

Romans 12:3-8
“A Change of Mind”

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I. Intro

In the 2nd verse Paul told his readers to be “*transformed by the renewing of their minds*” the rest of the chapter will explain specifically what it means to have a change of mind!

After many years of pastoring, I’ve realized that for the most part when people come into my office with relational difficulties their quest is to get the other person to change. Friends, the best place to start when you notice that someone needs to change is always yourself! There are two very good reasons for this:

1. You are the only one by the working of the Spirit of God through the Word of God that has the power to change.
2. Often it is our transformation that motivates the other person to being open to the same transformation.

II. Vs. 3 Who we are

Vs. 3 It is interesting to note that it is not wrong to think about yourself, it is wrong to think more highly than you ought about yourself. We need to do a regular inventory of how we see ourselves in Christ. Paul exhorts believers under his apostolic authority to do just that. Paul tells us to do a self-check in two areas:

- A. “*Not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think*”: Paul says we need to avoid overrating ourselves! You may not think you think to highly of yourself but

there is a sure-fire way to determine that you do and that is when others treat you not very well. When people are saying that we aren't all that, we get real upset and say, "*Well how dare they treat me this way!*" Some folks are easy to tell that they think more highly of themselves because they are always talking about themselves they are their favorite subject. But with others have learned that this isn't very becoming to boast about ourselves, so they adopt a more subtle way of thinking more highly of ourselves and that is to get other folks to do it for us. We go around and put ourselves down so that people will respond by saying, "*Oh no you're not that way why you are the smartest, most kind person I know!*" And inwardly we think to ourselves, "*Yeh, they're right, I am!*" Now you can tell if you are doing this really quick because when we bait the hook that way and the person instead of responding the way we had hoped says, "*You know, I'm glad you said that about yourself because I've been noticing that about you for years!*"

B. "***But to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith***": If we are to avoid "*overrating ourselves*" just how are we to see ourselves? Paul identifies two ways we are to see ourselves:

1. **Soberly**: The word here in the Greek means "*to be in one's right mind*" and as such **conceit** is considered to be "*out of your mind*". To be sober minded about oneself is to realize that you are sinner, that you have a flesh that will constantly try to get you to be enslaved to lusts and passions. We need to realize that we can never trust ourselves; we've always got to be on the lookout for the "old man" with his thoughts and attitudes.

2. **Measure of faith:** The second thing we are to do is to look back over all the truth in spite of you that God has to say about you. You used to be dead in trespasses and sin's, you used to walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, conducting ourselves in the lust of the flesh, fulfilling the desire of the flesh, children of wrath. But now He has made us alive! All of this is because of His great love with which He has loved us and now He has raised us up together making us to sit in heavenly places that in the ages to come that He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness towards us. WOW!!!

Ray Stedman said that when he would first get up as he was starting his day he would remind himself of three truths:

1. **I'm made in the image of God:** I'm not an animal; therefore, I don't have to behave like one. I have the ability in Christ to respond and relate to the living God and behave in a way that God created me to behave not like a beast!
2. **I'm filled with the Holy Spirit:** I have the power of God working in me; all of the strains and stresses of today need not affect me and mold me into that beast that I used to be. Instead, the Holy Spirit will be using those very things that used to shove me into acting like an animal into acting more like Jesus.
3. **I'm a part of God's plan:** There are no coincidences or accidents everything I'm going through today is part of His design and plan. God will not only be working out His plan in me, but He will also be working out His plan through me today for others. So, I can just enjoy the journey, can't wait to see what new adventure God is going to be doing today!!!

III. Vs. 4-8 What we have

Vs. 4-5 The second thing that changes are minds is the Holy Spirit working through other believers on our behalf. The Church is an organism not an organization as Paul refers to it as a human body. There ought to be one in “*unity*” yet individually different thus without “*uniformity*”. The body of Christ isn't about as becoming a member so that we can get something out of it. It is about as being a member so that we can make certain that someone else gets something out of it.

Vs. 6-8 The word “*gifts*” here is a word where we get out word “*graces*” from which speaks a lot about the “*gifts*”. They should be “graceful”, which speaks about being natural and beautiful to see operate. There are four places in the New Testament that you can go to find teaching on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, here and in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and chapter 14 as well as Ephesians chapter 4. But a careful examination of these passages reveals that in the 1 Corinthian passage's the word for gifts is *italicized* which means that it is not in the original and the Ephesian 4 passage the word is not mentioned. So, in reality this is the only place that the gifts are specifically mentioned. The gifts here in Romans 12:6-8 are to be the **motivations** behind the **manifestation** of the gifts listed in 1 Corinthians and the **ministries** or offices of the gifts listed in Ephesians chapter 4. **I like the fact that the work of the Holy Spirit is first concerned with the motivation before the manifestation and the ministry position.** This truth is further illustrated by what Paul has already written in verse 3-5 where we are told to think soberly of ourselves. Paul divides these gifts into two groups: one of four gifts the other of three gifts:

A. Vs. 6b-8a Those that expound the word

B. Vs. 8b Those that expand the work

Those that expound the word

1. **Prophecy “Declares the Word”**: There are two types of prophecy mentioned in scripture and the one we most associate with this word is predictive in nature as it is engaged in “*fore-telling*”. But the primary meaning and usage in scripture of prophecy is not predictive but is simply declaring truth as it is engaged in “*forth-telling*”. Paul’s word of motivation in the exercise of this gift is that it needs to be always kept within “*proportion*” of our faith. The word “*proportion*” in the Greek is mathematical term that deals with the right ratio or proper proportions. So, Paul is saying that in declaring the word that we should do so always in the proper proportion of our faith within the limits already established in the tenants of our faith as well as the faith God has established in us. There is a limit, a set guide, to our declaring God’s truth, *it will always be consistent to what God has already made known in His word and it should always point people to God not to the prophet.*
2. **Ministry “Demonstrates the Word”**: The word used for ministry here is the same word where we get our word deacon and therefore refers to the person serving and not in what they are doing. As you read through the New Testament you will always see Jesus “*Touching*” and “*Teaching*” folks. In Acts chapter 9 the church was mourning the loss of Dorcas as many folks gathered to Peter displaying the clothes she made. Peter was called to declare the Word that warmed people’s hearts, but Dorcas was called to sew clothe that warmed their bodies. Paul’s word in exercising this demonstration of the Word is that the person should do so in the realm in which God has placed them. In other words, they need to bloom where they are planted

instead of looking to find a better gig, a more visible platform they should just go for it right where they are.

3. **Teaching “Defines the Word”**: A prophet will share occasionally but a teacher shares in an expositional way. And like ministry it ought to be aimed at understanding.
4. **Exhortation “Develops the Word”**: Those taught but not exhorted become “*fat sheep*” that only take in truth but never live it. Those who are exhorted but not taught become “*excited and active*” but have no depth or understanding to what they do and will burn out quickly or work in wrong ways. Again, in each of these cases we note that they are to exercise the gift right where they are and in the abilities God has given them.

Those that expand the work

1. **Giving “Expands the work”**: The word for “*gives*” means to “*impart*” of one’s earthly possessions and Paul’s encouragement is to do so with no strings attached with generosity. We can see how as Paul proclaimed already that we don’t all have the “same function” but how vital each and every function is each other and to the furtherance of God’s work. You can have someone who is called and gifted in declaring the Word or defining the Word but without someone called to “*expand the work*” it will not go anywhere.
2. **Leading “Engineers the work”**: The word here means a “*person who is placed in front*”. And they are to do so with care doing their best for others, for the benefit of God and others before self. During a private fishing trip in the Alaskan wilderness, a charter pilot and fishermen left a cooler with bait in the plane. A bear smelled it and

destroyed the Piper PA-18A 150 airplane. The pilot used his radio and had another pilot bring him 2 new tires, 3 cases of duct tape, and a supply of sheet plastic. He patched the plane together and FLEW IT HOME! That's what those that lead know how to do "*patch things up so that others can fly home*".

3. **Mercy "Encourages the work"**: There are those that "*expand the work*" by giving, then there are those that "*engineer the work*" by leading but you still need those that "*encourage the work*" by constantly displaying mercy towards all that are doing the work. And Paul says they are to do so with cheerfulness and that word is where we get our word ***hilarious*** from. God has placed in the body those that encourage others by their sense of humor and joy filled life.