

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Body Life: Thinking About The Grace Given To YOU!

by Dan Trygg

“Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle and singled out for God’s good news-- ...We have received grace and apostleship through Him to bring about the obedience of faith among all the nations, on behalf of His name, ⁶ including yourselves who are also Jesus Christ’s by calling.” Romans 1:1,5,6

“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. ⁶ According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts.” Romans 12:3-6

We have been looking at Romans 12, where Paul calls the Roman Christians to come together and stand alongside each other to form a team. They are to stand their bodies alongside each other to become a single “living sacrifice”. In other words, **he calls them to *set aside their individual self-agendas to be able to work together and become the dedicated team God intends to form them into***, in order to accomplish His purpose. They are to no longer choose to adjust themselves to fit into the surrounding culture. Instead, **they are to choose to be changed from the inside out, ...to *pursue inner change that is outwardly expressed in their behavior***. The potential is already in them by virtue of their union with Christ in His death and resurrection, and by the power of the Holy Spirit within them, who is ready and willing to lead them into new ways of living. He will free them from old patterns of living and the bondage of sin. **The “tipping point” that is crucial for this experiential change has to do with *the renewing of their minds, and their willingness to choose to follow the new leadings of the Spirit***.

We tend to read and hear these ideas from the standpoint of our individual lives, but in this passage it is more about our group ministry. **We are to be transformed as a group, as we begin to *perceive things in a new way*, and as we *test-out-by-experimentation to discover the will and purpose of God***.

Paul begins to move us along this path in the next verse. He begins by appealing to a concept he had introduced in the first chapter. There, he had introduced himself as “a slave of Jesus Christ, called as an apostle, set-apart for the gospel of God.” **He had mentioned that through Jesus he had “received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among the nations.”** Now, twelve chapters later, he dials this concept up again: ***God had called and spiritually-equipped him as an apostle to speak into their lives***. Literally, what Romans 12:3 says is, “I speak by means of the grace given to me to every one being among y’all.” **He is claiming to speak to them *from the grace of God which He gave to him for them***.

Paul appeals to this on numerous occasions:

In Romans 15:15,16, he again claims a special place of authority and leadership because of the grace given to him. He says, “I have written to you very boldly, in part reminding you on account of the grace given to me by God for me to be a public-servant of Jesus Christ unto the Gentile-nations, temple-serving the gospel of God, in order that the offering of the Gentiles might come to be well-pleasing, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.” **He says that God has given him special empowerment to speak into their lives. He could write to them, and they ought to listen to him, because God had called him and gifted him with special grace to help them in their relationship with Him.** Now, remember, Paul had never been there! I am sure that some of them would have heard of him, but he certainly would not have been as famous as the other apostles who had been disciples of Jesus. Yet, here he was claiming to have special ability from God to assist them to grow and mature.

In 1 Corinthians 3:10, Paul refers to how God had given grace to him to be like a wise master-builder, to establish a solid and sound foundation for their faith, Jesus Christ. In this case, the Corinthians had experienced the grace of God operating in Paul’s life. He had been among them for over a year and a half, and they had benefitted from his ministry among them.

In Galatians 2:1-8, Barnabas and Paul spent some extended time with the leaders of the church in Jerusalem, sharing how God had been working through their ministry, they *recognized the clear, active empowerment of God working through them among the Gentiles*. Galatians 2:9 says, “...experientially-knowing the grace that had been given to me, James, Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave [us] the right hand of fellowship (or, ‘partnership’) in order that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.” **The basis for this trust, ...and the resulting demarcation in the direction of the ministry....was the clear evidence of the grace of God working in Paul’s life among the Gentiles.**

In Ephesians 3, Paul appeals to the grace of God working in his life *on no less than three occasions in the first eight verses!* This is crucial, once again, to *establish a basis for his credibility to speak into their lives and to teach them.* In verse 2, he refers to the “*stewardship of God’s grace which was given to me for you [Gentiles].*” This was based upon revelation that God had given to him into a mystery that had been hidden through past generations, but which has now been revealed. This was about how the Gentiles had been made fellow-heirs, fellow-members of the Body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Paul, therefore, became a servant of the gospel, “*according to the gift of the grace of God being given*” to him (vs. 7), and according to the inworking of God’s power. “...to me,” he says, “...the very least of all saints, *this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ*” (vs. 8).

