

Eternity Daily Bible Study

Romans 9-16 The Implications of Salvation

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE MINISTRY OF THE AIBI

Number:605

Verses: Romans 12:3

Topic: A Humble Mind Is A Sane Mind

Date: 11th January 2007

Romans 12:3 MKJV *For I say, through the grace given to me, to every one who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think. But set your mind to be right-minded, even as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith.*

“Delusions of grandeur” are common among the insane, humility however seems reserved for those who have a solid grasp on life and on their place in the cosmos. Our natural human tendency is to imagine that we are much more important or more able than we really are. Some years ago at the age of 39 I decided that because I was OK at cycling when I was young I could get fit by training for a 55km road race. I did lose weight and I did get much fitter but I came dead last in the road race (I will spare you the details!). I was not what I thought I was – I did not have a “sober estimate of myself” .

Lacking a sober estimate of one's abilities and importance can have much worse consequences than losing a bicycle race. It can result in repeated failure in life, in humiliation and even in bankruptcy. Occasionally it can result in death – when an officer overestimates the strength of his troops or the wisdom of his strategy. In corporate life it results in stressed out staff and people scramble to “pick up the pieces” after someone senior promised but could not deliver.

Now that does not mean that very low self-esteem is a virtue. God does not ask us to think of ourselves as worms – but rather as children of God. Yet we are flawed and finite children of God. We have to face up to the fact that we are not all Billy Graham or Mother Teresa. We are a mixture of good and evil, and our abilities (even in the one person) range from brilliant to woeful. Someone may be a great evangelist and a hopeless administrator, or a wonderful bible teacher and hopeless pianist. And the sooner we come to terms with this – the better for all involved.

Many people want to be missionaries who are simply not gifted for living under tough conditions in foreign countries. That is no shame on them, only about 2% of people do have such a calling. Such people should breathe easy and pursue a calling that God has called them to and which He will bless them in. Others want to be bible teachers, when in fact they are very good evangelists – great at explaining the basics, but definitely not theologians. That is fine – just stick to their true calling as an evangelist and they will be blessed. Others are terrific administrators (one of the most needed giftings in the body and in shortest supply) but feel they should be “more spiritual” and insist on preaching and get hurt by the feedback. We all need a solid sense of ourselves – and of what we are, and what we are not – and the grace to accept that “we are who we are”.

The human potential movement has kept telling people that they can be “anything they

like". That is patent nonsense. I will never be a great cyclist no matter how hard I try. Lance Armstrong and a few thousand others will be way, way ahead of me! People want to be all sorts of things they are unsuited for - because of parental pressure or peer pressure or because it is cool or out of sheer vanity. Just look at some of the odd and peculiar folk that run as political candidates!

A few years after the humiliating cycle race God gave me an illustration about the fish in the sea. Some fish are sardines and are meant to be small, some are whales and are meant to be huge. A sardine the size of a whale would be out of place and a whale the size of a sardine would be similarly "wrong". God made BOTH the whale and the sardine and loves both and intended both to simply be as they are. We do not require our cats to bark or fetch the newspaper - after all they are cats! But we are not so clever about ourselves. We feel guilty because we are not super-achievers in every field. We feel that we SHOULD be slim, trim, good looking, and able to run the four minute mile while doing Tensor Calculus.

Spiritual objectives can clash with career ambitions so that some folk want to be both Ghandi and Donald Trump at the same time. We have to make choices and choose to focus on this or that, as Jesus said "You cannot serve two masters,you cannot serve both God and Mammon." And those important choices require a solid sense of personal reality.

Paul tells us that the solid sense of personal reality comes from our faith and from understanding the "measure of faith" that God has given to each of us. The word for measure is "metron" - which we find in words such as meter, metronome, metric etc. It means a graduated, measured out portion, an allotted amount. God gives each person a certain amount of faith for functioning in the body of Christ. In fact the very next verse starts a whole section on this:

Romans 12:4-8 MKJV *For even as we have many members in one body, and all members do not have the same function, (5) so we the many are one body in Christ, and each one members of one another. (6) Then having gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, if prophecy, according to the proportion of faith; (7) or ministry, in the ministry; or he who teaches, in the teaching; (8) or he who exhorts, in the encouragement; or he who shares, in simplicity; or he who takes the lead, in diligence; or he who shows mercy, in cheerfulness.*

So the measure of faith primarily relates to our ministry gifting (and not to saving faith). As saved Christians we have a kind of working measure of faith to believe God for some things and not for others. Some have faith for healing, others for prophecy, others to be able to win people to Christ, others have great faith in prayer and become intercessors, yet others have great faith in God's sovereign wisdom and become leaders and administrators. So our area of faith and our area of gifting go hand in hand.

So Paul is saying - check what you really have faith in God for before you think you have a gift in that area. Where is your spiritual heart beating? That is probably where God wants you to be. Where are you doubtful, skeptical or cynical - that is definitely NOT your ministry! Most of us find our working faith confined to a few main areas - and it is those areas we should develop in all godliness, wisdom and humility.

Blessings,

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