

**Tuesday Evening Bible Study at Tokyo Baptist Church**  
**Paul's Letter to the Romans – Chapter 12, Verses 1-8**  
**Notes from Tuesday March 22, 2011**  
**Last Revised on March 28, 2011**

**Songs**

**Opening Prayer**

**Introduction**

This evening we continue our study of the Letter of Paul to the Romans.

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Two weeks ago we finished reading and discussing through the end of Chapter 11

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Tonight we will begin reading Chapter 12.

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and I plan to cover the first 8 verses this evening.

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But first lets remember where we are in the letter overall.

**Review**

As we have repeatedly reminded ourselves,

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the **overall** theme of Paul's letter to the Romans is the **gospel**,

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which he sets forth in the **first four (4) chapters** of this letter.

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And then, in Chapters 5 - 8, he then looks at the implications of the gospel,

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for those who are being saved by it,

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concluding with those marvelous words we read in verses 37-39 of Chapter 8

*(Chapter 8, Verses 37-39)*

*No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

In the next section of this letter, consisting of **Chapters 9 through 11**,

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 Paul examines the **sad** situation of those **Jews** who are **cut off from Christ**.

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 This is the very difficult **section** of Paul's letter which we have just finished studying.

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 Despite the difficulty, I think that three points shine through this section:

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**First** the sad situation of the Jews has come about for the **salvation of the gentiles**.

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**Second** the salvation of the gentiles has come about for the **salvation of the Jews**.

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 And **Third**: the time is coming when **all** of Israel will be saved!

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 We are not sure what this means, that "*all of Israel will be saved.*"

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 We are not sure how many Jews, or how many gentiles, may **not** be saved.

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 Paul does not make these things clear to us.

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 Perhaps he himself does not know.

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 But it is important to notice that, in the **last several verses of Chapter 11**,

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 Paul bursts forth in **praise** of God's glory: His **wisdom**, his **knowledge**, his **unsearchability**, his **inscrutability**, his **sovereignty**, his **omnipotence**, his **aseity**.

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 We cannot **analyze** God or call him to account. God doesn't **need** us. Nor can we **give** anything to God, or advise him, or teach him anything.

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 The **creation** of the universe, the **fall** of man, God's **choosing** of Israel, the **coming** of Christ, the **rejection** of Christ by most of Israel, the **acceptance** of Christ by many Gentiles, the **salvation** of all Israel yet to come, and the **second** coming of Christ and consummation of his perfect **eternal** kingdom.

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 These are all for us mostly unsearchable **mysteries**.

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 We can only know what God **tells** us about these things.

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 We can only **understand** what he makes us to **hear** and **understand**.

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 To the extent that we **do** understand our response will be **reverent fear** and **doxology**.

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 God shall be merciful **however** and to **whomsoever** he so chooses.

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 And his mercy is seen most clearly and ultimately in Christ Jesus.

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 The last verse of Chapter 11 reads:

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***“For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen.”*** (Romans 11:36)

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 This is a fitting **end** to all that he has written to this point in his letter to the Romans.

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 and a fitting beginning for what is now to **follow**.

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 Because what has gone before (i.e. up to the end of Chapter 11) is mostly **theology**.

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 And what comes next is mostly **ethics**.

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 And the former ends and the latter begins with the **Glory of God**.

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 God’s glory in Christ **manifests** itself in our **behavior**.

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 Interestingly this is about where Pastor Dennis is now in his sermon series on Philippians.

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 Remember Philippians, Chapter 2, Verses 1-11

**(Philippians, Chapter 2, Verses 1-11)**

*So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,<sup>2</sup> complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.<sup>3</sup> Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.<sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.<sup>5</sup> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,<sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,<sup>7</sup> but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.<sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.<sup>9</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,<sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,<sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

We will now see some of these same thoughts developed by Paul in the last several chapters of Romans.

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Before we read on, does anyone have any questions or comments?

**Paul's Letter to the Romans, Chapter 12, Verses 1-2**

Will someone please read Romans, Chapter 12, Verses 1-2, in Japanese.

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Thank you. Will someone please read those same verses in English.

**1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.**

**2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.**

Thank you.

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Verse 1 reads

**(Verse 1)**

**I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.**

The word translated “*therefore*” makes a strong connection with what went before.

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It is because of God's glory, because of who God is, and what God has done, in Christ, that Paul is able to make this appeal and, indeed, left with no choice but to make this appeal.

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It would be fair to say that theology (Chapters 1-11) determines ethics (Chapters 12-15).

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Our ethics are, indeed, Christian.

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But it would probably be better to say that God in Christ determines our behavior.

