

Application

A. What do others see in you? Are you captured by the good news, the gospel? What would you give; what would you risk so that one more person would have his/her life changed by Jesus Christ? Last fall I invited you to give me names of people you long to see come to faith. I still have those names (show stack). We still pray for them regularly on Wednesday mornings. (Would you come help us sometime?)

I averaged the number of people you wrote down and came up with 172 as the number I'm praying will come to Christ by August 31. To date we've celebrated the salvation of 85 people (that doesn't count our missionaries' converts – just ours here through our witness and ministry). Pray that another 100 will find Christ!

B. What will you give for the gospel? Is the goodness of Jesus Christ the centerpiece of your life? People who are full of goodness are gospel people. People who are complete in knowledge are saturated with the gospel. People who are competent to instruct, stand on **grace, glory** in Christ Jesus, and live for the **gospel**. Let's join heart to heart in the work of the gospel!

C. Very briefly let me point out that in teaching us about Christian maturity, Paul has not given us more rules to follow. He has not introduced a new legalism. What he has done is point out what we've almost lost in our culture – the idea that character counts. Conduct flows from character and character is formed when we major on three things:

Sustaining grace – It's all a gift from God

Singular glory – God's hand in everything that happens

Unstoppable gospel – The power of God to change lives

“Convinced, Complete and Competent” 4/11/10
Romans 14:14-2

RMBC
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Introduction

A. Once upon a time the frogs held a race to see who could reach the top of a very high hill. A big crowd gathered to watch and cheer, but no one really believed the tiny frogs could reach the top. You heard statements like: “Too difficult!!” “You'll NEVER make it.” “No chance. That hill is too high!”

The frogs began collapsing one by one except for a few who seemed a bit more determined and pushed on. The crowd continued to yell, “It is too hard! You won't make it!” More frogs got tired and gave up, except for one little frog that just wouldn't quit! He climbed higher and higher.

Finally everyone had given up except the one tiny frog. With one final effort he reached the top! All the other frogs naturally wanted to know how this one frog managed to do it. Someone asked him, “How did you do that? What's your secret?” He didn't answer. He just looked at everyone. That's when they realized that the little frog was deaf.

B. In the challenge to keep growing, it really helps to know when to turn a deaf ear to voices that compete and distract us from the voice of God. And what a boost of spiritual encouragement we receive when we are commended for our faithfulness!

C. Paul opens the section we'll study this morning with an amazing compliment. He is convinced that something very right had happened in Rome. (Read Romans 15:14).

Wouldn't it be great to hear those words? How that must have blessed those believers! The Apostle shone his “spiritual flashlight” into their hearts and saw character that he could bless. He commends the Roman believers for three things.

A Worthy Goal vs. 14

A. While we clearly don't attain those attributes overnight these three affirmations form a worthy goal for every believer. People like that learn to “turn a deaf ear” to the negative call of this world, and open their ears to the truth from God's Word. Look at those three qualities for a moment:

1. To be **full of goodness** is to grow to a place where you operate out of proper motives. Goodness ushers in compassion, care, and concern for needs as they arise. Goodness is the fruit of righteousness which grows in the soil of right relationships with God and with other people. If your friends write “Full of goodness” on your tombstone you will be greatly honored. True goodness is godliness.

2. To be **complete in knowledge** is to possess both knowledge and wisdom. I doubt Paul was thinking of math and science here. Nothing wrong with those, but his concern was for the spiritual life of people. His examination showed they had grasped the essentials of the gospel to such a degree that they could face life with its dangers, its temptations, its losses and its sorrows.

They knew about justification – the gift of worth we receive from God as he forgives our sin. They grasped sanctification – the process in which the old nature is daily shaped and sharpened for godliness. And they knew about glorification – the plan of God through which he is preparing to dwell with him in heaven where we will actually reign with him in a new heaven and a new earth. That's the kind of knowledge God commends.

3. To be **competent to instruct** is much more than head knowledge. It means that we care so deeply about each other that, as Paul says in Ephesians 4:15, we “speak the truth in love.” To be competent to instruct means our relationships are so genuine that we know when to give praise and when to offer correction. We are only competent to instruct one another when we are full of goodness and complete in knowledge.

