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Series: Romans: The Just Shall Live by Faith
Message: We Are All Ministers of the Gospel

Transcribed Message
February 11, 2024
Romans 15:14-16

When we were looking at Romans 15 in verses 7 through 12, I mentioned that there are at least five things that you would want to look for if you were looking for a church. I mentioned that the word should be at the center of that. There should be preaching and teaching of the word. There should certainly be clarity about the gospel and not only clarity, but there should be a heart of evangelism and discipleship to take that message, to bring it to people, to bring them to an understanding of the gospel, to disciple them in their walk with God. We talked about the need for biblical servant leadership so that what is modeled within the leadership of the church is really a heart and attitude of observing and then putting others before oneself. Then of course we talked about this matter of a caring and engaging membership.

Here we are this morning in Romans 15, and it looks to me like in verses 14 to 16 Paul says to us this is what this number five point looks like. We talked about a caring, engaged, encouraging environment where God's people are really sharing life together. When I came to these verses, I was reminded of what we had said just a couple weeks ago. I thought this is Paul fleshing out for us what that is going to look like. So that's what we get to see this morning in verses 14 to 16. To be involved in one another's lives is to see the beauty of God at work doing what only he can.

Let's begin with just a couple of introductory remarks. In this 14th verse, Paul begins this last section of Romans. This last section of Romans is going to be more autobiographical than we have seen to this point. Paul's going to be more transparent. He's going to show more of himself and his heart. He is not doing it for purposes of self-promotion. He's doing it because he wants again to gain a hearing from the Roman believers with regard to his apostleship, with regard to his message. He is going to remind them of his desire to come and be with them and meet them. He has never even met them. In this last section that Paul does all of these things, he has got a lot more to

say. Even though we say this is the last section, there's a lot more that Paul is going to say. In fact, there are 47 verses counting this morning and he comes to this last section and kind of wraps up the letter to the church in Rome. It reminded me of the statement that you often would hear when preachers are preaching, and they would say in conclusion, and then 20 minutes later they would say now in conclusion. Well, there's Paul. He's beginning this last section and for 47 verses as we wrap up into that 16th chapter, he's going to be sharing with them things about his heart.

That is what's in the second point. Paul is going to reflect on some of the things that he has already said. You know from the heart of Paul that he never minds reminding us of things that he has said before. When you look at that 15th verse: "but on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder." Paul doesn't mind repetition. Line upon line, precept upon precept. That's the way we learn. That's the way we take in. We need to be reminded. We don't just hear something one time and then never forget it. Paul's going to speak to things that he has already said and to review them and remind them of those things.

You remember back in the first chapter and in the 8th verse he said, "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because your faith is proclaimed in all the world." In verse 12, these are things that he is going to be reminding them of again. "That is that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine." That's what he said in the first chapter, and he's been doing that for a while now and he's going to do it again as we come to the closing verses.

Notice thirdly, these words are both personal and pastoral. Look at the way he starts off in that 14th verse. He starts off and he references them as my brothers. He's engaging them and saying you're my siblings. You're my brothers and sisters. Of course, you're my brothers and sisters in Christ. You might think in this last section that while it gets more autobiographical and he gets more personal that there might be a drop off in doctrine and in the teachings that we've seen to this point. That of course won't be the case either. Paul is going to bring some amazing things to us still in these remaining 47 verses. They're going to speak to the great truths of our faith.

I think because Paul was just a man of such passion. He was always asking himself the question: what am I doing with my life it's making a difference? What are you

doing with your life that's making a difference? What am I doing with my life that's making a difference? What am I doing that is having some eternal consequence? I think that's what constantly drove Paul. That ought to drive us too. That ought to be a question that we're thinking about every day. God, what is it that you have for me today that is going to have an eternal consequence? What do you have for me today that is going to be impactful for the kingdom? Clearly you know that's the heart of Paul and that's what he's going to speak to. While this has a very personal pastoral tone, it is really driven I think largely out of this passion that he wants his life to make a difference. He wants his life to count. He wants it to count for more than the years that he has here on the earth.

What does a caring fellowship look like? What does a caring fellowship look like? This first one is not in your notes, so you won't be able to write this one down. This is my last comment on this matter. But someone did send this to me this week. "A caring fellowship is where people give up their seats. A husband and wife are in prayer over a decision to possibly sit in a different pew." I see some of you are sitting in different places and I know there's an upside and downside to that. The upside is I'm used to you being where you have always been, and I don't know where you always are now. So, you may take that and use it and go with it. That's it on that topic. It will not come up again unless somebody sends me something again.

