



Text: Romans 12:3-8¹

Series: Right Living – God’s Righteousness Transforming Our Lives

Title: Part 18 – “All for One & One for All!”

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The three Musketeers: Athos, Porthos & Aramis – and their side kick d’Artaignon (I could never figure out where he fit!) They were a small group of men who brought justice and stood together against incredible odds!

They covered each other’s backs in a fight;

They risked their lives for one another;

They trusted each other;

They were very different from each other but they worked together to achieve a common goal;

They passionately believed in the rightness of their cause.

Their battle cry was:

“All for one and one for all!”

Sounds like a working definition of the church of Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul may not have condensed his message down into a slogan but the essence of his counsel in Romans 12 verses 3 to 8 can almost be reduced to those simple words...

“all for One & One for all!”

Let’s read Paul’s counsel. This morning I’d like us all to read Paul’s words in unison together and so I’ll ask you to read along with me. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Paul wrote to us...

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

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generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. Romans 12:3-8

In order for the church of Jesus Christ to function effectively we “spiritual Musketeers” need to develop three crucial perspectives about how we relate to one another. We need to get a handle on how we fit with all the others who make up the church, and that can be a tough job! Much of what Paul says here is a challenge to self-control. It is an invitation

First of all,

We need to develop a sensible perspective about ourselves

“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.”

Romans 12:3

Many of us are reluctant to think about who we are. We consider it to be self-absorbed “navel gazing.” It’s too “touchy-feely.” And some forms of self-awareness thinking probably are unhealthy and selfish. But Paul is challenging us to a healthy, Biblical self-awareness that leads us to healthy, spiritually mature involvement with others in the body of Christ. The context Paul gives us for thinking about ourselves is in relationship to other believers in Jesus. The question he asks us to answer is: how do we see ourselves in relationship to others?

Paul tells us that each of us needs **“to think with sober judgement”** about who we are. The phrase “sober judgement” translates a single compound word in Greek that literally means “sober minded.” He warns us that we should not think **“more highly”** of ourselves than we **“ought to think.”** He implies that there is an appropriate way to think about ourselves and there that there is an inappropriate way of thinking about ourselves.

Already in his letter to the Romans there have been some hints that among the people in Rome were some who had an unhealthy view of themselves and it was causing division in their relationships within the church. Back in chapter 11, he spoke of the relationship between Jews and Gentiles and he challenged Gentile believers to avoid displaying arrogance toward Jewish believers. He spoke of the spiritual debt that Gentiles owed to the Jewish and he counselled the Gentile Romans...

“So do not become proud, but fear.” Romans 11:20

The word translated as “proud” is actually two words which literally mean “high minded.” Paul detected a spirit of pride that was beginning to take root in the



way some of the Romans were thinking about themselves, a spirit that needed to be rejected. Paul put his finger on ethnic “high-mindedness” and identified it as inappropriate thinking.

Later in chapter 12, just a few verses from the passage we’re looking at, Paul again addresses the attitude of pride. He wrote....

“Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.” Romans 12:16

Here the problem wasn’t the ethnic division between Gentiles and Jews, but between the prominent and the socially disadvantaged within the Roman church. The word “haughty” is again “high minded.” Paul put his finger on economic “high-mindedness” and told the Romans to get rid of it.

Paul didn’t know a great deal about the church in Rome – he’d never been there. But Paul knew people, Paul knew the Gospel and Paul knew the church. He knew that “high mindedness” among believers was one of the single most common causes of disunity among believers, even in good churches.

The church in Philippi was a good church but Paul wrote to them in much the same way with much the same concern that he expresses here to the Romans. Last week we touched on part of what Paul said to the Philippians and this week I want to complete Paul’s thought. Last week we looked at Paul’s appeal to “the mercies of God” in Romans 12, verse 1, and I showed you how he appealed to the Philippians on the same basis. He wrote to his friends in Philippi, a church he knew and loved, with these words...

“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.” Philippians 2:1-7

The Philippians were on the verge of having rivalry and conceit destroy a great church. The solution, Paul told them, was to think “soberly” about themselves, to have a proper mind about who they really were. The word translated as “humility” is a compound word in Greek. It literally means to be “lowly minded.” What was the proper mind the Philippians were to have about themselves? It was the “mind” of Jesus, who made himself “nothing” and became a “servant.”



Let's go back to Paul's words to the Romans. When he counsels them to be "sober minded" about themselves, what "mind" does he want them to have?

Paul recognizes that people in the church have different gifts as God has given them. But what he wants them to realize is these gifts were given to them by Jesus for the purpose of service to one another, not for self fulfillment or self expression. He wants them to develop the mindset of servants of Jesus Christ. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote...

"let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him." 1 Corinthians 7:17

How do we know when we are thinking of ourselves too highly? I think that pride is perhaps the most difficult of all things to discern but let me try to provide some "sober" thinking here. It seems to me that we're probably thinking too highly of ourselves ...

- When we're habitually **criticizing** the contributions being made to the work of Christ by our brothers and sisters in the Lord;
- When we're **comparing** ourselves to others in the body and wishing that they would be as committed as we are to the work of Christ;
- When we're feeling that we're **overburdened** by the work of Christ because others aren't carrying their fair share of the load;
- When we begin to believe that our work is so **crucial** that the work of Christ would be seriously hindered or stopped if we ceased;
- When we're feeling as if we aren't getting the **recognition** we deserve for all the things we do for the body of Christ.

A proper understanding of who we are in God's service will never lead us to pride or self-promotion. We have been called by God to lead a life of service to Christ and to one another. That's who we are – servants of Jesus, equipped by Jesus and placed where we are by Jesus to serve the purposes of God.

Secondly, that leads Paul to tell us that...

We need to develop an expanded perspective about our connection with others

"For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." Romans 12:4-5

As I said earlier, Paul puts a context on our thinking about ourselves and the context is that together with other believers we form "one body in Christ." We are connected together by our common faith in Jesus and Jesus joins us together to serve his purposes in the world.



There is a **profound unity** in our connection together. Although we are “many,” together we form “one body.” In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul emphasized the unity of the body of Jesus Christ. Notice his emphasis on “oneness.” Paul wrote...

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.” 1 Corinthians 12:12-13

But if you think Paul was strong on “oneness,” just listen to Jesus’ passion for the unity of His Church that he expressed in his prayer before he went to the cross for us. “Father,” he prayed,

“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.” John 17:20-23

The unity isn’t something we manufacture; it’s something we’re called to preserve with effort (Eph 4:3) because it’s created by God when he brought us into connection with Jesus by faith.

There is a **rich diversity** in our connection together. The members of the body of Christ “do not all have the same function.” We are very different from one another, but God has designed us and assigned us our differences so that we can fulfill a specific function within the body.

We’re not all “eyes” or “hands” or “mouths” or “feet.” Kent Hughes tells of a youth pastor who made the point about diversity within the body of Christ by painting a football to look like a huge human eye with a big, round pupil.

He wrapped it in a blanket, put it under his arm, and showed it to his group, asking, “What do you think of my baby?” The typical response was, “Oh, gross!” Then he asked them, “What if your girlfriend was just an eye? Imagine taking her out on a date and having a giant eye sitting across from you in the booth!” Needless to say, he made his point. Without diversity the body would become a monstrosity. F. F. Bruce, [a major New Testament scholar] writes:

Diversity, not uniformity, is the mark of God’s handiwork. It is so in nature; it is so in grace, too, and nowhere more so than in the Christian community. Here are many men and women with the most diverse kinds of parentage, environment,



temperament, and capacity. Not only so, but since they became Christians they have been endowed by God with a great variety of spiritual gifts as well. Yet because and by means of that diversity, all can co-operate for the good of the whole.^{2 3}

There is **a beautiful mutuality** in our connection together. Paul says that we are “individually members one of another.” We are connected together like our hands and feet, our eyes and ears, our nerves and our muscles. We all know what happens to our whole body when we stub our toes, or slam our fingers or hit our heads on low-hanging branches – our whole body responds in pain. In 1 Corinthians Paul says.

“If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.” 1 Corinthians 12:26

We are a team and what happens to one member effects us all. A sea captain and his chief engineer were arguing over who was most important to the ship. To prove their point to each other, they decided to swap places. The chief engineer ascended to the bridge, and the captain went below to the engine room.

