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Series: Romans: The Just Shall Live by Faith
Message: A Promise & More Greetings

Transcribed Message
May 19, 2024
Romans 16:25-27

When you think of coming to the end of the book of Romans, you can't help but think, even as Paul came to the end, what would have been going through Paul's mind as he came to these closing words. It was four years ago that I quoted Martin Lloyd Jones, who said of the book of Romans: "Romans is the greatest masterpiece ever written. It is a colossal and incomparable statement of Christian truth." Martin Lloyd Jones believed that so firmly, so strongly that he spent almost 12 years preaching through the book of Romans in almost 400 messages. How do you bring the book of Romans to an appropriate conclusion? I would suggest to you that you bring the book of Romans to an appropriate conclusion by means of a doxology. And that's what we find in these closing verses: 25, 26, and 27.

Let's take off at the beginning here and do a very quick review. As we wrap up Romans here, let's say three things. Paul clearly loved the church. To love the church is to love people. If you love the church, you'll love people. If you love people, you'll love the church. You just can't separate the two. That's what we see in Paul, especially in the 16th chapter as he names 30 people, calling them out, encouraging them. And then all the way through the book you just see his heart for the people God had entrusted into his care.

Secondly, Paul loved the doctrine of grace. You could just say Paul loved doctrine. Paul loved doctrine, but he loved the doctrine of grace. It's really the doctrine of grace that encapsulates the gospel. That's what Paul has been sharing with us. He is

the great preacher and teacher of grace of God. He was persecuted because he did that, and yet he pressed on and shared with us the unmerited grace of God that we need every day of our life. Apart from this grace we cannot live the Christian life.

And then lastly, Paul loved to give glory to God. That's what he does in these closing verses. As we look at these verses this morning, let's do it this way. All of the blessings that we enjoy revolve around Jesus and the gospel. We exult in the glorious plan of our great God. It's this matter of benedictions and doxologies, because that's what we come to here.

Before we jump into the outline, I want to say that Paul has given us several benedictions in the book of Romans. We had one back in verse 20. We had one back in chapter 15 and verse 13. We had one in chapter 15 and verse 33. As I indicated last week as you think about the ending of Romans and you correlate the end of a message to an airplane coming in to an airport and getting ready to land, it's as if Paul was circling the airport and started to land at 15:13. But he pulled up a little bit and came back around in 15:33. But he went back up again and then in 16:20 he came in but pulled up a little bit more. That's what he's doing. He's bringing this benediction.

I want you to see the difference between a benediction and a doxology. A benediction is an expression from God to us. One of the greatest benedictions in all the Bible is in Numbers 6. Just listen and soak in and enjoy these words that are God's blessing to His people. "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace." Aren't those great words? We've heard them and are familiar with them, but that's what a benediction is. A benediction is God speaking blessing over His people. Paul does that three times as he brings this book to a close.

But when he gets to the very end, it's a doxology, and not a benediction. That's what we want you to notice. In Paul's 12 other writings, there are 12 benedictions that he gives at the end of every one of his letters. God's blessing to His people. You could do a study just of the benedictions of Paul. One word appears in every one of benedictions. The word "grace". It appears in every one of the benedictions that Paul pronounces over the people.

Then we come and we look this morning at this seven-fold doxology. It's one long sentence, but not as long as the sentence in Ephesians 1 when Paul jumps into the opening section of the book of Ephesians. But this one is long too because it's verses 25, 26, and 27 – all these together. In full disclosure, we could have taken each of these verses and spent a Sunday on each one of them. Let's look at these together this morning. These verses are all about the gospel. They're all about what the gospel is. They're all about what the gospel does.

