

97-03-16a

So as we continue our worship this morning, turn with me for our Scripture reading to 2 Corinthians chapter 8. 2 Corinthians chapter 8. Our study in Romans has brought us to the applications section. And we're going to see some things this morning that are echoed and reflected here in 2 Corinthians chapter 8. Beginning in verse 7. Paul says, But as you abound in everything, in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us, see that you abound in this grace also. And this is a ministry to the saints.

There's an opportunity to be of benefit to believers in another city. And Paul has presented this opportunity to them and he's asking them to abound in this grace also. He says, I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. And in this I give advice. It is to your advantage not only to be doing what you began and were desiring to do a year ago, but now you also must complete the doing of it.

That as there was a readiness to desire it, so now also there may be a completion out of what you have. For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have. For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, and their abundance also may supply your lack, that there may be equality.

As it is written, he who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack. But thanks be to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus. For he not only accepted the exhortation, but being more diligent, he went to you of his own accord.

And we have sent with him the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches. Not only that, but was also chosen by the churches to travel with us with this gift, which is administered by us to the glory of the Lord himself, and to show your ready mind, avoiding this, that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us, providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. What Paul is talking about here is how to execute, how to perform in a way that pleases God and that glorifies God when an opportunity comes up.

And that's really what his exhortation is in Romans chapter 12. Knowing what God has done, knowing the mercies of God and the opportunities that He's given us in this age, here now is a concrete opportunity to do. This is where the rubber meets the road.

Here's an opportunity. They have the means, they have the motive, they have the opportunity, and Paul is saying you had a willing mind, this is coming from the right sources, here's how to do it. And that's after all the question that we want to answer for ourselves as we continue through

the letter to the Romans, isn't it? We've gone through in some detail his doctrinal argument that began in Romans 1.16 and has continued all the way forward through chapter 11.

And he says, I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present yourselves a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And he goes on to urge us to not be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, so that we may detect, perceive, comprehend and grab onto what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. So we're into the practical phase here.

How does this happen tomorrow when we go back to work or we go through the tasks of the day, whatever they may be? This sounds fine and we can emotionally think what a wonderful thing. Yes, I want to be a living sacrifice. I want to be transformed and so on.

But is transformation going to take place? You can see here that the believers in Corinth latched onto that same idea. Paul presented this truth to them about the Christian life. And he said, you need to abandon your former ways of thinking, your former priorities and live in a new way and start to operate in the realm of faith and hope and love.

So he's reminding them, he says, remember when we talked about this a year ago and you had a willing heart, a willing mind? Well, here's your chance. Now the circumstances have been arranged by God and here's an opportunity to exercise this faith and this truth that's in your soul. And he says, he reminds them of what it takes in terms of faith.

He says, God has arranged things this way, that when you've got a surplus, you give and those who have a lack have their need filled. There may be a time in the future when you have a lack and some believer will be able to fill that. And it's not just in financial things but in any area of life.

And it's one of the reasons that we are part of a body and it's one of the principles we're going to see this morning. So this is a helpful passage to have for a Scripture reading and we pray that God will add His blessing to the reading and the hearing of it this morning. But let's turn now to our central passage, which is Romans chapter 12, where we resume this morning in verse 3. Paul has given that great turning point in Romans 12.1. He is urging, calling us to this practical application.

And after giving those first two verses that I just quoted, he goes on to say in verse 3, Now, there's an interesting concept. God has dealt out a portion of faith to each believer. How does that affect our responsibility? What exactly does that mean? Do I only have as much faith as God has measured out to me? Think soberly as God has dealt to each one of us.

For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we being many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them. If prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith.

Our ministry, let us use it in our ministering. He who teaches, in teaching. He who exhorts, in exhortation.

He who gives, with liberality. He who leads, with diligence. He who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

There are three or four key words and phrases in this passage that we want to attempt to clarify this morning so that we can understand this. Because on a read-through, there are a number of things that at least in my mind kind of stick out as question marks. God is portioning out a measure of faith and then Paul says, prophesy in proportion to your faith.

Well, if God's given me four thimblefuls full of faith, then I just prophesy according to my four thimblefuls or whatever. So we want to try to get a grip on this. The first thing to notice here is that there is an underlying structure to the content that Paul presents in this section.

Notice the very first thing he says. He says, for I say through the grace given to me. Paul is an apostle.

