

## ROMANS 12:3-8

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

### INTRO

- I. This is the beginning of the “rubber meets the road” portion of Romans
  - a. This is the “So What?” to Rom. 1-11
  - b. All subsequent passages in this section are to be viewed in the context of Rom. 12:1-2.
    - i. This is common in Paul’s literature (e.g., Eph. 4-6 is to be viewed in light of 1-3, and 5:22-6:9 in light of 5:21)
    - ii. Rom. 12:1-2
    - iii. It is the responsibility of each individual member of the body of Christ to exercise the grace and faith given them by God with sound judgment, in meaningful community with the people of God, and for the benefit of the body.

### BODY

- II. **Each member of the body of Christ is expected to exercise sound judgment, rather than overestimating oneself. (v.3)**
  - a. This is a commandment from Paul, issued by the authority God had given him to be an apostle to the Romans.
    - i. The Greek word used for grace is *χαριτος*, which is the broad term for grace, which we render as a gift.
    - ii. Grace is not limited to the saving gift of God, though surely that is the greatest grace, but also every gift of God.
  - b. This commandment is given to each and every member of the people of God, without exception or exemption.

- i. Our English Bibles will have some variation of “all of you,” “each of you,” “everyone among you,” which muddies the waters of what Paul is saying.
    - ii. The Greek renders this far more emphatically and clearly as “every single one of you.”
  - c. Believers are to think sober-mindedly.
    - i. The literal wording is to “not think more highly of yourself than is necessary, but think in order to be sensible.”
    - ii. Some argue that this is an overconfident wisdom, but that puts no requirement on the believer to consider others, which is the thrust of this passage.
    - iii. Those who have an overinflated view of themselves, or are unhealthily occupied with themselves, tend to act and think in a way that does not reflect sensibility.
  - d. This sober-mindedness comes in measures of faith given by God.
    - i. This is *not the same as salvation by faith*.
    - ii. There are measures of faith indicated in Scripture.
      - 1. Matt. 19:11-12
      - 2. Rom. 14 (entire chapter)
    - iii. This fits with the context of the passage, which is that God gives different gifts in varying degrees to all of His people.
    - iv. All people truly in the faith are truly in the faith, but not all have the same degree of faith (yet).
      - 1. Some people can drink with a clean conscience, others cannot.
      - 2. Some people could eat food sacrificed to idols with a clean conscience, other could not.
      - 3. Some are able to grasp the deeper truths of the faith, others are not yet able to.
      - 4. This is not a less-than, greater-than scenario, but simply where people are at on their respective faith journeys.
        - a. The idea is that this is tool for us to measure our own faith, with the expectation that it grows over time (Cranfield).
        - b. This is also a comfort that we have a measure of faith, which should preserve us from both pride and despair (Schreiner).

**III. Each member of the body of Christ is expected to live in meaningful community with the people of God in a way that is both evident and essential. (vv. 4-5)**

- a. The thrust is to become others-focused for a specific purpose.

- b. Each part of the body has a different function.
  - i. Paul is extrapolating an ongoing metaphor (the body of Christ) that the Romans might not have been familiar with, but they would have been familiar with a body at large.
  - ii. Transition “for” is best translated “in light of this,” or “for this reason.”
    - 1. Paul is giving them the “why” of sober-mindedness.
    - 2. The exhortation is to consider themselves *and* consider other within the framework of a measure of faith, and the gift and function which will be revealed shortly in his letter.
  - iii. Not all body parts have an identical function, but all have a necessary function that works together with all the other functions to ensure the body operates properly.
- c. In the same way, members of the body of Christ have different functions toward the same end.
  - i. Just as a body has many parts functioning together, believers also function together as the body of Christ.
  - ii. “members individually of one another” is an individualizer into the corporate.
    - 1. The union is in Christ, and it is a forever, indissoluble union.
    - 2. Each believer is responsible to evaluate and exercise his or her own function within the body.
      - a. There are no passenger Christians.
      - b. There are no lone-ranger Christians.
- d. These functions are most evident in the gifts given by God.
- e. Even though the individual Christian is responsible for his or her own function, that Christian’s function is not for his or her own benefit.

**IV. Each member of the body of Christ is expected to exercise the gifts he or she has been given by God, for the benefit of the body. (vv. 6-8)**

- a. These is a road map for how to exercise the gifts God has given.
  - i. Not a “how-to” manual for exercising the gifts.
  - ii. Rather a “how-to” for the mindset behind exercising the gifts.
  - iii. “... the unselfconscious, business-like, sober way in which Christians who do measure themselves which God has given them in their faith will give themselves to the fulfillment of the tasks apportioned to them.” (Cranfield)
- b. These gifts are according to the grace God has given.
  - i. The gifts (charismata) are from the grace (charis) God has given to us, nothing in ourselves.

- ii. This word “charismata” is where we get “charismatic” from, and where the understanding of the “gifts of the Holy Spirit” associated with the charismatic movement also comes from
  - iii. Some folks get this twisted and limit the gifts to some mandatory thing from a uniform list, but these “charismata” here are not identical gifts to all people (the conjunction is in contrast to v. 5)
  - iv. Still, it is clear that *every* believer has a gift from God that he or she ought to be exercising.
- c. Believers should exercise these gifts to serve one another.
  - i. Some have prophecy, according to the standard of the faith.
    - 1. This is not referring to the office of prophet.
    - 2. This is not referring to what some might call a “word of knowledge.”
    - 3. This is referring to someone authoritatively speaking the words of God for the hearers.
    - 4. As a result, this is to be done within the standard of the faith once held for all the saints.
      - a. Proportion is an atypical rendering of the Greek word ἀναλογίαν, which intimates a subjective nature to the person exercising the gift in accordance with their degree of faith.
      - b. There are significant theological implications with this viewpoint, including subjectivity of prophecy and of faith.
      - c. Grammatically, the definite article before both “ἀναλογίαν” (measure) and “πίστεως” (faith) indicates an objective measure and an objective faith.
  - ii. Some have the gift of service to others.
    - 1. Διακονίαν is a catch-all for service in Greek.
    - 2. It ranges from service of the Word to waiting on tables.
    - 3. This specific context refers to general service like we see here on a weekly basis.
    - 4. If serving, serve with gusto!
  - iii. Some have the gift of teaching others.
    - 1. If one is gifted as a teacher, the should exercise that benefit for others.
    - 2. Teachers are not exempt from other acts of service, but this should be a primary focus.
      - a. (Calvary Chapel Caldwell example)

- iv. Some have the gift of encouraging others.
  - 1. This is not the exhortation from the pulpit, though that certainly is also encouragement.
  - 2. This gift would have been especially needed and welcomed in the early church.
    - a. Comforts during persecution.
    - b. Encourages during general difficulties.
  - 3. This is a specific exhortation to action.
  - 4. Luther: "The teacher transmits knowledge; the exhorter stimulates."
- d. Believers should exhibit the hallmark traits of their grace-gift.
  - i. When giving, they must do so sincerely.
    - 1. This refers to those of a giving spirit.
      - a. Time or money.
      - b. By one's own means.
      - c. By distribution from benevolence as an officer of the church.
    - 2. The one in such a position will give freely, sincerely, and without an ulterior motive.
  - ii. When leading, they must do so eagerly.
    - 1. Some consider this established church leadership.
    - 2. Some consider this a broader term.
    - 3. It seems in this passage the broader term better fits the context, as specific giftings are the focus rather than titles.
    - 4. The leader should exercise this gift eagerly, out of diligence and not out of ambition.
  - iii. When showing mercy, they must do so cheerfully.
    - 1. Clearly, we should all show mercy.
    - 2. However, there are some for whom being merciful is far more natural – this is a gift of God!
    - 3. When showing mercy, it should be a cheerful act, and not a grim duty.

## V. APPLYING THE WORD

- a. In what ways am I sober-minded in my thinking, and in what ways do I think too much, or too often, of myself?
- b. Am I functioning properly within this body?
  - i. In what ways am I tempted to be a passenger Christian?
  - ii. In what ways am I tempted to be a lone-ranger Christian?

- c. What gifts has God given me to benefit this body of believers?
  - i. Am I currently exercising those gifts?
  - ii. If not, how can I start exercising them?
  - iii. If I don't know what they are, have I asked God to reveal them to me?