

**Romans 12:3-8 (NKJV)**

**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.

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

1

**Rom 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; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

2

- The behavior of God's children is atrocious!
- Multitudes of believers are self-focused, living for themselves and for the here and now, accompanied by a sense of pride that elevates self above others
- Many continue in sinning, often without remorse and with no desire for change
- Christianity is rife with these problems, which has led to a systemic spiritual crisis within the church of Jesus Christ
- How can local churches expect to reach the goal, as given in Eph. 4:13-16?

3

**Eph 4:13-16** Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine ... but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head — Christ — from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

4

- Does that sound like a description of the church of Jesus Christ in our age?
- Not hardly! In fact, typically, that kind of maturity and selflessness is not even found in local churches, much less in the broader, universal church of those who are in Christ!
- What we are experiencing in Christianity today is nothing new
- Paul wrote this epistle to the believers at Rome, because the church was plagued with division and disunity

5

- The church is not an *organization*, but an *organism*, so the fault lies squarely with the individual believers, who were living licentiously (in the case of the Gentiles) and legalistically (in the case of the Jews)
- The bottom line: there were many carnal Christians in the church at Rome who were causing the church to have some very serious spiritual problems
- Ironically, the first century problem is still with us in the twenty-first century, and now more intense than ever!

6

- To that end, Paul gives several rules in ch. 12-13 for a well-ordered life and church – teaching how God’s children should behave like disciples of Jesus
- Remember: All disciples are believers, but NOT all believers are disciples
- Disciples are those believers who determine, by God’s grace, to deny self, take up their cross, and follow Jesus

7

**CLARIFICATION:**

- *Legalism* is the ritualistic observance of *man-made rules* or laws (e.g., fundamentalism’s “standards”) or laws that have been nullified by God (e.g., the Mosaic rituals); the rules are based on preferences and the focus is **OUTWARD**
- *Obedience* is faith-filled, Spirit-enabled observance of God-given *spiritual rules*, as mandated by the Scriptures, not matters of preference mandated by man; the focus is **INWARD**

8

- Paul has already written three chapters (ch. 6-8) on the importance of living our lives, by faith, through the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, rather than in the flesh
- So when I mention rules for a well-ordered life and church, I am not talking about gritting your teeth, pulling up your bootstraps, and determining to make these things happen in your life
- It is in the context of choosing to obey, by faith, through the enabling power of God’s Spirit, our provision for living righteously

9

**Rule #1: Get off your high horse and become a team player**

Rom 12:3 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.

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

10

- In America, because of the way our nation was founded, and because of our constitutional ideals, we are taught to be rugged individualists – independent spirits – people who march to the beat of their own drum
- And because of our capitalistic economy we also tend to be competitive
- The biblical metaphor for both the universal and the local church is – not a competition – but a human body, with each of its members cooperating, working together for the good of the overall body

11

**Robert Govett (1813-1901), on Romans:**

Certain special powers were communicated to each of the members, in order that each might be in part dependent on others. It was not God’s design that each saint should possess every gift, and be required for ever use; but He bestows various gifts, suited to the perfections of the body.

12

1 Cor 12:24b-25 God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.

26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

13

W.H. Griffith Thomas (1861-1924), Commentary on Romans:

Three great thoughts are thus emphasized, or at least suggested in these words: Unity, Diversity, and Harmony. And it is only when these three are realized and blended that the Church of Christ can live its true life and do its proper work.

- It's time for Christians to get off their high horses, humble themselves, and become team players, recognizing that the BODY overall is the focus, not the individual members

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1 Cor 12:14 The body is not one member but many.

- It's not about YOU; it's about the BODY
- In Rom. 12:3 Paul says, "Stop thinking of yourself as better than others – get serious – and recognize that God has given you a measure of faith [aka *spiritual gifts*] for you to use to make the team better, more harmonious–
- "If you don't get off your high horse, the church will have a measure of division and disunity"

15

W.H. Griffith Thomas, Commentary on Romans:

Each Christian ... is only a part of the great whole, and unless his opinion of himself agrees with God's opinion of him his life will inevitably result in failure.

