

Romans

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Romans 12:3-8



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Vss. 3-5

- Paul here returns to one of his favorite preaching metaphors, that of seeing the church as a human body, specifically as the Body of Christ. We see a much more expanded presentation of the concept in 1 Corinthians 12 where Paul goes into great detail and depth.
- In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul points out that all special gifts come from God and that they must be used in God's service as God directs. The fault of the Church, in modern times at least, is that it has interpreted the idea of special gifts far too narrowly, thinking only that special gifts of the Spirit consist of things that are super spiritual like healing or speaking in tongues or intellectual gifts such as public speaking, praying, teaching and writing. It would be a good thing if the Church would realize that the gifts of the man who can work with his hands are just as special gifts from God. The mason, the carpenter, the electrician, the painter, the engineer, the plumber all have their special gifts which are all from God and can be used for Him.
- So when Paul says here that none of us should think too highly of ourselves, it is because the ground at the foot of the cross is level. We are all just sinners saved by grace and whatever we have is a gift from God, a gift not given on merit, because we have none, but given by God's grace and for His purpose. In the church we should realize how we need each other and have respect for each other. There can be no such thing as "I don't need anyone" isolation in the Church or pridefulness in the church. Jesus in Matthew 20:25-26 said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles domineer over them, and those in high position exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wants to become prominent among you shall be your servant..."
- As Barclay puts it, "Here is one of the most famous pictures of the unity of the Church ever written. Men have always been fascinated by the way in which the different parts of the body cooperate. Long ago Plato had drawn a famous picture in which he had said that the head was the citadel; the neck, the isthmus between the head and the body; the heart, the fountain of the body; the pores, the lanes of the body; the veins, the canals of the body. So Paul drew his picture of the Church as a body. A body consists of many parts but there is in it an essential unity. Plato had pointed out that we do not say, "My finger has a pain," we say, "I have a pain." There is an I, a personality, which gives unity to the many and varying parts of the body. What the I is to the body, Christ is to the Church. It is in Him that all the diverse parts find their unity."

- Paul goes on to look at this in another way. "...we," he says, "are one body in Christ." There is a tremendous thought here. Christ is no longer in this world in the body, therefore if Christ wants a task done within the world, He has to find someone to do it. If He wants a child taught or if he wants a sick person cured or if he wants His story told, he has to find someone to make it happen. Literally, we have to be the body of Christ, hands to do His work, feet to run upon His errands, a voice to speak for Him.
- "He has no hands but our hands to do His work today. He has no feet but our feet to lead men in His way. He has no voice but our voice to tell men how He died. He has no help but our help to lead them to his side. We are the only Bible the careless world will read. We are the sinner's gospel. We are the scoffer's creed. We are the Lord's last message, given in word and deed. What if the type is crooked? What if the print is blurred? What if our hands are busy with other work than His? What if our feet are walking where sin's allurements are? What if our tongue is speaking of things His lips would spurn? How can we hope to help Him or welcome His return?" Annie Johnston Flint
- Here is the supreme glory of the Christian: he or she is part of the body of Christ upon earth. But it is all a gift, it is nothing we've earned that we should take personal pride in.
- So Paul draws a picture of the unity which should exist inside the Church if it is to fulfil its proper function. A body is healthy and efficient only when each part is functioning perfectly. The parts of the body are not jealous of each other and do not covet each other's functions. From Paul's picture we see certain things which ought to exist in the Church, the body of Christ.

Vss. 6-8

- Prophecy (not foretelling the future but preaching like an Old Testament prophet, "Thus sayeth the Lord..."), service, teaching, exhortation (with emphasis on evangelism and joy), giving (joyfully without hesitation), leading (with enthusiasm), and showing mercy with cheerfulness are singled out as examples of the various parts of a unified and cohesive body of believers. Joy is implied in each of these and a primary quality.
- Philippians 4:4 "Rejoice in the Lord always! Again I will say, rejoice!"