

YOU AND I ARE OBLIGATED TO PEOPLE WE HAVE NEVER MET

World Impact Sunday - May 5th, 2024 - 10 a.m.

Pastor Don Horban - Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON

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. [14] I am obligated both to Greeks and barbarians, both to the wise and the foolish. [15] So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.”

Did you catch that opening sentence? There’s a point Paul wants to make. And he starts off his argument with the words - “***I don’t want you to be unaware....***” In other words, there could easily be ignorance about what he’s going to say. He’s going to stress something ***crucially important*** and yet ***easily missed***.

Here’s the contemporary issue. What fuels our vision for a World Impact Sunday like ours? ***In a tough economy with mounting expenses what does it take to keep a church globally ambitious?*** Is it Murray pulling at our hearts with just the right project? Is it managing our church expenses so we will end up with extra money? Is it keeping pace with the latest in promotion and social media impact?

That's what this text is addressing. The Apostle describes an invisible **compulsion** - a **divine force** - behind all global reach. He's going to tell people in Rome that he may have been **delayed** in coming to see them, but there's no way he's not going to get there. In fact, he doesn't want his delayed agenda to lead them to think he wasn't "**eager**" to bring the gospel to them (15).

And now, on to the point he doesn't want them to be **unaware** of (13). He's not eager to reach these Romans simply because they're such wonderful people or they have been easy to reach. And he's certainly not fulfilling a denominations' missionary assignment.

No. There's a heavier weight behind Paul's mission. He says he has an **obligation - that's the word he carefully chooses - an actual debt to be paid to these still unreached people**. He's **accountable to God and he feels that accountability**.

How did Paul become an **owing** person? Where did this **debt** come from? It came from receiving God's redeeming grace. **Reception** of the gospel creates **obligation** with the gospel. Paul says this is a **real** obligation, not just an imaginary religious obligation. To **embrace** the gospel is to **owe** the gospel, so God says.

This is both **glorious** and **frightening**. It's **frightening** because this is how I can recognize how deeply we've received divine grace in the first place. This is the explosive truth Paul says he doesn't want any Christian remaining **unaware of (13)**. We **sin** if we **ignore this debt**. Something remains **unpaid** in my response to divine grace. That's why Paul presses the weight of this divinely owed debt as deeply into my easily-self-absorbed-heart as he can.

Hear the Spirit of Christ in Paul's words. **Reception** creates **debt**. Or put it closer to home. **Saved people this side of heaven owe the gospel to lost people this side of hell.**

But this is also a **glorious** debt. It has a wonderful goal in constant view. It is that the Name of the Son be the praise of all nations - **Romans 1:5 - "Through him we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations"**

One more thing. Here is one of the most unbelievable promises in all of Holy Scripture. And it relates directly to this World Impact Sunday - **Ephesians 6:8 - "...knowing that whatever good each one does, slave or free, he will receive this back from the Lord."**