

In considering verses 1 and 2, two weeks ago, I suggested they serve as the hinge which connects the two sections of this letter—chapters 1-11 are largely doctrinal—chapters 12-16 are largely practical—chapter 12:1-2, to change the imagery, are the bridge which connects these two sections—there is a sense in which everything he tells us in 12:3 to the end of the letter—is found in summary form in vv1-2—in v1 we have consecration to God, and in v2 separation from the world...

Now—before we come to v3—let me point out that verses 3-8 form a single unit—which has as its theme the nature and use of spiritual gifts—v3 describes the source of gifts, vv4-5 describe the purposes of gifts, and vv6-8 describe the nature of spiritual gifts—thus v3 is foundation to vv4-8 as here we learn where they come from...

I. A Negative—"do not think..."

II. A Positive—"think soberly..."

III. Lessons

I. A Negative—"do not think..."

1. The first thing necessary is—to point out the close connection that exists between v3 and the preceding passage...
2. This is suggested in that v3 begins with the connecting word "for"—"For I say, through the grace given to me..."
3. Two weeks ago, in considering v2, I suggested that by "the will of God" was meant—God's revealed will...
4. That is—in being transformed, by the renewing of our minds—we will understand and cherish God's will for us...
5. This good, acceptable, and perfect will of God is found within Scripture—and it concerns every aspect of living...
6. I suggest that especially from v3 to the end of the chapter (v21)—Paul elaborates upon what this will entails...
7. From v3-8 he describes God's will with regards to spiritual gifts and from v9-21 with regards to various duties...
8. Thus—I want to make an application before moving further—the primary context of sanctification is the local church...
9. Having provided in vv1-2 a wonderful summary of progressive sanctification—he now provides the context within which this sanctification is found...
10. That is—within what context to we present our bodies as living sacrifices, be transformed, and renew our minds...
11. Well Paul tells us in vv3-8—the body of Christ, or, the church of Christ—that is—within the local assembly...
12. Oh my dear friend—let me put this as plain as I possibly can—there's little progress in sanctification outside the church...
13. Those who think they can thrive as Christians with little or no attachment to a body—are terribly mistaken...
14. Now—the next thing I want to do is examine the way in which he addresses his readers—"for I say, through the grace given to me..."
15. That is—the grace given to me for my salvation—but especially—the grace given me to make me an apostle...
16. Rom.15:15-16—"Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on *some* points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God, 16 that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit..."

17. [a] Authority—that is—Paul's speaking as a minister or apostle of Jesus Christ, invested with divine authority...
18. [b] Humility—that is—all that he was—he was by the GRACE OF GOD—both as a Christian and an apostle...
19. Thus—the apostle is here doing what he's about to exhort his readers to do—ascribe all that they are to God's grace...
20. This then brings us to the prohibition itself—"...not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think..."
21. That is—don't have an exaggerated view of yourself—don't think of yourself more highly than is warranted...
22. The implication is—there's a standard that ought to temper, or influence, the way in which we view ourselves...
23. That standard, as we shall see in a minute, is a sober assessment of grace and gift, as sovereignly given by God...
24. Gal.6:1-3—"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. 3 For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself..."

II. A Positive—"think soberly..."

1. The apostle not only tells us what NOT to think—but he also tells us HOW to think—"think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith..."
2. The Gk word rendered "soberly" literally means—"to have a sound mind, or to think with sound judgment..."
3. Native to the word is the concept of sobriety and self-control—that is—modesty of thought concerning yourself...
4. To think soberly is to think rightly—to think within proper proportions and with a moderate self estimation...
5. That is—we are to think soberly of our own grace and gift and not think too highly or in an exaggerated way...
6. Now—it's important to realize that Paul is again referring back to v2 and the statement—"renew your minds..."
7. V2—"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind"—think rightly...
8. Align your thinking to Scripture—think God's thoughts—have a sober view of who you are and what you have...
9. The phrase—"as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith"—is both IMPORTANT and yet very DIFFICULT....
10. By "faith" is meant—the grace of faith—or, the grace whereby we trust Christ and exercise our spiritual gifts...
11. The word "measure" refers to the degree or quantity of faith—every Christian has a measure, or amount, of faith...
12. Faith has a twofold function—it connects us to Christ in our justification and works for Christ in our sanctification...
13. Robert Candlish—"Faith has a double function; it has two offices to discharge. One the one hand, it is receptive of Christ. One the other hand, it is energetic from Christ and for Christ..."
14. That is—faith has a double function—first, it passively receives Christ, and then secondly, it actively works for Christ...
15. It's largely in this second sense that Paul here uses it—that is—faith as a grace that energizes spiritual gifts...
16. This "faith" is described as "dealt to each one by God"—or as a gift from God—given to each person in measure...

17. That is—every person is given a measure of faith—whereby they trust Christ and exercise their spiritual gifts...
18. Thus by "faith" is meant the same thing as "grace"—or put another way—our faith is a grace given from God...
19. We could paraphrase Paul as saying—Have a proper and honest assessment concerning your God-given abilities...
20. In other words—don't exaggerate the grace and gifts given to you—but soberly and honestly measure them...
21. Eph.4:7-8—"But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore He says: When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men..."
22. This passage is obviously similar to Romans 12:3—notice three things—[a] grace and gift are FREELY given...
23. V7—"but to each one of us grace was given"—that is—grace was given for SALVATION but also for SERVICE...
24. [b] Grace and gift are SOVEREIGNLY given—"to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift..."
25. That is—Christ determines who gets what gift—He gives grace to whom He wills—and—in the degree He wills...
26. [c] Grace and gift are MEDIATORIALY given—that is—they are given though the mediation of Jesus Christ...
27. Or, another way of putting this would be—all of God's grace is given to poor sinners—because of Christ's work...
28. This is found in Paul's quotation of Ps.68:18—"When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave fits to men..."
29. That is—after Christ died and rose again—He ascended to His Father's throne and send to earth His Spirit...
30. This Spirit gives or communicates grace and gift to the church—and He does so—for the sake and merits of Christ...
31. Or, another way of putting it would be—Christ Himself gives grace and gift as the victorious Head of His church...
32. Now—here we come to a very important and beautiful truth—all grace and gift comes to the church through Christ...
33. That is—Christ, in His substitutionary death and victorious resurrection—purchased all grace and every gift...

III. Lessons

A. Man by nature is a proud creature

1. First of all—I would have you notice, that Paul levels this warning to everyone within the church without exception...
2. Why—because he knows the nature of man—he knows that all men have the tendency to think too high of themselves...
3. Now—this of course runs contrary to modern thought—which portrays man's greatest problem as low self-esteem...
4. What man needs most, so we are told, is to have a higher view of himself—his abilities, worth, and his value...
5. But dear brethren—this is NOT true—for every man, by nature, has too high a view of his own self-worth...
6. Or, put another way—we all have a very high view of ourselves—or, man by nature—is a VERY proud creature...
7. Notice two ways this pride is evident within churches—[1] we despise others, and [2] we promote ourselves...

8. [1] We despise others—that is—we look down upon others, who, as we perceive it, have lesser grace and gift...
9. Those who have an elevated or exaggerated view of themselves—necessarily have a LOW view of others...
10. In fact—what we think of others is a sound indicator of our own spiritual health—they two are necessarily related...
11. For example—if a person climbed a ladder he would look down upon everyone—why—because he elevated himself...
12. So too—the person who is always looking DOWN upon others—has elevated themselves ABOVE others...
13. [2] We promote ourselves—that is—we push our own ideas and thoughts upon the church and its members...
14. A pushy person is a proud person—they have a high view of themselves, their thinking, and their abilities...

B. True religion promotes humility

1. That is—the whole of the Christian religion is such that—it deflates the pride of man and gives the glory to God...
2. [1] Its source—by this I mean—everything we have as Christians—has been freely given to us through Christ...
3. 1Cor.4:6-7—"Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other. 7 For who makes you differ *from another*? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive *it*, why do you boast as if you had not received *it*..."
4. [2] Its purpose—by this I mean—all that we have been given—has been given to us—for the good of others...
5. Neither grace nor gifts are given for our own benefit—they are given that we might glorify God and benefit others...
6. MLJ—"The first thing we must do is learn to look at these gifts in the right way. We must not look at them subjectively or in terms of ourselves. That is always the fatal mistake. The moment we begin to look at the gifts like that, we go astray. We must look at them objectively...What do I mean? I mean that the gifts are not ours and therefore they are nothing about which we should boast. We have not produced them; we have not generated them; they are not a reward for anything that we are. He [Christ], with his master strategy, has determined to give these gifts, 'dividing to every man severally as he wills'. So they are entirely His and therefore we can go on to say – and this is most important – that we must never overestimate any gift..."
7. [3] Its example—here I mean—the epitome of religion is found, is exemplified, in the person of Jesus Christ...
8. To use the terminology of our text, grace and gift were given Him without measure, Jn.3:34—"for God gives the Spirit without measure unto him..."
9. Phil.2:5-7—"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men..."
10. The Christian religion, or faith, is all about being like Christ—thinking like Christ and then acting like Christ...
11. The phrase—"let this mind be in your which was also in Christ Jesus"—serves as the backbone to Christian ethics...
12. In short—we are to "think like Christ"—who while He was full of grace and gift—humbled Himself as a servant...

C. Sober assessment is necessary

1. Here I want to point out the obvious—while we are not to think too highly of ourselves—we are to think of ourselves...
2. Or, to put it another way—we are to rightly or soberly assess the measure of grace and gift given to us from God...
3. [a] We mustn't think too high, and [b] we mustn't think too low—both are wrong and must equally be avoided...
4. Here I'm referring to what we commonly call "spiritual gifts"—a subject Paul directly addresses in verses 4-8...
5. God gives every Christian certain things common to EVERY Christian—regeneration, justification, adoption...
6. No Christian is more regenerated, more justified, or more adopted than others—these are COMMON gifts...
7. Yet—having said this—there are other things, the degree of grace and specific gifts—that are variously given...
8. Now—two things need to be remembered with regards to these various or varied gifts given to God's people...
9. [1] Every Christian is given gifts, and [2] not every Christian is given the exact same, or identical, spiritual gifts...
10. [1] Every Christian is given gifts—just as every Christian is faith for salvation they are given faith for service...
11. V3—"as God has dealt to each one"—that is—He has given to EVERY Christian—various and varied gifts...
12. Thus—it's an appropriate question to ask—in what way has Christ gifted me to serve within His body or church?...
13. [a] Ask God—that is—pray to God to show you—in what ways He has gifted you—that you may be a blessing to others...
14. [b] Ask others—that is—ask others to tell you, from their perspective, how have you most often helped them...
15. [c] Ask yourself—that is—look within to see, what ways do you find easy and joyous, to serve and assist others...
16. [2] Not every Christian is given identical gifts—just as there are various parts of a body—there are various members in a church...
17. V3—"as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith"—that is—a specific amount and NOT the entire whole...
18. Matt.25:14-15—"For *the kingdom of heaven* is like a man travelling to a far country, *who* called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey..."
19. Let me close this morning with an important reminder—for all the talk about gifts let us not forget the greatest gift...
20. 2Cor.9:15—"Thanks *be* to God for His indescribable gift"—Christ is the greatest gift in whom other gifts are given...