What is it that a caring fellowship looks like? The first thing is that there are people who encourage one another. Look at that 14th verse, just the beginning part of that verse. "I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness." Let's stop right there. People who encourage one another. We have to ask the question, in light of what Paul says, about the meaning of goodness. What does Paul mean when he speaks about the fact that they are full of goodness?

Let's begin by looking at the meaning of the word itself. The word itself could be translated goodness as it is here, but it has the idea of kindness. It includes the idea of people who are generous towards each other. They're people who are people of integrity as well. All that encompasses this word. Paul says you are full of goodness when he thinks of them. The things that he has heard, because again he hasn't met them yet, but he's heard a lot about them because the church at Rome was a significant

church in these early years. What he has heard is that this is a group of people that are kind, kindhearted, generous. They're people of integrity in the way they walk with God.

What do we know about that? The first thing we know is it's not an inherent goodness. It's not an inherent goodness. Paul has not changed his theology since chapters 1, 2, and 3. When we get to chapter 15 and Paul says you guys are so full of goodness, he is not talking about an inherent goodness. He is not changing what he said in chapter 3. Remember in chapter 3 in what is some of the strongest language in the New Testament describing our condition apart from Christ, there is none righteous; no, not one. There isn't anybody who seeks after God. That is just some of the mild language of that 3rd chapter as Paul describes for us who we are and what we are apart from Christ. There is no inherent goodness. When you do your survey on the street downtown and ask folks if people are basically good, most people would say I think in their hearts most people are basically good. That is not what Paul is talking about here. He is not talking about an inherent goodness. We know that is not the case. This is not mere flattery on the part of Paul. So how can he say when I think of you guys, I just think of how good you are.

I would suggest to you if it's not an inherent goodness, it is an inherited goodness. Those are tricky words in case you didn't know that. But it's derived from an inherited goodness. He is basically talking about this life change the gospel has brought. This word that speaks of their kindness and generosity, their integrity is a result of the life change that has taken place because of the gospel. It really is the beauty of the end of chapter 3 when he talks about what it means to be justified by faith. He talks about the beginnings of this matter of sanctification, of being set apart, and all of those wonderful things that he has spoken of in terms of being redeemed and declared righteous. All that has transpired and all that is taking place. Over in Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 8, he says something that I think corresponds to that; "For at one time you were darkness." There's no goodness in our heart of our own self because at one time we were in darkness. "But now you are light." There is an inherited in the Lord "walk as children of light, for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true." That's what he's talking about. He is talking about a goodness that is not inherently a

goodness, but a goodness that is the result of being justified, redeemed, and the power of the Holy Spirit of God living within us.

This goodness then is evidenced in our life by the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the fruit of the Spirit. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness. There it is. Faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Tucked right in the middle of all those fruit of the Spirit is this descriptive word that Paul uses here of goodness. The reason that he can speak of their goodness is he can speak of the fact that the Holy Spirit, having justified them by faith in Christ, is now doing this work of sanctification. It results in evidence in their life of this matter of goodness. In Ephesians 2:10 remember after Paul makes that amazing declaration of verses 8 and 9 of how we're saved by grace and faith, and he comes to that 10th verse and says, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works that he has ordained beforehand that we should walk in them." There it is. That's the picture. We're taken from a place of being in desperate need, not searching after God, not caring at all for spiritual things to this new work having brought us into new life and into a relationship with God.

I almost wonder when you come to this 14th verse and Paul's beginning this last section, I almost wonder if there isn't some reflection on his part of what just happened in the preceding context. Remember if you've been with us, 35 verses dealing in that previous section with this whole matter of things that he called opinions in chapter 14 verse 1. In chapter 14 verse 1, he began 35 verses of talking to them about how to get along with each other, how to stay connected to each other, how to think well of each other even during disagreement. That was the whole point. He acknowledged there are some of you in the church at Rome that are strong. You are mature in your faith. Others of you are weak. You're weak in your faith. You haven't fully come to grasp and understand the principles of how to walk with God and living under the new covenant and all the that involved. I almost wonder if the Holy Spirit doesn't say to Paul at this point okay, Paul, that's 35 verses in which you've been dealing with them on this matter of opinions and disagreements. Some of those issues, as we said even those issues today, are hard. It's not easy sitting next to somebody who just frankly has a very different opinion than you do on one of those issues. Maybe he just senses that at this point we've talked about this for 35 verses and now under the leading of the Holy Spirit

he says yeah, but I don't want you to be discouraged. I don't want you to be discouraged. I want to encourage you. These are hard conversations. We have to have them, but I don't want you to be discouraged.

