

THE GOSPEL IS FOR THE WHOLE WORLD (Romans 1:14-15)

INTRODUCTION:

In today's passage Paul is saying that the gospel is for the whole world. This is a theme throughout the Bible beginning with Genesis.

As early as Genesis 3, we see that the gospel is for both male and female, the first announcement of the gospel being made to both Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:15).

In Jonah we see that the gospel was for the city of Ninevah.

In the ministry of Jesus the gospel was taught to "publicans and sinners" as well as to those who had the privileges of education and high birth, like Nicodemus. The gospel was disclosed to the Samaritan woman of John 4.

In Acts God reminded Peter that the gospel was for Roman military officers, like Cornelius, as well as for those who, like the Jews, were ceremonially "clean."

Jesus showed the geographic scope of the gospel's proclamation in the Acts' version of the Great Commission: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

How easily we forget this! Christians forget, or perhaps ignore, that the gospel is for the whole world. Today, I want us to see from our text that the gospel is for the whole world and what that means to us.

THE GOSPEL IS FOR THE EDUCATED

First, Paul says that the gospel is for the educated and the intellectuals. Paul begins by saying:

Rom 1:14 (NKJV) I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise.

He was a debtor, first to the Greeks. The Greeks were the primary source of Western culture and intellectualism. Because of their language, those who could speak and read Greek had access to the great historical, epic, dramatic and, above all, philosophical writings of the past. Even the powerful Romans got most of their education through the Greek writings. The gospel is for the educated.

A young Presbyterian pastor was being interviewed by the session to become their pastor. They were in a university community of highly educated people. Ten of the 20 people in the adult Sunday School class either had Ph.D.s or were Ph.D. candidates. One question to this prospective pastor was, "What do you think about your ability to minister in a community of highly educated people?"

He answered something along these lines: "Gentlemen, the ground at the foot of the cross is level. And every person, whether educated or uneducated, sophisticated or unsophisticated, intellectual or ignorant must come to God through Christ, and through Christ alone. Every person, academician and non-academician alike, must one day stand before God and give an account of his life."

In our day some of the most difficult people to reach are those in an academic setting. Many believe that they are too sophisticated to believe a message written 2,000 years ago. Many are putting their faith in the wisdom of man, but it will not be sufficient when we stand before God.

List to what Paul wrote the the Greek city of Corinth:

(1 Cor 1:22-24 NKJV) For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; {23} but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, {24} but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Paul says that he is indebted to the Greeks, to the wise, because the gosel is for the whole world. It is for the wise, whether they are Greeks or Romans or Americans or the intellectual academicians on university campuses.

THE GOSPEL IS FOR THE ORDINARY PERSON

Next Paul affirmed that the gospel was for the ordinary person. He said,

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

The Greeks called all people who were non-Greeks "barbarians." This is the next category of people to whom Paul says he is obligated to preach the gospel.

"Barbarian" did not have quite the negative overtones to the Greeks as it has for us. Today a barbarian is someone who is uncivilized. The word for the Greeks actually had to do with speech patterns, for when the Greeks heard non-Greeks or "foreigners" speak, what they heard sounded like babbling, or stammering: bar,

bar, bar. So “barbarians” were people who did not speak Greek. They were the ordinary people.

Perhaps you are a person who feels yourself to be just ordinary. You can't claim to be a Ph.D. or a highly cultured person. You are just an ordinary person. Well, the gospel is for the ordinary person also.

We forget that Jesus Christ did not go first to the wise, wealthy, or influential citizens of his day, but to the ordinary people, whoever and wherever they were. And the important people did not like him for it! They sneeringly called him a friend of drunkards and sinners. Nevertheless, that is where he went. His friends were carpenters, fishermen, tax collectors, and others who worked hard for a living.

After Jesus' death and resurrection, when the gospel began to spread beyond the geographical borders of Israel, it was among the working people—often among slaves—that it advanced most readily.

The gospel is for the whole world.

REASONS FOR PAUL'S INDEBTEDNESS

Paul mentions that “he was a debtor” to take the gospel to all kinds of people. Why did Paul have such a strong sense of obligation to all mankind?

For one thing Paul felt that if God had not have called him as carry the gospel to the Gentiles, what would his life have amounted to? Paul gives some interesting insight into this in I Tim 1.

