

Devotional Questions – Romans 12:3-8

1. *What is the connection between Romans 12:1-2 and these verses (Romans 12:3-8)?*
2. *Why does Paul stress the need for right thinking before he lists the ways we should act (Romans 12:3)?*
3. *Why does Paul emphasise the grace shown to him (Romans 12:3)?*
4. *What is the point of the verbal illustration of the human body (Romans 12:4-5)?*
5. *Do you think Paul is addressing individual believers or the whole church when he is talking about the gifts of the Spirit (Romans 12:6-8)?*
6. *What is the difference (if any) between a spiritual gift and a natural ability?*
7. *What have 'grace' (Romans 12:3) and 'faith' (Romans 12:6) to do with how the Christian is able to carry out 'the will of God' (Romans 12:2)?*
8. *What generally are the two groups that the list of gifts here fall into (Romans 12:6-8)?*
 - a.
 - b.
9. *What are the 7 gifts Paul mentions here, and how are they useful in the church today?*

Devotional Questions – Romans 12:3-8, Answers to Questions

See Dr Ruckman's commentary *The Book of Romans* pp 476-487 and the *Ruckman Reference Bible* p 1503 for detailed comment and www.timefortruth.co.uk/alan-oreilly/ *Romans 12 – Summary Thoughts* pp 3-4 for additional remarks.

1. *What is the connection between Romans 12:1-2 and these verses (Romans 12:3-8)?*

The connection is “...*be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind...every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly...*” Romans 12:2-3 as Paul urges humility on the part of today's believer *in principle* with respect to none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself by comparison. **“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”** Philippians 2:5-8.

2. *Why does Paul stress the need for right thinking before he lists the ways we should act (Romans 12:3)?*

Paul does so because he knew King Solomon's exhortation with respect to right thinking as germane to right living.

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” Proverbs 4:23.

3. *Why does Paul emphasise the grace shown to him (Romans 12:3)?*

Paul does so because that is his testimony as in effect he exhorts today's believer, noting of course the Lord's admonition that applies likewise to today's believer. **“So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do”** Luke 17:10.

“But by the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” 1 Corinthians 15:10.

4. *What is the point of the verbal illustration of the human body (Romans 12:4-5)?*

The point is as Paul describes to the Corinthians with respect to one body whose many members God has tempered so that they should function as one for genuine harmony, mutual care and maximum effectiveness. Today's believer should seek to ensure that he is truly *tempered* within **“the body of Christ”** 1 Corinthians 12:27. See www.timefortruth.co.uk/alan-oreilly/ *Temperance and 'Self Control.'*

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ...God hath tempered the body together...That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular” 1 Corinthians 12:12, 24-27.

5. Do you think Paul is addressing individual believers or the whole church when he is talking about the gifts of the Spirit (Romans 12:6-8)?

Both. See *Question 4* and 1 Corinthians 12:27 **“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular”** and note Paul’s encouragement to the Ephesians and in turn to today’s believers.

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” Ephesians 2:19-22.

6. What is the difference (if any) between a spiritual gift and a natural ability?

The first God gave on conversion, **“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit...all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will”** 1 Corinthians 12:4, 11, the second the individual would have from God without conversion **“...for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee”** 1 Chronicles 29:14. Both should be surrendered to God, as today’s believer should note from King David’s confession and Herod’s failure to surrender his oratorical ability to God.

“And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost” Acts 12:21-23.

7. What have ‘grace’ (Romans 12:3) and ‘faith’ (Romans 12:6) to do with how the Christian is able to carry out ‘the will of God’ (Romans 12:2)?

By inspection, grace and faith were central to how Paul executed his ministry and in turn how it should be therefore for today’s believer, as Paul testifies.

“...I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God...Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily” Colossians 1:25, 28-29.

8. What generally are the two groups that the list of gifts here fall into (Romans 12:6-8)?

- a. Speaking
- b. Ministering i.e. doing

Peter summarises the basic groups as follows. Noting *Question 6* and Herod, Acts 12:21-23, so that by contrast **“that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ”** 1 Peter 4:12.

“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” 1 Peter 4:11-12.