I read a blog just this week entitled "Five Ways to be Present in Worship". The first one was prepare in advance. The second one: remember God is the object of worship. We're not coming to please ourselves. We're coming to focus on God. Be a participant, not a spectator. The fourth one is what grabbed me because he said number four is to be a relentless encourager. How about that? Be a relentless encourager. What does a caring fellowship look like? One of the things that would have to be true of a caring fellowship is there were people, lots of people hopefully in that fellowship, who were relentless encouragers. This is what he said about that. "What does it mean to encourage one another? It means being intentional, to care for one another's souls and point one another to Jesus. A ministry of encouragement is an unsung ministry. I can't think of a greater gift to cultivate and deploy in the church than to be a relentless encourager."

I look at that and I see that's what Paul is saying here. In the world, remember, Jesus said you will have trouble. In the world there's going to be discouragement. That is just the reality. Every one of us has faced at any different point in our life, and some of you may be right now dealing with things that are deeply discouraging for a whole range of reasons. You go out into the world every day and it literally is a place of discouragement. People will dump on you and criticize you, attack you, and they'll cut you off in traffic. They'll do all manner of things without any sense of goodness, without any sense of kindness, without any sense of generosity. It looks to me like what Paul is saying to us and as he did to those 1st century believers, he is saying that's why it's one of the reasons why you come here. That is one of the things that should be happening here. One of the things that should not be happening here is a spirit of pettiness, a spirit of criticism, and an inability to get along with somebody just because they take a different opinion on an issue that the Bible doesn't even speak about. If we can't get past that, then we're not any different than the world. When we come here, this ought to be a place of refuge. It should be a place when you walk through those doors, you better be ready because there's going to be a bunch of relentless encouragers coming

after you. Don't let that keep you away, but that does sound somewhat scary. To be an encourager doesn't take any special gifting. To be an encourager you don't have to rise to some super-spiritual level. Come on. That's something that is for every one of us. All of us can be encouragers. Here's the point. When people encounter a believer, somebody who says they attend Covenant Community Church, the report that ought to come back is m I met one of your folks today. I met one of the people that attend your church. I just have to say they are some of the kindest people I've met, and I sensed a goodness in their spirit. Such generous people. Those are the things that ought to be said of us. Not ...really? They go to church? They go to my church? No, it's not my church. It's Jesus's church. We ought to be kind and generous. Out there, it's a different thing. In here, that's the way it should be.

Second thing. People who are filled with knowledge. People who are filled with knowledge. I went back and forth so I put the word equipped up there too because it seems like either one of those words would work. People who are filled with knowledge. People who are equipped with knowledge. That's what he's going to say to us next. "I am myself satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge." That's where he begins. Filled with all knowledge. When I read that it seems to me that he is beginning his points of conversation here with just what it means to think like a Christian. Thinking like a Christian. When Paul says they are filled with all knowledge, he certainly doesn't mean that they know everything. There are people who think they know everything. We know that. But when he said you're filled with all knowledge, it's not like he is saying I didn't even need to write this letter to you because you already knew it all anyway. No, that's not his point at all. They are filled with all knowledge that is an indication of their maturity. That is what he is talking about. He is commending them because they have maturity. They have discernment. They have an appetite for the word of God.

Do you know what was true of the church in Rome? I think this is correct. I don't think in the book of Romans, in this epistle to the church at Rome, I don't think there's a place where he rebukes them. I don't think there's a place where what he says to them falls into the category even necessarily of correction. I look at those verses that we looked at in the previous section, those 35 verses on dealing with differences. It was

more of an acknowledgment to me that there's two different groups. You don't always agree with everybody on everything. But when we went through that section, it wasn't like he was bringing corrections and rebuke and admonition. This is remarkable.

