

1. **Introduction:** In 12:3 Paul said, believers should *“think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.”* Some commentators consider “measure of faith” to refer to the faith in Jesus Christ that brings salvation. But that faith must be possessed by every believer in the same sufficient measure. If that is so, what does Paul mean? I believe he is speaking of the faith necessary to properly use spiritual gifts. That faith is part of what I call “sustaining faith” or “faith for living.”

2. **Some Different Ways “Faith” is Used in Scripture:** Scripture uses “faith” in both a broad way and in more specialized ways. The broad or general meaning of “faith” is “trusting God.” “Faith as trust in God” has important sub-categories.
 - “Saving faith” or “faith unto salvation” is that faith given by God which enables a person to believe in Jesus Christ and His gospel. It is the faith required to receive salvation.
 - Saving faith is the God-given key opening the door to salvation. Saving faith endures eternally and is rewarded by justification, adoption into God’s family, and receiving the indwelling Holy Spirit.
 - Every believer has the same sufficient measure of saving faith.
 - The gift of saving faith is entirely God’s action. Those receiving the gift are passive. But there is also faith in which believers are to be active not passive. I call that “faith for living” or “sustaining faith.”
 - “Faith for living” keeps a believer’s life focused on God, enabling them to move forward in life and enabling subsidiary trust in people, ideas, and things.
 - Such faith is necessary to life because all actions must be taken before knowing the outcome of that action. Faith that God is in control keeps believers doing what needs to be done.
 - Nonbelievers also must have faith that their actions will produce the desired results. Their faith is in themselves, or society, or something else.
 - Having received the gift of “saving faith,” believers are ready to live “in Christ” for Christ through God enabling their “faith for living.” Believers are to be active in exercising “faith for living.”

- “Faith for living” or trusting God in daily life, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, enables a believer to face each day seeking to love God, love neighbor as self, strive to be trained in godliness as they use the gifts God has given.
- Every person has a unique “faith for living,” one whose exercise uses their capabilities and gifts. As a believer lives in faith, they grow in experience and discernment to live as God intends them to live.
- Discernment is a vital gift bestowed by the Holy Spirit. Discernment enables sorting the wheat from the chaff, enables making right choices to navigate through the sea of ideas and to choose the right approach to do God’s work.
- Prayer for discernment should be a priority for every believer. Without discernment, it is far too easy to fall into the trap of flailing around, staying very busy, but accomplishing little that is important to God.
- Each spiritual gift carries the responsibility and accountability to productively use that gift.
- When the Holy Spirit gives Spiritual Gifts, He matches the gifts He gives to the character, personality, talents, and other particular abilities God has given.
- Believers are to think soberly about themselves. A part of thinking “soberly about self” is to utilize the gifts and abilities God has given and not spend time yearning for different and perhaps what we think of as higher gifts.
- God graciously made Paul an Apostle and gave him the “faith for living” needed to do an Apostle’s work in the face of personal hardship, frequent rejection of his message, and constant threats of arrest.
- Two subcategories of trusting God, then, are “saving faith” and “sustaining faith” which may also be called “faith for living.”
- Every believer’s attitude toward self should be “humility,” but their attitude toward others should be love. Paul next writes about love.

3. **Romans 12:9-16**: *“Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. ¹⁴ Bless those who*

persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly Never be wise in your own sight.”

- Paul says there should be mutual love, sympathy, and honor within the family of God, loving one another with brotherly affection (9-13).
- There should be appropriate love and forgiveness for non-believers (14).
- Let love be genuine (without hypocrisy). Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good (that is, exercise discernment) (9).
- Regard other believers as true members of the family of God. Ephesians 5:21 says be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.
- Show mutual honor as well as mutual affection. (10).
- Be fervent in what you do for the Lord (11).
- Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer (12).
- Contribute to the needs of saints, show hospitality, and be generous (13).
- Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them (14).
- Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep (15).
- Live in harmony (agreement) with one another, don't become proud, and don't be conceited or wise in your own sight (16). See also Philippians 2:2-5.
- In verses 17-21 Paul generalizes the obligation to love by extending it to our enemies, even those who persecute believers and wish them ill.

4. **Romans 12:17-21**: *“Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’ ²⁰ To the contrary, ‘if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.’ ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”*

- As a believer is transformed through the renewing of their mind, all their relationships will be transformed.
- Believers having consecrated themselves to God, are to love one another, not allow evil to overcome them, and to deal rightly with enemies.

- Believers must not repay anyone evil for evil, take revenge, or curse them.
- Retribution is often attractive to people of all ages. But Christians are forbidden to retaliate or seek revenge. Vengeance belongs to the Lord.
- In so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all
- Rather than seeking revenge, if your enemy has problems, help him. Paul says, ***“if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.”***
- Because of the grace shown us when we were still enemies of God, we should strive to overcome evil with good, dealing graciously with our enemies.
- ***“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”*** In other words, when possible, the best way to be rid of an enemy is to turn them into friends.

5. **Romans 13:1**: ***“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.”***

- In Chapter 13, Paul continues to write about proper relationships. The next relationship he considers is that of believers to civil authority.
- God is the sovereign source of all authority. Satan and his minions are constrained by God. Because of the Fall, Satan, at present has the power of death over humanity, but he will lose that power when Christ comes again.
- God is Lord of all things. God has delegated authority to civil government but with limitations. There are boundaries and constraints.
- When Paul describes a believer’s right relationship with civil authorities, he assumes the civil government acts within the boundaries and constraints intended by God. That of course is not always the case.
- Paul does not discuss how a believer is to react when a civil government violates the limitations He imposes on delegated power.
- Obviously, that is an important issue, which if misunderstood, will lead to Paul’s instructions being misinterpreted.
- A complete picture of right authority and its limitations and constraints is needed. Other Scripture helps develop that picture.

- God’s exercises sovereignty over the church through His written Word and duly appointed leaders.
 - God’s sovereignty over civil government is exercised through civil leaders.
 - Every ruler everywhere at all times in history was either put into their exalted position by God or permitted to hold their position for His own reasons..
 - That political power is in the hand of God is shown in Scripture passages like ones dealing with Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, and Cyrus.
 - Because all civil authority flows from God’s sovereign authority, Paul says everyone should be subject to civil governing authorities.
 - Civil government is necessary to promote good and punish evil, protecting citizens and allowing them to prosper.
 - Our Lord Jesus was born into the world at a time when the Roman Empire was characterized by relatively good transportation, peace, tolerance of religious diversity, and prosperity.
 - In other words, at the time, the government of Rome was pretty good and it was relatively safe and fast to move around the Empire.
 - As Paul wrote this letter, the Empire’s situation was still about the same, but Emperor Nero soon would make things dramatically worse for believers.
 - The principle of separation of the functions of church and state is found throughout Scripture, but eliminating God from civil considerations is not.
 - In OT times, God would not allow an individual to hold both religious and secular power. Priests came from the Tribe of Levi. Kings from Judah.
 - 1Samuel 13:8-14 says that Saul, the King, tiring of waiting for Samuel, made a sacrifice that should only be made by a priest. That was against God’s rule.
 - As a consequence, Saul’s rule as King was cut short. Only in Christ Jesus did the offices of priest and king be lawfully combined.
6. **Constraints on Civil Authority:** In Matthew 22:21, Jesus clearly distinguishes between that which is due God and Caesar. *“Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”*
- There are right and wrong uses of power. Authorities are accountable to God for the way they use their delegated power.

- Civil government is authorized by God to use its delegated power to promote and reward good and to punish and restrain evil.
- Believers are to be obedient to civil authorities' rightful authority. When civil authorities exceed their rightful authority, what is a believer to do.
- If civil obedience is demanded to things inconsistent with God's requirements, believers must obey God.
- The division between that which is rightly Caesar's and that which is God's can be seen in Jesus' trial before Pilate.
- Jesus was asked if He knew Pilate had authority to either free or crucify Him.
- In John 19:11, ***“Jesus answered him, ‘You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.’”***
- Jesus agrees Pilate has true authority over Him, authority delegated by God which he, Pilate, is accountable for using properly.
- Pilate commits sin when he agrees to crucify a man he knows is innocent. But Jesus says Jewish leadership is guilty of a greater sin than Pilate. Why?
- Because the Jewish leaders were conniving to kill Jesus, who was fulfilling before their eyes, prophecies made in Scripture about Messiah which they professed to believe.
- Further, they sinned against their consciences as Pilate discerned Matthew 27:17-18, ***“So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, ‘Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?’¹⁸ For he (Pilate) knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up.”***
- Pilate's obvious sin was condemning a man he knew to be innocent. Why did he do this when he had declared Jesus innocent and even tried to release Him?
- Some insight comes from John's description of the last portion of Jesus' trial after the Jews declared that everyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar.
- John 19:12, ***“From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, ‘If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar.’”***
- Being Caesar's friend was something Pilate strongly needed.

