



World Christian Fellowship

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Romans 20 Debted to God

Romans 1:13-15, *Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles. ¹⁴ I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. ¹⁵ So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.*

Romans 1:8-16, the apostle Paul opens his heart.

He lets us see the motives with which he serves the Lord Jesus Christ. No greater servant ever lived than the apostle Paul, except our Lord Himself.

This passage forces us to look inside and to see what really made him the reasons that he was what he was, that he did what he did, that he thought the way he thought, and wrote the way he wrote.

Apparently, it was very important to him as he wrote this epistle to stop at the very beginning after just the introduction in the first seven verses and unbarred his heart.

1. Fruitful Spirit.

V 13, Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles.

Paul writes to them the reason why he could not come to them, saying that he was prevented by the Lord.

Paul's view of the ministry was a pursuit for spiritual fruit. The ministry is not an end in itself, it is a means to an end.

The purpose of preaching is not preaching!

The purpose of preaching is fruit.

The purpose of ministry in music is not ministry in music but a fruit in your life.

It is to get you to think about divine truth.

It is to touch your heart.

The purpose of any ministry is not the function itself.

The purpose is fruit, product, result.

The pursuit for spiritual fruit was the mainspring of all apostolic activity.

John 15:16, *You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.*

Jesus sent the apostles out to bring forth fruit.

A person who serves with genuine is only content with fruit.

- Some people are content with prestige.
- Some people are content with pure acceptance.
- Some people are content with money.

The devil tempts the good and sincere people with thought of questioning their ministry. Some fire full ministers loose out because they do not see the fruits in their life.

Adoniram Judson story should inspire us!

Some can be pressured by Satan to settle for something far less than what they ought to settle for.

2 Timothy 2:6, *The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops.*

V 13, *Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren,*

This phrase is used by Paul many times and it is a phrase for emphasis on essential truth.

- Paul uses it when he talks about the doctrine of salvation.
- Paul uses it when he talks about the doctrine of Satan.
- Paul uses it when he talks about the doctrine of the second coming.
- Paul uses it when he talks about spiritual gifts.

Paul uses it in a lot of very key places, and he uses it again here. So, in effect Paul is telling the Christians in Rome, I do not want you to miss it. I want you to know that I wanted to come desperately in order that I might have some fruit among you.

Paul is saying that I am not interested in the amount of the love offering, I just want the fruit.

You can measure your commitment to Christ by whether you are more concerned with what happens in others' lives than you are with what happens in your own.

Do you really get lost in what happens in the lives of other people?

What is fruit?

In the Scripture, three things constitute fruit.

a) Attitude fruit.

Galatians 5:22-23, *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.*

We call that attitude fruit.

Those are all attitudes:

Love's an attitude, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control. Those are attitude fruit. Fruit is attitude.

Paul is saying that he wants to reach Rome and see that they may be the right attitude. An attitude of love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

b) Action Fruit.

Fruit is also action.

Fruit is not only attitude, but it is also action. Fruit is what you do.

Romans 6:22, *But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.*

Here Paul is talking about holy living.

The fruit of your lips, which is praise.

The fruit of your hands, which is offering.

Philippians 4:15-17, *Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. ¹⁶ For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.*

The fruit of righteousness, which is the behavior of your life.

So, we have attitude fruit and action fruit.

Paul says, not only do I want to see you with the right attitude I want to see you with the right action.

c) Salvation fruit.

Romans 16:5, *Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Greet my beloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ.*

The first converts in an area. Fruit are the people that come to know Jesus Christ and are added.

Paul desired to save men.

1 Corinthians 9:22, *to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*

So, Paul says, my desire is to see believers with the right attitude, believers with the right holy lifestyle, and people added to the kingdom.

The last one is the real thrust of this text. The fruit was enormous when he got to Rome.

Paul wrote back to the Philippians from Rome.

Philippians 4:22, *All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household.*

He had been used of God to win people in Caesar's household to Christ. Paul was in the ministry for fruit.

Acts 28:30-31, *Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, ³¹ preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.*

We get excited about testimony after testimony of how God has changed lives.

2. Obedient spirit

V 14, *I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise.*

Paul continues to talk about his attitudes and the reasons he serves.

Paul says that he was obliged.

The ministry for him is not a fantasy.

He did not want to be in anything but to preach the Gospel.

For him it was a debt.

It was an obligation to God.

He owed a debt to God.

If you have forgotten, look for a moment at

1 Corinthians 9:16-23, *For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!¹⁷ For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship.¹⁸ What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel.¹⁹ For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I*

might win the more;²⁰ and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law;²¹ to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law;²² to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.²³ Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.

Paul was on the way to killing Christians and the next thing he knew, God turned him around and called him into the ministry.

Paul was in against God's will.

So, he, do not commend me. I have a debt to pay.

What motivates me to preach?

You have an obligation to God.

Paul says, "I have a debt."

His debt is really to God, toward the Greeks and barbarians.

A debt to God on their behalf.

In a sense he has a debt towards Greek and Barbarians.

If you are walking down the street and you pass a house and you notice that the roof is on fire and the family is in another section of the house. How can you sit and do nothing?

What is your responsibility?

You could stand on the road and deliberate thinking that anyone knows them that could let them know their house is burning down.

No!

Because they are in a dire situation and you have the information that can save their lives, you owe a debt to them.

What happens when you see person falling from the bridge into the lake?

What happens when you see a person as a destitute?

Paul says I owe the Gentile world a message because they are on the way to hell and I know the way to heaven.

We all have a debt!

To whom much is given, much is required.

