

Romans 1:13-15

Student Notes

- **Recap: Why Paul had not been to Rome:**

1. It could have been spiritual opposition: See 1Thessalonians 2:17-18
2. The hindrance could have been the sheer magnitude of the apostolic work in the eastern part of the empire.
3. It may have simply been the will of God and the timing of God.

- **The Harvest Anticipated:**

v. 13 "... In order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles."

What does Paul mean by fruit or harvest? "Karpos": "Fruit" or "Harvest".

1. Some think Paul is referring to the salvation of individuals in the churches at Rome. See: Jesus use in Luke 10:2.
2. "Fruit" as a reference to the offerings he intends to receive for the trip to Spain. See: Romans 15:28.
3. Simple reference to whatever spiritual blessings and growth may take place during his ministry to the believers at Rome. See: Romans 6:21-22.

- **Paul's Obligation to the Greeks and Non-Greeks (Barbarians):**

v. 14 "I am obligated both to Greeks and Non-greeks, both to the wise and the foolish."

Translation variations: “I am obligated”, or “I am a debtor”. A deep-seated thought in these phrases: Paul’s core motivation for apostolic ministry. (See: 2 Corinthians 11:26)

Verse 14: “I am obligated both to Greeks and Non-greeks, both to the wise and the foolish.” A parallel passage: “Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” -- 1 Corinthians 9:16:

Paul is indebted to the Greeks and the non-Greeks. Paul is their debtor.

Notice he did not say, “I am indebted to God.” You can’t be indebted to God. Grace is grace; it is free grace or it is nothing at all. You cannot owe God a debt of grace that you must somehow pay back.

So how is Paul a debtor to the Greeks and non-Greeks? John Piper gives an excellent answer when he writes:

“When you hear good news about how to escape from a common misery, you become a debtor to tell the good news to others so they can escape the misery too.”

Paul had found great deliverance from a very religious, but very dogmatic, even hateful system. Now he is obligated to share with Jews and Gentiles alike the deliverance that can be found in Christ.

- **To The Greeks and Non-Greeks (Barbarians)**

“Greeks”: “Ellēsin” -- those who were of Greco-Roman status, culture, language, and heritage.

“Non-Greeks”: “Barbarois” -- “Foreigners or Barbarians” ... All peoples outside Greco-Roman language, influence, and culture. Note: The Greeks were considered sophisticated and cultured: the Barbarians were the opposite.

Paul: "I am obligated to both. I have a debt to them to tell them about Christ."

John Piper:

"Culture and intelligence and education do not qualify you for the gospel of grace. And being unrefined and uneducated and illiterate do not disqualify you for the gospel of grace. There are no qualifications for this grace."

Like Paul, we owe the gospel to the educated, cultured, and highborn, just as much as we owe it to the uneducated, uncultured, and lowborn. Grace is for everyone and we have an obligation to share it with prosperous Americans and impoverished third-world nations.

Verse 15 he writes:

"That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome."