

**Intro:**

We are working our way slowly through Romans. I wonder if you think I am too slow?

In my studies, I am reading the sermons of David Martyn Lloyd-Jones on Romans. I told you before that he preached on Romans over a 13 year period. In one of his messages, he makes the point that the book of Romans itself is a synopsis, a summary, of the apostle Paul's own teaching. He says,

“This whole great Epistle is nothing but a synopsis. The Apostle would have taken months to expound fully what he says here in this short compass; so that when we study the Epistle to the Romans we do not just go through it lightly and superficially.”<sup>1</sup>

I hope that I am never guilty of going through the Word of God lightly and superficially! Lloyd-Jones goes on to illustrate his point this way:

“A friend of mine who used to attend here regularly and who has now gone to glory — a very good man — once said to me, rather jocularly but very kindly — ‘You know, I sometimes think that the Apostle Paul must be amazed when he sees what you get out of his epistles!’ Poor man! By now my friend has discovered that the Apostle Paul is amazed at how *little* that most people, and I with them, get out of his great epistles. He cannot be in Rome. If only he could be to preach to them day after day. You remember we are told that for eighteen months, in Ephesus, day by day he spoke in the school of Tyrannus; he spoke for hours, and went on day after day. What do you think he was talking about? According to some people's ideas of exposition he could have spoken on all these epistles of his in one afternoon!”<sup>2</sup>

So you see I am not alone in my philosophy of exposition!

But, you know, the reason we go through these texts very slowly is not to show off how many words can be said about them. It is not to show off the time we take in the study.

The reason we take our time with this is to produce something in you — not boredom! — and that something is the same thing we are looking at in our message today.

*The Objective of Christian Ministry*

Let's read Rm 1.8-13, but note that our text is v. 13.

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<sup>1</sup> D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: The Gospel of God*, p. 226.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 227.

Paul is saying that he has a purpose in his desire to come to the Romans: “that I might have some fruit among you also”. What is Paul after?

Fruit! That is the subject of our message:

*The Objective of Christian Ministry*

**Proposition:** Faithful ministration of the Word of God intends to produce fruit in its hearers.

## I. Fruitfulness is more than mutual benefit

A. There are many motivations for Christian interaction

1. The sympathy that prompts the ministry of prayer (9-10)
2. The mutual benefit that prompts Christian fellowship (11-12)
  - a. I long to ‘see’ you – *i.e.*, eyeball to eyeball
  - b. To give to you [a spiritual gift]
  - c. To receive from you [a mutual encouragement]

This is the language of fellowship; by itself a significant ministry within the church.

B. The kind of interaction Paul has in mind here is the regular ministry of the Word [how do I know?]

1. This is something he has regularly planned for (but been hindered)
2. This is something he expects to gather from them (fruit) by his ministry to them [not receive from their ministry to him]
3. This is something he already has from other Gentiles

From this, I take it that Paul is referring to his ministry of the Word – it is this that produces fruit among others.

C. Fruitfulness is the product of the preached Word

1. The Word itself has the power to change lives (2 Tim 3.16-17)
  - a. Doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction – ways the word is ministered
  - b. Thorough equipping – consequence of the word ministered

2. Consequently, the preaching of the Word is charged to Timothy (2 Tim 4.1-2) [How is it to be done?]
  - a. Reprove
  - b. Rebuke
  - c. Exhort
  - d. With patience and *doctrine*.

Notice how these terms are almost parallel to the effects of the Word in 3.16.

**D. Fruitfulness is seen in the life of the Spirit-led and Spirit-taught believer**

1. Gal 5.22-24 [what is this? teaching of the Galatians from the apostle Paul]
2. Eph 5.9 [more teaching of the word from the apostle Paul]
3. Phil 1.9-11 [Paul's prayer for the saints in Philippi — and a word of teaching for them]
4. Jas 3.17-18 [teaching of the Word from James this time]

What Paul has in mind here in v. 13 is something more than he thought of when he talked about giving them a spiritual gift.

- He is talking about his ministry planning.
- He is talking about the results of his ministry producing something he longs to see in people – fruitfulness.

Now let's expand a little bit on this idea of Paul's ministry planning...

## **II. Fruitfulness is the object of careful planning**

- A. Paul's ministry regularly exhibited careful planning, subject to the leading of the Holy Spirit
  1. Paul's attempts under the leading of the Spirit in Ac 16 (Ac 16.6-10)
    - a. He encouraged the saints in Galatia [first journey] (6a)
    - b. He intended to minister in Asia [Ephesus] but was forbidden by the Spirit (6b)

- c. He subsequently sought to minister in Bithynia [northern Turkey] but again not allowed by the Spirit (7)
  - d. Received the Macedonian vision in Troas, made plans to go to Macedonia (8-10)
2. Paul's plans including Rome (Ac 19.21)
- a. Plans to travel again to Macedonia and Achaia [Greece]
  - b. Plans to go to Jerusalem (offering)
  - c. Plans to go to Rome

Of course, along the way, there were hindrances — Paul speaks of them in our passage:

- Direct intervention by the Spirit
- Human interference (but providential care)

All of these plans had an object – Paul wasn't a tourist, seeing the sights of the empire!

Paul's object is fruit among the Gentiles!

B. Fruitfulness is the plan of the Lord Jesus Christ for the ministers of his Word

- 1. I have chosen you and ordained you that you bear fruit (Jn 15.16)
- 2. I have authority: Go, make disciples (Mt 28.18-20)

I did a little search on the internet last night with these words "increasing fruitfulness harvest" — I found about 45,500 pages with that search.

- Many Christian sites with articles on fruitfulness

Articles on increasing the fruitfulness of...

- Kiwis
- Grapes
- Salmon
- Cotton
- Orchards

All of this involves detailed, careful study and planning.

Fruitfulness in the ministry is the object – the goal, the design, the target – of faithful planning for ministering the Word.

### III. Fruitfulness is the result of faithful ministry

A. Paul is telling the Romans that he wants to repeat in Rome what he has experienced among other Gentiles

1. The words “that I might have some fruit among you” imply an intention to harvest

“The idea expressed is that of gathering fruit, not that of bearing it. Underlying this figure, however, is also the progress and advantage of the saints. For if the apostle is to garner fruit it is because those at Rome were to bear fruit that would redound to their account (*cf.* Phil 4.17).”<sup>3</sup>

2. Harvesting fruit is the end of a laborious process

‘Fruit’ “denotes the result of labour.”<sup>4</sup>

B. Fruitfulness is the object of our ministry of the Word among you

1. Everything about our preaching ministry is intended to produce fruit in you
2. Everything about our biblical counseling ministry is intended to produce fruit in you
3. Every effort of our church plans, everything that we do — we intend to make you disciples

You should make every effort to attend everything ... to fully benefit from the ministration of the Word among you.

- But I don’t mean to turn this application merely to the subject of attendance!

<sup>3</sup> John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 24.

<sup>4</sup> James Denney, “St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans” in *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, W. Robertson Nicoll, ed., p. 588.

The fruitfulness of the ministry of the Word fails at one of two points:

- The ministry isn't faithfully delivered (one way or another).
- The ministry isn't submissively received.

Listen, I desire fruit among you! And I get a great deal of joy when I work among you and see fruit!

- Love, joy, peace ...

And when I see wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking?

- Then the Word is needed: reprove, rebuke, exhort...

C. The faithful ministry of the word in a local church is primarily that of the pastor, but it is also the ministry of any Christian in various circumstances

1. As they discover things in the Word and repeat them to others
2. As they fulfill their responsibilities in the Word to others
  - a. To their children
  - b. To Sunday School classes they may teach
  - c. To Bible studies they may lead
3. As they may have occasions [the men] to fill in for the pastor

In other words, you, too, have a ministry of the Word. You should plan for it and expect a harvest.

D. The ministry of the Word has not changed (2 Tim 4.2) [This is how it is done.]

1. Proclaim
2. Reprove
3. Rebuke
4. Exhort
5. With patience
6. And doctrine

## Conclusion:

Lloyd-Jones said that when the apostles spoke they spoke with power:

“They spoke with power, and the word, as it came through them, fulfilling the prophecy of Jeremiah, was like a hammer ‘that breaketh the rocks in pieces’. It crushed men. It convinced men. It convicted them. It caused them to fall to the earth and to cry out, ‘Men and brethren. What shall we do?’ It made them desperate. The power! That is what Paul is talking about. He was conscious of this power.”<sup>5</sup>

Think about your opportunities to minister the Word.

- Are you conscious of the power of the Word?
- Are you intending to use the power to produce fruit?

In your ministry of the Word, you should expect fruit. Do you have it?

Jesus said:

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**John 4:35** Say not ye, There are yet four months, and *then* cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.<sup>36</sup> And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

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**Proposition:** Faithful ministrations of the Word of God intends to produce fruit in its hearers.

Do you have fruit for your ministry of the Word?

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<sup>5</sup> D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: The Gospel of God*, p. 222.