

## God-Given Faith to Think Humbly and Rightly (12:3)

12:3 *For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think [ὑπερφρονεῖν] more highly of himself than he ought to think [φρονεῖν]; but to think [φρονεῖν] so as to have sound judgment [σωφρονεῖν], as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.*

### Humble

- Paul uses a play on words here, using three different words about thinking and discerning (that all have the same roots). He commands us to be humble in our thinking about ourselves immediately after telling us to “*be transformed by the renewing*” of our minds (12:2).

### God Gets the Glory

- We cannot have pride in the amount of faith we have (and, therefore, our exercising of Spiritual gifts), because “*God has allotted to each a measure of faith.*”
- Paul highlighted this at the beginning of the verse: he writes as an apostle not because of his own genius or spiritual ability, but “*through the grace given*” to him.<sup>1</sup>

## God-Given Grace to Function in the Body (12:4-6a)

12:4 *For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 12:5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*  
12:6a *Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly...*

### The Church as Christ’s Body

- This is a theme Paul will continue in  
1 Corinthians 10:16,17; 12:12-27; Ephesians 1:18-23;

This is what Ephesians 4:7-11 says; Christ gifts the Church with leaders to help them grow in Him – all by His grace.

2:11-16; 3:6; 4:4,12,16; 5:23,30; Colossians 1:18,24;  
3:15.

## What We Owe Each Other

- “Believers who live wholly for God are committed to community (12:3-8). They do not live for themselves any longer, but they become involved with the new people of God and minister to the needs of others with the gifts granted to them by God.”<sup>2</sup>
- This is a great hurdle for true Christian growth (and, in light of 12:1,2, true Christian worship). We gravitate toward community, but it tends to either be cliques inside the church (1 Corinthians 1:12,13a) or social groups outside the membership of the local church. In our flesh, we want community, but community that looks a whole lot like us. We resist the biblical reality that in the Lord we “*are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit*” (Ephesians 2:21,22), and tend to fellowship in areas of common experience, hobbies, age, etc. God’s intent is for unity in Christ beyond worldly categories.

## Seven God-Given Gifts (12:6b-8)

### What This List Isn’t

- This list isn’t all-inclusive or comprehensive. The apostle gives us other lists in other letters he writes.<sup>3</sup>

### Prophecy (12:6b)

12:6b...*if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith...*

### What It Is

- In the Old Testament, Prophets were God-called and Spirit-empowered people who applied God’s Law

<sup>2</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1998), pg. 649.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:8-10,28-30; Ephesians 4:11; see also

1 Peter 4:10,11.

to God’s covenant people at specific times and places.<sup>4</sup>

- The Church has allowed the Charismatic/Pentecostal movement (which rose up in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century) to re-define terms like this – new definitions, which, in my view, are usually suspect, have become mainstream. Prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, “prophecy” was understood to be Spirit-empowered application of Scripture to specific congregations at specific times – what we think of when we say “preaching.”<sup>5</sup>

#### How the Spirit Shows It in All of Us

- READ Acts 2:16-18. On the day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter proclaims that the promise of Joel 2:28,29 (and the desire of Moses in Numbers 11:29) has been fulfilled in the Church. All of God’s people in Christ have His Spirit, and are called upon to speak a Christ-centered

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<sup>4</sup> Even when telling the future, the Prophets were only applying God’s Law, which promised curses for unfaithfulness (which came to pass) and God’s gracious future restoration (which partially came to pass in Israel’s history and fully came to pass in Christ, Who is the true Israel). READ Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30.

<sup>5</sup> For example, the earliest book in English on preaching is called “The Art of Prophecy,” by William Perkins (1558-1602). It is not about receiving new special revelation through the Spirit or foretelling the future, but about faithfully preaching the Word to a known congregation. In England, Separatist preachers (who weren’t allowed to attend University) from different congregations would gather for what modern seminaries call “preaching labs,” opportunities to preach together and allow the more experienced preachers to offer critique (congregations were allowed to be present). These gatherings were called “prophesyings” (a practice borrowed from continental Europe from the second generation of the Protestant Reformation).