Think of the epistle to the church at Philippi. Euodia and Syntyche. The two ladies in the 4th chapter who he called out by name and asked the church to help Euodia and Syntyche get along with each other. Someday we're going to meet Euodia and Syntyche in heaven. We're all going to have good thoughts at that point. we won't ever think anything bad but we're going to remember and say, oh Philippians 4, right? No, we won't do that because we are full of goodness at that point in time, a perfect goodness. But he is reflecting on the fact that they have a maturity. They have an appetite for God's word. How different is it when the writer of Hebrews wrote in the 5th chapter and he says in verse 11: "About this we have much to say and it is hard to explain since you have become dull of hearing, for though by this time you ought to be teachers. You need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food. For everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child in solid food is for those who are mature." That's exactly what Paul is saying here about these believers in Rome. I can put a stake out for you guys and you're on it. I don't have to bottle feed you anymore the elementary principles of the word of God.

It reminds me of what he said to the church at Thessalonica in the second chapter and verse 13 when he said to them when I came to you, and I brought the word to you. I just love the way he phrases it. He says you received it for what it was, not the words of man but the word of God. That's the discernment that a caring fellowship of mature believers has, so as the word is being taught and they are discerning and they're taking that in, it's not just the words of man. You understand when somebody is just speaking the words of man and just giving human wisdom, and when they're sharing to you the deep things of God. That's this church at Rome. He is commending them in that way.

I couldn't help but think of the fact that one of the charges that is frequently brought against the church in America today is that we're biblically illiterate. We've talked about that a hundred times, haven't we? This burden that within the church in the

United States where we have the Bible in our own language in 100 different versions. Every group now has the Bible made just for them. It's amazing. The marketing of God's word is incredible. The reading and taking in of God's word is not so incredible. Biblical illiteracy still seems to be what is too often the standard fare in churches today.

It was back in like 1985 a philosopher named Alan Bloom wrote *The Closing of the American Mind*. It had to do with higher academia in America. In 1985. The guy was a prophet because he wrote about our current condition even though he saw it happening already back in 1985. David Wells wrote a book not much after that regarding the evangelical community *No Place for Truth*. He just shows in his book the decline of theology and doctrine in the lives of God's people and how we are, as Paul says in Ephesians, caught up with every wind of doctrine that comes along. Some popular teacher, some charismatic teacher, somebody that's out there putting forward something and a whole bunch of people follow after and buy their books and think it's great. Paul's commending them here, it seems to me, that they are thinking like a godly, mature Christian should be thinking.

Then what happens with that? Then there is acting like a Christian, isn't there? It's acting. It is Romans 12:1 and 2. "I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable to God, which is the most reasonable thing that you can do. Don't be conformed to the world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Why? So that you can show that you're a different person, that your life has been changed by this gospel, that you're not living in conformity to the thoughts and the principles in the ways of the world. This matter of thinking like a Christian is certainly going to lead us to acting like a Christian. We asked the first question, "what do I know?" The second question is what am I doing with what I know? That's what we need to be asking as well. A caring fellowship is encouraging. A caring fellowship is filled with people who are equipped by the word. They are filled with the knowledge of God's word.

Now notice thirdly, a caring fellowship is people who are competent to counsel. Next statement in verse 14. "You're filled with all knowledge and you're able to instruct one another." I look at those six words and there's two words that I want to know more about. The first one is the word "able". What do you mean, Paul, when you say you are

able to do this? In some translations, it is the word “competent”. It's the same word. Now let's look at verse 13. He says at the end of verse 14 you are filled with all knowledge and you're able to instruct one another. You're able to instruct one another. Look at verse 13. When you look at verse 13, tell me what word in verse 13 is the same word as the phrase “able to instruct”. Able to instruct. What word in verse 13 is the same word? It is the word power. The word power in verse 13 is the same root word *dunamis* from which we get our word dynamite, from which we get our word power, from which we get our word effective, from which we get our word competent. that is the same idea here. It is the idea of power, of effectiveness, even of competency as we sometimes would see.

What is it that we're able to do? What is it that we're effective to do? He says we are able to instruct. We're able to instruct one another. This is a very interesting word. It has multiple meanings, but it comes from the word *nutheteo*. When you look at the word *nutheteo*, The first part of that word means mind. The second part of that word *theteo* is the idea of placing something. You put that compound word together and it means to put something in the mind. Put something in the mind. As you read your New Testament, this word is translated in various places in different ways depending on the context. In some places it is translated with the word instruct. You are able, you're capable, you're effective at instructing one another. You are able, you're capable at teaching each other. In other places, it carries the idea that you are able to exhort each other. In other places, it is you are able to correct, to warn. You see the breadth of the meaning of this word. It's to place something in somebody's mind. What you're doing is you're instructing, you're teaching, you're exhorting, you're correcting, and you're in fact warning.

