

Romans 1:8-15

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[0 : 00] Let's read together Romans chapter 1 verses 8 through 15. Paul writes, First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.

! I want you to know, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you, but thus far have been prevented, in order that I may reap some harvest among you, as well as among the rest of the Gentiles.

I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also, who are in Rome. Now, as I studied this text this week, it's kind of interesting, because we kind of get Paul's salutation to the Romans later on in his letter. He's begun the first seven verses of this book with a great gospel presentation, which we talked about last week. And then he turns to greet the Roman believers.

And he tells us about how he longs to come to them, his desire to come and to mutually encourage them. And that kind of seemed to be the bearing of the text as I first read through it. We read in verse 8, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.

[1 : 33] And I thought, oh, what a great sermon this will be, on the kind of faith we should have, and what people should be looking at with our faith. But as I read through the text and arrived at verse 14, I got stuck on a little phrase.

And that phrase was, Under obligation. It seemed a strange phrase to me. I am under obligation. And as I did some word studying to it, it perplexed me further.

And so if you'll permit me, we're going to start with verse 14. And then I'm going to show you what I really believe the great example of this text is to us. But I want to start by putting up the one point of this morning's sermon.

It'll be up on the screen there for you if you're taking notes. And that is this. Christian, as a disciple of Jesus Christ, our Lord, you are obligated to share your faith with the church, firstly, and with the world, for the sake of Jesus' name, among all the nations.

So this week, we're going to talk about that obligation to share our faith with the church. And next week, we'll talk about the obligation to share our faith with the world. So this little phrase, under obligation, is only used three times in the New Testament, all by Paul.

[2 : 48] Once in the book of Galatians, and then twice here in his letter to the Romans. It simply means, the Greek term, which I could not pronounce, so I'm not going to tell it to you, simply means, one who owes another, or a debtor.

One who owes another, or a debtor. Now the reason that perplexed me, is we know, Paul's already talked about grace to him. We've received grace and apostleship, that's in verse 5.

And if there is somehow then something he owes back to God, then grace is to be grace. Doesn't it? Grace is the free gift of God. We know that we do not deserve anything that God has done for us.

Our sin has bought us, justly bought us, God's wrath upon us. But he's gracious to us. He then doesn't require us to work that off.

Does he? So if we owe God something, then it ceases to be grace. And that's what troubled me. So to kind of give a little evidence to the meaning of that word, that's in fact what it means.

[3 : 56] Galatians 5.3, Paul writes, I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision, that he is obligated to keep the whole law. Same word there.

But we know Paul previously talked in Galatians 3.10, he says, for all who rely on works of the law are under a curse. For it is written in Deuteronomy chapter 27, cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, and do them.

He further goes on in the same chapter to say that no one can. Right? So Paul uses that same term to say, if you're going to try to gain acceptance with God through works, then you're obligated to be perfect.

You're indebted to perfection. Right? So the word holds true. It means to be a debtor. That is what you must do, and you have no choice in the matter.

The other place it's used is in Romans chapter 8, verse 9. And I'd like you to turn there because I think it gives us a greater understanding of what Paul means to be under obligation.

[5 : 00] Romans chapter 8, verse 9. We're going to read through 14. Paul writes, So he draws a dichotomy.

Those who have the spirit and those who do not. Those who are in Christ and those who are not. Those who are lost. Those who are saved. Okay? Verse 11. If the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his spirit who dwells in you.

So then, brothers, we are debtors. Same Greek term. Translated differently in the ESV. So then, brothers, we are debtors. Not to the flesh to live according to the flesh.

For if you live according to the flesh, you will die. But if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the spirit of God are sons of God. Okay?

I want to draw your attention to a few things here. First, last half of verse 9. Anyone who does not have the spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, right? And then in verse 12, we are debtors.

[6 : 21] So what are we debtors to? In verse 12, he says, Not to the flesh. Then he goes on to speak about the spirit. The very end of verse 14. For all who are led by the spirit of God are sons of God.

So what are we indebted to? Ourselves. Now let that become selfish sounding. Our identities. Because of who we are in Christ, we must do certain things.

We are compelled by Christ to do certain things. The spirit lives within us. And as a result, we will look a certain way.

We just got done studying the book of 1 John in the evenings with the men's group and the women's group. And that's the theme of that book. Christian, live this way. Little children, beloved sons of God.

Your life will look this way. If you have grace in your life. So our obligation is to who we are in Christ. To our identities.

[7 : 29] So Paul is saying here, I'm under obligation to share my faith with the Greeks. He says to the Greeks and to the barbarians. The barbarians were those who were not educated.

