

ROMANS 1:13-16 "The Power Of The Gospel Is God's Power In Your Life"

Paul's desire to be with the Roman Christians was a sincere one. The church in Rome had been established for awhile and Paul wanted to go to Rome for their encouragement, as well as his own, and it was also an ideal place for launching into other parts of the world to share the gospel, such as Spain, which Paul desired to visit.

If there were any in Rome who may have doubted his sincerity, he assures them that was always his intention to be with them, but that God would be the One who would pave the way in His time and will.

Rom 1:13 "I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles."

Some have wondered what could have prevented Paul from going to Rome. And a variety of things come to mind. 1) In A.D.49 there was an imperial edict to expel the Jews from Rome.

F.F. Bruce quoting from Dio Cassius says, "Claudius had already imposed some restrictions on the Roman Jews at the beginning of his principate: as the Jews had again increased in numbers, but could not easily be expelled from the city because there were so many of them, he did not actually drive them out but forbade them to meet in accordance with their ancestral customs."

Of course, Paul being a Jew would have come under scrutiny with this edict. Another prevention could have been Paul's busy schedule with all of his traveling to found churches among the Gentiles. Keep in mind that over a period of a few years Paul made three missionary journeys.

And we should never discount God's direct intervention in Paul's life not to go to Rome. The Holy Spirit had prevented Paul from going into Asia even though he thought it would be a good idea to go there.

Act 16:6 "Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia."

God's will and timing should be our ultimate concern, no matter how good of an idea we may have. And then we must follow where He leads. And so, in essence, this is what Paul tells these Romans. 'I've wanted to come to you for some time, but things beyond my control, and the will of God at that particular time, did not allow me to come.'

In verse 13 our text we see a second reason for Paul wanting to go to Rome. Remember, in verses 11 and 12, he wanted to be there to impart some spiritual gift which was the sharing of their faith for mutual encouragement so that they could be strengthened.

But to be strengthened to just flex our spiritual muscles was not Paul's desire. He continues in verse 13 "in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles."

The NAS and the KJV both put it this way, "that I might obtain some FRUIT among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles." The Greek word used for the NIV's translation of Harvest is literally translated fruit. And so the NAS and the KJV are closer to the original meaning.

What kind of fruit did Paul want to obtain from them? If we use the word fruit in the sense of harvest there is the idea of seeing converts to the faith as a result of their faith in Christ.

This approach to this verse can't be discounted, but if we are going to get to the clearer picture of what Paul has in mind we need to keep this verse in the context of Paul's thought of wanting to impart the spiritual gift for their strengthening.

Strengthening to what end? Well, again we let the word of God be our guide to the interpretation, and keeping in the context of this letter, Paul gives us a clearer picture in Rom 6:22 "But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the BENEFIT you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life."

The word "benefit" is the exact same Greek word karpos used in our text in verse 13 for "fruit". In other words Paul says, 'I'm looking to get some fruit from you, something which will be a clear indication of which tree you belong to.'

And that's why Paul essentially says later in this letter in Rom.6:22, that in Christ we have the fruit of the Spirit which shows itself in holiness, a life set apart for Christ. A life that

desires to seek the Lord in all things and live in the power of the Spirit to God's honor and glory.

It's not as though Paul is saying that the Roman Christians aren't demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit in their lives in this opening chapter, but he wants to taste that fruit first-hand and make sure that fruit continues to ripen and is sweet so the rest of the world sees the love of Christ in their presence.

And in that sense, with that kind of fruit, the Lord will be able to show a harvest by bringing others into the kingdom through their faithfulness and love to Christ.

Paul ends verse 13 by essentially saying that, 'this is the kind of thing which is going on among the other Gentile churches, and it's what I hope to see among you as well.'

This is fundamental to the growth of the church. There's the tendency to think that holiness has nothing to do with harvest in the sense of gathering souls for Christ. The truth is that the fruit of the Spirit works in conjunction with the gospel message.

It is the fruit of the Spirit which demonstrates the power of the gospel; the power of God Himself working in our lives to bear witness to the fact that the Creator is alive and well and desiring to reach out to a lost world through His servants who show His love.

And so being fruitful will include sharing in the harvest, but its primary sense is showing fruit in our lives by being faithful and obedient to Christ.

