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Title: Thinking About the Body

Text: Romans 12:3-8

Paul begins chapter 12 by telling his brethren that you present your body to the Lord as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. That is your reasonable service. In verse 2 he tells us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds so that you can prove or determine the will of God. Paul's emphasis here was to get believers to understand that they had an obligation to the Lord to give Him the best of their service and sacrifice. The rest of the chapter is given over to the individual believer's duty and place in the whole body of Christ.

As we consider Paul's words in our text we find that there are three observations that every believer needs to make concerning where he or she fits in to God's plan for the body of Christ.

- 1. Watch Your PRIDE in the Body (v. 3).** There is a danger that as we grow in the Lord and become more separated in our walk that we will embrace the sin of pride. In fact, pride is at the very root of all sin! How is that possible? Because pride puts "I" first! Also notice that Paul's remarks are not given to an isolated few, but to all believers. Pride is a sin that we all deal with from time to time. Let's notice the challenge against pride that we are given in verse 3. **A. The Danger We Are to Avoid.** The apostle tells us that the danger of pride is a two-fold danger. **Self-Deception** is the first problem that Paul addresses – that of thinking more of yourself than you ought to think. Paul has in mind those people who tend to look down on other believers. Maybe they tend to think that others aren't as holy as they themselves are. Maybe they think that their gifts are superior to those of others. Maybe they want to be in control, believing that God has vested within them the answers to every problem. Whatever goes through a person's mind who thinks he "is the stuff", he is a person walking in pride! Sadly, there are many who think they are "God's gift to the church". Some go so far as to believe that if they and their talents were removed from the life of the local church, the church would cease to function. John spoke of a man like this in 3 John 9. He mentioned a man named Diotrephes, who "loveth to have the preeminence among them." Too many, like Diotrephes, have forgotten that the church existed before they did and will continue to exist after they are gone! The conclusion of the matter is this: every believer is important, but none is essential! That is, there is a place in the work of God for all the redeemed, but the whole work rests on the shoulders of none! When any church or ministry becomes dependent on the gifts and abilities of just one or two individuals, that ministry is in danger and needs to change. May we learn the truth of Paul's words in Philippians 2:3-5 – *"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus..."* **Self-Deprecation** – the opposite end of the spectrum are those folks who display a "false humility". There are the people who when asked to do something in the church say things like, "I can't do it! I don't have any talents or abilities. I can't do anything." If you are saved, there is something you can do! When the Lord saved you, He gifted you in some area. It is up to you to find out what that gift is and to get busy using it for the glory of God. To do less is a slap in the face of the God who saved you by His grace! When we adopt such an attitude, we are saying that the Lord messed up! That He didn't know what He was doing when He saved and gifted you for service! I don't think I would want to be guilty of saying that to the Lord. How about you? Also in this group are those people who try to downplay what the Lord has gifted them to do. If the Lord has used your life in a great way, don't deny Him the glory He is due! When someone come up and brags on you, just tell them that all the glory belongs to the Lord who chooses and uses vessels according to His will. **B. The Decision We Are to Accept.** Between these two extremes is the balance we are to strive for. Paul calls on us to *"think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."* "The word *"soberly"* means "sanely, intelligently." This verse tells us that we need 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 in that gift. Instead, submit your life to the Lord and allow Him to use that gift for His glory. The bottom line is that we need to be honest about what the Lord has done for us by His grace. Don't think it makes you better than anyone else. By the same token, don't assume a position of false humility, by pretending that God isn't doing anything through you. Both extremes are wrong! Don't lose sight of Paul's use of the word "GRACE" (v. 3, 6). This word reminds us of two important truths. We are all saved by grace. We got into this thing the same way, and we all came from the same place! We are washed in the same blood. We are headed

to the same Heaven. Regardless of our respective backgrounds, we are all sinners that God has saved by His marvelous grace (Ephesians 2:8-9). You or I will never be better than any other believer! We are all serving by grace. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:10, *“But by the grace of God I am what I am.”* If you and I are living the right kind of lives for Jesus Christ, then we will never be any more or any less than He intends us to be. Whatever gifts, talents and abilities we have are ours by His grace and are to be used for His glory. They were not given to us so that we could exalt ourselves through them, BUT so that we might be able to live for God, honor Jesus and glorify the Father. God’s grace, active in the life of the believer, is what equalizes us one with the other. God decides what we do and to what extent we do it. Therefore, He leaves us no room for the exercise of foolish pride in the arena of our walk with Him.