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I read this great quote in preparing today's lesson, at least I think it is a great quote:

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***“As the arrow, loosed from the bow by the hand of the practiced archer, does not rest till it has reached the mark; so men pass from God to God.”*** (Barth, Romans, p.438)

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Or and even better quote, from Ephesians, Chapter 2, Verses 8-10

*(Ephesians 2:8-10)*

***For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,<sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast.<sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.***

God has prepared beforehand the works we should “walk in”

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And he has created us in Christ Jesus **for** these good works,

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and he has place his Spirit within us to **lead** us in this walk,

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and it falls to Paul, who is himself walking the path laid down for **him** by God, whose job it is to **exhort** the brothers in Rome to yield themselves to the Spirit and God’s work also.

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This mysterious **walk** and **leading** involve our mind, our understanding, our will, and Paul’s apostolic mission and his gifts of prophesy, preaching, teaching, exhortation, and etc. are on display here.

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Again, Verse 1 reads:

**(Verse 1)**

**I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.**

In exercising his own holy vocation as an apostle of Christ,

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Paul is making his appeal to other believers in Christ,

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on the basis of the “*mercies of God*”

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which a fair description of the gospel of Jesus Christ as set forth in this letter: “the mercies of God”

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It is because God is **merciful** and because God has been merciful to **Paul**, and to **us**, that Paul makes this appeal.

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Q. And what **is** his appeal?

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A. that they present their bodies as a “*living sacrifice*”

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Q. Yes, and what does that mean?

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A. That they **give** themselves to God...

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A. That they **yield** themselves to God...to willing **obedience**... to the **leading** of the Holy Spirit

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A different and probably better English translation would switch the order of the words living and sacrifice so that this passage reads: "...present your bodies as a **sacrifice**, living holy and acceptable to God."

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Clearly the point here is **not** that the brothers in Rome would give up their **lives**, at least not right away,

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but they would give the remainder of their lives **over** to God,

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over to a life **lived** as **God** would have it lived.

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In the last part of Verse 1, Paul notes that a life lived in this way, God's way, is **worship**.

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He says "**spiritual worship**" meaning, I believe, "**true worship**"

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as distinct from **ceremonies** and **rituals** which might also be called worship.

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True worshippers, spiritual worshippers, may **also** sometimes participate in ceremonies and rituals (that's what church services are)

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and there is nothing **wrong** with that, so long as the worshippers continue to live a life yielded to God and church is just an incidental part of that.

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What is wrong, of course, is when people do **not** yield their lives to God but proceed to engage in church ceremonies and rituals **anyway**.

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This, the importance of **true, spiritual** worship, is a **consistent** teaching of the **whole** Bible,

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and this is predominately a matter of how we live our lives...**outside** of church.

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Verse 2 continues

**(Verse 2)**

**Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and**

**perfect.**

Every human being is, to some extent, conformed to this world.

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But here Paul is saying that we, as believers, should move away from that.

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We are citizens of heaven. The Holy Spirit lives in us. We are bound for glory.

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We should yield ourselves to the leading of the Spirit and allow ourselves to be transformed,

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from conformance to the **world**...to conformance with the Kingdom of **God**

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and this by the renewal of our **mind**.

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Our way of **thinking** must be made **new** again.

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So that we may **discern** what is “the will of God”

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This is an act of our own understanding, whereby we **discern** “the will of God.”

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Q. And what is meant here by the “**will of God**”?

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A. What God wants? Yes, but are we supposed to discern what God wants **in general**?

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A. What God wants **us to do**? Yes, but in what sense? To divine his **particular** will?

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A. **How** God wants **us to live**? Yes, especially in the moral/ethical sense.

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A. The answer given in the text is that “the will of God” is “what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

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God intends for us to be **perfect**, as he is perfect.

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And while complete perfection must wait until God has **finished** his work in us,

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he wishes for us to **begin** the process of transformation now,

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And this is an **experimental** process:

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so that by “**testing**”, Paul says, we discern what is the will of God.

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We allow our **mind** to be renewed by the spirit of God, and then

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we live out the remainder of our life, testing, and discerning how **God** would have us live.

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This is all about **God** and what he is graciously accomplishing **in** us,

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and not, of course, about **anything** we might conceivably accomplish on our own.

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Questions? Comments?

### **Paul's Letter to the Romans, Chapter 12, Verses 3-8**

Will someone please read Romans, Chapter 12, Verses 3-8, in Japanese.

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Thank you. Will someone please read those same verses in English.

**3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.**

**4 For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function,**

**5 so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.**

**6 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith;**

**7 if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching;**

**8 the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.**

Thank you.

