

- Week 18 -

Romans 12:3-21

Read Romans 12:3

Paul begins his discussion of our relationship with one another with an exercise in self-evaluation. He uses the Greek verb *froneō* in word play to make his point.

*mā hūperfronein para ho dei fronein
alla fronein eis to sōfronein*

*Do not hyperthink [of yourself] more than you should think
but think of yourself healthy [honest, sober] thinking.*

In other words, evaluate your own abilities and place in the church honestly and realistically. See yourself as you really are, not as you think or wish you are.

Let's take a minute to discuss some situations in which we might "hyperthink" about ourselves and how to correct that. What might cause this kind of overvaluing of yourself, and what brings you back to reality?

Overvaluing yourself

Seeing yourself honestly

Why is overvaluing yourself dangerous to the cause of Christ?

Read Romans 12:4-8

Paul addresses the practical reality of the church (the body of Christ; v 5; Eph 3:6, 4:12).

What is the advantage of thinking of ourselves as members of one body?

Notice the use of "grace" in verse 3 (by the grace given to me) and verse 6 (according to the grace given to us). Does Paul see himself as above the church or part of it?

What implications does that have for positions of authority in the church today?

The list of gifts that Paul offers is not exhaustive. Still, they are important in the context he is dealing with, namely the issue of the church sorting out how the Jews and Gentiles should relate to one another in the church.

- One who prophesies, in proportion to our faith
- One who serves, in our serving
- One who teaches (participle), in his teaching
- One who exhorts (“appeal”, v 1), in his exhortation
- One who gives, in his giving
- One who leads, with zeal
- One who does mercy, with cheerfulness

As we read these gifts, let’s consider them not as gifts to the individual — “I have the gift of service — but gifts *to* the church. How do each of these gifts benefit the church as a body?

Read Romans 12:9-13

In English, this passage seems to be just a series of commands. The structure is a little more complicated than that. Paul opens with “Let love be genuine” (there is no verb in the Greek) which is followed by eleven (11) active participles that are meant to illustrate what that means. Take a moment to reflect on how these commands reflect genuine love.

Read Romans 12:14-18

The next series begins with a command (imperative mood), “Bless those who bless you” (v 14) which is then followed by another series of embedded participles. Paul glosses God’s promise to Abraham (Gen 12:3).

Incidentally, v 16 uses the participle form of the verb from our discussion in v 3, *froneō*, so Paul is coming back to that idea.

His conclusion is in verse 18. It is a case in which the English “live peaceably” doesn’t really convey the idea. Paul may be glossing Jesus from Matt 5:9. “With all your power/might, be peace with everyone.”

Why would this idea of “being peace” be so important in the church? In the Roman world?

Read Romans 12:19-21

Why does Paul call his audience “beloved”? Remember how he opened this section (v 9).

When Paul quotes Deuteronomy 32:35 — “Vengeance is mine...” — why would this matter in the world that his audience found themselves?

Check out Matthew 5:38-42 and 25:31-40; Luke 6:34-36. Can you see how Paul is again referring to the teachings of Jesus in verse 20?

Paul’s call for compassion in verse 20 speaks to his desire not to be overcome (*nikaō*) by evil. How does this inform our perspective on world affairs, particularly the evils of this present age?

Verse 21 is a transitional verse, providing the opening bookend for a section which closes with 13:8. This is known as an *inclusio*. The next section deals with the church’s relationship to those outside of the church — governments, civic authorities, unbelievers. How does our attitude toward other believers affect our relationship with those outside of the church?

Added Note at the End

Although this is not the point of the passage, how does knowing that Paul is glossing Jesus help your understanding of how the New Testament was written?