

Drawing People to Christ

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[0:00] We preach early and then later on in the service we have an opportunity for you to ask questions.! So like if there was something that I said during the sermon that you said,! Did you really mean that?

You know, or something that's come up during the week that you want to ask questions about and you want the pastor, Oh! His opinion on it. We have a time for that later on. And I've got a question for you too, so just so you know that.

But we are in Romans chapter 15 today. Yeah, this is on.

Oh, there it is. Yeah, now it works. Okay, Romans chapter 15. I really came this close to just wrapping this whole sermon series up today.

Because we shifted gears in a big way. So if you're in Romans chapter 15, last week we did verse 13, which is really one of the final teaching verses in this chapter.

[1:14] And we've spent that. But when we go to verse 14 in the book of Romans, we're shifting gears from a teaching mode.

And now this is, Paul's wrapping it up. He's finalizing the book. He's finalizing his epistle, his letter. But I'm just going to, I decided instead of wrapping the whole thing up, that I'd just do 14 through 21. So join with me, if you will, in reading this. Romans 15, beginning in verse 14. 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 given me by God, 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. In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God, for I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience, by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Erech...

[2:57] I knew I was... That place, it's... Yeah. I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ, and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation, but as it is written, those who have never been told of Him will see, and those who have never heard will understand.

Other than illiquirium, I believe it's pronounced. I think we got that. Paul here is making a pretty incredible statement, and we're going to spend some time on that today, but know this, that whatever you walk out of here today, I really hope that you walk out of here with the understanding that our words and our actions, our deeds, should point people to Jesus, okay?

When people talk to us, when people see us at work or see us in the community, what they should get is a picture of Christ.

Our lives should draw people to the Lord. Sadly, that's not always the way it is. Sometimes people see us and they go, I want nothing to do with those people, and we don't want that.

We want to be the sort of people that people like, that people see that there's something good, something different about us, and we want to draw people to Christ.

[4:40] So that's what we're going to be talking about. Romans chapter 15, verse 14, Paul shifts gears into the end of the book, and he starts off by making this bold statement.

I mean, let's just start off here by saying, verse 14 is incredible. The apostle Paul says that, I am satisfied about you, my brothers.

I was talking to some other people, other young men. I used to be a young man. I was talking to some young men. I can't say I'm a young man anymore.

But I was talking to some young men, and they said that their heart's desire was to hear from the Lord, well done, good and faithful servant, enter into your rest.

And I'm like, yeah, that's exactly what I want. I have deeply desired to hear that from the Lord for as long as I can imagine, as long as I can remember, for as long as I am cognitive.

[5:48] I have want to hear from my father, well done. Anybody here feel that way? Want to hear good job? Anybody's dad ever tell them well done?

You lucky son of a... I've never heard that, you know? You guys have been just blessed. But most people grow up, most people live with a deep desire for approval.

And what is the Apostle Paul here saying? 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.

How would you feel if the man appointed by God to spread the gospel, the man who personally was used by God to write most of the New Testament, the man who had started how many different churches, inspired how many...

If he walked up to you and said, you're filled with goodness, you're filled with knowledge, and you're competent to teach. How would that make you feel? I could walk on water.

[7:03] I wouldn't even need water to walk on. What a great feeling that would be. And being filled, and having it recognized, being filled with knowledge, being filled with goodness and ability, is great.

And it's a wonderful blessing. And it's our goal and our desire. None of us want to be fat, dumb, and lazy. You know?

We want to be smart. We want to be good people. We want to have capabilities and abilities. We want to be those dependable people in the church.

Anybody ever come up to you and apologize? I'm really sorry that I ran over your dog, cat, flower bed.

And then they followed it up with the word, but. You know what I'm talking about? I'm really sorry I ran over your dog. But if you'd had him penned up, it wouldn't have happened. You guys know what I'm talking about? How many times have you heard somebody say something?

[8:17] Man, I'm really sorry this happened. But, and then they give some excuse for what they've done. What does that make their statement? It kind of lessens it, doesn't it? I'm not saying that's what the apostle Paul did, but look what he says.

Let's see. 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's. What's that next word?

But, wait, you just ruined it. I was feeling so good in you. But, on some points, I have written you very boldly by way of reminder because of the grace given me by God.

Now, this is, it takes the wind out of your sails, but it's really important for us to understand that you can be a good person.

You can be filled with knowledge, and you can have immense ability and still need to be instructed, still need to be encouraged, still need to be given direction.

[9:43] You know that? You can be great at what you do, and yet you still need some extra education.

