



World Christian Fellowship

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Romans 109 Gifts & Attitude Romans 12:3-5

Romans 12:1-5, *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.* ²*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.* ³*For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.* ⁴*For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function,* ⁵*so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.*

The ministry is committed to us.

The work of the kingdom depends upon our usefulness, faithfulness, and our commitment.

Short summary of Romans 11 chapters.

- We are the redeemed,
- We have received the mercies of God,
- We have been delivered from darkness and brought into light,
- We have been freed from the bondage of sin,
- We have become the children of God,
- We have become the saints of the Most High,
- We are the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ,
- We are given the task of the hands and feet and voice of Jesus.

We must offer ourselves in the single supreme act of worship that any believer can do as a living sacrifice.

Offering to the Lord our whole soul, body, mind and will, Romans 12:1-2.

God wants our life as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to Him, which is the basic act of spiritual worship. That is the entrance into usefulness.

When it comes to this service, **V3-5**, we need to recognize that though there is unity at the level of commitment and tremendous diversity at the level of service.

Like a body that has many members, so the body of Christ has many members, and verse 6, they have differing gifts.

We all stand on the same common ground in the unity of commitment but there is tremendous diversity.

We are as diverse in terms of our service as we are diverse in terms of our own personal identity.

There are no two Christians alike.

There are no two of us who can serve the Lord alike.

There is tremendous distinctiveness in all of us.

We are to think of ourselves according to how God has apportioned to us the measure of faith, and it's different for everyone.

V 5 reminds us that every one of us are distinct. There is only one body but everyone a different member.

V 6 again, we have differing gifts.

The primary focus of these verses is to demonstrate to us that though we all enter the place of usefulness with the same utter and total self-sacrifice. And in that there is complete uniformity, and there is great diversity.

There can be no genuinely effective service unless we have first offered ourselves as a living sacrifice.

The offering of living sacrifice kind of attitude to God is greatly practical because the intention of offering myself to God is so that I may become immediately useful to Him.

Offering ourselves to God is not something mystical.

- If you have given yourself wholly to God and see no effective ministry, then it is not believable.
- If you are serving the Lord but no total commitment to Him, then it is also not believable either.

Service to God has meaning and reciprocal blessedness only when it is the outflow of total commitment.

Total commitment is only total commitment when it produces effective service. The two go together.

There can be results from a carnal life. There can be results when you are serving God without really being committed to Him. When you are doing it because you like to see yourself doing it, or you feel good doing it, or others think well of you when you do it, or there even a desire in your heart to do it. There can be results.

The reason is this because the truth is so much more powerful than your limitations. But the results are not going to accrue to you in terms of blessedness.

You can be used by God even in the midst of your non-commitment when you speak the truth because the truth is so much more powerful than your ability to limit it. But you will not receive the benefit and blessed.

The message is so powerful, God can get it through a clogged vessel, but think how much more wonderful if the vessel was clean.

V 3-4, *For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. ⁴ For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function.*

Every one of us who has come to Jesus Christ is called to make a supreme dedication to Him. Out of which is to flow a life of service unique to us.

- If we say we are dedicated but there is no life of service, our dedication is questionable.
- If we function on the outside but the dedication is on the inside, our service is very limited and accrues no blessing to us.

We are talking to everybody here.

We are all in the same situation.

I know there are people in the church who believe they are committed to the Lord, but if you look at their life and try to see where that comes out into service, it isn't there.

Some of them might say that I am really dedicated to the Lord but right for now I am busy with my job. I am busy working. I am busy shopping. I am busy with my hobby. I am busy recreating. I am busy vacationing. There is a time for all of that.

But dedication works out in service, that's what Paul is saying.

How can you know your gift?

You will never know your gift and you will never really know its potential until you have lived out Romans 12:1-2.

Because if you are not at the point of total dedication, whatever you are doing in terms of function and service is not revealing to you the full definition or potential of your gift.

Like the human brain. They estimate that maximally people are using their brain are functioning at about 11 percent of their brain capacity. That means there is another 89 percent that isn't even being used.

We understand the limitations of the human mind or when we give certain tests to people and assume that that therefore

gives us the final word on how much capacity they have. The human mind has tremendous capacity beyond what we attain.

In a spiritual dimension the same thing is true.