Paul has that spiritual gift. And in that spiritual gift, we find many of the other spiritual gifts included. He has the gift of exhortation.

He has the gift of teaching. He has the gift of pastoring. He has the gift of encouragement.

He has the gift of helps. He has many of the things that later on will be divided out to individual believers comprehended in that super gift of apostle. But even his gift has been measured out to him by God.

He said, I am ministering. I am beseeching you. I am talking to you through the grace that has been given to me.

And so this is Paul fulfilling his responsibility. How many times have we seen in our different epistles of Paul him say that he is an apostle by the grace of God, that he's ministering the gospel of the grace of God, that he lives in and through and for the grace of God. That's what he's doing here.

And what he's saying is, I'm about to get close to a nerve here. I'm about to get close to a sensitive area because we're going to talk about our self-esteem. We're going to talk about how we rate ourselves as members of the body of Christ.

How we rate ourselves as people. What's our net worth as a human being? What do we think of ourselves? He says, I'm going to present some truth to you and this is coming to you via me from God. This is from the grace of God that has been given to me.

This is my function. I'm fulfilling my role of bringing this your way. So I say this through the grace

given to me.

You would think, you know, a lot of these passages you come to them and you think, you know, I could draw a line through that phrase through the grace of God which is given to me and this passage would still make perfect sense. And in a lot of cases it would. So why is that phrase there? There's a reason for it.

God doesn't waste words. So when Paul here says, I'm saying this through the grace which is given to me, this is something that we're going to find important in this passage and in fact it's a key to this section. So watch for this.

You'll probably be able to anticipate some of the points that are going to come out of this passage if you watch for that as we go. He says, I say through the grace given to me to everyone who is among you. And this is drawn out in the Greek.

He could have just said, to you all, in whom in, or something like that. But instead he's got four or five words in here. He's got the word that means to be, you who are, and a lot of times that's omitted in conversational Greek.

It's just implied or assumed. But it's there in this phrase. And he stretches it out and that creates emphasis.

He says, the grace of God is what's operating here. I'm saying this to you through God's grace and I'm saying it to each, in English we would say, to each and every one of you existing in this group. That's the emphasis that that little phrase has.

We look at everyone who is among you, but in the Greek it really sticks out like a little mountain in the middle of this sentence. He's saying, there isn't anybody in your group that I'm not talking to. Each and every one of you needs to pay attention.

If you think you're humble, if you know you've got problems, whatever your level of self-esteem or lack thereof is, this is addressed to you. And I am emphasizing it because Paul emphasizes it here. So all of us need to pay close attention to what he's about to say.

What is it that he's saying through the grace of God here? Don't think more highly than we ought to think. Don't think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. We say, well, my goodness, in our day and age it seems like the big problem is nobody has enough self-esteem.

We look around and people identify problems and they say, well, he's just got low self-esteem. That's why he's clamoring for attention. That's why he's committing criminal acts.

He gets attention because his self-esteem is low and he wants to be validated or he wants to be noticed or whatever it may be. And there was some deficit. We go into all these little rabbit trails of motivation and speculation on why somebody is operating in sin or in evil.

And frankly, the matter is that's our nature. And unrehabilitated, that's what we will do. And it doesn't matter how many people pay attention to you.

If you're pursuing the urges of our innate self, that's what we're going to do. But he says, I'm urging each and every one who is among you not to think more highly than he ought to think. The word for thinking here, the core word, and a couple of these have prefixes on it, is phroneo, P-H-R-O-N-E-O, phroneo.

And it has basically the same locus of meaning as our word to think. This is your mindset. How do you perceive? How do you estimate? What is it that you believe? And what is the operating facts in your mind? So he says, don't think more highly.

And this is hyperfroneo. Huper means over and above. We have hypo comes over into English as something that is over and above.

You're hyper, you're hyperactive. You're excessively active. It's too much.

It's over the activity that's normal. Hyperactive. U turns into Y when it comes over into English.

So this is hyperfroneo. This is hyperthinking. Thinking too high of oneself.

Then he ought to think. And the word for ought here is deo. It's from deo, D-E-O, which the noun form of this meant a bond or handcuffs.

The demoniac that was over in the region of Gerasa, Jesus and the disciples went over there and he was living among the graves. And many times people had bound him hand and foot, but he would shatter the shackles and wear off the bonds and so forth. Well, the word for bonds in that passage is deesis and it comes from deo.

So in Greek, it has a little more force than you ought to do this. You really ought to eat better. You really ought to get more rest.

