

Portrait of a Godly Pastor (Part 2)

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[0:00] Amen. We'll just take this first verse, even though Paul's subject continues on through to verse 21, and that's why I read the entire text.

And we'll pick that up next time, next week, if the Lord gives us the day. And He might not. He might just come take us home. But anyway, we'll do that next week, the rest of it.

Now, Paul's subject in the larger passage, the whole thing put together, his subject here is, well, it's variously identified, different opinions maybe on it.

But in my view, Paul's subject here is, well, really, what he has here is a pretty good description of his ministry.

And I would specifically say his pastoral ministry. Because we don't have here, even though this is part of it, we don't have here, you know, the emphasis on missions or his missionary work.

[1:12] But he is speaking to a church. An established church, a planted church. Though Paul didn't plant this church, this particular church. And so he's being very pastoral and he's giving them a description, I think a good description, of his ministry.

His pastoral ministry. And so, I would say to you, and though there aren't many pastors here tonight, I'm one, and we have some other pastors here, but most of you are not.

But I would say to you that these verses that I read a moment ago serve as a pretty good set of instructions for pastors. But don't worry, there's a very clear application to all of us here.

And we'll get to that by and by. You know, the Apostle Paul was and continues to be one of the greatest examples of pastoral ministry.

You say, what church did he pastor? Well, a number of them. In fact, all of them that he planted. He was initially their pastor, even though he didn't live there. And he wrote letters to these various churches and had contact with many of them.

[2:27] But he was their pastor for a time. And so, he really does, I think, represent a great example of pastoral ministry.

For those who are in the pastorate, and I would also include those who are serving as missionaries. He is a great example for that. Some years ago, and I think it was back in the 70s, and then it was kind of later revised a little bit, but nothing really changed.

But Michael Hart, you may not know that guy, but he published a famous or infamous book simply entitled The 100. Have you ever heard of this book?

The 100. You say, well, 100 what? Well, the subtitle explains the meaning of the book, or the subject of the book. And here's the subtitle. A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History. All right, so 100 of the most, according to Michael Hart, 100 of the most influential persons in history. That's what the book was about.

[3:38] Now, number one on the list, who do you suppose made number one? You would hope, but it didn't. He didn't. Muhammad. He made number one on the list.

Jesus got in there third from the top. Just third. And so, you know, if you believe Michael Hart, believe his conclusions, then Jesus was the third most influential person in all of history.

Ridiculous, huh? But I'm bringing this up because of the person who came in sixth. And it was the Apostle Paul. Came in sixth of the 100, quote, 100 most influential persons in history.

And, indeed, Paul was very influential. Continues to be, even though much of his influence people might not ascribe to him. Might not know that this came from Paul by way of Scripture.

But Paul was, continues to be, a very influential person. When you consider, in the first case, that he wrote at least 13, Tom, of the New Testament books.

[5:00] I believe he wrote 14. But, see, I always have to get that dig in there, don't I, Tom? Anyway, he wrote a great deal of the New Testament, which includes, of course, the book of

Romans.

It's the book that we're in tonight, arguably the most significant of the letters written in the New Testament. Maybe, you know, other than the Gospels, I think the most significant.

One of the greatest foundational texts for the Christian faith, Paul wrote. It would be difficult to imagine the New Testament without the book of Romans.

It would clearly represent a huge gap in Christian doctrine. And, especially if you add on to that or include all of the other letters that Paul wrote.

Can you imagine those letters not being in our New Testament? Can you imagine the significance of that in our Christian doctrine? So, Paul's very influential. But, not just that, Paul was the apostle that God chose to send to the Gentiles.

[6:03] And, aren't you glad that he did? And, then Paul was the one God chose to really, literally spearhead the advance of the Gospel on into Europe and beyond through his missionary journeys.

It was Paul that was chosen by God to do that. And, so, I think pretty clearly that Paul was the first international missionary. Well, there may have been others who already had branched out, maybe through the dispersion of the Jews because of persecution.