We call it in the education industry, continuing education, right? Or refreshers, you know, or symposiums, or an excuse to fly down to Vegas to spend a, no, no, no, that's insurance people. They're bad. I'm just kidding. But, you know, there's, in just about every career, you can be fully qualified, fully certified, and fully able, and yet you still have times of training and encouragement or renewal.

That's what's happening to me in October. My wife is kicking me out, and I'm going to a pastor's conference so that I can be encouraged, I can be refreshed, I can be reminded, and have more wind in my sails.

So in verse 15 here, when he says, but on some points, he's not saying that they're not qualified. He's just really fulfilling his role as a minister.

[10:54] Take a look in the book of Hebrews. We'll be back in Romans, but take a look in the book of Hebrews. Left it in here last week. There it is. Chapter 10, verse 24 and 25.

Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

You see, the idea is that we come together and we encourage one another. We meet together and we seek ways to inspire one another. Chapter 3, verse 13 in the book of Hebrews.

It says, exhort one another every day, as long as it is called today, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Now, Paul's talking to believers. Paul's talking to Christians. Paul's talking to people who know and love the Lord and are serving Him, and he's saying, encourage one another. Push one another on.

[12:08] You know, find ways to inspire one another. And that's what he's doing back here in Romans. I myself am satisfied that you are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another, but I have written you very boldly by way of reminder.

So, even though they are filled with that, they're reminded. So, I have now finished my introduction. So, here we go. Let's talk about what Paul's encouraging them in.

The gospel. Just so you know, this letter of Romans, it really starts in the very beginning, and it's all about the gospel, and in the end, it's all about the gospel.

In fact, there's 11 times in the book of Romans that the word gospel is used. Four of them are in chapter one. Four of them happen between chapter 15, verse 14, and the end of the book.

Basically, one chapter. That's eight of the 11. There's only three other times that it's even mentioned in his whole book. So, his foundation is start, I'm going to teach you about the gospel.

[13:29] And then, in the end, you now know what the gospel is all about. So, that's kind of an... Oh, let's have some fun. Turn to chapter one.

Turn to chapter one in Romans. Chapter one, verse one. Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God.

Look at verse nine. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his son. Wait a minute. I thought it was...

Gospel of God in verse one. Verse nine, it's the gospel of his son. Verse 15 and 16, it's just the gospel.

If you look in chapter two, verse 16, Paul uses my gospel. And here in chapter 15, it's the gospel of God in verse 16.

[14:37] Verse 19, let's see, where is it? The gospel of Christ. In verse 20, what does it say? Verse 20, I got it here.

We just did 1625. Now to him who is able to strengthen my gospel, I am missing one.

Oh, I hit 20. Oh, preach the gospel. It's just the gospel. Sorry, I got confused. So we see gospel of God, gospel of his son, the gospel, my gospel, gospel of Christ.

That's five different ways it's identified. Labeled variously, it is only one gospel. Okay?

Some people want to say that there's a bunch of different gospels, but Paul's referring to one gospel here. There you go.

[15:41] I didn't write it. Take a look in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. If you want the mechanics, if you want the definition or just the gospel in a nutshell, 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verses 3 through 5.

We read, For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas and then to 12.

That's the basic framework of the gospel. The most basic framework. Jesus, God's son, came, lived, died, buried, rose again.

according to the scriptures. That's the framework of the gospel. If you want to know why God can save us from our sins, why God can forgive us of our sins, why it is that we don't have to bear the penalty of our own sins, that's it.

God took on human flesh, lived a perfect sinless life, died a substitutionary death on a cross, was buried, and rose again. That's why.

[17:11] But I want you to look back here into Romans chapter 8, because there's more to it than just the basics. There's more to it.

when we're talking about the gospel, when we're talking about the impact it has in people's heart and in their lives, the framework is important.

You've got to know what we're talking about. But what does it mean? And that's what we see here in Romans chapter 8. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do.

By sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

[18:26] You see, that's what the gospel does. Because Christ paid our sin penalty, we're free from the law.

We're free from guilt. We're free to live for God. And here's the thing. Even if you are filled with all goodness, even if you have a good, comprehensive knowledge of all things about God, even if you have been talented and gifted by God with the ability to teach and instruct others, you're still living on a sin-infected world, still going to, at times, make huge and glorious mistakes, and you are going to walk away from them going, why did that happen?

And what am I going to do? That's just the reality of it. But according to the gospel, we're forgiven. According to the gospel, God has taken all of our guilt away and He's forgiven us. And we have the freedom to stand up and say, I royally messed that up.