You really ought to do this or that. Well, deo means you must. You're required.

You're bound to do this. There is a requirement. It's like a bond.

It's like being tied to something. And Paul tells the Thessalonians, I think it's in 1 Thessalonians 2 or 3, he says, you know how we lived among you and we taught you how you ought to live to refrain from idols and adultery and that sort of thing. Well, you really ought to refrain from these idols.

You really ought not to commit adultery. You must not. You're a believer.

You've been sanctified. You must live a different way. And we must have right thinking.

We're bound to it by our status in the body of Christ. I say to you not to think more highly. Each one of you ought to not think more highly than you ought to think, but to think soberly.

Now this is another form of froneo with a prefix, but this time it is sofroneo. S-O-P-H-R-O-N-E-O Sofroneo. Sophos is the word for wisdom.

We get sophomore. I don't know how that happened to sophomores because they're probably the most unwise of college students, but sophos means wisdom. And sofroneo is used for reasonable thinking, right thinking, wise thinking.

Again, thinking about the demoniac across the sea over in Mark. I think it's in chapter 7. The demoniac. When the people of the town came back out and they found him sitting, clothed, and in his right mind, the word for right mind is sofroneo.

He's reasonable. He's sensible. He's normal, which of course shocked the daylights out of them.

So you find this. Actually, that's Mark 5. We also find this in Titus 2.6. You remember we were in Titus on Friday night, and Paul is talking to Titus who's a pastor, and he's telling him what he ought to teach different categories of people in his congregation. So he tells Titus in 2.6, after telling them what the younger women and the older men and so forth ought to be doing, he says, likewise, exhort the young men to be, and then he uses the word from sofroneo, to think reasonably.

What's the biggest problem? It's almost a cliché anymore to talk about the problems with young people today. I mean, people have been talking about the problems with young people today ever since Adam turned over to Eve and said, look at that Seth. He's just running wild.

Look at that Cain. I can't keep a leash on him. These young people today.

And so, what do you teach them? If you have the opportunity to present truth to young people, what do you teach them? Well, Paul says teach them to be sofroneo types. To think reasonably. And this is the thing that is so unpredictable about our society today, isn't it? And as it probably has always been, but it's unreasonable.

I was thinking about this yesterday as I watched some children ride their bikes through my yard. When I was a child, culture was a little bit different. Training, I think, was a little more widespread for children.

And I would have not dreamed of entering someone else's yard. It was just holy ground. That's not my yard.

If a ball went over the fence into someone's yard, you had to do the awfulest thing. You had to go knock on their door and say, hi, my ball is in your yard. Can I please get it? And that kind of thing.

But now, it just seems like the earth is mine, and the fullness thereof. And you happen to be living on this piece of ground that I'm playing on. But there's a completely different mindset.

And so I was thinking, and these were junior high age kids riding these bikes through my yard. And I thought, you know, today you can go out and chastise someone. I mean, you ask them and that does no good.

And so you say, look, stay off of my yard. But if you aggravate someone, they'll get a burr under their saddle and decide that you have wronged them because you've denied them a privilege. And they'll come back and egg your house, paper your bushes.

They'll retaliate. And you have to take that into consideration anymore. If you talk to a strange child or to a young person, if they get ticked off, you don't know what they're going to do.

They'll come smash all the windows in your house or your car. Or they'll come along and just put big deep scratches in the paint of your car because you've gotten in their way. All they do is think about what they want.

And they think everybody else, you know, you see these people diving in and out of traffic. They think, well, the rest of us on the road are just pylons for them to avoid. And that, you know, what's the matter with these people? They have no sense of urgency.

I've often thought that myself. But, you know, then they just weave in and out of traffic. These young guys on motorcycles just whipping in and out and causing danger to themselves and others.

But what's the problem? They're not thinking sensibly. They're not thinking reasonably. They're not adjusted to the realities of life.

And many of them wind up cratering early in life and either getting incarcerated or damaging their health, losing a limb or an eye or getting involved in chemicals because they haven't been taught to think reasonably. And that's what Paul says here. Teach them to be sophroneo, to be sober, serious thinkers, to think in terms of wisdom.

And that's the word that he uses over here in Romans 12, verse 3. We shouldn't be thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. It's madness to overestimate yourself or your importance or to think that, you know, why is this happening to me? Someone has wronged me. I couldn't do what I wanted to do.