There may have been others that went to other parts of the world who think there were. Others who went to other points in the world that Paul did not go to and served as missionaries in that sense.

But, Paul was the first international missionary.

And, he was the first and, I think, greatest theologian who has ever lived. Again, in reference to the letters that he wrote and the theological doctrinal significance of those letters or contribution to Christian faith.

And, he was, by most accounts, and I agree with this, that Paul was the greatest preacher in the history of Christianity. Maybe second only to Jesus. Alright?

[7:18] Not maybe. I think second to Jesus. Alright? But, what you may not have thought about concerning Paul is what I said a moment ago, that Paul was a pastor.

Paul had a pastoral heart for his people. And, that's very clear, especially right here in verse 14. I think it will become clear to you later, next Sunday, as we go through the rest of this text.

He was a pastor, the first pastor of those many churches that Paul planted and even others that were not specifically planted by Paul.

Alright, now then. These verses, verses 14 through 21, that I read a moment ago, again, they give us kind of a bird's eye view into Paul's pastoral ministry.

We can learn a great deal from that. And, this is, as some have called it, a portrait of a godly pastor.

Alright, so here's what we're going to see tonight and next Sunday.

[8:20] We're going to see Paul's pastoral commendation. He's commending the people there at the church in Rome. That's what we'll consider here tonight.

That's verse 14. Then, verse 15, is Paul's pastoral determination. Then, we have Paul's pastoral occupation, verses 16 through 17.

Then, Paul's pastoral motivation, verse 18. And, finally, Paul's pastoral ambition. What he sought for, strived for, his ambition, verses 19 through 21.

Alright, now tonight, then. Paul's pastoral commendation. In verse 14, he said, he wrote, Now, I myself am confident.

Or, I think the King James uses the word persuaded. Absolutely persuaded. Maybe that carries with it a little bit more force, a little more meaning. He says, I'm persuaded about something concerning you.

[9:27] That is the church at Rome. I'm persuaded about something concerning you. And, what? What was it? That you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able also to admonish one another.

This is a commendation. A really tremendous commendation for these believers here in Rome.

And, really, it's pretty amazing. Especially, again, when you consider that Paul did not plant the church there. And, by the way, at least up to the time he wrote this letter, he had never visited the church.

And, he had never, ever even seen any of these believers. And, yet, he knew them. I think he made it his business to know them.

To know them. And, he said, I myself am confident concerning you. He knew, apparently, quite a lot about them. Alright? MacArthur noted, he said, Paul addresses them both warmly and forthrightly

as if they were close friends.

[10:43] That's what you can kind of sense. I think you sense that from this verse in verse 14. This is pastoral. Very pastoral. He loved them. He instructed them.

He encouraged them. He commended them for their faithfulness. And, their effective service to the Lord. And, listen, people, this was no general word of commendation.

Not just kind of a, you know, kind of a general little statement. You know, you're just a bunch of great people. He didn't just say, you're just great people. You're wonderful people. Nothing general like that.

He's very specific. As we're going to see here in just a moment. In fact, this is not the first word of commendation he gave to the Roman believers. You have to kind of go back, way back, over two years back, to when we looked at Romans chapter 1.

Did you know we've been in Romans that long? You say, preacher, we know it. We know it. But, back there in chapter 1, verse 8, Paul said, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, y'all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

[11:57] What a commendation. Incredible. Now, here's the point. Or, I guess we could say the initial point, the primary point here.

Well, not the primary point. The initial point. I'll go back to that one. Here it is. And I would say that the point is primarily for me to get. Because I'm the pastor here.

You know, sadly, dare I even say this, but pastors can be some of the most self-consumed people you would ever meet.

Pastors can be some of the most ungrateful people you would ever meet. I can speak about pastors because I am one.

And, you know, pastors can be some negative. So condemning. Pastors can be so dissatisfied with the people of this church.

[13:12] It's not testimony. All right. Pastors can be this way. Well, I guess this is a testimony.

