

Romans 15:14-16: What Do You Do with the Gospel?

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[0 : 00] I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.

But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder because of the grace God has given me to be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

This is the word of the Lord. Amen. Good afternoon to you.

Our singing this afternoon sounded like those who believe the message of Romans that we've been in for much of the year and going to take a break from.

Let me pray and we'll get into God's word on this afternoon. Father, thank you so much for your word, your gospel that has changed and continues to shape our lives.

[1 : 19] prayers that you would be glorified through your word. We commit ourselves to you both for speaking and hearing and responding to your word.

Amen. Amen. If you live in this community or within 250 feet of the boundaries of the community, that is where University of Chicago calls itself home, you likely received a copy of the letter that I am about to read a portion of on this afternoon.

It's related to what they call a PD. A PD is a plan development. In part, this is how that letter reads. As you may know, it starts out, Dear Neighbor, and I do live within 250 feet of university property, a little south of 61st Street. As you may know, the University of Chicago wears many hats in the community.

Leader in higher education, provider of health care, major employer, and partner in the neighborhood schools. For those of you living nearest to campus, the university is also a major landowner in the neighborhood.

[2 : 46] A role we take very seriously. From time to time, we work with the city of Chicago to update a formal document called a planned development, or PD.

This document explains how we use our land and governs what uses are permitted. Whenever we request a change in our PD, you as a nearby landowner receive legal notification, and we want to let you know that you will be receiving such a letter later this summer.

Policy calls for them when they are moving forward in their planned development to let the neighbors know. In the meeting, and I went, there was interesting information that was shared, some that I did not know.

The university's land holdings include 214 acres. The police department, largest private police force in the country, polices over 1,900 acres in the community and the surrounding environment. The university's influence continues to spread even to the concern of some of its neighbors around in and around Hyde Park.

[4 : 14] And while there are concerns that the university's agenda does not comprehensively serve the well-being of the entire broader community, one thing is sure.

The university has a plan, huh? And they're working to fulfill it in very expansive ways. Their influence prevails all around us.

In our text on this afternoon, Paul also had a PD, if you will. He had a planned development.

And I would even modify the PD and call it a planned missional development. That's what we see as we get into chapter 15, verse 14 and following.

We get a look at Paul's planned missional development. Now in chapters 1 through 11, we had looked at an explanation of the gospel.

[5 : 21] Paul laid out this grand gospel portfolio before the Christians in Rome. He had never had been there, but he was looking for them to partner with him in carrying the mission westward.

Huh? Beginning in chapter 12, there we saw a noticeable shift. A shift in content, tone, and style of the letter is noticeable as we get into chapter 12.

Explanation yields to exhortation and application of the gospel to everyday living. That's what we encounter when we get into chapter 12.

In this section that I'm going to preview today, and we will get back to it in the fall, but what we wanted you to do, we wanted you to get a sneak preview of where the letter is going over these last two weeks, even as we break for it for the summer.

Paul repeated the main points in this particular section that were raised at the beginning of the letter, particularly chapter 1, verses 1 through 15.

[6 : 35] And here he comes full circle. He comes back to things like his apostolic call, his connection with the church at Rome, his ministry plans, as we first saw a glimpse of them in chapter 1, verses 1 through 15.

See, Paul is a man on a mission. And though we often don't view it this way, Romans can actually be seen, in a sense, as a missionary manifesto.

The content, the application, and then what do you do with the gospel? What do you do with it?

Huh? He's a man on a mission.

After his explanations and exhortations, he proceeded to make an appeal for help from these believing people in carrying the gospel even further.

That's what we get a glimpse of and what we see as we move forward. And this is what I want you to see on this afternoon. First, he makes an appeal in verse 14, to those who were characterized by spiritual maturity.

[7 : 55] They're characterized by spiritual maturity. We'll take a look at that. But then, he makes an appeal in verse 15 based on his apostolic authority in verse 15.

But also, he makes an appeal in verses 16 and 17 based on his ministry credibility. So he makes an appeal based on those who were characterized by spiritual maturity.

He makes an appeal to them, verses 15 and 16, on the basis of his apostolic authority, but also on the basis of his ministry credibility that we see in the text before us.

Look at verse 14. It really amounts to a commendation, doesn't it? I myself am satisfied about you, you Roman believers. And notice what he calls them.

My brothers. Chapter 15, verse 14. That you yourselves are, notice what he says, full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another.

[9 : 16] Those three characteristics are characteristics of those who have spiritual maturity. He addresses them as brothers and proceeded to let them know that he was persuaded about the genuineness of their faith.

It was likely that Paul was in touch with the Christian community in Rome through his ministry associates. Additionally, according to chapter 1, verse 8, and one of the things you might want to do on this afternoon, turn back over to chapter 1, and if you can do several things at once, just sort of hold your place in chapter 1, because I am going to flip from back and forth, at least on an occasion or two, from chapter 15 back to chapter 1.