We have many Christians who are trying to define their gift while only having about an 11 percent performance capacity to decipher.

If they ever came to **Romans 12:1-2** and lived out that life, they would probably totally redefine their gift, because they would begin to see it in its fullness.

The greatest saints in the church's history who changed the course of the world and who impacted the history of the church. They learned the meaning and the value of **Romans 12:1-2**. They learned to live that way.

Our usefulness now depends on three things.

1. **Attitude,**
2. **Relationship,**
3. **Service.**

1. Attitude

What is the proper attitude?

What is the attitude in the heart of one who is totally given over to God?

Attitude of humility.

V 3, *For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.*

"For" there is a transition.

Only the dedication can lead to this proper attitude.

If you have the gift of ministry, then minister.

- The gift of prophecy then prophesies.
- The gift of teaching, then teach.
- The gift of exhortation, then exhort.
- The gift of giving, do it with liberality.

Whatever it is, if you have it, do it.

Service begins with dedication for dedication is behind humility.

The right attitude is the result of a self-surrender.

If I have given everything I am to God, then I have left with nothing. That's the attitude of humility. It flows out of selfless abandonment to the will of God.

To make his point Paul warns against the wrong attitude.

"I say, through the grace given unto me."

What kind of grace?

Paul is not talking about saving grace, although he did receive that. That was experienced by all believers.

All of us has received in Christ saving grace, no question about that.

That's not what he has in mind.

It is the grace specifically that called him to be an apostle.

It is the grace of God that ordained him to a position of authority as an apostle.

He had received from God the call to preach.

He had received from God the apostleship as Christ Himself had come to him, confronted, and called him into the ministry.

He repeatedly says this.

So, he was an apostle by grace. What he is saying is that this was given to me through grace.

Why didn't he say that as an apostle of Jesus Christ I am telling you?

Humility!

Paul is saying that I want you to know that my rank has nothing to do with me, it has to do with God's grace. So, there is humility even in the way he refers to his apostleship. Very consistent.

1 Timothy 1:13-16, *although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. ¹⁴ And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. ¹⁶ However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.*

- I was made an apostle by mercy.
- I was made an apostle by love.
- I was made an apostle by grace.
- But nonetheless I am an apostle.
- I am speaking to you as an apostle.

I am saying it as an apostle by grace, but I am saying it as an apostle with authority to everyone that is among you.

Nobody gets off the hook, all professed Christians at Rome in the church and all professed Christians anywhere.

I am saying to all of you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly.

There is a Greek verb "to think." It's the verb *phrone*. He uses a form of it four times in that one statement.

Another way to translate it would be this: 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 with sober thinking.

Or, not to be high-minded, above that which he ought to be minded, but to be so minded as to be sober minded.

What does it mean to think soberly?

It means to be in one's right mind.

If you don't think about yourself the way you ought to think, you are insane and out of your mind.

if you are living an illusion about who you really are and what your capability really is and what your gifts are, if you are living out an illusion, you are insane.

You need to think soberly.
You need to be in your right mind.

So, we are warned not to over-estimate, to think proudly. This is the sin of exaggeration.

- Don't think more highly than you ought to think.
- Don't overestimate your value.
- Don't overestimate your gifts.
- Don't think you are the world's next leading evangelist if you are not.
- Don't overestimate yourself.

A very ugly sin contained in exaggerated self-esteem, the Bible says the Lord hates a proud heart.

1 Peter 5:5-6, *Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."* ⁶ *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,*

Don't have an exaggerated opinion of your abilities.
Don't have an exaggerated opinion of your gifts, but rather than thinking more highly, think soberly.

But don't think too low.

Think right.

Don't go around saying, "I am a worm."

Don't think too high, but think high, not just too high.

Be in your right mind.

Recognize your limits.

Keep a proper measure of your gifts.

We are not trying to advocate silly, false humility. But it is silly to think you are something when you are nothing.

Galatians 6:3, *For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.*

One of the things you want to learn in your area of spiritual gifts is this, don't have an exaggerated opinion of what you can do, of your gifts. Think realistically, wisely.

There is no room for exaggerated self-esteem, whether it comes in boastfulness.

Don't have an exaggerated opinion of yourself.

On the other hand, don't come along with all that false modesty that says I am nothing.

Both of those are unacceptable.

