

Romans

PART 20

ONE FAITH, ONE BODY,
MANY MEMBERS

All-In

Chapter 12 opened by teaching us that as living sacrifices transformed by the power of God, we are to be all-in for the gospel. So how do we do that? In the verses that follow, this chapter will discuss more specifics of our life together, our unity, our thoughts of each other, and our functions in the church. It calls all members to participate in gospel living. No one is supposed to sit on the sidelines. The Christian life is properly lived in honor of the whole body of Christ. We are not to function alone as solo spiritual rogues in the wilderness, but we are to work together for the gospel, recognizing how much each person has to offer. We must not think, “I don’t matter. There’s nothing for me to do in the church.” Rather, we must see the priceless value of our own lives and the lives of others in Christ’s body.

Chapter Highlights

VS 3-5

Our thoughts are to be measured by what God says, and how we value the gospel message will affect how we live for the glory of God. If the message of Christ is huge to us, our thoughts of ourselves and of others will be in balance with God’s Word. So what are sound thoughts in agreement with the Word of God? Sober thinking is acknowledging our equality in Christ. He is all and in all members, and we are members one of another. Therefore, we are not to think too highly or too lowly of ourselves. Abject pride and self-pity are both boastful, focused on self. Both types of pride seek glory from men. Both are deceptive and destructive, isolating us and embittering us. We are not to think of ourselves as worthless and useless, nor are we to be self-righteous and think of ourselves as better than everyone else. You are a Christ-filled, deeply loved person, alive by the holy spirit dwelling in you.

Before discussing gifts of grace, chapter 12 establishes our common identity. Christ is the head and we are supplied spiritually by him as his members. We, as one body, are the ones by whom Christ does his work in the world. We are singularly united under one person as joint-heirs and joint-members. In a culture so focused on the individual, we must renew our minds to God’s way, not allowing ourselves to be conformed to the selfish ways of the world. Life for Christ is fundamentally lived with others, and we must recognize that before getting to individual offices in the body.

SIMILARITIES VS DIFFERENCES

- One body, yet unique parts
- Everyone has a role, yet they can differ in function
- We all have a common purpose to love and encourage each other, yet each has a special gift of grace

All Christians are called to an active role. Both the shared functions and special ones are important. We all have received THE gift of holy spirit, but each person also has A gift of grace that allows them to serve in ways unique to them as God works within them to do so. This notion presupposes that we are already giving our lives sacrificially over to God. So, instead of trying to figure out the specifics of our individual offices, we should focus on living for God and participating in our common roles. As we do so, the special things God graces us to do will be pouring out of us. We also must remember that the ministries he gives are by grace, and they do not define who we are. Let us not think that the more public or prominent gifts are better than more “unseen” ones. Sober thinking is according to the measure of faith given to all people, by which we know that we are all of equal value in Christ.

AN IMPORTANT WARNING

We must not compare ourselves to others in a competitive way. Christ is all and in all, and we can rejoice in both our shared identity and unique graces. Differences are not a cause for division, but they are the diverse beauty of the body of Christ. **Everyone belongs here. Everyone has a home in this family.** The purpose of these gifts is not for the sake of our own glory, and it is not power for power’s sake. We do not work against each other, but we all work towards the faith of the gospel as we are supplied by the same lifesource of the spirit of Christ. The proportion/measure of faith is the same foundation to all, so even with our unique gifts we all function in accordance with that standard, which is the gospel and its purposes.

There are many more ministries than what are listed here in Romans 12, and all of them are useful for the edification of the church. Whatever we excel at, we do so by Christ in us and by grace to the glory of God. **All kinds of service is needed, and the health of the body of Christ is directly affected by ALL members ministering to each other, not just the leaders.** For example, Barnabas excelled in exhortation, and that gift was highly efficacious to the whole church, even among the apostles. Each person is called to serve, even if we’re not good at it by the flesh. Moses wasn’t naturally a good speaker, David was a lowly shepherd, and many of the apostles were outcasts and humble fishermen. We don’t need a title to “get going” on doing God’s will. It starts with a desire to live for God, and as we get involved with people’s lives, we can walk by the spirit to meet the needs we see in front of us. If we focus on our own needs, we won’t see God’s will and the opportunities He provides to minister to our brothers and sisters.

VS 6-8 CONT.

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:

Whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

I PETER 4:10-11 ESV

VS 9-10

Let love be without hypocrisy. Let it be genuine and real. Don't play a part. Don't wear a mask. Genuine love comes from our sober thinking and the value of the gospel to our hearts. As we are impacted by the one who loved us and gave himself for us, we will love others with a pure heart fervently. Also, this will cause us to shudder in hatred at evil things. The wickedness of the world should be disgusting to us. This of course includes things like murder, theft, and lust, but it also includes bickering, loose speech, slander, covetousness, bitterness, unforgiveness, and causing disunity, which are also evil. Instead, we can cleave to what is good, which is the will of God as verse 1 said. Renewing our thoughts to His ways will heal our conscience from clinging to evil things.

We are to be devoted to each other in kind, affectionate love. We can't get rid of each other, and desiring to cut off our fellow members is so far from the heart of the Father. Rather, we are to take the lead in showing honor to each other. We try to outdo one another in love, making the first move in showing value to our brothers. We should care about the needs of others more than we care about our own, even when they do evil things. This is the standard of faith, not the standard of flesh.

Conclusion

Romans 12 displays the posture of the heart for the one who wants to serve. My life belongs to God, I am dead to sin and self, and I will not be conformed to the world. I will be transformed by God's faith standard in the gospel and participate in His purposes as a living sacrifice.

Romans

VIEW OUR ROMANS SERIES ON YOUTUBE

