

What's Your Worth?

Romans 12:3-8

February 6th, 2011

We are in the exhortation part of the book of Romans where Paul reveals to us how we are to live for God in Christ. Paul always begins his letters by telling us what God has done for us in Christ, and then he usually ends by reminding us what we should be doing for Him since we're in Christ. The rest of this book is going to be talking about our life, practical every day, living as a Christian as we make up the body of Christ.

There have been times when I had something that I wanted to offer others, but I wasn't really sure what it was worth, so I had to go price it. I know it's not a good selling technique when you are offering something for sale and someone asks you what you want for it and you say, "Well, what do you think it's worth"? Sometimes it is hard to determine exactly how valuable something is, but it's important in our society, and in our life, especially as we trade, buy, and sell goods. Sometimes there is a tendency when a person looks at something to actually believe it is worth more, or less, than it actually is, depending on which side you are on. Maybe not meaning to, sometimes a seller will actually inflate the worth of what they are selling. They also might deflate the worth. Because worth and value is so important to a capitalistic society like ours, we know there are some enterprises where we can't just leave it up to the buyer and the seller to determine the value alone. For example, I don't know of a bank in this area that would just allow you to tell him what your house was worth and then loan you the value of that house when you get ready to mortgage a new home. But, neither would a person taking out a mortgage on a house from a bank trust the bank to set the price of the home being sold. So we have a whole industry in the US, a whole enterprise, where people make their living by appraising other people's stuff. I've had my house appraised a couple of times and when the appraiser would come out to my house they would look at my house, list everything, look everywhere, and see what I had. I've never had an appraiser tell me what the value of my house was on the day he appraised my house. I would ask if they could tell me what it

was worth, but they couldn't. The reason is because they first have to find another place in the community similar to yours that sold. When I hear those words, my heart just sinks, especially if you live where I live. Sometimes property values, are just not worth what we think they're worth.

As we continue in Romans chapter 12, we are going to talk about worth. Not the worth of your house, or car, or your farm, but about your worth. What is your worth? Paul believed it was important for us to have an understanding of our value before he went very far in exhorting us as a church.

Scripture

"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. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness."

Now, let me give you a disclaimer in the beginning. I find in the book of Romans that this section of Scripture is one of the toughest sections of Paul's teaching to exegete. Because it's hard to exegete, it's hard to outline, and because it's hard to outline, I believe it's hard to present. Some passages just preach, and some are hard to preach.

Paul's Authority

I find this section amazing because it is not what I would ever expect Paul to write about. Paul has spent 11 chapters in the theological Heaven, talking about what God has done for us in Christ. After he finished that, with his feet firmly on the earth, he said, *based on all that I've said, I would get down on my hands and knees and beg you to realize that because of this, you should have made a one time, once for all, presentation of your body to God as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, which is reasonable acts of worship you can do. And because you have done this, don't ever forget you are not supposed to be like the world around you.* You are actually supposed to be in a process, where you are being transformed. Your innerness is so being lifed out that there is a radical change to your outer-ness; your outer-ness is revealing your innerness. This takes place as you renew your mind, as you get in the Word and the Word gets into you. The Word of God transforms you, so the next thing you know, you discover that you are living out, or "lifing" out, testing, proving, and revealing to others that the will of God in your life is good, acceptable, and perfect; no matter what circumstances or situations you find yourself in. Wow! I am ready to say amen, praise the Lord, this is glorious!

Then Paul hits me with a whammy. He starts off with something that is deeper than I can ever get my hand around, initially, so I have to spend some time digging to make sure I get it. He said, *"For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you..."* You see, when he says by the grace given to me, he is calling upon his authority as an apostle. He is reminding the Roman Church of his relationship to them, and their relationship to him. This is one of those E. F. Hutton moments. Do you remember the E. F. Hutton commercials? They would be on a plane, or a restaurant, where there is a lot of noise, and all of a sudden someone says, "E. F. Hutton says," and everybody stops talking and turns and listens. The reason is because E.F. Hutton was a financial authority, supposedly, in their particular area. That is what Paul is saying; he is reminding the Church that he is an apostle, and he is saying this *"to everyone among you"* by the enabling power that God has given him as an apostle. He is not speaking to an isolated few in the Roman Church, he is speaking to the Roman

Church in its entirety, to everyone who is among them, to everyone who makes up the body of Christ in Rome.