Thus we find in Romans 12:3 that he appeals to the grace of God which had been given to him as *the basis for being able to speak to them, and direct them to follow his counsel.* He says he is “speaking through the grace of God.”

Notice that in this verse his focus has changed from the *group* to addressing them as *individuals.* In order for them to discover and develop their *group dynamic,* they need to understand who they are, *as individuals.* This is made very specific in the Greek: “I speak ...to every one being among y’all”, ...i.e., those *individuals* in the *group.*

What does he have to say to them? He tells them what NOT TO think about, and what TO think about.

Again, we tend to separate this verse from the context. Paul is *building upon* what he just said in the first two verses of this chapter. They are called-alongside to stand-together to become a living sacrifice. They are to no longer choose to fit in with the pressures and influences of this age, but **they are to be transformed** (radically-changed inside, so that their external manner of life is dramatically changed). **How does this happen? By the renewal of their minds, ...their perception of reality. NOW do you see the connecting lead-in to verse three? This is the first application of renewing their minds that Paul suggests.**

He tells them NOT to think-beyond what it is necessary to think about themselves, rather TO THINK unto the TO THINK SOUNDLY. How do they determine what makes for “sound-thinking” about themselves? “..to each one as God has apportioned a measure of faith.”

What? How does this fit? Paul goes on to explain, “For according-as in one body we have many members (parts), but all the parts do not have the same function; in this way we (the many parts) are one body in Christ, but individually members of one another.” **We do not have the same function, but we are designed to work together as a team. More than simply a conglomeration of individual parts, ...we need each other, and we affect each other.** This is an important consideration. Paul deals with this in depth in 1 Corinthians 12. “To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (vs. 7). There are varieties of gifts, services and inworkings, but the same Spirit distributes these things individually as He wills (vss. 4-6,11). No part (or gifting) is unnecessary, and no part (or gifting) is to be exalted above all the rest. Rather, we are to have the same care for one another, because our lives are linked together (vss. 19-26). Sounds like Romans 12:1,2. We are individually to come together as a team. **More than simply a voluntary organization, however, we are an organism, ...made to share life in the Spirit together.**

In Romans 12:3, Paul plainly states: “According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts.” You see, this is what we are to be thinking about! **We are to be thinking about OUR unique grace-gift. We are to think about it accurately, clearly, and with sound judgment. We are not to think of ourselves as more than we are, ...nor as less than we are.** Our place and function in the team, ... in the Body of Christ..., is important, even crucial. **If we do not function according to the grace given to us, our contribution will be sorely-missed. The Body will be weakened, crippled.** If we are to come alongside and stand together to become a “living sacrifice”, we each need to come to accurately perceive how the grace of God uniquely works in us. **We need to commit to stand together, to work together, yes, ...but we need to do it in the power of the Spirit, with each one operating according to the inworking grace of the Spirit being manifested, outwardly expressed through them, for the common good.**

How do we determine OUR grace-gifting? Most of us do not have as dramatic an experience as Paul did, where God *told him* what his calling was to be. How do we recognize the working of the Spirit in our lives? It is really quite simple. **Get serious about your walk with Christ. Abide in Jesus. Ask the Spirit to be leading you and working in your life** (He likes to be asked.). **Then, get involved** in the Body of Christ, or where the work of Christ is happening. This is NOT the same as going to church. This is getting involved in relationships and service opportunities. **AS you ABIDE and you make yourself AVAILABLE, the Holy Spirit will ACTIVATE you. God will bring the opportunities to serve TO YOU** (Eph. 2:10). You will sense that you are to get involved. **AS you do, repeatedly, a pattern will begin to become evident.** Others (if not *you*) will notice an unusual interest and effective activity in the area you are gifted in. **Paul exhorts you to think about this soberly. It will become evident, if you are activated.** It is part of who you are. *You can’t help but function according to your grace-gift, if your spiritual life is healthy.*