



## [Romans 15:14](#)

(14) And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

*King James Version*

This verse provides a clear sense of an active, even aggressive, [goodness](#). Paul links goodness with full knowledge and admonition of each other. This gives us insight into what he knew of and expected from Christians in Rome, placing before us a target to shoot for in our relationships within the [fellowship](#) of the church.

But Paul lists goodness first, as though it is either the foundation for the other two virtues or at least their necessary precursor. [1 Corinthians 8:1](#) says, "Knowledge puffs up." Knowledge combined with vanity can spew a torrent of self-righteous offense, but goodness will hold such a display in check and guide knowledge to build up rather than destroy.

Biblical goodness is always, under every circumstance, beneficial. Though he had not yet been to Rome at the writing of his epistle, Paul evidently understood that he was writing to an unusually strong congregation. He was so confident that they had a strong and sincere desire to do the right thing that he wrote that they were "full of goodness [and] filled with all knowledge."

This is quite a compliment, serving to reinforce what he writes in [Romans 1:8](#): "Your [faith](#) is spoken of throughout the whole world"! They were far different from the recipients of Hebrews, whom he tells, "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the [oracles of God](#)" ([Hebrews 5:12](#)).

The Romans' full knowledge was an intelligent and comprehensive understanding of the faith and Christian responsibility. Strong faith is not built on weak understanding. They had given honest, serious thought to applying their faith to the sometimes bewildering tangle of life in [this world](#). They were living it.

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These two qualities—goodness and knowledge combined—present a sound vehicle for instructing each other on the best ways to "walk the walk" despite the pulls of this world. Goodness provides the right disposition and motivation, and knowledge, the correct instruction. One devoid of the necessary knowledge cannot teach; anyone destitute of goodness will not even try because he lacks the impulse to help others in the right spirit. Even if he makes the effort, only a spirit marked by active [love](#) will win the response without which no true education in God's way is possible.

The word translated "admonish" in verse 14 is rendered "advice," "counsel," and "instruct" in other translations. In [1 Thessalonians 5:14](#), the same word is translated "warn," indicating that it is more than mere instruction. The English word that comes closest to expressing the sense best is "inculcate." *Inculcate* means "to impress upon the mind by frequent repetition or persistent urging" (*Webster's New World Dictionary*). Among its synonyms are such strong words as "indoctrinate," "brainwash," "admonish repeatedly," and even "hammer"! No wonder William Barclay says that *agathosune* is goodness that "might, and could, rebuke and discipline."

This goodness does whatever loving [wisdom](#) calls for in a given situation. However, this in no way means that one should deliver the admonishment, counsel, or even rebuke with meanness of spirit. In other words, one with goodness does not viciously "chew somebody out." Numerous Scriptures counsel us to be gentle and tender with each other. Paul is himself a model of tact and diplomacy in dealing with difficult circumstances within congregations and between himself and a person or congregation.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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