

**Romans 1: 13-15; “That I Might Have Some Fruit”, Sermon # 3 in a series entitled – “From Faith to Faith”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, in the Morning Worship Service.**

In this passage Paul is writing to all the believers in Rome telling them of his plans to come to them. He had wanted to come to them, he says, but there were reasons why he did not make it there in the time that he had wished. All the reasons that he gives them, here, for his delay, are related to this statement – “That I might have some fruit among you also”. And so, I would like us to focus on that statement in order that we as a congregation, might be able to understand more about how fruit can be gathered by us in living our Christian life.

1<sup>st</sup> of all – In gathering fruit hindrances may be seen as disguised blessings. 2<sup>nd</sup> – In gathering fruit we must see our preaching and sharing of the gospel as a debt. And 3<sup>rd</sup> – In gathering fruit we must always be ready to preach or share the gospel wherever we are. Let us see how much God is involved in our being able to have some fruit for our labors, both as a church, and as individuals.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – In gathering fruit hindrances may be seen as disguised blessings.** (verse 13)

“Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles.” When Paul says, “that I might have some fruit among you also”, he is saying that He as an apostle of Christ was called to a fruit gathering ministry among all the people that the Lord would send him to, as an apostle of Christ, to minister to them. It is important for us to remember this. That each person who is called to the ministry of the word, has a ministry appointed to them by God Himself. And the object of that ministry is to gather fruit for God in relation to those he ministers to.

It is true that all Christians are called to bear fruit unto God. That is, the fruit of the Spirit and the fruit of their good works. But the fruit that Paul talking about here is the fruit that he would gather in accordance with his sowing the gospel and the word of God in the minds and the hearts of the people whom God sent him to. Jesus said at the end of the Parables in Matthew 13: 52 – “Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who bring out of his treasure things new and old.” In this verse we are thinking of the minister of the word as a hard working farmer. 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2: 6 – “The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops.”

Paul had great desires and an eagerness to fulfill his commission as an apostle. He was gathering the people, who he had won to Christ, into local churches. He would gather fruit in relation to his building them up in their faith. He would gather fruit by his adding to their knowledge. And he would see the good results which would come from that. In every case, he would be attempting to complete what might be lacking in their faith, so that they would become more mature Christians. This is the ministry of what every pastor will want to see taking place, in relation to the labors of the whole church that he ministers to.

And actually, every person who preaches and who shares the gospel wants to gather for Christ and for God. For it says in John 4: 36 – “And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.” I take this to mean, that you and I, all the people in the local church, every worker for Christ, desires that they might have some fruit for their labors, so that His cause and His kingdom is advanced. Paul, you will remember, had gathered much fruit in relation to his labors at Corinth and Ephesus.

Now he desired to have some fruit among the believers at Rome also. There is no doubt that God Himself placed this desire in Paul’s heart, years before he actually came to Rome. In Acts chapter 19, verse 20 it says that, “the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.” And then it says: “When

these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, 'After I have been there I must also see Rome.' Little did he know at that time that he would be hindered in very great ways from getting to Rome in the way that he had first purposed to get there, by simply walking there with his traveling companions.

You will remember in Acts chapter 21, when Paul came to Jerusalem, he went to see James and the brethren. And they received him gladly. He told them all that the Lord had been doing through his ministry among the Gentiles; how much fruit he was gathering. In order to prevent trouble with the Jews, James advised Paul to go to the temple with some men who had taken a vow, to show forth the fact that he himself kept the law. Paul did this. And when he was in the temple, the Jews from Asia saw him, and they dragged him out of the temple and they began beating him to death.

When the commander of the garrison heard about this, he came and rescued Paul from their hands. Thus began the great trial of Paul's life and ministry. This was the hindrances begun. He could not get free from the many charges of the Jews against him. These were false charges. And he was brought before the Sanhedrim first. He defended himself ably there, but they still wanted to kill him. But the commander rescued him again from them. He took him to a barracks for safety. And thus began the great hindrances that Paul experienced for the next few years. Paul could have been greatly discouraged by this.

But look how the Lord helped him. The following night, the Lord stood by him and said – "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome." So, you see the Lord had ordained that Paul was going to be able gather fruit there at Rome for Him. But Paul knew from what he says in our text, that he would be greatly hindered in getting there. In Acts 25: 11 when he appeared before Governor Festus, the Governor wanted to do the Jews a favor, and so he asked Paul – Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me concerning these serious charges that the Jews are bringing against you?

And Paul said – "For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no can deliver me to them." "I appeal to Caesar." And so this was how he would eventually make it to Rome. Now, what I want you to see, is that this was the way that the Lord led Paul. Paul had often planned to come to Rome, but was hindered until now, the time of the writing of this letter was 61 A.D. He had probably been involved in about 3 years of hindrances which kept him from being able to come to them. And so now he was eager to preach the gospel to those brethren and believers at Rome.

I want you to see that it was Paul's desire to gather fruit there at Rome. But it was God's providential ordering that these hinderances would take place. Why? So that Paul could gather fruit in all the places that he was taken as a prisoner. He calls himself, "the prisoner of the Lord", in Ephesians 3: 1. And Philemon 1, he refers to himself as – "I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus". It was all through this imprisoning experience, that Paul would be gathering fruit. The gathering of fruit was something that Paul would do just as much, in and through all of his hinderances, and even more so, than if he had had a straight path all the way to Rome.

And so in applying this truth to ourselves, we too ought to see hindrances as disguised blessings. For it is in relation to these hindrances, that we as a church, and we as individuals, shall gather fruit for God. It is how we will come into contact with the people who Christ will save. It is how we will be able to help, and minister to those people whom the Lord would have us minister to. The Lord had ordained that these hindrances would take place in Paul's life. And He no doubt ordains them in our lives, and in the life of our church, as well.