There's something wrong. It's just like the generation today that is just belligerent in a lot of cases. This is how they caricature at least, you know, Generation X. Or now they're already going past Generation X. I heard on the radio the other day, Dawson McAllister and some of these other people who deal with youngsters are now saying, well, the new generation is the, not the

colonials, the millennials.

They're the millennials because they're going to be the 2000 generation. And this is how they're just belligerent. They just have a chip on their shoulder and they don't even know why.

Well, this is why they're not thinking reasonably. They're only thinking about themselves and whether they're happy or not. And of course, that's a problem that all of us have.

So this is what we're urged to do. It says, think soberly. But this is to think reasonably.

Be like the man sitting clothed and in his right mind, thankful for what God has delivered him from and looking forward to what God is going to do. That man, if you recall in Mark 5, wanted to accompany Jesus and stay with Him. He was sensible.

He was reasonable. He understood where he had been and where he was and where he wanted to go. And Jesus gave him a specific mission.

He said, you don't need to accompany Me. Go to your family. Go to your kinsmen and your brethren and your townspeople and tell them what great things God has done for you.

And that was his particular function. But He says, I'm telling each one among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think reasonably. As God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

So now, are we somehow hemmed in by whatever measure of faith God has given us? Is that what Paul is saying here? And if not, what is he saying here? Because it sounds like, well, there's different measures of faith and some of us are going to be very faithful and be wonderful missionaries in Afghanistan and so forth, and others of us have just got measured out a little faith and we'll just trust God for the daily things of life. Well, when we take a closer look at this, it makes a little bit more sense. This word measure is *merizo*, M-E-R-I-Z-O or D-Z-O, depending on what you want to do with the Greek zeta there.

It's pronounced D-Z-O, M-E-R-I-D-Z-O. And this means to a lot. You have a big something and you divide it out and assign it to people.

You apportion it. You allot it. You divide it out.

You take a large thing and you give pieces of it to designated individuals. This word is used, for example, in 1 Corinthians 1.13. Remember when Paul is talking about... Some of you say, I am of Paul, I am of Paulus, I am of Barnabas. And he says in 1 Corinthians 1.13, is Christ divided? Are there little pieces of Christ? And Peter's got the best piece and Paul's got the best piece.

And by dividing up and by letting these schisms form and by saying, well, I'm in the Peter clique and I'm in the Paul clique and I'm in the Reverend so-and-so clique and the rest of you are not,

you're dividing Christ. You're splitting Him up and assigning different pieces of Him to different people. Well, if Christ is not divided, the people who minister Christ should not be divided either.

And we shouldn't say, well, my loyalty is to this one person. Christ is not divided. And Paul asks the question in a way that wants a negative answer.

Christ is not divided. Turn over a few pages in 1 Corinthians to chapter 7, verse 17. He's in the context here talking about believers married to unbelievers.

And this is not, as we have seen, talking about faith and salvation and the Gospel and so forth in context like this. This is not just talking about you're saved and they're not. This is talking about faithful versus faithless.

This is talking about trustors. I think almost we should go through and where we find believer and unbeliever, we should say trustor and non-trustor because it's a present tense. It's a present participle.

The one who is believing. The one who is not believing. The one who is trusting.

The one who is not trusting. The one who is operating in faith. The one who is not operating in faith.

And Paul says here, if the untrusting husband, the wife remains with him, he's sanctified by the wife. And the untrusting wife is sanctified by the husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.

And what this is talking about is how does God view the household? Does He view that household as one that He can bless or as one that He has to discipline? Well, when you've got one of each in the parents, what about the children? Well, God honors the household on the basis of the one faithful parent. And so that's a household that's blessed even though the other parent is faithless. And this can include no salvation in the traditional sense.

But it also includes where you have a believer who is rampantly uninterested in the things of God. And this can be the basis for marriages dissolving. Someone can be a believer, and because they are faithless, you should stick with them if you can, but Paul says if they want to depart, let them go.

And we've tried to nail down how can you possibly know if someone is a believer or not? When they were at the age of six, did they trust Christ? But now you can't tell. How do you know if you're allowed to divorce them or not? This is operational faith versus operational faithlessness. And I'll make a real shocking statement here and say that it is legitimate for a believer who's trying to pursue the plan of God.

If you find yourself married to someone who is opposed to that in every way, and a believer can

be worse than an unbeliever in terms of operation because you go, whatever you want to call it, reversionism or reverse process reversionism. It's almost as though you've swung as far away from God as you can get. And life can be hell on earth for someone who is really trying to please God.

