



*by Mercy*

ROMANS 12:3-8

*Devotional*

## *Romans 12:3-8*

*<sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. <sup>6</sup> Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; <sup>7</sup> if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; <sup>8</sup> 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.*

# Day 1

ROMANS 12:3a

*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...*

Paul's command to the Romans comes from a place of authority as an apostle who has been given "grace," specifically, the grace of apostleship to bring about or oversee their obedience in the faith (Rom 1:5). This command is corporate and inclusive of all persons in the Roman congregation. What benefits come from widespread humility in a community? How might thinking about ourselves appropriately result in Gospel life in our church?

Let us not be confused, humility was not an ancient virtue. Commentator Michael Bird says, "Humility was for inferiors--for slaves, plebs and retainers." Rome was fiercely competitive and consumed with the pursuit of honor and status: "raising yourself above others was the name of the game." As Christians we are called to be set apart, or holy. In what areas of your life do you resemble the world? What would it look like to approach your day with the marks of humility: listening more than speaking up, serving rather than being served, considering others' needs before your own? Practice a posture of humility today, one that is only possible by the "grace given to us" through Christ Jesus.

## Prayer

*Father in heaven. I confess that I think myself to be higher than I ought. Forgive me and help me, Lord Jesus, to see myself through your eyes, as a child of God--beloved and a part of the kingdom of light that shines forth in our world. All of this is by no measure or work of my own, but by the grace given to me from You. Help me to see others with value, dignity and worth. Give me humility in situations where I might be puffed up. Help me fight pride and arrogance throughout my day. Your grace is sufficient for me, my status as a child of God brings me peace. Help me to serve, love and consider others today and this week, as an outworking of my humility in Christ. In Jesus name, Amen.*

# Day 2

ROMANS 12:3b

***...but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned***

Sober judgment means accurate thinking, one that avoids the ditch both of pride and the ditch of despair as it pertains to self evaluation. Which ditch are you more prone to? Why do you think that is?

Avoiding the above ditches means that we measure ourselves according to the faith that God has assigned. Here we are encouraged to look at ourselves through the lens of the Gospel which tells us “we are sinful and completely lost apart from his saving mercy” (cf. Rom 3:23) but simultaneously “we are beloved recipients of the free gift of grace and new life in the Spirit through faith in the finished work of Christ” (Rom 6:23, 8:11-16). How does this standard help you see yourself rightly?

## Prayer

*Lord Jesus apart from you I recognize that even my best works are as filthy rags in your sight, lacking proper motivation and complete purity of mind, heart and strength. But in union with you through faith, the Spirit testifies with my spirit that I am an accepted, beloved child, completely righteous in the sight of a holy God. This is the standard, the measure of faith. Holy Spirit, help me to apply this standard with sober judgment on my best days and on my worst days. Help me to remember who I am in you and to drown out the voices in my head or in the world around that either tell me I don't need God or I will never measure up. Thank you for such marvelous grace. In Jesus's name. Amen..*

# Day 3

ROMANS 12:4-5

***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.***

**UNITY & DIVERSITY**— In our increasingly globalizing society, people all over are faced with the opportunity and challenge of unity in diversity. There is danger on either side. Unity unchecked calls for uniformity, expecting conformity to whichever body asserts its power. Diversity without mutual respect leads to divisiveness and derision, where differences become a target to attack.

The Bible gives us a powerful framework to consider unity in diversity that's rooted in the three-in-one God himself! God is a unity, one God, in a diversity of persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

So how do we hold the tension of unity and diversity together as we encounter it in our locale? Take a moment to reflect on the opportunity and challenge of unity and diversity in your life.

**UNITY & TRANSCENDENCE (*given in Christ*)**— Paul grounds the unity of the people of God in union with Christ. Unity is not something we seek. Unity is a reality, given to the church to be experienced. (cf. unity: Ephesians 4:1-6, 12-13)

**DIVERSITY & INTERDEPENDENCE (*individually members one of another*)**— This passage also highlights the diversity of the church. We are not just a collection of independent "body parts," but we are an integrated organism! Paul reminds us that there is function and worth for every member. (cf. diversity: Ephesians 4:11-12, 15-16)

Compare Paul's description of unity and diversity with that of other definitions in the world today. How are they similar and different? How does the biblical basis for unity and diversity help you to find a way forward in this cultural moment?

# *Prayer*

*Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you are the one true living God, in your three-fold glory, three-fold power, and three-fold love. Lift up my eyes to you today. Help me to behold the beauty of the church's unity as one body, and the abundance of our diversity in you. I acknowledge that you have created us to need one another. I confess that our unity is in Christ alone. These remind me of the commands to "love Thy God and to love Thy neighbor." Lord, by your gracious hand would you help me to do that today? In Jesus's name, Amen.*

# Day 4

ROMANS 12:6a

*Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them...*

It's one thing to like and understand the imagery of the church as a body, with each of us having a different function. It's quite another thing to live it out! An orchestral analogy could be illuminating as well: the idea of different instruments working together is appealing. But French horns and snare drums are REALLY different. A harp and trumpet have to work hard to blend for the good of the piece. And 2nd violins just always have that "2nd" in their position. Let's pray for grace to grow in our love for each other as we offer up our differing gifts for the good of the church.

*In Rhythms for Life: Spiritual Practices for Who God Made You to Be*, Alastair Sterne writes "The gifts matter, but not as much as what they create." How is that a helpful orientation?

Matthew 5:14-16 tells us we ARE the light of the world and that the only way the light isn't seen is if we cover it. Ephesians 4:1-3 calls us to KEEP the unity of the Spirit, which means we already HAVE it and can only break it. And today's Romans passage says we HAVE gifts--and we can either use them or not. Let's pray Philippians 3:16 over Christ Church, that we might treasure what God has already attained for us.

As we continue our week, whether we're caught up in the busy-ness of things we enjoy or the mundane of the things we know we just have to finish, how can we accept and share God's gifts?

## *Prayer*

*God our heavenly Father, every good and perfect gift comes down from you, in whom there is no shadow: thank you for the gift of knowing you and your grace. Please fill us with your Holy Spirit and grant us eyes to see and receive the gifts you've entrusted to us. May we steward every gift according to the ways of your kingdom. You have uniquely made us. Please give us vision for how we can each use our gifts in many different ways for the common good of the church and for the sake of the world. Help us not to hold onto your generous gifts, but to hold fast to you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

*Rhythms for Life: Spiritual Practices for Who God Made You to Be* by Alastair Sterne, p. 42

# Day 5

ROMANS 12:6b-8

*...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.*

When Jesus ascended, He gave gifts that would build the body toward maturity, that is, Christlikeness. Some of the gifts are listed here. Each one is valuable, not for itself, but for the purpose of living together in a way that represents Christ to the world. Each gift is exercised “in proportion to our faith,” within the parameters of revealed truth and the gift itself. Competing and comparing or not using our gifts all disable the body.

What gift has God given you?

Is your service characterized by zeal and cheerfulness?

How can you encourage someone else in their service?

Do you think Christ is on display through the body life at Christ Church?

## Prayer

*Loving Father, You have been merciful and gracious to us while we carried on our rebellion against you. You are patient and long-suffering with our slowness and stumbling. We are thankful to you! Thank you for loving us in the Lord Jesus and equipping us to make Him known. Please help us encourage one another in ways that bring hope to a hopeless world. In Jesus's name, Amen*