(1 Tim 1:12-16 NKJV) And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, {13} although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. {14} And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. {15} This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. {16} However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.

Paul felt obligated to all persons because his life would have amounted to remaining a blasphemer, a persecutor and a violently arrogant man. God saved him so that he could be a pattern to all who believe. Do you feel that God did the same for you?

Another reason that Paul and us are debtors to all persons is that all persons are made in the image of God and are worthy of redemption. God's love goes out equally to all mankind, because we are all from one -- Adam. We are all descendants of God's first pair. We all have the image of God imprinted upon us. God loves all the world. Therefore we are to love all equally!

This is difficult to do isn't it. We all have our preferences of people to show love and we all have our favorite people to be prejudiced against. But God calls you and me to love all people equally. Paul knew this and affirmed that he is a debtor to all to share the Gospel, because all are made in the image of God and Christ died for all.

A third reason Paul and us are debtors to share the Gospel with all is for same reasons that a person that sees a building burning is obligated to warn the occupants.

If we are passing by a building home, and know that people are in it aware of their danger, are we obligated to warn them and help them to safety? What kind of ethical breakdown would it be for a doctor not to warn his patients of something the patient had or was doing that was destructive to the patient's health. We are debtors to all to share the Gospel with them in the same sense. We know that there is healing for the sin sickness of the soul and we are obligated to share that healing with others.

It is like the beggar who was given a \$100 and a free place to live and was told that this time tomorrow he would do the same for all his friends whom the beggar could get to that place. If the beggar had any compassion he would go tell all his friends about the most generous offer.

We begin to see our indebtedness when we see ourselves as beggars who have been fed and know where to find food. There are those all around who are beggars spiritually. We have an obligation to tell them where they can get bread.

THE GOSPEL IS FOR ALL PEOPLE.

At the close of his statement of obligation to the Greeks and non-Greeks, the wise and the foolish, Paul explains his eagerness to come to Rome. In verse 15 he declares: **“That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome.”**

When he mentions “you who are at Rome” Paul is not adding a new category, for the Romans fit within the earlier Greek or non-Greek, wise or foolish categories. The church at Rome included every conceivable type of man or woman and was therefore itself all-embracing. So when Paul says that the gospel is for those at Rome “also,” he is actually saying, “The gospel is for you, whoever you

may be and wherever you may be.” The gospel is for you no matter where you live, no matter your age, no matter your circumstance in life.

You may be a hardened sinner. You may have no concern for the things of God today. But one day you will stand before that God and you will have to give an account of your life. You need Jesus Christ to save you from your sin and hell.

In 1951 comedian Red Skelton and a party of friends flew to Europe, where Skelton was to appear at the London Palladium. As they were flying over the Swiss Alps, three of the airplane’s engines failed. The situation looked very grave and the passengers began to pray. Skelton went into one of his best comic routines to distract them from the emergency as the plane lost height, coming closer and closer to the ominous-looking mountains. At the last moment the pilot spied a large field among the slopes and made a perfect landing. Skelton broke the relieved silence by saying, “Now, ladies and gentlemen, you may return to the evil habits you gave up 20 minutes ago.”

Skelton’s joking advice underscored the truth that whatever religious “commitments” those terrified passengers may have made were strictly temporary. The minute they stepped safely out of that aircraft, all deals with God were canceled. But, you cannot cancel the Day of Judgment that awaits every unrepentant sinner. You need Christ—today.

You may be a child or a young person with your whole life stretching before you. You have great plans, and you may have very little place for God in those plans. If so, I tell you that the gospel is for you and that you need it, just as others do.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the great Baptist preacher of the 19th century in London, once said in a talk to children, “You may be young; but you are old enough to sin, and you are old enough to die.” As long as that is true, you need a Savior.

The gospel is for the whole world because the whole world needs Jesus!

CONCLUSION:

Now most of us would agree that the gospel is for the whole world. Our problem is that most of us don’t truly feel the obligation that Paul felt to get the gospel to the whole world. That is what many of us need to come to grips with.

We that have experienced the gospel are debtors to share the gospel to all the world.

Evangelism is one beggar who has found bread telling another beggar where to find the Bread of Life.

Are you paying your debt? Are you committed to the gospel going out to all? Do you act upon your belief that the gospel is for the whole world?