

**Doxology to the Only Wise God**  
Romans 16:25-27 on May 26, 2024  
Pastor Jerry R. A. Johnson

*Please read Romans 16:25-27 before going further in this transcript.*

With these final 3 verses, we come to the end of our journey through the book of Romans.<sup>1</sup> I have to be honest, it's a little bittersweet; because while it does feel like it's time that we move on to something else, there's also a sense of reluctance to move away from this wonderful book of the Bible. It's been such an incredible blessing to take this deep dive into the book of Romans. Over the past year or so we've been on quite a journey through a series of complex and beautiful theology, as well as practical and helpful direction for daily living. The gospel of Jesus Christ, is indeed "A Gospel for Everyday People." I appreciate how New Testament scholar Douglas Moo summarizes all this: "The deep theology and practical advice found in Romans have as their ultimate purpose the glory of God. It is when readers of Romans seek to understand that theology, and to live out its consequences, that God is glorified."<sup>2</sup> So today, as our church wraps up our study of the book of Romans, I hope that each one of us can look back and give God glory, for all that we've learned and discovered about the gospel. Many of you have told me how much the book of Romans has been a personal blessing to you. And this journey has been a personal blessing to me as well, and a privilege to preach through. There's nothing quite like thinking deeply, and carefully, about the core gospel truths that form the foundation of our Christian faith. So I trust that this study has helped each one of us to grow and mature as we continue "becoming deeply devoted followers of Jesus together."

Paul begins verse 25 with three words, "Now to him," but he doesn't actually finish his thought until verse 27, "to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen." So verses 25-27 are one long, final, run-on sentence.<sup>3</sup> This is Paul's closing "Doxology to the Only Wise God." A "doxology" is simply a way to "give God glory." Doxology is a combination of two words: "Doxa" = "glory" and "Logos" = "speaking"<sup>4</sup> So if we translated this woodenly, we could say that doxology is "glory speaking." We speak of

---

<sup>1</sup> Romans 16:25-27 is the matching bookend to Paul's opening words in Romans 1:1-5. They both make reference to:

- the gospel message which Paul has been commissioned to proclaim.
- the gospel that was written about in the Old Testament Scriptures.
- the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- the gospel that calls us Gentiles to "the obedience that comes from faith."

<sup>2</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *Encountering the Book of Romans*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2014, p. 197.

<sup>3</sup> Long, run-on sentences like this one, often cause me to make a sentence diagram in order to get my head around the flow of what's being said, which is what I needed to do this week.

<sup>4</sup> The word comes from the Greek doxologia, "praise or glory," a combination of doxa, "glory," and logos, "a speaking." See <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/doxology>

God's glory by expressing our wonder at what He's done in the past, and at what He's doing in the present, and at what He's still yet to do in the future.<sup>5</sup> We give Him glory not just for what He does, but also for who He is: our Redeemer, our Sustainer, and our eternally wise God. So before Paul gets to his letter's crescendo in verse 27, he first summarizes some of the key gospel truths that he's been teaching us about in the book of Romans; key reasons why God is worthy to receive the glory, forever!

## **We give God glory because, through the gospel, ...**

### **1) God establishes and strengthens our faith.**

Romans 16:25 says, "Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ...." The *ESV* translates Romans 16:25, "Now to him who is able to strengthen you...." The *NIV* says, "to establish you." They're both driving at the same idea; the range of meaning for this Greek word includes to inwardly strengthen, to establish and confirm, to cause a firm commitment within. It's describing how God makes us stronger in our inner beliefs and attitudes.<sup>6</sup> For some of us, this phrase, "Now to him who is able," may bring to mind the words from Jude 24, "[Now] to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy."<sup>7</sup> This is actually a helpful connection to what Paul is driving at here in Romans 16:25. You see, not only is God able to save us from our sin, but He's able to keep us from stumbling; He's able to establish and strengthen us day by day, and to present us before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy.

