

## TO GOD BE THE GLORY

Romans is a great book in the Bible and for some time now we have been examining it in depth. We are now looking closely at Romans 16:25-27, which constitute a glorious doxology. It is really quite remarkable how Paul has captured the essence of the whole of Romans **in two short verses (25 and 26)** of his **closing doxology**. The reader is carried back and swept through the whole Roman epistle to review quickly the Gospel that brings **praise to God**; the Gospel which gives rise to the doxology.

We saw that in these verses Paul praises God for four main truths. The first truth found in Romans 16:25 and 26, which we talked about last week, is that the Gospel establishes and strengthens men and women. Today we will look at the remaining truths. The second truth is that it is a Gospel concerning Jesus Christ, thirdly it is a Gospel that reveals mystery, and fourth it is a Gospel that is being made known to the Gentiles or to other nations.

Last week we saw that God provides a **power** that can lift sinful people out of their hopeless condition, set them on their feet, and give them power and eternal life. Let's go back and read Romans 3:21-30:

*21 But now God has shown us a different way of being right in his sight—**not by obeying the law** but by the way promised in the Scriptures long ago.*

*22 **We are made right in God's sight when we trust in Jesus Christ to take away our sins.** And we all can be saved in this same way, no matter who we are or what we have done.*

*23 For all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard.*

*24 Yet now God in his gracious kindness **declares us not guilty**. He has done this through Christ Jesus, who has freed us **by taking away our sins**.*

*25 For **God sent Jesus to take the punishment** for our sins and to satisfy God's anger against us. We are made right with God when we believe that Jesus shed his blood, sacrificing his life for us. God was being entirely fair and just when he did not punish those who sinned in former times.*

*26 And he is entirely fair and just in this present time when **he declares sinners to be right in his sight because they believe in Jesus**.*

*27 Can we boast, then, that we have done anything to be accepted by God? No, because our acquittal is not based on our good deeds. **It is based on our faith**.*

*28 So we are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law.*

*29 After all, God is not the God of the Jews only, is he? Isn't he also the God of the Gentiles? Of course he is.*

*30 There is only one God, and there is only one way of being accepted by him. He makes people right with himself only by faith, whether they are*

*Jews or Gentiles.*

Back in Romans 1:16,17, Paul says:

*16 For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—Jews first and also Gentiles.*  
*17 This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, “It is through **faith** that a righteous person has life.”*

The Good News is that from God, through Christ, there is power for a transformed life. So is it any wonder that Paul says in Romans 16:25: “*Now to God who is able to **strengthen** you according to my gospel.*” You see nothing else could accomplish this transformation. The Gospel alone gives us the Good News that God alone can strengthen us. Jude had the same thing in mind in his doxology. Jude 24,25 NKJV:

*24 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,*  
*25 To God our Savior, **Who alone is wise**, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.*

The Gospel of Christ alone is able to strengthen, transform, and provide for eternal life in Heaven. But it is not only a Gospel that establishes people, it is also a Gospel about Jesus Christ. Romans 16:25:

*25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ.*

## **2) The Second truth for which Paul Praises God is that the Gospel is a Gospel Concerning Jesus Christ**

Is the public preaching of Jesus Christ a major theme in Romans? Starting in Romans 3:20 and running all the way through the end of chapter eight, the theme is always Jesus Christ. This was Paul’s life commitment. In 1 Corinthians 1:23 Paul says: “*We preach Christ crucified.*” In 2 Corinthians 4:5 Paul says: “*We do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.*” In 1 Corinthians 2:2, he says:” *I determined not to know anything among you except Christ crucified.*” So Paul praises God not only because the Gospel lifts up fallen people and strengthens them, but also because of the preaching of Jesus Christ which is the foundation for transformation and strength. From Romans 3:21 all the way to the end of Romans 8, Paul itemizes every single feature of Christian living that comes as the result of the wonderful work of Jesus Christ. **IN ROMANS 3:22 WE SEE THAT RIGHTEOUSNESS COMES BY FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST.** In verse 24 we see that we are justified by God’s grace through the redemption that is found in Christ.