So, notice what the word was, according to chapter 1, verse 8. The word had spread abroad that there was a credible Christian witness in the chief city in all the empire.

in Rome. There was a Christian community of people there. Look at chapter 1 and verse 8. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because your faith, it's proclaimed.

It's broadcast where? In all the world. Huh? How is it that people know that there are Christian communities in a given locality?

[10 : 54] Is it because there are physical structures like this church that we're worshipping in? Are temples? Is that the sign that there are really Christian communities in a given locality?

What are the signs that God's rule, in fact, is present on earth in the midst of his people? Huh?

What are the signs that heaven's invasion in the earth in and through the gospel?

It is through people. People who have been comprehensively, head, heart, in hand, comprehensively impacted through the gospel.

Huh? Only Trinity is somewhat nomadic, tabernacle-like. Huh? How many different dwellings has HTC been in in its 13-year history?

Quite a few. But the community, the church, it's not this building. It was not K-A-M. It was the 37 that started and those who had been added.

[12:07] Huh? Huh? And providing a credible Christian gospel witness in a given locality. Huh? And such things are on display in a way in their lives that relate to people and the world around them.

Huh? That's the kind of Christian witness. How do you know that the gospel has landed? How do you know that the gospel has made its way into a family?

into a home, in a neighborhood, into a community? It's through the lives of those who have been impacted by God's Word. Notice in verse 14, back in chapter 15 now, character-wise, the believers in Rome were full of goodness.

Huh? Kindness and generosity is what's in view there. These are the things were on display in the lives of those who had been impacted by the very gospel of God.

The kind of people they had become contrasted with what we see of those who live apart from the gospel. Turn back to chapter 1 now and look at particularly at verse 29.

[13:29] Chapter 1, verse 29. And here we have Paul, he speaks of those who had been given over to a debased mind because of their refusal to properly acknowledge God.

That's what he's referring to in verse 29. And notice what it says. Notice the words. The words that we see here are repeated in 15 and verse 14.

Notice, they were filled, these who were given over to a debased mind, those who refused to acknowledge God properly, they were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice.

And here's the word that actually is in the first part of verse 14. They are, notice what they are full of. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness.

They are gossips. A particular notice what we see, again, that they are, what they're full of. Those apart from Christ, those who were given over to a debased mind on the basis of the rejection of God, full of envy, murder, strife, maliciousness.

[14:48] These things, the things that are mentioned here, and just think about them, they are both personally and socially destructive. And friends, those things should not characterize those who have laid claim to the gospel and the gospel has laid claim to them.

But Paul commends the Romans as those who were now, through the gospel, motivated to be kind and generous. They're full of goodness because of their embrace of the gospel.

Evidence of their spiritual maturity was not just seen, excluded to kindness and generosity. They were also, notice what we see there, they were filled with knowledge.

That's another word that we see in 129. Just as we saw the word full at the first part, that the first part of verse 14 speaks of, these God rejecters were also filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil and covetousness, malice, and these things that particularly destroy peace and harmony and social wholeness.

Contrary to those who made up the new community at Rome, contrary to what we see in 129, those who made up the new community were filled with all knowledge.

[16:09] That's what this means. Their lives had been filled with God's truth and they would allow people in the know as it concerned God. Knowing about Him, their core beliefs were in accord with sound Christian teaching is what's in view.

They knew what they needed to grow and to witness. And this is reminiscent to Paul's words to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 verses 4 and 5. I give thanks to my God always for you because the grace of God that was given you in Christ that in every way you are now enriched in Him in all speech and in all knowledge.

They were people in the know. They had a word from God, truth from God that was displacing other things in their lives.

But in this note, they were able in the last part of verse 14 to instruct one another. they were able to share or to warn or admonish and interact with each other in ways that facilitated their mutual growth as believers.

That's what's to happen in the family of God. The ability to share not, and notice as we look all through Romans there's this challenge to this one-upsmanship and superiority.

[17:28] But here he's saying one of the things that characterized these believers is that they were able to instruct and interact with one another.

What we see here, this is Paul's two thumbs up regarding the spiritual community that was thrown. There was evidence of spiritual maturity among them.

That's what he's commending in this verse. Similar things were expressed in chapter 1 and verse 12. For I long to see you that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

There was going to be this mutual sharing between the Romans and Paul of their spiritual gifts in order to encourage each other. On the one hand, he was waiting to use the spiritual gifts among them, but he also expected to be strengthened and they used their spiritual gifts for him when he came.