A key distinctive here, is that God is the only One who's able to do this. He alone has this ability; we can't establish and strengthen ourselves! This is why God alone gets the glory at the end of Romans, in verse 27, because He's the One, who's responsible for helping His children persevere to the end.<sup>8</sup> <sup>9</sup> New Testament scholar, Tom Schreiner, has a helpful note here: "The strengthening envisioned is the ability to resist temptations and trials, with the result that they do not forsake and abandon the Christian faith...."<sup>10</sup> The means by which God strengthens His people is the gospel; this is

---

<sup>5</sup> *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2314 footnote on Romans 11:33-36.

<sup>6</sup> "Establish" = στηρίζω "② to cause to be inwardly firm or committed, confirm, establish, strengthen." (William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 945.)

στηρίζω "to cause someone to become stronger in the sense of more firm and unchanging in attitude or belief—"to strengthen, to make more firm." (Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 677.)

<sup>7</sup> See Jude 24-25 (the *ESV* and *NKJV* include the word "now") as well as Ephesians 3:20-21. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2018, p. 788.

<sup>8</sup> See Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2018, pp. 788-789.

<sup>9</sup> The proof is in the pudding. The gospel has power, not only to save, but also to sustain.

<sup>10</sup> "...The durability promised is based on and comes through the...gospel." Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2018, p. 785.

clarified in Romans 16:25, “Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ....” So what is it that establishes and strengthens us? The gospel! The proclamation of Jesus Christ!<sup>11</sup> So this gospel that we’ve been studying in-depth for the past year or so, is the means by which God strengthens our faith, and makes it durable throughout all the highs and lows of this life. The gospel is anchored and sustained by the centrality of Christ. Centering our lives on Christ, isn’t just for our salvation, it’s also for our daily sanctification; it’s for our satisfaction, joy, and victory over sin.

The Apostle Paul began his letter to the Roman Church, by declaring in Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. The gospel is indeed the power of God that brings salvation, but... that salvation isn’t just a one-time transformation. Paul’s closing words about the gospel, are meant to remind us, and encourage us, that God’s power continues to work in us day by day, establishing and strengthening our faith. The gospel, and the ongoing proclamation of Jesus Christ, helps us to press on to the end!

By the way, don’t let Paul’s reference here to “MY gospel” throw you off. He’s simply referring to the fact that he received the gospel directly from God, and not from some other human source. Galatians 1:11-12 says, “I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. 12 I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.” So Paul’s gospel, is none other than God’s gospel. Paul received it directly from God, and then he distributed it to others as God empowered him, and sent him out with the message of the good news about Jesus.

The key to the gospel message is that it’s “about Jesus Christ.” The Apostle Peter says it so well in Acts 4:12, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.” The gospel of Jesus Christ is not just one good option among many; it is the one and only way “given to mankind by which we must be saved.” We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ...alone!

---

<sup>11</sup> This “may denote either the act of preaching or the content of preaching.” Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2018, p. 785.

**We also give God glory because, through the gospel, ...**

## **2) God revealed the long-hidden mystery of Jesus Christ.**

Romans 16:25-26 goes on, "...the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past,<sup>12 13</sup> 14 26 but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God..." We modern-day Christfollowers often don't fully grasp or appreciate the mystery that's being referred to here. But for the Apostle Paul and the Christians living in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, this mystery was fascinating. It created a lot of conversation, and study, and sometimes even a little bit of confusion. You see, in His perfect wisdom, God ordained a particular plan, and a particular timeline for how/when the gospel realities would be revealed.<sup>15</sup> In His sovereignty, God kept certain things hidden, tucked away, until it was the perfect time to reveal them. In fact, the *ESV* translates verses 25-26 this way: "...according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages 26 but has now been disclosed..." "Now" refers to the time of the first century church. God did something in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, that people who lived earlier in history could only wonder about.

