

THE BOOK OF ROMANS  
"Gifts of the Spirit"  
Romans 12:3-8

INTRODUCTION

1. This is part of a section dealing with how to serve God (12:1-15:13). The key issue is the glory of God (cf. 15:9). What a blessed goal.
2. Now, Christian service is seen in relation to full surrender (12:1, 2), to the church in humility (12:3-8), to society in love (12:9-21), to government in submission (13:1-14), to doubtful questions in consideration (14:1-15:3), to the whole world in hope of God's glory (15:4-13). God grant us this kind of service.
3. Look then at the matter of humility in the church:
  1. ITS CALL v. 3

- a. By Paul

It is clear that Paul says the word here, but it is because of his apostleship, here called grace given (cf. 1:5). It is a humble appeal for humility.

- b. To Romans

The message is for all in the Christian community without exception.

- c. For Purpose

1) Negative The verb is only found here in the N.T. It means to "overthink," hence not to be highminded or over proud. Every form of spiritual pride is disastrous to life and godliness.

2) Positive One's thinking is to be directed (unto → ) sober mindedness i.e. to a self-knowledge which does not end in foolish indiscretion. Self-conceit is thus treated as a species of insanity.

- d. By Standard

The call to humility is grounded in the fact that God has measured out to each a measure of faith. Note: 1) four times the word "think" or "have an opinion" in this one verse. 2) God puts this appeal to discourage pride when thinking of gifts FIRST. Lay this to heart!

2. ITS REASON vv. 4, 5

- a. The Model

The human body is the model: many members, but one body. The members do not have the same acting function.

- b. The Parallel

All believers (Eph. 1:22, 23) are considered members of Christ's mystical body. The thought of the

verse is that the many members of the body are one Body in Christ. What is true as to individuals, they are members of one another. Thus, in consequence the individual relation is that of fellow-member with every other.

Note: God enforces interdependence; not independence in the Body! Think: How can I serve? not How can I shine?

### 3. ITS EXPRESSION vv. 6-8

The list of gifts provided is prefaced by a statement which indicates unity, diversity, and harmony. The true life and work of the body is seen in those three words. To put it succinctly: a place for everyone and everyone in his place. Would to God this were believed on in the church!

#### a. Official Gifts

1) Prophecy Strictly speaking a prophet gave forth revelation. In that sense, no prophets today. However, the need for men who declare God's Word is enormous.

2) Ministry This word was used of material things (Acts 6:1) and spiritual things (Acts 6:4). Probably material here (cf. 1 Cor. 16:15).

3) Teaching This involves the clear explanation of God's Word to people (cf. Neh. 8:5-8).

4) Exhortation This is a ministry of comfort and persuasion to obedience. How greatly this is needed today! It's invaluable.

#### b. General Gifts

1) Giving This relates to the sharing of one's substance. It is to be without reluctance (2 Cor. 9:7), without false pretence (Acts 5:1-11), and with simplicity or singleness i.e. without selfishness or secondary designs.

2) Ruling Literally this means the one "standing in front." It very likely refers to leadership in general. He should be characterized by diligence or haste i.e. earnestness (2 Cor. 7:11f; 8:8, 16).

3) Mercy This relates to those who share with those who suffer. "Cheerfulness" is the word for hilarity (cf. 2 Cor. 9:7).

CONCLUSION To recognize that all we are and possess comes from God is the constant guard against pride (v.3). Moreover, our differences are our strength and an exhibition of God's grace (v. 6). So be it until He comes. Amen.