But their language was unintelligible to the Greeks who were very highly educated. They were actually mocked. Their language to them sounded like babbling. So they would say their language sounded like bar, bar, bar, bar, bar.

And that's where that term barbarians comes from. So he kind of adds understanding to what he says when he says Greeks and to barbarians. He says both to the wise and to the foolish. He's defining what he means.

Those Greeks who were so wise and to the barbarians who were rather foolish in their minds. But then in verse 15 he says, So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

So Paul is being compelled and he's indebted to his own identity in Christ to share his faith with the fellow believers. And we're called to the same.

[8 : 28] The great value that we can pull from this is to see this example of Paul and to the Roman believers and to do the same. In verse 11 he says, The spiritual gift that Paul longs to give to them to strengthen them, he defines for us in verse 12.

That is mutual encouragement of our faith. And then in verse 8 he says, First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.

Isn't that phenomenal? I think it's worth just pausing and touching on that, although that's not the thrust of what I'm trying to show you this morning. The Roman believers had a faith that was proclaimed in all the known world at the time.

They were being talked about all over the world. Isn't that phenomenal? Oh, I want us to be a people like that. Not just Christ Family Church, but Christians of North Georgia.

I want people all over the world to go, Have you guys heard about those North Georgia Christians? They have got faith. They radically believe the promises of God. Look at the way they live.

[9 : 46] Man, they must have a great God because they place all of their trust in him. Long to be a place like that. At the very end of verse 4, 4b, end of verse 5, Paul wrote, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship.

For what end? Okay, so he's given us the grace, that free gift of grace, and a mission, a message to carry to the world, which is the gospel, to bring about the obedience of faith.

To bring about the obedience of faith or the obedience of the faith. All right, so not just to see converts made, but to also see disciples made. And for what end?

For the sake of his name being Christ among all the nations. So you get then there, you can see in these first 15 verses that phrase, I don't know if it's still, it is indeed up on the board, but Christian, as a disciple of Jesus Christ our Lord, you are obligated to share your faith with the church and with the world for the sake of Jesus' name among all the nations.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 9, verse 16, For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting, for necessity is laid upon me.

[11 : 04] Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel. And I think many of us find ourselves in that position this morning. Both that we do not share our faith with the world around us, and we do not share our faith with each other.

Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel. The vision statement of Christ Family Church is, Christ Family Church exists to experience, proclaim, and display the supremacy of Jesus Christ in all things.

I don't know if you ever pay attention, but that's usually up on the screen when you come in here in the morning. Christ Family Church exists to experience, so we have a felt that a reality in all of our lives that Jesus Christ is supreme to all other things.

We proclaim that, we tell others about that, which is what we're talking about this morning, and we display it in the way we live. We believe the promises of God, and that changes the way we live because we hold Christ more valuable than all other things.

So if we're to realize this vision as a church, if we're to get to that place, we need to be sharing the gospel with one another, don't we? We need to be speaking to one another these gospel truths, carrying this apostolic message that's been given to us so that all of us will arrive at the obedience of the faith.

[12 : 28] That's what we're talking about there, isn't it? If Christ Family Church truly experiences, proclaims, and displays the supremacy of Jesus Christ in all things, we've arrived at that point, haven't we? I don't think we're going to arrive there at this side of glory, but we can sure try.

We can set a goal for ourselves that's so lofty. I am an idealist, and I love it because I think Christ was an idealist. That's a high thing to attain to. So that's our goal, is to work to that point.

Some of you have heard me use this analogy, and I apologize to those of you who are tired of it.

I've read a book called The Trellis and the Vine. It's co-written by Colin Marshall and Tony Payne.

And it's a book about gospel ministry in the church. And they use this analogy, which I'm going to read to you in just a second, to speak about the trellis work and the vine work. And the vine work is the work of gospel ministry, and that's what we're meant to be about in the church.

And trellis work is necessary to support vine work, but we often get too wrapped up in the one and forget the other. So if you'll permit me, I'm going to read you just a short page out of this.

[13 : 36] This is written by Tony Payne. He says,

It's hard to tell what condition the trellis is in under the jasmine, but at the few points where it is still visible, I can see that it hasn't been painted in a long time.

At one end, it has been pried off the fence by the insistent fingers of the jasmine. And although I have tried to reattach it more than once, it is useless. The jasmine has taken over. I know I'll have to do something about this in the long term, because eventually the weight of the jasmine will pull the trellis off the fence altogether, and the whole thing will collapse.

I have often thought of taking a cutting from the jasmine and seeing if it will grow on the beautiful but vacant trellis on the garage, although it almost seems a shame to cover it up.