And one of my former pastorates, after I preached a Sunday morning sermon, one of the older ladies in our church shook my hand on the way out and said to me, Pastor, can't you ever tell us something good about us?

I didn't react so well to that then, but that was a few years ago. And hopefully I've learned a few things about, you know, relating to people.

A few things more about ministry than I knew back in those early days of ministry. And so the lesson here is that pastors would so love their people, the people of their church, the people they've been called to serve, so love them and care for them that he would always commend them for their good work.

And to commend them for where it's obvious that they are obeying God and serving Him and allowing the work of God to flourish through them.

[14:27] He ought to commend them. Now, for what did Paul commend the church at Rome? Three things specifically.

And I'll name them this way. Here's the three points of my message tonight. He commended them for their goodness of life. Their goodness of life.

Second, he commended them for their grasp of the truth. And third, he commended them for their gifts.

Gifts of exhortation. Exhorting one another. Alright? These three things. Now, before we discuss these three points of commendation, I've already told you what I'm supposed to learn from this text as a pastor.

And now let's just talk about what we all ought to learn here. Let's remember that Paul is writing to a specific group of people.

[15:33] A church. In Rome. He is not speaking generally of all churches. So this is not a commendation that, you know, just passes on to all churches.

Alright? And so the things for which he commended the church at Rome, he did not, for example, write to the church at Corinth. Just as an example.

He didn't write these things in that letter to them because he was not commending them for these things. So it didn't apply to them. Now, I think that in all of Paul's letters to the churches, you can find commendation, points of commendation.

Now, some more and some less. Some I think he had to really scrape the bottom of the barrel to find, you know, to commend. But he always commended in some way. But let's just get back to this. Let's remember. I'm going to make a point here, and it's an obvious point, that the things he commended the church at Rome for, he did not commend our church necessarily.

[16:45] Or any other church. That means we may or may not deserve his commendation in these areas. You say, now you're trying to make us feel bad, Pastor?

No, I'm trying to make a point. Actually, I'm asking us to approach this verse in a particular way so that it will help us.

Knowing that the commendation is not necessarily for us. It's for the church at Rome. So how do we approach this so that it helps us? Well, let's think of it this way. Paul's commendation given to the Roman church, naturally becomes for all churches a recommendation.

So Paul's commendation for them should be received by us as a recommendation. And if we take it seriously, that demands a self-examination.

Let me say that again. Paul's commendations given to the church at Rome should become, to all other churches, us as well, Paul's recommendation to us.

[18:08] And therefore, if we take that seriously, it demands a self-examination. To see if these things are true of us. And if they're not, to take some action to move that way.

I mean, if Paul's going to commend them for it, then these are things that maybe we ought to have. And maybe do have. I'm not saying that one way or the other. This is how we ought to approach the text. Alright?

So let's consider each of these. First, there's the goodness of life. Their goodness of life. He commends them for their goodness of life. He says, Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness.

Full of goodness. That's commendation number one. He said they were full. Not just good people. They were full of goodness. Full of goodness. Now the word translated goodness is, well, in the first place, a very unique word.

It doesn't appear very many times in the New Testament. In fact, I think Paul is the only one who uses the word. Maybe two or three or four times. And it's a word that doesn't appear in any other Greek literature.

[19:13] So it's very unique. But the thing we need to understand about it is that it's very broad. Very broad word. Very general word. And it could certainly mean moral goodness.

It could be translated that way. We could have Paul saying, I'm confident of this thing, that you also are full of moral goodness. Moral goodness. It could be translated that way.

Which would mean, I think would be, a bit of an overstatement on Paul's part to suggest that any Christian could be utterly full of moral goodness. Anybody want to stand today and give testimony to the fact that you're full, absolutely full?

That is, you are completely moral. Anybody? Anybody? I don't think that's what he means. Now, so, if it's a general word, it can also mean this.

It can refer to kindness. Christian kindness. Being considerate toward others. It can mean that. Loving and giving and so forth.