Do not Hyper Think

We believe that God's Word is the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God and was written in the context of 2000 years ago. But, it's just as alive and fresh today as it was in the time it was written, however, we cannot take the Bible out of context. We must first interpret in context, and once we've determined its meaning and bring it into our culture, it still has a meaning to us today. Now catch this next part of the verse; it isn't me talking, it's the Apostle Paul talking and reminding us who he is. He is not just Paul, he is the Apostle Paul, and he has authority to say what he is going to tell us, the body of Christ today. I would never have thought to begin a talk like this. The first thing he said is for us "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." Wow! That verse just seems to be out of context. He just reminded us of what God has done for us in Christ. We were a sinner, either unto the light of natural revelation, or a sinner under the light of special revelation. We were under the wrath of God. God was letting us be as sinful as we wanted to be, and then the Gospel broke into our life. Then He transformed us from a sinner to a saint and His plan for our life is to mold us in an image of Jesus Christ. And when we suffer, when we find it's bad, get our eyes off our suffering and realize the suffering we're going through right now isn't comparable to the glory that's going to be revealed. Then he tells us that God has a plan all along to use us as Gentiles to bring Jews to salvation. I made a one-time presentation of my body to God, a living sacrifice, and I'm supposed to be exhibited in a transformation of my life, and now he has given me this whammy and tells me not to think more highly of myself than I ought to think! Wow...You mean to tell me it's possible for a believer in Christ to think more highly of himself than he ought to think? Paul must have thought we would.

Four times in one verse, he uses the same word, yet two of those uses have a different prefix in front of it. Have you ever written something where you really wanted to use the same word twice but was afraid it would look simple, so you found a metaphor, a synonym? You used

another word that meant the same thing, so you didn't use the same word twice in the sentence and Paul uses the same word four times because he knows there's a problem. There are actually people in the Roman Church who thought more highly of themselves than they ought to think. The words Paul used are "*to think*;" to have a right estimate of yourself. But then he puts the prefix, **hyper**, on it, which means 'to go over, to go above, and to go beyond.' This is where we get our English word, hyper, from. Paul knew that there was a sense in which everyone needs to think about themselves, to have a right estimate of themselves. But he knew the danger of the people of the Church who had come to know Christ and been placed in the body of Christ. He understood that there could be a problem when all of a sudden they realized they had been spiritually gifted, and some might actually begin to focus all of their attention on themselves and begin to 'hyper think.'

It's good to ventilate, but not hyper-ventilate. Do you know anybody that is hyper? Those people wear me out. I look at people that are hyper and I think hey, *you are wasting your life! You are exerting way too much enthusiasm, way too much energy, way too much exertion! It doesn't take that much to get the job done!* But it's another matter when we 'hyper think' and all the attention is on us. We begin to think about ourselves and we begin to inflate our worth. Paul says it is a danger in the Church. It's such a danger that he wants you to know that as you begin to renew your mind and experience a transformation, it's one of the first things that's going to happen to you. You are going to begin to think too highly of yourselves. That is what is going to happen to young Christians that come into the body of Christ. He says don't 'hyper think,' but 'sober think.' The ESV says "*sober judgment*." It looks like a different word in Paul's original sentence. It's the same word, but the English translators just can't put four words in a sentence that's the same word, so we have to change it. Paul says don't *hyper think*, but *think, think, sober thinking*.

Sober Thinking

The word "*sober*" means 'to be level, not to be out of kilt, not to be unbalanced, but to be balanced.' I think one of the best illustrations of being sober, being balanced, is that tool a carpenter uses in construction. They have this instrument about four foot long, and it's called a level. It

has a little tube of glass that has two little lines on it. It has water in it with a bubble inside. You lay that level on something and it will show when it's level, or balanced when the bubble is between the two lines. I got to help a little bit when we were building this building. My carpenter skills were so lacking that I worked a lot in the closet of this building...But anyway, I remember times when we would put a level on the walls of this building and I'm looking at it and, well, on the farm, we've got an expression, "It's close enough." I was reminded often that we weren't building a barn down here, we were building a church building! We would slap that level up against the wall and the bubble would barely be touching one of lines and it looked close enough. And you know, in all reality, if we just had the level on a four foot part of a wall that's probably good enough; close enough is good enough. But when you realize that you have that level on a wall that is around 25 feet tall, you know that if you are a little off here, you are going to be really off up there! Now it would be one thing if we were just setting a wall by itself, or a pole by itself, and it wasn't connected to anything else. Who would really notice it was just a little off up there? But when you begin to tie this building in, it's really important that the walls be sober; that everything be right.

That is what Paul's saying to us in the Church. As you begin to experience this transformation into the image of Jesus Christ, there is a danger that in the newness of being a Christian, in the newness of being a saint of God, you could begin to think more highly of yourself than you ought to think. He stops us and says quit it; think soberly, think right about yourself, come to the right appraisal of who you are and what your worth is. Most of the time that wrong behavior comes from wrong thinking. If you don't believe it, you will know that to be true when you become a parent. When you catch your children doing something wrong, sometimes these words will instinctively come out of your mouth without even thinking about it: "Think about what you are doing." You don't tell them to change their behavior, or to stop doing what they are doing and start doing this. You tell them to think about it! What are you saying to them? You've been thinking wrong! Stop; think right! Get your bearings back, because when you get your bearings back, then your behavior will exhibit the rightness of your mind.

Standard of Measurement

Now how do we know how to value ourselves as Christians? How do you know what you are really worth? You have to have a standard. If we are going to make sure something is correct in construction, we want to make sure that if we have a group over here and a group over there, they are all using the same measure of standard of measurement. We don't want one in metric and one in feet, because 32 feet and 32 meters are completely different. So what is our standard, or measure? It is each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. Boy, here's where it gets tricky. It's really hard to make sense of this, but Paul tells us this so it would make sense. But 2000 years of time has passed, so you look at the commentaries, the scholars, and the researchers. But they all have a different opinion of what it means when Paul says each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. How you determine what this measure is will be based on what you already believe to be true about the Gospel. But the word, "*measure*", literally means 'an amount, a quantity, a capacity of measurement, a standard.' There's a standard of faith that we measure ourselves by, and that measure of faith is the measure of faith that God has assigned. I personally believe that the only way you can know what Paul means at the end of verse 3 is to go ahead and read what he says in verse 4, 5, and 6. You can check out John McArthur, and Chuck Swindoll, and John Stout and they are all going to have a different opinion, but here's what we all must notice; verse 4 begins with the word "*for*." This word usually connects what is being said to what follows. Now, when he puts a *therefore*, that is a flashing light; that is a red light! But Paul thinks we are educated enough that sometimes he doesn't have to flash a red light, he can just flash the cautious light. With a caution light, you just slow down at that intersection. You don't have to come to a complete stop, but you have to at least slow down. That is what "*for*" does; it's a caution light, meaning slow down.

Diversity of Spiritual Gifts

Now a lot of us look at this passage and we already know what the Bible teaches, so we think Paul is talking about self-esteem verse 3, then we think he switches to the body of Christ in verse 4 and 5, and then he

switches to gifts in the Church in verse 6 through 8. We think Paul is talking about 3 different things. I read one commentary that outlined it this way. It said that Paul wants us to think about ourselves, he wants us to think about the body, and he wants us to think about our spiritual gifts, and that is where most people go with these verses. I don't like to be out on a limb without a lot of people around me for support, but I have to tell you what I really believe. I believe we miss it when we break this passage into 3 sections. Verses 4 and 5, and 6-8 are telling us how to have a right estimation about ourselves. Verses 4 and 5, and 6-8 are telling what the measure of faith is that God has assigned. Paul tell us in 1st Corinthians 6-12 what he believed when it comes to the body of Christ and the spiritual gifts in the Church. He believed that there was one Spirit, yet a variety of gifts. He believed that there was one Lord Jesus, but a variety of ministries. He also believed that there was one God, but a variety of results, a variety of energizing. This means that in the body of Christ there is going to be a unity, yet there is going to be a diversity. In the body of Christ, there is going to be a unity that the Holy Spirit produces, but there is going to be a diversity of gifts. When you begin to look at those varieties of gifts, there's going to be a diversity of ministries because of Jesus Christ. When you look at the diversity of the gifts and ministries, you will find that there are people with the same gift in the same ministry, but there is also a diversity of energizing, there is a diversity of enabling, and even that is attributed and assigned by God. Do you understand that? There is a standard of faith that God has assigned, and God has determined the potential of Hardin Baptist Church! God has determined your potential as a believer, and that's what you measure yourself against.

- **One of Many**

Is your place in the body of Christ fulfilling the assignment God has given you because He is enabled you to be the person He desires you to be? Wow...So, what does that mean? How do I come to my sense of worth? How do I have a right estimate of who I am? You must first say to yourself and believe that you are one of many. "I am one of many." Now what you are saying is that you are not the whole; you are a part of the whole. If that whole just happens to have 1500 parts, then you are one of 1500. That kind of deflates your ego a little bit, doesn't it? That means you better get over yourself really quick. You are just a part.

I been tracking the Super Bowl a little bit. I'm pulling for the Packers, (not that it matters) but I've been frustrated the last few days because it seems like the super bowl is being played between Rodgers and Roethlisberger. They are going to do a whole live interview of those two guys before the Super Bowl is played tonight. I didn't think it was about Rodgers versus Roethlisberger at all. I thought it was the Packers versus the Steelers. As a matter of fact, I'd like for somebody to take the offensive line away from Rodgers and just see how good he really is when that defensive line came at him. Roethlisberger's supposed to be able to scramble; yeah, take away his offensive line and see how fast he can scramble. He'd be kneeling down for safety after a couple of plays. Take the running backs away from those guys, take the receivers away from those guys...We have a tendency to over inflate people because we have a tendency to magnify one part over another part.

- **Based on the Whole**

That isn't what Paul is doing here. Paul is telling you to think about this; *I am one of many*. Some of you are thinking that would make you deflate your self-worth? No...You see, you have to understand that a part has its worth based on its working connection to the parts around it. As the parts around it do their part, staying connected, it contributes to the worth of the whole; it makes it better. So when you ask, "What am I worth," you do not see yourself in relationship to yourself, you see yourself in relationship to the body of Christ.

I want to warn you about a problem that we have today. It is the same problem as 500 years ago, except it has manifested differently than it did then. Five hundred years ago, they worried about the rise of institutions and government in the Church, and the abuse of that. They worried about the rise of the clergy over the laity, but then they righted that and got the clergy on an equal plain with the laity. But we have another problem in the Church that has happened in the last 50 years. We have a problem in religion that has been documented. There are studies being done at this very moment, books have already been written, and essays have been published from sociology about what's going on in religion and the Church and in America. It is called the rise of radical

individualism. You know many people who claim to be Christians, but are not affiliated actively with a local church. We are living in a day in which you can get up in the morning and turn in to Charles Stanley, or John MacArthur, or John Piper. You can have these guys brought right into your computer or iPod. You can take them right along with you every day, Adrian Rogers is dead, but he is still preaching today! You have as many choices of religious books as any other books in a book store, which makes it easy to believe that you can do this by yourself. Listen, if you keep this passage in context, your worth as a Christian is in relation to your involvement in the Church. Period. You may try to convince yourself and others that you can do without it, but you are going to be in trouble when you stand before God on the Day of Judgment. Your worth is in direct relation to realizing that you are a part of something bigger than yourself. You are a part of the whole, and that whole is the body of Christ.

When you begin to hyper think about yourself, you are going to believe that you are right and everybody ought to be like you; a part. So if you are passionate about winning people to Christ, that's what you think everybody will do. You will think everybody in church is going to win people to Christ. If you are dedicated to praying, you believe everybody is going to pray like you pray. If you are dedicated to teaching and studying, that is what you believe everybody ought to do. Everybody ought to do what you are doing. The next thing you know you begin to look at yourself forget you are just a part. You begin to measure yourself according to other people, and you begin to put other people down, deflate them and inflate you because they aren't like you. The next thing you know, you are looking for somewhere else to go. Can I tell you why you are looking for somewhere else to go? If you are one of 1500, and you split that pie into 1500 pieces and put it on 1500 different plates, you can feel really insignificant. You can really feel like you don't count, like you don't have an influence, so you start looking for somewhere else to go. If you feel like you are insignificant in a church of 1500, you are going down to a church of a 100. Now, it's not about the size of the church, but what is going on in your mind, because you are beginning to believe your influence is in making other people like you. I can't tell you how many have left their church because their church didn't have the passion they had. It wasn't about doctrine; it was about passion. If you are into church missions, you are going to find one that is and you could care less about local ministry.

You could care less about unwed mothers, or families who just lost loved ones and are dealing with grief. You are a part and you want everybody to be like you because you are thinking only about you. You have a hyper view of yourself. You think you are the Church instead a part of the whole, which is the Church. I am a part of a whole. It's not about me; it's about the whole. But because it's about the whole, it is about me, but it's in that order. It's about me being a part and doing my part, so the whole can be who God ordained us to be.

