

**What God's People Want (2):
To Participate in the Work of God**



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Romans 1:11–15

¹¹For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established—¹²that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

¹³Now 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. ¹⁴I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise.

¹⁵So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.

Main idea: God's people should highly value participation in God's work in one another's lives.

Introduction: What do you long for?

1. **Service.** "impart to you some spiritual gift" (v11).

- a. Paul's "gifts" were not talents for him but a stewardship for the church.
- b. The language of gifting reminds us that they are not from us or for us; they are from Christ and for others (cf. Eph 4:7–8).
- c. As such, they don't necessarily identify some great ability on our part, but rather a part that God has assigned to us in His work in others. Special enablings may contribute to discernment of special callings. But special callings sometimes require special dependence in the midst of weakness (cf. 12:3–13)

2. **Encouragement.** "that I may be encouraged together with you" (v12).

- a. Although Paul himself is greatly gifted (15:18; cf. 1Cor 14:18, 2Cor 12:12), he hoped to be built up and encouraged in his own faith by them. You are never so gifted that you cannot be helped by others, and others are never so gifted that you cannot be a help to them.
- b. Each believer has a role and place assigned by God in the body, which God uses for the good of all others. 12:3–13 is a means by which we are a help to one another's service (12:1) and obedience (12:2), cf. Eph 4:16.

3. **Fruit.** "I often planned to... have some fruit among you" (v13).

- a. We make all sorts of plans in our lives, but if one of the main things in our lives is to serve Christ and His body, then we ought to plan for this fruit.
- b. The Lord has His own fruit-plan for us; sometimes there is overlap, and sometimes it's a surprise. But we are to imitate Him by aiming at fruit in others' lives.

4. **Faithfulness.** "I am a debtor" (v14).

- a. Paul couldn't righteously *not* preach the gospel to any sort of Gentile. He had to preach to all kinds ("Greek and barbarian" and "wise and unwise"). What do the "wise" still need? The gospel (v15)!
- b. A gift, or a stewardship, is an obligation. Participation is not optional. We are indebted to be useful to one another's souls. If we fail to attend upon the means of grace for ourselves, or to have our first fellowship with one another in the public means of grace, or to have the rest of our fellowship flow from these, then we are failing to pay an obligation. We should desire to be faithful!

Conclusion: The work of the Spirit is to give us Christ, and to give us to Christ. As He does so, we will more and more value service, encouragement, fruit, and faithfulness.

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)

Romans chapter 1 verse 11 through verse 15. These are the words of God for a long to see you that I may impart to you some spiritual gift And so that you may be established that is that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you.

And me. 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, I am a debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians both to wise and to unwise.

So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome. Also, So far the reading of God's inspired and inherent word. Hmm, We heard last week as we came to consider versus nine through 15 that the apostle here as he has introduced himself and he's introduced his readers.

Now, he comes to to make some opening statements about the letter and just as he's going to say again in chapter 15, as he starts to wind down the letter or close the letter, he wants to come to Rome. But the way that he talks about wanting to come to Rome has been setting an example for us of what believers ought to want.

And so what we saw last week, the first two things that a believer wants is a believer. Once God to witness him, I believe her wants to please God. He wants to live for the eyes of God. Not for the eyes of men. In fact, whatever he does. Before men, he wants to do before God first to honor God and give him glory.

So that even if he has punished for doing good, he will bring glory to God. In the last day, when the Lord avenges, we also want to be. We want God as witness to our voices and so he talks about mentioning them always in our prayer in his prayers just as we want to live for the eyes of God first, We ought to, we also want to speak for the ears of God first, that prayer would be our most natural language and that the Lord would be our first reflex to speak to him.

There's something wonderful that happens for believers who are approaching marriage, and they have gone through, whatever the process is by, which selection is made, and then they start for the preparation. And one of the first one of the things that happens during that time. And we pray by God's mercy and approaching things in a biblical manner will not fizzle over time or fade over time is that that other person the perspective spouse and then the spouse is the first one you want to talk to.

And so we we want to live for the witness of God's eyes and we want to speak for the witness of God's ears In the second place, we want to be engaged with the will of God submitted to His will. Yes planning. He talks about planning to come to Rome and we see that even in tonight's portion in verse 13 but this if by any means.

Now at last I'm a find a way in the will of God to come to you. So believers, although we're submitting to the will of God, we make plans, we rejoice when the heart as our hearts plan our way, and the Lord directs our steps. We rejoice when he overrules us.

And the steps that he directs are different than what we had planned because he knows better. And we also rejoice when he grants to us. What we have planned, because our gentle and good. Father then will not only have planned for us. What is best? But also put in our hearts, What is best and often even when we are planning righteously, we don't have the wisdom to know what is best.

The. And that brings us to the beginning of verse 11, where we heard also that as we engage, the will of God. We not only are free to make plans, but also, we are free to long before and desire good things. He may have those better things for us in which he overrules our plans, but a believer should not shrink from earnest desires for that, which is good, Not Ernest desires, that God's providence would be different than it has been that's discontentment and covetousness, but Ernest desires for good things that might yet come.

And being able to say of course less not my will but thine be done. And that brings us to the third thing that believers want. And for the apostle, it was this thing that he began to say it verse 11 for I long to do what To see you that I may impart some spiritual gift to you and so forth.

And so if believers under the Providence of God directed by the Word of God ought to have these earnest desires. Yearnings longings. That's not license for yearning after or longing for whatever it is. Our flesh wants is it? The Lord teaches us what to long for. And so I wondered dear Christian, What do you long for, What do you desire Here?

We're going to hear tonight that the of the apostles' great desire is to participate in God's work, in the Roman. Believers lives to participate in God's work for in the Roman believers lives. And so I wonder if that aligns with what we long for and maybe we need some longing or yearning or desire readjustment tonight that a desire, not just to observe and praise God.

Yes for that. But even more to participate to fulfill, whatever role he has assigned to us. And we're going to find out a little bit more about that. But this participation that he longs for is a desire to serve a desire to serve to be a steward and to have a part in building them up in the second place encouragement.

Not just that he would encourage them but also that he would be encouraged by them. Do we long, not only to serve others in whatever role we have, not only to serve others in participation in God's work in there in their life. But to have them participate in his work in our life.

And we'll see the apostle setting us a model for that tonight And also we should desire. The Lord loves to give fruit. It honors Christ to His purchased it and honors, the spirit who applies it, that honors, the Father who has promised it to the Son and in the sun to us.

And so it's not a It's not a virtue for believers to say to have this grit, your teeth and endure fruitlessness theology. We should desire the fruit. If we don't have the fruit, we should ask for it more. We we have not because we ask not, that's one of the reasons why when the Lord is about to do a great work, he often stirs up a prayer meeting and they multiply and people demand them Because we are to ask for fruit.

We are to desire fruit. We should not. We should not be put off by the Lord's wise. First resistances. You need to be like Jacob wrestling refusing to let go until he blesses us. Need to be like the Seraphernician woman who is happy to be called a dog, if it means he can have crumbs from the master's table And so we should long for fruit and we should long for faithfulness and we'll see that.

In verse 14, under the phrase, I am a debtor or the clause. I am a debtor and so forth. So in the first part, then in the first place, then we should long for service. He says for a long to see you then I may impart to you some spiritual gift and there's a there's a extent to which there's a In one sense he's already imparting to them a spiritual gift, isn't he?

He's writing as apostle. He's writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is something that the Lord has assigned to him, but he doesn't just want to write letters. Remember the, the apostle,

John at the end of his second, and third letters, how he said, he had so much more than he, he wished to write.

But he'd rather do it face to face and pen and ink. You see the the greatest fellowship that we have is in the worship of God. And then the next great fellowship that we have is in imparting spiritual gifts, one to another being the instruments of Christ. And this helps us by the way, with what is a spiritual gift?

Is it some kind of Christian? Super talent. Well, There are a special enablings that may contribute to discerning, or understanding a special calling, for instance, an elder ought to be apt to teach a deacon ought to be particularly wise. And yet spiritual gifts, here are not super talents or super skills or super enablings, spiritual gifts here.

The word gift means that it's given from Christ. And to the church. And so, Paul didn't think of them as his gifts at all. He viewed himself as a conduit of sorts and in which the Lord had something to give to Corinth and Ephesus and to Thessalonica and to other places that he visited or that he wrote to and now the Lord has something to give to the Romans.