In the early church there are some problems with people who were longing to have the showy gifts.

1 Corinthians 12:31, *But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.*

You are coveting the showy gifts. And I want to show you a more excellent way and that is to live by love,"

An excellent translation.

You have got an exaggerated opinion of the gift you think you ought to have. You are trying to elevate yourself beyond what God has really called you to do.

Maybe like Diotrephes, who loves to seek the pre-eminence.

3 John 1:9, *I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us.*

This was not only common in Corinthians church as a problem. We can assume that in Rome there may have been the need to deal with the same issue that there shouldn't be people going around trying to be teachers all the time.

James deals with the same issue.

James 3:1, *My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.*

You need to settle for the gift God has given you. Don't underestimate it, but don't overestimate it either.

What are the wrong attitudes toward the gifts?

1. Using the gift boastfully.

Using a prominent gift boastfully, that would be wrong.

Thinking more highly than you ought to think.

God has given you a certain gift and you conceitedly use it.

You want the whole world to know that you are good at what you do, and God blesses you and you continually blow your own horn.

Talk about yourself,

Promote your own causes,

Showing yourself superior to everybody else.

1 Corinthians 12, the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you. Nor the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

You sort of stand alone in importance, using a showy gift boastfully.

2. False humility.

Another sinful attitude is depreciating the value in false humility.

Knowing you have a prominent gift, knowing it is a unique God-blessed gift, but playing the game of false humility.

Wanting people to sort of pat you on the back and build you up and stroke you a little bit. That also is an unacceptable attitude.

I had to deal with this early in my ministry when people would come to the door and say to me, "what a wonderful sermon. I really enjoyed that, or I was saved."

How should you react?

it was absolutely nothing.

Learn to say thank you, that's all.

Deal with the issue of pride in your heart, not make your problem somebody else's problem.

If I can't handle that, then that's my problem, not somebody else's problem.

3. Counterfeit.

Counterfeiting a prominent gift.

You don't have one, but you parade as if you did, trying to be what you are not.

Like in 1 Corinthians 12 where the foot wants to be the eye.

In other words, there's dissatisfaction with what you are. If you can't do this and you can't be used in that way.

Are all apostles?

1 Corinthians 12:29-30, *Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?³⁰ Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?*

In the early church there was a tendency to want those things.

There are a lot of people today who are seeking gifts they don't have and parading supposed gifts that are only counterfeits.

4. Jealousy.

Failing to use an inconspicuous gift out of jealousy.

There are people who seek a prominent gift and falsify it and they usually do that because they are discontent with the gift they have and jealous of someone else's gift. That's wrong.

If I can't be this, then I am not going to function.

If the foot says if I am not the eye, I am not going to do anything.

No, it is unacceptable.

5. Failing to use.

Failing to use your gift at all, just turning it off.

This is the one Paul is dealing here.

Romans 12:6-8, *Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;⁷ or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching;⁸ he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*

Whatever your gift is use it.

- Don't play games with your ego.
- Don't overestimate yourself and boast.
- Don't underestimate yourself and say, "Well, I don't need to do anything, who am I? I'm nothing anyway, my gift is minimal."

Those kinds of attitudes devastate the body of Christ.
Don't think more highly than you ought to think but think wisely, not more, not less, A balanced estimate of our gifts.

Humility defined wrong way.

Most people think humble people are sort of meek, quiet, invisible, you don't know anything about them, so you assume the best.

He/ she is such a humble person, never says a word.
That may not be humility, it could be just flat stupidity.

They don't know anything.
They have nothing to contribute.

Humility is not obviously overestimation, nor is it underestimation, it is right estimation.

It is being able to say that God has gifted me. He has given me a way to serve Him for His glory. I thank Him that you recognize that. I bless His name.

Paul is not afraid to say I am an apostle of Jesus Christ by grace. I am not afraid to say God has given me gifts of communicating the Word of God by His grace, not by any of my own deserving or any of my own earning at all, but simply only by His grace.

I recognize that, we must deal with that honestly without pride, but without false humility either.

How can you rightly recognize your gift?

V 3, For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

Whatever gift you have, who gave it to you?

God gave it to you.

"As God has dealt to each one a measure of faith."

Whatever gift we have, God measured out to us.

