **especially that you may prophesy**.² For one who speaks in a tongue **does not speak to men but to God**; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries.³ But one **who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation**.⁴ One who **speaks in a tongue edifies himself**; but **one who prophesies edifies the church**.⁵ Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would **prophesy**; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, **so that the church may receive edifying**.”).
 - 1) Tongues were exciting because one could speak the word of God in a foreign language without ever studying that language!
 - a) For that reason, brethren wanted that gift. It was the “best.”
 - b) In comparison, prophesying seemed ho-hum, nothing special, seeing it could not be distinguished from ordinary preaching/teaching.
 - 2) Yet, Paul reminded them that what matters is the good of the church, not what one feels is better for themselves or wants. Thus, Paul says prophesying was better.
- iii. What we should take from this is that what we are truly capable of doing to benefit the church may not be flashy, or something that stands out, but it is still needed!
- b. We must not *undervalue* God’s gifts to us (1 Cor. 14:1-5).
 - i. In other words, care must be taken not to think like the Corinthians that anything short of a particular gift, or talent, is somehow less or unimportant.
 - ii. So, if you find yourself struggling concerning harmonizing what you think your talents are with what you are being given to do within the local church:
 - 1) Do not think of your talents only in connection with the assemblies. Doing so limits talents where God has not. For, talents are often things we can do outside the assemblies in serving one another and those of the world for Christ.
 - 2) We must be humble and understand that there is much talent in this congregation that needs to be used, which results in lesser opportunities in certain areas.
 - 3) You can ask someone (not your mate) to sincerely evaluate your talent list, or the things you may think you are or could be good at.
 - a) Now, to do this you cannot have your feelings on your sleeve.
 - b) For, brethren who care will *confirm* your talents, point out the ones you do not have, and suggest ones that you have but may not have considered.
 - 4) Of course, none of this is of value if you become dead-set on a particular talent, or job, which if you lack that talent will likely result in continued frustration.
 - iii. We must have faith, or trust God, that the talents He has given us are truly the talents that are best for us and show that faith by using them to the best of our ability.

II. Talents must not cause division (Rom. 12:4-5 – “For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function,⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.”).

- A. As members of the church, we are given varied roles/functions that must be embraced (12:4-5).
 - 1. Just as the human body is made up of parts with varying functions, so is the body of Christ, and by extension, the local church (2:4).
 - 2. Therefore, whatever my talent, or function, may be, though it may differ from another and not even be what I want it to be, it must be embraced as my function *in the one body* (12:5).
 - a. For, as we use our talents, we *act as members of one another* forming one body.
 - b. So, whatever your talent may be, using it in coordination with the other members results in a unified body working for Christ.
- B. We cannot allow our God-given function within Christ’s body to produce a rift.

1. How you feel about **your** talents must not cause separation (1 Cor. 12:14-18 – “For the body is not one member, but many. ¹⁵ If the foot says, “Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear says, “Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But now **God has placed the members**, each one of them, in the body, **just as He desired.**”).
 - a. We must believe God that just because we have different talents, that does not mean that we are not part of the body or this congregation, or that we are of lesser value.
 - i. Not being the *hand* or the *eye* does not mean you are of no value to this congregation.
 - ii. If everyone was an eye or hand, who is going to be the ears or the feet of the body?
 - iii. There are so many jobs that need to be done in the body, and we all need to consider what those jobs may be and take initiative to use our talents to do them.
 - b. If we do not view our talents properly, this can become a real problem as this congregation grows and more talent becomes evident and available.
 - i. Thus, again, we cannot limit our view of talents to what goes on at the assemblies.
 - ii. Talents must be seen as things we can do for Christ every day in serving one another, our neighbors, co-workers, etc.!
2. How we feel about *others’ talents* must not cause separation (1 Cor. 12:21-25 – “And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; or again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” ²² On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; ²³ and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, ²⁴ whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, ²⁵ so that **there may be no division in the body**, but that the members **may have the same care for one another.**”).
 - a. Rejecting or downplaying the value of someone’s talents is sinful, seeing whatever talent one has comes from God!
 - b. However, that does not mean that if you *want* to have some talent, but others have seen it is not your real talent, that they are wrongfully rejecting your talents (i.e., cause division).
 - c. Again, we must be humble and accept what our talents *are* and *are not*.
3. Whether your talent is being teacher, a teacher’s helper, a greeter, an encourager through conversation or messaging, one who visits, a deacon, a caretaker of the sick, fixing meals, an elder, mowing someone’s lawn, one who keeps up or cleans the building, a preacher, etc., you must know that...
 - a. Every talent given by God and used in accordance with His will is valuable!
 - b. The use of every talent must be seen as a needed function for the good of a unified body.