Several hours later, the captain suddenly appeared on deck covered with oil and dirt. “Chief!” he yelled, “you’ve got to get down here, I can’t make her go!” “Of course you can’t,” replied the chief. “We’ve run aground!”

On a team we don’t try to out-do one another, we each work together to accomplish our common goal. In the church of Jesus Christ our common goal is to bring glory to Jesus and we do that when we celebrate and honor our unity, diversity and mutuality in Christ.

We’ve had many opportunities in the past few weeks to feel pain together. It was during one of those events that a person from outside our church paid this congregation a great compliment. This person is part of a care giving network here in town and when she heard that a person in our congregation had encountered suffering, she said to me that she was glad that that person was connected to this church because she knew they would get the care they needed. What she was saying was that she has noticed that when one member of our body suffers, we suffer with them.

We need to develop **a sensible perspective about ourselves** – we need to develop the humble mind of Christ.

²Hughes, R. K. (1991). *Romans : Righteousness from heaven*. Preaching the Word (222). Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books.

³3. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1966), p. 227. As quoted in Hughes, *Romans*.



We need to develop **an expanded perspective about our connection with others** – by faith in Christ, we have been made a part of the living, breathing Body of Christ.

Finally,

We need to develop a practical perspective about our involvement in the lives of others

Put simply, **you are needed!** You are **ALL** needed!

Paul wrote...

“Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them” Romans 12:6

There is a simple assumption underlying what says Paul here. He assumes that all of us, each of us who are “in Christ,” all of us in Christ who have arms and legs (the “we” is borrowed from the verb in v. 4), he assumes that we have at least one gift from God that is to be put into use. We have different gifts but “us,” all of us, are to use them.

Paul gives us a list of seven gifts that God gives believers so that they can serve him in the body of Christ. These seven are not exhaustive of the variety of gifts that God gives believers. You can find different lists in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, Ephesians chapter 4 and 1 Peter chapter 4. But the gifts that Paul identifies here fall into two broad categories, gifts of speaking or gifts of serving.

Among **the gifts of speaking** that God has given the body of Christ are:

- **Prophecy.** This is a key gift in the life of the church. While some aspects of this gift involving foretelling future events (cf. Agabus Acts 11, 21) the main expression of this gift in the New Testament is the ability to speak a Word from the Lord that addresses a specific need at a specific point in time (cf 1 Corinthians 14).

In the life of the church, Paul said that...

“the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.” 1 Corinthians 14:3

Do you need that kind of ministry in your life? How does a word from the Lord come to someone so that they are able to communicate an encouraging, upbuilding word to you? The prophet Isaiah explained his process of preparation this way...



“The Lord God has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught.” Isaiah 50:4

Spending time in God’s Word, in meditating on the Word and communing with the Lord in prayer, listening for His voice, that is how one receives “a word” to sustain the “weary.” When the Lord impresses a truth from his Word upon your heart and mind, and when the need to which that Word speaks arises in the life of someone else, you will be prepared to offer a word that will build up, encourage and comfort those who are weary.

- **Teaching.** Teaching is a gift that is crucial to the body of Christ so that it is enabled to grow in the knowledge and in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Pastors are to be teachers (Eph 4:11) and elders are to be teachers (1 Tim 3:2) so that the church is kept in the truth of the Word of God. Parents are to teach their children the truths of the faith found in God’s Word so that they will come to faith in Christ (Deut 6). Sunday school teachers and Bible study leaders are to be teachers of God’s truth.

One of the teaching opportunities I enjoy very much is the **Christianity Explored** class I lead through a study in the Gospel of Mark. When people encounter the truth of the Gospel their lives are changed and it’s a privilege to help facilitate that meeting between them and Jesus by teaching them the truth of God’s Word.

How does someone prepare for this ministry? One of the great Bible teachers of the Bible was a man by name of Ezra. This is the secret to Ezra’s success as a teacher of God’s Word...

“For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.” Ezra 7:10

Notice that Ezra “set his heart” to the study of God’s Word AND to do it. That’s the kind of teacher that God will use to instruct his people.

- **Exhortation.** The word literally means “to come alongside.” Exhorters “come alongside” those who need help to get going in their spiritual lives.

