

FPFWC Christian Development



Learning About Faith

January 2024

Winter Quarter

January 27, 2024

Lesson #4 – Faith and Transformation

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Romans 12:3-8

ICE BREAKERS-

1. How does our identity in Christ affect our self-esteem?
2. Why is important to appreciate and encourage the spiritual gifts of others?

Key Verse: “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us.”—Romans 12:6a

LESSON BACKGROUND –

The book of Romans was written by Paul in about AD 58, probably toward the end of his third missionary journey. At that point, Paul had not yet been to Rome, but greatly wished to visit (Romans 1:11–15; 15:23–24). He would do so, but in chains as a prisoner, as Acts 27–28 records.

He made it to Rome by about AD 61 but remained under house arrest, unable to move about the city as he might have wished (Acts 28:16, 20, 23, 30). Paul wrote his letter to the church at Rome to introduce himself and his teaching prior to a personal visit there. The church likely had been established not long after the day of Pentecost, some three decades earlier (2:1). Some of the Jews who heard Peter’s sermon that day were from Rome (2:10), and it’s easy to imagine that they were the ones who started the church after returning home to Rome. There can be little doubt that the Roman church had heard of Paul (28:15) and looked forward to meeting him.

One of the great debates concerning the context of the book of Romans is the demographic composition of the Roman church when Paul wrote. Were the members primarily of Jewish background, of Gentile background, or evenly split? Although it is highly likely that the church was founded by believers of Jewish background, Paul seems to suggest that the church was composed primarily of Gentiles (see Romans 1:5–6, 13). The Roman emperor Claudius expelled Jews from Rome about AD 49 (Acts 18:2), which would have resulted in believers of Gentile background coming into greater prominence.

But by the time that Paul wrote this letter, Claudius had died and the expulsion order was rescinded, allowing Jews to return to Rome. How many believers of Jewish background constituted the Roman church is uncertain, but Paul does spend Romans 9:1–11:12 speaking about the nation of Israel. Even so, that section depicts a direct address to Gentiles in 11:13. The weight of the evidence therefore points to a Gentile majority in the church in Rome.

The book of Romans falls into two major sections. The first part, Romans 1–11, features some of the most doctrinally heavy thoughts in all of Scripture. A shift comes with Romans 12–16, which addresses how Christians should then live in light of the truth of those doctrines. Today’s lesson comes from this second section.

LESSON COMMENTARY

12:3–8. Beginning in 12:3, Paul turned his attention to the social implications of being right with God. **Measure of faith** (v. 3) probably means “the *instrument* for measuring, namely saving faith.” Every believer is saved by faith, and if each measures himself against that “yardstick” or “standard,” conceit will vanish, and the diverse parts of the local body will work together more profitably for their mutual care (vv. 4–5). The body receives help especially as its members use their spiritual gifts (vv. 6–8). **Prophecy** (v. 6) was not “powerful preaching” or “convicting others of sin.” A prophet was God’s mouthpiece, His spokesperson who received direct revelation and spoke it with authority to His people (Ex 7:1–2; Dt 18:18, 20; Jr 23:16; for more on prophecy, cf. the comments on 1Co 12:10, and on 1Co 14 as a whole). The prophet is to prophesy “according to the standard of faith” (HCSB), or “in keeping with the Christian faith”—i.e., prophecies must not contradict previously revealed truth. **Service** (v. 7) refers to working in practical ways to assist believers. **Teaching** is the systematic impartation of knowledge or skill, in this case biblical truth. **Exhortation** (v. 8) carries the dual sense of “comforting” (cf. 2Co 1:3–7) and “urging one to live biblically” (Rm 12:1). **Giving** refers to the glad contribution of financial resources to the needs of Christians and the church without duplicitous motives (the meaning of **liberality**). The one **who leads** provides the oversight and direction for the church (cf. 1Tm 3:4–5, where the word is translated “manage”; and 1Tm 5:17, translated “rule”). **Diligence** means “eagerness, hard work, and speed.” **Mercy** involves showing sympathy or kindness to those who suffer. For more on spiritual gifts, cf. the comments on 1Co 12–14.

LESSON NUGGET – God has given each of us certain gifts and ministries to be used in the body; and though we are all different, He calls us to work together to accomplish His purposes. We are connected and need to depend on each other.

If we all just do our own jobs, the body will function beautifully. But if we are not humbly working together; or if we neglect our job to worry about what someone else is doing, the body will be flopping around, out of control. Find your job in the body, and just do it.

Sources: Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary