

Romans 12:3-5

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Modified from Irving L. Jensen's excellent work " Jensen's Survey of the NT "				

[Romans 12:3-5](#)

Our Responsibilities Under Grace - Part 3

by Dr. Wayne A. Barber

See also onsite verse by verse comments - Romans 12:3-6 Commentary

Years ago, I was up in Alaska with my family and I had the opportunity to fly in the cockpit of a 727. I loved it when we took off. There is nothing like being up in the front of the plane and seeing what is going on. They were flying us up to Prudhoe Bay on the Arctic Ocean. I had never been there before.

The weather was perfectly clear as we flew, But as we got up there, I noticed when we made our bank around and were going to land on that air strip, the pilot put everything on instrument rating. I thought, "Now that is interesting." As a matter of fact, I leaned forward and asked, "Why are you going in on instruments? It is clear as a bell." He said, "Wayne, excuse me. I am flying the plane. We will talk about this later." Then I realized that wasn't the time to discuss it.

We came around on instrument rating, and they landed the plane. It was clear as a bell! After we landed I said, "Now, you have got to help me on this. I thought instrument landings were for fogged in conditions." He said, "I can really tell you have never been up here. We have learned never to trust what we see or think we see. When we land up here, the fog can move in so quickly we only trust what we know will land this plane."

I can't say it strongly enough. If you are a believer, you have turned now to love Him back. You are presenting yourself. You have got to understand: don't you trust what your mind tells you. Trust what the Word of God and only the Word of God has to say. If you don't, you have forgotten what we have already learned in chapters 1-11. This mind does not think as God wants it to think. It has to be renewed to think the way God wants it to think. It is a brand new change here. You are presenting yourself. There is a renovation that has to take place in your mind.

I want to read verses 3 down through the first part of verse 6 so you will know that is what Paul is talking about. He says, "For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly..."

You have to follow the flow of the context. The first thing he addresses is the concept one has of what the church is supposed to be, a realization. I am going to ask you a question. Have you come to this realization yet in your Christian walk that the Church is a little bit bigger than what your local church or any other church is all about? Oh, yes, there is the local church which is a picture of the universal church—not the universal salvation type of church; we don't preach that. I'm talking about the universal Church, which is made up of people who put their faith into Jesus Christ, which is world-wide, which spans the globe. The local church is a picture of that, but we are only a part of something that is all over this world. God has a big family, and it is called the Body of Christ. This is what the Church is all about.

Now, let's walk through this in this new realization you have come to once your minds are renewed and your character is being transformed and you are presented to Christ. Watch. Here is the realization that you come to. Paul had it. He says, "For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you..." Paul said, in verse 1 of chapter 1, "I am an apostle." What he is saying here is, "I wouldn't be an apostle, I wouldn't even be a believer if it wasn't for the grace of God."

There is that humility. Humility frames the rest of the book. You have got to have it. It is the understanding that says, "I don't deserve anything but hell. But oh, God, thank you for what you have given to me." Paul is saying, "I am the chief of sinners. I am the least worthy to be an apostle." First Timothy 1:15 says, "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all." The word "foremost" means that I am the chief of all of them. The religious man that he was, he understood what he did not deserve. He understood that he didn't find Christ, Christ found him. It is only by grace that he has what he has, and it is only by grace that he is what he is.

So he says, "I am an apostle only by the grace of God. I understand that the role that God has given to me I don't deserve and could not deserve in a million years. It is only an act of His grace." He says, "For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you..." The word "given" is *didomi*. It is in the aorist passive. I didn't ask for it. God just gave it. It is the gift that is given always for the good will of the person getting the gift. In other words, somebody wants to do something good for somebody, so he *didomi*, he gives him a gift. Paul said, "My God loved me enough to give me the gift, 1) of being in His body; 2) of being an apostle. And it is only by His grace."

He says, "I say to every man among you." Ladies, you can't get off the hook here. The word "man" doesn't appear in the text. The word translated there for "every man" is *pas*, which means each and every one of you and the whole when put together. So he covers everybody. He says, "I am not leaving anybody out, male, female; I am not leaving anybody out."

Paul goes on to say, "not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think." That little word "not" is *me*. There is another little word for "not," *ou*, which means absolutely not in any situation. But *me* has more of the idea of a relative not. Let me explain. There are times I need to think highly of myself. What? In other words to take care of myself. If you don't think anything of yourself, you won't take care of yourself. You have known people like that. So it is important at times to think highly of yourself in the right way. Paul is talking about in your place in the body of Christ in regards to your salvation. I don't want you to think more highly of yourself.

