

For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.
(Romans 12:3)

The “*faith*” addressed in Romans 12:3 cannot be the faith that God requires prior to effecting salvation. God only saves under only one condition: When the depraved repent and choose to believe (Acts 16:31; Acts 26:18; and Romans 10:9-19). We will confirm that God’s gift of “*faith*” (Romans 12:3) is the faith needed to function within the area of the New Testament believer’s spiritual gifting, a gift received after repenting and believing while depraved. After all, Romans 12:3-8 addresses the subject of spiritual gifts.

According to 1Peter 4:10, Romans 12, 1Corinthians 12 and 14, and Ephesians 4, every church saint receives a spiritual gift. This spiritual gift is received in conjunction with being placed into Christ through the avenue of the Holy Spirit (1Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:3) subsequent to exercising repentance and faith while depraved. The “*faith*” addressed in Romans 12:3 is of utmost importance if we are to function efficiently within the area of our spiritual gifting. This gift of “*faith*” is not the same “*faith*” as is mentioned in Ephesians 2:8-9. Considering the above, we can conclude the following.

Once we exercised repentance and faith while depraved, we were baptized into Christ’s body through the avenue of the Holy Spirit (1Corinthians 12:13) and were “*saved*” (Acts 16:31). In other words, we were “*born again*” (John 3:3-6), became new creations (2Corinthians 5:17), and were made part of the “*body*” of Christ (Ephesians 5:30). In conjunction with being saved, subsequent to exercising personal repentance and faith while depraved, we received the “*measure*” of “*faith*” mentioned in Romans 12:3, the “*faith*” given to every member of Christ’s body, the church, so each gift within His body might function as efficiently and powerfully as possible. This “*faith*” is God’s gift (Romans 12:3), unlike the “*faith*” of (Ephesians 2:8-9), which is exercised by the depraved prior to spiritual regeneration.

The *Wycliffe Bible Commentary* adds concerning Romans 12:3:

Paul is not here speaking of “saving faith”... “Saving faith” would be no standard for correct self-judgment. Only pride would say: “See how much saving faith I have.” But it is a humbling experience to say: “Here is the faith I have for carrying out this or that particular task for God.” This can only lead to the prayer, “Lord, increase our faith” (see Luke 17:5). In the account of the heroes of faith in Heb 11, we see that the measure of faith given corresponds to the task to be accomplished.¹

The “*faith*” of Ephesians 2:8-9, exercised by the depraved in conjunction with their recognizing their need for a Savior, must not be confused with God’s gift of “*faith*” (Romans 12:3) granted to those who have previously chosen to repent and believe. Yes, God gives believers faith (Romans 12:3), but it is the faith needed to function within the area of their spiritual gifting—not the faith required prior to God’s redemptive work of spiritual regeneration. We can draw this conclusion because Paul is addressing spiritual

gifts in Romans 12. Thus, the “*measure of faith*” of Romans 12:3, given to New Testament believers once they are in Christ, cannot be equated with the “*faith*” of Ephesians 2:8-9—the “*faith*” exercised by the depraved prior to salvation. Those who fail to make this distinction entangle themselves in numerous theological inconsistencies. After all, why would God plead for the lost (depraved) to exercise faith, all of whom will not be saved, if He were the source of such faith, determining from eternity past who will or will not receive it? Such a scenario would make Jesus appear foolish in passages such as Matthew 23:37:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.”
(Matthew 23:37)

The unbelieving Jews rejected Jesus’ offer of salvation due to being “*unwilling.*” Their unbelief, therefore, did not result from God failing to provide repentance and faith, as some have incorrectly assumed. (Matthew 23:37 is discussed in much greater depth in our *God’s Heart* series.)

God’s “*purpose,*” desire, and will for man can be rejected:

But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God’s purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John. (Luke 7:30)

who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.
(1Timothy 2:4)

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2Peter 3:9 KJV)

Before moving forward, we must correctly answer the following question: “Is the repentance needed for salvation God’s gift, or does it originate with man?”

He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. (Acts 5:31)

Must God give us faith and repentance before we can repent and believe? Some people would answer with a resounding, “Yes!” Does this idea line up with the full counsel of God’s Word? “*Peter and the apostles*” (Acts 5:29) stated that both “*repentance*” and “*forgiveness*” have been granted to “*Israel*” (Acts 5:31).

For proper interpretation, we must first understand that the word “*Israel*” in this context points to everyone of Jewish descent, not just Jewish believers. The apostles were speaking to the leaders of the Jews, most of whom had rejected Jesus’ Messiahship. Had the apostles been speaking of Jewish believers only, and not the entire Jewish nation, they would have stated this fact in the text. Hence, for “*Israel*” in this context to mean anything other than the entire Jewish nation would have been misleading

to their unbelieving Jewish audience. Consequently, those who view the word “*Israel*” as pointing to believers alone are in error.

Here is where our study becomes extremely interesting. First, note that “*repentance*” (Acts 5:31) is granted in the same sense that “*forgiveness*” is granted. Second, if repentance should be God’s gift, then the entire Jewish nation has been given “*repentance*” and “*forgiveness*.” In that case, every Jew would be saved, which the Scriptures vehemently deny. How then is Acts 5:31 to be viewed? God grants “*repentance*” and “*forgiveness*” to Israel in the sense that He offers all of Jewish descent the opportunity to repent as well as the opportunity to receive forgiveness. The choice is theirs as to whether they, in their depravity, will or will not repent and exercise faith. The same opportunity is made available to both Jews and Gentiles according to Acts 11:18 and 2Timothy 2:25:

...then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.” (Acts 11:18)

*with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,
(2Timothy 2:25)*

Conclusion: God grants all Jews and Gentiles the right to exercise personal repentance and faith while depraved. This fact refutes the false teaching that He must give the gifts of repentance and faith to the spiritually regenerated before they can repent and believe. More information regarding faith and repentance is available in our series titled, “*God’s Heart.*”

ⁱ Mickelsen, A. Berkeley, *et al.* Edited by Pfeiffer, Charles E. & Harrison, Everett F. *Wickliffe Bible Commentary*. Chicago: Moody Publishers. 1990