

Romans 15:13-22(Part 2)

Romans 15

14And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.

Paul corrected the members of the Roman church for much of this letter. Now he is building them up and encouraging them by showing them who they are and what they can do through Jesus Christ.

Full of goodness.

Paul uses the term “full of goodness.” What does it mean to be full of goodness? The bible says that we are all sinners. The bible says there is not one righteous. No not one. Only God is good. When we are born again, the Holy Spirit gives the goodness of Jesus Christ to us so that the good work of Jesus goes into our account and that our new nature desires to do what is good and pleasing to God.

Filled with knowledge

We are filled with knowledge because we understand the bible. When a person receives Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit moves into that person helping them understand the bible. Not only do we know and understand the content of the bible. We know God in a personal way through our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Able to Admonish (counsel or instruct)

The word for admonish can also be translated gentle instruction or counseling. It is the idea of giving encouragement and guidance to one another. All members of the church are able to counsel or admonish one another.

One of the ways we find correction, encouragement and guidance is through other Christians. God has set things up in his church so that our correction and encouragement and guidance come primarily from someone who is your equal.

Most often the problems people face can be met by the support that fellow Christians bring to one another in a relationship context.

When people have emotional or adjustment problems they often need one of three basic things that will help alleviate their discouragement.

BASIC NEEDS; LOVE, CAPABLE IN CHRIST, NOT ALONE

- First, people need love. We know that because Christ tells us to love one another.
- And people need to know that they are capable in Christ. We know this because Paul said things like; “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”
- And people need to know that they are not alone. We know this because God said it was not good that man be alone so he created a companion. And he told his followers; *I am with you even to the end of the age*.

Each of these basic needs can be met by hanging out with the regular folks from the Christian church.

FELLOWSHIP OR RENT-A-FRIEND

When I used to be a Christian Counselor I noticed that most of the problems I tried to help people with could have just as easily been resolved by a good discussion with a trusted friend. There were times when I felt as though I was a rent a friend because the person I counseled refused to get close to other Christians. There are times when it is good to get input from someone who has studied human behavior. But generally speaking God has

equipped the body of Christ to counsel one another. If we are not spending time with other Christians outside Sunday morning in a friendship context, then we will have to pay someone to do for us what God wants to give us for free.

15But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, 16to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

In verse 14, Paul compliments the church on their spiritual maturity. We saw in Chapter 1 that, though Paul had never been to the Church of Rome, he had heard of it by reputation. He says in *verse 8*, “*...I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because your faith is being reported all over the world.*” This was clearly a growing and powerful church in Paul’s day and he encourages them for their maturity. In verse 15, he explains that his bold teaching is to **remind** them of things they already know.

So much of what is necessary to know as a Christian we have heard many times before. Peter, in *Second Peter 1:12-13* says, “*So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have.*” ¹³*I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, “*

We are not computers who are programmed and then just automatically follow our programming--we are humans who need reminding. We are not trains placed on tracks that never leave their pre-determined course. We are impulsive creatures who have a strong tendency

to wander from the path. We are constantly in need of being put back “on the right path” and that is done as we are reminded of the truths of the faith.

If we ever respond to a Bible teaching by turning up our nose at it because we “know that already” and proceed to tune out, we are denying the frailty of our nature. The fact that we know something does not mean we are practicing it. When we are reminded of these truths of Scripture the Holy Spirit makes whatever mid-course corrections are necessary in us.

If a church whose faith was “reported all over the world” needed reminding, then we can be assured we need to review what we have learned.

17Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God. 18For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me,

Think of the way Paul got his start in ministry. Let’s briefly overview Acts chapter 9 to see how Paul got his start as an apostle.

Acts 9

The Conversion of Saul

1Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, 2and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

3As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; 4and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" 5And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, 6but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do."

10Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord."

11And the Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying, 12and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight." 15..."Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel...

Ananias went to Paul (whose Jewish name was Saul) and said; ***Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.*** ***18And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized; 20and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."***

Who is responsible for the ministry of the apostle Paul? Who called him? Who healed him? Who told him that he should focus his ministry on the Gentiles? The answer to all of the above is "God did it."

19...from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

When Paul walked the earth, he lived out the great commission. He went into the entire world preaching the good news of Jesus Christ. In Paul's time people did not there were seven continents. They believed the world went from Spain, up to England, down to Africa and over to Asia. What is amazing to me is that by the time the apostles died, the gospel was carried to

every continent that they knew about. If they knew a place existed they went or sent someone to go and preach the good news. No wonder many early Christians thought Jesus would return in their lifetime. Beginning on the day of Pentecost and continuing through the ministry of the apostles and the members of many churches, the gospel has spread to most of the known world. That was a major focus of the church. And it still should be today.

20And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation; 21but as it is written,

**"THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE,
AND THEY WHO HAVE NOT HEARD SHALL
UNDERSTAND."**

Paul's primary ministry was not to preach to the convinced. If all we do week after week is preach to the convinced then we are missing the most important assignment God has given us. We are called to preach to those who have not heard the good news. And then those who believe are called to encourage one another to stay strong and be effective at reaching more of those who do not yet believe.

Not too long ago I had a discussion with the elders. I told them that I was really conflicted about how I divided my time between Christians and non-Christians.

On a normal week I spend several hours reaching out to those who do not know Jesus as Lord and Savior. There was a stretch of time where suddenly the Lord gave me contact with about a dozen people who were either non-Christians or who had not been to church for years. Many of them had very serious problems and they wanted my help working through some things. As a result I had a few months where I did not get to spend a lot of

time with Christians. Most of my time was spent with those who were not yet a part of the church.

And a few people who already know the Lord were upset that I was not spending time with them. Then it dawned on me that the people who already knew the Lord and wanted more of my time were not reaching out to any non-Christians. In fact I was not available for them because I was doing their work.

My desire is that each person who attends here will pray sincerely and ask God who he wants you to reach out to and invite into the family of God. As you are doing the work of the Lord and reaching out to your neighbors and friends and family I will be there, mentoring you and encouraging you and helping you. But if you do not reach out to your friends and family and co-workers, then I will not have the time to hang out with you because I will be too busy doing your work.

If you see me spending a lot of time with people who do not come on Sunday or who are not Christians, then know that I need your help so that I can balance my time between mentoring those who are already saved and reaching out to the lost.

The name of our church is the Evangelical Free Church. Evangelical means that our primary purpose is to spread the good news to those who are not Christians. And then when people come to Christ we are able to counsel and encourage one another to grow and mature in Christ. But evangelical is the reason we got here and the reason we exist. It is God's plan to use us to add more souls to heaven.

22For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you;

23but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you

Paul was not able to visit Christians until he knew that he did all he could to get the good news out to those who did not know the Lord. Paul's priority was to evangelize. When he was sure he did all he could to get the good news out, then he came back to strengthen the Christians. But he knew that Christians are able to counsel one another with or without him there. Paul did not want the blood of the non-Christian on his head for failure to preach the good news. Neither do I.

TAKING IT HOME

1. Did you realize God gives us free encouragement and counseling when we spend time with other Christians? What are you doing to move toward friendships with other Christians? When is the last time you invited another Christian over to your house or out to dinner or attended a small group study?
2. What are you doing to make contact with people who do not have a relationship with Jesus Christ or who need to come back to fellowship with other Christians? Are you expecting someone else to do your job of reaching out to your friends and neighbors? If so, how do you think that impacts the overall health and well being of the church?
3. Have you ever been tempted to brag about what a good person you are? If so, like the apostle Paul, are you willing to find your security and sense of goodness in Jesus Christ so that you can say; ***I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me,***