And this is the sense Paul expresses to the Philippians in Phi 1:22 "If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me..... "

His love for Christ compelled him to show that love in the way he served the Lord, in the way he equipped the Body of Christ and the example he was.

We see how this fruit manifested itself in one of the Gentile churches Paul refers to here in Romans..... Col 1:6 "All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth.⁷ You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf,⁸ and who also told us of your love in the Spirit."

That's the fruit. The love in the Spirit which shows itself in the acts of the Spirit in our lives. Gal.5:22 "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."

And this is what Paul wanted to taste among the Romans and that's what Christ wants to see in His church today. Paul goes on in Rom 1:14 "I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish."

The word obligated here is also translated a debtor. Paul was indebted to the world to give them the truth of Christ's gospel. William Barclay in his commentary on Romans says, "Paul was thinking of two things when he wrote that. He was under obligation because of all the kindness he had received, and he was under obligation to preach to them. This highly compressed sentence means, 'Because of all that I received I am under obligation to all sorts of men.'"

He begins with the obligation to all nations in general. Both to Greeks and to Barbarians, as it's found in other translations. When he speaks of barbarians he doesn't necessarily mean that in a derogatory sense.

When we think of barbarians we usually associate it with cruel and inhuman sorts of people who have no regard for life. That might be a proper definition for today. But in Paul's day the word for non-Greek or barbarian in the Greek language was barbaros.

Pastor Chuck Smith notes that "the term barbarian originated with the Greeks who thought that all foreign languages sounded like "bar-bar" or incomprehensible babbling."

And so Paul wanted the Romans to know that all men need to hear the gospel. And then he even shows us that not only all nations but all classes of men. the wise and the foolish.

In other words, those who are quite learned and those who are ignorant in the sense that they may not be able to read or write. God makes no distinction and neither should we. We are not to be bigots or show favoritism when it comes to extending grace and mercy and the gospel of Christ to the world.

James touches on this in his epistle. Jam 2:1 "My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism.² Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in.³ If

you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet,"⁴ have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?⁵ Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?"

As sinful people we have a tendency to gravitate towards those who are important or prominent to the exclusion of those who have a lower station in life. God says, 'I created all of you and you all need my Son for salvation and I make no distinction when it comes to the proclamation of mercy and grace and the love of Jesus Christ found in the gospel.'

And so here Paul reminds the Romans, who are considered the elite in the world in light of the fact that it is Rome who rules the world, that all men are created by God and all men must be given the good news of Christ no matter what nation they belong to or what class of people they may be.

And this is why Paul was always chomping at the bit to go to some very remote places in the world to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ. And he continues in our text.... Rom 1:15 "That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome."

Maybe there were some who saw Paul using discrimination in reverse. He seemed to be spending a lot of time with those people who might be considered foolish or unwise, but he says, I'm eager to come to you also. You who are deemed by the world to be learned, intelligent or privileged.

What's interesting here is that Paul is eager to preach the GOSPEL to these Roman Christians. And the question might be asked, if these people are already Christians why does Paul feel compelled to preach the gospel to them?

Well, there may be a couple of things going on here. 1) Paul may have felt that he could be of assistance in sharing with the Body of Christ, the gospel to those who were unsaved and who might come to hear Paul speak among the Roman Christians who undoubtedly have un-believing friends.

And so Paul may have been preparing the Roman Christians for an evangelistic campaign in Rome where they need only bring their

unsaved friends and he would assist in sharing the gospel with them.

But, I believe there's something a little deeper here when Paul says he wants to preach the gospel with these Christians. The phrase, "preach the gospel" in the Greek, is actually one word; Euangelizo. And it means to announce good news.

I believe that Paul, in coming to Rome to encourage the Romans in their faith, wanted to take them back to their faith and remind them of what a great salvation they have in Christ.

Pastor Chuck Smith recounts the story of how, when he was a Pastor in a particular denomination, he used to give an evangelistic message every Sunday to his congregation. And he would share the gospel and then ask if anyone would like to receive Christ.

Invariably no one would come forward because everyone in his congregation was already a professing Christian. After he left that denomination he learned that his people didn't need to continually be invited to accept the gospel, but they needed to be continually reminded of what a great gospel we have in Christ.

