



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Unity

June 14, 2020

Romans 12:3-5

Clint Pressley

³For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

(Pastor prays)

“These are the times that try men’s souls.” Thomas Payne said more than he ever knew in 1776 during the throes of the Revolutionary War. Because it’s our souls that are smothered in this meleé. In one way or another, we have felt it – worry, anxiety, anger, hurt, frustration, disgust! Think of all the emotions you have felt over the last couple of weeks and the ache you have felt in your soul.

Soul work – that’s what we have here. It’s what Paul said in Romans 12:2, *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind*, A renewed mind is a revived, cleaned out, non-headache-filled mind, a mind that’s settled and strong and peaceful. It’s a mind that trusts the sufficiency and power of God found in Christ and Christ alone.

God is kind to have us in this passage at this time as He instructs us and shepherds us and heals us. When you do this kind of preaching you’ve got to place a passage in its context. Paul is writing to a small church that’s hanging on by a thread in the pagan city of Rome. This church is made up of Jews and Gentiles who have found their real identity in Christ and the sufficiency of Christ not only to reconcile them to God through His cross but the sufficiency of Christ to reconcile them to one another in Christ. Isn’t it interesting that Paul spent 11 chapters outlining doctrine and theology and now, as he starts to apply that theology, one of the very

first things he tackles is the unity of the church while he celebrates the diversity of its people, showing us that this is the Christ-honoring mark of God's handiwork.

Verses 3-8 in the text are connected to the verses 1-2 by the word "for" in verse 3. In verse 2, Paul spoke of the renewing of our minds (and man do we need it). Then in verse 3, four times Paul will use one of his favorite words, "think." I want to use that combination of "renewed minds" and "think" to get at this passage so that God's word and the sufficiency of Christ might minister to our souls today. I want you to have a renewed and peaceful mind.

A Renewed and Peaceful Mind is a Mind Focused on Christ.

How do we get there? Come with me and let's see. Let's look at that word "think."

Think about grace

Notice how Paul makes the transition and look at what he says. ³ *For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.* By the grace given to me. I say to everyone among you, here's what gives me the authority to speak into your life. Have you ever had someone speak some stinging truth into your life and you wonder, "Who does that guy think he is?" Do you see what Paul does here on the very front end of speaking into another person's life? He says, I only have one kind of ground to stand on – grace. This should instruct how we live and how we talk and how we think. Because the base of everything we have in this world is God's grace given to us at the cross of Jesus.

As I was studying for this sermon, I was reading Acts 26 where Paul is standing before Agrippa before he was shipped off to Rome and he was giving his testimony. And his testimony was that he was hateful and mean and persecuted the church. He tortured Christians and rejoiced when they were killed, and on his own he had no right to say anything. But grace—the grace of God— is that every one of us who are now Christians were once enemies of God. And yet, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us, on the cross. God raised him from the dead and, if you repent and believe, God saves us by grace.

Now as a product of grace, we become *dispensers* of grace. Thinking on the grace and living in that grace reminds us that we are people of grace. It took a billion times more grace from God to save you than it will grace from you to love one another. A renewed mind and peaceful mind is a mind focused on Christ. It happens when we think about grace. There's something else I'm

going to ask you to think about and its going to sound a little unusual but it's here in the passage.

Think about yourself

Let me show you where I get that. Let's read all of verse 3. ³ *For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.* Paul is fully aware of the devastating consequences of pride and he packs this verse full with the word, "think." He starts with a negative and moves to a positive. In thinking about ourselves, we must avoid the two extremes – thinking too highly of ourselves or thinking too lowly of ourselves. Instead, we need to develop sober and healthy judgment based on the faith the God has given us. So how do we develop this sober self-assessment? Because we all have blind spots. Here's how Jesus Christ becomes our standard. I think we can do this with three ruling questions.

Why do I need Christ? The root of it is because of our own sin. I'm a sinner by nature and, not only that, I commit sin, so I am guilty of those sins. And that has made it so that I am separated from God with no real hope of having the affection of God. Why do I need Jesus? Because I was an enemy of God but God came to rescue us through Jesus. Why do I need Jesus? Because I was such a sinner. There's another question we need to think about ourselves.

Why does God love me? Because from birth we have parents who tell us how good and lovable we are? That is not the case. God loves us because of His own grace and nothing about us. We think of the example of Hosea and Gomer and how God told Hosea to marry Gomer even though she was so terrible and would cheat on him and run out of his life and he was to go and pursue her. That becomes a picture of how God loves His people. Not because of how good we are but because of how good He is. He's the one. That's where the grace is. He not only takes away our sin. He comes to the cross and puts the punishment of our sin on Jesus so that justice is satisfied and then grace is given to us. Why does God love me? Because He is good. The third question we might ask is

How do I honor Jesus? How do I live my life right now with my family, my career, money? How do I honor Jesus with my eyes, my conversations, my Facebook posts and social media?

We ask these questions to help guide our lives. Why do I need Christ – because of my own sin. Why does God love me – because of His grace. And then, how do I honor Jesus? Think about yourself and start asking those things. You start developing a renewed and peaceful mind – a

mind focused on Christ. So we have talked about 2 things to think about so far. Think about grace. Think about yourself.

Think about others

In this context, Paul is talking about the church. He's talking about the people in your Sunday School class or those you interact with on a Sunday, on Facebook or in your small community group. What does Paul have to say about that? Let's read verse 4-5. Don't you love these verses? *⁴For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.* I'd like to take these verses and break them into three categories. Unity. Diversity. Mutuality.

Unity

Let's read these verses again and look for the unity of the church. *⁴For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.* We get our spiritual life from the same source. We are saved at the same cross. We are filled with the same spirit. We are loved by the same father. We are on the same mission. In His high priestly prayer, Jesus prayed in John 17:20-21, *²⁰"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.* According to the prayer of Jesus, our unity becomes a means of displaying the power of the Gospel. Unity.

Diversity

Notice this in verse 4. The many members do not have the same function. They are different and have different roles. You understand that when it comes to the church. Diversity, not uniformity, is God's handiwork. We are not color *blind*, we are *colorful*! God's glory is revealed and celebrated in the diversity of His people. This letter that Paul is writing is going to a church in Rome made up of the most diverse kinds of parentage and countries and cultures and mindsets, and we rejoice in the diversity because it displays the suffering of Christ to bind us together! When we talk about the finished work of Christ on the cross, we usually frame it in terms of us being reconciled to God. But we must also talk about the sufficiency of Christ in reconciling us to one another. That's exactly what Paul said in Ephesians 2:14-16. *¹⁴For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing*

wall of hostility¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace,¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

That unity and diversity brings us to one more word.

Mutuality

Let's read it in verse 5. *⁵so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.* And individually members one of another – that's empathy. This is us. This is the church defying all the naysayers and worldly or political drivel. We trust the suffering of Christ to weld us together in love and service, humility and actions. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12:26, *If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.* Isn't that the kind of church we want to be? It's having our minds focused on Christ and His cross; thinking of grace and where we stand. It's thinking about ourselves and our need for Christ. And thinking of the church with unity, diversity and mutuality all at the cross of Christ. I want us to be a church that increasingly always believes in the sufficiency of what Jesus has done for us to heal us, to use us and to be glorified in us.

(Pastor prays)