How do you suppose Paul begins? He rightly begins with moving our focus upward. There's a focus upward. He starts off by saying "now to Him." That is what a doxology is. Doxology is two words. It's the idea of glory and the idea of worth. Someone compared the word "doxology" almost to the word beauty because you can't fully capture the meaning of doxology because it's so expansive. So here Paul gives God glory. When the Westminster Confession asked the question: What is the chief end of man? Why are we here? What is our purpose for living? The Confession responded by saying it is that we would glorify God and that we would enjoy Him forever. We should never ever lose track of the fact that we were created to be worshippers. We're going to worship something. We do worship something. God's intent is that we be worshippers of Him, that we be worshippers, as Jesus said in John 10, that we be

worshippers in spirit and in truth. That's who God created us to be. That's why we're here.

How tragic it is to lose sight of the very reason why God created us which is to every day lift a doxology in praise to Him. That's what He's asking us to do. And yet here we are. We find ourselves living in a humanistic, men-centered society. It seems like we can't go there fast enough in any more ways that we possibly are. Every attempt to bring God and faith into any type of perspective or conversation is cancelled and pushed back. We see it every day of our lives. That's the world that we live in. Yet here it is before us. Now to Him.

It was Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century who said that theology is the queen of all the sciences. How beautiful is that? Think about what it is that you study in school. In the middle of that circle, around everything that you could possibly study, at the heart of it all should be the glory of God. God in essence is to be the center of everything. It is to be God-centric. That's the way Paul started off the book of Romans. I'm an apostle of Jesus Christ. I'm a slave to God in the sense that my life is dedicated to Him. And so here he says to us in these closing verses, get your eyes off yourselves. Yeah, that's right. Get your eyes off yourselves, off your problems and circumstances, and get them on to God. I hope that one of the results of our study as we've gone through the sweep of God's redemptive plan through history is that we have new thoughts, big thoughts, humbling thoughts of who our God is, about His greatness, about His majesty, about His power. Paul rightly starts off and says get your eyes upward and get your eyes on God.

Then secondly, He is able. He's the one who is able. He's able to strengthen you. Now to Him who is able to strengthen you, to establish you. My mind immediately goes to Jude verse 24 Now to Him who is able to keep you from falling. What a great

statement. What a great doxology that is. Now to Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you blameless, to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with great joy. That's the same mindset that Paul has here as he brings us this second thought. Or even in 2 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 12. For I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him until that day. That is the point. Ephesians 3 verse 20. He is able to do exceedingly abundantly over all that we ask or think. I just love all these expressions of Scripture that begin with that statement "He is able". God is able. He is the one who is able to do these things. That establishing, that strengthening is in the present tense. It is a continuing. It is in the passive voice. It's the voice of grace. It's God doing it for us, in us. It's not something that we're doing. God meets us right where we are.

In a world that seems committed to embarrassing, mocking and shaming us, what is God's heart for us? Never any of those things. God's heart for us is to build us up, to lift us up, to establish us, to encourage us, to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with great joy. That's God's heart for us. To establish us and make us strong.

Thirdly, the glorious news. According to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ. The gospel, my friends, is glorious. It is glorious because it's the good news. That's why in the first chapter, the theme of the whole book, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Have you ever been ashamed of the gospel of Christ? I know I have. I have been silent at times when I should have spoken with boldness about the gospel of Christ. Paul says I'm not going to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ because I know that it, and it alone, is the power of salvation of Jesus Christ to everyone who believes. That's the glorious news he has given to us. The same thought is in the 5th chapter and

verse 8 in that God shows His love for us that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

Remember last week we talked about the impact of the gospel regarding our past, present and future. In the past, the gospel has come to us, and it has once and for all taken care of the penalty of sin forever. We never again worry about the penalty of sin. A child of God by faith in Christ who has believed that what Jesus has done on the cross is all that needs to be done for salvation. That person is then given the gift of eternal life and that gift is an irrevocable gift. When Jesus died on the cross for our sins, obviously all our sins were yet future. What sin could you name that He didn't pay the price for? So with regard to the past, the penalty of sin has been taken care of.