I'm really sorry. I'm going to try better. That's the gospel. We don't bear any of the guilt anymore because Christ took it all upon Himself and paid the penalty on a cross.

[20:00] So we can get up in the morning and we can go hard-charging and we can try really hard and we can fall flat on our face all the time. Get up, dust ourselves off, and say, that didn't go so well, did it?

And try again. And try again. And try again. And look at our fellow believers as we're both picking ourselves up out of the mud.

We can do it. Let's go. You know? There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus for the law of the Spirit of life has set you free.

That's the gospel. And the mechanics of it, Christ came, died, lived, lived. But the reality of it is that God takes broken people and forgives them and fills them and gives them a purpose and lets them go.

And when they fail, He doesn't step on them and throw them out. He picks us up. He dusts us up. And lets us go again.

[21:14] That's the gospel. So when we're back here in Romans chapter 15, and he says that I have written you very boldly by way of reminder because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, Paul has recognized people have turned to God.

And by God's grace, not only have they been forgiven, they've been equipped and empowered to serve Him. And in that, every now and then, we might need a reminder, God loves you.

Yeah. You blew that one spectacularly. God still loves you and we're going to do better. Right? Ready? Here we go.

God loves you. That's what he's talking about. So when he says, but, at the end of all this boldness, it's okay. Paul's with us in this, encouraging us.

Now, we've got the bold reminder that is, that we are in the service of the Lord, that we've got work to do. The basis of our work and the basis of our, of what we're going is the gospel.

[22:30] The fact that, that God loves us, that God loves the whole world, that God has, has given us incredible gifts and power and has given us this ministry to go out and do.

But he says something interesting. He says, where is it? Verse 16. 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.

Well, so Paul's reminder that he's writing here is to ensure that even Gentiles would make acceptable offerings to God.

Remember the situation? Paul's writing to the church in Rome who the Jews who had been expelled for five years have just returned to.

And so we've got all these Gentiles and all these Jews and they're trying to work out, you know, how are we supposed to handle this situation? And the Jews come from a heritage of faith.

[23:49] I mean, they had the scriptures, they had the law, they had the Torah, they have the priests, they have Jerusalem, they have the temple, they've got all of this behind them and so they've got a fair head start in how to serve the Lord, how to worship God, what's right and what's wrong.

The Gentiles are coming out of hedonism, idolatry, paganism. I mean, some of their backgrounds are a bit sketchy, right?

And so they're trying to work all this and Paul's saying, look, God's grace is effective for both Jew and Gentile but let's be honest, we need to make certain that what people are doing, the offering that they're giving is acceptable to God.

And I love this. The offering that Paul is talking about is not money. It has nothing to do with money. It has nothing to do with things. That's not the offering that he's looking for. That's not the offering that God wants. Now, does God expect there to be money and things and various stuff like that brought to support the ministry of the temple?

[25:07] Yeah. In fact, in the Old Testament they had a tithe. Do we have a tithe today? Anybody? Yes, we do. No, we don't. We're not underneath the Mosaic Law.

You don't have to bring 10%. You can bring 12%. You can bring 1%.

God loves a cheerful giver and we should give today as God lays upon our hearts. For some people, let's just be honest, for a lot of people, they grew up in an age where they spent a lot of money.

They've got huge amounts of debt. They are so upside down, many of them have declared bankruptcy not once but two or three times. They're just figuring out how to, you mean I shouldn't spend it?

You know, they're just learning how to pay bills. And they can budget this much. And so they do it as a sacrifice to the Lord.

[26:28] And you might look at it and think, whoo, you are really going out your way on that one. But remember what Christ said about the widow who put in the two mites? Nobody put in more than her?

It's not what we bring in physically. It's not the things that we bring to the Lord. It's our attitude and our worship.

Psalms chapter 51. Great chapter in the Bible. Love Psalms. This is, Psalms 51 is a good one. And it's still between, there it is, all right.

Verse 1 says, well, as you open it up to Psalms 51, this is a Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet, confronting him after he had, yeah, him and Bathsheba, yeah.

This is when Nathan confronted David. One of my favorite stories. David gets, he's told the story by Nathan about this guy, and David's off with his head, and Nathan turns, I'm talking about you, and David breaks down in repentance.

[27:47] Great story in the Bible. But take a look at verses 16 and 17. You got to remember, David was living under the Mosaic Law, and the Mosaic Law demanded a sacrifice for forgiveness.