"Thinking highly of yourself" is the word *hupophroneo*. *Hupo* means above, higher, and *phroneo* is more than just to think. It has the idea of a mind-set. It is kind of like the guy who wrote the book, "Humility and How I Achieved It." Thinking more highly of yourself is a choice. It involves your own will, your own conscience, your own affection. In other words, if you find somebody who is proud in the body of Christ, you have found somebody who has made a choice to be that way. You have found somebody who has denied the grace of God in his or her life. You have found somebody who has become arrogant in his or her own self.

You see, this idea of thinking more highly is more than just a random thought. It is a chosen way of thinking: you choose to think that way. You can't think this way if your minds are being renovated by the Word of God and your character is being transformed. You can't think that way because your renewed way of thinking is to not think more highly of yourself than you ought to think. I personally think that would be a great platform for

chapters 12 through 16: Don't think more highly of yourself in your relationship to God. As we move into chapter 12, don't think more highly of yourself in your function in the body of Christ; don't think more highly of yourself when it comes to relating to one another. Don't think more highly of yourself when it comes to submitting to pagan authorities that God has placed over you in chapter 13. You can just go right on down the list. God will teach you how to think, but I have got to be presented first so that my mind then can be renewed by what God's word has for me.

Paul goes on in verse 3 to say, "but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith." I should think a certain way as a believer. That word "ought to think" is the little word *dei*, which means that which is inevitable, that which is necessary. After studying chapters 1-11 it is inevitable and necessary that you think a certain way. To think anything else is to have an unrenewed mind. To renew your mind causes you to think. It says God has given "each a measure of faith," to have sound judgment.

What is Paul talking about here? What does he mean, "to think so as to have sound judgment"? To think is *phroneo* again, have the mind-set, choose to think it. The word "sound judgment" is an interesting word, *sophroneo*. It takes the same word, and adds a word to it. The little word *so* in the front of *phroneo* comes from the word *sozo*, which means sound—something that is whole, something that is solid. Have you ever taken something that is solid and hit it? You can hear that solid sound behind it. Well, you see, when you have based your mind on what God says, that is solid. Think so as to have a sound judgment.

The second part of that word is *phroneo*, which comes from the word *phren*, which again means a mind-set. Here it is. When you have your minds renewed, you are going to think differently, but your thinking is going to be more sound than ever before because it is going to be based on what God says.

The word *sophroneo* also means that you don't go to extremes. Now I want you to hang on to this. Once you start presenting yourself and renewing your mind this realization comes to you and causes you to have such a sound biblical mind when it comes to the church, specifically. You won't go to the extreme of exalting yourself and you won't fall into the extreme of discouragement and depression. Why? Because your mind has been based on something that is sound, something that is whole, something that is solid.

He says, "as God has allotted to each a measure of faith." Whew! The word "allotted" here is the word *merizo*. That word is kind of like when you went for Christmas or Thanksgiving to your grandmother's and you had a big piece of pie. Somebody had to cut that pie, and *merizo* means that is the piece that you got.

Now, wait a minute. God has allotted to each one, He has cut a piece or portion, a measure of faith. Now what is he talking about? The word for faith there doesn't have quite the same meaning as we normally know faith, which is dependence or obedience to God. I believe here it is talking about God has allotted to each a certain portion in the church called the body of Christ.

Did you know that there is a big piece of pie out here called the Body of Christ? Now, excuse me, I am not being sacrilegious, but for the sake of illustration. I have a piece in that body of Christ. God has cut that piece. God has given me a portion in the body of Christ. But God has also given you a piece and somebody else a piece. Now you say, "Well, I didn't get as big a piece as you did." Or I can say to you, "I didn't get as big a piece as you did."

Listen, who cut the pie and who deserves the pie to start with? You have got to come to it that way. The church is not an organization, it is an organism. God formed it. It is His church. Preachers don't build it. Staffs do not build it. You don't build it. He says, "I will build My church." But we are a piece of it. Each one of us has an ability to trust God. That is the "faith" I believe he is talking about, in the slice of the pie that God has cut for us individually.

I don't know if you know it or not, but you don't join the Body of Christ. You have to be birthed into it. When you are birthed into it, you are given a gift that causes you to fit in that Body. It is a totally different concept than what the world has. You can't measure it like the world measures things. It is totally, radically, different. That is why your mind has to be renewed so this realization can come upon you.

Some of us have got a bigger piece, some of us got a smaller piece, but each piece is important. Paul explains that in verses 4 and 5 as he moves on. He says, "For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." He has given a comparison here. The first thing he starts off with is the human body. We have one body, but we have many members in it. The word "member" has the idea of limbs, but he says that all of it doesn't have the same function.

Think about the human body. All of us have different sizes, different shapes, and we all have different limbs and organs and things that make up this body. You think there is not a difference? You say, "Oh, it is just an arm and a hand. The same thing on the other side." Oh, no, it is different. If you don't believe me, go try to do a common task using the other hand (e.g., try to write left-handed if you are right-handed.) You will find out in a minute the right hand is different than the left hand. You need both of them. They both have a role to play. I have a right leg and I have a left leg. Everything in me is important to the function of this body.