- Having attempted to have Jesus freed by appealing to the crowd, Pilate now gave in, condemning Jesus to be crucified in hope of pleasing Caesar.
- Pilate misused his power and is accountable to God for condemning a man he knew to be innocent.
- However, his cowardly act in giving up Jesus to be crucified did him no good.
- A few years later, the proconsul of Syria removed Pilate from office and banished him to France where he died.
- Jesus did not contest Pilates’s use of his legitimate authority even though it resulted in His death. What Jesus did do was speak the truth reminding Pilate he was sinning and one day would have to answer for his sin.
- Although, the church rightly does not rule the state, believers have the duty to speak out against sins of civil authorities an to point out their accountability to God who delegates authority to them.

7. **Romans 13:2-4a**: *“Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴ for he is God’s servant for your good.”*

- Paul’s reference is again to legitimate civil authority. If civil authorities claim authority that is not legitimate, what is a believer to do?
- Believers need civil authority. Left to themselves, believers would be like Judges 21:25, *“In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes”*.
- Civil authority is God’s wise provision to avoid anarchy among fallen humanity. Paul says that if a believer disobeys legitimate civil authority they are at the same time disobeying God.
- God will punish that disobedience. So will the civil authorities.
- These things raise important questions. Suppose civil government tyrannically and obviously violates God’s intended legitimate functions. What then?
- In Matthew 22:21b Jesus said, *“render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”*

- His answer first declares civil authority legitimate even in the unpopular matter of paying taxes, but the second part of His answer imposes limits.
- Though God delegates legitimate authority to civil government, His sovereign authority remains and must be obeyed by believers though it means disobeying other authorities.
- So believers are required to be obedient to both civil authority and God's authority. Where conflict between the two occurs, they must obey God.
- What then are some situations in which believers must disobey civil authority? The most obvious is preaching the gospel.
- Independent of what civil authority says, believers have a God-given duty to preach the gospel (Matthew 28:19).
- We see this in Acts 4 and 5 where the leaders of the people commanded the apostles to keep silent because of the stir they had already created.
- In Acts 4:19-20 Peter and John that the leaders should judge for themselves whether it was right in God's sight to obey the leaders rather than God.
- The apostles were threatened, released, arrested again and yet continued to preach and teach.
- Another obvious situation is one in which believers are commanded to disobey God's clear moral commands.
- No human government has a legitimate right to command believers to engage in immoral or non-Christian acts.

8. **Separation of Church and State:** The underlying principle for separation of state and religious power is found in Scripture. On the other hand, there is no principle found anywhere in Scripture for excluding God and His moral principles from the function of civil government.

- Israel's government was intended to function under God's moral principles.
- Governments which deny or ignore God, no matter how they begin, inevitably become evil and Israel was no exception.
- When Israel's civil government failed to follow God's moral principles, Israel drifted away from God and got into trouble.

- At the time of Christ, Rome occupied Israel. The Jewish ruling authority for civil and religious matters was the Sanhedrin, but it was subordinate to Rome. For example, the Sanhedrin had no authority to execute anyone.
- Again, in Israel God required religious and civil functions to be separate. This was done by having priests come from the tribe of Levi and kings from the tribe of Judah. No person could be both priest and king (except for Christ).
- Despite this wise example, believers at various times have tried at least four types of models of church/state interaction: (1) state controls the church.
- (2) church controls the state.
- (3) having the state favor the church and church accommodate the state.
- (4) a partnership in which state and church constructively cooperate, each having its own sphere of dominance.
- Given that Israel was an occupied country under Roman control as Paul was writing, his position on obeying civil authority is somewhat surprising since there were no Christian civil authorities (global, regional, or local) – none!
- The civil authorities he dealt with were Roman, and the religious authorities were Jewish. Both were unfriendly and at times hostile to the church.
- The fourth category of church and state relations best describes Paul's teaching in Chapter 13 (as well as intentions of America's founding fathers).
- Today, in the United States, there are strong attempts to eliminate every trace of the Christian God from government.

9. **What is Next:** More on civil government, Romans 13:3-7.