**Jesus came to earth, went to the cross, and died for our sin providing salvation for us. THAT IS WHY PAUL PRAISES GOD** at the end of chapter 16. He praises God because Christ is the foundation of our salvation. Jesus intervened and took the punishment that we would have had to endure, and **by faith we receive the gift of salvation**. And what is it that Christ gives to us? Let's go back to Romans 5:1-5:

*1 Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.*

*2 Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of highest privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory.*

*3 We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they are good for us—they help us learn to endure.*

*4 And endurance develops strength of character in us, and character strengthens our confident expectation of salvation.*

*5 And this expectation will not disappoint us. For we know how dearly God loves us, because **he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.***

The preaching of Jesus Christ gives us all of that. Now we want to mention that the peace spoken of in Romans 5:1 is a spiritual peace. Christians often struggle because they do not recognize there is a difference between spiritual peace and psychological peace. So when their anxiety level rises, they conclude they have no peace, or their "friends" do. Spiritual peace consists of two things. First it is a peace that comes from a cessation of hostilities with God. In fact, the majority of Old Testament references refer to peace as a cessation of hostilities.

**Deuteronomy 20:10-12, NAS**

*10 "When you approach a city to fight against it, you shall offer it terms of peace.*

*11 "And it shall come about, if it agrees to make peace with you and opens to you, then it shall be that all the people who are found in it shall become your forced labor and shall serve you.*

*12 "However, if it does not make peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it.*

**Job 5:23, NIV**

*For you will have a covenant with the stones of the field, and the wild animals will be at peace with you.*

So therefore, when God has His people make peace offerings with Him, He is giving them a tangible demonstration that the natural hostility between God and people has been set aside because of their repentance and obedience. We see that peace can then generalize over into other aspects of the individual's life when they live in relationship and obedience to God. Hence, the psalmist can use this analogy to speak of the

individual's peace with God as long as the individual does not return to sinful ways:

**Psalm 85:8, NAS**

*I will hear what God the LORD will say; for He will speak peace to His people, to His godly ones; but let them not turn back to folly.*

**Proverbs 16:7, NAS**

*When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.*

Christ was the supreme Sacrifice, so we no longer make animal peace offerings. Today we come into a state of peace with God by accepting the work of Christ on the cross on our behalf. So a person accepts Christ and comes into the family of God. They are now on God's side rather than the devil's side. They have peace with God, as stated in Romans 5:1. In warfare we do not do battle with the people on our own side, only with the enemy.

The second aspect of spiritual peace is the awareness of the many Bible verses that can quiet our hearts when the tendency to worry and fret arises. Verses such as these:

**Psalm 94:19, NAS**

*When my anxious thoughts multiply within me, Thy consolations delight my soul.*

**John 14:27, NAS**

*"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.*

**Philippians 4:7, NAS**

*And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Psychological peace is influenced by both biology and mental state. Some people are biologically predisposed to experience increased anxiety, almost constantly. They may remind themselves of God's Word and God's promises frequently, yet still experience the effects of increased adrenalin pumping through their systems. What these individuals, and the people who love them, have to keep in mind is that God understands their biology and that when they recall and lean on the promises of God He knows they are trusting **Him to the best of their ability**, even though they still **feel** anxious. They also have to realize that their peace with God does not depend on their feelings, but on God's trustworthiness.

For other people, recalling God's promises may well flood their minds with a calmness that they equate with peace. They have to remember that non-Christians can use sayings and mantras to come to a state of calmness, which is not necessarily the peace of God. They must also recognize that their peace with God does not depend on their feelings, but on God's trustworthiness.

It can be very misleading to equate peace with calmness. The peace of God is something deeper, more sure, and more dependable than an individual's adrenalin or serotonin levels. The person with high biological anxiety who wants to trust God and who is reminding themselves constantly of God's promises, may be far more spiritual and closer to the Lord than the person without such biological predisposition who finds it easy to remain calm and may not focus their mind as frequently on God's Word and on God Himself.

