



Introduction

I am sure that Romans 12:1-3 has become a part of you by now. You have memorized it and said it aloud many times. I know you also have pondered how it can mark you for an authentic Christian life. Isn't it great to memorize God's Word? Thinking back on Romans 12:1-3, some specific focuses stand out. Right now, say each verse out loud and stop after each one to consider:

Verse 1 challenges us to consider our perspective about our holy God. Are we willing to worship Him sacrificially?

Verse 2 challenges us to consider our perspective about the world. Are we willing to be transformed into something different?

Verse 3 challenges us to consider our perspective about ourselves. Are we willing to have a Godly view of ourselves?

And verses 4-5 bring a new challenge to consider our perspective about others. Are we willing to see others as part of Christ?

Looking at the Verses

As Romans 12 began, Paul's heart was full of many things he wanted to share. However he knew the foundation was mercy, so he says "*in view of God's mercy*". God's mercy always levels us to be able to see things His way. You see when I consider how much I am in need of a merciful God; I have to be willing to: worship Him sacrificially (verse 1), be transformed (verse 2) and view myself from His perspective (verse 3).

As we begin to look at verses 4-5, which focus on our perspective about others, mercy is also very important. If we don't grasp how merciful God has been to us, we will never share God's perspective about others. And so... let us not forget that important phrase from verse 1, "*I urge you brothers in view of God's mercy*". From that viewpoint then, what is Paul urging us to see about others in verse 4? Let's take a look.

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. (NIV)

For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. (NASV)

In this way we are like the various parts of a human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around. The body we're talking about is Christ's body of chosen people. Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of his body. But as a chopped-off finger or cut-off toe we wouldn't amount to much, would we?

(Message)

Our bodies are made up of many parts. None of these parts have the same use. There are many people who belong to Christ. And yet, we are one body which is Christ's. We are all different but we depend on each other. (New Life Version)

This was a radical message for that culture and it is still a radical message for us today. What is this message that should invade our self-centered ways of thinking? The message is that people have value because they are a part of the body of Christ. That is very important. In our humanness we have a tendency to be choosy about whom we will allow into our lives. Paul challenges that idea by reminding us that we are a part of Christ's body. We are only a part because of His mercy and we have no right to exclude any one else because it isn't our body anyway. Christ chooses who can be a part, and His choice includes whoever will believe in Him and trust Him for salvation. Paul is very clear here, each person that is a part of the body of Christ has value because they are a part of Him.

Let's follow that line of thinking by considering our own bodies. Each of us possesses a body that has as the Bible says "*many members*". We have very noticeable things about our body, parts that get distinction and parts that seem needy. Some parts are more important than others and there are parts that we must protect more than others. There are parts we like and parts we don't. There are parts of our body that are distasteful to us but they are still part of our body and are needed and valued. And... there are

many parts of our body that we don't even understand but we realize that we need them nonetheless. The point is that regardless of whether we like, notice, enjoy or understand each part of our body, we value each part, because it belongs.

That is a simple line of thought and easy to follow, however there must have been a reason that Paul was bringing this to mind. Just as man's perspective had gotten off base about God and the world and themselves (verses 1-3) it had also gotten off base about others. It is so easy to become entrenched in this kind of selfish thinking that doesn't value others and we don't even realize it. Consider this:

Recently I learned of a common morning prayer for a Jewish man of that time. It went like this "Thank you God that I am neither a Gentile, slave nor a woman." I was a little shocked at that prayer! How could a man devalue others like that in prayer? You know what; it only shows how far gone our pride can go. Just as a person can have a cancer in his/her own body and not even know it, a haughty spirit of pride in our lives can be growing rapidly and we can be ignorant of it. According to that prayer, the pride was obviously there in Biblical times, but it is obviously present today as well. In our politically correct society we may not be so bold as to pray that way out loud, but what is going on in our hearts and minds? You fill in the blanks?

Lord I thank you that I am not a _____, or a _____ or a _____.

If we are thinking like that, we need a mental adjustment. That is why Paul's message is for us today as well. We need to be reminded of the mercy of God that made us a part of His body. How dare we devalue other parts of His body?

I am ashamed to remember all of the times that I have considered others not as valuable as myself in the body of Christ. And over the years I have witnessed countless others do the same. How do we do that?

We exclude others from our circles because they appear different

We openly criticize and mock others approaches to ministry

We make others in the body the brunt of our jokes

We gossip about people and slander people when they hurt us

We exhibit a spirit of superiority over others because of our outward accomplishments and possessions

We reject other members of the Christ's body because of race and culture

We make subtle statements about others that hint at pride and rejection

Paul is reminding us that mercy included us in Christ's body! Because of that we must value whoever else He has included!

And So...

Verses 1-5 really make up the first section of this chapter. As we have memorized them, we have memorized timeless messages for Christians about our basic thinking. These principles of Christian living must become imbedded in the way we think or we won't even begin to be able to express the nature of our God in the way we live. So he makes these messages clear in the first 5 verses.

Worship involves sacrificial living (v.1)

We must live transformed lives different from the world (v.2)

We must have a God perspective of ourselves (v.3)

We must value everyone God has chosen to be a part of His family (v.4-5)

Consider:

Each of these 5 verses - Are they representative of your thinking and your desires as a Christian?

Try and remember a time that you felt especially grateful to being included in something. Now think of that feeling alongside the truth that God has included you in His body. Take a moment to express your gratefulness to Him.

Your valuing of others in the body of Christ – review the red statements above. Is there any area where you need repentance?

How you might specifically and purposefully express appreciation and value to someone you have rejected in the past.

Pray

Romans 12:4-5 **Lord help us to remember that we are a part of the Your body. Help us to value one another as you have valued us!**