

**Kirkwall Presbyterian Church**  
***'Are you Equipped for service?'***  
**Romans 12:1-21**  
**February 15, 2026**  
**By Keith Marcy**

My grandfather farmed the same land where Nora and I live. He had two sources of power to get the work done – human power and horsepower. A few years after my father and mother bought the farm, they bought a 20-horsepower tractor. It would do the work of 1 team of horses. By modifying the horse-drawn equipment, dad managed to farm pulling the small horse machinery with the little tractor.

Nora and I bought the farm in 1975. Shortly after, we invested in a brand-new green tractor with 3-point hitch and a hydraulic loader. It was a much bigger machine. Instead of pulling a 2-foot-wide plow, it could pull a 6-foot-wide plow. It had hydraulics. Instead of struggling with a lever to raise an implement, you could move a little knob on the tractor, and a hydraulic cylinder would raise the implement – if you had the implement.

The tractor was great to drive around the yard and up and down the road, but in the field, it was quite useless without proper implements. Gradually, as we could afford them, we bought a plow, a cultivator, a disk, then a seed drill and corn planter. Eventually we bought some good wagons and a baler. The new tractor was the beginning of becoming efficient farmers. But while it looked nice – all shiny and polished, it was useless without the equipment to use with it.

What does this story have to do with the Scripture Andrew read?

I hope it will make the Scripture clearer.

When I was 28, something very profound happened to me spiritually. I was a Pharisee. I believed I was a child of God because I obeyed many laws – some were God's laws (the Ten Commandments), but many were man-made laws – traditional laws. Then a new preacher came to this church who gave me shock treatments. He said, *"Everyone who has not come to Christ and had his sin cleansed by the shed blood of Christ is hopelessly and forever lost."*

Over the next year, through this man's faithful teaching, God chipped 28 years of religious callouses from my heart until one morning, after a horrible

night, I said, *“Lord Jesus, I cannot go on like this. Please enter my heart and cleanse me.”*

And He did.

And I was changed!

The shop jokes I once enjoyed and told, were not funny anymore. If, in a fit of temper I used God’s name in vain, I was immediately moved to tears of remorse. My prayers were filled with pleas for forgiveness. The hymns in church became alive. And God’s Word became precious. I was being made new – new thoughts, new priorities, new goals.

I was sort of like the shiny new John Deere tractor. I looked different than the old one, but on my own, I was rather useless because I was not equipped.

The passage Andrew read for us is about the Holy Spirit equipping believers to be useful. He gives those who come to Jesus, gifts, abilities and skills so that they can be useful to Him in His Church, and therefore the Church can fulfill its mandate in the world.

Paul reminds all true believers that they belong to the Church, the bride of Christ. The Church is like a body with many parts. He uses the example of our bodies with hands, feet, eyes, ears – parts that are all different in function, but equal in importance. In the Church, the body of Christ, the Holy Spirit gives some the ability to prophecy and others the ability to teach. Prophecy in the New Testament is slightly different than in the Old Testament. Paul’s use of the word means to proclaim what God has said, what He has done and His promises, like what will happen in the future – that Jesus will come back.

Prophecy and teaching are closely related. I think of prophecy as a lecture explaining the Word of God; teaching involves more student interaction, like a Bible study group. Both prophesy and teaching use the same source – the Bible – but present the same truth in different ways.

Paul goes on. Some have received the gift of discernment. Discernment is the ability to detect a liar, or when someone is distorting the Scripture. This gift is enhanced through personal study. Discernment is an important gift! Pray for this gift so both you and the Church will stand for Truth.

Faith is also a gift of the Holy Spirit. It is the basic gift we receive so that we can believe. It is also enhanced by personal study and experience, and faith is the root of peace with God. Faith motivates us to pray and to work for the King and Lord of all!

The gift of administration – in this passage it is interpreted as leadership. If you have ever sat through a poorly organized meeting, you understand why the gift of administration is important – especially in a church. A good leader is not a person who has all the answers, but one who is humble enough to listen to others. So, they become overseers, making sure there is accountability so that all concerns are attended to.

The annual meeting is this afternoon. Some will be elected to various boards and committees. Pray that the Holy Spirit will give them the gift of administration so that they can fulfill their varied tasks for God's glory.

All gifts are vitally important. Paul mentions some I call the practical gifts – hospitality, showing mercy, the gift of helps – that is providing for those in need. Then Paul, in this passage, suddenly throws out the gift of love. This is the Spirit with which all other gifts must be practiced. For example, helping those in need – absolutely no gossip. Do it with tight lips. Showing hospitality – balance talking and listening properly. Active listening is almost a lost art in our society. May it be re-kindled in the church. Give the shy person the opportunity to talk. And gently silence the loud talkers and the interrupters so that everyone is encouraged and allowed to serve with the gifts He has been given.

We could go on and on. I close with this thought: If you recognize what your gift is – for every believer has received a gift – use it wisely; if you want another gift, ask the Holy Spirit in prayer in order that you may be a more profitable servant.

I began by comparing a born-again Christian to a new tractor – a potential source of power. The gifts of the Spirit are the implements so that the power house can be useful to accomplish many different jobs so that God's church will be equipped *'to make disciples of all nations, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you'* (Matthew 28:19,20), so that the

Church will grow in faith and many of those being saved will be added to their number for God's glory!

Some may be thinking, "But I am in my twilight years, there is nothing I can do!" Oh, there is plenty you can do—you can pray using the faith God has given you. You can encourage others to serve using their gifts. You can show hospitality by listening to a lonely or shy person and sharing a word of hope. And you can thank our Creator and Lord for His incredible Creation and His remarkable plan of Salvation for all who believe!!

May His Church blossom because He has empowered its members to do so!!