So when Romans 5:1 speaks of "*peace with God*" it is speaking of the cessation of our hostility with God and the establishment of our relationship with Him in His family. And there is more. Romans 6:3-9:

*3 Do you not know that when we became Christians and were baptized to become one with Christ Jesus, we died with him?*

*4 For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now **we also may live new lives.***

*5 Since we have been united with him in his death, **we will also be raised as he was.***

*6 Our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin.*

*7 For when we died with Christ **we were set free from the power of sin.***

*8 And since we died with Christ, we know we will also share his new life.*

*9 We are sure of this because Christ rose from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him.*

Sin can no longer punish us or judge us. Christ cleansed us of all sin in the eyes of God. We died with Him, we rose with Him, and we walk in newness of life. This is peace with God. Romans 6:16,18,22,23:

*16 Don't you realize that whatever you choose to obey becomes your master? You can choose sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God and receive his approval.*

*18 Now you are free from sin, your old master, and you have become slaves to your new master, righteousness.*

*22 Now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life.*

*23 FOR THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH, BUT THE FREE GIFT OF GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE THROUGH CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.*

All of these things are the blessings that come to those who believe in the preaching of Jesus Christ. Such "*Good News*" moves us to offer our praise to God by saying:

*To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen*

In chapter 8 Paul says that another blessing that comes to us through the preaching of Christ is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In verse 2 he talks about the law of the Spirit. In verse 4 he talks about walking in the Spirit. He talks about possessing the Holy Spirit in verse 9. He talks about the life the spirit gives us in verse 11. He talks about the power of the spirit to kill the deeds of the body in verse 13. He talks about the leading of the Spirit in verse 14. He talks about how the Holy Spirit confirms to us that we are children of God in verse 16. Then in verse 23 Paul tells us that the Holy Spirit guarantees that one day we're going to be in Heaven with the Lord. The marvelous ministry of the Holy Spirit is concluded in verses 26-28 where Paul talks about the interceding work of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit prays on our behalf. All this because of the preaching of Christ. Such "Good News" moves us to offer our praise to God by saying:

*To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen*

Finally in chapter 8 Paul winds things up by talking about the eternal security of the believer. Verse 1 said it when Paul wrote:

*I So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.*

Then starting in verse 18 Paul talks about our **future glory**. Then starting in verse 28 we see that **all things work together for our good**. Nothing will ever separate us from the love of Christ. We are going to Heaven because God will never reverse His promises or judge us for our sins. All of this flows out of the work and the preaching of Christ.

*To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen*

### **3) The Third Truth for which Paul Praises God is that the Gospel Reveals a Mystery**

In Romans 16:25-27, Paul says:

*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 means that when Jesus came and brought the message of salvation in the Gospel, something that had never been seen before was seen. Something that had never been known was then fully known. It had been predicted by the Scripture and the prophets. Ezekiel had written about the fact that someday God would come and save His people and take away their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh, and that He would write

His Law on their hearts and give them His Spirit. The prophets had said a Savior would come; a Messiah, a Deliverer, a King. But it had never been realized. It was always hidden and that is why it is called a *mystery*. A *mystery* is something that was hidden in the Old Testament but revealed in the New Testament. The Gospel was the unfolding of a *mystery* kept secret since the world began and now made evident. **It was spoken of in the Old Testament and according to God's schedule made evident in the New Testament.**

Because we know the Gospel message, because we have the epistle to the Romans, we know the mystery that all the saints of the Old Testament looked for. Peter said in 1 Peter 1:10-12:

*10 This salvation was something the prophets wanted to know more about. They prophesied about this gracious salvation prepared for you, even though they had many questions as to what it all could mean.*

*11 They **wondered** what the Spirit of Christ within them was talking about when he told them in advance about Christ's suffering and his great glory afterward. They wondered when and to whom all this would happen.*

*12 They were told that these things would not happen during their lifetime, but many years later, during yours. And now this Good News has been announced by those who preached to you in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. It is all so wonderful that even the angels are eagerly watching these things happen.*

Now what exactly is the mystery? Turn to Ephesians 3:3-6:

*3 As I briefly mentioned earlier in this letter, **God Himself** revealed his secret plan to me.*

*4 As you read what I have written, you will understand what I know about this plan regarding Christ.*

*5 God did not reveal it to previous generations, but now he has revealed it by the Holy Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets.*

*6 And this is the secret plan: The Gentiles have an equal share with the Jews in all the riches inherited by God's children. Both groups have believed the Good News, and both are part of the same body and enjoy together the promise of blessings through Christ Jesus.*