Confidence in their spiritual maturity up front, commending them for spiritual maturity. Notice though, but while Paul appealed to those who were characterized by spiritual maturity, secondly, he appealed to them on the basis of his spiritual or apostolic authority.

[18 : 47] Back to chapter 15 and let me read again verse 15. But on some points, I have written to you and notice what he says here, friends, very boldly, by way of reminder, because of the grace of God given to me.

On the one hand, he commended them, but even in the letter, there were challenges and words that were very appropriate for where they were. Paul acknowledges his apostolic role.

Again, you look back at that chapter 1, it's there. The Lord used him through his bold writing ministry to remind them of things that were very foundational and extremely crucial to their faith. Because of the very bold teaching of Paul in this particular letter that we've looked at since the first of the year, several things should have been more evident to them because of Paul's teaching. Let me highlight just a few of them. What should they have known better? And what should we, having been in this letter for six months of this year, what should we know better now having covered this ground?

[20 : 06] First of all, that the roots of the scriptures are in Jewish, the roots of the gospel are in Jewish scriptures. Chapter 1, verse 2. You don't have to turn to it. But again, they should know that better. Oh, as Paul quoted scripture after scripture from the prophets, from the Psalms, from the law, the roots of the gospel are in the Old Testament, huh?

That all, and that's 51 times or so in the book. Again, it's a small word, but it's a good word. It's a key word in the book. All Jew and Gentile apart from Christ stood condemned before God.

See that in chapter 3. They should have known that for sure. Paul's bold teaching in Romans. Not only that, but all Jew and Gentile through Christ were eligible for God's mercy.

Romans chapter 11. All, on the one hand, stood condemned. But all, on the other hand, stood as candidates for the very mercy of God.

Chapter 3, verse 20. by the works of the law, none were justified. Can't work your way. Viewer, you can't even make a down payment on being right with God.

[21 : 21] There's no one who's ever lived other than Christ that possesses that kind of spiritual currency for all of sin and false short. The glory of God.

that was clear. That the rule of the law no longer applied to those who were in Christ. Such had been replaced by the reign of God's spirit in the believer.

Romans chapter 7 and 8. Huh? Paul's bold teaching helped them to understand where they stood and their relationship to the very law of God.

that boasting on the basis of ethnicity or ethics was excluded. Wow. Paul had boldly put forth, stood his ground at proclaiming the tenets, the principles of the gospel, how it is that a person could be made right with God.

Huh? Isn't it good to know that and to have clarity? If you expect to be right with God, you need clarity on how to do that.

[22 : 29] Not the works of my hands, not my deeds, not my ethnic roots, but it's only through the work of God's Son that we are, have a stand right with God.

It terms, chapter 3, verse 21, but now the righteousness of God apart from works is revealed. on the basis of the person and the work of Christ.

Paul exercised, friends, his ministry with boldness. He had pressed home the critical facts of the gospel in very compelling, compelling ways using great rhetoric and all kinds, various kinds of ways that befitted his audience that he was ministering unto and showing them the very path to being right with God.

It was through his son. He could exercise, why could he exercise his ministry with confidence? Because he understood his apostolic call that he took very seriously and this very book is evidence of that.

Praise the Lord, huh? God has used that in the lives of the Romans in that day and subsequently through the centuries. Huh? The preference of Martin Luther's commentary on Roman says it very well.

[24 : 03] Romans is worthy of not only every Christian should know it, word for word, by heart, but occupy himself with it every day as daily bread of the soul.

It can never be read or pondered too much and the more it is dealt with, the more precious it becomes and better it tastes, huh?

I see a measure of application in what Paul has said here. what we see here as far as the exercise of his ministry is a reminder for those who both preach and hear the gospel that spiritually mature people are ripe for bold challenges based on God's word.

Huh? Spiritually mature people. And I don't know where you would classify yourself on the spiritual growth development formation continuum.

Huh? But you may feel that you have a little spiritual mileage under your belt. Huh? Bold challenge is just right for you. Huh?

[25 : 22] You may have felt that you've been there, done that, heard that. Bold challenge is just right for you. Paul ministered, now, obviously we don't have apostolic authority and our authority is not based on the volume of my voice, but it's based on God's word.

And even those, regardless of where you are, and you determine that, and then we still may be off even after self-assessment, but those, even those who would consider themselves spiritually mature, are ripe for bold challenge from the word of God.

We may be tempted to feel that we've outgrown certain things. Reminders, friends, a right for all of God's people.

Huh? Reminded of James, how should we humble ourselves? How should our response be to God's word? We should put a welcome mat out for it. And receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your soul.

Bold challenge is right for all of us. He appealed to those who were characterized by spiritual maturity, verse 14. He appealed to them on the basis of his apostolic authority, but also notice that he appealed to them on the basis of his ministry credibility that we see in verses 16 and 17.

