

INTRODUCTION TO THE “DOXOLOGY”

Finally in the closing verses of this marvelous epistle Paul considers this small group of people who have been with him in Corinth as he wrote this letter. They too wish to extend their greetings to the people in the church at Rome. Paul begins with Timothy in Romans 16:21:

21 Timothy, my fellow worker.

Timothy is Paul’s beloved child in the faith, his protégé, his number one disciple and friend. Paul wrote in Philippians 2:19-22:

19 If the Lord Jesus is willing, I hope to send Timothy to you soon. Then when he comes back, he can cheer me up by telling me how you are getting along.

20 I have no one else like Timothy, who genuinely cares about your welfare.

21 All the others care only for themselves and not for what matters to Jesus Christ.

22 But you know how Timothy has proved himself. Like a son with his father, he has helped me in preaching the Good News.

It sounds like Paul thought very highly of Timothy, doesn’t it? Timothy loved Paul as well and stood by him. You can read about Paul’s affection for Timothy in many of Paul’s epistles. If you care to do some research on your own you might want to read 1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:10,11; 1 Timothy 6; 2 Timothy 1,2,4; and 1 Thessalonians 3:2.

Paul tells the Romans that Lucius sends his love as well. When Paul first started out his ministry in Acts 13, one of the five men who were leading the church at Antioch was Lucius of Cyrene. Perhaps that is who this is. Another possibility is that this could be Luke since Luke was with Paul at this time. The book of Acts was of course written by Luke and in Acts 20:5, Luke uses the words “us” and “we” which confirm that Luke was with Paul. It is entirely possible that Lucius refers to Luke because in three places Paul refers to Luke as Lucas, which is simply an equivalent to Lucius ((Philemon 1:24; Col. 4:14).

Then Paul adds the names Jason and Sosipater also in Romans 16:21. We don’t know who these men are, although from the text we know they are either relatives of Paul or Jews or possibly both. The only information we have appears in Acts 17:5-9. Jason was Paul’s host on Paul’s first visit to Thessalonica and Jason became a follower of Christ as a result of that visit. So it is very possible that Jason became a traveling companion of Paul in his ministry. Sosipater, also called Sopater, was from the town of Berea and was probably one of those Old Testament students who studied the Scripture. He was in Paul’s group at this time as well and is mentioned in Acts 20:4.

These men were all Paul's friends and they were part of his life which demonstrates again that loving relationship he had with so many people. Then in Romans 16:22, we read:

22 I, Tertius, the one who is writing this letter for Paul, send my greetings, too, as a Christian brother.

Paul had a secretary who took all his dictation and his name was Tertius. So Tertius just jumps in here and takes the opportunity to send his own greetings to the Roman church. Paul often used a secretary. You can see that in 1 Corinthians 16:21 and Galatians 6:11. Wouldn't it be a thrill and privilege to write down on paper the holy Word of God? Then in Romans 16:23 Paul wraps up the greeting: "*Gaius, my host.*" In Acts 18:7 he is called Justus. Romans usually had three names and this man's three names could have been Gaius Titius Justus. He was first seen in Corinth and it was said of him that he worshipped God. He was a true seeker after the true God and he lived next door to the synagogue. Paul reached him for Christ and he was baptized as we see in 1 Corinthians 1:14:

14 I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius,

So this man is also now with Paul supporting his ministry. We are next introduced in Romans 16:23 to: "*Erastus, the treasurer of the city.*" Erastus also sends his greetings to the people in the church at Rome. Here was a man of prominence involved with Paul's ministry. Then finally Paul mentions Quartus, and the only thing we know about him is that he is a brother in the faith. So Paul is surrounded by a beloved group of people who share his life and service. Then another benediction in Romans 16:24:

24 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Paul has now given the Romans five benedictions in the Book of Romans, four of those are in chapters 15 and 16. The other one is in chapter one. You may think of a benediction as something that ends a church service. **BUT IT IS ACTUALLY A PRAYER THAT GOD WILL BESTOW CERTAIN BLESSINGS ON HIS PEOPLE.** We see that benedictions are another way Paul expresses his love for the Christians in Rome.

Paul's heart is so filled with love. I believe this is just an emotional response on the part of Paul. He just said it four verses back in verse 20. He loves these people and has a heart of compassion for them. Now let's go on to the concluding verses of Romans in Romans 16:25-27:

*25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past,
26 but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith;*

27 to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.

This book ends in these verses with what is called a **DOXOLOGY**. Those of you who have been in the church since childhood probably remember growing up singing the *Doxology*. Do you remember it?

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him all creatures here below,
Praise Him above ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.*

That is a doxology. It really means a praise saying. Paul uses a praise saying to bring this epistle to a conclusion. The Word of God is filled with many doxologies. There are many times when the writers of Scripture just stop in the midst of all they are writing and lift their hearts to God in praise. Let us give you an illustration of this. The book of Psalms was basically the hymnbook for the Hebrews. There are one hundred and fifty Psalms which the Jews read and studied and even sang. The Psalms are divided into five books. These books speak about the attributes of God, the work of God, the power of God, the wisdom of God. At the conclusion of each book there is a doxology. Book one ends at Psalm 41:13, a praise saying for all that has been said about God in these first 41 Psalms:

13 Bless the Lord, the God of Israel, who lives forever from eternal ages past. Amen and amen!

So ends Book One. Now let's go to the end of Book Two at Psalm 72:18,19:

*18 Bless the Lord God, the God of Israel, who alone does such wonderful things.
19 Bless his glorious name forever! Let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and amen!*

The Third Book ends at Psalm 89:52:

52 Blessed be the Lord forever! Amen and amen!

Book Four ends at Psalm 106:48:

*48 Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting!
Let all the people say, "Amen!" Praise the Lord!*

Book Five ends at Psalm 150 and the entire Psalm is a doxology:

*1 Praise the Lord! Praise God in his heavenly dwelling; praise him in his mighty heaven!
2 Praise him for his mighty works; praise his unequalled greatness!
3 Praise him with a blast of the trumpet; praise him with the lyre and harp!
4 Praise him with the tambourine and dancing; praise him with stringed*

instruments and flutes!

5 Praise him with a clash of cymbals; praise him with loud clanging cymbals.

6 Let everything that lives sing praises to the Lord! Praise the Lord!

So doxologies are a very important part of the life of the people of God. When you come to the New Testament you find that at the birth of Jesus Christ the angels appeared and spoke a doxology. Luke 2:13,14:

13 Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God:

14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to all whom God favors.”

As Jesus came into the city of Jerusalem in Luke 19 as the Messiah, all the people said:

“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!”

Another doxology, another praise saying, directed toward the Lord Jesus.

The disciples’ prayer by which Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew 6:13 contains another doxology, another song of praise:

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

As you come into the epistles of the New Testament, there is a resounding doxology in Ephesians 3:20, 21:

20 Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,

21 to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

Another doxology is found in Hebrews 13:20-21:

*20 Now the God of peace, **who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd** of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord,*

21 equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

These doxologies appear throughout the Bible and they all have a common theme. They are **praise offerings** to God and Jesus. So as we come to the last section of chapter 16 in Paul’s letter to the Romans, we are on familiar ground as we come to another one of these

praise sayings. As we look at this, we want you to see that this doxology captures the **three major themes** of the entire Roman epistle. You'll remember if you have been coming regularly that the book of Romans can be divided into three parts:

- ☞ Chapters 1-3 deal with humanity's sin.
- ☞ From the end of chapter 3 - chapter 8 Paul deals with the matter of salvation.
- ☞ From chapter 9 to the end of chapter 16 we see matters related to Christian life, ministry, and relationships.

Also you need to note that there is a parallel between the closing doxology and the first eleven verses of Romans. You will notice the word "*establish*" in verse 25 of chapter 16. In Romans 1:11 Paul speaks about "*establishing*" or "*strengthening*." In verse 25 he speaks about "*my gospel*." In Romans 1:1 he speaks of "*the gospel of God*." In verse 25 Paul talks about "*the mystery which has been kept secret*." In Romans 1:2 he talks about "*the gospel promised beforehand*." In verse 26 he speaks of "*the Scriptures of the prophets*." In Romans 1:2, it is "*the holy Scriptures*." In verse 25 he speaks of "*the preaching of Jesus Christ*." In Romans 1:3 it is about "*God's Son*." In verse 26, he speaks of "*the obedience of faith*," and in Romans 1:5 he also speaks of "*the obedience of faith*." Here he speaks of "*all nations*" coming to the Gospel in verse 26 and in Romans 1:5 "*all the Gentiles*" coming to the Gospel. So Paul closes this great epistle by discussing the same things with which he began the epistle. He is bracketing these truths around the rest of the letter.

The book of Romans is introduced and concluded with elements that summarize all that is in between. Now in this doxology there are four main truths for which Paul praises God:

- ☞ It is a Gospel to establish (strengthen) men and women.
- ☞ It is a Gospel concerning Jesus Christ.
- ☞ It is a Gospel revealing mystery.
- ☞ It is a Gospel that is being made known to the Gentiles.

Let us examine each of these:

1) Paul Praises God for the Gospel that Established (Strengthens) Men and Women

In Romans 16:25, Paul writes:

25 Now to Him (God) who is able to establish you according to my gospel.

This is a Gospel that is capable of strengthening people. So Paul offers His praise to God for the fact that the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ strengthens people. You see God is able to do this because He is powerful enough to do anything. The Greek word used here for *establish* or *strengthen* means *To set steadfastly in an immovable position, to plant their feet*. It carries the idea of being mentally settled.