- **Working Together**

Have you noticed the wisdom of God? The body is a unity, yet it's diverse. Because the body is a unity and it's diverse, and we know that, we make statements about people. We'll say things like, "Wow, he is athletic"! Well, what does that mean? That doesn't mean they love sports; that means their body really excels when it comes to sports. We talk about people being coordinated. The opposite of being coordinated is clumsy. I'm not going to ask you how many of you are coordinated and how many of you are clumsy, but boy, if you are one of those clumsy people, I feel for you because you are going to live life differently than those of us who are coordinated...I mean you just can't get your body to do what it's supposed to do, and I wish I could help you. I love it when my body works together! But for my body to work together, it has to understand the importance of all the other parts. You see, when you over value yourself, you will believe everybody is supposed to be like you. When you think right about yourself and have the right estimate, you will think everyone should be like Christ, and not like you. When you have the right estimate about you and your relationship to the body of Christ, you desire for everyone to be like Christ! But when everyone is like Christ, they won't be like you because God has designed a body, not a part.

Let me give you a few examples. Have you noticed how the foot and the hands are kind of alike? I mean they both have ten other things connected to them. Each foot (if you are normal) has five toes, and five times two is ten. Each hand has five fingers, and five times two is ten. But there is a dissimilarity. God intended for the feet for mobility and the hands for do-ability, and while they are similar, they are not similar. The sole of your feet is longer than your toes. The sole of your feet is

longer than your toes because you were made to move, you were made to get the body somewhere. But look at the hands; fingers are normally in proportion to the palm because it's the hands that grab ahold; it's the hands that do what we're supposed to do when we get there. Now, you've done this, but you don't want to talk about it because you are too sophisticated to talk about it in public, but there have been times when you were in a handicapped position where you could not use your hands to reach what you wanted to reach, so you took your socks and shoes off and stretched your leg out as far as you could and used your big toe and your next toe to grab something and tried to get it where you wanted it! Come on, you've done it, right? Nobody looked at that and said, "Wow, they're athletic!" Nobody looked at you and said, "Wow, you are really coordinated!" People looked at you and said, "What in the world are you doing?"

Our heifers are calving, and because they sometimes have problems, for the last few nights we would get up twice in the night to check on them. God really spoke to me this week as I was out checking for heifers who are calving. I've got a flashlight in my hand and I got to a heifer with a calf and I need to help her, but I have this flashlight in my hand. Have you ever tried to help a heifer with one hand? That's tough. Praise the Lord for those caps that have a light on the cap. They have a button you push...I didn't have one of those; I had a flashlight in my hand. That would be like God putting your eyes on the end of your fingers. You have to have your fingers to get to where you are going, and when you get to where you are going, you have to try to do what you are supposed to do with your eyes on the end of your fingers. You just couldn't do much when you get there; you are handicapped. Imagine if God had put the eyes on the end of our big toe. When I was outside the other night, it was 10° F at 2:00 in the morning. Boy, I would have been in trouble if God had put my eyes on my toes, because I would have to make a decision; do I put my socks and boots on? Well if I do that, I can't see where I'm going or I risk freezing to death. It is amazing how God designed the body! Aren't you glad God made the parts the way He made them? Do you get it? We are the body, and God has given us each a measure of faith. He assigned you a place in the body and He has given you a grace gift. According to the gift that we've been given by grace, we are to use them.

Use Your Gift for the Body of Christ

The word, "*gift*", in verse 6 is the Greek word from which we get our English word, ***charismatic***. Yes, we are a charismatic body. It means to be grace gifted; it means the Church has a gift. Each member in the Church has a gift and the reason the Church member has a gift is not because of the natural talents and ability of the saint. It is because God and His grace, at the moment of your new birth experience, gave you a super natural gift according to the Holy Spirit of God. He knew He was going to bring you to the body of Christ at Hardin, and He knew this body needed you! And so that you could have a sense of worth in this body, He has given you the gift. The ***charismata*** you need to help this body be who God wants us to be...wow.

I am a part, but I'm a unique part. I am a one of a kind, no other one like me, original masterpiece of God. The reason is because God loved His body. Will you do your part, as a part, in the body of Christ and reveal to yourself and the world around you your worth?