C. Here's a question: How does someone get to this point? How do you achieve a level of character Paul describes in vs. 14? The short answer is that you learn to apply Romans 1-14 – that great body of teaching we've studied the past year. We discovered the great themes of the Bible along with the necessary skills for living those truths – Salvation by faith; love for others; the sovereignty of God.

D. I still remember the impact one of my mentors made on me the day he looked me in the eye and said, “Dennis, it is time for you to see yourself as a man of God.” He saw something in my life that even I couldn't see, and by speaking the truth in love, he gave me a pretty strong push to grow up in my faith. I would wish that for every one of you.

E. Beginning in vs. 15 Paul gives us his answer to the question we asked, “How do we get to this level of character?” Paul turns the flashlight on himself for a moment as if to say, “Here's how it works for me.” I've circled three words in this section that reflect Paul's thoughts about his own life: Grace – vs. 15; Glory – vs. 17; Gospel – vs. 19. (Read vs. 15-22)

A Sustaining Grace vs. 15-16

A. Paul never lost sight of the grace of God in his life. He uses rich biblical words to describe God's call on his life: he is a minister, a priest, an acceptable offering, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

B. In order to grow up in your faith I challenge you: Never, ever lose sight of grace. After God's grace saves you, it goes to work on you. Grace is the source of the gifts the Holy Spirit lays on you. Grace welcomes you in and sees you home. Grace heals your hurts and sends you out to serve. Let grace consume you and you will grow in character.

A Singular Glory vs. 17-19a

A. A powerful statement in this section is this remarkable observation in vs. 17, “I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God.” Here's what Paul is saying, “If there is a speck of worth in me, it is only through what Christ has accomplished.”

The word glory here could be replaced by the word “boast.” Paul is boasting in the Lord. He is so convinced that God is at work in everything that happens to him that he can talk about it without boasting about himself. God gets all the credit/glory.

When you come to the end of your life and measure what you have accomplished, will you be able to “glory in Christ Jesus?” I urge you to begin now to recognize God's hand in everything. The most confident, fearless servants of God are those who recognize (absolutely believe) God is in it all. What a way to live – seeing God's fingerprint all over the place!

An Unstoppable Gospel vs. 19b-22

A. In this last section imagine Paul standing on the isthmus between Macedonia and Achaia in the city of Corinth. To the east he could mentally see Athens where he spoke with philosophers, the Aegean Sea, Asia Minor and on to Galatia. Further east and south was Tarsus, his home town, and beyond that was Jerusalem. Paul had established churches in what is now Turkey northward up into Illyricum which was Yugoslavia until a few years ago.

But as Paul looked west he pictured the great city of Rome across the Adriatic. He anticipated that some day he would go to Rome but his vision didn't end there. He saw beyond Rome all the way to Spain. His great passion in life was to spread the Good News of Jesus everywhere. May God give us a world vision for the gospel!

B. The gospel had changed Paul's life and captured his heart. He writes in vs. 19, “I have fully proclaimed the *gospel* of Christ.” Paul opened this letter 10 pages back saying he was “set apart for the *gospel* (Rom 1:1). He declared “I am not ashamed of the *gospel* for it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.” (Rom 1:16). Now he's about to end his letter and the *gospel* is the last thing he wants to write about.

Introduction

It is crucial that we stay _____ for opportunities God brings into our life.

Paul’s compliment to the Romans: You are _____, _____, and _____.

A Worthy Goal – vs. 14

Three qualities that reflect depth of character and spiritual maturity

1. Full of _____
True goodness is _____
2. Complete in _____
Three truths to know and apply:

3. Competent to _____
A godly ability to speak the _____ in _____

A Sustaining Grace vs. 15-16

Let grace _____ you

A Singular Glory vs. 17-19a

Seeing God’s _____ on everything

An Unstoppable Gospel vs. 19b-22

To Paul the gospel was _____

Application

Do you live for the gospel?

Will you pray for changed (saved) lives?

Grace – Glory – Gospel = Character which flows into conduct