[27 : 05] God's call to Paul, notice in verse 16, was very Gentile focused, to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified, by the Holy Spirit.

Notice, Gentile focus, and he understood this, he embraced it, and he fulfilled it. Listen to him in 11, 13. Now I'm speaking to you Gentiles, and as much as I am apostle for the Gentiles, I magnify, I boast in, my ministry.

He knew it, he embraced it, others recognized it, Paul in Jerusalem, Galatians chapter 2, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised, for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me from mine to the Gentiles, and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived grace was given to me, they gave to me the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.

He understood that his ministry was to the nations, to the Gentiles. Notice in verse 4, verse 16, there we see worship-related words.

You see those there? Priestly service, the offering of the Gentiles, acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. the word even translated minister is from the same root that we get our liturgy.

[28 : 58] Generally speaking, the word referred to a person who rendered public service, but he did it at personal expense. And in the New Testament, the word is often a reference to those who were in some service to God in some kind of public setting.

And here is a reference to Paul, who served the Lord Jesus in the sacred ministry of the gospel. Just as a priest who would serve God in the realm of the temple, so the domain of Paul's service was the very gospel of God.

What was Paul's offering? It was his Gentile converts to the Christian faith. Those who had been made an acceptable offering to God by the sanctifying work of the Spirit of God in them. They had been set apart for God. Those converts were his offering. Sounds like the language of Romans 12 and 2, doesn't it? Where the call is for Christians to present themselves as an offering to God, the acceptable offering being presented here, is the Gentile Christians that Paul is presenting before God.

Look at verse 17. In Christ Jesus, then I have reason to be proud of my work for God. In Friday, a week ago's paper, that included a section in which our new mayor discussed the progress of his administration for the first 30 days.

[30 : 37] He was asked to give himself a grade for the first 30 days of his being in office, and I think that he wisely gave himself an incomplete.

But then he had some additional words. He said, I am proud of this, speaking of what he's done, but I ain't resting on it. Paul had ministry credibility, and we can't get into all of that, but you can see it on down.

He had ministry credibility. Regarding the results of Paul's labor, he boasted in Christ for it, but the verses that follow highlight his past labors all the way to what used to be Yugoslavia.

while his work for God and the nations was worthy of boasting in his mind, it's not complete. I am not through.

The gospel of God had been explained, the gospel of God had been applied, but it still, listen to this, the gospel still needed to be spread. Thus his appeal.

[31 : 49] So he makes his appeal in the last section, chapter 15 verses 14 and following. He makes his appeal.

His PMD, his planned missional development is what is there. In essence, he says that, and listen to this, planned missional development needs personal and corporate engagement. engagement. Planned missional development needs personal and corporate engagement. It needs those who would deem themselves mature or those who would deem themselves in process. It needs personal and corporate engagement. Where the letter is headed is clear. And Paul's words to his audience still apply friends to you and me today.

What's the relevant word from this particular passage? Those who have believed the gospel and are challenged to live the gospel should seek to share it and partner with those who do the same.

[33 : 03] That's where Paul is leading. You believed it. You've applied it to your life. Now what do you do with it? You share it.

and you seek to partner with those who are doing the same. Planned missional development then and now needs personal and corporate engagement.

And I want you, we had our first conversation and prayer this afternoon. and as we think about whether we're talking about on a corporate level or whether we're talking about on a regional level there are plans.

You remember our mission statement, don't you? Vision statement. Our vision is to see the city of Chicago transformed by the power of the gospel. That's planned missional development in Holy Trinity.

What do you do with the glorious power of the gospel that makes people new? That transfers one from Adam's realm to the new realm from death to life from sin to righteousness?

[34 : 16] That removes one from the realms of external laws and to the reign of the indwelling spirit that unites Jew and Gentiles into one body?

God's family? That calls people to harmonious relationships and family? what do you do with it? You embrace it. You live it.

And you partner in the spread of it. For the glory and honor of God. May that be our vision. May that be our intention. May you participate.

There are going to be opportunities for using your time and your talents in the coming months.

There's always opportunity to use your dollars. Even as we look at our budget for the year and what we need in order to make the gospel go even in our region.

Plan, missional development needs personal and corporate engagement and participation. I trust basis based on the gospel that you embrace, the gospel that you're trying to live out.

[35 : 26] I trust that you're in. We'll hear more from Paul and Romans in the fall. Let's pray. Father, we give you praise on this afternoon. Thank you for the glorious gospel of your son and how it is

laid out so wonderfully, marvelously in the book of Romans.

Thank you that we've heard it explained. We anticipate the more exhortative word in the fall, but also we see where the book is going.

and may those who have believed it and embraced it, may we participate fully in the sharing of it for the glory and honor of your name.

Amen and amen.