

The Introduction

The Text

Romans 1:13-15 Now I don't want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I often planned to come to you (but was prevented until now) in order that I might have a fruitful ministry among you, just as I have had among the rest of the Gentiles. I am obligated both to Greeks and barbarians, both to the wise and the foolish. So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

The Support

Now I don't want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I often planned to come to you (but was prevented until now) in order that I might have a fruitful ministry among you, just as I have had among the rest of the Gentiles

Where we live and minister and proclaim Christ in on God's sovereign grace.

Acts 17:24–29 (CSB) The God who made the world and everything in it—he is Lord of heaven and earth—does not live in shrines made by hands. Neither is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives everyone life and breath and all things. From one man he has made every nationality to live over the whole earth and has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of where they live. He did this so that they might seek God, and perhaps they might reach out and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also his offspring.' Since, then, we are God's offspring, we shouldn't think that the divine nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image fashioned by human art and imagination.

I am obligated both to Greeks and barbarians, both to the wise and the foolish

Romans 15:14–21 (CSB) My brothers and sisters, I myself am convinced about you that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another. Nevertheless, I have written to remind you more boldly on some points because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, serving as a priest of the gospel of God. God's purpose is that the Gentiles may be an acceptable offering, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Therefore I have reason to boast in Christ Jesus regarding what pertains to God. For I would not dare say anything except what Christ has accomplished through me by word and deed for the obedience of the Gentiles, by the power of miraculous signs and wonders, and by the power of God's Spirit. As a result, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum. My aim is to preach the gospel where Christ has not been named, so that I will not build on someone else's foundation, but, as it is written,

Those who were not told about him will see,
and those who have not heard will understand.

Where do you see God in the text? What does the text say about God?

God

Why was Paul restricted from going to and ministering in Rome? Not circumstances but God who is sovereign.

What is the sovereignty of God?

In dealing with trying to wrap our minds around God's sovereignty, 19th century Presbyterian theologian Charles Hodge laid out the sovereignty of God alongside the *actual* free will of God are just outward expressions of God's omnipotence, that is, the absolute power of God. (Omnipotence is a fancy way of saying, 'Almighty'.) To that end, Hodge writes in his Systematic Theology:

"Sovereignty is not a property of the divine nature, but a prerogative arising out of the perfections of the Supreme Being."^[3]

^[3]: Charles Hodge. Systematic Theology. Volume 1: Theology. 440.

In other words, God is not sovereign because He is sovereign. Let me let Hodge explain it best:

Although this sovereignty is thus universal and absolute, it is the sovereignty of wisdom, holiness, and love. The authority of God is limited by nothing out of Himself, but it is controlled, in all its manifestations, by his infinite perfections. If a man is free and exalted, in proportion as he is governed by the enlightened reason and pure conscience, so is he supremely blessed who cheerfully submits to be governed by the infinite reason and holiness of God. This sovereignty of God is the ground of peace and confidence to all his people. They rejoice that the Lord God omnipotent reigns; that neither necessity, nor chance, nor the folly of man, nor the malice of Satan controls the sequence of events and all their issues. Infinite wisdom, love, and power, belong to Him, our great God and Saviour, into whose hands all power in heaven and earth has been committed.^[4]

^[4]: Hodge. 441.

In other words, because God is perfect, good, wisdom, holiness, and love, that is sovereignty. God is the fullness of all of those things and in that, He is sovereign.

And since we know he is absolutely perfect, good, wisdom, holiness, and love and within that, sovereign, we know that God's hand was on Paul.

We also know that Paul could not make it Rome, he sent this letter. Praise God for this epistle.

Paul does make it to Rome eventually--not of his own volition but as a prisoner sentenced to death for the preaching of the gospel of Christ.

The Gospel

So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome

What does this have to do with the gospel of God?

Just like no one else who knew Saul before he became Paul would have even try to bet on him becoming a Christian, we do not know where somebody is going based on where they are at now.

If you listen to worldly wisdom, "God only helps those who help themselves" is not true and it damns us all to hell. Because while some have the strength to get themselves out of a pit, none of us are good enough, perfect enough obedient enough, wise enough, holy enough, and loving enough to get us out of hell and into the presence of God.

I think we think we believe that. But our actions say something totally different. How do I know? The biggest way is how many Christians who grew up Christian get into the real world, get kicked in the teeth by sin, and are left dumbfounded that this is not how it was suppose to go. So two responses: either they try harder to be better (usually to earn the favor of God in some way) or run away from him altogether--usually starts out with some sort of deconstruction. And when it comes to deconstruction, it doesn't have to be a huge heretical deniel of the basic tenets of the Bible but rather, just stop going to church. Or when people check up on you, you don't return their calls. Or keep people walled off because you want to be right and you don't want people talking you out of the direction you are heading.

The good news despite all of that is that our salvation from sin and death and unto God who is perfectly wise, love, and peace, does not depend on, as the Apostle John puts it, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh nor the will of man"^[5] but depends completely and perfectly by God. Here are two possible reactions.

"There is nothing I can do." Hogwash. The Apostle John will go on to say, "The one who believes in the Son has eternal life, but the one who rejects the Son will not see life; instead, the wrath of God remains on him."^[6]

You, just like every human ever born of woman, are called by God to put their trust and obey Him, who is the only living God.

The other reaction: God gives you a new heart with new desires. I think, it is after you have seen what your sin has done to your life and the lives around you. And then God rescues you, grants you His own heart and His Spirit, "cause you to follow His statutes and carefully observe His ordinances"^[7], and gives you grace and the sheer gift of repentance, it is only then when we can sincerely speak the words of Peter when Christ asked him, "Do you want to go away as well?"

John 6:68-69 (CSB) Simon Peter answered, "Lord, to whom will we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

[^5]: John 1:12-12

[^6]: John 3:36 (CSB)

[^7]: Ezekiel 36:26-27. See also, Romans 7:7-25

Our Responsibility

Stop turning away from God.

If you are now away from God or when you do turn away, just turn back to him.

Keep confessing. That is part of repentance.

Repentance is to live differently. Will you fail and struggle and suffer? I can almost promise you, yes you will. But keep turning to him.

One of the most greatest evidences of our broken world are the humans struggles with addiction to destructive vices like drugs and alcohol. But that is an external evidence--evidence that we can clearly see on the outside--of what sin does to us on the inside. Without the grace of God, we will go headlong into sin not counting the cost of consequence to our own life and everyone around us.

Ever met someone who has been or is addicted to porn? I have. That is me. I am that person. That is an addiction. And people struggle with that addiction. But sin lies to you and tells you, "It's harmless. No one is getting hurt by this." But you are getting hurt by that sin. The people you are watching--imagebearers of God--are getting hurt by that sin. And if you have people close enough to you to actually see you, your relationships are hurt by that sin.

The wages and consequences of sin is death. And just like Adam and Eve, they didn't die instantly and thought, "Maybe I can get escape punishment by covering up my shame."

But because they belonged to God--predestined, loved, called, justified, glorified by God--God wasn't going to let them go like that.

God came down to where they were at and preached the gospel.

Romans 6:23 (CSB) For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Christ came down to where we are at now and preached the gospel to you and me.

Trust in Christ. Believe in him. Keep confessing. Keep repenting. Start letting the world become dim to you as you look into the beauty of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Pray

MY LIGHT

Open our eyes.

Make eye contact with us.

Kill our cold hearts.
give us your heart
with new desires
for you alone.

Amen.

Media

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