

Humility in the Body of Christ
Romans 12:3
February 16, 2022

Context

Theme of Romans: The gospel of God (1:16-17)

Chs 1-11 The gospel as the power of God for salvation – The indicatives

12:1-15:13 The gospel and the transformation of life – The imperatives

- 12:1-2 Consecration
- 12:3-8 Humility
- 12:9-21 Love

15:14-16:27 Conclusion

In 12:1, we as believers are exhorted, on the basis of the mercies received from God in the gospel, to present our bodies to God as a sacrifice

- To consecrate our bodies to our God who has saved us

This sacrifice is to be living, holy, and pleasing to God

This is the believer's reasonable response of worship

Verse 2 instructs how we are to live a life consecrated to God our Savior

1. Do not be conformed to this world
2. Be transformed by the renewal of your mind
3. Discern the will of God

Question: Why do we as believers need the instruction in verse 3?

1. Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought

“For”

1. Connects the broad instructions in vv. 1-2 with concrete instructions in verses 3ff.
2. Verses 3ff. concern how we are to conduct ourselves in the body of Christ (cf. vv. 4-5), and start with instruction on humility

“by the grace given to me I say...”

1. Refers to the apostleship Paul received from Christ
2. **Rom. 1:5–6** through [Jesus Christ our Lord] we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

“I say to everyone among you”

- These instructions are for everyone in the body of Christ

“not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think”

We once thought too highly of ourself, but we are to no longer do so

- In the fall, man became “haughty” (1:30), “self-seeking” (2:8), “proud” (2 Tim 3:2), and “arrogant” (2 Tim 3:2)

Recommended reading: Stuart Scott, *From Pride to Humility: A Biblical Perspective*

When we are proud, we are focused on self. A person is prideful who believes...

1. They, in and of themselves, are or should be the *source* of what is good, right, and worthy of praise
2. They, by themselves, are (or should be) the *accomplisher* of anything that is worthwhile to accomplish
3. They should be the *benefactor* of all things.

In essence, they believe that all things should be *from* them, *through* them, and *to* them or *for* them. Pride seeks to put self in the position that belongs to God.¹

Pride encompasses much. Pride exists not only in those who are self-absorbed with their abilities and accomplishments, but also in those who are self-absorbed with a sense of failure and are caught up in self-pity.

1. They are not concerned with the glory of God and with thankfulness for the good gifts and talents the Lord has given them, but instead are focused on how they think they have gotten a bad deal, or how they are not as good as someone else.
2. Self-pitying people desperately *want* to be good, not for the glory of God, but for themselves. They *want* to do things for and by their own power and might for personal recognition. They *want* everyone to serve them, like them, and approve of them. When these desires are not fulfilled, a proud person will become even more inwardly focused.²

Pride is the mindset of self: a focus on self and the service of self, a pursuit of self-recognition and self-exaltation, and a desire to control and use all things for self. Pride is a master’s mindset rather than that of a servant.³

¹ Stuart Scott, *From Pride to Humility: A Biblical Perspective*, 5.

² Scott, 5.

³ Scott, 6.

In Romans 12:3ff., Paul is instructing us especially not to think we are above the service to which God has called us

1. verses 4-8
2. Not to think we are above...
 - service in the body of Christ in general
 - serving in the specific way to which God has called us at this specific time
3. This also applies to service in the family, the workplace, etc.

One of the primary heart-indicators of such pride is discontentment

2. Think of yourself with sober judgment

“but to think with sober judgment”

- NASB “but to think so as to have sound judgment”
- CSB “Instead, think sensibly”

The apostle Paul expressed a sound view of himself in 1 Timothy 1:12-16

We are to recognize the following about ourself:

1. We are a sinner saved by grace (Rom 3)
2. Apart from Christ, we can do nothing (John 15:4)
3. We can do everything God calls us to do, through Christ who strengthens us (Phil 4:13)
4. God has graciously given us a spiritual gift to be used for building up the body of Christ, to the glory of God (Rom 12:4-6)

And we are to give thanks to God!

It is a false humility that says, “I don’t have anything to offer to anyone. God can’t use me.”⁴

3. Think of yourself according to the measure of faith God has assigned

“each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.”

- NASB “as God has allotted to each a measure of faith”

Relates to what is taught in verses 4-8 about God assigning a diversity of gifts to the members of Christ’s body.

Along with a spiritual gift, God has allotted each believer the faith needed for exercising their gift.

⁴ James Montgomery Boice, *Romans*, 4:1570.

Spiritual gifts are to be used in dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit.

- 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 11

Sober judgment recognizes that God has gifted you for service, and humbly and gratefully accepts that gift rather than insisting you have some other gift.

Conclusion

Question: What might be some of the negative consequences of not following the instructions in this verse? What might be some of the positive effects of following this instruction?