

<b>Series:</b> Romans	<b>Reference:</b> Romans 15:14-17	<b>Title:</b> Full, Filled & Fit	<b>Date:</b> 1.29.17
<b>Website Writeup:</b>			
We have more than we need to participate in God's global heart for reaching the nations. Sometimes we just need a reminder, a healthy challenge, and some simple steps to take.			

### Color Changes in text indicate slide changes

Last week we asked ourselves if we've been 'taken for the Taken'? Is Jesus' last command our first concern? Are we listening to the Scriptural message - the Gospel of Christ righteousness being imputed to us simply by faith, is not only available to us, but all people groups & we're called to be in Co-Mission with God to bring it to them?

*We quoted Psalm 46:10 which says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." And Isaiah 56:7b, "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations."*

*The pivotal verses in Romans are vv12:1-2 which state - Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God - this is your true and proper worship. <sup>2</sup>Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

As a result of God's mercy towards us in the Gospel, we submit our full selves; mind, body & soul - time, talent & treasure - and in the process of doing so we understand God's will. All nations will worship Him. We're in Co-Mission with God to see that come about. *Missions will end when Jesus returns - worship will continue forever. Worship is the catalyst of mission. Mission is the byproduct of worship.*

*We looked at the state of the world right now as it pertains to people groups - People Groups: 16,560 / Unreached Groups: 6,698 / % Unreached Groups: 40.4%. These statistics we can get from [joshuaproject.net](http://joshuaproject.net) where you can download & view people profiles, maps, videos, and much more concerning the unreached of the world.*

At least one of you this week took advantage of this. Brian Dressler, who gets a gold star for participation! Through his work in building his cidery, Brian has frequented *Home Depot*, where he's some across an Indian cashier who has a limp from a foot/back problem. An issue with which he can relate. And through a conversation on Indian film, he learned she spoke a language called Telegu. He wrote this to me earlier in the week...

*"I was completely surprised when I realized, India is made up of all kinds of ethnic & language groups, even though to us we can't tell them apart & just lump them together as Indian. After that I was able to go on the Joshua Project & look up her people group & learn more about it. It's a very cool resource, I thought you might like to hear about it being put to use!!"*

Scripture definitely calls the Church to 'go' to the nations (Mt 28). However, sometimes they're being brought to us. And if we open our eyes we may see them right around us, as Brian did. My challenge now is for Brian to pray over her foot/back problem!

Today we find ourselves in this short section of vv14-17...<sup>14</sup>*I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with knowledge and competent to instruct one another.* <sup>15</sup>*Yet I have written you quite boldly on some points to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me* <sup>16</sup>*to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. He gave me the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.* <sup>17</sup>*Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God.*

I said a few weeks back that if as a church we weren't growing in things Paul's reminding us of, these sermons would sound punitive. In other words, if you were being derailed in your pursuit of Christ & His calling on your lives by useless arguments & infighting, these sermons would seem harsh. It's a much different thing to sit & listen to a sermon on holiness & purity when you're not pursuing these things, than when you are. In the one instance, you begin to sweat when the pastor speaks & think, "Jeez, he's seeing right through me!" And in the other, you'd nod in agreement, and say, "Yeah, good reminder!" However, in a corporate sense we're doing these things well, so it comes off more as a welcome reminder, than convicting in nature.

Paul states the same here, his readers *are* full of goodness, filled with knowledge, and competent to instruct one another - They're full, filled & fit! Like you, an educated bunch. Good thinkers. You've studied the Scriptures, have the resources to continue to do so, and many of you have grown up under a strong Christian legacy. Others have laid a foundation in your life, and you've continued to build on it. You are practicing Romans 12:1-2 & building on it over time - making good decisions.

I remember when leaving for the mission field. Moving overseas to work in order that the Lampungese, a group of about 2.5 million Muslims in South Sumatra, would have the chance to know Jesus. They were one of the unreached people groups of which we've been speaking. I felt so ill prepared. So limited in my knowledge of the Scriptures, and experience in ministry. I was only 28! What did I know? I was a punk!

But I had to remember - if I compared myself to a theologian, Christian writer, or pastor of a church who'd been doing this for 30 years here in America, yes, I had a lot to learn. But stand me next to a Lampungese Muslim, and I was suddenly an expert on Jesus, and scriptural matters - I was full, filled & fit for the job. I had read the Bible well more than they; they'd never read it. I'd walked with Jesus; they hadn't. I'd struggled longer with my faith; they had not begun that journey. And I had the power of the Holy Spirit in my life; they'd yet to experience Him. Every advantage was mine - I had more than enough resources to be a powerful witness to Lampung Muslims!

In non-English speaking countries there are many requirements for a local person to become an English Teacher; degrees, testing, certifications. But for a native speaker from an English speaking country, all you have to do is show up, and you're almost guaranteed a job; even at the college level. That's because you know more English than any educated host culture English speaker in the crowd - it's your native tongue. That's what Paul's saying to us. He's reminded us of the basics of the Gospel, called us higher to maturity, and outward to reach the nations. We have all we need, and are building on that foundation as we grow.

To those people groups who've no Christian witness among them, we're the Scriptural Native Speaker. We have the life of Christ within us through the power of the Holy Spirit. We know more about Jesus than they. As a matter of fact you know more about Jesus than you think you know about Jesus. You know more about Jesus than your neighbor who grew up going to Catholic school, but has since given up on 'religion'.

Even though your friends have grown up in this country with a church on every street corner, you know more about Jesus because you've done the work. You've gone to your Bible Study, worshiped every Sunday, and talked with your friends day in & day out about your struggles of faith. To your friends & neighbors who do nothing but go to work, come home, drink wine, walk the dog, go to sleep & get up and do it all again - you're the local theologian! To everyone else around you, you're anywhere from 2 - 2000 steps ahead of them in your understanding of Jesus & the Scriptures, because you've put the time in through Community Groups, Worship, Personal Devotion & discipleship relationships.

Which is all there because God's called you to be a witness to those who don't yet know Him. He's prepared you for this witness. Have confidence, because in the land of the blind the one eyed man is king! Those who don't know Jesus are spiritually blind, and you not only have one eye, but two with which to see clearly! You have a lot to give!

If you want a funny read, pick up Mark Twain's, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. An engineer, Hank Morgan, hailing from Connecticut bumps his head & is accidentally transported back in time to King Arthurs Court, where he fools the people of that time into thinking he's some great magician. His knowledge of modern technology stuns the English of the Early Middle Ages with all kinds of normal modern day feats with which we'd be very accustomed already. He predicts, and claims to cause an eclipse only because he remembered the date on which it would occur. He uses fireworks & explosives to win favor & diminish the reputation of Merlin, his rival in the magical arts. A little bit of knowledge goes a long way. Information is power.

More & more as time goes on, you're neighbors are increasingly ignorant of Jesus & the story of God. America is increasingly becoming an unchurched nation. We assume people have read the Scriptures, but they haven't. In relation to the Story of God, it's as if they're stuck in the middle ages, and you've progressed 1300 years in your knowledge of faith. You can predict the spiritual eclipse & produce the spiritual fireworks to wow them through prayer! You're more like modern Hank Morgan in the Middle Ages than

ever before. All the while that void in people grows ever larger, and will be filled with something - and there we stand with all the answers, and the power of prayer at our disposal.

Do a test. When you're speaking with your neighbors, in a non-threatening way, ask them a few questions. Tell them you have no agenda, you just want to understand where they are in their view or understanding of Christianity. Ask simple questions...

- Do you know what a Pharisee is?
- Could they describe the way of salvation from a Christian standpoint?
- Can they quote a verse from Scripture?
- What does Baptism mean? And why do it?
- Have they ever read the Bible in whole, or in part?
- Why did Jesus have to die?
- What's the difference in living under the Law, or living under Grace?
- Who was Abraham and why was he important?

It may be something like a Jimmy Kimmel video when they go out on the street & ask questions to the public. You may find a few have some answers, but not many. The vast majority would probably know very little of the Gospel message, the Scriptures, and what they do know, may be a gross perversion of it. It will probably be very moralistic, rather than a story filled with Grace.

But back to our passage...Paul's been infected with the pastoral heart. And a pastor has at least two very evident functions. *Firstly, it's part of his job internally within the church to be a constant reminder of what the Gospel is to us. So he says to them, "I have written you quite boldly on some points to remind you of them again."* Why? Because we tend to forget & the Gospel's important. We tend to be subject to the law of entropy - Scripture urges us not to give up meeting with one another (Hebrews 10:24-25). To grow deeper in our understanding of the Scriptures for this reason (2 Peter 1:3-11 / Colossians 1:9-14).

Think about it, where else do you hear these messages which countermand the principles of the world? Nowhere, but in church! Left to our own devices, we would deteriorate in our knowledge & understanding of Scripture, and its transformational message. Most of us are not self-feeders, and even if we are, the principles of the Gospel must be lived out in community to have them known at more than an intellectual level.

So, *listening & participational faith are important.* I had a friend once who was convinced the phrase '*cleanliness is next to godliness*' was a verse in Scripture. I challenged him to look it up. Lo & behold, not a verse. Some other phrases commonly mistaken for Scripture in popular thought are...

- To thine own self be true (from the Shakespearean tragedy, *Hamlet*)
- Neither a borrower nor a lender be (Also from *Hamlet*)
- God helps those who help themselves (Possibly from an Aesopian fable, *Hercules & the Wagoneer*)

- Money is the root of all evil (a perversion of 1 Timothy 6:10 which says, *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils*)
- God works in mysterious ways (the phrase may originate from William Cowper's hymn, *God Moves in a Mysterious Way*)
- This too shall pass (possibly from the Old English poem, *Deor* [c. AD 10th century])

There are many more, and although I'm a pastor, I have found myself thinking a verse says one thing, until I read it & find I was off in a word or two & it made a vast difference! Or, I negated a phrase & it changes the meaning.

Even punctuation makes a difference in our reading. *We could say...A woman, without her man, is nothing. But change the punctuation and...A woman: without her, man is nothing.* Very different right!?! What about this short love letter...

*Dear Jack, I want a man who knows what love is all about. You are generous, kind, thoughtful. People who are not like you admit to being useless and inferior. You have ruined me for other men. I yearn for you. I have no feelings whatsoever when we're apart. I can be forever happy - will you let me be yours? ~ Jennifer ~*

*But love can easily become rejection with a little punctuation change...Dear Jack, I want a man who knows what love is. All about you are generous, kind, thoughtful people, who are not like you. Admit to being useless and inferior. You have ruined me. For other men I yearn! For you I have no feelings whatsoever. When we're apart I can be forever happy. Will you let me be? ~ Yours, Jennifer ~*

This is why Jesus valued every jot & tittle of the Hebrew Scriptures, every stroke's important since they make all the difference. *Psalm 46:10, Be still & know that I am God takes on greater meaning when we add I will be exalted among the nations. Isaiah 56:7, My house will be called a house of prayer means something vastly different to us when we add the phrase for all nations at the end of it.*

*It's why we seek to take in the whole counsel of Scripture within the context of community in light of biblical history & tradition. We don't do this disconnected from the Body. It's why doing a verse by verse study of a book is much more spiritually healthy than topical studies. A verse by verse study forces us to deal with every word in context - a topical study leaves room for picking, choosing & therefore perverting the Scriptures (not that topical studies shouldn't be done).*

*If Paul's redundant, it's for good reason. Anytime you see something repeated over & over in the Scriptures, take notice. It's important - God's saying listen to this. Like Jesus saying, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear..." He's slapping us on the forehead at those times saying, "Listen up, this is important!"*

*So, a pastoral heart firstly seeks to constantly remind us of the simple Gospel in our lives, in order that we won't deviate from it. So we won't slip back under the slavery of the Law - that we'd remain joyfully present under the blessing of Gods grace.*

But his second purpose is to remind us what to do with this knowledge. In v14 he says, you've got all you need, you're going in the right direction. In v15 he said, I just wanted to remind you of the foundational Gospel. And now he also reminds them that the blessings they receive in that knowledge, are in order that they might pour that blessing right back out to the nations.

