

Align (2)- Humbly Serving God

Romans 12: 3-8

One of the things that comes to my mind as we continue in “***Aligning ourselves with Christ,***” is how we serve within the body of Christ. I mean, serving God in the church and outside of the church, and what does that look like and involve?

Humble Service in the Body of Christ

“³ For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. ⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.”

Do you know what I have found? It is hard to give advice to others without seeming to assume superiority; and it is hard to take advice, unless the giver identifies himself with the receiver, and shows that his counsel to them, is also applied to, or for, himself.

This is what Paul speaks of right here in this passage, being led by the delicate perception which comes from a loving heart, compared with a deliberate ‘tact,’ which is often cold and clumsy. He wishes, like many do he prays, as we all should, and he desires that these people hear his passion, filled with love, so that they hear what he is saying. This is the first of the specific duties to which he invites the Roman Christians, as they recognize God, as the giver of all capacities and grace. Paul calls them to the faithful use of their ‘gifts,’ their God given abilities, which will differ according to the grace given to each. He speaks of ‘***the grace given to me,***’ and in Romans 12:6 thus, of ‘***the grace given unto each of us.***’

He was made an Apostle, by the same loving, giving God who has bestowed various gifts on each and every one of us. He knows personally of the grace of God, which he now shares in, just as he would have everyone else know of this Grace. He assumes no superiority, ***but is simply using the special gift bestowed on him, for the good of all.*** With this delicate turn in his life, which might have sounded harshly authoritative to some, he counsels those who will listen. Speaking first of the social duties which all Christian men owe to one another. ***A sober and just estimate of themselves,*** and then, ***a helpful hand for all who believe in Christ,*** called service. It is immediately followed by his counsel to patiently and faithfully exercise different gifts. Stating, it’s time for God children to start utilizing their gifts. To use the gifts God has placed within our lives, for the betterment of the body.

Truthfully, most of us know at least some of the basic gifts or talents we have. He is urging us to utilize them for His Glory. ***Aligning ourselves with Him,*** is to discover how we were created to serve Him, and then sharing our abilities to fulfill the work of the kingdom together. This is what He calls the church, “***The Body of Christ.***”

In the event you didn't know this, each of us has something, some God-given skill, talent or ability, to help build His church. Thus, working together we help the Lord accomplish the work of the Kingdom that needs to be done right now.

Illustration:

The story is told of two men riding a tandem bicycle up a steep hill. (a bicycle built for two) After much effort, they finally made it to the top of the hill. The front rider said, "That was a tough ride." To which the second rider replied, "Sure was, and if I hadn't kept the brake on, we might have slipped backwards." I wonder, have some of us kept the brake on while saying we want to help other accomplish the Lord's work?

So, let's see what we can find in this passage for us today?

1-Sober judgement. *"³ For by the grace given me, I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you."*

See ourselves in accordance to the faith God has given us... How we see ourselves, will determine what we do, and how we act and treat others. I know there have been times when I might have made a judgment of others, based upon what they say or do, and how they live without knowing them. Haven't we all? And at times makes those judgments based upon how we feel we are living our life in Christ.

Paul says here, ***"Be careful as to how you judge another."*** It appears that the way we judge others based upon how we see ourselves. If we are not careful, judging others can come across as extremely judgmental, and often filled with an air of superiority. ***Lord, help us if we have done this.*** This is why having a proper perspective of ourselves is so important. We are all God's creations, every single one of us. And we are all made in His image. So, if we truly want to be in close relationship with Jesus, we should first realize just who we are in Christ. Then, we might begin to see others as Christ sees them. I think this is why we are told to think of ourselves with ***"sober judgement,"***

Some of the worst choices we make in life are because we often act before we have a complete understanding. Over the course of my life, I have made my share of poor choices. I am sure most of us can testify that we have made some poor decisions at times, as well. This happens at every level of life. Choices made in: education, employment, love, housing, investments, politics and more. Choices made say about, ***when to speak and when to keep silent, when to fight and when to stand down, when to move and when to stay put, when to write and when to read, when to date and when to quit dating and move to the next level*** – or, choices about ***marriage and/or breaking up.*** Some people end up hurting or injured themselves a great deal more than needed, because they hung around the wrong people, or, went to places they should not have gone. Poor judgement, or, less than sober judgement. At time, we may ven say or do things that hurt others, with the best of intentions.

Paul is trying to help us see ourselves as God sees us. The people around us are not less, nor are they more, than us, we are as His children. *Have you ever hard story like this?*

Illustration:

If you ever meet “J.E.”, you would quickly tell he was a very angry man. In fact, at age 54 he’d been an angry person for many years. In a Bible study that night, many questions had been raised in his mind. Talking with the leader afterward, he said, “I asked Jesus to be my Savior when I was 9 years old. But nobody ever taught me about who I am in Christ, that I’m accepted by God or that Christ lives in me.”

