

Intro:

All right, we are finished with lunch, we are full of a sense of obligation for Christian ministry, so now what?

Now it is *The Readiness for Christian Ministry*.

The *American Heritage Dictionary* gives us these definitions for 'readiness':

1. Prepared or available for service, action, or progress: *I am ready to work. The soup will be ready in a minute. The pupils are ready to learn to read.*
2. Mentally disposed; willing: *He was ready to believe her.*
3. Likely or about to do something: *She is ready to retire.*
4. Prompt in apprehending or reacting: *a ready intelligence; a ready response.*
5. Available: *ready money.*¹

Early in his ministry, Jesus said:

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.

The harvest is always ready.

Later on, the Lord said:

Matthew 9:35 ¶ And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.³⁶ But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.³⁷ Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly *is* plenteous, but the labourers *are* few;³⁸ Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

The harvest is always ready.

¹ readiness. Dictionary.com. *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/readiness> (accessed: February 16, 2008).

On still another occasion, our Lord said:

Luke 10:1 ¶ After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come. ² Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly *is* great, but the labourers *are* few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.

The harvest is always ready.

But what of the harvesters? What makes them ready?

Our text is Romans 1.15

Read Rm 1.8-15

Proposition: Readiness for Christian ministry comes from the inner self-life of a disciple.

I. Readiness comes from a heart focused on other people

A. Paul gave to the Romans five evidences of his interest in them:

1. His thanksgivings for the *fact* of their existence (and spiritual reputation) (1.8)
2. His prayers for the *opportunity* of visiting them (1.9-10)
3. His *desire* to give a spiritual gift for their establishment (1.11)
4. His *desire* to receive their spiritual gifts for mutual encouragement (1.12)
5. His *purpose* to obtain spiritual fruit among them in the ministry of the word (1.13)

B. In addition to this, there is the sense of obligation to preach the gospel to the lost world, the Greeks and the Barbarians, the wise and the unwise (1.14)

Every one of these things are focused on others, not self.

- Even his desire to receive their spiritual gifts is ministry related – he wants for them an opportunity to serve as well. See Phil 4.15-18.

- You are not ready for ministry if your heart is set on what others should be doing for you. [You aren't really ready for spiritual living at all, if that is the case.]

Readiness comes from a heart focused on other people.

II. Readiness comes from a will submissive to the Lord's disposal

A. Three other statements of readiness in the NT

1. A statement of readiness that led to failure (Lk 22.33)
 - a. Peter was ready to go to prison, even death, *he said*.
 - b. Peter failed. He wasn't yet completely submissive to the Lord's will.
2. A statement of readiness in the face of Christian antagonism (2 Cor 12.14-15)
 - a. Paul was ready to come to minister to the Corinthians
 - b. Paul was ready to do it at his own expense
3. A statement of readiness in the face of prophesied persecution (Ac 21.13-14)

B. Paul's readiness for Rome was in submission to God's will

1. He prayed for success *at last* (10)
2. He prayed for the will of God (10)
3. He had long been hindered in spite of plans (13)

Paul subjected his will to the will of God – he put no terms and conditions on his service.

- Paul didn't say 'I'll serve you in this place, and this place only.'
- Paul didn't say 'These are my gifts Lord, if you need them, I'm ready.'
- Paul was ready for wherever and whenever and however the Lord would direct, even to prison and death if necessary.

Readiness comes from a will submissive to the Lord's disposal.

Readiness comes from a heart focused on other people.

III. Readiness comes from a mind filled with the truth of the gospel

A. Paul is going to 'preach the gospel' to the Romans

An aside: There is a ministry of gospel preaching that is necessary for the saved as well as for the lost.

B. Preaching the gospel presupposes knowing the gospel [incredible grasp of the obvious?]

When I was in real estate I used to attend sales seminars. One speaker emphasized the point that you needed to be ready when you knocked on a prospect's door, especially a 'FSBO' – a 'for sale by owner'.

- He said the reason that most realtors didn't bother with FSBOs was because they didn't know what to say.

We are talking about something much more important than getting a listing in real estate – we are talking about the gospel.

How well do you know the gospel?

C. Knowing the gospel means devotion to the things of the gospel

1. Turn the television off
2. Pick up your Bible and good Christian literature

"Over-learn" the gospel – know more than you can say

3. Get involved in local church ministry
 - a. Regular attendance
 - b. Volunteer service
4. Pray the gospel for your lost friends and acquaintances
5. Get involved in a Bible study for your neighbours if possible

You cannot do everything, but you can do something.

The more you know of the gospel, the more ready you will be.

Readiness comes from a mind filled with the truth of the gospel.

Readiness comes from a will submissive to the Lord's disposal.

Readiness comes from a heart focused on other people.

Conclusion:

D. L. Moody is quoted as saying this:

“I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And that which I can do, by the grace of God, I will do.”

Are you ready for Christian ministry?

Proposition: Readiness for Christian ministry comes from the inner self-life of a disciple.

- A mind filled with the truth of the gospel
- A will submissive to the Lord's disposal
- A heart focused on other people