Now listen, there is no such thing as a healthy body with selfish limbs or organs. That is one of the first things you come to realize. When you start presenting yourself to Him, your mind is being renewed. God helps you to realize you are an important part to the function of His body on this earth. He is living in you. You have presented yourself to Him. He is going to work Himself through you through the gift that He has given to you. It is very significant that you understand this. Gifts are for the Body; they are not for outside the Body. Outside the Body we are commanded to do anything that anybody is gifted to do. But inside the Body we have a function. So the Church is not some organization that could be measured like something out in the world.

For instance, let's just say you have a burden to reach people for Jesus. We all have a command; but there are some people who seem to be actually gifted in that area. You lead 25 people to Jesus this next week, but not a one of them joins your church. How do you measure that? They may have joined another church, but so what? The church is bigger than your church. You see, you can't measure these things like you do in the world. It is different. You have to come to a realization that the Church is nothing like man-made religion. It is a body and each person fits into that body. Just like we have a physical body with many members that do not have the same function, the Church is the same way. There are spiritual gifts in the members that are a part of that body.

I want to tell you something, no matter how small a piece of pie you have, some people are perhaps jealous or envious. They go to the extreme. You see, they fall into that trap. If they had a sound mind and sound judgment, they wouldn't try to do what they are not gifted to do in the Body of Christ. But when you do that, you fall into the extreme of discouragement.

It is like the members of your body. Every member does not do the same thing. I want to keep saying this over and over again. There is no such thing as a healthy body with selfish organs or limbs. A brother had a fall recently going out in his back yard and thought he had sprained his ankle. It didn't get any better so he went to the doctor. He had fractured a bone in his ankle. That bone is so small compared to the rest of the body, but that little bone caused problems. Do you know what it means to have a fracture? It doesn't mean it breaks. It just cracks. It is just a little hair-line crack. But because of that one little bone in the midst of his whole body of healthy bones, he limps, has a cast and walks with a cane.

You see, each person is important in the function of the Body of Christ. It is not like an organization. It is totally different. It is like a human body. Just like you have different limbs and organs, they all have different functions.

Well, he says in verse 5, "so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." Now, before we move to verse 6, the first thing he wants you to see is how intricately we are tied together. I need you, but you need me. You ask, "Well, does it mean that I need you for what I think I need you for?" No, you need my gift, and I need your gift. We all are somehow tied together.

Oh, if we could see this. If my liver some day decides, "I am going on strike. I never get any attention. I do all the dirty work. I am not functioning any more." My lungs are healthy. My heart is healthy. Everything else is in great shape. What happens to my body? It dies. Because one organ did not function like it ought to function.

That is how important we are to one another. When you find out that you are gifted, you also find out that you are also interrelated. We need one another. No man has all the gifts. We have the Holy Spirit who manifests those gifts and when we are outside the body of Christ, then we are commanded to do, as I said earlier, and people who are gifted help us to do what we are commanded to do more gracefully. But within the church, no one has all those gifts. Every one of us has a piece of the pie. We have to find the place where we fit. So the first thing is to realize how much we need one another.

But look at verse 6. "And since we have gifts that differ." Now I don't know how clear you can get. That is what he is talking about. This is the realization that you come to when you present your body, when you renew your mind. The first realization that you come to is what the Church really is: it is not a corporation; it is not an organization: it is the organism, the body of Christ, and each one of us have an intricate part in that, an

intricate role, an intricate function in that. Gifts are different according to the grace given to us, that grace that we did not deserve. He is the one who made the pie. He is the one who cuts the pie.

Paul goes on to say, "let each exercise them accordingly." Boy, I have had so many experiences in this. I want to share some from my heart because we are coming into a tremendous part of chapter 12. When I was down in Mississippi, I followed a man who was a wonderful pastor to the people. He loved to visit. He was in the homes of all the shut-ins every single day. He was in the people's houses. He was wonderful about doing that.

When I went in, I heard about all this. I have always so admired that piece of the pie. It has always been something to me that I kind of wish I had a little bit more of. But you know what I found? When I got there, I discovered my piece of the pie wasn't exactly the same as his. In fact, my gifts are exhortation and teaching. Did you know that a person with the gift of mercy shows his gift by what he does? But a person with the gift of exhortation shows the same exact care by what he says. It is the same exact heart; it is just manifested in a different way.

So I got there and I started off trying to do the same thing. Suddenly I found out I didn't have enough time to study. Study is a high priority on my heart. So I went back to check with the people. How did this man teach? How did he preach? They said to me very clearly, "Wayne, he was a good visitor, a wonderful man, but we feel like we are starving to death for the Word of God." So evidently they needed something else during that time. I don't have the answers to all this. Perhaps his piece of the pie fit that, but they came to a point that they needed something else and God happened to drop me in on them. I wasn't cut the same way.