1 Peter 1:10-12 explains it this way, "Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, 11 trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels LONG to look into these things." Romans 16:26 clarifies that... "[this "mystery" is] ...now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God..."<sup>16</sup> New Testament scholar Tom Schreiner says it well: "the emphasis is on God's ordination, and determination, that the gospel would be known at this specific time in salvation history. The emphasis on God's sovereignty is pronounced, for it is 'the eternal God' who decided that now is the time in which the mystery

---

<sup>12</sup> Regarding this "mystery," see 1 Timothy 3:16 and the long footnote and multiple verse references listed in *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, Romans 11:25 pp. 1909-1910.

<sup>13</sup> Paul also talked about a "mystery" back in Romans 11:25. See footnote in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, footnote on Romans 11:25 p. 2314.

<sup>14</sup> "The so-called mystery religions of Paul's day used the Greek word (*mysterion*) in the sense of something that was to be revealed only to the initiated. Paul himself, however, used it to refer to something formerly hidden or obscure but now revealed by God for all to know and understand. [Including things like Christ's incarnation, His substitutionary death, the gospel's uniting of all peoples, Jews and Gentiles alike, together making up the Church, the future transformation of believers' bodies for eternity, and the summation of all things in Christ.]" *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, Romans 11:25 footnote on pp. 1909-1910.

<sup>15</sup> "God ordained this plan." Andrew David Naselli, *Romans*, Crossway, Wheaton, Illinois, 2022, p. 198.

<sup>16</sup> See 1 Timothy 1:1 and Titus 1:3.

would be revealed.”<sup>17</sup> Friend, you and I are living in an incredibly special period of salvation history, which began in the 1<sup>st</sup> century but continues on into our current day. We live in a privileged time, a time of great spiritual blessing, a time of great spiritual opportunity to share in the mystery that’s been “hidden for long ages past.”<sup>18</sup> In Matthew 13:17 Jesus told His disciples, “For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people *longed* to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.”<sup>19</sup> Tom Schreiner goes on... “Paul is awestruck because God has given him the privilege of preaching this gospel, which is the capstone of God’s revelation and the fulfillment of all that is [foreshadowed] in the Old Testament. ...[God’s] glory reaches its apex through the work and ministry of Jesus Christ....”<sup>20</sup>

By God’s command, the mystery of Christ was revealed and made known through the prophetic writings. But how could a message that’s been written down in the Old Testament for hundreds of years, have been hidden!? And what does it mean that it’s NOW been revealed and made known? New Testament scholar John Stott explains it well: “following the saving events of Christ, God has given his people a new Christological understanding of the Old Testament as bearing witness to Christ. As a result, it is through the apostolic declaration that ‘the Christ is *Jesus*’ that the gospel is spreading.”<sup>21</sup> Tom Schreiner adds, “the gospel is the revelation of a hidden mystery, and it also makes known what was prophesied in the Old Testament. [the gospel is] both hidden and prophesied, concealed beforehand and anticipated in the Scriptures. ...‘the revelation of the mystery’ ...has been shuttered from the view of former generations. ...The revelation of the mystery is an eschatological event that has ‘now been manifested.’ ...The gospel of Jesus Christ, proclaimed by Paul, fulfills what the Old Testament Scriptures predicted. ...According to Romans 16:26 God has ordained the time in which the prophetic Scriptures will be fulfilled. ...What was foreshadowed in the Old Testament, is now perceived in its true significance, in light of the fulfillment that has arrived.”<sup>22</sup>

It’s helpful to keep in mind how Paul began his letter to the Roman Church, “Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—2 the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures (referring to the Old Testament

---

<sup>17</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2018, p. 787.

<sup>18</sup> We may not necessarily have it easy today, but we certainly have it good!

<sup>19</sup> Also consider Hebrews 11:39-40.

<sup>20</sup> “...and the gentiles show that God is glorious by entrusting their lives to him.” Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2018, p. 789.

<sup>21</sup> John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Romans*, Rev. Ed., IVP, Downers Grove, IL, 1994, p. 412.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2018, pp. 786-788.

Scriptures).”<sup>23</sup> (Romans 1:1-2) That’s why the Old Testament still has such immense relevance for us today. As we noted back in Romans 15:4, “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.”<sup>24</sup> That’s why this summer we’re going to take an intentional look into some of the Minor Prophets. These Old Testament books were written to teach us.

**A third reason we give God glory is because, through the gospel, ...  
3) God provided a way for all peoples to come to the obedience that comes from faith.**

The end of Romans 16:26 explains why God did it this way, “...so that all the Gentiles [meaning all nations, all “ethnos,” all peoples]<sup>25</sup> might come to the obedience that comes from faith.”<sup>26</sup> This now fulfills the blessing promised to Abraham way back in Genesis 12:3, “...all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” Galatians 3:8 agrees, “Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.” So the Gentile obedience that Paul writes about in Romans is the fulfillment of this promised blessing for all nations, for all peoples. God keeps His promises; God fulfills His Word. Just to be clear, this obedience flows from faith. In the words of Romans 1:17, “For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed – a righteousness that is *by faith* from first to last...” When the gospel takes hold of us, it changes us; when we put our faith in Christ, it transforms us into instruments of righteousness. The gospel reveals and proves out God’s righteousness; the fruit of God’s righteousness is borne out in His people.<sup>27</sup>

I appreciate how Tom Schreiner puts it: “The gospel does not summon people to exercise their own moral virtue. It calls them to put their trust in God, who raised Jesus from the dead. By trusting Him they will be filled with the power to live fruitful lives.”<sup>28</sup> In other words, the gospel isn’t just a consoling story about God’s love for us, with a moral code of good behaviors tagged onto the end. The purpose of the gospel is “the

---

<sup>23</sup> One has to wonder whether when Paul was writing this in the New Testament, about the Old Testament, did he realize that he was helping to write the New Testament Holy Scriptures? There’s no way to be certain.

<sup>24</sup> See Ephesians 1:9-10. In Luke 24:44-47 Jesus taught His disciples, “He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” 45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. 46 He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

<sup>25</sup> The *ESV* clarifies that the range of meaning for the Greek word “ethnos” includes “all nations.”

<sup>26</sup> The *ESV* says “to bring about the obedience of faith.” The *NASB95* says, “leading to obedience of faith.”

<sup>27</sup> Consider Romans 6:13 and its surrounding verses 1-23.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2018, p. 788.

obedience that comes from faith.” The gospel is designed to impact our behavior; it’s designed for our practical, daily formation into deeply devoted followers of Jesus. *This* is how the gospel brings glory to the only wise God!

The ultimate purpose of the gospel is to reveal God’s glory. In the closing words of Romans 16:27, “to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.”<sup>29</sup> In His sovereign wisdom, God has provided the way for mere human beings to share in His righteousness, to “come to the obedience that comes from faith” in Jesus Christ. This is a marvelous gift, a wonderful work of God, and it brings God glory forever! God is glorified when His righteousness can be shared with us, imputed to us - in righteous standing, and lived out by us - in our daily lives. *Obedience* to God, brings *glory* to God. A deeper understanding of the gospel not only causes us to well up with deep gratitude and heartfelt thankfulness, but it also creates within our spirits, the only appropriate response: reverent worship and joyous praise to God.

Let’s keep this in mind whenever we celebrate the Lord’s Supper. Consider these words from Article 7 in our Statement of Faith: “...The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord’s Supper, which visibly and tangibly express *the gospel*. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.” One of the reasons that our celebration of the Lord’s Supper is so precious to us, is that it visibly and tangibly expresses the very gospel that God uses, to establish and strengthen our faith. So as we partake, let’s allow the gospel to confirm and nourish our faith. And let’s glorify our only wise God through Jesus Christ!

---

<sup>29</sup> “In human experience glorious moments of aching beauty are temporary and [vanishing], but this glory will last forever.” Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2018, p. 789.