

Romans 12:3-13

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

⁹ Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

Romans 12:3

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I appreciate how Paul starts with this phrase “For by the grace given to me,” reminding himself and those to which he is writing, that it is by the grace of God applied to him that he is even able to speak about Jesus at all. He follows that with “me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.” Paul wants us to be cautious of how we see ourselves, because as we spoke about in previous studies, we do not have a true view of ourselves. We talked about this in Study 30 when we discussed Romans 11:25, “Lest you be wise in your own sight”. Here are the notes from that study:

“Paul understood that his mind will easily pass over and excuse his own “small sins” and but put a magnifying glass on another’s “big sins.” That describes each of us. Our members, our minds, and emotions, are still wired to assign fault to someone else for our shortcomings. We cannot trust our judgement or evaluation of ourselves because we do not see ourselves accurately; we either fall far short of who we are or think too much of who we are. We may think we are wise in figuring life, faith, parenting, marriage, but our God the Father and God the Son both called us sheep in need of a shepherd. Sheep are incredibly stupid animals and would quickly die without their shepherd. I think that is a fair comparison of us as His creation to God as Creator.”

“but to think with sober judgment” means to consider yourself with a sound mind, a right mind, and a mind that gives a moderate estimate of yourself, not thinking too highly.

“each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.” God has given us each faith; some have faith to pray in power, others have faith to heal and others have faith to prophecy. God is not only the provider of our spiritual gifts; He is also the provider of the faith to act on the His prompting to use that gift.

Romans 12:4-7

⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Having gifts that differ

according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ 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.

Paul reminds us *“For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.”* What a wonderful reminder that there is no need to be jealous of someone else’s gifting or faith. It is the body of Christ working together that makes it a body. A hand cannot work without the wrist and forearm, and an arm cannot work without being attached to the torso. So while each serve a different function in the body, all the parts and their functions are necessary. And so it is with the body of Christ. We should consider how we elevate those among us who are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers since scripture is telling us they are no more important than any of us. The key is to DO your part. Exercise your faith by walking in the gifting the Lord has given to you. There are no spectators in Christianity; only players. The last part of this sentence above *“individually members one of another”* means that as parts of the body, we are connected to one another. All believers everywhere are part of the body of Christ, with no one being more important than another because of their function, their country of origin, or their economic standing. God shows no partiality, and neither should we.

It is a fascinating thing to experience the body of Christ in as small as just 2 other people where upon sharing, we learn that we have gifts that complement each other; that one’s strengths are another’s weaknesses. Only our supernatural God can make that happen. Then when we are in our churches, we see it again – some are gifted to teach, others to sing, others to welcome. And when Bob and I come to Kenya and Uganda, we experience it as well as we gather in small groups to share.

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Here Paul provides some examples of the gifts and then the action related to walking them out. He gives prophecy and the action is the faith to step into what you are hearing the Lord telling you for another. The gift of service requires the faith to step out into unknown areas where you can serve others. The gift of teaching is walked out in faith by trusting that the Lord is giving you not just revelation but the gift to explain it so others can understand.

The gift of exhortation is the gift of developing relationships with other believers to be able to encourage them in their spiritual growth. If that is the gift you are given, then step out in faith that God has had you build those relationships with those who need encouragement in their walk. To the one who has been given much by the Lord in material wealth, the faith to give generously and trust that He is the one who provided it all to begin with. To the one who has been given the gift to lead, to do with a diligence and earnestness so that others are led well.

And lastly to the one who has been given the gift of mercy to do so with the right attitude of cheerfulness, not as a burden. Gotquestions.com describes the gift of mercy as what we express when we are led by God to be

compassionate in our attitudes, words, and actions. It is more than feeling sympathy toward someone; it is love enacted.

Romans 12:9-13

⁹ *Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.* ¹⁰ *Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.* ¹¹ *Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.* ¹² *Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.* ¹³ *Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.*

Verse 9 begins with “*Let love be genuine.*” A definition of “genuine” is without hypocrisy, not false or disguised. In the Greek, the word for this genuine love is *agape*. Gotquestions.com describes this type of love: “*agape* is not used in the New Testament to refer to romantic or sexual love that the Greeks called *eros*. Nor does it refer to close friendship or brotherly love, for which the Greek word *philia* is used. Agape love involves faithfulness, commitment, and an act of the will. It is distinguished from the other types of love by its lofty moral nature and strong character. Agape love is beautifully described in 1 Corinthians 13.” This is the love to which Paul is referring, when he asks us to have our love be genuine.

Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Abhor means to intensely dislike or hate. The Lord hates evil actions within man, as it reflects the heart. Proverbs 27:19 says, “*As a face is reflected in water, so the heart reflects the real person.*”

Proverbs 6:16-19 says, “*There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.*”

Psalms 5:5-6 says, “*The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers. You destroy those who speak lies; the Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.*”

As Holy Spirit works within us, we will despise evil thoughts and actions, and not want to partake in any of them; even the smallest lie will cause great conviction. Then Paul provides the opposite, what we are to do. “*Hold fast to what is good.*” Genesis 2 uses “hold fast” when speaking about how when a man marries, he “*holds fast to his wife and they become one flesh*”. The King James for verse 9 uses “cleave” which means to be joined, and come from the root word, *kolla*, which means glue. What powerful imagery and fiery words are used here by Paul – intensely hate what is evil and be glued to what is good.

Verse 10 says “*Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.*” In this verse, Paul also uses brotherly love, whose Greek word is *Philia*. Jesus commanded this love of His disciples in John 13:34-35 when He said, “*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.*” ³⁵ *By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*” This is a love that moves from words into action, and should be evident in our lives and in our communities. One of the most powerful ways to demonstrate that love is to “*Outdo one another in showing honor.*” This can only be done when we humble ourselves. We see this repeatedly in scripture. Philippians 2:3 says, “*Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.*”

1 Peter 5:5 says, *Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another*". The only way we can show more honor to someone else than ourselves is when we are humble and walking in love for those around us.

Verse 11 says, *"Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord."* Slothful is an interesting word choice here. The King James uses the same word, and when we look it up in the Greek, it means "irksome" which still needs a definition as well. Irsome means "shrinking, timid" and is used negatively in that it is grievous. "zeal" here means earnest care, carefulness, and diligence in the Greek. I know the King James and New King James translates this word into English as "business" but that is a little less accurate. *"be fervent in spirit"* means to be hot or to boil for the Lord. We often hear the phrase, "He or she is on fire for the Lord!" That is the equivalent. So again like verse 10, Paul provides the opposites: the negative and the positive. We are not to be timid, shy, or lazy in our actions and care of one another but instead be spiritually on fire recognizing that we are always serving the Lord when we serve one another.

In verse 12, three short phrases reflect our personal relationship with Jesus Christ. *"Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer."*

Christ is our hope for this current life as it is through Him that we can live in joy and peace above our circumstances. He is even more our hope for eternal life where we will dwell in the presence of God fully revealed in all His glory. Romans 5:2 says, *"Through Him (Jesus), we have obtained access into this grace in which we stand and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God."* We are to be a joyful people because of the hope we have in Jesus, and this is part of the evidence to non-believers that we have something they do not, that draws them to inquire.

"be patient in tribulation" requires us to persevere while holding onto our faith in Christ. It is faith that reminds us God is working on our behalf, faith that He is redeeming all things for good for those who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). It is faith that reminds us He is using this tribulation to transform us more into His image (Romans 8:29). Jesus made it clear that there would be tribulation when He said in John 16:33, *"In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."* Taking heart means having hope, speaking truth over your situation and yourself, encouraging yourself through Him. Our patience is rooted in our trust and faith in Jesus, who has given us the right to be called children of God. And if we are His children, we can trust that God our Father is working behind the scenes on our behalf. As Psalm 23:1 says, *The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want."*

"be constant in prayer." We are reminded of this frequently. We pray when we are anxious and worried (Philippians 4:6-7), we pray when we are sick (James 5:16), we pray when we are thankful (Psalm 100:4); we pray in all circumstances because He is our Father and we are His children. It is how we communicate with Him; it is how we depend on Him. Prayer is a conversation and our Father wants to talk to us all the time.

In verse 13, *Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.* These are the actions that manifest through a relationship with Jesus Christ. Paul collected money from the churches he was visiting, to give to the saints in Jerusalem who were suffering. We are transformed into people who have compassion for others. At the Lord's prompting, we are guided into helping with the needs of our brothers and sisters. This could be providing meals or clothing to a family in your neighborhood. "Contribute" in the Greek means to come into communion or fellowship, to share in or partner in. The hardship with being in need is not only the

physical/material need but also the emotional need. If most of those around you are doing well enough, and you suddenly have a situation that causes you to have a need, you can feel isolated and alone. It can also be embarrassing and shame-filled in your mind. This is when the enemy can attack. But when the Lord prompts your brothers and sisters in Christ to contribute, not only are they meeting your physical need; they are also demonstrating that you are not alone, that they are in this with you. It is a powerfully encouraging action to contribute to the needs of the saints. It is also a powerful demonstration to non-believers of Christians in action.

“Seek to show hospitality” Another word for seek is practice. Practice hospitality. Practice of any kind means you are doing it for a prolonged period. We are called to be a hospitable people, to open our homes to “strangers.” A stranger is believer we do not know; it is not someone that no one knows. Paul traveled around to all the churches and stayed in homes of believers in those locations. That hospitality enabled him to get the sleep and food he needed to teach. It not only met his physical needs, but provided for his emotional wellbeing through being in communion with others. Practicing hospitality is another form of “contributing to the needs of the saints.”