You know what it is like before you know God, before you become a Christian, before you turn your life over to Jesus Christ and begin to understand the Word of the living God. You are unsettled. That is the case of the whole fallen world. There is an unsettled attitude in the world today. And I don't mean that in the sense of turmoil on the outside. I mean it in the sense of the struggle for truth on the inside. Men and women are not mentally settled. But the Gospel is capable of settling the mind on what is true and right, on a course of action in life, on a true path. The saving Gospel is able to make us firm, it settles us, it strengthens us, and it grounds us solidly in our minds as to what we believe and how we behave. Once you come to know the Lord Jesus Christ, once you have committed yourself to His saving Gospel, then you know the truth and the truth lights the path for your life. **No one in the world is more settled than a true believer in the Gospel of Jesus.**

And Paul calls it "*my Gospel*" in Romans 16:25. He is not being particularly possessive. He simply means that it is the Gospel in which he believes and which he preaches. But we should remember that Paul had been given the Gospel message by direct revelation from God. He didn't learn the Gospel like we do by hearing someone preach. He did not learn the Gospel by reading about it. He learned the Gospel because Jesus Himself gave it to him. Paul says in Galatians 1:11,12;15-17:

11 For I would have you know, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.

12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

15 But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased

16 to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,

17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.

The Gospel, the Good News that Paul preached, states that God has the power and wisdom to take a fallen, misunderstanding, chaotic mind and settle it once and for all on the truth so that it can stand erect and say, "*I know what I believe. I know in whom I believe. I know what God asks of me, and I understand His promises.*" Without the Gospel of salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, people are fallen, unsure, insecure, and unable to find peace and joy.

In that fallen and unstable situation, people have no defense against Satan. They may be constantly learning but they never find the truth (2 Timothy 3). They grab at every moment to get from it all the joy, meaning, fulfillment, and satisfaction they can find. But there's nothing there of real substance. This is reflected in the line from Arthur Miller's play, *After the Fall*, in which the husband says to the wife as they are eating breakfast, "*Frankly dear, life has deteriorated to how many miles per gallon we get on our Volkswagen.*" This reflects the purposelessness and meaninglessness that people get out

of life after chasing after the fulfillment of their lusts and greed. Those who do not know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and have a thriving relationship with Him, do not know what to believe or where to stand. So they may try to drown those feelings in activity, work, sex, drugs, alcohol, or gambling, or whatever. God is able to take that fallen person, lift them up, and set them on their feet, and give them a new heart, a good heart (Ezekiel 36:26; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Luke 8:15).

That is what Romans 1-3 is all about. The theme of these chapters is *The Fallenness of Mankind*. In these chapters Paul describes the condition of people before they were strengthened by God. In Romans 1:19-22, Paul writes:

19 For the truth about God is known to (unbelieving people)¹ instinctively. God has put this knowledge in their hearts.

*20 From the time the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky and all that God made. They can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So **they have no excuse whatsoever for not knowing God.***

21 Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. The result was that their minds became dark and confused.

*22 **Claiming to be wise, they became utter fools instead.***

In spite of the behavior of such unbelieving people, of whom I was one, God provided a way through Christ for all of them to be made right with God and receive a new life and a new heart here in this life and eternal life in Heaven. **Is it any wonder that Paul praises God for such a gift?**

Paul goes on in Romans chapter 1 to tell us that people need to worship something, and if they refuse to worship the true God, they'll invent one they can worship. Romans 1:24,25:

24 So God let them go ahead and do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies.

*25 Instead of believing what they knew was the truth about God, **they deliberately chose to believe lies.** So they worshiped the things God made but not the Creator himself, who is to be praised forever. Amen.*

Yet in spite of this kind of behavior, God sent His Son to pay for the sins such people committed so that they could be made right with God, receive a new heart and a new life, and be granted eternal life forever in Heaven. God continues to offer this opportunity to all people today no matter how terrible their sin. This is just another reason for praising God as Paul does here at the end of Romans 16. Beginning in Romans 1:29 and then 32, Paul says:

¹ Parentheses added.

*29 Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, fighting, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip.
32 They are fully aware of God's death penalty for those who do these things, yet they go right ahead and do them anyway. And, worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too.*

Here we see the predicament of people before they come to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, before they are *established* in the truth. So it is no wonder that Paul praises God in this doxology for having the ability to establish us, to change our hearts, and set us on the path to new and eternal life. Neither God nor Paul wanted people to remain in this condition. So God provides a **power** that can lift people out of this hopeless condition, set them on their feet, and give them power and eternal life. What power is that? We'll find out next week and conclude the book of Romans. **Honest.**