Jew and Gentile, which means all the people in the world, were to be one in Christ. Here we see God's marvelous plan for all of humankind. No one is excluded for any reason. How marvelous! Those who believe were intended to join the union of all believers in the unity of the Church of Christ. This was the *mystery* Paul referred to in Romans 16:25. The prophets predicted (prophesied) this would happen. We can go all the way back to Genesis 12:3, where God tells Abraham:

*3 I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the families of the earth will be blessed through you.”*

Abraham of course was the father of the family tree from which Christ descended. God’s intention was **to bless the whole world and embrace them in His salvation** through the people of Israel, of whom Abraham was the first called by God. But even though the prophets often spoke this truth, the reality of it was locked in a cloud of obscurity until Jesus Christ came and fulfilled the new covenant and called to Himself **both Jew and Gentile** as one in Him. This is the *mystery* which was revealed according to the commandment of the everlasting God, that the saving Gospel should be made known to all nations and all people so that they might have the opportunity to come to faith. Such “*Good News*” moves us to offer our praise to God by saying:

*To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen*

So Paul **praises God** because God gave us a Gospel through Christ that can lift us up and establish (strengthen) us in righteousness. Because we have a Gospel that centers on the work of Jesus Christ. A work that is totally transforming. **Paul also praises God** because we have a mystery revealed.

#### **4) The Fourth Reason Paul Praises God Is that The Gospel Is Being Made Known to the Nations (All People)**

A mystery, a secret, which was that God wanted salvation for everyone and now He wanted it to be made known to all the nations, that they **all** might be obedient to the faith. Isn’t that the theme that Paul begins in chapter 9 and continues through 11? Do you remember what it was about? We studied those chapters for months.

Romans 9, 10, and 11 are about the fact that Israel has no corner on salvation. Romans 9:6-8:

*6 Well then, has God failed to fulfill his promise to the Jews? No, for not everyone born into a Jewish family is truly a Jew!*

*7 Just the fact that they are descendants of Abraham **doesn’t make them truly Abraham’s children**. For the Scriptures say, “Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted,” though Abraham had other children, too.*

*8 This means that Abraham’s physical descendants are not necessarily children of God. It is the children of the promise who are considered to be Abraham’s children (Genesis 17:18-21; 25:12-18)<sup>1</sup>*

Just because you were a Jew, a descendant of Abraham, didn’t mean that you had an exclusive right to salvation. Salvation was for everyone, Jew or Gentile, who trusted in God and later believed in Christ as Savior. Romans 9:24:

---

<sup>1</sup> Parentheses added.



*24 Even upon us, whom he selected, both from the Jews and from the Gentiles.*

Such “*Good News*” moves us to offer our praise to God by saying:

*To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen*

This theme continues right through the end of chapter 9. So the mystery of Jew and Gentile being joined together as one in Christ and salvation being extended to all people to the ends of the earth is Paul’s major theme in these chapters. Then in Romans chapter 12, Paul talks about the relationships those Jews and Gentiles are to have in the church. They are to use their spiritual gifts starting in verse 3 down through verse 8 **to strengthen** the church and one another. Starting in verse 9 Paul tells them how they are **to love one another** and **be kind to one another** and **care for one another**. Then in Romans chapter 13 Paul talks about this new body, Jew and Gentile, **one in Christ** and how they are to respond to the society in which they live and how they are to be submissive to the government. In verses 8-10 he tells them they are to be seen by other people as loving, and to understand that by loving God and one another they are fulfilling the whole Law. Such “*Good News*” moves us to offer our praise to God by saying:

*To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen*

Paul goes into Romans 14 and 15 telling them they must be sure **not to offend one another** and cause each other to stumble. From chapter 9 on it is all about how the Jew and the Gentile are to get along in the church.

We see in the closing verses of chapter 16 that the Gospel establishes people in righteousness who were formerly fallen in sin. It is a Gospel concerning Jesus Christ who has provided for us all the necessary elements of Christian living. It is a Gospel which is a mystery revealed that Jew and Gentile are one in a great fellowship of love which is regulated by the principle outlined in Romans 9 and following.