And that's what much of our work here, or maybe not here, I hope not, but work in church is about, is trellis. Building programs that are intended to support the work of God, the gospel ministry in the church, but tend to do the opposite.

[15 : 41] Let me give you an example. Once upon a time, the church that met here had a program called Awanas. Are you guys familiar with Awanas? And the language that went on around here was that Awanas is such a great program.

Awanas helps kids learn scripture. Awanas grows mature believers. Awanas does none of those things. The gospel ministry that happens in that framework accomplishes those things.

Okay? Small example. So we put all of our faith in the programs and the system that we build and the buildings that we have and the CEO-like structure in our churches, and we forget to do gospel ministry.

Congregants are the most guilty of this because you come and you fill a seat. You're a spectator, and you're not involved in the work of the church. This is an indictment on you.

You have a job. You have a role to play here. And you might say, well, I've asked to serve a role. I've come and said, hey, will you let me know when there's something that needs to be done?

[16 : 51] That's trellis, which needs to happen. I might ask you someday to mop a floor. It has to be done. But you all already have a job. And that's gospel ministry.

The people sitting next to you need the gospel. I would assume that most of us in here, a high percentage of us in here, are Christians already. We have placed our faith in Christ. We need the gospel. I stand up here and preach. I need the gospel. I need you guys to speak the gospel to me. You've been given a great task.

I'm afraid for most American Christians, the gospel itself has kind of become white noise. It's that thing that we get thrown on to the end of every sermon.

So we get a little quip in our sermon, five ways to have a better marriage is the sermon this morning. Oh, and by the way, you've got to get that Jesus thing sorted out first if you want to do these five things.

[17 : 51] And most of us check out when that happens. Oh, I'm saved. That's cool. I don't need to hear this gospel message any longer. It becomes white noise. Yesterday we went on a hiking trip with Jamie and Chris and my mom and all the kids.

And we were hiking along the creek at DeSoto Falls. If you've ever been there, you know what I'm talking about. So path falls right along the water the entire time. And it ends, three quarters of a mile, it ends at this rather magnificent waterfall, which is quite loud.

And the kids have been hiking along the sound of the water for so long up this trail that I had to point out, I mean, it was crashing down, but the volume had just gotten turned up a little bit on the sound of that water.

And I had to point out to them, and we'd come to the waterfall, like, look, look up through the trees. You could see it coming down the side of the mountain. It's 100 feet. It's loud. But they totally had tuned out to that altogether.

So if we're tuning the gospel out in our lives, what are we tuning into? Ourselves, right? I'm at limited space up here. We're tuning into ourselves.

[18 : 55] That's a dangerous place to be in. So do you know how the work of Jesus informs and impacts your life today? Is the gospel still relevant for you?

It most certainly is. So let me give you an example of what I mean. Do you know how Christ's ascension, when he went to heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father, where he sits today, do you know how that informs and impacts your life today?

I imagine most of you could give me some answer to that question. But it's a big one. Do we know how the gospel affects our life today? I once heard a wonderful example, and I tried my hardest to give credit to whoever said this, but I couldn't remember who.

I heard this wonderful example of where we all stood before Christ. And this preacher said, it was as if we stood in a valley at the bottom of a dam that's 10,000 miles wide and 10,000 miles high. Try to picture that. 10,000 miles wide, 10,000 miles high. And behind it, it's held back the waters, which represent the wrath of God. We have purchased that.

[20 : 10] That is ours because of our sin. And each one of us stands at this giant dam, and suddenly that dam bursts loose. It doesn't get a crack and dribble.

It busts the whole thing. And all that water is rushing towards us. Certain destruction is coming our way. And we stand there with this wall of water that comes our way.

And just before it reaches us, a great hole opens up in the ground, and that water gets sucked and pulled down into that hole as we stand there. And all that destruction gets taken away.

You remember in the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ prayed that the cup was going to pass from him. You know where all that wrath went?

It went to that cup. That's what Jesus was praying. God, is there any way, any way we can accomplish this without me bearing your wrath for the church? And there wasn't.

[21 : 10] And he did it voluntarily for us. So he took that cup, all that wrath, and he drank it to the last drop. And when he got done, he turned it over, he set it down, and he said, it is finished.

And then he went to heaven, and he sits down at the right hand of the Father, interceding for us, giving us his spirit. That's the ascension. It's significant that he's sitting down.

He's not making constant propitiation for our sins. It is finished. And all of us, as you drank that wrath, stood on the side, yelling, chug.

So how does that, how does that reality, how does that truth impact our daily living? What do you do with that? How do you minister to the gospel, to those around you, knowing just that, just this one thing, the ascension of Christ, one of many things that he accomplished?

