

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 G5485 given G1325 unto me G3427

παντὶ τῷ ὅντι ἐν ὑμῖν μὴ ὑπερφρονεῖν
to every man G3588 that is G5607 among G1722 you G5213 not G3361 highly G5252

παρ' ὁ δεῖ φρονεῖν ἀλλὰ φρονεῖν
to think of himself more G3739 than he ought G1163 to think G5426 but G235 to think G5426

εἰς τὸ σωφρονεῖν ἐκάστῳ ὡς ὁ θεὸς
soberly G3588 G4993 to every man G1538 according as G5613 G3588 God G2316

ἐμέρισεν μέτρον πίστεως
hath dealt the measure of faith 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?

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