



Video:
Discussion with Yvette Marquez
and Dan Palm

Chaplain's Office
University Passage Resource

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Haughty or Humble
Romans 12:3

Paul the Apostle is a model of humility like Jesus Christ before him. He sees his teaching vocation as an outworking of God's grace in his life. He believes that it is by God's grace that he is permitted to urge members of the Church in Rome to not think more highly of themselves than they ought to think. Paul would not have mentioned this if it were not a danger.

Rome was the seat of the empire, the largest of all cities, the apex of power, the epitome of fame and fortune, the gold standard for every aspiration, the destination of merchant and missionary, and the light of the nations. All who lived in Rome shared in its prominence, glory, and reputation, for good or for ill. This included the church in Rome. They already had worldwide notoriety (Rom 1:8). They were the first church in status. Their influence was even greater than that of the church in Jerusalem. It will be only a matter of time before the pivotal role and significance of the church in Rome is inscribed in history. Their legacy remains to this day. Paul's warning was not just rhetorical flourish. The drift toward arrogance was a real threat, and it did indeed occur.

The church in Rome surely had its trials, especially because it was located in the epicenter of the empire. Most of its members did not participate in the wealth and affluence of the surrounding culture. The church in Rome also faced persecution and poverty. Still, their position in relationship to other Christian congregations gave them the kind of preeminence that could have easily gone to their heads.

Paul wants the people of God to think of themselves with sober judgment or sound reasoning. He wants them to think of their place in the body of Christ rather than in the Roman Empire. Paul calls this place "the measure of faith." He is not speaking of how much faith someone has in comparison with someone else. He is speaking of the shape or form that a person's faith takes within the body of Christ. If your faith were turned into action, what would it look like? That is what Paul calls "the measure of faith." The faithful church member does not seek to imitate someone else, but in humility seeks only the place assigned to him or her by God. It is only when the human heart is submitted in humility to the Spirit of God that the believer will be guided to his or her proper place in the body of Christ.

1. How can the church in North America guard against arrogance today?
2. How would you describe the "place" of the North American church in the body of Christ?
3. How would you describe your personal "place" in the body of Christ?