It demanded a sacrifice for just about everything. But look what it says here. For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it. You will not be pleased with a burnt offering.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. Do you see? It's not the things, it's the person, it's the heart.

We see this again in Hosea, which I used to know where it was. Hosea is in the Old Testament, isn't it? Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, right? Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea.

Ha, I was right. Chapter 6, verse 6. I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice.

[29:02] The knowledge of God rather than burnt offering. In fact, if you turn to Matthew, where Jesus is teaching, in chapter 9, verse 13, it says, go and learn what this means.

I desire mercy and not sacrifice. For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners. It's in chapter 12, verse 7, too.

where he says, and if you know what this means, I desire mercy and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless.

You see, the Jews should have known this. I mean, they've got all the history. I mean, David was their king and he wrote half, you know, you got Hosea, one of their prophets.

Jesus was teaching in Jerusalem. Hello! They should have known this. But the Gentiles, you know, they're out there worshiping Baal and, you know, all these other, they might not have the background for it.

[30:22] So Paul's teaching them. He says, look, I want the offering of the Gentiles to be acceptable. He wants the offerings of the Jews to be acceptable too, but let's not put a knife in it, you know.

And he says, look, the real sacrifice is not truck loads of money, though, by the way, I don't turn those away, but a broken and contrite heart.

Someone who's yielding their life to God. Do you want to sacrifice? When was the last time you changed your behavior because it was appropriate to God?

When was the last time you excused your behavior, even though you knew it wasn't appropriate?

Hey, we're all in this together, all right?

Don't think I'm beating you over your head with a bat. Too hard. That's terrible. What a bad person.

So Paul is giving them a reminder, look, you're good, but don't forget, we're here in the service of the gospel, and we need to live in such a way that is appropriate.

[31:41] And what is the purpose? The purpose is that others may know God. God. And that's what in Romans 15, that's what that last whole section was about.

And it's incredible what he says here. In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God, for I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience, by word and by deed.

That's important. You see, you can talk the talk, but can you walk the walk?

You ever heard that? Yeah, it sounds great Sunday morning. Praise Jesus. You know, and then what happens on Monday? Oh, bless your lovely heart.

I'm just so excited to see you here Sunday. It's a great thing. And then, you know, you're cutting people off in line and speaking in foreign tongues and just having royal hissy fits all through the week.

[32:54] But come Sunday, bless Jesus. Are you walking the walk? Are you talking the talk? You want to know what else is just as bad?

It's those people who walk the walk but never say anything. That is just as bad. You can be a great Christian. I'm living for the Lord. No, I'm not taking my anger out there.

I'm dealing with this. I'm not being something that I'm doing. I'm reading my Bible. I'm treating people right. I'm doing all the things God wants me to do except I'm not telling nobody. That is just as bad as the other.

How can they learn if they don't hear? You see, our words and our actions both bring people to the Lord.

Well, they should. They're both required. It works better that way. I mean, it can happen without that but that's not the way it's supposed to be. How we live and how we talk is supposed to draw people to God.

[33:59] He says, I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem all the way around to Illichrium, I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel.

Thus that I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation, but as it is written, those who have never been told of him

will see, and those who have never heard of him will understand.

That was the reminder that Paul was giving the church in Rome. Look, it's all about the gospel. It's all about what God has done for us. The fact that he takes miserable wrecks like me, like you, forgives us, removes all penalty from us, gives us an opportunity to grow in the knowledge and the experience, the love of our Savior, so that we can go out and share that with others.

The challenge is sometimes our walk, our words. We need to be reminded.

[35:32] We need to live for the Lord, not in these four walls, but in every day of our life. And I've got to be honest with you. It's a sacrifice.

It's a challenge. It hurts. I'm talking in Sunday school today. I've had to face this choice this week. Will I do the smart thing or will I honor the Lord? And I'm driving down the road and I'm thinking of all the people that are free to do whatever they want.

They're free to do, to do, to do. I'm thinking of the cost of doing the right thing. And then I remembered that Bible verse.

The one that says, I would have envied those who are evil until I remembered their destination. And I thought, oh yeah, that's right.

[36:41] I've got a great retirement program. I can do a little bit of suffering down here. And so I encourage you. I know it's hard. I know it's a challenge. I know there's times where the world pulls you hard against the way of righteousness.

Let us keep our eyes on him. And when we fall down, don't forget, God still loves us. He's going to dust us off. And his mercy is new every morning. Amen. Let's pray.

Amen. Let's pray. Amen. Amen.