The Lord knew what fruit that He wanted Paul to be able to gather. And He knows what fruit that He wants us to gather as well. In the latter part of this letter to the Romans, in chapter 15, verses

20-29, he says this: “And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man’s foundation, but as it is written: ‘To whom He was not announced, they shall see; And those who have not heard shall understand.’ “For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you.” “But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you.”

“For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for awhile.” “But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints.” “For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem.” “It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors.” “For the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things.” “Therefore, when I have performed this and sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain.” “But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.”

So, you see my brethren, hindrances are blessings in disguise for us; we who are Christ’s saints. For it will be in relation to these hindrances that many good things will take place. There will be much good fellowship established, and many good things in gathering fruit, which will take place. In this good way we will help each other on our way to heaven. In this good way we preach and share the gospel with people we may not have intended to. In this good way, the cause of Christ is furthered here in Tama. We are not building on another man’s foundation.

**2<sup>nd</sup> – In gathering fruit we must see our preaching and sharing of the gospel as a debt.**

(verse 14)

“I am a debtor to Greeks and barbarians, both to wise and to unwise.” To be a debtor is to have an obligation to pay someone back who has loaned you money, or who has performed a service for you. This is how the apostle Paul saw himself in relation to his having received the free gift of salvation from Christ. He had then the privilege of being commissioned to be the apostle to the Gentiles. He felt that he had a solemn obligation to go about to fulfill his commission, to preach the gospel, which was given to him by the Lord through Ananias following his conversion on the road to Damascus. Ananias was reluctant to go to Saul because he had been such a persecutor.

But the Lord said to Ananias in Acts chapter 9, verses 15 & 16 – “Go, for he is a chosen vessel (or instrument) of Mine to bear My name before the Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.” “For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.” Now I hope that you can see that although salvation was a free gift to Saul, that in the Lord’s mind there would be cost to his being faithful to Him. This is always the case with every true disciple of Christ. Paul needed to be faithful to his commission in relation to all the grace that he had received. And we too, need to be faithful to Christ on the level of our personal commission, to do what we can to fulfill the Great Commission.

Saul saw his personal commission as a debt of love that he owed, as the hymn-writer Isaac Watts said. “But drops of grief can ne’er repay the debt of love I owe: Here Lord, I give my self away, Tis all that I can do.” Paul saw his labors in the gospel as an obligation. It was an obligation which God had called him to, based upon the greatness of the mercy and grace that had been shown to him, by Christ Himself. You and I, as pastor and members of this body, need to sense this same obligation. We need to see our preaching and sharing of the gospel as a debt which we owe to our God for all that He has done for us.

We have been shown grace. Let us preach grace, and share with other people about the greatness of the grace of Christ. We have been shown this great mercy. And so let us learn to show mercy to others, and speak to others about why they should believe in Jesus. Paul said that he was a debtor

both to Greeks and to barbarians. This is an interesting wording, because he doesn't include the Jews in this statement. The reason for this was, because he was writing to the believers in Rome, and the congregation there was mostly Gentile. And what he is trying to emphasize to these believers in Rome is the idea that they should not confine their preaching of the gospel, simply to the educated and the religious people around them.

They should be willing to draw near, even to barbarians, to share with them the unsearchable riches of Christ. Let me pause here and say – Is this something that you are willing to do? It always appears to be easier to share the gospel with people who have a Christian religious background, but who are unsaved. But sometimes we may think, that other people, who have never been religious at all, we think that it is too difficult to win them to Christ, and to their becoming truly religious. This kind of thinking, we should reject. The Greeks, many of them in Paul's day, were at least religious people.

When Paul mentions "barbarians" he is thinking about all the other people groups of the world that may have gross idolatry and immorality connected with their "religion". Paul says that he was a debtor to both groups. Greeks and barbarians, and wise and unwise people all need to know of their sinfulness, and of God's mercy through Christ, to save them from themselves and their sins. Do you see it this way; that is, preaching the gospel as a debt which you owe to God? His Divine love and His mercy have saved you. You owe him your loving witness to His grace.

**3<sup>rd</sup> – In gathering fruit we must always be ready to preach or share the gospel wherever we are.**

Verse 15 – "So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also." I think that what Paul is saying is that he was not only very willing to go to Rome to preach the gospel to them, but that he was also ready to do so, if God would open the door for him to go. What a good attitude that Paul always had in relation to preaching the gospel. He was ready! Now you will notice that Paul is talking about his being ready to preach the gospel to them; people who evidently already knew the Lord. You might wonder, then, if he shouldn't have worded it differently? That is, he might have said - I am ready to come to Rome and to preach the whole counsel of God to you, as he said to the elders at Ephesus, when he called them to himself before he went to Jerusalem. He knew that he would come into great trouble there, and he did.

What I think that Paul meant, here in verse 15, is that he knew that preaching the gospel to them was not meant only to save those who had not believed yet. But it would also mean his explaining to them the gospel more fully, in relation to all the particulars of the doctrines of Christ's Person and His work of redemption, leading to repentance and saving faith in Him. This would also lead him to speak to them, over some days, weeks, months, or even years, about all the blessings and responsibilities related to becoming a Christian.

The doctrines of justification and adoption, and of sanctification and redemption, these would all need to be opened up to them and considered by them. And he would want to talk to them about what the responsibilities of living the Christian life were, in terms of their being involved in a local church, and being faithful to God to fulfill those daily and weekly duties of worship and service. Of learning their new responsibilities to love the brethren and other people around them, which would also lead them then, to their doing good works, and trying to glorify God in all that they would say and do. It was because there was so much truth surrounding the gospel, that Paul wrote this letter to the Romans. You see how extensive it was. But Paul was always ready to preach and explain the gospel. I pray that we will be too.