It was given sovereignly by Him by His Spirit. So, I have whatever I had because it's a gift from Him.

I want to do all I can to refine and sharpen those tools, but those gifts are His gifts to me.

Now that makes my life a stewardship.

How important it is to give myself totally to Him.

God has given me a gift to use for His glory in the advance of His kingdom.

If you are ever to see the maximal potential of that gift, then you start by giving your whole self to God. Then you will see what will happen to that gift.

God gave it and He will maximize it by His own sovereign design.

"According as God has dealt to every man,"

No gift should ever be sought after.

They are sovereignly given by God.

1 Corinthians 12:11, *But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.*

The Holy Spirit divides the gifts as He wills.

1 Corinthians 12:7, *But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:*

There is a divine source to all the gifts.

The Holy Spirit has dealt out to every man one of a kind as He will.

If God is the one who deals these out and measures them out according to His own sovereign will, then I am not to be seeking after a gift. Totally foreign to the Scripture.

If the Lord has given these gifts and dealt them out to every one of us, then no gift should be unused!

No gift should be unused.

Why?

It is given by God for His own glory, for the purpose of advancing His kingdom, advancing His church, and praising His name.

1 Corinthians 12:18, *But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.*

God set every one of them in the body as it has pleased Him. Every one of them is there because it pleases Him.

Whatever your gift is, it is pleasing to God that He gave you that gift. God wants you to use that gift.

So don't depreciate that gift. For the sake of God's glory don't let that gift fall into disuse.

How has God measured them out?

"He has dealt to every man the measure of faith."

God has measured out the measure of faith.

You have a measure/cup, that contains so much. One person gets so much in his cup. Another a different one.

The measure for everybody is different.

God measures it out for each of us distinctly, one of a kind. We are like spiritual snowflakes. There aren't any two of us alike. Each one of them is utterly unique.

Because each of us has uniquely measured out to us the *measure of faith*.

Not saving faith because saving faith isn't measured out different to everybody. Saving faith is the same faith. It's totally putting my trust in Jesus Christ.

If I have a gift of teaching and preaching, then God gives me the faith it takes to use that gift.

Look at someone who has the gift of showing mercy and who is very sensitive and who can listen to someone warmth of spirit. Then they minister that gift of showing mercy which basically is toward people who are in great need.

God has given us in our church who have a tender heart toward people who are lost, whose whole ministry is directed to reach out to those kinds of people.

God didn't give a gift and then limit it sovereignly and put us in a place of unbelievable frustration.

One with the gift of preaching or gift of teaching needs the spiritual capability to maximize the gift. The ability to understand the Scripture, the ability to put the Scripture in a way that other people can understand it, to dig into the Word and find out the meaning that's there.

The one who has the gift of mercy needs to have the spiritual insight to hear a hurting person and to see beyond the words to the pain in the heart. That is the faith that goes along with the gift.

So, when you receive a gift, you receive the necessary spiritual capacity to make it function.

Have a right estimation of your gift and spiritual capability.

- Then when you have a right estimation of it.
- Then you know what God has gifted you to do.
- You know that God has given you the faith to do it.
- Then you can be humble about it.

Because you know it isn't you, it is God.

- We have what we have because it was given us by God.
- We certainly aren't going to gain anything by boasting about our gift, we will lose our effectiveness.
- We are not going to gain anything by false humility.
- We are not going to gain anything by depreciating our gift.
- We are certainly not going to gain anything by not using our gift.

How do you know your gift?

1. Present yourself as living sacrifice.
2. You are gifted.
3. Pray for wisdom.
4. Seek nothing.
5. Examine your heart.
6. Confirmation.
7. Blessings of God.
8. Wholeheartedly serve.
9. Cultivate it.

2. Right relationship.

V 4-5, *For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, ⁵so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.*

"As we have many members in one body,"

Talking about the physical body, we have got many members. Head, eyes, nose, mouth, ears, teeth, arms, legs, fingers, toes, all the internal organs, etc.

We have many members in one body and all members don't have the same function.

Paul borrows his beloved analogy of the body.

To illustrate the relationship of believers. We are one body and yet many members and they all work together.

Your hands will do exactly, impulsively, instinctively, and instantaneously what your mind rather casually thinks for them to do.

It's just amazing how the body works together.

