



Introduction

Last week God's Word instructed us to understand the privilege of being a part of the body of Christ and to value others that are a part of His body as well. I hope the Holy Spirit challenged you this week to live with your arms and hearts open wide, valuing people in His body.

We are moving on to verse 6 this week. Verse 6 really can be divided into two sections. The first is a final perspective to consider for the Christian life and the second is the beginning of some serious lists and instruction. I hope you remember the four perspectives that Paul gave in verses 1-5. They should be very evident to you as you have hidden them in your heart. Take a minute right now and say verses 1-5, making a distinction of the perspective Paul is trying to give.

Now that you have done that, let's look at verse 6 where Paul offers one more perspective. It concerns:

-our efforts or works in the body of Christ (verse 6)

Looking at the Verse

As we consider verse 6 we are going to mainly look at the first half of it, or we would say, verse 6a. In the next devotion we will expound on the second half, verse 6b, along with verses 7-8. This week we are going to consider two things:

1. We each have been given a gift
2. We each need to use our gift in faith

So, let's jump right in by looking at some different versions of Romans 6a.

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.... (NIV)

Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly... (NASV)

So since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren't. (Message)

In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. (NLT)

We all have different gifts, each of which came because of the grace God gave us. (NCV)

1. We each have been given a gift

It isn't any news that we are all different from one another. We are all very aware of our differences! Let's be careful though, I don't think it is Paul's point in his thought expressed here. You see many times we look at one another and consider our differences according to the choices we each have made, thinking it is what makes us different. As we do that, it is easy to think one of two ways, developing a sense of pride, thinking we have made our own way through life if we have been successful. Or, on the other hand, it is easy to be down on ourselves, thinking we have blown it if life hasn't gone too well for us. Although we are responsible for making wise choices and working hard, I believe there is a different message here in verse 6a. What is it?

Verse 6a says we have different gifts. The Greek word for different is:

"diaphoros" = different, varying in kind, excellent, surpassing

The Greek word for gifts is:

"charisma" = a favour with which one receives without any merit of his own

The thought here is that we are each a part of God's body (verses 4-5) and He has chosen to give each of us varying and excellent gifts just because He wants to do that. He is an excellent God who imparts excellent gifts. He doesn't give excellent gifts to some and sub standard gifts to others. It isn't about our background or life choices or opportunities. The Almighty God has given each one of us valuable gifts to use in His kingdom. When we become a believer, God's Spirit literally comes to life within

us again. As God places His Spirit in each of us, He deposits a gift in us to use in the body of Christ. We don't deserve it, but He does that because of His grace. We may have made bad choices, been lazy, been irresponsible or many other things but "according to the grace given us" we each have a gift, a different favour from God. That is why it says, "we have". If we are a believer, we already possess a gift, not because we deserved it, but because of His grace.

That simple concept can make such a difference in how we perceive ourselves and how we perceive others in the Kingdom. You see we may look at ourselves and feel we have nothing valuable to offer the kingdom. According to the Word of God that is a lie. We have to replace that lie with the Truth from God's Word that says "we all" or "each of us" have a gift. You are not excluded. In fact, according to verse 6, no one is. If you are a believer, you have been given an excellent gift to use in the Kingdom. You may not even realize what it is yet, but you do have one! You don't deserve it; God just gave it to you because He wanted to.

Or... you may see yourself as someone who has much to offer. You have been very successful in life, made lots of right choices and climbed the ladder of success quite well. It is easy for someone in that position to consider others in the body not as valuable or worthy to serve. That is also a lie. If you have an excellent gift to use in the kingdom, then you only have it because God gave it to you. It is a gift of His grace. Others have a gift that is valuable as well. God gave it to them. Remember we each have a gift!

We each need to use our gift in faith

The New American Standard Version goes on with this verse in an interesting way. It says:

"Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly..." (NASV)
I love the wording "each of us is to exercise them accordingly". According to what? I think the message is according to the fact that you have been given it by God. God gave it to you so don't disregard it according to your low self image, thinking your gift is not valuable or needed or even present. Or... don't forge ahead with so much confidence in yourself as if your gift is a result of all your labors and efforts. It isn't, God gave it to you and He wants you to use it in faith!

I like the word exercise that is used in the NASV because of the message it conveys...the idea of using your gift. It is the image of carrying out or making use of something. In our culture, we use the words "work out" for exercise and that image can be of use to us here as well. Whatever your gift is, God has given it to you to be used in His body. When we think of exercising we know that it takes time, consistency, discipline and perseverance to see results. One must be committed to the task, believing that in time, he will see results. In the same way we need to exercise our gift in the body. Just like physical exercise, it may feel awkward, painful, uncomfortable and difficult but you press on anyway believing in faith that you will see results. You do that in faith, knowing that God gave you a gift.

And So...

Can we add this one more perspective to the list from last week? I must admit in my earlier study I didn't see verse 6a as part of that list, but God opened my eyes this week. We must have His perspective about the jobs we do in His body. That is just as important as how we view Him, the world, ourselves and others. The fact that I didn't see that at first just shows how careful memorization of God's Word, makes us take the time to see things we otherwise wouldn't. So press on! Here they all are - God's foundational perspectives that are so important for us to walk wholly as a Christian. I pray they are hidden in your heart!

Worshipping God involves sacrificial living (v.1) We must live transformed lives different from the world (v.2)
We must have a God perspective of ourselves (v.3) We must value everyone God has chosen to be a part of His family (v.4-5)
We must acknowledge our God given gifts (v.6a)

Consider:

All five perspectives this week. Make sure they are hidden in your heart and that your life and thinking are lined up with them. What gift has God given you for the body? Are you using it? Are you using it in faith or according to yourself? How do you view your gifts? How do you view others gifts?

Pray

Romans 12:6a, "Lord thank you for giving us different gifts through your grace. Help us to use them in your Kingdom!"