2. **Watch Your PLACE in the Body (v. 4-5).** Paul’s next objective is to teach the individuals that they should use their respective gifts for the good of the whole body of Christ. **A. Understand the Image (v. 4).** Paul draws our attention to the human body to illustrate what he is about to teach. A human’s body is a complex creation. Our bodies are made up of trillions of cells, over 200 bones, over 600 muscles and specialized systems that cause us to be able to live and function. The body is very diverse, but it is the perfect picture of unity. No part in the body tries to take the office that belongs to another. Each part simply does its intended duty and as a result, the entire body is able to live, function and enjoy life. The human body has 7.5 trillion cells. Each cell has 200 trillion tiny groups of atoms called protein molecules. The Largest molecule is called DNA. This carries hereditary information from the parents to the offspring. It also carries genetic code. DNA in one cell is 6 feet long. Total DNA in the human body would fill a box the size of an ice cube, but if it were joined together, it would reach to the sun and back 400 times! All our cells contain the information found in all the other cells. Each cell in your body carries all the necessary information for another you. If the coded DNA information and instructions of one human were translated into English, it would fill a 1,000 volume encyclopedia. Paul appeals to the human body as a grand example of diversity and unity. He want his readers to see that the same unity of design and purpose is to exist within the body of Christ. That is the idea he turns to in verse 5: *“So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.”* **B. Understand the Individuality (v. 5a).** He begins by reminding us that we are individuals. We are saved individually. We are gifted by God individually (1 Corinthians 12:4-11). We are special to God as individual persons. Let us never be ashamed of who we are as an individual in the Lord Jesus Christ. He loved you! He died for you! He saved you! He has a special place in His body just for you! Therefore, we must never try to force someone else to conform to our idea of what a Christian is. God has some peculiar people in His family, but each one of them is important to what the Lord is doing. **C. Understand the Integration (v. 5b).** While the body is made up of many components, when they function right, they all function together seamlessly! When my eyes see something they want to investigate closer, my hand responds by reaching out and lifting the object or bringing a book closer. When I want to move from one location to another, my feet and body respond by moving in the chosen direction. When I am hungry and near food, my nose smells, my arms lift, my elbows bend, my mouth opens, my mouth closes, my jaws and teeth go into action, etc. There is a wonderful integration and cooperation within the human body. This is the kind of seamless integration and cooperation that should exist within the body of Christ. Sadly, many believers have come to believe that they can get along just as well without other believers. If someone is just a little different, we allow them no place in our idea of what a believer is and we refuse to cooperate with them. By the way, I am not referring to compromising doctrinal standards for the sake of unity! We are to be a body, but one distinct truth about the body is that every cell in my body possesses the same DNA! Just as every true believer in the body of Christ possesses the DNA of spiritual life: The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9). Since that is true, every genuine believer will accept certain fundamentals of the faith and will be identifiable as a child of God. Again, we can turn our attention to the human body to see these ideas pictured for us. 1 Corinthians 12:14-26 gives us a humorous illustration using the human body to speak of the body of Christ. While our bodies are one whole, they are made up of individual parts that do specialized tasks from which the whole body benefits. Our human bodies are a marvel of individuality and harmony. Every part has a duty and all parts come together for the good of the whole. None are unimportant and none should be left out! The body of Christ is no different! Every member has been gifted in some area or another. We must isolate that gift, use it for the glory of God and refuse to try and take to ourselves a gift that we have not been given. Do what God gifted you to do and leave others to do what He gifted them to do! Don’t be jealous of what the grace of God has produced in the life of another believer.
3. **Watch Your PERFORMANCE in the Body (v. 6-8).** Just as we are to find our place in the body of Christ, we are to

carry out our duty to Him in the correct fashion. Paul closes this section by teaching us how to do just that.

A. Our Call (v. 6a). What you need to do is to ask the Lord to show you the gifts He has given you so that He can use you in that area for which He gifted you. By the way, if you walk in humble submission to the Lord, He will reveal His gift to you by giving you opportunity to exercise that gift for His glory as you go through this world. Your duty is simply to be what the Lord saved you to be. 1 Corinthians 14:1 – Pursue love and desire spiritual gifts.

B. Our Condition (v. 6b-8a). In these verses, Paul mentions some of the spiritual gifts God gives to the church. (Other lists of gifts are found in 1 Corinthians 12:28-31, Ephesians 4:11-12, and 1 Peter 4:10.) There are many gifts given to the church. Here Paul speaks of those that relate to Expounding the Word of God (v. 6b-8a) and those that relate to Expanding the Work of God (v. 8b). Of course, none of these lists are exhaustive. God gifts people for many different tasks in the body of Christ. Paul's idea is that we should seek to determine that gift or gifts that we have been given and then we should consecrate that gift to the Lord. We should wait on Him to open the doors and to give the opportunities for service. **When and how God uses us is His business. Being available and willing to be used of Him is ours!**

C. Our Caution (v. 8b). The last part of verse 8 deals with our attitude as we use the gifts we have been given. We must always be cautious that we ONLY do it the Lord's way. He mentions three gifts: giving, leading (or ruling), and showing mercy. Then, he tells how these gifts are to be administered. I believe that these three statements can be applied across the board to the exercise of all spiritual gifts. Paul says that the gifts are to be used with simplicity (liberality), diligence and cheerfulness. It might do us good to investigate these three words. Simplicity – this is a word that means “with sincerity; free from mental pretense and hypocrisy.” In other words, whether it be giving or any other exercise of the spiritual gifts, it must be done with a pure heart. Let us minister for Jesus without thoughts of self. We should serve Him for His glory, not for personal gain! Diligence – this word means, “with haste and earnestness striving after something.” Our word “speed” comes from this word. This refers to seeing the urgency of the moment and reaching out to the best of our ability to make a difference in the lives of others while there is time. Cheerfulness – this word means “with excited joy and readiness of mind.” We get the English word “hilarious” from this Greek word. Being allowed to exercise our gifts in the service of God should fill our hearts with unbridled joy and excitement. That is the idea: serving God from an excited heart – going to church because you want to, witnessing because you want to, serving Jesus in your area of giftedness because you are excited about being all the Lord wants you to be!

- 4. Conclusion.** As we think about the Body of Christ, I wonder how well we are filling the places we have been called to fill. As you listened to this sermon, did the Spirit of God touch your heart and say, “Right there is where you need work!”? Maybe it is in the area of pride and false humility. Maybe you haven't been exercising your spiritual gifts as you should. Maybe you haven't even discovered your area of giftedness. Maybe you have been trying to take someone else's place in the body of Christ. Maybe you have been doing your job, but with a wrong attitude. You know if there is a need, you can bring it to Jesus right now! Will you do that?