

“For I Say ... To Every Man”

So begins this section choked full of rich advise for Christians. Paul said to every man *“not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think but so to think as to think soberly, according as God had dealt to every man a measure of faith”* (Rom. 12:3).

Proper attitude about oneself requires that none be proud or boastful. The wise man lists haughty eyes as one of seven things hated by God and warns that pride goes before destruction (Pro. 6:16; 16:18). Jesus said, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”* (Matt. 5:3). Our thinking is to be *“sober,”* and a proper spirit produces sober thinking.

“Fore even as we have many members in one body and all the members have not the same office: so we, who are many, are one body in Christ and severally members one of another” (12:4). A similar, fuller passage from Paul is found in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. There the illustration of the body and its members primarily illustrates the functions of the nine spiritual gifts. In the Roman passage the illustration is designed to show that each member of the body is to function to its best ability to benefit the whole body in its function.

As one surveys the various gifts, is evident that the list of seven gifts compose some supernatural gifts and other gifts which required no miraculous endowment. Of the seven “gifts” only one demanded supernatural power, prophecy. And while some of the natural gifts such as teaching might have been received in a supernatural way, neither it nor the other five really needed supernatural endowment: ministry, exhorting, given, ruling and showing mercy. Whatever the gift one had, that one was to devote himself to the full performance of it.

“Let us prophesy according to the proportion of our faith” (Rom. 12:6). In essence, the prophets were to confine themselves to what the Spirit revealed to them. They were to speak *“as the spirit gave them utterance”* (Acts 2:4). But, because *“the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets;”* therefore possible for one to restrain what the Spirit did reveal to him, Paul’s commands to Thessalonians, *“Quench not the Spirit,”* was absolutely necessary (1 Cor. 14:32; 1 Thess. 5:19).

“Or ministry, let us give ourselves to our ministry” (Rom. 12:7). Ministry is *“to serve”* and might describe a variety of functions, including preaching. Very likely here it has reference to seeking to fill the needs of the saints. If

one is fitted for that, let him not fulfill that ministry in a partial or neglectful way.

"Or he that teaching, to his teaching" (Rom. 12:7). Man cannot direct his way and God's people are destroyed for lack of knowledge (Jer. 65:16; Hos. 4:6). God's word is the lamp the world needs (Psa. 119:105). Let the teacher try to enlighten with saving information as many folks as possible.

"Or he that exhorteth, to his exhorting" (Rom. 12:8). One thinks almost immediately of Barnabas who excelled in this gift and whose ability was recognized by the apostles. When news of the conversion of Gentiles in Antioch reached the ears of the Jerusalem church, their choice to strengthen and edify that infant church was Barnabas *"who when he had seen the grace of the Lord was glad and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord"* (Acts 1:23). Some seem to have the knack for making estranged parties even more bitter against each other; yet others, as Barnabas seem to know just what to say to help heal rifts. If one has such an ability, then let them use it. Such men are badly needed today!

"He that giveth, let him do it with liberality" (Rom. 12:8). Christians are commanded to give (1 Cor. 16:1; 2 Cor. 8, 9). The reminder concerning giving is *"He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; but he that soweth bountifully shall also reap bountifully"* (2 Cor. 9:6). Whether we have little or much, we can and must give liberally of what we possess.

"He that ruleth, with diligence" (Rom. 12:8). Peter's exhortations to elders are appropriate here *"exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willing"* (1 Pet. 5:2). It is a sober task which elders have for *"they watch in behalf of your souls"* (Heb. 13:17). While they must not accept the responsibility because they are forced to; once they do accept that task, they are to exercise that oversight with diligence.

"He that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness" (Rom. 12:8). The same thought was expressed by Peter in his first letter: *"Showing hospitality one to another without murmuring"* (1 Pet. 4:8). If we help others, let us do so without complaining. To complain will negate any benefit we might otherwise receive from our *"showing mercy."*

You have a gift; likely several of them. Exercise your gifts to the best of your ability, desire to help others with the gift God has given you.

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