Regarding the present, He has given to us by means of His Spirit the power to live out this gospel in our daily life. Then, of course, regarding our future, to be released from the very presence of sin once and for all forever. What is the tragedy of our time? The tragedy of our time it seems to me that even in the church not only are we ashamed of the gospel and we're ashamed of Christ and how the world might view us because we're different and think differently. So often tragically we're not even sure what the gospel is. I think the most important thing that we could ever realize coming through the weeks, months and years in going through Romans is that with absolute clarity we can declare and speak the gospel.

What is the gospel? The gospel as Paul rehearses it from the beginning of this book nearly to the end is the amazing truth that we are condemned. Sin has done its terrible work in the world and is bringing all of us under the penalty of death and separated us from God in time. And yet Jesus comes into this world, lives a perfect sinless life, died that terrible death on the cross, and yet He does so in pain for my sin and for yours. What is it that we are asked to do in light of that? Literally put aside any

thought that we can contribute to our salvation. Forget about it. Stop trying to earn your way to heaven, God says, and believe that what Jesus did was enough.

My friends, everybody in this room that has cognitive ability and skill should be able to share in any given moment that glorious gospel, which is good news. Even if you stumble a little bit as you present it, don't worry about it! It is the power of the gospel, not the power of my words, not the power of your words. It isn't our intellectual ability to argue someone into the faith. We can't do that anyway! All we do is give an answer to the hope that is within us. What is the hope that is within us? It's the gospel. If you don't know with familiarity, with comfort, with boldness the gospel, I say to you make sure that's the next thing you do. Familiarize yourself so that you can share very quickly. There's bad news and there's good news. The bad news is we've all sinned and sin brings separation. The good news is that Jesus came to do something about that. What He did was all that needed to be done, and all He asks is that we believe. When you share that, the response oftentimes is that's too simple. That's not enough. Don't worry about that. At that time, you've entrusted that glorious message into the hands of the Holy Spirit and it's up to Him to open the heart to trust and understand that message. That's all we're called upon to do – to be ministers of reconciliation.

I say to the parents here this morning. The greatest charge you can ever receive as a parent is to make sure that your home is gospel centered. Make sure that your children begin to hear you at an early age in your prayers, in your nighttime conversations and discussions the gospel. They need to see you living out that gospel. They need to see you walking with God in that gospel. They need to see the calling that God has put upon you.

Notice this one last thing, when Paul calls it my gospel. If I said something to you – let me share something with you about my gospel. You might say, wow. That's kind of

bold. For Paul it's not that. Paul can say this is my gospel. He says in Galatians chapter 1 verses 11 and 12 that he has been entrusted with this gospel, not from the words of men but from the words of God Himself. Paul was unique. He was born out of due season, so it truly was his gospel that was entrusted to him. It was given to him to pass along to others. So it really was uniquely his.

Notice the fourth thing – the mystery. Look what he says. The mystery. “According to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but now has been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations.” Now you know that the word “mystery” in the Bible is not a who-done-it. It isn't a murder mystery. We're not trying to figure out something in that way. The word “mystery” in the Bible simply speaks about something that has been hidden in the past but has been brought to life in the present. So most likely as we think about that in terms of divine revelations, it's been hidden in the ages past. It's been hidden in the Old Testament.

What is it that Paul is speaking of here when he says it's been a mystery that is now revealed? I want to know what he's talking about. James Boice in his commentary on Romans lists out 7 mysteries that the New Testament Scriptures put forward. He speaks of the kingdom of heaven in Matthew 13, the olive tree that we looked at in Romans 11, Christ and the church and the marriage relationship – a picture of Christ and His people, the mystery of godliness in 1 Timothy, the mystery of the rapture in 1 Corinthians 15, the mystery of lawlessness and the mystery of the fulfillment of God's plan. What is the mystery that Paul is talking about here? The mystery that Paul is talking about here I believe is what he speaks to in Ephesians, in chapter 3 and verse 4 through 8. “When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been

revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.” The mystery is that God is going to bring together the Jews and the Gentiles. This distinctive joining together of into one group so that Jews and Gentiles are now going to be united into one. The Old Testament talked about blessing that would come to the Gentile nation. Israel was chosen by God to be a blessing to the world.