Paul had an obligation, first, to God and it was his apostolic calling. His debt was expressed in preaching the gospel to Greeks and barbarians.

"Greeks and barbarians," "wise and unwise," are parallel phrases.

The Greeks were considered the wise and the barbarians the unwise.

Paul is saying that the educated and the uneducated. The Greeks were very sophisticated and when they knew the Greek language, of course, which was believed to be the language of the gods. The language of philosophy and wisdom.

Now they thought they were really the elite, the educated. When a person came along and spoke another language, they had an unintelligible kind of sound, and the Greeks used to call their unintelligible chatter "bar-bar-bar--bar."

So, foreigners became known as bar-bar-ians. They were regarded as uncultured, uneducated, and unintelligent.

Paul is saying I owe the same responsibility to the educated, the uneducated, the wise, the unwise, the cultured, the uncultured, the Greeks and the bar-bar-ians.

What does Paul say in that statement?

You cannot pick and choose who you want to preach the gospel to.

Paul says, I want to reach people.

Do you remember the first person that Jesus ever revealed Himself?

It was a half-breed harlot living in the village of Sychar who had a handful of husbands and was living with a man who was not her husband. To make matters worse, she was a Samaritan. But the gospel is always the great equalizer!

It is so easy to be trapped in being a respecter of persons. We tend to want to evangelize the high class and we let the rest of the people pass by.

With an obedient heart, Paul was going to fulfill his debt.

Paul would obey at any cost. On his way to Jerusalem, they told him he was going to be imprisoned.

Paul responded saying that "I don't care. I'm going to finish what the Lord has given me to do."

We all are going through struggles and we have not seen all the joys. It is tough and all we have got is the bottom line of a debt to God.

If we are faithful to discharge the debt, He will fill our heart with joy.

3. Eager spirit.

Balances off about discharging the debt.

That is not to say that you do it reluctantly.

There is an eagerness to fulfill that responsibility.

V 15, *So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.*

Acts 20:22-24, *And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.²⁴ [c] But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.*

As if somebody wrapped up his heart and dragged him into Jerusalem. He was compelled. It indicates a strong desire.

Paul says that his spirit is bound. A good indication that Paul's self-preservation was not at the top of his priority list. His only concern was to fulfill the plan of God and the ministry God had given to him and that was everything he lived for.

2 Corinthians 5:6, *So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.*

Philippians 1:21, *For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

Colossians 1:24, *I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church,*

So, he had an eager spirit.

Life had only one value to Paul. Think of this and look at your own life. This is a very hard thing to accept.

Life had only one purpose. There was only one value in life to Paul and that was to do God's work and consumed by that.

He was eager to preach. And there were others like him. I think of

Philippians 2:25-27, *Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need;²⁶ since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.²⁷ For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.*

Epaphroditus was working with Paul there. Paul says God was not only merciful to him to preserve his life, but merciful to me because my heart would have been broken.

So, Paul is saying in Romans 1:15, all that falls within my power, all that falls within my prerogative is ready. As far as I am concerned, I am eager to come to Rome to preach the gospel.

He is like a racehorse in the gate, banging against the steel, waiting for the thing to open.

He is like a sprinter who gets in those blocks, and I can remember that feeling so well.

Paul was like a sprinter and God had to hold him back he was so ready to go.

Are you so eager?

Is that the kind of service you render?

Or does somebody have to get behind you and shove with all their might to get you involved?

Does your wife have to give you the typical Saturday afternoon lecture to get you here Sunday?

To get you to the Bible study.

Or are you eager?

If it comes out of your heart, you are eager.

It is amazing that he was as eager as he was because he knew what a volatile place Rome was. He knew they would despise him. He knew they would reject his message. He knew they hated Christ.

Paul, how can you be so eager to go to Rome?

Rome was up to their neck in emperor worship.

They despise the gospel of Jesus Christ.

How can you be in such a hurry to go there?

Aren't you intimidated about what is liable to happen?

There was a great saint in the early church by the name of **Basil**. You can read about him. He was martyred in **363 A.D.** and he was martyred by a man that became known as Julian the Apostate. Julian had restored into the Roman Empire heathen worship. **Constantine**, for the most part, had made Christianity the religion around 325.

When Julian came in, he brought back heathen worship. Basil, who was a great Christian, went to him one day and this is what the historian said he said to the emperor.

"You renegade, you have abandoned the throne prepared for you in heaven. Verily I believe that Christ, whom you have begged, will take you and pluck you out of thy dwelling that you may know how great is that God whom you have offended. You have not thought of His judgments, nor venerated His altars,

you have not kept His laws which you did declare often with your lips. Wherefore, great emperor, Christ will not remember you."

Emperors were not used to being talked to like that. Julian ordered Basil to prison. This was the punishment.

Every day the guards were to make seven leather thongs from strips pulled out of his skin. So, every day they would cut long strips to make into thongs. This went on for weeks.

Finally, Basil picked up one of the thongs and asked to see the emperor. This was granted because the guards felt that he had prepared himself to deny the faith and affirm the place of the emperor.

So, he was brought holding in his hand his own flesh, scarred all over his body and this, the historians record, is what he said, "Dumb, deaf, and blind are your idols, apostate. To me to live is Christ, to die is gain."

He threw the thong of his own flesh at Julian's feet. They carried him out and dropped him on a red-hot bed of iron spikes and he died.

Soon after, Julian himself died. There are many records of his last words.

He is said to have said this, "You have conquered, O Man of Galilee." Basil was bold!

His boldness got the message through.
Paul served with his spirit.