We are all joined together in a spiritual body as a human body works together. We share common life, common gifts, common ministry, common resources, common joy, common sorrow, and common everything.

Now that emphasizes our unity. We are all one.

We're all one yet we are all diverse.

If you have a body that has one member that says I am not going to function, you have got a problem.

- Everything in the body must work together.
- Everything in the church must work together.

If you have got parts of the church that aren't functioning, the whole body suffers.

We are so diverse, and I am so diverse that if we don't do what we were gifted to do, it cripples the body.

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made, by Paul Brand, who is a very outstanding surgeon that works with a leprosarium in the south. A very brilliant doctor who is well respected across globe.

"I am first struck by their variety. Chemically my cells are almost alike, but visually and functionally they are as different as the animals in a zoo. Red blood cells, dices, resembling Life Saver candies voids through my blood loaded with oxygen to feed the other cells. Muscle cells which absorb so much of that nourishment are sleek and supple full of coiled energy. Cartilage cells with shiny black nuclei look like bunches of black-eyed peas glued together for strength. Fat cells seem lazy and leaden like bulging white plastic garbage bags jammed together. Bone cells live in rigid structures that exude strength. Cut in cross section, bone resembles tree rings overlapping strength with

strength, offering implacability and sturdiness. In contrast, skin cells form undulating patterns of softness and texture that rise and dip, giving shape and beauty to our bodies. They curve and jut at unpredictable angles so that every person's fingerprint, not to mention his or her face, is unique.

"The aristocrats of the cellular world are the sex cells and the nerve cells. A woman's contribution, the egg, is one of the largest cells in the human body, its ovoid shape just visible to the unaided eye. It seems fitting that all the other cells in the body should derive from this elegant and primordial structure. In great contrast to the egg's quiet repose, the male's tiny sperm cells are furiously flagellating tadpoles with distended heads and skinny tails. They scramble for position as if competitively aware that only one of billions will gain the honour of fertilization. The king of cells, the one I have devoted much of my life to studying, is the nerve cell. It has an aura of wisdom and complexity about it. Spider-like, it branches out and unites the body with a computer network of dazzling sophistication. Its axons, wires carrying distant messages to and from the human brain, can reach a yard in length. I never tire of viewing these varied specimens or thumbing through books which render cells.

"Individually they seem puny and oddly designed but I know these invisible parts cooperate to lavish me with the phenomenon of life. Every second my smooth muscle cells modulate the width of my blood vessels, gently push matter

through my intestines, open and close the plumbing in my kidneys. When things are going well, my heart contracting rhythmically, my brain humming with knowledge, my lymph-laving tired cells, I rarely give these cells a passing thought.

*"But I believe these cells in my body can also teach me about larger organisms, families, groups, communities, villages, nations. And especially about one specific community of people that is likened to a body more than **30 times in the New Testament**. I speak of the body of Christ, that network of people scattered across the planet who have little in common other than their membership in the group that follows Jesus Christ. My body employs a bewildering zoo of cells, none of which individually resembles the larger body. Just so, Christ's body comprises an unlikely assortment of humans. Unlikely is precisely the right word for we are decidedly unlike one another and the one we follow from whose design come these comical human shapes which so faintly reflect the ideals of the body as a whole from God.*

"The body of Christ like our own bodies is composed of individual, unlike cells that are knit together to form one body. He is the whole thing, and the joy of the body increases as individual cells realize they can be diverse without becoming isolated outposts."

"What makes all the cells work together? What ushers in the highly specialized functions of movement, sight, consciousness through the coordination of a hundred trillion cells?"

The secret to membership lies locked away inside each cell nucleus, chemically coiled in a strand of DNA. Once the egg and sperm share their inheritance, the DNA chemical ladder splits down the centre of every gene, much as the teeth of a zipper pull apart. DNA reforms itself each time the cell divides, two, four, eight, sixteen, thirty-two, sixty-four, a hundred and twenty-eight, each with the identical DNA as it splits out.

"Along the way cells specialize but each carries the entire instruction book of 100 hundred thousand genes. DNA is estimated to contain instructions that if written out would fill a 1,600-page books. A nerve cell may operate according to instructions from volume four and a kidney cell from volume 25, but both cells carry the whole compendium.