And so he began to spend more and more time going verse by verse through the bible to feed and equip the sheep and to show them how God's salvation in Christ should be their motivation to love and good works and grow in the Lord.

I believe this is what Paul had in mind. He wanted to come to Rome to announce the good news of Jesus Christ and equip the Christians by reminding them of what great love had been bestowed on them by God, and how they in turn should seek to show forth the fruit of their salvation by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In this way many would come to know Christ. Now, you can be assured that Paul also took the opportunity to invite people to Christ who didn't know Him. But, despite the immaturity or the maturity of the people who did know Christ, Paul always preached Christ crucified and risen from the dead for the salvation of sinners.

But his motivation was different for believers because he wanted them to appreciate their salvation. This is the precise reason why I teach and preach the way I do.

I may exegete passages of scripture like the ones before us this morning, and we may spend time looking at what Greek words have to say and how other portions of God's word may speak to a particular subject, but there will rarely be times when I don't incorporate the good news of Jesus Christ into my message.

Because all of the wisdom we may obtain from God's word is useless unless it's put into practice in the light of Christ's love for us on the cross. This is precisely why Paul wrote to the Corinthians the way in which he did.

1Co 13:1 "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.3 If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.5 It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.8 Love never fails."

And the love to which Paul speaks is the love which has been given to us as a result of the love we received by embracing the good news of Jesus Christ by faith.

Everything we learn from God's word, everything we do for the Lord must be seen and done in the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In Him is life. And as Paul says in Rom 6:4 "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

A life that is empowered by the Spirit. Let's continue with that thought. Rom 1:16 "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile."

Paul is saying that the gospel of Jesus Christ is powerful. Now the word for power in the Greek is *dunamis* and it infers a miraculous power.

Now for Paul to say that he was not ashamed of the Gospel there may have been those people who either were ashamed of the

Gospel, or wanted to bring shame on Paul for devoting his entire life to the Savior.

But he boldly proclaims that he has every reason not to be ashamed. Why? Because this gospel is not just some cute story; it's the truth. But it's truth that has been demonstrated in power; real divine, supernatural power.

That power was seen in the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ as the Spirit was upon Him and He exercised miraculous power, but it's ultimate expression was seen in His resurrection from the dead.

In fact this is the way Paul starts this letter to the Romans when speaking of Christ..... Rom 1:4 "and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord."

And then he states in 1Co 1:17 "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel--not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power 18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

There are real powers in this universe. There is demonic power which Satan wields to destroy men and to blind the eyes of people everywhere. His power is strong, but never forget that Satan is a mere creature created by the hand of God. He was created a perfect angel who rebelled against his Creator.

There is also the power of man who thinks he is more than he is when it comes to power. None the less, man's power is exercised in ways which can be quite deadly. And unfortunately, Satan is able to empower men to do his bidding and deceive many.

But the greatest power of Satan and his angels, along with all men everywhere outside of Christ, doesn't even hold a candle to the infinite power of God.

And it is our Mighty God's power which resides in us, His people in Christ, so that we may walk in His ways, and be conformed into the image of our Savior.

We don't have to live lives which retreat from the enemy. We don't have to live lives where our victories are few and far between. Life can be tough, but I dare say that none of us have experienced life from the apostle Paul's perspective when it comes to being persecuted for our faith, or facing dangers at every turn.

Paul knew what he was talking about when he wrote to Timothy in 2Ti 1:7 "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline."

Life for the Christian is full of spiritual battles where the enemy tries to drag us down. There may be sins we struggle with or things in our lives we're not willing to fully give over to Christ. But remember that those battles will never be won in our flesh. If they could be we could also claim the victory in ourselves.

No Paul tells us in 2Co 10:4 "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds."

There is no stronghold in our lives which can't be turned over to Christ and His power. I like the way Peter puts in his epistle. 2Pe 1:3 "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness."

We don't need to turn to the wisdom of the world to solve our problems. We don't need to devise clever plans to make headway. God say's, 'My divine power has given you everything you need for life and godliness.'

Paul also touches on God's strength in Eph6:10 "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.¹¹ Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground....."

The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. If you're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ you have the power of God's Holy Spirit to enable you to live to His honor and glory. May we humble ourselves before the Lord and trust Him for all things as we go forward in His Spirit who gave us life eternal through the Lord Jesus Christ.