16

Handley Moule (1841-1920), The Epistle to the Romans:

The one Lord distributes the one faith-power into many hearts, "measuring" it out to each, so that the many, individually believing in the One, may not collide and fight but lovingly cooperate in many kinds of service, the result of their "like precious faith" (2 Pet. 1:2) conditioned by the variety of their lives.

17

- Because we are to function as a unified body and not have division among us, we must sometimes correct one another, and we are to be open to correction

Prov 12:1b He who hates correction is stupid.

Prov 13:18a Poverty and shame will come to him who disdains correction, but he who regards a rebuke will be honored.

Prov 15:5b He who receives correction is prudent.

Prov 15:10b He who hates correction will die.

Prov 16:22 The correction of fools is folly.

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- If you disdain correction, you are hurting yourself and your church
  - Christians need to be open to correction – not merely by the pastor, but by other brothers and sisters in Christ
  - But those who get angry and bristle and threaten to leave the church are revealing the ugly, prideful condition of their heart
- Prov. 13:10 (KJV) says, “only by pride comes contention”

19

Rom 12:4-5 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

- To that end, exercise the spiritual gifts God has given you so the body can function in a unified and cohesive manner

20

Rom 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; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

- Every child of God has one or more spiritual gifts
- The word *gifts* in v. 6 comes from the Gr. *charisma*, which are given by God's grace

21

Thayer: *Gifts* (Gr. *charisma*) “denote extraordinary powers, distinguishing certain Christians and enabling them to serve the church of Christ, the reception of which is due to the power of divine grace operating in their souls by the Holy Spirit.”

- Spiritual gifts are the God-given abilities to do what you are unable to do, what your personality cannot accomplish on its own

22

- God gifts you, not for your own personal benefit, but so you can exercise your gifts in the context of the local church, thereby being a blessing to the body
- Carnal (fleshly) Christians – those who are not led by the Spirit – are unable to exercise their gifts, because they are not surrendered to the Holy Spirit
- They are not using their gifts for the benefit of the local church and, depending on how long they have been living in carnality, they may never have exercised their gifts

23

- God intends spiritual gifts to be used to benefit and prosper the church toward its goal of unity and maturity
- According to Paul and even Peter, the gifts fall into two main categories – and although some are more visible than others, they are ALL EQUALLY IMPORTANT!

1. SPEAKING gifts – prophecy (preaching), teaching
2. SERVING gifts – ministry, exhortation, giving, leading, showing mercy, etc.

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Prophecy (preaching)

- Thayer: in this context, the word refers to “the endowment and speech of the Christian teachers”
- Vine: “forth-telling” ... the telling forth of the mind of the Lord
- Barclay: It is only rarely that prophecy in the New Testament has to do with foretelling the future; it usually has to do with forth-telling the word of God.

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Prophecy (preaching) – cont’d:

- Paul says the preacher should exercise his gift “in proportion to faith” (v. 6)
- In Greek there is an article before faith – *the faith*
- BDAG says this could be defined as “*in agreement with*” *the faith*

26

Zane Hodges, Commentary:

The possibility was all too real that individuals claiming prophetic inspiration might express ideas that ran counter to true Christian doctrine. The true prophet does what Paul enjoins here: he prophesies in agreement with the faith.

27

W.E. Vine, *The Epistle to the Romans*, takes a different position regarding the preacher exercising the gift of prophecy “in proportion to faith,” saying:

It is a warning against going beyond what God has given and faith receives. This meaning ... is in keeping with the context ... That there is a definite article before “faith” in the original does not necessarily afford an intimation that the faith, the body of Christian doctrine, is here in view. The presence of the definite article is due to the fact that faith is an abstract noun.

