



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Sermon Notes

Transformed Service (2)

Romans 12.8

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Introduction

1. Gary Inrig included these comments in an article he wrote on the the New Testament's use of διακονία (*diakonia*) and its implications for the church.

According to *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* "ministry" involves "the office, duties, or functions of a minister" who is, in turn, defined as "one officiating . . . in church worship" or "a clergyman especially of a Protestant communion." While this undoubtedly reflects popular usage, it severely distorts biblical truth. Ministry is not the activity of a spiritual aristocracy or the work of a professional class. Rather, it is the lifestyle, responsibility, and privilege of every believer.

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A διάκονος is one who by choice and position has come to be under the authority of his Master and who therefore serves others in love and gratitude.¹

2. In part 1, we focused on Paul's use of διακονία in Romans 12.6, where it is one of the gifts and (likely) the heading for half of the other gifts. It's a big New Testament idea owing to its connection with Jesus' self-identification and call to his followers. We will study the three service gifts in v. 8.²
 - a. For each, the qualifier has "the effect of emphasizing the manner of using the gifts."³
 - b. These three "have moral attitudes attached to their performance" (Johnson, 193).

Body

I. Sincere Service.

A. ESV: "the one who contributes, in generosity."

1. NRSV: giver/generosity; NIV 2011: giving/generously. NIV 1984: contributing/give generously.
2. ASV/NASB/NKJV: gives/liberality; RSV: contributes/liberality.
3. NET: contributing/sincerity.
4. KJV: gives/simplicity.

B. "Contributes" (μεταδίδωμι, *metadidōmi*) means to "give (a part of), impart, share"⁴ and "can refer to sharing of any sort" (Johnson, 194).

1. Paul has already spoken of "impart[ing] . . . some spiritual gift" to the Romans (1.11).

2. He uses “gift” elsewhere for sharing material or spiritual things (Eph. 4.28; 1 Thess. 2.8).
3. Here, is it used either in the sense of “one who distributes the resources of the church as a whole or one who shares his or her own resources with those less fortunate”⁵?

C. The meaning of the qualifying word helps us decide.

1. ἀπλότης (*haplotēs*) basically means “simplicity or wholeness.”⁶
2. It can also refer to “singleness (of purpose; hence ‘simplicity’; cf. 2 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22)” (Moo, 768).
3. “[W]hen used of giving, the meaning of the word shades over into ‘generosity,’ that is, giving that displays a singleness of heart and intent (2 Cor. 8:2; 9:11, 13)” (Moo, 768).
4. The word is used of God in Jas 1.5, and by Jesus in his reference to the kind of “eye” we should have (Matt 6.22).
5. The idea is that of one who does not operate with ulterior motives.
6. This is giving just because it’s right and reflects the nature of one who is becoming like Jesus. “He who shares in sincere concern.”⁷

II. Serious Service.

- A. ESV: “the one who leads, with zeal.” (RSV/ESV footnote: “he who gives aid, with zeal.”)
 1. NASB/NIV/NRSV/NKJV: lead/diligently; NET: leadership/diligence.
 2. KJV/ASV: ruleth/diligence.
 3. NIRV: leader/work hard at it.
 4. NLT: leadership ability/take the responsibility seriously; NJB: put in charge/conscientious.
- B. The word προΐστημι (*proistēmi*) can refer to a “a person who presides over something or a person who comes to the aid of others” (Moo, 768).
 1. Some find support for the second meaning here in the fact that Paul inserts this gift between two that refer to giving, but that meaning is not typical in the NT and does not appear elsewhere in Paul’s writings.
 2. Others try to take the context into account while still focusing on the primary meaning of the word to suggest that he is referring to persons who presided specifically over the church’s charitable work (e.g., a deacon), but again that meaning does not fit Paul’s typical use (1 Thess. 5.12; 1 Tim. 5.17, where the reference is the “elders who rule well”) (Moo, 768-769). See also 1 Tim. 3.4-5 where the reference is to “managing” one’s household.
 3. It’s better to take it as a reference to a leadership function, certainly important in the body, understanding the default NT view of servant leadership (cf. Mark 10.42-45), “a person who presides over something or a person who comes to the aid of others” (Moo, 768).
- C. What we should especially see in considering προΐστημι is the manner of action: with “zeal” or “diligence” (σπουδή, *spoudē*; the latter is to be preferred).
 1. In the sense of “active, of a protective leadership care for, help, give aid; of responsible preoccupation with something devote oneself to, engage in, strive for.”⁸
 2. The idea is to work hard at being leaders (again, the focus is on function, not office), for the benefit of those being led.

III. Specific Service.

- A. ESV: "he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness."
 1. Of interest is that only here does Paul use ἐλεέω (*eleeō*) to refer to human action instead of God's (cf. Rom. 9.15, 18; 11.30-32 [verb]; 15.9 [noun] et. al.).
 2. Given what we can learn about early church practice, what is probably in view are things such as visiting the sick, caring for the elderly or disabled, and providing for the poor.
- B. The manner to characterize this service is "cheerfulness" (ἡλαρότης, *hilarotēs*) the "quality or state of cheerfulness, opp. of an attitude suggesting being under duress, cheerfulness, gladness, wholeheartedness, graciousness" (BDAG).
- C. Undoubtedly helpful to that end is remembering that to "do mercy" is to imitate God who has shown compassion, pity, and care for all of us.

Conclusion

1. Cranfield's summary of Rom 12.6-8 reinforces the importance of these verses.

It is instructive to notice that out of the seven charismata referred to in vv. 6-8 no less than four . . . most probably have to do with the practical assistance of those who are in one way or another specially in need of help and sympathy. This fact by itself is a clear and eloquent indication of the importance of the place of *diakonia* in the life of the church as Paul understood it. *If this work bulked so large in the thought and activity of the primitive Church in spite of its poverty, it can hardly be right for it to bulk less large in the life of the relatively so affluent churches of the west in the last years of the twentieth century, when more than half the world's population is underfed, inadequately provided with medical services, and in very many other ways underprivileged, and at the same time ease of communications has made the whole world one neighbourhood.*⁹

2. Such should be the nature of "living sacrifice" people!

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Notes

¹ J. Gary Inrig, "Called to Serve: Toward a Philosophy of Ministry," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 140, 560 (October-December 1983): 335, 337.

² The major headings will continue the form used in part 1 where we looked at "Selfless Service" and "Savior-Like Service."

³ Luke Timothy Johnson, *Reading Romans: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon, GA: Smith and Helwys Publishing, Inc., 2001), 193.

⁴ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), BibleWorks. v.10. [BDAG]

⁵ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 768.

⁶ Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, eds., *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), BibleWorks, v.10.

⁷ James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, Word Biblical Commentary 38B (Dallas: Word Books, Publisher, 1988), 730.

⁸ Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, Baker's Greek New Testament Library (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), BibleWorks, v.10.

⁹ C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, The International Critical Commentary, Vol. II (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979), 628; emphasis mine.