And it is often possible to continue in a marriage, but there are times when you know that you're in a sack race with this person, and as long as your leg is tied to theirs, you can't make any progress in the plan of God. And when you find yourself in that situation, that is the basis for getting out. And that's what Paul is teaching here.

So he says, if the untrusting one, if the unbelieving one desires to depart, let them depart. A brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace. And that's the determining factor.

If you can maintain a marriage and have peace, that's one of the fruits of the Spirit, isn't it? Love, joy, and peace. If there is no peace, if just being in the same house breeds strife and conflict, you can't grow in that kind of situation. And people have to make that decision before the Lord about when it's time to separate.

We have the same criteria in the body of Christ. Someone can be a believer, and yet we, quote, unquote, excommunicate them. We separate.

We don't even eat with them under certain circumstances. We part company and have no fellowship with them because they're walking in darkness. And there's criteria for that, and a body has to know when to divide.

And believers have to know when to separate, and that includes marriage. And, of course, you can see in verse 16, another instance where Sozo isn't talking about salvation from the lake of fire. How do you know, O wife, whether you will deliver your husband? How do you know, O husband, whether you will deliver your wife? As long as you think there's hope that this person may wake up and may turn.

I had a situation like this where I was rooming with a believer who had just decided that Christianity was messed up, didn't want to have any part of it. But I continued to room with him because he would occasionally ask a question. I could tell he was wrestling with things in his soul, and eventually he got very interested in the things of God and started getting tapes from a good teaching pastor and has been listening to those daily ever since.

And you can be the means by which God will deliver someone, deliver a believer out of this present evil age if we have patience, if we have endurance, and if we forbear. But there's also a time when you can tell that that is just spitting into the wind and it's time to separate. But look at what he says in 717.

But as God has distributed to each one, and this is our word, *merizo*, as God has allotted or apportioned to each one, as the Lord has called each one, we just studied calling Friday night, so let him walk. God has measured out to us a set of circumstances. God has measured out to us people with whom we deal.

And he has called us to peace. He has called us to godliness. He has called us to righteousness by faith.

And that's the issue. That's the deciding factor. We have to stand before God and decide whether to stick and endure or whether to make a change.

And we have to look at, what has God allotted to me? What are my responsibilities? What are my priorities? This is the practical outworking of the truth that Paul has given us here in Romans in these 11 chapters. This is where we have to start putting it into practice and making application. What is really my goal? What does God have for me? If my goal is to please God and to fulfill His call, here are the circumstances and the people that God has allotted to me.

What are the decisions? What are the associations or the separations that are going to honor God and make that happen? And sometimes God has allotted us contact with a person who may or may not be a believer, but we have peace. We have a reasonably good fellowship going there and it's an opportunity. Who knows whether by maintaining that contact, you'll be the means by which God can channel grace and channel truth.

And that will be, who better than you, if this person ever does wake up, do you have that channel of communication? Do you have that contact and that open loving spirit that will attract them to you if they ever do develop an interest in the truth? We have to maintain that and nurture that. That's a part of love. That's a part of self-sacrifice.

We may have to endure wrongs. We may have to endure a lot of fertilizer coming our way from that source, but we look at things in the light of what God's plan and God's purpose is. And if there's peace, and if we can maintain and we can grow and it's not hindering us and keeping us from making any progress, we have to stick with that because God has measured that out to us.

Paul says, God has distributed to each one. The Lord has called each one. Each of us has a slightly different calling, don't we? Because each of us has slightly different circumstances, in some cases radically different circumstances.

But we have those apportioned to us and we have a calling in that. Was anyone called while being circumcised? He goes on and says, here's your circumstance. You're Jewish.

You're circumcised. Here you are. You're a Gentile.

You're uncircumcised. That's your allotment. That's your lot in life, we call it.

God has a calling for you in that. He says, your circumstances in verse 19, circumcision or uncircumcision, whatever your current people and things and details of life are, that's not important. What's important is keeping the commandments of God.

Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. If you were called while being a slave, then be a good slave. If you're called being a master, be a good master.

Make use of it. Turn it to advantage. Use it as an opportunity for growth.

But these things are allotted. They're apportioned out. And the interesting thing here is keep in mind that this idea of allotment, there are other ways he could have said this.

He could have said it's been given to you or you've received it as a thing. You've received it. But instead he says this is allotted.

And allotted always has the idea that there's a big something of which you've been given a piece. And in this life, each of us is filling a part of the whole. Our life and our circumstances are a part of the larger plan of God and it's an essential part.

Nobody else has our part. Nobody else has that calling and that allotment that we have. It's ours to stand or fall.

It may be if you want to think of it in terms of the issue that God has with the angels and the points that He's demonstrating to them about His character and His justice and what it means to live with Him as opposed to living apart from Him. Our life uniquely makes a point in that argument. And as we're going to see when we go through Romans Chapter 12, this is a big issue in how we view our lives and how we view ourselves as members of the body of Christ.

It's our allotment and it's unique to us. This word *merizo* is also used in Matthew Chapter 12, verse 25. You don't have to turn there because you're familiar with it.

Jesus said, a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. A house or a city that's divided against itself cannot stand. What do you have? You have an entire household and you split it.

You've got two parts. Either part by itself is not the whole thing. And half a house doesn't stand.

Half a kingdom doesn't stand. This word is used in 2 Corinthians 10, verse 13. If you're near there, you may want to turn to that.

2 Corinthians 10, verse 13. Paul again is talking about what God allots. He says, in 10-12, we will not dare class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves.

The problem in Corinth was there were people who did think of themselves more highly than they should think. And they commended themselves and they approved themselves and they approved each other. They had a mutual admiration society going there.

And Paul says, well, I won't dare to try to compete in that arena. I mean, their commendation is nothing I could ever meet or ever hope to approach. He's being a little bit sarcastic here, or tongue-in-cheek.

He says, I will not dare to class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. They measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves among themselves, ultimately are not wise. We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God has appointed for us.

And that word appointed is *marizo*. God has designated an area for us. God has designated an area for us.

And we're going to try to stay within that. It is a sphere or an area which especially includes you, Corinthians, Gentile believers, target audience for the Apostle Paul. I don't know where these people got their calling.

I don't know why they're commending themselves. Paul doesn't go into those details. But what Paul says is, God allotted responsibility for you to me, the Apostle Paul, and I will confine my concentration to the area that God has apportioned to me.

There's people to whom Peter ministers, and you're the people to whom I'm ministering. He says, I'm not overextending myself in verse 14, as though our authority did not extend to you, for it was to you that we came with the gospel of Christ. And this whole chapter talks about the contrast between thinking too highly, and Paul contrasts himself with those who have overestimated their importance, who have misunderstood their calling and their responsibility, and they're busy trying to get other people off the track.

But Paul says, God has apportioned you all to us. Probably one of the clearest examples of the use of this word to talk about apportion of a whole is over in Hebrews 7, verse 2. Remember when the author of Hebrews talks about Abraham, and he says, remember Melchizedek was the priest living in Salem, King of Salem. And Abraham, after he got the victory over the five kings from the cities of the plain, he got the booty and got the spoil, and he portioned out a tenth part to Melchizedek.

He tithed. He gave a tenth part to the priest. And the word that's used there in Hebrews 7 is *meridzo*.

Abraham had all of this spoil in a big area there. He took a tenth of it, allocated that to Melchizedek. Why did he do that? And of course, you can get into a whole discussion on tithing.

But what form of priesthood is in effect at this time in history? It's not the Levitical priesthood because Levi hasn't been born yet. Levi's going to be Abraham's great-grandson. It is the family

priesthood.

It's the priesthood of the senior living patriarch. And if you've done the comparison of genealogical information, you find that the oldest living patriarch in Abraham's line, the man who is still alive at this point, is Shem, son of Noah. And at this time when Abraham defeats the kings of the cities of the plain, Shem is still alive.

And I personally believe that Shem is Melchizedek. He is the king of Salem. And so Abraham goes to the family priest, Shem, and worships.

And a part of his worship is this idea of the tithe or the tenth part. And Melchizedek shares with him bread and wine. That's a whole fascinating thing.

I better not get off into that or we'll never finish our lesson. But Abraham divided a tenth part to Melchizedek. And it's a part of a whole.

Now why have we emphasized that part versus the whole so much? Go back to Romans chapter 12 and verse 3. God has measured out to each one a measure of faith. What does it mean to have a measure of faith? Well, I'll leave you hanging in suspense. It's time for our break.

When we come back, we'll see how that idea of a part of the whole applies in this verse. But let's pause here and take our break.