

ROMANS (12:3)

Sober Self-Analysis

PART 61 – FEBRUARY 5, 2006

“IDOL” MINDS

In verse one, Paul called us to dedicate our bodies as living sacrifices of worship: an ongoing commitment of complete surrender to modeling the mercy that we have received.

Then in verse two we were challenged further, to be transformed at our deepest level, by the renewing (i.e. resetting & refreshing) of our minds.

Now, in verse three (and for the rest of chapter twelve) Paul describes how a renewed mind (in sync with scripture) begins to think and act and feel, in relation to God and self and others.

And it all begins with the bedrock in verse three.

But, before we read it together, let's set the mood. You know, love it or hate it, “American Idol” is celebrated in part for the shockingly lofty self-appraisals of its contestants.

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 measure of faith God has given you. - *Romans 12:3 NIV*

Next to a proper view of God, the way we perceive ourselves is the most critical perspective we have.

- A renewed mind has an desire for realistic humility.

Every last one of us has a suicidal tendency toward pride. That's why Paul says: “I say to every one of you”

Common sense tells us that inflated egos are destructive to the soul, but exalting them in American culture is big business.

Advertisers, educators, coaches, and politicians will have to give account for exploiting our suicidal tendency toward pride.

An un-renewed cultural mindset will demand and embrace more and more self-centeredness. And we need to be aware of it.

- First, there was “LIFE MAGAZINE” ... all about our world.
- Then “PEOPLE”; they’re the most important part of life.
- Then came “US” ... why waste our time reading about *them*?
- So finally, this achievement was trumped with: “SELF”.
- You know the publication I’m waiting for? “JUST BRUCE”!



BY THE GRACE

What’s interesting at the beginning of verse three is how Paul sets the example of the attitude he’s calling for.

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you ...

Paul has a lot of “bragging rights”. He could’ve said, “By the power and authority vested in me and verified by miraculous demonstration, (I say to every one of you ...)”

- Instead of “by the power”
- Instead of “by the authority”
- Paul says: “by the grace”

He has a sober understanding that it’s only by God’s grace and mercy that he’s come into this role; and he’s no more *deserving* of it than any of his readers. God’s grace is the great equalizer.

As we display a sober understanding of God’s grace in our own lives, it readies the people God’s placed around us to receive God’s Word through us.

The scariest thing about those “American Idol” tryouts is that we share the same tendencies. I often wonder while I’m watching: which areas of *my* life am I that woefully oblivious to?

Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment

VITAL, NOT ESSENTIAL

The “PIPELINE” of communication between God and us, gets clogged with the “cholesterol” of pride. It’s a genetic condition ... we inherit it from Adam! And humility helps clear the corrosion.

Clothe yourselves with humility. – 1 Peter 5:5 NIV

Q: You know why we resist clothing ourselves with humility?

A: Because those clothes are transparent and uncomfortable!

It’s an outfit you don’t just slip on. You have to be very intentional about wearing it. But, the more we wear it the more comfortable we get, and the more we look like Jesus.

In Matthew 22:2, Jesus compares His Kingdom to a WEDDING RECEPTION. With that in mind, watch how it sheds light on another parable Jesus told.

When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, “Give this man your seat.” Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, “Friend, move up to a better place.” Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. – Luke 14:8-11 NIV

This is how Jesus wants us to behave in His Kingdom! He *wants* to exalt us, but to do so, we *must* “take the lowest place”. This means recognizing our own faults and flaws. However, it *doesn't* mean that we think *poorly* of our value, it means that we think *rightly* about our condition.

We tend to go in one of TWO EXTREMES when we evaluate ourselves: thinking we’re indispensable; or, thinking we’re worthless. Sober judgment contains the full spectrum of our faults and flaws, as well as our contributions, strengths, and abilities.

I came across this mean-spirited little poem for those times when we’re thinking that we’re God’s gift to this world; or that His Kingdom (in some small way) depends on our contribution.

Sometimes when you feel that your absence would leave an unfillable hole;
Just follow these simple instructions, and see how it humbles your soul.
Take a bucket and fill it with water, put your hand in it up to your wrist;
Now pull it out fast and the hole that remains, is the measure of how you’ll be missed!

- Every believer is vital, but none is essential.
-

MEASURE OF FAITH

And finally, Paul says that our “Sober self-analysis” should be:

In accordance with the measure of faith God has given you

This is one of those difficult passages to translate.

But rest assured that it doesn't mean that God supernaturally implants some kind of “faith chip” in our heart that programs and pre-determines our level of belief and trust in Him.

Paul wouldn't contradict what he wrote two chapters earlier:

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. - *Romans 10:17 NIV*

Fight the good fight of the faith. - *1 Timothy 6:12 NIV*

“The measure” can refer to the tool that measures, *or* the thing that's measured. So, there're two basic thoughts on the subject.

1. God's Word is the thing that measures.

The word for “faith” can mean “The Faith” or “The Gospel”. And “measure” can also mean “standard”.

In this theory the verse is saying to:

Think of yourself with sober judgment, **according to the standard of the Gospel of Christ that God has given us.**

2. My growth is the thing that's measured.

This would mean that the “measure” is a “snapshot” since the NT instructs us to grow in our faith.

In this theory the verse is saying to:

Think of yourself with sober judgment, **according to the current level of growth and maturity that God has given you.**

Both are valid: we need the Word of God as our standard, and we need each other to help us measure our ongoing growth.