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In what has gone before, Paul has made it clear that we are all, and each one of us is, an object of God's grace.

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Now in Verse 3 he says:

**(Verse 3)**

**For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more**



**highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.**

Paul is no different than the rest of us in this respect.

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He was a sinful human, conformed to the world, an enemy of God,

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who was transformed by the renewing of his mind,

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and set on the path which God had prepared for him.

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Q. What grace was given to Paul?

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A. Life

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A. Salvation.

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A. The Holy Spirit.

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A. Apostolic office.

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A. Other spiritual gifts.

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It is by these gifts of God's grace that Paul speaks,

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and not because of any merit or accomplishment of Paul.

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This is, in fact, the speech of God through the Apostle Paul,

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and Paul dare not claim this as his own speech.

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What is said to them is "*do not think too highly of yourself*"

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Q. What does this mean?

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A. The grammar would allow it to mean something like, "do not delve into matters to great for your **understanding**, but stay within the bounds of what you can understand in **faith**."

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A. The more likely meaning, and the one favored by most translators is simply not to find too much merit in our own **character** or **accomplishments**. To not be **proud** or **conceited**.

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In either case we are bid to "*think with sober judgment*" grounded in the "*faith that God has assigned*"

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We must not go beyond the **limits** of what God has established **for** us,

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because each of us does have a perfect **place** in God's Kingdom.

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Since Adam and Eve, I dare say, most of man's problems have arisen from us failing to **discern** and gratefully to **accept** our place.

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Verse 4 reads:

**(Verse 4)**

**For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function,**

This is a simple analogy.

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My body has many parts and each part has its proper place and function.

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The body of believers in Christ is similar.

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Verse 5 reads:

**(Verse 5)**

**so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.**

Each believer in Christ has a personal relationship with Him.

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Though we are many, we are connected by Christ,

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and united through the Holy Spirit living in us.

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We all belong to one another.

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No two of us are the same.

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There is no hierarchy, in the sense that each of us has a direct personal connection to Christ.

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This is the situation of Christian believers.

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Q. So how can we decide who should do what?

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A. The answer, or at least an important part of the answer in view here is that we should each use the gifts which God has given us.

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And because these gifts are not the same, from one believer to another, we will find ourselves doing different things, in accordance with the will of God.

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Verse 6 reads:

**(Verse 6)**

**Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith;**

Each is suppose to use the gifts of grace which he has received.

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Q. How do we know what our gifts are?

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A. Looking back to Verse 2, we might imagine that this has to do with (i) the renewal of our minds, (ii) testing, and (iii) discernment.

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A. Looking back to Verse 3, we might imagine that it has to do with sobriety and humility; we must not exceed the measure of faith that God has assigned to us.

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Indeed I think we cannot exceed the measure of faith that God has assigned to us, or use gifts which God has not assigned to us, without learning, perhaps the hard way, that we have misunderstood God's will in this respect.

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A prophet, for example, who exceeds the boundaries established by God is a "false prophet" or at least a prophet who is making a mistake, and this will be corrected by experinece.

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This is why Paul in the Corinthian correspondence made provision for the prophets in the church to monitor one another.

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There are many gifts other than prophesy, but they are subject to the same strictures, I think,

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Verse 7 reads

**(Verse 7)**

**if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching;**

The word here translated "service" is the word which is alternatively translated as "ministry"

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Paul here says that if we have a gift for service (ministry) we should use it

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That is pretty much what TBC says!

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Again, I think the way we discover such gifts is by the renewal of our mind, testing, discernment, sobriety, and humility.

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The same goes for teaching, which is different from prophesy, and from exhortation although we often see people with several gifts, such as the Apostle Paul for example.

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Verse 8, which reads:

**(Verse 8)**

**the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.**

We have already touched on exhortation, which tends to group with teaching and prophesy.

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The last three gifts sort of go together too: giving, leading, and acts of mercy.

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Although we see these and other gifts in various combinations in various believers.

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We are all called to give, to contribute, and to do so generously.

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However there are those who seem specially gifted by God for this role, either because he has endowed them with lots of wealth or income which can be contributed,

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or because he has endowed them with the special joy and zeal for giving which other struggle to find in themselves.

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A point here, I think, would be that a generous giver is not less important than a good teacher, minister, or prophet.

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Indeed since each Christian is called and gifted by the living God, we could not think otherwise.

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Leadership gifts of various kinds are in evidence in various Christians,

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as are gifts for giving mercy and good cheer,

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and none of these gifts may be considered more or less important,

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just as no believer may be considered more or less important,

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because all have been made and chosen and sustained and redeemed and gifted

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by God Himself: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**Closing Prayer**