9. What are the 7 gifts Paul mentions here, and how are they useful in the church today?

See extract from www.timefortruth.co.uk/alan-oreilly/ Romans 12 – Summary Thoughts pp 3-4. No format changes have been made. Note again from *Question 8* the over-arching reasons for the bestowal and exercise of spiritual gifts. **“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen”** 1 Peter 4:11-12.

5. Romans 12:6-8. Paul here sets out the manner in which the gifts for service “*gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us*” Romans 12:6 are to be exercised:
- 5.1. “*prophecy...according to the proportion of faith*” Romans 12:6 in that “*...faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*” Hebrews 11:1 with the prophet like “*Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet*” Hebrews 11:7 “*(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)*” 2 Corinthians 5:7.
- Prophecy of course “*...now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God...*” Romans 16:26 insofar as “*Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets*” Amos 3:7 including for example the permanence of *the nation* of Israel, Jeremiah 31:35-37, 33:19-21, 25-26:
- “Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD.”*
- “And the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers.”*
- “Thus saith the LORD; If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them.”*
- In addition “*prophecy...according to the proportion of faith*” Romans 12:6 has application to non-King James pulpits becoming King James pulpits. Pulpits are often raised on daises and are therefore “*high places*” in a church building, “*...thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places*” Deuteronomy 33:29.
- 5.2. Ministry as in “*ministering to the saints...by the will of God*” 2 Corinthians 8:4-5, teaching, exhorting Romans 12:7, 8 are all *wait-on* ministries according to need that *God* not man specifies “*by the will of God*” 2 Corinthians 8:5 as Paul states “*But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus*” Philippians 4:19.
- 5.3. Giving “*with simplicity*” Romans 12:8 is as it was for “*the churches of Macedonia*” 2 Corinthians 8:1 who simply specified the intended recipients of their giving and trusted in the will of the Giver that He revealed to them in that they “*first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God*” 2 Corinthians 8:5.
- 5.4. Diligent rule Romans 12:8 is as Peter exhorts “*Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock*” 1 Peter 5:2-3.
- 5.5. Showing mercy “*with cheerfulness*” Romans 12:8 is meant to be infectious so that those ministered to may be cheered and their spirits uplifted because “*A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken*” Proverbs 15:13. See attached study [Mother](#).

Mother

Mercy Manifest

Romans 12:8 exhorts for **“he that sheweth mercy”** to do so **“with cheerfulness.”** Mary Ann Bickerdyke 1817-1901 from Galesburg Illinois showed mercy manifold **“with cheerfulness”** as a nurse and hospital administrator for the Union Army during the American Civil War. See en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Ann_Bickerdyke and her biography *Cyclone in Calico* by Nina Brown Baker archive.org/stream/cycloneincalico001060mbp/cycloneincalico001060mbp_djvu.txt. The title comes from an irate doctor who complained to his commandant about Mrs Bickerdyke’s visit to his hospital, pp 54-55. Alluding to Mrs Bickerdyke’s garb *he shouted to the astonished commandant that a “cyclone in calico” had invaded his hospital and turned it upside down.* Mrs Bickerdyke spoke with the commandant soon afterwards and thereby made herself indispensable to the army for the duration of the war. *The interview that followed is not recorded, but in after years Mrs. Bickerdyke said simply, “I talked sense to him.”* The irate doctor gave no more trouble.



Mary Ann Bickerdyke in 1898

It had all started when Mrs Bickerdyke’s pastor asked her in the summer of 1861 to care for sick soldiers in camp at Cairo, Illinois. The camp was overcrowded and unsanitary. Many men were ill and some had died. Mrs Bickerdyke visited the tented hospitals there, all of which were filthy. She arranged for the sick men to have hot baths, better food, cleaned-up quarters and clean bedding. When she summoned the men to their hot baths and chicken dinners, it was **“with cheerfulness,”** p 42.

...beckoning the doctor [in charge] and two or three volunteers to accompany her, she marched upon the first tent. She waited a minute, while the dull eyes of the sick men turned toward her. Then, unexpectedly, she laughed.

“If your mas could see you now! I bet they ain’t one of you had a bath since you left home. Well, we’re going to clean things up around here, boys. We’re going to clean you up, too. Now how many of you can walk if you try real hard? I got men here to carry you if you can’t. But how many can get up for a hot bath and a clean bed and a real home supper? This ain’t the sergeant getting you up for drill, remember. Come on, now. Who can walk for fried chicken?”

