**Lesson 33: Your Place in the Church Body**

Text: Romans 12:3-8

**Introduction**

In the last lesson, we saw that your faith in Christ ought to be the chief influence on your daily decisions. We are daily confronted with the pressure to fit into the world’s mold. Instead, we should be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Having the right mindset is the theme of the next verses. Paul begins to explain what it will look like if believers allow God to do His transforming work. It will affect the way we think and serve in the church.

The world’s mentality is often one of individualism. It is typical to think that you do not need others and to be concerned about your own profit. This mindset must be forsaken. God has designed for you to grow in the context of a local church. Your life will be transformed as you interact with other believers. Let’s consider the type of mindset we ought to have in our church family. We will see that grace brings us together and makes us different all at the same time.

1. **God’s grace makes us the same regarding our position in Christ. (v. 3-5)** 
   1. The Bible teaches the doctrine of the local church. The teaching of a “universal church” is not biblical. The very definition of the word “church” necessitates an assembly. This is clearly what Paul has in mind as he writes to the believers in Rome.
   2. The body analogy is also used in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4 to illustrate the unity and diversity in a church.
   3. One member should not think of himself or herself as more important to the body that any other member. (v. 3a)
   4. A proper view of grace produces humility (v. 3b). Prideful thoughts must be replaced with sober thinking. To think soberly means that we have an accurate assessment of ourselves according to a trustworthy source.
   5. Paul said that the standard by which we ought to measure ourselves is “the measure of faith” (v. 3c). There is question as to the meaning of this phrase.
      1. Some hold that it refers to the gifts God distributes to the believers mentioned in the following verses.
      2. A more likely understanding of the phrase is that faith itself is the measurement for every believer. We are all saved by faith and thus equally in Christ. We are all recipients of the same grace. Every believer has the Holy Spirit living within and thus the same opportunity for spiritual growth!
      3. This measurement will keep you from overestimating yourself. You could never have earned the position you are in. One believer is not more saved than another believer. There is no room for thinking highly of yourself, since you are saved by grace through faith.
   6. Because we have all been saved by faith, there is unity within a church body. (v. 4-5)
      1. There are many members in a church body with diverse roles. (v. 4)
      2. Nonetheless, we are one and have a responsibility to each other. (v. 5)
2. **God’s grace makes us different regarding our roles within the church. (v. 6-8)** 
   1. The exercise of gifts within the church is based on the ability God gives. (v. 6a)
      1. God has creatively designed the local church.
      2. In His infinite wisdom, God has gifted you in a particular way that will contribute to the unity and well-being of the whole church.
   2. The gifts must be properly used to be beneficial. (v. 6b-8)
      1. God has gifted some to preach. (v. 6) Prophecy does not refer to telling the future, but rather to proclaiming what God has revealed in His Word. We most often refer to it today as the ministry of preaching. Those who have the ability to proclaim God’s Word are to do so in faith. The reference to “proportion” here means, “in agreement with or in proportion to” (Gingrich). Those who transmit truth in preaching must make sure that the message preached is in agreement with Bible doctrine. The preacher can then preach it with the conviction that he is communicating the Word of God.
      2. God has gifted some to serve. (v. 7a) The word “ministry” is the word from which we receive our word “deacon.” Paul may have had in mind the office of a deacon. A deacon should be willing to serve and help the church body in any possible way. It carries the idea of one who waits on tables. We are blessed with many members who have the heart and ability to serve.
      3. God has gifted some to teach. (v. 7b) This is another speaking gift. It refers to those who make the truth plain to those who desire to learn. They pass on truth to the next generation.
      4. God has gifted some to exhort (encourage). (v. 8a) They come alongside other believers in a way that helps them to live out their faith in Christ.
      5. God has gifted some to give. (v. 8b) This refers to those who give to meet the need of the church as a whole as well as those who give to meet the needs of individuals. They should do so with simplicity (sincerity). They should not give with hidden motives. It ought to be from the heart with no strings attached.
      6. God has gifted some to lead. (v. 8c) This may refer to those who have leadership over various ministries within a church. They are to serve in these capacities with eagerness. It is not just something they have to do, but something they want to do.
      7. God has gifted some to show mercy. (v. 8d) This refers to those who care for others in need within the church. It may include caring for the sick, elderly, and poor of the church. They should be glad to do so. They are to serve with cheerfulness (gladness).
   3. When every member humbly does their part, it is a benefit to the whole body.
3. **Central Idea: Paul encouraged the believers to avoid pride within the church by remembering that they are saved by faith and gifted by God to serve in the church.**
4. **Application** 
   1. We tend to think more highly of ourselves than we should. It is easy to think that your particular ministry is more important than another ministry. Remember, your gift isn’t given that you might have a name for yourself. Self-promotion does not belong in the ministry of a church. God’s gifts are for building the church, not for showcasing your abilities.
   2. On the other hand, you might think you are unimportant. You may feel that you don’t measure up to others and that you have nothing to contribute. The presence of God’s grace in your life says otherwise.

**Conclusion**

God’s grace will transform self-centered people into Christ-centered people who live for the benefit of others. Every member needs to serve according to the ability God gives. When we view each other through the lens of God’s grace, we have an accurate picture of our church family. We are all sinners saved by grace through faith in order to make a difference in the lives of others. Serve in your place by grace!