"The DNA is so narrow and compacted that if all the genes in all my body's cells were put together, they would fit into an ice cube. Yet if the DNA were unwound and joined together end to end, the strand could stretch from the earth to the sun and back more than 400 times. The DNA provides each cell's sealed credential of membership in the body. Every cell possesses a genetic code so complete that the entire body could be reassembled from information in any one of the body's cells. Just as the complete identity code of my body and hairs and each

individual cell, so also the reality of God permeates every cell in His body, linking us members with a true organic bond. I share the ecstasy of community in a universal body that includes every man and woman in whom God resides."

Just as DNA resides in every cell in your body, so the living God, who is the compendium of all truth, resides in every cell within His church.

"At the Central Railway Station in Madras, India, lay a beggar woman more pitiful than the others I saw there. She had positioned herself alongside the stream of passengers hurrying to catch their trains. Businessmen with brief cases passed by her as did wealthy tourists and government officials. Like many Indian beggars, the woman was emaciated with sunken cheeks and eyes and bony limbs, but paradoxically a huge mass of plump skin, round and sleek like a sausage was growing from her side. It lay beside her like a formless baby, connected to her by a broad bridge of skin. The woman had exposed her flank with its grotesque deformity to give her an advantage in the rivalry for pity.

"Though I saw her only briefly, I felt sure that the growth was a lipoma, a tumour of fat cells. It was part of her and yet not, as if some surgeon had carved a hunk of fat out of a 300-pound person, wrapped it in live skin and deftly sewed it on this woman. She was starving. She feebly held up a spidery hand

for alms, but her tumour was thriving. Nearly equally the weight of the rest of her entire body, it gleamed in the sun exuding health, sucking life from her. Fat cells, the Madras' beggar's tumour was composed entirely of an orgiastic community of fat cells. In our figure-conscious western world, the word 'fat' connotes a lack of discipline and unnecessary aggravation of cells that should be reduced.

"From the surgeon's vantage point, however, as he draws a knife across the skin, exposing oleaginous layers of fat cells, the evil connotation is balanced by a sense of the value of fat."

"Each fat cell is a storehouse containing a yellow globule of oil which crowds out the cell nucleus. Most of the time the cell lies dormant while the body eats enough food to fuel its need. Come famine, people with plenteous fat cells will be able to sit by while others starve. That is the most strategic function of fat."

"Sometimes a dreaded thing occurs in the body. A mutiny results in a tumour lipoma such as the one attached to the Madras beggar. A lipoma is a low-grade benign tumour. It derives from a single fat cell, skilled in its lazy roll of storing fat that rebels against the leadership of the body and refuses to give up its reserves. It accepts deposits but ignores withdraw slips. As the cell multiplies, daughter cells follow its lead and the tumour grows like a fungus, filling in crevices, pressing against muscles and organs, occasionally a lipoma crowds a vital organ

like the eye, pushing it out of alignment or pinching a sensitive nerve and surgery is required.

*"I have removed such lipoma tumours. Under a microscope they seem composed of healthy fat cells, bulging with shiny oils. **The cells function beautifully except for one flaw, they have become disloyal.** In their activities they disregard the body's needs. And so, the beggar woman in Madras gradually starved while a lipoma that was part of her was engorging itself.*

"A tumour is called benign if its effect is fairly localized and it stays within membrane boundaries. But the most traumatizing condition in the body occurs when disloyal cells defy inhibition, they multiply without any checks on growth, spreading rapidly throughout the body, choking out normal cells, white cells armed against foreign invaders will not attack the body's own mutinous cells. Physicians fear no other malfunction more deeply; it is called cancer."

Now the illustration is graphic.

There are rebellious cells in the body of Christ. Some of them are benign in the sense that they ultimately don't seem to be killing the church, they just engorge themselves and take in and never give out so that the church becomes emaciated. And it can't function while they, all they want to do is get fatter and fatter.

Their whole approach to things is:

What are you going to do for me?

What are you going to give me?

What can I receive?

They take it in and take it in and never give it out and the church is weakened and weakened.

Then there are those cells that are mutinous to the point where they literally kill the church because they rebel overtly against it.

The church is always in danger of both kinds, the lazy fat cells that basically starve the church of its usefulness, its power, and its resources.

We don't want to be either!

We want to be the living, healthy cells that function for the glory of God and the health of the body of Christ.