A surprisingly large number of them could, and did. Those too weak to totter out on their own feet were carried, and set down near the hogsheads-turned-bathtubs...

Mrs Bickerdyke knew Proverbs 17:22 **“A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones”** and in mercy how to mend broken spirits along with languishing bodies. The soldiers to whom Mrs Bickerdyke ministered responded with uplifted spirits and great affection, p 52. *They called her Mother...Before the summer passed Mrs. Bickerdyke was Mother to every enlisted man in camp, sick or well.* The name stuck and would be used not only by enlisted men.

Mercy as Compassion

Showing mercy **“with cheerfulness”** Romans 12:8 as Mother Bickerdyke did is meant to cheer those ministered to and lift their spirits because **“A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken”** Proverbs 15:13. Luke shows that mercy in Romans 12:8 is therefore compassion manifest as practical care. **“But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him...Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise”** Luke 10:33-34, 36-37. That was Mother Bickerdyke’s calling and strength.

“Nobody alive left out there”

Mrs Bickerdyke accompanied the Union Army during its advance into Tennessee where she cared for the many wounded from the days-long battle for Rebel-held Fort Donelson in February 1862. She helped scour the battlefield to bring in every possible survivor. On one occasion in spite of her exhaustion, Mrs Bickerdyke continued her search after dark, with an unexpected result, pp 84-85.

In his tent on the field, a Union officer was sleepless...Colonel John A. Logan...tossed on his cot and cursed his wound...it stung and ached...He got up for a drink of water, and looked out to see how the weather was. The weather was cold, but the sky had cleared, with a waning moon dimly lighting the darkness. While he looked, it seemed to Colonel Logan that he saw another light, close to the ground, and moving a little. It strengthened as his eyes accustomed themselves to the night, and flitted to another spot.

The colonel shuddered. Some ghoul, robbing the dead? What else could it be?...Colonel Logan roused his sleeping orderly. “Find that man and bring him to me!” he roared.

The orderly went, and for a long time he did not come back. When he did, he had Mother Bickerdyke with him.

“I was glad to have your boy’s help,” she said cheerfully. “...I had to satisfy myself. They ain’t nobody alive left out there. Now I know that, I can sleep. You ought to be asleep yourself, son.” She peered at him, holding her lantern high. “Wounded, ain’t you? That’s a mighty messy-looking bandage you got there. Let me fix it” whereupon she did.

Like Mrs Bickerdyke scouring the wilderness in the dark with a lantern for the sake of the dead, today’s believer ***“sheweth mercy”*** Romans 12:8 in scouring ***“the darkness of this world”*** Ephesians 6:12 ***“with the light of the glorious gospel of Christ”*** 2 Corinthians 4:4 for the sake of the dead as Paul reminds the Ephesians. ***“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins...But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)”*** Ephesians 2:1, 4-5.

“Stretched seventy-five miles”

Mrs Bickerdyke’s hospital work was demanding in the extreme for both herself and the volunteers who worked with her, p 86. *For the first ten days after the Donelson battle, she never slept in a bed or took off her clothes. “I felt,” she said afterward, “like my nerves was stretched seventy-five miles.” They were steel nerves, and equal to the tension.* As Paul states, with the same application to today’s believer ***“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work”*** 2 Corinthians 9:8.

“The one person...who outranks me”

By 1864 General William T. Sherman en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Tecumseh_Sherman had assumed command of the Union Army in the Western Theatre of the war where Mrs Bickerdyke ministered. He too saw her as indispensable but Mrs Bickerdyke’s forthright manner still rankled with some senior officers and those close to them, pp 159-160. One day, a colonel came to Sherman with a complaint *that his wife had been grossly insulted by a nasty old woman.*

“I didn’t know we had any nasty old women in our army,” General Sherman remarked. “Who might she be, now?”

“I believe she calls herself Bickerdyke, sir.”

“Mother Bickerdyke?” The general laughed. “Oh, well, this is too bad. You’ve picked on the one person around here who outranks me. If you want to lodge a complaint against her, you’ll have to take it to President Lincoln.”

In conclusion therefore, today’s believer should understand and trust in Proverbs 22:29 ***“Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.”***