III. Talents must be used (Rom. 12:6-8 – *HCSB* – “According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts: If prophecy, use it according to the standard of one’s faith; ⁷ if service, in service; if teaching, in teaching; ⁸ if exhorting, in exhortation; giving, with generosity; leading, with diligence; showing mercy, with cheerfulness.”).

A. This list is different from what we normally think about gifts.

1. It only contains one miraculous gift, prophecy, and most of them are not what we would normally think of as gifts (e.g., service, exhortation, giving, showing mercy)!
2. They are all talents God values and are to be used with commitment and enthusiasm.
3. Do you know someone you can serve, someone in your neighborhood, at work, or wherever that needs some mercy, some encouragement, etc.? Use your talents for Christ!

B. Our talents mean we have been recipients of God’s grace, which we need to pass on (12:6).

1. Since your talent(s) are from God’s grace, it would be an affront to His grace to reject them, refuse to use them, and/or to resent the talents bestowed upon others.

2. God's wants us to be thankful for the gifts grace has bestowed upon us, because these make us valuable, functioning parts of Christ's body!
- C. The Parable of the Talents and the proper view and use of our talents (Matthew 25).
1. First, we learn God gives some people more talents than others (Mt. 25:14-15 – "For it [kingdom of God] is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. ¹⁵ To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey."").
 - a. These talents are given *according to our ability to use them* (25:15).
 - b. So, I am not responsible for using talents that I do not have the ability to use.
 - c. Again, that does not mean that because you may not like doing something, or feel that something is beneath you, that you can just leave that to someone else.
 - i. For, again, there are things in the kingdom that are not that enjoyable to do.
 - ii. So, we must be humble and *not think too highly of ourselves*.
 2. Second, whether I am a 1, 2, or 5 talent person, God is pleased only when I **choose** to use the talents I have been given to bring glory to Him and benefit to His kingdom.
 - a. Two servants *chose* to use their talents, but one did not (Mt. 25:16-18 – "Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. ¹⁷ In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. ¹⁸ But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money."").
 - b. When reckoning time came, the Master praised the 5 and 2 talent servants for using their talents for his increase (Mt. 25:19-23 – "Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.' ²¹ His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' ²² "Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, 'Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.' ²³ His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'").
 - i. They were praised not for the number of the talents, but because they used them.
 - ii. Though one had more talents than the other, *both were equally praised* as faithful and welcomed into the joy of their master (12:21, 23).
 - c. The servant who did not use his talents was condemned (Mt. 25:24-27 – "And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. ²⁵ And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.' ²⁶ "But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. ²⁷ Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest.'").
 - i. His condemnation was not for being only a 1-talent servant, but for not using it.
 - ii. If we are offered a chance to serve, even if it is not what we like or for some reason think it is below us, we better think long and hard before rejecting it.
 - iii. For, the rules of God's kingdom concerning how we are to view ourselves and service are clear (Matt. 23:10-12 – "Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. ¹¹ But the greatest among you shall be your servant. ¹² Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted."").
 3. Whether we use our talents properly has eternal consequences (Mt. 25:28-30 – "Therefore take away the talent from him [one-talent man], and give it to the one who has the ten talents.' ²⁹ "For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance;

but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. ³⁰ Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”).

- a. How sad it would be to end up like that one-talent servant and lose everything because I did not use my talents, no matter what my reasons might be.
- b. How sad that would be because God abundantly blesses those who use their talents, giving them eternal joy with Him, no matter what their talents might be.

CONCLUSION:

1. Know your talents, and your limitations, and work within them with all your might for God.
 - A. Realize that no one is given the talents to do everything; but everyone can do something.
 - B. And, that something is what God expects you to do in the kingdom.
2. Of course, to do this you must begin with coming to Jesus in F-R-C-Bp. Will you come today?