

# Know Yourself

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Romans 12:3

“Know yourself” is an ancient Greek statement found on the two-faced Oracle of Delphi and employed by Socrates, Plato and others in the ancient world and into the middle ages to our modern times.

Knowing yourself is a preoccupation of our age. Self-identity, self-esteem, self-worth are keen topics.

And this is a central part of human knowledge. We are knowing creatures in a knowable world. We know what is outside of us, we know what is inside of us. To know yourself is a part of your sanity. However, to know yourself and to know yourself accurately are two different things. Certainty and accuracy are not the same thing. Just ask Dr. Fauci. He said with certainty that masks were not helpful to stop the virus; and he said they are very helpful to stop the virus. He said it would be wrong to mandate vaccinations, and now he says we must mandate these vaccinations. Certain in all!

Recall how Romans began with men knowing God and knowing themselves, seeing his glory but suppressing that knowledge. Rather than thankful worshippers of him, they ran the opposite direction with their ears plugged and eyes closed. And they fell further, and deeper, as God gives them over to darker, demented paths of death.

So Calvin began his famous Institutes, with how we cannot know ourselves aright, or our world correctly, without knowing God. And vice versa! Until you know yourself a creature made by Him in His image, made for Him, and fallen in sin – I will not see him as my owner, nor turn to him for redemption!

Think of that for a second. God gives us one book and it is so entirely about salvation. And man says God is wrong! We don't need saving! Even though all the proof points just in this direction!

What a change for us. Now the tremendous glory of God's mercy has transformed you and me and brought us up and out of our dark ages. But this world continues to conform us to itself; to have us wear their masks, and to think like they do.

It should not be a surprise to find Paul taking us first, after Romans 12:1-2, through the doors now of Christian self-thought.

- How are we to think of one another as one body with various members?
- How are we to think of the gifts of the Spirit given each one of us?
- How are we to think about loving our neighbor in the second half of the chapter?

All this begins with thinking rightly about ourselves in verse 3.

Paul just spoke of renewing your mind – the mind set on the Spirit; a mind fixed on the true world that is coming to us in Christ; a mind offering up all – body and soul – to God our Father through His Son.

But Paul is a realist. He knows what issues arise regarding gifts. He is writing from Corinth remember, who had all those problems in this area.

How then does he do it?

Here is the Word of grace from the Apostle – like a mirror to us and a gospel to change us. Here is a caution against pride, and a call to think humbly, soberly – not like a drunk person.

Two Points then:

WHAT IS IT THAT HUMBLER US?

WHAT IS IT THAT HINDERS US?

Begin with: WHAT HINDERS US?

Answer: PRIDE!

We must not think of ourselves so highly. Verb for *sound judgment* – the same as to think. It is to think sanely, opposed to madness; or reasonably as opposed to crazy and foolish. But here it means controlled as opposed to uncontrolled.

How we need God's light for this! The God who sees more defilement in your duties than we see in our sins! He shines on us. But we have reversed things: I can see more good in my evil!

To despise God's glory is to leave us with glorifying ourselves – and that, I guess, brings its own shallow reward.

This struggle goes on in the believer. We know we are hateful because of our sin. Yet we can't stop idolizing ourselves.

Let us keep fixed before us how worthy we are of condemnation and rejection. This helps us know we have nothing to be arrogant about, and arrogance loses its grip on us.

Think for a moment of the great dangers in Laodicea. In the last church in Revelation 2-3, the best promises go to the worst body –

<sup>17</sup> 'Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, <sup>18</sup> I advise you to buy from

Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. <sup>19</sup> 'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. <sup>20</sup> 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. <sup>21</sup> 'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. (Rev 3:14-21)

My goodness – the Son of God invites them and us into the very throne He has won!

This brings us our second point: WHAT IS IT THAT HUMBLER US?  
So as to Know Ourselves

First, what is humility?

Augustine said humility is the first lesson in Christianity, and the second, and the third.

Humility is an attitude – a mindset – an outlook. Many are momentarily humbled but not humble. They are humiliated perhaps but empty of true humility.

Humility is to live in a sober, self-estimation of yourself.

When Jesus began, “Blessed are the poor in spirit” – he meant, blessed are those who see their own poverty in sin.

Gardiner Spring: “Evangelical humility consists in a just view of our own character, and in a commitment to abase ourselves as low as our vileness requires us. The pride of the human heart casts a veil over the

character of men and aims to conceal their worthlessness as creatures in sin. The humility of the Gospel throws aside the veil, and discovers that worthlessness... The natural spirit of men is independent, a proud spirit.”

One author says: What makes humility so desirable is the marvelous thing it does to us; it creates in us a capacity for the closest possible intimacy with God. (Monica Baldwin)

So begin with God and Christ – the glory of God and the humility of Christ. “A sight of God’s glory humbles. The stars vanish when the sun appears.” Thomas Watson

Think of it: Angels are humble! The very highest and best of God’s creatures are humble! What the world needs today is humility, but this only comes with God.

And be sure humility does not lessen or diminish us.

It did not lessen the Son of God when he became humble. Christ ceased not to be King because he became a servant; nor less a lion when he was a lamb; nor God because he was made man, nor judge though he was judged in our stead; so a man does not lose his honor by humility, but honored **for** his humility. Henry Smith

Be proud of Christ! Boast in the Lord alone! Humility is a real annihilation of ourselves before the glory and grace of Christ.

Be your lives lived better 10,000 times over, they would still not be good enough for heaven. And be your sins 10,000 times worse, Christ is still sufficient for a world of sinners!

The blessings and beauties of humility need to fit us better. Better to be a humble worm than a proud angel; a humble sinner than a proud saint.

Boice tells a story of a young believer asking advice from an older saint. He asked: “please pray for me that I might be nothing.” He replied, “you are nothing, brother; take it by faith!”

What you think about God is the most important thing about you. The greater you believe the God of the Bible and the Bible of God, the smaller you become, and rightly so. You cannot rise or fall except in this way.

Beware of pride in your humility. Do you want to be humble or merely thought to be humble? Humility is like underwear – essential, but indecent if it shows. Helen Nielson

It is such a fascinating thing, the Christian life. We know we are God’s children, that he has assured us of eternal life. Who should be prouder!? More boastful?!

But assurance ministers to humility and faithfulness, not to arrogance and sinful freedom.

In the comic strip Garfield, the cat is going on and on and on about himself to the little dog about how wonderful and great and gifted he is. And finally, exhausted, he says, “Gee, Pookey, I’m tired talking about me – you talk about me for a while!”

We get exhausted trying to prop up ourselves, living for ourselves, not really knowing ourselves. Humility is the refreshing medicine to this tired, lifeless, pointless pursuit.

Where we go next in Romans 12 makes this all the more important. How do we get along with others? How do we see our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ?