

# Adult Bible Discovery- August 30, 2020

## For Starters:

*“Mercy is the only avenue of hope for people who have no merit—and disobedient people obviously have no merit.” – Armin J. Panning; The Peoples Bible Commentary; Romans p.199*

*Do you agree with the above statement in regards to your understanding of mercy as Paul has explained it in the book of Romans?*

By God’s holy law, Jews and Gentiles have both been convicted of disobedience (See Romans 3:23). But a guilty verdict has been handed down for a most gracious purpose. Paul says, *“God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all”* (Romans 11: 32). Such inclusiveness does not mean that all people will actually accept Christ and his merit as their hope of salvation, even though God desires that outcome (see 1 Timothy 2:3-4). Paul is not preaching universalism, as though all people will actually be saved whether they accept Christ or not. Paul is rather saying that God’s good and gracious intent, his mercy, extends to all in spite of their disobedience.

On the backdrop of that great truth, one could summarize Paul’s line of argument in Chapters 9 to 11 as follows: Since everything comes by God’s mercy to those who accept Christ and his merit, believing Gentiles have no basis therefore on which to boast of their favorable circumstances, and believing Jews on the other hand, have no need to despair, as bleak as their current situation may appear.

God’s mercy is in charge! The realization of that great truth can draw but one response: a doxology of praise.

## Read Romans 11:33-36

God’s plan in a mystery in the sense that we would never have been able to plan or devise anything like it. And even after God in his infinite wisdom devised it, we would never have been able to figure it out if he had not graciously revealed it to us. And even after he revealed it to us, we would never have been able to believe and accept it had he not sent his Holy Spirit into our hearts to work that faith. God’s ways far transcend our puny capabilities.

Reflecting the thinking of Isaiah (40:130 and Job (41:11), Paul poses three rhetorical questions, each of which leads us to acknowledge that absolutely no one gave God any help with devising the marvelous plan of salvation where mercy predominates. Hence there is but one possible reaction, and that is to give all glory to the triune God.

Beginning with chapter 12, Paul picks up a somewhat different emphasis in his letter. There are some who tent to divide all of Paul’s letter into two parts, a “doctrinal” section followed by a “practical” section. These people would say that chapter 12 starts the second major part of his letter, the practical portion dealing with sanctification, or Christian living.

## Read Romans 12:1-2

Paul now urges his readers to action. This action is not based on merit or worthiness but upon mercy. He says, “in view of God’s mercy...” What comes next can only be understood by what has come before. It is interesting to note that Paul uses the plural form for mercy here. He is not referring to a singular event, but the entire body of the letter up to this point and he urges three things to occur:

- We are to offer bodily dedication
- We are to avoid worldly contamination
- We will experience Godly transformation

For more information on the above points, see Pastor Seth's Sermon on this text. It can be found in the following places:

Video: <https://vimeo.com/449881592>

Audio: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/august-23-romans-11-33-12-8-pastor-seth-moorman/id1508490372?i=1000488939899>

Text: <https://www.blogger.com/blog/post/edit/11190775/7222837280593803087>

### **Read Romans 12:3-5**

In keeping with the "grace," or gift, of the public ministry given to Paul, he now shares a useful piece of advice with his readers. Negatively he says, "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought." Then turning that into a positive, he says, "Think of yourselves with sober judgement, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you."

The second half of that positive response poses some difficulty. Scripture nowhere speaks of saving faith as being given in different measures to different people. Saving faith saves! One person is not more saved than then next by virtue of having received more faith.

There is a translation issue we need to address in order to gain understanding. The NIV and other translations that use a rendering such as "the measure of faith" convey the idea that faith is being measured. The original language, however allows the words "of faith" to be understood as a possessive: *faith's measure* or *the measure that faith uses*. With that latter understanding, Paul's twofold advice would then read as follows:

***Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure, or standard, that your God-given faith uses.***

What standard, or measure, does faith use to assign proper worth and value to the individual Christian's role? Paul suggests that a Christian's role in the church is analogous to the role individual parts or members play in the human body. That is the harmonious relationship that exists among Christians when each one uses an individual God-given gift or talent for the common good.

### **Read Romans 12:6-8**

Paul now enumerates seven gifts. He could have made his point listing fewer than seven. He no doubt could have extended the list beyond seven, had he wanted to. Paul's point is simply this: Don't think too highly of yourself; on the other hand, don't disparage or neglect the gifts God has given you. Rather, employing sound judgment, faithfully use the various gifts God has given you for the common good of the Kingdom.

Questions to ponder:

- *What gifts have you been given?*
- *In view of God's mercy, how can you use those gifts for the common good of the Kingdom?*
- *Knowing that a body relies on all the organs working in harmony with one another, what does that mean for the members of the body of Christ as they use their God-given gifts to be a living sacrifice?*

Prayer:

*Thank you, God for bringing me into the Body of Christ and for the gifts You give to those who have served me in many and various ways. Enlighten me with Your gifts, and empower me to be a living sacrifice, that I may humbly use my gifts to serve others. Amen.*