

THE BOOK OF ROMANS

"I Am Debtorship"

Romans 1:14-16

INTRODUCTION

1. Scripture is clear to record Paul's earnest and planned trip to Rome (vv. 9-13). It was all by God's will (v. 10). Moreover, he had clear reasons for wanting to go to Rome (vv. 11-13).

2. The book of Acts details Paul's ultimate journey to Rome. It was totally different than prayed for (Acts 25-28). Apparently, Paul's prayer was answered in a way so as to accomplish the goal (Rome), but somewhat contrary to anticipations.

3. Now there are specific reasons why Paul wanted to visit Rome. They are deep and very meaningful in relation to his call as the apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 22:14, 15; 26:17; Gal. 2:8). Study his assertions:-

1. I AM DEBTOR

The word "debtor" points to accountability. Paul does not diminish his personal accountability. He has debts for which he must give account. While not stated, it is assuredly assumed that Paul is accountable to God. He elsewhere states that (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). Here, however, he details his accountability to men:-

a. Two Races

The Greeks really refers to Greeks, Romans and such as held pride of race and culture. In modern day, it might be applied to industrialized nations. All others are the Barbarians. Only three N.T. references for this word (Acts 18:2; 1 Cor. 4:11; Col. 3:11). That means people with a strange and unintelligible language. Jews are not mentioned because "Gentiles" (v. 13) is the subject. In essence, Paul writes, all nations are his responsibility (Mark 16:15).

b. Two Capacities

The wise and unwise refer to intelligent and ignorant people. Both of these terms are without an article (anarthrous) so speak of classes of people. Culture is probably the dominant item here while nationality is the key of the former division.

NOTE: Paul expresses his indebtedness as a steward and trustee. What he has must be passed on to others. Here, then, is a debt of honor. We have ignored the command of Christ (cf. Mark 16:15; Matt. 9:38; 1 Cor. 16:2). May we be moved to show our love (John 15:21).

2. I AM READY v. 15.

a. In Position

The difficult Greek phrase at the beginning of this verse literally means: "Thus the according to me affair is ready." It is a strong phrase affirming "as far as it depends on me, I am anxious to come" Thus, in accord with the position as a debtor, he is ready to go to Rome.

b. In Purpose

To preach the Gospel in Rome also. Paul was committed to the Gospel (v. 1). He was willing to fulfill his debt to the believers at Rome also. Paul attained this desire, but first as a prisoner and later as a martyr. He was not afraid of Rome. His debt would be paid there also.

NOTE: The two confessions "I am debtor," "I am ready" are at the heart of all true work of God.

3. I AM UNASHAMED v. 16.

a. Feelings

There might be contempt for the Gospel. Paul might be humiliated as a preacher, yet he asserts his lack of shame. Roman soldiers crucified Christ and Roman pride and power might dictate another course, but Paul was unashamed.

b. Message

The message is the key issue and not the work of proclaiming it. Paul knew nothing more than the Gospel of Christ (cf. Gal. 1:6-9). Oh, for a heart to glorify God in this Gospel--that was Paul.

CONCLUSION

How great is the need to be a debtor in fact, ready in heart, and unashamed in attitude.

*"O Zion, haste, thy mission high fulfilling
To tell to all the world that God is Light;
That he who made all nations is not willing
One soul should perish lost in shades of night.*

*Behold how many thousands still are lying,
Bound in the darksome prisonhouse of sin,
With none to tell them of the Saviour's dying,
Or of the life he died for them to win.*

*Publish glad tidings, tidings of peace,
Tidings of Jesus; redemption and release."*

Mary A. Thomson