Again, I go back to the end of the 20th century and a guy by the name of Jay Adams. Jay Adams was a Christian counselor who felt like what he was seeing happen in Christian counseling was it was becoming less Christian. He was burdened for what was happening in his counseling ministry field and he was concerned that it wasn't what he thought it should be. So, what does Jay Adams do? He preferred the term biblical counseling. You might ask what's the difference between Christian counseling and biblical counseling. In some cases, it might not be any difference. In other cases, it might be like night and day difference. I hope when you're ever looking for a counselor

you don't just ask for a Christian counselor. Somebody hanging a shingle over their door at the counseling ministry and just claiming Christian may be good. It may not mean anything much at all. If they're a biblical Christian counselor, that is a different thing. That's what you want. That's what Jay Adams was concerned about. He was concerned that counseling was leaving behind the Bible, the wisdom of God, the truth of God. Again, was the guy prophetic? Of course he was. There's lots of things that go under the name Christian counseling that really don't bring the effectiveness that Paul talks about here, having people who are filled with and equipped with the word of God. So, what did Jay Adams do? He wrote a book, and he began what was called for many years nouthetic counseling. It came from the Greek word *nouthetic*. Nouthetic counseling. He wrote a book called *Competent to Counsel*. Right out of Romans 15:14. I know that you guys are full of goodness, and you are able to instruct one another. Or another rendering would be I know you are competent to counsel. Jay Adams was a reformed Presbyterian. He believed in the sufficiency of the word of God. He thought the word of God brought a power with the gospel to bear on any problem that anybody had. He's not saying that every problem that we have is addressed in the Bible, but he is saying the wisdom of God and the sufficiency of God's word brings power. He also thought that many of our problems have a sin-related issue and that is of course true as well. so he began that. David Powlison has taken on that role now. Ed Welch. These men provide excellent counseling resources. That was what he says to us here. A caring fellowship is filled with people who are capable of instructing each other, warning each other, exhorting each other, teaching each other.

Now what is the goal of that? The goal is to build up and not to tear down. I want to show you by way of example. In Acts chapter 20 and verse 31. Remember Paul was leaving Ephesus and he wasn't going to see the elders there any longer, and so they came together. You just get the heart of Paul in such strength and beauty in Acts 20:31. He is saying this to the elders of the church in Ephesus: "Therefore, be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease day and night to admonish (that's the word: instruct, teach, warn) every one of you with tears, and now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified." He went on to warn them and to

encourage them. It's the same thing that we find over in Colossians chapter 1. In Colossians chapter 1 verse 28, you have that wonderful hymn we proclaim. Warning everyone. That's the word. Warning everyone. Here now it is warning everyone. Teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ. Then you turn a page to 3:16 and he says something similar. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God." 1 Thessalonians 5:14 says the same thing.

What is this? What's happening in a caring fellowship? It is nothing less than purposeful, intentional discipleship. It's purposeful, intentional discipleship. It is the pouring of your life into somebody else's life. It's being attentive to, it's looking and listening to people who may be around you that are hurting. They're in a tough spot in their life. maybe they haven't told anybody about it, but there's just the sensitivity that you have in your heart because you are filled with all goodness, you are equipped with this knowledge, and you have a heart that is ready to come alongside those who are struggling. This is investing in just ordinary conversations with spiritual purpose. This is what we do for each other. This is the value, by the way, of a smaller group than this. We can't really do this ministry in the way that we can in a small group. I can teach the word and others can teach the word in this setting and it will fill you with God's knowledge truth and with discernment. But in terms of what you can do in a small group when you can share life, what you can do one-on-one is very different. I think that's what he has in view here.

Now finally, let's look at this last one. People who understand their ministers. People who understand their ministers. Look at verse 15: "But on some points I've 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." To me, one of the saddest points of church history is the perversion of the ministry. The perversion of the ministry. You see it even in the history of Israel. I know it's not a direct corollary to obviously living as we are under the New Covenant, but even in the Old Testament you get a picture of sadly what comes later on. God's plan for Israel was one

way and they looked around at the nations around them and they said we want to be like the nations around us. God, we want to be like them. I know you're a king, but we want a king we can see. It was a corruption of really God's plan for ministry within the nation of Israel.

