

Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

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Body Life: Thinking About Individuality and Interdependence

by Dan Trygg

“For through the grace given to me I say to everyone 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. ⁴ For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.”

Romans 12:3-5

"I say ...to every one being among y'all..."

1. These thoughts are addressed to the individuals in the group.

Verses 1-2 were addressed to the group as a whole. Now, Paul focuses on the individuals that comprise the group. Note that presence and relationship are the only identifying requirements for these people -- not membership requirements or some formal ceremony. It is enough that they are there.

"...not to think beyond what it is necessary to think; rather to think toward the to-think-soundly"

2. Paul exhorts us to see ourselves accurately.

We are encouraged to think. In fact, the goal is to think *well*, ...in a healthy, realistic way. The phrase, "...to everyone being among you", indicates that *none of us can excuse ourselves from this responsibility*. We are *not* to let others do our thinking for us. This is important. Maturity means that we are able to discern good and evil, and that we have a relatively accurate view of reality (e.g., Heb. 5:14). *If we rely on others to do our thinking for us, we do not develop the skills necessary for our own growth.*

We are not to "overthink". It is easy to think beyond what is necessary to think about right now, and convince ourselves of things about us that are not true, or have not yet developed. Keep it well founded.

"...to each one as the God has distributed/portioned-out a specific portion/a limited measure of faith."

3. Here a limitation, or direction, for our thinking is specified by Paul. It is to be in accordance with the unique apportionment of faith God has given each of us.

In the context of this passage, this "measure of faith" can only be referring to our spiritual gifts and our intended function in the body of Christ.

Notice, concerning our spiritual gifts and function:

(a.) The verb tense is past completed action. In this context, **we are to watch for and think clearly about what God has *already* given, -- not pray or look for something we do *not* have.**

(b.) Again, to state it plainly, **we already *have* spiritual gifts.**

"As each one *has received* a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

I Peter 4:10

(c.) **God has chosen to distribute *specific and limited apportionments of faith* to us.** Cf. I Cor. 12:11.

It was never God's intention that any one of us could "do it all". That is unrealistic, "thinking-beyond-what-is-necessary" thinking. The question is, "What am I uniquely gifted to do? What are my strengths, and what seem to be my limits?"

"For even as in one body we have many limbs/parts, but all the limbs/parts do not have the same function, in the same way the many [individuals] we are one body in Christ, but the according to each one [we are] members of one another."
vss. 4,5

4. The human body provides a useful illustration of our interrelationship with one another:

- a. There are *many* parts.
- b. There is *great diversity* in the function and characteristics of parts.
- c. *Together* the parts comprise a larger organism
 - i. This larger organism may have a life of its own at an entirely different level than the experiences of the individual parts.
 - ii. The larger organism may have characteristics and functions that differ from those of the individual parts.
 - iii. The health and vitality of that larger organism is dependent upon the *healthy function* and *interaction* of the individual parts.
 - iv. The health and vitality of the individual parts also requires the healthy functioning of the *other parts* of the body.

"the many [individuals] we are one body in Christ, but the according to each one [we are] members of one another."

5. Individually we *are* members of one another. Somehow our lives *are* interdependent.

Our individual spiritual health and vitality *is* affected by the vitality, and functioning of our fellow believers. This is not some starry-eyed idealistic view of how it "ought to be". This is not a "should". Paul clearly says that **this is the way things *are***.

What does this mean?

- a. *I* need *your* full participation in order for *me* to experience all that God has potentially made available for me.
- b. *You* need *my* full participation in order for *you* to experience all that God has potentially made available for you.
- c. The Body of Christ, on a local and on an international scale, needs *you*, and *you* need the full maturity and function of *each part* in order to experience all that God has intended.
- d. The Body of Christ has been anemic and sick because so many of its component members are not mature, healthy, functioning parts that effectively contribute to the whole.
- e. If we begin to change to become healthy and functional, our increasing health *will* spill over on others.