He's not describing here that he's going to go around laying on hands and and hand out super talents to people. No, he recognizes his calling, He recognizes his grace. The, the way the Lord has grown him in grace, he recognizes those giftings, we can call them that or perhaps for the sake of clarity.

As we're making the distinction here, those special enablings from God, He recognizes that those are not his that their gifts from Christ for the church. And so he says, I longed to see you that I may impart to you some spiritual gift. You see everything that we receive from the Lord puts us under a debt.

It is not ours to keep. We are indebted to honor and glorify Him and to serve His church to participate in the work that he is doing in the church. And so, he longed for services and honor, it was a privilege. There's a duty and he couldn't wait for it.

I longed to see you that I'm in part to you. Some spiritual gift. So that you may be established that reminds us, doesn't it? Ephesians 4:7 and 8 and how badly the churches need to be established by good teaching by sound doctrine. And you can see the Romans getting a taste in this letter.

How amazing we could study this letter? I forget now how many years or even decades Dr? Lloyd Jones was in Romans. We could, we could study it and study it, and study it, and not exhaust it, and get all sorts of riches out of it. This was that, this was the taste, This was the letter.

He sent ahead of time as a sample of what he would teach when he was there. Why? Because without sound doctrine, like what we have in this epistle, like what we have, of course in the scriptures a whole without sound doctrine. We're easily tossed. True and fro and blown back and forth and we can whether by circumstances or persuasive and deceptive and maybe even well-meaning people under the influence of not well-meaning spirits who have deceived, then there's there are so many ways that are doctrine can become unstable, He doesn't want them to be unstable.

Why? Well, In part because they need to be established not only for their own sakes and not only for one another's, sakes you remember that in Ephesians 4, right? They need the doctrinal stability, Why? Because every joint in the body supplies something, how to how well does your body function if you have a single joint dislocated and every part?

Every member of the body does its share and they need to be established for that, but he wants them to be established. Also, for his own sake. This brings us to encouragement, he desires participation in the work of God in their lives. Not only that, he might serve them, but that he might also be encouraged by them.

That is that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith. Both of you and me, You see, when we get to Romans 12 and verses 3 through 13, and we'll see several things in verses 3 through 13. When it talks about, thinking of oneself, according to the measure of faith that God has apportioned out to us and it names.

Some things in that list that are things that all believers are called to. Are you aware that you can make an entire list of spiritual gifts? That every Christian has Every Christian has the gift of hospitality. Every Christian has the gift of giving Every Christian has the gift of charitable deeds.

Those are things were commanded to Now not every Christian has a gift of being a father or a mother or a brother or a sister. Although you could say brotherhood and cover both of those things, There's a difference, though, isn't there? An important one, but every Christian has the gift of being a church member, Then there are other things, of course, and we won't go into chapter 12.

Now, we don't have the time in these midweek meetings, But he wants then to encourage him. You see, here's the apostle he at times, for instance, he tells the Corinthians I speak in tongues more than any of you, and he's full of gifts of his own and he can't wait to be used in their lives because it's a gift from Jesus.

But aren't their gifts. The encouragement that God has has enabled them to give aren't they also gifts from Jesus And there's something from Jesus to small for the Apostle. Will he ever outgrow needing to be encouraged and built up by Christ? Although Paul himself is is greatly gifted and we put some references there that you can look at to hear and think about the greatness of his gifts chapter 15 and verse 18 of this very little letter.

First, Corinthians 14, verse 18, second Corinthians 12, verse 12. He had the signs of an apostle and the gifts of an apostle. But although he himself is greatly gifted, he hoped to be built up and encouraged in his own faith by then you know you see you're never so gifted that you cannot be helped by others and others are never.

So gifted that you cannot be a help to them, remember the discussion of the parts of the body and how all of them, need all of the others and first Corinthians chapter 12, it's not one of you here. Dear Christian who are, who are. So, un gifted or

There are not one of you here, who cannot be and encouragement to me, to your parents, to your elders, to those who you think are most mature in the faith. We are to encourage one another. Each believer has a role into place a signed by God in the body which God uses for the good of all the others will notice when we get to chapter 12, that in verse 1, when he says to offer your bodies as living sacrifices and then in verse 2, when he says to prove by testing how good and pleasing and perfect is the will of God that we're commanded to serve us and obedience in response to the marvelous gospel in chapters one through 11.