Sometimes they need help because they’re spiritually stagnant and the encourager offers them a warning from God’s Word. Sometimes they need help because they’re spiritually discouraged and the exhorter offers them comfort from God. A great pastor/encourager I knew once told me that the sum of his ministry was “to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.” The wise exhorter knows the difference.



One of the best preparations for the ministry of exhortation is the experience of being exhorted. Paul wrote to the Corinthians...

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort [same word translated as “exhort], who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

There are people who need people to come alongside them when their faith is failing, either because of distress or because of complacency, and they need a word of exhortation to get them moving forward again. Perhaps you’ve had an experience where you’ve been exhorted by God, perhaps through the ministry of others or perhaps by the Spirit of God. God has given you a gift that you should use in the lives of others who need the same kind of ministry.

Secondly, Paul outlines four **gifts of serving**.

- **Service.** This is the practical ministry of getting stuff done that needs to be done to care for the needs of the people. In Acts 6, verse 2, it involved caring for the feeding of the widows in the church of Jerusalem, much like Pastor Norm’s “soup run” does here or the work of the Kitchen Committee who are organizing tonight’s Thankoffering banquet. Without this gift, people go hungry. This is the gift people use when they drive people to medical appointments, when they repair their roofs, when they shovel their snow or rake their leaves.
- **Leading.** You probably thought all the gifts of serving involved behind the scenes care giving, but they don’t. This is care giving done up front. The phrase translated as “the one who leads” comes from a Greek word that literally means “to stand before.” In 1 Thessalonians 5, verse 12, this word is used to refer to those who “are over you in the Lord.” Part of this ministry of leading is overseeing the care of the church as a whole. Leading is a serving ministry in the body of Christ because Jesus tells us that if we want to “first” or “in front” we need to be servants. (cf. Matthew 20:26-28) Paul challenges leaders to lead with “zeal” which is earnest, dedicated labour. Paul offers a commentary on zeal just three verses later when he writes: **“Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.” Romans 12:11**
- **Mercy.** This is the gift, as one Bible scholar puts it, “to tend the sick, relieve the poor, care for the aged and disabled.” This is **the “Good Samaritan” gift (Luke 10:36-37)** that Jesus told us to practice and you can read that story in Luke chapter 10 to see the gift of mercy in action, or you can come to Long-term Care the next time we have a service there



and watch those who cheerfully wheel the residents down the hall to the chapel.

- **Contribution.** I've left this gift to the end on purpose. Today our Thankoffering appeal for missions brings this gift to the fore. This is the ministry of giving to meet the needs of the body of Christ and you might think that this is the "rich man's" gift, but it's not. This is the gift of the person who had decided in his or her own heart what they should give to the work of the Lord in proportion to the way God has blessed them. (cf. 2 Cor 9:7; 1 Cor 16:2)

“On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper” 1 Corinthians 16:2

Have you ever heard of Mary Jones? Probably not. In 1893 three men set out to reach the people of the Sudan with the Gospel. They reached Nigeria without money to travel inland and they were reduced to selling their watches and extra clothing. At their moment of greatest need a gift arrived -- \$300 from a servant woman named Mary Jones. The men were able to travel inland and although two of them died, the third, R.V. Bingham, established what became one of the largest faith missions in the world – the Sudan Interior Mission or SIM. Today SIM stands for “Serving In Mission” because they now ministry around the world, not just in the Sudan.

When Mary Jones died, her relatives looked for her will. There was none, just a simple account book in which she had entered her monthly receipts and expenses. The entries were simple:

“For native work in China, \$50”

“For native work in India, \$50”

Her relatives knew that she had received a legacy – it, too, was recorded:

“Received, legacy, \$300”

And beside it was written,

“Paid out for the Sudan, \$300”

Mary Jones was not a rich woman but Mary Jones had the gift of giving.

People are in need of the ministry that God has gifted you to give. Your particular gift might be found in one of the other lists Paul gives us in one of his other letters. Whatever your gift might be, and remember, if you are “in Christ” you have at least one gift, then as Paul said...

**“let us use them”
“all for One & One for all”**

And to God be all the glory!



- **Prayer**
- **Invitation to Prayer**
- **Final Song:** Let the Flame Burn Brighter
- **Benediction:** Ephesians 3:20-21, "Go in peace and serve the Lord, in the power of the Spirit, to the glory of the Father, Amen."