

The Body of Christ¹
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Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC
June 11, 2023

Text: Romans 12:3-8

Purpose: For most of us, faith is so individualistic. Paul wants us to realize that since we have accepted Christ as our Savior, we also belong to each other. Each of us make up a portion of the larger community. We are to live out our faith in community and not in isolation of one another.

Eight-year-old Susie came home from school and informed her mother that today in class they had learned how to make babies. The mother, rather shaken by the development, called the teacher to complain.



After listening to the mother complain for a few minutes, the teacher responded, "Did you ask her to explain how it is done?"

"No," said the mother.

"Then ask her and call me back," replied the teacher.

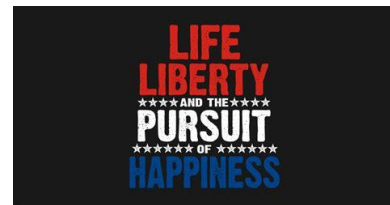
"So how DO you make babies?" the mother asked her daughter.

Susie responded, "You drop the 'y' and add 'ies.'"²

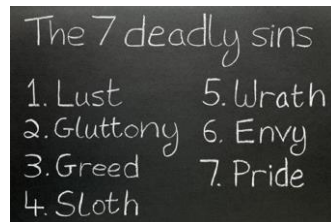
Last week we began to examine chapter twelve by looking at the secret to living a holy life before God. What we discovered last week was that we are offer our bodies as a “living sacrifice.” This was to be a deliberate decision on the part of the believer in surrendering their body, mind, and will to the Lord. We as individuals are to yield our lives unto the Lord. Paul calls this our “reasonable service.”



This way of thinking fits so well into American mindset. American are by nature, and by constitution, individualistic. We don’t like anyone telling us what to do, when to do it, or how to do it. We are so determined to pursue freedom that we have written into our constitution that we are guaranteed life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. For the most part, our country is geared towards personal satisfaction to the exclusion of the needs of the community. Even when it comes to matters of faith, we tend to be very individualistic instead of community minded.



Paul is inviting us to shift our thinking from the individual believer to how the individual interacts in the Body of Christ. As we come together as a community of faith, we need to be aware our individual pride can hinder the unity in the body. We also need to be mindful as to our place in the body of Christ, as well as our performance in the body of Christ.

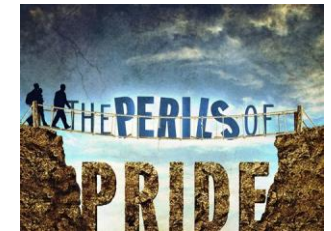


I. Watch Your Pride in the Body (v. 3)

Paul is well aware of the nature of mankind. When we think we have arrived to a place of holiness in our lives, the issue of pride always rears its ugly head. One of the greatest dangers we face in our Christian walk is the sin of pride. It is so easy to think we are all right with God while all those around us are simply sinners. But pride is actually the root of all sin! This is possible because pride is based upon putting “I” first!

A. The Danger We are to Avoid

Pride is the sin that actually has a two-fold danger.



1. Self Deception

The first problem that Paul addresses it that of thinking more of yourself than you should think. Paul has in mind those people who tend to look down on other believers. Maybe they think that others are not as holy as they are. Maybe they feel that their gifts to the community of faith are superior to others. Maybe they want to be in control of the church and believe that God has given them all the



answers to the church’s problems. I have met a few people like this in other churches. They think they have the “right stuff” when in fact, their pride and arrogance cause so many problems.

They actually think that the church would fold if they didn’t attempt to run the church. John spoke about a man named Diotrephes in 3 John 9. This man “loved to have the preeminence among the church.” We need to remember

that the church has existed before we came on the scene, and will continue to exist after we are gone.

2. Self Deprecation

At the opposite end of the spectrum are those people who display a “false humility.”

These are the people who when asked to do something in the church they say, “I can’t do it! I don’t have any talents. I don’t have any abilities. I can’t do anything.”



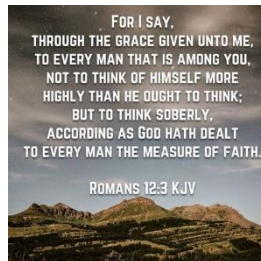
If you are saved, there is something you can be doing. When you were saved, God gifted you in at least one area. You need to get busy and use that gift for the glory of God. If you don’t use what you have been given, then it is almost an insult to God.

Also in this group are those people who try to downplay what the Lord has gifted them to do. The Lord may use them in a mighty way and they only shrug it off as “nothing.” If the Lord has used you in a particular way, don’t deny it. Let the Lord get the glory for using you in your situation. We are only to be the vessels that the Lord uses for his will and purpose.

B. The Decision We Are to Accept

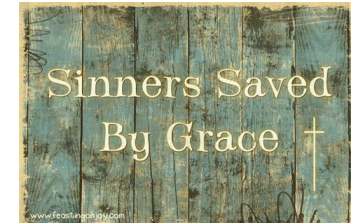
Between these two extremes of self deception and self deprecation we find the balance we are to strive towards.

Paul calls on us to “*think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*” The word “soberly” means to act sanely and intelligently.



We are to make an honest assessment of what the Lord has done in our lives. If He has gifted you in an area, do not become puffed up because of that gift. Instead, submit your life to the Lord and let Him use that gift for His glory.

If He hasn’t given you a certain gift, accept the one that the Lord has given to you and put it to use. We do not need to swell up with pride, nor do we need to have an attitude of false humility.



1. We are all saved by grace

We need to remember that we are all saved by grace. We are all washed in the same blood. We are all headed to the same heaven. We all sing the same song. In God’s eyes we are all equal. God is not a respecter of persons and neither should we.

2. We are all serving by grace

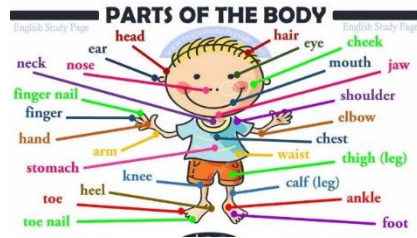
It is out of the grace of God that we are called to an area of service. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:10, “*But by the grace of God, I am what I am.*” If we are living the kind of life God has called us to, then we will become what God intends for us to be. We are all gifted differently in the body of Christ. These gifts were given to us to use to encourage one another and help the body of Christ to grow in the knowledge and wisdom of God.

II. Watch Your Place in the Body (v. 4-5)

Our gifts help us in our place in the Body of Christ. When they are put to use, then everyone is benefited.

A. Understanding the Image (v. 4)

Paul draws our attention in verse four to the image of the human body. Our bodies are very complex. Our bodies are made of trillions of cells, over 200 bones, over 600 muscles and many different specialized systems that cause our bodies to function and work. Each cell is different and has a different function. Every body part is unique and is designed for one function. No part of the body tries to do the function of another. For the body to live, each must do their part or the whole dies.

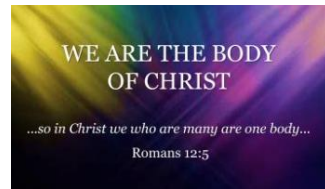


Paul is appealing to the vast diversity the body has but also how it is unified in its function. Paul wants us to realize that we are all different and diverse in our gifts, functions, and abilities. But if the Body of Christ is to be healthy, vibrant, and alive, then we **ALL** need to exercise our giftedness and not hide it.

B. Understanding our Individuality (v. 5a)

Paul reminds us in the first part of verse five, that we are all individuals. But we are also united to the person of Jesus Christ. Because of our unity in the Body of Christ, we are also responsible to the whole.

Verse five says, “so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.” (This is one of the songs that Marty Goetz sings that I love – “We Being Many.”)



C. Understanding the Integration (v. 5b)

This body is actually an integration of different components. We are to function seamlessly! As we look at the church and those around us, we see different personalities, needs, gifts, and ways of doing things. But God has brought us together for a purpose and function. If we were to act united as one body, then we could do great things for our community here in Kinston. Each person is needed in the body of Christ.



Every member has been gifted in some area or another. We must identify our gifts and begin to put them to use.

III. Watch Your Performance in the Body (v. 6-8)

As we begin to identify our giftedness in the body of Christ, we need to make sure we are performing it in the correct fashion.



