

Romans 1:13-15

⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being proclaimed all over the world.

⁹ God, whom I serve with my spirit in preaching the gospel of His Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you ¹⁰ in my prayers at all times, asking that now at last by God's will I may succeed in coming to you.

¹¹ For I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, ¹² that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.

¹³ I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, how often I planned to come to you (but have been prevented from visiting until now), in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.

¹⁴ I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. ¹⁵ That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.

¹⁶ I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, then to the Greek. ¹⁷ For the gospel reveals the righteousness of God that comes by faith from start to finish, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

Berean Study Bible

1

Go sowing and reaping. Romans 1:13-15

Go in expectancy. 13

I'll tell you what I am doing. "I want you to be aware"

I'll tell you why I am doing it. "that I might have a harvest among you"

Go in humility. 14

I must give the Gospel across racial barriers. "Greeks and non-Greeks"

I must give the Gospel across social divides. "the wise and to the foolish"

Go in generosity. 15

I'll do whatever I can. "I am so eager to preach the Gospel"

I'll go wherever I can. "to you who are in Rome"

Thursday 14 March 2019, Castle Hill

2

The best laid plans. Romans 1:13-15

The famous Scottish poet, Robert Burns, was ploughing in the fields in November 1785 when he accidentally destroyed the nest of a field mouse with the plough. His tender heart was full of remorse towards the little creature that needed the nest of gathered leaves to survive the winter, he composed a poem with the unimaginative title, "To a mouse, on turning her up in her nest with the plough, November, 1785".

In modern English, the second-last stanza reads,

But Mouse, you are not alone,
In proving, foresight may be vain:
The best laid schemes of mice and men
Go often askew,
And leave us nothing but grief and pain,
For promised joy!

Plan with openness. 13 “I want you to know”
Look where you are going.
Integrity is based on transparency.

Plan with options. 13 “I often planned, but...”
Remember the world is broken
Realise there are always alternatives.

Plan with optimism. 14 “I am eager”
God is always good
Gospel is always good news

3

Give and take. Romans 1:13-15

I gain from others. 13
I don't always get what I want. 13a “I planned... but have been prevented”
I do always get what I need. 13b “have a harvest among you”

I give to others. 14-15
I owe to society. 14 “I am obligated to both”
I owe spiritually. 15 “eager to preach the Gospel”

4

When the bubble bursts, get a new bubble. Romans 1:13-15

Plan with my desires. 13
My hopes. “I planned...”
My hindrance. “but have been prevented”
My heart. “have a harvest among you”

Payment of my debts. 14-15
I have something to learn from everyone. “I am obligated to both”
I have something to contribute to everyone. “eager to preach the Gospel”

5

Abundant life in a non-abundant world. Romans 1:13-15

Live with integrity. 13a “I planned...”

God Himself makes plans
God’s people make plans

Live with flexibility. 13b “but have been prevented”

Be thankful for blocked paths.
Be attentive for godly options.

Live out my responsibility. 14-15

I am responsible to people. “I am obligated to both”
I am responsible to God. “eager to preach the Gospel”

A

Glowing in the dark. Romans 1:14-17

Gospel is not defined here. See Romans 1:1-4, and 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

I’ve got something to say 1:14-15

I need to say this ‘debt / obligation’ 14
I want to say this ‘eager’ 15

I’ve got someone to be 1:16

Gospel does what no one can do ‘power of God’ 16a
Gospel does what everyone needs ‘salvation of everyone’ 16b

I’ve got something to discover 1:17

Within the Gospel I see God’s essential nature ‘righteousness’ 17a
Within the Gospel I see my essential nature ‘faith’ 17b

B

I am. I am. I am. Romans 1:14-17

I am a debtor [under obligation]. 1:14

I am so eager to preach the Gospel. 1:15

I am not ashamed of the Gospel. 1:16

Quotes and illustrations

I planned to come to you (but have been prevented from visiting until now, 13

Sometimes our plans fail, so a greater plan and purpose can prevail. Jeanette Coron

When we put our faith and trust in God, we’ve done the one thing that a human can do to accomplish superhuman things. We have reached past human strength and knowledge.

We’ve touched infinite strength and infinite knowledge. John Townsend, Henry Cloud

Your first small step must be followed by another, and another, until you realize that God has indeed made a way for you to know him personally. Henry Cloud, John Townsend, God does new things. He is an originator. Satan is a counterfeiter. IBD

God uses prepared people to prepare people IBD

“in order that I might have a harvest among you,” 13

The word translated here as “harvest” is the Greek noun καρπός [Strong's 2590], a word appearing 66 times in the Greek New Testament. This word is most often translated as ‘fruit’, being the fruit of the vine, or fruit plucked from trees. For example, Matthew 3:10, Matthew 7:17-19. But, it can equally be translated as grain, crop, or harvest, being the fruit of the field. For example, Matthew 13:26. This word can also refer to the fruit of one’s loins or one’s womb, meaning one’s child or descendants. For example, Luke 1:42. This word is also used to describe one’s deeds or works, being the fruit of one’s efforts. For example, Galatians 5:22, Ephesians 5:9, Philippians 1:11.

‘I am a debtor’ 14 – surprisingly not ‘to Christ’ but to various people!

I am a debtor [under obligation]

Someone gives you a thousand pounds in order for you to put in one of our offering boxes in an envelope designated for a specific Christian cause or missionary that we support. That is why you were given that thousand pounds. You are in debt to the giver for that amount until you put that exact sum of money in the offering box. Your friend has put you in debt to that cause until you give his 1,000 pounds to the church specifying that it is to go to this particular work of God.

Paul is in debt to the people of Rome. He has not borrowed anything from them at all that he has to repay, but his friend Jesus Christ has entrusted him with this message that we deserve eternal death because we are sinners, but our Lord, because he has loved us so much, has died in our place. He is the Lamb of God who came into the world and took away our sin and guilt. (With thanks to Geoff Thomas¹)

Suppose the governor of this state were to give you a pardon of a man about to be electrocuted or given a lethal injection. And you were to deliver that pardon. He said, “I’m going to give you the honour to take the pardon to the warden to see that this man is set free.” Suppose you put that pardon in your pocket and said I’m going to deliver that pardon. But in the meanwhile, you went shopping, in the meanwhile you cut your grass, in the meanwhile you went golfing, in the meanwhile you took a family vacation. Then you pick up the newspaper and read where the man has been put to death and you had the pardon in your pocket. How would you feel? (With thanks to Jerry Shirley²)

¹ <http://geoffthomas.org/index.php/gtsermons/114-16-i-am-debtor-i-am-ready-i-am-not-ashamed/>

² <https://www.gbcdatur.org/sermons/3IAMs.html>

Music and songs

Songs about plans, 13a

God holds the key to all unknown. H
God is in control (Twila Paris)

Songs about harvest, 13b

Bringing in the sheaves

Songs about everyone needing the Gospel, 14

Jesus put this song into our hearts
Open the eyes of my heart, Ot 23
People need the Lord
Purify my heart / Refiners fire, 657
Since Jesus came into my heart, H 704
There is room in my heart (Thou didst leave...), H 140

Songs about eagerness to witness, 15

Be bold. Be strong. SiS 465
Fear not, 505
Let Your Kingdom come... By Grace we'll preach Your Gospel (Kauflin)
Live for the Kingdom... Bearing the Gospel, go to the nations, Ot 15
Look what God is doing... Take the living Gospel,
Stand up, stand up for Jesus, H 522 / 752
Tell the world... Tell them that the Gospel has come (Gibson, Camp, Bonds) FE 61
We can make a difference... Take the Gospel to the world (Allen)
When the saints go marching out... The Gospel message is, 'Come in'
Where else have we to go when You alone have words of eternal life? (Chiswell)

Thought starters for personal reflection or group discussion.

1. Why would you be excited about visiting someone that you had never met, and who lived somewhere famous, far, far away?
2. The Apostle often planned to visit the Roman church, but his plans were always thwarted, 13a. He does not say how he felt about that. How would you feel?
3. He describes what he wants to do in the Roman church as a 'harvest' or 'fruit', 13b. What do you think he expected to achieve among them?
4. Is that 'harvest' or 'fruit' something that our church could produce? What makes a church 'a harvest field' or 'fruitful' in these ways?
5. What advice would you give to someone who wanted to be more fruitful?

6. What is the 'obligation' or 'debt' we have to the people of the world, 14-15? Why is this described as an 'obligation' or 'debt'. How can we discharge this debt?
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