Scripture to all situations (a fulfillment of Deuteronomy 6:6-9).

#### How the Spirit Leads Us in It Through Certain Members

- The Spirit leads us to speak His Word by His power and illumination through the example of gifted members of the congregation.

#### The Proportion of Faith

- There is no pronoun (“his”) in the original Greek. These translations show this:
  - “...according to the portion of faith” (Geneva Bible).
  - “...according to the proportion of faith” (King James Version, Young’s Literal Translation).
  - “...in agreement with the faith” (New Century Version).
  - “...after the reason of faith” (Wycliffe).
- Interpreters through Church history have understood the phrase in the original Greek, “analogy of faith” (τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως), to refer to the limitation of all prophecy – it cannot go past the Scripture’s unified message of the faith.<sup>6</sup>
- The Message paraphrase very accurately captures the meaning of Paul’s phrase: “If you preach, just preach God’s Message, nothing else.”

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<sup>6</sup> Our Baptist forefathers described the “analogy of faith” like this: “The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched by other places that speak more clearly.” The faith described in the whole of Scripture explains itself, and doesn’t need spiritual “experts” or Church tradition (as in the Roman Catholic Church) to rightly explain/understand it. Paul is teaching that those gifted with prophecy cannot step beyond the faith as explained fully and sufficiently by the Scriptures.

## Service (12:7a)

12:7a...*if service, in his serving...*

### What It Is

- “Service” (some translations render this “ministry”) is exactly as it sounds.<sup>7</sup> The greatest example is Jesus’ own, Who came to serve us by laying down His life in our place that we might have forgiveness for sins (Matthew 20:28//Mark 10:45). The word is used in the N.T. to describe table-serving (Matthew 8:15//Mark 1:31//Luke 4:39; Luke 10:40; 12:37; 17:8; John 12:2; Acts 6:2), financial support (Luke 8:3; Romans 15:25), physical aid in distress (Matthew 4:11//Mark 1:13; Matthew 25:44; Hebrews 6:10), or help/comfort (Acts 19:22; Philemon 13).

### How the Spirit Shows It in All of Us

- The Spirit is truly at work in a congregation when members look out for each other and look for ways to meet each other’s needs through service.<sup>8</sup>

### How the Spirit Leads Us in It Through Certain Members

- The office of deacon (διάκονος) comes from this word “service” (διακονία). While all members of the congregation are to be dedicated to serving one

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<sup>7</sup> There is no unique Greek word for “minister” in the Bible – it is the same as the word for “deacon” or “servant” (διακονία). We are all called to “serve,” that is, to be involved in “ministry.”

<sup>8</sup> The N.T. cites neglect of each other’s physical needs as a sign that we aren’t really in the faith at all (Matthew 25:41-46; James 2:15-17; 1 John 3:16,17). One of the signs given in the Scripture that the Holy Spirit was truly at work in a congregation is its mutual sharing to meet each other’s needs (Acts 2:44,45; 4:32-37). This physical service would also be reflected in the Spirit-filled submission of members to each other in our relationships, too (Ephesians 5:18b-21; Philippians 2:1-18).

another, deacons are to serve as examples of that service.<sup>9</sup>

## Teaching (12:7b)

12:7b...*or he who teaches, in his teaching...*

### What It Is

- Teaching is the explanation of Scripture.<sup>10</sup>

### How the Spirit Shows It in All of Us

- As I pointed out on Mother’s Day, even mothers had a role in teaching in the O.T. (Proverbs 1:8; 6:20; 31:1,26).
- Consider Hebrews 5:12-14 and the call to Christian maturity.

### How the Spirit Leads Us in It Through Certain Members

- Teaching is also mentioned as a gifting in 1 Corinthians 12:28,29; Ephesians 4:11 (where it should probably be hyphenated “pastor-teachers”).