[20:22] And accepting and helping. And it just involves all these things. Just being kind. Kind people to one another. I think that's what the idea is here.

And especially when you consider that, starting at the beginning of chapter 14 and on into halfway through chapter 15, Paul has been talking, you remember, about how we're to relate to one another. How the strong are to relate to the weaker among us.

And how we're to receive one another. Not judge one another. Be tolerant of one another. To initiate, you know, a help toward one another.

An acceptance toward one another. As I said last week, making sure that the law of love always takes precedence over the law of liberty. And so, this is Paul's commendation to the church at Rome.

But this is Paul's recommendation to every church. And this calls for a self-examination. Examine yourself.

[21:24] Examine our church. Are we kind to one another? I think we are. Is there room to improve on that? Well, of course. Paul's second commendation.

Their grasp of the truth. He says, Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are filled with all knowledge. So, not only full of goodness, but full of knowledge. Filled with all knowledge. What does that mean? Well, Paul is not saying that the Roman Christians, you know, were a bunch of brainiacs. I mean, we're not to suppose that the church at Rome was populated by a bunch of Albert Einsteins or Stephen Hawking or Alex Trebek, you know. I consider him a pretty smart guy. I don't know if you'd lump him in with these other two guys, but that's not the idea. You know that Paul's not talking about that kind of knowledge at all. He's referring to the knowledge of God's revealed Word.

The knowledge of God's revealed truth. His Word. The Bible. They were filled with that. More specifically, they were filled with the truth of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[22 : 42] The pollster, George Gallup, we hear a lot about polls these days. This is a different kind of poll, not a political poll, but he once concluded, this George Gallup, he once concluded, based upon polling data, here's what he concluded, that there is a knowledge gap between Americans' stated faith and the lack of the most basic knowledge about that faith.

And he went on to say, half of those who say they are Christians do not know who delivered the Sermon on the Mount. I'm not just making an opinion about this, this is from polling data.

Polling Christians. There are a lot of Christians who don't have a grasp of the truth. And so do a little examination. Are you deserving of Paul's commendation?

I'm confident concerning you that you also are filled with all knowledge. And by the way, we're not just talking about a mastery of Bible facts here.

I mean, so what if you can win the game of Bible trivia and make everybody impressed? Big deal. The idea is more than just mere knowledge.

[23 : 56] It is the grasping of the significance of that truth. The eternal weight of it.

It's grasping also the application of that knowledge. Which leads us to the third commendation. Paul commended them for their gifts of exhortation.

Their gifts of exhortation. Again, now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you are able also to admonish one another. The word admonish comes from the Greek word nuthio.

Nuthio. And it's talking about instruction. And in this context, of course, it's biblical instruction.

So the idea here is that they were able to give biblical instruction to one another, to warn one another, to encourage each other. And again, the source of that instruction, of course, is the word of God.

[25 : 04] Nuthetic counseling, by the way, I think, is the way to go. That is, as opposed to, you know, Christian psychology, which really is just pseudo-psychology.

Nuthetic counseling is taking God's word and giving instruction. And so this is the idea. He's saying, this is what I commend you for, you people there in Rome, because you exhort one another with God's word.

I like the way James Boyce turned this commendation into self-examination. He asked, Do we love the Lord enough to talk about Him naturally and often?

Do we love others enough to bring spiritual truths into daily conversation? Do we care for Christians enough to point them in the right direction when we see that they are deviating from or falling short of it?

It is this kind of thing that Paul commended the Roman church for. Now, let's put all this together because they go together, all three of these.

[26 : 16] This goodness and knowledge come together for the spiritual well-being of the church.

It's the application, the coming together and application of the goodness and knowledge. You see, goodness without knowledge is just really not much more than emotionalism.

By the same token, knowledge without goodness is dry orthodoxy. But together, a powerful force for spiritual health in the church.

goodness and knowledge. So take Paul's commendation to this church and receive it as a recommendation.

That's my recommendation. And then respond to that with a self-examination followed by transformation.

[27 : 16] a change. a change. Thank you.