A. Our Call (v. 6a)

Verses 6 – 8 remind us of our call, condition, and a word of caution. “*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 give, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy with cheerfulness.*”

Spiritual Gifts

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Prophecy | 14. Faith |
| 2. Pastor | 15. Leadership |
| 3. Teaching | 16. Administration |
| 4. Wisdom | 17. Miracles |
| 5. Knowledge | 18. Healing |
| 6. Exhortation | 19. Tongues |
| 7. Discerning of Spirits | 20. Interpretation |
| 8. Giving | 21. Voluntary Poverty |
| 9. Helps | 22. Celibacy |
| 10. Mercy | 23. Intercession |
| 11. Missionary | 24. Exorcism |
| 12. Evangelist | 25. Service |
| 13. Hospitality | |

These verses remind us once again that when we were saved, we all got a gift. At the moment of conversion, we received a special gift from God that He intended you to use for the good of the Body of Christ. What you need to do is ask the Lord what gift you have received and then begin to put it into use.

If you walk in humble submission to the Lord, He will reveal to you the gift you have received. He will also give you an opportunity to use it for His glory as you go through this world. You have been saved and gifted with a unique gift. The church needs you to put it to use and not sit in the pew hiding it.

B. Our Condition (v. 6b-8a)

God has given various gifts to the Body. In this list, Paul mentions prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhorting, giving, leadership, and mercy. In other passages we find additional gifts that the Lord has given to the Church.

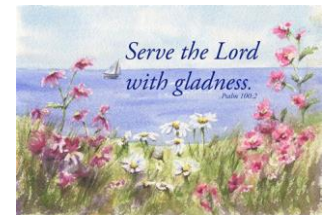
If you will look on the back of your bulletin, you will find a list of 25 different gifts that C. Peter Wagner has identified as spiritual gifts for the church. These are found in 1 Corinthians 12:28-31, Ephesians 4:11-12, and 1 Peter 4:10. If you are interested in finding out what your gift might be, let me know and I will sit down with you and share a gift assessment questionnaire to guide you to your area of giftedness.

It was Paul's idea that we seek to determine our gifts and then consecrate them unto the Lord. In 1996, I took that gift assessment and determined that I had been given several gifts that when combined, made a good match to serve as a pastor. It was at that point that I realized that I might be uniquely gifted to serve as a pastor to a congregation.

I did not immediately begin to seek to serve as a pastor in a church. I continued to teach Sunday school. I began to work with small group ministries. I continued to interpret for the deaf, and write articles for the newsletter. I took a step of faith and enrolled in the Master of Divinity program at Campbell. Each of these opportunities were used by the Lord to prepared me to accept the call to serve the body of Christ as a Pastor.

C. Our Caution (v. 8b)

As we examine our passage from Paul, we are cautioned as we exercise our gifts, we need to use them with simplicity, diligence, and cheerfulness. These can be applied not only to the three gifts listed by Paul, (giving, ruling, and showing mercy) but they apply to all the rest on that list.



1. Simplicity

When I think of simplicity, it means to use with sincerity, free from pretense and hypocrisy. When we exercise our gifts, we need to do it out of a pure heart. We need to do it as unto the Lord – not for ourselves. We should serve for the glory of God and not for personal gain.

2. Diligence

The word diligence means “with haste and earnestness striving after something.” There needs to be an urgency in what we do in life. We also need to be intentional and persistent in using our gift(s). When we put them to use, we can make a difference in other people’s lives. When we are sloughful (lazy) in the use of our gift and resources, we actually waste what God has given to use.

3. Cheerfulness

The third word used by Paul is cheerful. We need to have an excited joy about doing what God has asked us to do. As we exercise our gifts, we get a feeling of completion and fulfillment that no other area of life can fill. When we reach that point, we are excited about what God is doing in our life. Going to church will not be drudgery, instead it will be because you want to come.

Today we have talked about how God calls us and has given each of us gifts to serve in the Body of Christ. I wonder, “How well are we doing in filling the places in the Body of Christ?” As you have been listening this morning, has God touched your heart about your place of ministry and service? Maybe you have been exercising your gift, but you have done it out of a sense of pride and false humility. Maybe you have not been



using your gifts as you should have been. Maybe you have never taken the time to discover your unique gift that needs to be put to use in the Body of Christ.

Only God knows your heart and only you can respond as He leads and guides.

LET US PRAY

Notes:

¹ Outline from Sermon Notebook, Romans 12_3-8, Thinking about the Body

² Mikey’s Funnies, Babies Funny, May 1, 2023