Then you come over into the church and it always surprises me when I study church history. It always surprises me how quickly the human heart of man moved away from the teaching of Jesus and the apostles, and how quickly the leadership within the church especially moved away from what the Bible teaches should be true of those who are in leadership. Very quickly the leaders, just 30 or 40 years after our Lord was raised and ascended and the early church is just beginning, before you even get out of the 1st century, men have taken names and titles and positions and authority for themselves that God never intended. It's still true today. What we have today within the Christian ministry is this ridiculous term called celebrity pastors. What do you think Paul would say if we asked him if he had ever heard of celebrity pastors? What would he say, church? *Me genoita!* May it never be! But we have this corruption of the ministry that began even as early as the 1st century.

Why do I say all that? Because no pastor in the New Testament is ever referenced as a priest and yet we have whole groups claiming to be priests. We have one priest, our High Priest. Paul is speaking metaphorically here and speaking, as we'll see in a moment, of priestly service. We're all believer priests. We don't have anybody that we need to go through to talk to our heavenly Father. We don't need to come to a communion table and hope that there's a priest there who will minister the elements to us because we need that from them. No, we don't need that from anybody. When Paul speaks here of this matter of understanding that we're all ministers, he wants us to see this ministry that has been entrusted to us.

What is the proper view of ministry? First, it centers around the gospel. As I said, Paul is not claiming to be a priest. He's using this metaphorically. He's talking about priestly service and in particular his priestly service here is the preaching of the gospel. It is the sharing of the good news. That's the way he began the epistle. He said I've come to proclaim to you the gospel, the good news. It's the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. So, the ministry that

we are all engaged in is we're ministers of reconciliation. We're all called in to the ministry. I am no more in the ministry than you are except that I'm paid. In that sense different, but not in terms of any standing before God or any giftedness. We all share in those things together. It centers around the gospel.

The goal is our sanctification. "So that", he says, the offering of the Gentiles. Consider again the Gentiles were viewed by the Jews as being unclean. Paul says they're not unclean, they're set apart, they're sanctified, they're holy unto God. It's a wonderful affirmation and it's all by the Holy Spirit.

How does it all come about? It all comes about by the sufficiency of the word. The sufficiency of the word. The word of God is sufficient for everything that God has called us to do and be. The word of God is sufficient for everything that God has called us to do and be. It is by the word of God that we can be a caring fellowship of people who encourage each other. It is by the sufficiency of God's word that we can be a caring fellowship that is equipped and filled with all knowledge. It is by the sufficiency of the word of God that we can be a caring fellowship and we can step into each other's lives and be competent to counsel and encourage. It is by the sufficiency of the word of God that we can be a caring fellowship, recognizing that every one of us is called into ministry.

What do we take away ministry? Ministry, I say to you, is not for the professionals. Ministry is not for professionals. All of us need to see ourselves as part of the spiritual care team of this church. When you see that and you step into that, then you don't miss out on seeing God using you, God working in you, God working through you. It answers the question that we raised earlier from the heart of Paul that drove his life when he asked probably on a daily hourly basis God, how can my life make a difference for the kingdom. How can my life make an eternal difference? How is it that my life is impactful for the things of God? We know that the answer to that begins with the gospel.

The gospel is simply the good news. The gospel says to every one of us we've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. The gospel says to us you cannot work your way to heaven. I don't care how good you try or how hard you try. You can't do it because God requires 100% perfection to get into heaven. That's none of us. But the

good news is that Jesus came, he died on the cross for my sin and for yours, and what we are asked to do is simply to believe on what Jesus did and what he did. That's enough. God says if you believe that what Jesus did on the cross was enough, because that's what the Bible says about what Jesus did, then he will forgive your sins and he will give you the gift of eternal life, and you'll join the ministry with all of others of God's people.

Let's pray. Father God, thank you for the sufficiency of your word. Thank you for the heart of Paul. We pray that for ourselves. We pray that for Covenant Community Church. We pray that we truly would reflect the truth of these verses, that we would in fact be a caring fellowship of believers who really do seek to encourage each other, are equipped by your word that we step into each other's lives at various times to encourage, to instruct, to warn, to admonish. Lord, we pray for the heart to do all the things that you have called us to do being in the ministry together. I pray that you would strengthen us in this, that we would lift up those who are weak, that we would lift up those who have fallen, that we would come alongside those who are struggling. Lord, enable us by your Spirit, by your word, by your grace to do the things that you called us to do. We pray that your Holy Spirit would open the heart of anyone this morning who has not yet put their faith and trust in Jesus alone for their salvation. May this be that morning that they trust Jesus for the forgiveness of sin and the gift of eternal life. We pray in Jesus's name, Amen.