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- So Hodges is saying that the preacher is bound to say what is consistent with “the faith,” the body of teaching found in the NT
- Whereas Vine is saying the preacher is bound to say only what God authorizes him to say, which he must take by faith and go no further
- By way of application, it seems that God could allow some preachers to say more than others on a certain matter, but only if God has given him liberty to do so, and providing the preacher steps out by faith

29

- Wm. Newell 1868-1956), in his classic commentary on Romans (publ. by Moody) goes into an interesting discussion – quoting Darby (1800-1882) – emphasizing that while there is no new revelation in our era, a “prophet” could be led by God to preach truth which is in the Word of God but has been lost, so it is new to the audiences to whom the prophet is addressing – in that sense he is functioning as a biblical prophet

30

Teaching

- Whereas preaching is general proclamation of the Word of God, teaching seems to be focused instruction in the doctrines of the Word and how they apply to life
- This gift is for helping others understand the Bible
- Aquila and Priscilla had this gift and taught Apollos

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Ministry

- This is general service – willingness to serve as needed in the church
- Comes from the Gr. word *diakonia*, from which we get our English word *deacons*, but other members of the body (who are not in the office of deacon) may also have the gift

Alva McClain, Romans: The Gospel of God's Grace:

[The deacons] are really the closest assistants to the pastor, to help him in every duty and to help the church. It should be a place of service, not a position of power.

32

Exhorting

- The gift of encouraging others to live uprightly

Giving

- To be done with *liberality*
- God gifts some with the ability to make more money than others, *not* so they can spend it all on themselves, but so they can be a blessing in the local church
- Whether you have the *gift* of giving or not, ALL Christians are to be giving!

33

Zane Hodges, Commentary:

The fact that the giver should give with generosity is therefore best understood as applicable to *all* who give. Giving is a general Christian responsibility ... The model of Jesus Christ Himself is the inspiration for true Christian generosity (cf. 2 Cor 8:9).

2 Cor 9:7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

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- In the retreat away from tithing – which was mandated under the Mosaic law and, therefore, is not a mandate for our church age – many Christians hardly give at all
- They have gone from one extreme to the other, but that is not the spirit of the NT!
- Should not NT Christians, who have so much more than OT believers, give all the more?
- Avoid the polar extremes – legalism on the one end, and licentiousness leading to neglect on the other – find the right balance according to God's Word

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Leading

- This certainly applies to pastors, but it could apply to others as well, who are not in an official capacity or office
- Maybe it means you will lead church projects to help the pastor
- Leading must be done with *diligence*, which implies consistent effort, but also includes the idea of *speed* – in other words, not lackadaisical or dilly-dallying, but getting the job done, seeing it through to the end

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**Mercy**

- Having a great heart of compassion for others – above and beyond
- This could include having a heart for the needy or recovery-type ministries in the church
- This kind of ministry can be discouraging at times, so remain cheerful, because those to whom you are ministering need love and encouragement

37

- Peter talks about the gifts, and he also divides them into the two general categories

1 Pet 4:10 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

1 Pet 4:11 If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

38

- No matter what your spiritual gift, you are to “minister it to one another”
- Again, spiritual gifts are not for YOUR benefit; they are for the benefit of OTHERS, for the CHURCH overall
- God wants you to be a good steward of His *manifold grace*
- God’s *grace* is His divine enablement, but in this context, it is a reference to spiritual gifts – the ability to do things that do not come natural to you

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- His grace is “manifold” = variegated
- That is, God’s grace is diverse and comes to us in many different forms
- Notice that Peter categorizes all spiritual gifts in two groups: speaking and ministry
- Ministry = helps, administration, giving, mercy, hospitality, etc.
- Speaking = preaching, teaching – evangelist, pastor-teacher

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- Notice the two “if ... as” statements
- How do we exercise good stewardship in the use of these gifts?
- *If* you have a MINISTRY gift – then you are to serve *as* of the ability (enablement) which God supplies
- *If* you have a SPEAKING gift – then you are to speak *as* the oracles of God – that is, as if God Himself were speaking

41

Christ is glorified ...

- When the servant is ministering according to the ability (or enablement) that God gives
- When the preacher is preaching AS the oracles of God
- Are you using your God-bestowed spiritual gifts?
- If not, it’s time to get off your high horse and become a team player

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