Is it any wonder then that Paul cries out in conclusion in Romans 16:27:

*27 To God, who alone is wise.*

Why does Paul say that? Why doesn’t he say, “*who alone is powerful*” or “*who alone is loving*”? Because only a supernatural, infinite mind could ever have developed such a plan. There is no one and nothing that could be wise enough to ever accomplish such a saving work. In Ephesians 3, Paul says that the whole point of God saving people and having all people, Jew and Gentile alike, love one another in the Church of Christ was so that the principalities and the powers in the heavens (holy angels and fallen angels) might know the manifold (suggesting the beauty and variety of God’s wisdom in His great plan of salvation) wisdom of God.

## Ephesians 3:8-11,14,15

*8 Just think! Though I (Paul)<sup>2</sup> did nothing to deserve it, and though I am the least deserving Christian there is, I was chosen for this special joy of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ.*

*9 I was chosen to explain to everyone this plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning.*

*10 God's purpose was to show his wisdom in all its rich variety to all the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. **They will see this when Jews and Gentiles are joined together in his church.***

*11 This was his plan from all eternity, and it has now been carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.*

*14 When I think of the wisdom and scope of God's plan, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father,*

*15 the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth.*

Paul has been given the task of bringing people to see the cosmic mystery at last revealed, and how God has chosen to work out His eternal purpose (Eph. 3:9, 10) The verb used for “*explain*” means ‘to enlighten’ and assumes that there is a fog of spiritual darkness that needs to be cleared away. The language probably refers principally to conversion (Ephesians 5:8-14; Acts 26:17-18; 2 Cor. 4:4-6; 1 Thessalonians 5:4-5), but Paul also is referring to his sense that people will continue to grow into a greater understanding of God's eternal purposes as a result of Paul's continued prayer for these Christians and his continued teaching. So we see that God's whole purpose in Paul's preaching, teaching, and praying ministry is that ***the church should be built up so it would show God's wonderful wisdom to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.***

What does this involve? The rulers in question are probably the whole host of heavenly beings; not merely God's angels nor merely the evil powers, but both. They are the assembled witnesses before whom God vindicates his wisdom. He does this through a church which brings his wisdom to expression. That wisdom is his eternal purpose in Christ (11), which quite clearly is none other than his intent to unify all things in Christ (1:9–10). It is brought to expression in a universal church where Jew and Gentile live and worship as one body, in harmony with God and with brothers and sisters in Christ (*cf.* 6; 2:11–22). Paul's teaching and prayer in Eph. 1–2 is thus dedicated to emphasizing and encouraging such unity, as is his exhortation in chapters 4–6. He believes it to be a central, if not *the* central, witness to the gospel. In this he follows Jesus whose whole final testamentary prayer in John 17 focused on the request that God keep the church in a unity of love which matches and witnesses to the unity of love between the Father and the Son.

What does this doxology at the end of Romans 16 say to us? First, if you are here this morning and do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, it tells you that a very wise and loving God has revealed a plan which previously was a mystery. This plan is

---

<sup>2</sup> Parentheses added.

that through the Gospel, which is clearly stated in Romans 10:9, 10, you can be strengthened and established as a Christian, a member of God's family, forever/ And what does Romans 10:9 and 10 tell us?

**Romans 10:9-10, NIV**

9 *That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

10 *For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*

That, in a nutshell, is the Gospel Paul preaches. It is the Gospel for you, no matter what your heritage or what nation you hail from.

And what does this doxology say to a believer? It says that our hearts should be filled with praise. Furthermore we should remember that Christ didn't accomplish His wonderful work so that we could live in sin. So we should feel a renewed commitment to holiness. I wasn't given the fullness of salvation by the perfect work of Jesus so that I could give back to God a disobedient life in return. The Lord didn't do what He did for me so that I could serve Him with half a heart. We should be reminded that He saved us to put us into a great fellowship. I want to give all to that fellowship that there is in me to give, don't you? We are part of the unveiling of the *mystery* of ages past and now revealed. What praise this great truth stirs from the depths of our hearts!

Such "Good News" moves us to offer our praise to God by saying, by singing, and maybe even by shouting:

*To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen!*