



**Dependence Day**  
**Romans 12:3-8**  
**July 7, 2019**

Forget Brexit! What about Amerixit? We Americans exited Great Britain centuries ago. We had a holiday for that just last week. And I know you well enough to know how you celebrated it: You did whatever you wanted! Right? At least pretty much? Independence is not only a political standing that Americans won in 1776. It is also the value that prompted our Amerixit and the value that underlies much of how we live our lives every day. But is independence actually Christian?

One reason we place such high value we place on independence is that we think more highly of ourselves than we ought. True, some of us have a lower opinion of ourselves than reality, but more of us seem to suffer with having a higher opinion of ourselves than we should. Many of us feel like we are right about everything, that our opinions are of equal or greater value even than experts in the given field, and that people ought to cater to our needs and desires. God urges us not to view ourselves this way (Romans 12:3; cf. 1 Corinthians 4:7).

It's true that being made in the image of God gives each of us great value, it is also true that we have many weaknesses and sins. Also, we can't take total credit for what is good about us because God was involved in it. But the primary reason we should not think too highly of ourselves, in this passage, is that we are but one part of a very large group of other people (notice the explanatory "for" in v. 4). We are not independent.

Every Christian is a part of the church, and we belong to one another (Romans 12:4-5; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:12-31). When we come to Christ, we are baptized not only into him but also into his church. Romans 12:4-5 shows that this means getting thoroughly connected to the church. We cannot stay aloof or stand on the sidelines. We are called to connect deeply. And we are to treat each other in the special ways of the "one another" passages (e.g., Romans 12:10, 16; 13:8; 14:13; 15:7, 14; 16:16). A part of our transformation into the image of Christ is learning that we are not to do merely whatever we feel like doing or what is best for us but to consider others and specifically the other parts of the church.

We need to be clear that unity is really important in God's eyes (John 17:11, 20-21). When difficulties arrive, we must strive to live in peace and make every effort to preserve the unity that God's Spirit has created in the church (Romans 12:18; 14:19; Ephesians 4:3). The Bible has much teaching about the need and ways for us to get along (e.g., 1 Corinthians 1-4; Philippians 2:1-11). Occasionally there may be a situation that leads to a break in fellowship between members of a local body, but this should be extremely rare and unique circumstances. What's more, even if it comes to that, all the Christians are still members of the one universal church and must have attitudes, words, and behaviors appropriate to fellow-disciples.

We have different spiritual gifts, depending on what God has given to us (Romans 12:6-8; cf. 1 Peter 4:10-11). Using these gifts to help the others we are closely joined together with is especially important. Doing so helps build up the body and make it more like Christ (Ephesians 4:11-13). Since some practices mentioned in Romans 12, such as serving and giving, are to be done by every Christ-follower, we cannot evade responsibility for them by saying "that's not my gift." Still, some people have a special gift for doing these and so will emphasize them. Service is both a specific gift and also the manner and attitude in which all gifts should be exercised (Mark 13:34-36; 1 Peter 4:10).