## Exhortation (12:8a)

12:8a...*or he who exhorts, in his exhortation...*

### What It Is

- We see that in the synagogue (Acts 13:15) and the early Church (Hebrews 13:22) there was a place for messages of encouragement, comfort, and/or motivation. This is the verb used, for example, when people were urged to repent and believe in

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<sup>9</sup> “All members are to be committed to serving one another in Christian love. The deacons are to be examples of Christian servant leadership, and lead in organizing the service ministry of the congregation” (Indian Hills Baptist Church By-Laws, II.1.3).

<sup>10</sup> “Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, **prophets and teachers**” (Acts 13:1). The Spirit provides both those who explain the meaning of Scripture (“teachers”) and those who also apply it to the spiritual needs of the congregation (“prophets”) – there is, of course, some cross-over in these two: preachers will explain, and teachers will apply.

the Gospel (Acts 2:40) or to persevere in the faith (Acts 11:23; 14:22).<sup>11</sup> In fact, Paul introduces this section of Romans (chapters 12-15) using this word: “Therefore **I exhort you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice – alive, holy, and pleasing to God – which is your reasonable service**” (New English Translation).

- This is the title Jesus gives the Holy Spirit the night before His death: the Comforter (John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7; see also Acts 9:31).<sup>12</sup>

#### How the Spirit Shows It in All of Us

- READ 2 Corinthians 1:3-7; 7:5-7,13; Ephesians 6:21,22; Colossians 2:1-3; 4:7-9; 1 Thessalonians 2:9-12; 3:1-3; 4:18; 5:11; Philemon 7.

#### How the Spirit Leads Us in It Through Certain Members

- If “prophets” convict and “teachers” explain, there are some whose gift is to motivate us to action.
- “...Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of **Encouragement**), and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet” (Acts 4:36,37). This is the same word translated here in Romans as “exhortation.” This man was an encourager and motivator to the congregation – so much so that it became his nickname!

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<sup>11</sup> Again, there is some overlap in the giftings: “Judas and Silas, also **being prophets themselves, encouraged** [exhorted] and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message” (Acts 15:32; see also 1 Corinthians 14:31).

<sup>12</sup> Paul says, “*he who exhorts* [ὁ παρακαλῶν], in his exhortation [τῆ παρακλήσει],” and Jesus gives the Holy Spirit the title of “Comforter” (Παράκλητος) – these words share a common root in the original Greek.

### Giving (12:8b)

12:8b...*he who gives, with liberality...*

#### What It Is

- This one’s clear, I would think. The N.T. understands any excess to be for the purpose of giving it away to help others (Luke 3:11; 1 Timothy 6:17-19); one of the purposes of our labor, in fact, is to be able to give (Ephesians 4:28).

#### How the Spirit Shows It in All of Us

- 2 Corinthians 8-9 shows us that giving is the result of God’s gracious work, and is not dependent on being wealthy. Its goal is that thanksgiving be lifted up to God (Who gives the gracious desire to give and the means to give) and that fellowship is strengthened between believers.

#### How the Spirit Leads Us in It Through Certain Members

- Some people are motivated by God’s grace to give; they serve as role-models for all of us.
- How to they give? Some translations say “with liberality,” “generously,” “with simplicity,” or “with sincerity.” I think it’s expressed well in 2 Corinthians 9:7.

### Leading (12:8c)

12:8c...*he who leads, with diligence...*

#### How the Spirit Leads Us in It Through Certain Members

- There are those in the congregation who lead, and they do so through the ministry of the Word (1 Thessalonians 5:12,13; 1 Timothy 3:4,5; 5:17).

### Mercy (12:8d)

12:8d...*he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*

#### How the Spirit Shows It in All of Us

- READ Jude 22,23.

#### How the Spirit Leads Us in It Through Certain Members

- Some people naturally and cheerfully reach out to help those either in physical or emotional need.

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**Having received God’s mercy in Christ, are you now serving each other by the abundant grace He gives you?**