*SO... I have written you quite boldly on some points to remind you of them again.... because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. He gave me the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God.*

The Gentile Nations, those whom Israel had disregarded. With whom they'd become closed to sharing with due to their nationalistic pride. Those whom Israel wouldn't have given a second thought to if they hadn't been reminded & pressed to do so by God himself through the prophets.

For instance, have you ever thought about the Uyghur in Afghanistan, the Sundanese of Indonesia, the Telugu in Bahrain, the Kenembu in Chad, the Tobilung in Malaysia, the Arab Bedouin in Jordan, the Basque in Spain, the Kurd in Southern Iran, and thousands of other unreached people groups? This is where we should be talking about these things, praying about them, lifting them up. We're God's house of prayer for all nations.

Remember, Israel was strategically & geographically placed smack dab in the center of the trade routes of the known world, with the Temple at its center. The Temple boasting the outer Court of the Gentiles. That place where all the Gentile nations could come & see God's house as a house of prayer for what? Just Israel? No, as a house of prayer for them! A place where they should be able to see the love of God & His Truth proclaimed over them as well as Israel. But you remember in Mark 11 Jesus overturned the tables in the Court of the Gentiles because Israel had disregarded its purpose, and was using it for greed & selfish gain. We do need reminding.

And Paul's a minister of Jesus, tasked with the duty of proclaiming the gospel of God to the Gentiles. And from all that he's said throughout this book, I believe he's saying the same he says in **1 Corinthians 11:1, *Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. Jesus was about the kingdom of God for all nations. It was his last command, it is Paul's first concern. And therefore, it should be ours.***

So, if we're full, filled & fit - full of goodness, filled with knowledge, and competent to teach, what do we do now? There are six ways you can start to move forward in this... learn, pray, go, send, welcome & mobilize (Explain - and what CG's are doing this week - hand out packets).

## Questions for CG Leaders

1. Read 2 Peter 1:5-9, *5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.*
  1. How does this passage fit with our sermon on Wisdom in New Years?
  2. Or with what Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*
  3. Or with what we heard Paul say in Romans 14:1-15:7 about the spiritually mature & immature.
  4. What does it mean to be effective & productive in our knowledge of Jesus?
2. Go to this link, <https://joshuaproject.net/resources/videos>, and scroll to the very bottom of the page to find the *Don't Waste Your Life* video. Watch this video together, and discuss what it means to just send money, or to be willing to go ourselves?
3. Go to this link, <https://joshuaproject.net/resources/media>, and take the quiz together as a group.
4. Go to this link, [https://joshuaproject.net/resources/prayer\\_videos](https://joshuaproject.net/resources/prayer_videos), and watch the short video on praying for Muslims.
5. With your group (invite them to bring their laptops or use their phones to follow along if they'd like), go to this link, [https://joshuaproject.net/resources/prayer\\_calendars](https://joshuaproject.net/resources/prayer_calendars).
  1. Scroll to the bottom to the *Regional Calendars*
  2. Click on the *Largest Muslim Peoples Calendar*.
  3. Find the date you are currently meeting on.
  4. Find the name of the Unreached People Group to be prayed for on that date
  5. Then go to the top of the page to the search icon, and type in that people group
  6. A number of listings may come up, just choose the first or best, and read aloud the information about them to your group
  7. Then pray for that group and the work going on among them.
6. Give your group some homework for the week.
  1. Have them download the app for the *Unreached of the Day* from Joshua Project
  2. Challenge them to pray for 5 minutes a day / 5 days for the coming week for those groups which come up through the app
  3. Challenge them to look up and research each of those groups a little more on Joshua Project during their week
  4. Challenge them to memorize Mt 24:14 & 28:18-20 & to pray those verses, asking God to clarify what their role in reaching the unreached is to be. Urge them to listen to, and not just speak at the Holy Spirit!
  5. Challenge them to study Colossians 1:3-14 in their quiet time, comparing it to Romans 15:14-17.