And then it's immediately from that service and obedience that have been commanded that he launches into verses 3 through 13, in chapter 12, about the gifts of believers, and the gifts that believers are to one another. Now we have some opportunity to do that with one another tonight, but there's one day that's been set aside especially for the fellowship of worship not just in the public assembly but conversations that are aimed at worship that keeping the heart and mind in

that condition because we don't exalt Christ to ourselves nearly as easily nearly as well as we exalt him to others.

I'm sure you have found this. If you've been a long believer for a long time that in God's Providence, in the work of the Spirit, when you're talking to someone else, that's much more easy to be intentional. About exalting Christ to them about building them up in him by pointing to his glory into his honor and praise and worship.

We have opportunity to to do that with one another and the more we get in the habit of doing it to one another, the more we get in the habit of doing it to ourselves and the two become mutually reinforcing How wonderful it would have been to revisited by the Apostle.

Paul. So full of how glorious Jesus is and to have that in fact and build up the congregation and the more excited they became at the under the apostles, ministry and fellowship and encouragement about the glories of Christ, the glories of his gospel. The perfections of his finished work.

The ongoing Almighty application of it by his spirit, as they became excited, they would speak to Paul about it. Paul, of course, knows way more than they do, but he might say something. And they'd say, oh Paul we just had that in family worshiper. I just had that and private worship does don't you see that in this passage also The Apostle Probably already knows.

It's in that passage also but you can anticipate. Can't you The joy of seeing God? Having worked in them and having them reminded him of another passage. And so we longed for service unto one, another and encouraging one another, as we participate in God's work, and one another's lives.

And then fruit, We said long for fruit. Now, I do not want you to be unaware brethren, but 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, It's odd to read sometimes.

Thankfully, there are several good commentaries that didn't miss it but others wonder allowed or on the page. What was this hindrance that kept the apostle from coming to Rome? Well, you can see it implied in verse 13. The Lord had fruit for him to bear among other Gentiles and he hasn't been able to come to Rome yet because the Lord was intending to do a different sort of work with him.

And so, as we longed to be fruitful in in one another's lives, we should also pay attention to where the Lord is making us fruitful to what he has called us to do. We make all sorts of plans, but if one of the main things in our lives is to serve Christ and His body, then we ought to plan for fruit.

I often plan to come to you. That I might have some fruit. You see, he didn't just want to encourage and establish them. He wanted to be able to see that they were encouraged and established And of course the Apostle here is using language. He uses elsewhere to talk about conversions.

See, as we go through the the letter, he's gonna say some things. Like, as many as are led by the Spirit of God. These are the sons of God. If anyone has not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his. This is possible to be part of a church.

That is faith. Famous like the church to which he was writing and still not be converted The apostle ever. So gently says, I longed to come to you. That if there are any self-deceived among you, not just that you would be built up, not just you'd be encouraged. But even that if there are any self-deceived among you, or maybe not self-deceived, maybe just miserable because you're a dead person in a live church and they look around and the preaching doesn't seem to be shaping their own mind and their heart.

Perhaps it's not. So not on the justification side. Perhaps they have not perceived yet the way that the Spirit operates in our lives and they're trying to be sanctified by effort, the good that they want to do and the evil that they hate and God commands effort and it's right to make that effort, but they haven't yet gotten to thanks be to God through Jesus Christ.

Our Lord and there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, For whom the law of the Spirit of life, has set them free from the law of sin and death. He wants to have fruit. We mustn't just go through the motions as we encourage one another, on the Lord's days and make all of our fellowship.

Aim at worship as we teach our families or are taught by our husband, or our father, in the family worship. We should long for fruit especially for those little ones who are not yet. Showing the evidence of faith, This should be a great desire. Oh older. Siblings. Don't you see the opportunity?

You have every time you're gathered as a family, every time you worship together as a family. Every time you have to say that you're sorry to a younger sibling who has not yet professed faith, that you have sinned against and you have an opportunity to tell them why you need the gospel, and why they need the gospel.

All of these are opportunities to have the Lord form in you and evangelistic mind the desires, to see the fruit of eternal life and the evidence of that eternal life in the fruit of sanctification.

So he longed to serve and the role that God had given me longed to be mutually encouraged, not just to encourage them but to be encouraged by them. He longed to bear some fruit. The Lord had planned other fruit for him for a while but he hadn't forgotten fruit in Rome.

Any longed in the last place to be faithful. I am a debtor. He says both the Greeks and to Barbarians, both to wise and unwise you see? It wasn't optional. You can hear him. Say, whoa, is me. If I don't preach the gospel or like the prophet who said, he, he tried not to speak but it burned within him until it had to come out.

And the psalmist says that, as well. I am a debtor. He says, you see what he's saying? He's saying, if I don't preach the gospel to all sorts of Gentiles, I will have failed in an obligation. He couldn't righteously, not preach the gospel to any sort of Gentile and it may be here that He's ever.

So gently answering one of their objections which might be if we're such a great church, Then why do you say you need to come here and have fruit among us? Aren't we doing well on our own? And he's saying, I have to come preach to you. I don't just preach to barbarians.

I preach also to Greeks because the Lord is commanded me to preach to both. Do you know why they're called barbarian's children? Because the Greek speakers in the Roman culture would never. They heard someone speaking a language other than Greek and pretty much everyone spoke Greek. But there were, There were people, for instance, in a place called Lookinia that we'll see in the book of Acts that they preferred their primary language first.

But to the Greek-speaking, people, all the other languages sounded like burr. Burr burr. Burr. Burr burr. That's that's where the word barbarian comes from in the Greek and it's very similar to the word that we translate that way but you can see how those who have the polished Greek and probably Latin as well since it was the legal language at the time in Rome, you know, those, in this, this Roman church would say, why do you want to come preach to us?

And we know that there are two parties in the church, both of whom thought themselves wise and the apostles going to be very gentle, very is going to very gently point out. Which one is the actual weaker brother? When we get there later in the letter, he says, I am under obligation to minister to everyone because everyone needs.

What verse 15, this indebtedness. This obligation. He's under. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome. Also, Are you not yet a believer in Jesus Christ? Have you not yet closed with him laid? Hold of him by faith.

What you need is the gospel. You need to hear of being right with God not just through outward forms. That announce faith to you like baptism but being right with God through faith in Jesus Christ. Have you been a believer? A long time. Have you been growing in grace?

Do you have much understanding? Do you know what you need? The gospel, the wise and the foolish, both need the gospel, the Greek and the Barbarian, both need the gospel and that's what launch launches him into verses 16 and 17, which we aim to take together next. Lord's Day or next.

Wednesday, Paul couldn't righteously, not preach the gospel. To any sort of Gentile. You see his gift of being the preacher to the Gentiles. The apostle to the Gentiles. It was a stewardship. It was an obligation participation is not optional. We are indebted to be useful to one another souls.

You can't fulfill that debt by missing church. Now there are times that God, providentially hinders you? But you can't fulfill the debt that God has placed you under, by giving you the gift, the role of being church member by staying at home and home, churching with a couple of other families.

You can't fulfill that debt by going to camp and not gathering with the church. You can't fulfill that debt by.

Keeping to yourself or even engaging with others but not with a view to edification. So well, I'm free to do what I want. Liberty of conscience. The Apostle says yeah, all things are permissible but not all things are helpful. The most all be done to edify. He's under a gospel debt and we are under gospel debt not as Apostles obviously.

But as church members, and how are we going to do? One another good. If we fail to attend upon the means of grace for ourselves, or if our first fellowship with one, another isn't in the public means of grace or the rest of our fellowship with one, another isn't flowing, both from how the Lord is growing us, and the worship that we have had together and then we have that opportunity to bring both of those things to bear upon one another We are under a gospel obligation and if we do not minister to one another in that way, if we do, not as the Apostle says in Ephesians 4, when he talks about being established in order that we can each minister to the others.

If we are not speaking the truth out of our love for one another and by that he doesn't mean you know, mathematical truth necessarily means especially the gospel. Doesn't he Then we are not fulfilling our obligation. We should desire to be fit. Faithful. So, what are we to long for to participate and God's work?

And one another's lives by serving one another by being encouraged by one another, how's your brother going to fulfill his debt of being an encourager? If you do not seek and receive encouragement from him of being fruitful and of being faithful, the work of the Spirit is to give us Christ and to give us to Christ and as he does so We will more and more value being used by the spirit and giving Christ to us and us to Christ.

And we will value more and more service encouragement, fruit and faithfulness.