I just want to give you a few examples. Turn to Philippians chapter 2. We're going to leave Romans, so don't worry about marking it.

[22 : 21] And we'll deal with the rest of the text next week. Philippians chapter 2. What do you do if you have a brother or a sister that you know is prideful, that you know is dealing with pride in their life?

It's usually a difficult person to talk to, isn't it? It's difficult to tell a prideful person that they're wrong. Philippians chapter 2, verses 3 through 8, reads, Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility, count others more significant than yourselves.

Let each of you look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus. Catch that.

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours. In Christ Jesus. If you have placed your faith in Christ, Christ has purchased that for you. Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing.

Taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

[23 : 31] So how do you minister the gospel to a prideful person? You say, look at the life of Christ. What did Christ do for you on your behalf? He became humble for you.

And now because of that, because he's ascended, and he's sitting at the right hand of the Father, and he's giving you the gift of the Spirit, you have the same mind. You should live that way. How about this as an example?

If you have a brother or sister struggling with the guilt of sin, and got that habitual sin in their life, that thing they seem to not be able to lick, and they carry around a great burden of guilt as a result of that.

Romans chapter 8, verses 1 through 4. Go ahead and turn there. We've got another text there too, but I'm going to go ahead and read it to you. There's therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law weakened by the flesh could not do by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.

[24 : 35] And for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh in order that the righteousness requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. What's the answer for that person?

You know Christ? You walk now according to the Spirit. He sits at the right hand of the Father interceding for you, and there's no condemnation for you because of what Christ has accomplished. How about a brother or sister who's received some bad news in the same chapter? We have another wonderful passage of text. Brother or sister who's received some bad news.

I think all of us could use this gospel ministry at times. Romans 8.28. We're going to read through the end of the chapter. And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good. For those who are called according to his purpose, for those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of a Son in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

[25 : 42] And those whom he predestined, he also called. And those whom he called, he also justified. And those whom he justified, he also glorified. So you're found in Christ. You know these things to be true.

Because of everything we've talked about, I won't repeat it again. Because of all that Christ accomplished for us, we know as his chosen children, he's moving us in a direction. He is taking us to perfection. Because we know that, we know that all the things that he's doing because we're his children are for our good. He's working us in that way. The things that we may not interpret as good in our lives.

The pain I deal with, I don't like it. I would rather it not be around. But it is part of this process that God is taking me through as a beloved child of his. Verse 31.

What then shall we say to these things? All these bad things. If God is for us, who or what can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

[26 : 52] Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died. More than that who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

There's that ascension. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sore, and you can add your own list to the end of that.

As it is written, for your sake we are being killed all the day long. We are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. No. In all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I'm sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Incredible, right? In Christ's action on behalf of his saints. It is finished. It is done.

And nothing can take that away. And because you are sons and daughters of God, you can trust that everything that happens in your life is for your good. It's gospel ministry.

[28 : 05] Right? I'm encouraging myself. There are things in my life that I don't think are good. Amen. Amen. For that truth. People around you need the gospel.

Saved or not, they need the gospel. Something sitting next to you is hurting in a way that you may not ever be able to understand. We're all in different positions in our lives.

Young, you can minister to the old. Old, please minister to the young. There are situations that I can never touch. Losing a baby. I can't ever get that.

I'm a man. It doesn't happen to me. Right? But I have the gospel truth. And the gospel truth ministers to every hurt that the Christian has.

Look around you. There are people who need the gospel. It ought to become a habit of ours to speak about our Savior. Right? It shouldn't be white noise to us. We should wake up every morning praising God for the work that He's done for us.

[29 : 11] Putting to death our flesh and praising Him for the Spirit that exists within us. Because we're under obligation to do so. Because of who we are we should live this way. It ought not be an option in your life.

If you don't live this way there's two choices. There's two possible solutions. Answer that. If you're not constantly sharing your faith in gospel ministry around you there's two options.

The first is that you're not a Christian at all. You've never experienced the grace of God in your life. And that wall of water someday will destroy you. Alright?

There will be no great hole that opens up to take it away. It will destroy you. And the solution to that is to repent and believe. Turn from your sin. Place your faith in Christ. Believe that he drank that cup on your behalf and you will be saved.

Second option is that you are a Christian and you're living in sin. And guess what? It's the same solution. Repent and believe. Turn from your sin and turn back to Christ.

[30 : 22] if we are to be disciples of Christ we will be about gospel ministry in the church. We all have a great task before us and praise God that he provides for all that he asks.

Let's pray together.