To go to extremes is to step outside the piece of the pie God has given you. To go to extremes is to try to operate in something that you are not gifted to do. You have to find that place in the Body of Christ. You don't find it until you present it. You don't find it until your mind is renovated. You don't find it until your character is being changed from within.

Then all of a sudden you begin to realize the ministry that God has for you and how different and how unique it all is and how it fits in the Body of Christ. What happens to so many people is, they compare one person with another person, particularly when it comes to churches. (By the way, I have no agenda in this. I am not trying to pump my own case here. I am just trying to show you out of my own experience what I have learned in this. I am who I am, lacking as I am, but I have a piece of the pie that is unique to me.)

Each person has to find that piece of the pie where they fit. You go to the extreme, even when you are looking at somebody else by your criticism, when you don't have your minds renewed. Then you don't have that concept of the church. You don't even understand it that way.

Well, I had another lesson. Several years ago, I was speaking at a conference. I had to speak with Dr. Stephen Olford. When he preaches, folks, anybody who calls themselves a preacher immediately decides, "Well, I could dig ditches or drive a truck." I mean, that is the way you feel when you hear this man preach. He is the prince of preachers. I forgot to tell them that I want to go first and let him go second. They put him first and I had to follow him. Oh, my goodness.

I heard him preach and I thought to myself, "I am so far from being anything like that, I need to decide what other area God has for me because it couldn't be in preaching." But while he was preaching, in that frustration, it was like the Holy Spirit of God was saying to me, "Wayne, do you believe what you preach?" I said, "Well, yeah." He was saying, "Now look at this group. Look at them real carefully while he is preaching."

One dear friend of mine was there. He is a deer hunter. He loved to talk about tree stands and what kind of gun you use and what gram of powder you use in the shells and all that kind of stuff. I just like him. He comes every year looking for me. He has some new story to tell me every year he comes. He comes to that conference because he is a good friend and he has found some camaraderie there.

Here he is sitting in front of the greatest preacher I think I have ever heard in my entire life, using a vocabulary that I had to have a dictionary to check it myself. I was wondering, "You know, I wonder if he understands what he is saying. It sounds great, but I wonder if it is registering what he is saying because what he was saying was such truth." He is a preacher's preacher to me. I was sitting there it was like the Holy Spirit was saying, "You know, Wayne, do you know what you need to do? Just get up behind him and interpret. But don't tell anybody what you are doing. Pick up the thought and just simply let your gift work to where you can explain to the people what he has just said and how they can implement it in their life."

Do you know what happened in the whole conference? It was the sweetest thing. Dr. Olford, to me, is one of

the finest Christian men I have ever been around in my entire life. He is such a wonderful gentleman. We were able to work in tandem like you would not believe. But you know what had to happen? I had to realize something. I can't think more highly of myself than I ought to think. I can't step over here and try to be somebody that I am not. But I have the ability to believe God and the portion of that which He has given to me. Therefore, I just need to function in my place. We both need each other.

How beautiful it is when you start working out of the portion of the pie that God has cut for you. You see, a lot of people don't understand this. They still don't have that realization. Folks, the struggles we are going to have down the road are going to be because of unrenewed minds who do not have the realization that the Church is not an organization, the members are not stockholders, and the pastor is not the CEO, Jesus is. The elders are not the Board of Directors. They are just appointed so that they can make sure that God is heard. They are not the only people who can hear from God, but they make sure God is heard.

All of us ,as parts of the body under grace, have a portion of the pie that He has cut. We need to function in the power of the Holy Spirit so that we do not go to extremes of exalting ourselves or the extreme of discouragement and depression because we can't do what we are not even gifted to do. We have got to see that. It is a realization.

I believe God is saying, "Do you realize what the Church is? It is bigger than these four walls. It is worldwide." Your gifts are not just for your local church. They are for the whole Body, you see. You don't measure them like you measure other things. God keeps us going. He is the one measuring. We won't really know all the things that have been done until we get to heaven one day. All we are required to do is be faithful in what has been given to us to live with that piece of the pie that we have. Develop what needs to be developed. Grow where you need to grow.

But when you come to the church, function in the gift that is going to be different from somebody else's. Function in your gift. Let others function in their gift. And as everybody functions, you have a complete picture of what God is trying to do. The Body is a vessel through which He manifests Himself in the uniqueness of the different gifts of every individual that He has given gifts to. That is what it is all about. That is a realization that will not come until there is a grateful presentation and a renovation of the mind so that our whole behavior changes. God, who gives the gift, gives the ministry and gives the effect. The Church is not what you think it is. It is what God designed it to be

PREVIOUS NEXT