The idea of blessing coming to Gentiles is not the mystery. Ask Jonah about that. Jonah was to take the blessing of repentance to the people of Ninevah. He said no way. I’m going the other way. He didn’t want those Gentiles believing and coming to understand God as their one true God. That was all there. We looked last week at the *protoevangelism* in Genesis 3:15. The first preaching of the gospel takes place in Genesis. All the sacrifices, all of the typology of the Old Testament is pointing to something, but none of those things were pointing to the reality that God was going to bring together Jews and Gentiles into one. I think even as Paul steps into that in chapter 9, 10, and 11 he is giving further teaching to this church that is largely Gentile that had started off largely Jewish. He is helping them appreciate what God was doing. Now the wall was broken down. Again, our history distancing us from that 1st century culture. The idea that Jews and Gentiles were going to be equal in the eyes of God. The Jewish mindsight was not inclined that way and yet that’s what God said He was going to do. Here’s the mystery that Paul revealed in this bringing together of these two groups.

And then notice the sovereignty of God. According to the command of the eternal God. That phrase reminds us again that God is the creator of the universe. God is the sovereign one. Not me. Remember that little syllogism? 1. God is sovereign. 2. You’re not. 3. When you struggle with 1 and 2, repent and go back to number 1. That’s a daily

exercise we all need. God is sovereign and we're not. We must live in the light of that. There are divine purposes that God is working out in our lives that are far beyond our ability and capacity to understand. We bow before that. God operates in different categories. We need to be humble. We need to be amazed. We need to be in awe. We need to be like Paul at the end of Romans 11. O, the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out.

Then number 6. The aim of it all. To bring about the obedience of faith. Paul clearly told us back in the first chapter in verse 5 what he was writing to do. Though whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of His name. That was chapter 1 verse 5. When we get to chapter 16 he says the very same thing. They're *inclusios*, one on one end and another on the other end, and everything in between brings all of it together. He lays all of it out in Romans 12 through 15. Our understanding and view and application of the gospel is living it out in our daily life. That's where the rubber meets the road. That's where the Lordship of Christ is presented. The connection of theology and practice. It doesn't do us any good to go through the book of Romans and be in awe of all the doctrine and theology that Paul puts forward in these great statements of faith if we don't connect them to the reality of how we live them out in our life. The gospel is intended to change us. That's what it's intended to do. It's intended to change us, and it only changes us as we submit and walk in obedience.

And then the last thing in verse 27. The ultimate reality of it all. "To the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ." The only way you can end the letter it seems to me appropriate to Romans is to focus again on God, to focus on the wisdom of God. To the only wise God be glory forevermore. This is what brings us ultimately to the ending in Revelation 7:12 saying "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and

thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever!” This is a summarizing statement. Sin is so awful in its impact. It usurps the very purposes of God for all His created order. That’s why the world groans under the weight of sin because it destroys everything that it touches. But the cross which is lifted up is glorious because it restores. It brings it back to God’s intended order, and Romans helps us see both in those chapters 3 through 5. We see the awfulness of sin but then we see the glory of justification. Then finally all of God’s people said, according to verse 27, amen. Amen means so be it. Let it be true. Let it be so.

What do we take away? Rightly understood and applied, the goal of all theology and orthodoxy is in fact doxology. Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him all creatures here below. That’s our heart and our desire.

Let’s pray. Father God, we’re thanking you again and again for your faithfulness. We’re thanking you for the glory of God that is revealed in the book of Romans and throughout Scripture. Let your name be lifted high. Let your name be magnified. May we as your people understand again the very purpose for which you have created and designed us – to bring glory to you, to be worshippers of you. Father, I pray that individually and as a church we will do the same because your Word, your truth has transformed us, has made us new and alive in Christ. To live out the glory of this gospel will be our highest calling. Thank you for all that you’ve done. In Jesus’s name, amen.