

Romans 12:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

Analysis

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. Paul speaks with apostolic authority—**through the grace given unto me** (διὰ τῆς χάριτος τῆς δοθείσης μοι, *dia tēs charitos tēs dotheisēs moi*) refers to his calling as apostle to the Gentiles (1:5, 15:15-16). He addresses **every man** (παντὶ τῷ ὄντι, *panti tō onti*)—no one is exempt from this warning against pride. The Greek wordplay is striking: **not to think more highly** (μὴ ὑπερφρονεῖν, *mē hyperphronein*) than he ought **to think** (φρονεῖν, *phronein*), but **to think soberly** (σωφρονεῖν, *sōphronein*)—literally, 'sound-minded thinking' about oneself.

Humble self-assessment is grounded in recognizing that **God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith** (μέτρον πίστεως, *metron pisteōs*). This doesn't mean different quantities of saving faith, but rather different gifts and callings that faith receives. Pride is fundamentally irrational because all spiritual capacity is received grace (1 Corinthians 4:7). This verse introduces the body of Christ imagery (verses 4-8), where spiritual gifts create interdependence, not hierarchy.

Historical Context

Roman society was intensely status-conscious, with elaborate hierarchies based on citizenship, wealth, patron-client relationships, and honor-shame dynamics. Jewish believers might boast in their covenant heritage; Gentile converts might pride themselves on freedom from Jewish law. Both groups needed Paul's corrective: all standing before God is gift, not achievement. The house church setting in Rome likely included slaves and masters, poor and wealthy, requiring humility to function as one body.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. In what areas of your life are you most tempted to 'think more highly' than you ought—spiritual maturity, intelligence, ministry effectiveness?
2. How does recognizing that your faith and gifts are divine allotments (not personal achievements) cultivate humility?
3. What would 'sober-minded' self-assessment look like in your evaluation of your strengths and weaknesses?

Interlinear Text

Λέγω	γὰρ	διὰ	τῆς	χάριτος	τῆς	δοθείσης	μοι
I say	For	through	G3588	the grace	G3588	given	unto me
G3004	G1063	G1223		G5485		G1325	G3427
παντὶ	τῷ	ὄντι	ἐν	ὑμῖν	μὴ	ὑπερφρονεῖν	
to every man	G3588	that is	among	you	not	highly	
G3956		G5607	G1722	G5213	G3361	G5252	
παρ'	ὃ	δεῖ	φρονεῖν	ἀλλὰ	φρονεῖν		
to think of himself more	G3739	than he ought	to think	but	to think		
G3844		G1163	G5426	G235	G5426		
εἰς	τὸ	σωφρονεῖν	ἐκάστω	ὥς	ὁ	θεὸς	
soberly	G3588	G4993	to every man	according as	G3588	God	
G1519			G1538	G5613		G2316	
ἐμέρισεν	μέτρον	πίστεως					
hath dealt	the measure	of faith					
G3307	G3358	G4102					

Additional Cross-References

Galatians 6:3 (Parallel theme): For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

1 Peter 5:5 (Grace): Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

Proverbs 26:12 (Parallel theme): Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him.

Romans 12:16 (Parallel theme): Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

Ecclesiastes 7:16 (Parallel theme): Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself?

1 Peter 5:8 (Parallel theme): Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

James 4:6 (Grace): But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

1 Peter 4:11 (References 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 4:7 (Parallel theme): But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

Micah 6:8 (Grace): He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?