

Lesson 25 – 12:1-8

As a Gentile audience reads Romans, chapter 11 becomes poignant in the realization that we are granted opportunities according to God's sovereign providence in hardening the Jews. We must maintain a genuinely humble spirit knowing that God has made allowances for us when He didn't have to. As a result, we may echo Paul's praise, "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen." – Rom. 11:33 & 36

Paul's admonitions according to mercy – 1-2

Three vital imperatives spring from Paul's address to the Gentiles about humility:

Imperative #1 – "Present your bodies" – Your vessel of life must be presented

In what fashion? Or, how? – "As a living sacrifice" – not slain, but living

In what condition? Or, how? – "Holy and acceptable to God"

For what purpose? Or, why? – It is "your spiritual worship." – your logical form of exalting God

Imperative #2 – "Do not be conformed to this world" – Do not mold to the will of the world

Imperative #3 – "Be transformed" – Change yourself

By what means? Or, how? – "by the renewal of your mind" – by mental renovation

* Note * Just as home renovation takes labor and time, so does renovation of the mind.

For what purpose? Or, why? – to "discern the will of God"

For the will of God is: 1)good, 2)acceptable, and 3)perfect.

Paul's admonitions according to grace – 3-8

This pericope has one double imperative, with an extensive rationale.

Double imperative – "do not think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment" – self evaluation mustn't be with haughtiness, but with a control over any emotional impairment.

On what basis? Or, why? – "We... are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."

* There are many members, each functioning according to their purpose, but uniquely.

These are gifts given by God's grace, to be used generously in grace.

1. Prophecy – that extra biblical word, derived from God, given to mankind. This gift was to be used, "in proportion to our faith." Because order and purpose are vital in worship, prophecy was to be done one at a time, with mutual submission. This probably an exercise of faith proportions.
2. Service – that ministry that meets the needs of people, whether spiritual, or physical. "According to faith" here may mean that not everyone with the gift of service exercises their gift the same way.
3. Teaching – the competent communication of God's Word to any audience. Here again, not every teacher may be competent in all doctrines or Scriptures.
4. Exhortation – an innate ability to encourage through various means.
5. Contribution – this gift is based in a heart of generosity, which Paul encourages.
6. Leadership – in leadership one is responsible for a) showing the way forward, b) taking care of those following, and c) devoting oneself to the task. This is to be done with zeal, or enthusiasm.
7. Showing mercy – withholding just punishment or recourse from those who are problematic, hurtful, or damaging. This gift is to be meted out with cheer, happiness, or joy.