“What were you taught?” the Bible study leader asked. “Where I grew up, we heard all the time about how perfect Christ was and about how we should learn to live like Him – if we didn’t, God would judge us.” J.E. went on, “It didn’t take me long, I’d say in my teen years, to figure out that I was never going to cut it. So, I gave up trying. I guess I’ve been living in guilt and running from God ever since. Off and on, through the years, I tried to go back to church, but I just got more guilt piled on top of me.

I’ve sat under so many teachers who made me fearful, that I was afraid to turn in any direction because God was going to get me. This is the first Bible study I’ve ever attended that gave me any hope” J.E. concluded.

At that point, J.E. was 54 years old. That means, even though he had been born again through trusting Jesus Christ at a young age, he had spent at least 45 years running away...

How sad, that he lost all those years, running from the Lord, because someone had not properly helped him discover the grace of God. If we don’t understand God’s Grace, we will struggle to have a sober judgment about ourselves and almost anything and everyone else.

2-Our faith, given to us by God.

“in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you...”

Paul gives a precise standard, or ‘measurement’ according to which we are to estimate ourselves. In essence he is saying, ***‘Faith’ is the measure of our gifts, and is itself a gift from God. The strength of a Christian’s faith, determines his/her Christian character. (repeat)***

Faith is ***trust***. And it involves the attitude of receptivity. There is in it, ***a consciousness of need, a yearning desire, and a confidence of expectation.*** For example, ***“An open empty hand, is held up, with the assurance that it will be filled, or, “an empty bucket, is let down into the well, with the assurance that it will be drawn up filled.***

Trust in God, is the precise opposite, of the self-imposed isolation, which shuts us out from God. If we have little or no faith, we will struggle to TRUST God, and everyone who lives around us. We are told here by Paul, that God gives us faith! The first thing that comes to my mind is, ***“do we exercise our faith?”*** Do we use it?

The law of the Christian life is defined, ***‘according to our faith, given unto us.’*** If we ***believe*** that we receive, according to the teaching of Christ, we will have what we ask for. The more faith a man exercises, the more of God and Christ presence he has. It is the measure of our capacity in Christ, which brings about an indefinite increase in the gifts which God bestows on faithful souls. What I mean by that is, ***as our faith grows, so does the power of God’s love working within us.*** God’s power is thus demonstrated more and more within our lives.

Just as a baby starts walking, so we start trusting God and exercising our faith. Each of us will have as much as he desires, and is capable of containing, handling, managing, within the Grace of God's gift, the faith given to us. The walls of the heart are elastic, and He desires to expand them. ***This is part of Aligning our live with Him.***

Illustration:

For the twentieth anniversary of Larry King Live program, Barbara Walters interviewed the man who became famous interviewing others. She asked him direct and revealing questions. Two of the most telling responses came when she probed about fear and faith. Walters asked King, "What is your greatest fear?" He immediately replied, "Death." This interview occurred in 2005 when he was near the very top of his career, and had much to lose, but none of that mattered compared to the fear of death.

Her follow-up question was, "Do you believe in God?" To which he paused and was quite for a moment. I would say that, that question hits at the core of Faith! Do we believe in God?

3-One body, many parts belonging to each other.

"⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."

As we Align ourselves with Christ, we come along side of others who are doing the same thing. Each of us, are seeking to draw closer to Christ, and as we do many of us end up being at the same place at the same time. Paul tells us that this is what the body of Christ is, many parts – each doing what the Lord has gifted them to do – seeking to become one body to bring glory and honor to the Lord. Many parts seeking to become one in Christ. The implication of this is, that no one gift, or person, is of more valuable to the body than the others.

Paul reminds us that we do not all have the same function, (gifts), rather, it takes everyone to help make the body whole. So, if we think about it for just a moment, as we each draw closer to Jesus, we draw closer to each other. **(Triangle)**

Aligning ourselves with Jesus, should help make the body stronger and more steadfast. We cannot, and do not, all do the exact same things, thus, we need each other. In fact, it says here, ***"we belong to each other."*** That is an important fact Paul states here. ***We belong to each other.*** He is saying, we are connected to each other.

As Christians, ***None of us exists outside of the body. No Christian is an unattached Christian.*** Can my arm stay alive without being attached to the body? Can any of our body parts stay alive or useful without being attached? We are all members of each other, connected to each other, with the purpose of serving Him and each other. That is how the body grows and becomes greater in size and service. This is what the Lord intends for us on this side of eternity.

We are Christ's body on earth, often referred to as ***"the church."*** With are countless different parts, in many different places, with vastly different jobs, but together we are, by analogy, ***"one unified being,"*** the Church, a single entity with a united purpose.

So, as we *Align our lives with the power of God*, He can be revealed through and in us, showing His might Power and Grace for everyone else. Paul says it is our call to serve Him and live for Him each day, *Humbly Serving God* each day we are alive. Aligned with God, every day.

Closing Prayer