

To the Only Wise God

Romans 16:25–27

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To the Only Wise God Rev. Lex DeLong / General Adult Romans Road to Recovery / Romans 16:25–27 Notes Romans 16:25-27 Title: "To the Only Wise God" Subtitle: Standing Firm in the Unveiled Mystery of the Gospel Main Idea: God commands our eternal praise because He alone has the power to establish our lives upon the revealed mystery of grace.

Companion Scripture: Ephesians 3:1-7 10/11/2026 — Romans 16:25-27 Title: "To the Only Wise God" Subtitle: Standing Firm in the Unveiled Mystery of the Gospel › [Opening / Introduction] Whether you are gathering with us here in the room or joining us live online, it is a joy to open God's Word with you. Today is a milestone for us. After 47 messages, we are finally coming to the closing verses of the Book of Romans. Recently, we looked at the "Blueprint of Gospel Fellowship," seeing how the gospel breaks down isolation and knits us into a deep spiritual interdependence. Today, Paul concludes his magnificent letter with a soaring doxology—a grand crescendo of praise.

Romans ends in praise

Romans 1–11

God's plan
of salvation

Romans 12–16

A renewed life
in the church

Praise for the mechanics of Redemptive History (Romans 1-11) Praise for the mechanics of Transformative History (Romans 12-16) The last time we saw a doxology like this was at the end of Romans 11. There, Paul was so moved by the profound depths of God's sovereignty that he praised Him for the mechanics of redemptive history—the cosmic plan of salvation mapped out in chapters 1 through 11. But today, Paul is moved to praise again. After spending chapters 12 through 16 showing us what a renewed, living sacrifice looks like in everyday life and the messy reality of the local church, he praises God for the mechanics of transformative history.

The master architect

Florence's unfinished dome needed a wisdom beyond conventional building methods.

› [Transition] When God enacts transformative history, He is essentially doing a construction project. He is taking spiritually dead people from entirely different backgrounds and building them into a unified, living structure. But as human history shows us, building a structure of massive scale that won't collapse under its own weight is incredibly difficult. In the 14th century, the city of Florence, Italy, built a massive, glorious cathedral. It was an architectural marvel, save for one glaring problem: the builders had designed a space for a dome so impossibly large—150 feet across—that no one actually knew how to build it. For over a century, the cathedral sat with a gaping hole in the roof, exposed to the rain and the elements. Human engineering had reached its limits. If they tried to build it using conventional wisdom, the dome would simply collapse under its own massive weight. It was an architectural "mystery" waiting for a revelation. Finally, a man named Filippo Brunelleschi stepped forward with a design that completely defied the wisdom of the day. Using a brilliant, unprecedented system of double walls, hidden chains, and a self-sustaining herringbone brick pattern, he did the impossible. Through his unique wisdom, he established a structure that still stands today.

When human wisdom reaches its limit

God establishes us through
a revealed mystery.

As human beings, we all face a structural crisis. We try to establish our lives using human wisdom. We anchor our identity in our careers, our bank accounts, our political alliances, or our own sheer willpower. But when the massive weight of life presses down —when the diagnosis hits, when the job is lost, when the culture shifts—conventional wisdom fails. We wobble. The walls crack. If you have your Bibles, open them to Romans chapter 16, starting in verse 25. As Paul closes this letter, he points us to the Master Architect. He shows us that: When human wisdom reaches its breaking point, God steps in with a revealed mystery to establish us forever.

Romans 16:25

“Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past,

Romans 16:25-27 “Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past,

Romans 16:26

but now revealed and made known
through the prophetic writings
by the command of the eternal God,
so that all the Gentiles might come
to the obedience that comes
from faith—

but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith—

Romans 16:27

to the only wise God
be glory forever
through Jesus Christ! Amen.”

to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.”

Our main idea

God commands our eternal praise
because He alone has the power
to establish our lives upon
the revealed mystery of grace.

Our main idea this morning is this: God commands our eternal praise because He alone has the power to establish our lives upon the revealed mystery of grace. › [Transition] But before we can appreciate the beauty of what God has built, we have to admit our own total inability to build it ourselves. Just like the builders in Florence staring up at a 150-foot gap they couldn't close, you and I are entirely incapable of bridging the gap between our sin and God's holiness. That is why Paul begins this doxology not by praising our efforts, but by pointing us exclusively to the divine Architect. God commands our eternal praise in four stages. Look at the first stage in verse 25: The Power that Establishes Us.



The Power that Establishes Us

"Now to him who is able
to establish you..."

Romans 16:25a

I. The Power that Establishes Us (v. 25a) The very first phrase of verse 25 is: "Now to him who is able to establish you..."

God makes us stable

Establish

To prop up
To make stable
To fix firmly

Paul uses a specific Greek word here for "establish"—*stērixai*. It means to prop up, to make stable, to fix firmly so as not to be moved. But notice the direction of the power. Paul doesn't say, "Now to you, who must try harder to establish yourselves." Paul points not to us, but instead, entirely to God. "To Him who is able." The word for "able" is *dynamai*—where we get the word dynamic or dynamite. It is the active, continuous, dynamic/explosive power of God. Spiritual stability is not achieved by white-knuckled human willpower; it is a divine provision. As Dr. Thomas Constable notes on this verse: "The apostle was confident that God could do for his readers what they needed... The gospel is God's chief tool to that end." If God is the Master Builder actively wielding this power on your behalf, what exactly is He establishing you against? The New Testament uses this exact same Greek word—*stērizō*—to show us two massive threats that God's power protects us from.

Strength in suffering

“And after you have suffered
a little while, the God of all grace...
will himself restore, confirm,
strengthen, and establish you.”

1 Peter 5:10

First, God establishes you against the crushing weight of suffering. The Apostle Peter used this exact word in 1 Peter 5:10 when he promised the church, "And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace... will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you."

Guarded by the Lord

“But the Lord is faithful.
He will establish you
and guard you
against the evil one.”

2 Thessalonians 3:3

Second, God establishes you against spiritual attack. Paul again uses the exact same word in 2 Thessalonians 3:3 when he writes, "But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one."

God alone has power to establish you

Spiritual stability
is a divine provision.

Spiritual stability is not achieved by white-knuckled human willpower; it is a divine provision. When you feel your faith wavering, when you feel the weight of life threatening to tear your structure apart, you do not need another self-help strategy. You need a fresh encounter with the God who is actively holding you up! He alone has the power to establish you. When you feel your faith wavering, when you feel the weight of life threatening to tear your structure apart, you do not need another self-help strategy, you need a fresh encounter with the God who is actively holding you up and God alone has the power to establish you. › [Transition] So, if God is the Master Architect wielding this dynamic power, what exact building material does He use to anchor our lives? He doesn't use the fragile bricks of our good works. He doesn't use the shifting mortar of human philosophy. Instead, He uses something far more solid, something He planned from eternity past. We see this foundation in the second half of verse 25:



The Proclamation that Anchors Us

The gospel is our foundation

Romans 16:25b–26a

II. The Proclamation that Anchors Us (vv. 25b-26a) If God is the Master Architect, what is the foundation He uses to establish us? We see it in the second half of verse 25: "...in accordance with my gospel... in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past."

God reveals the mystery

Mystery

A divine secret
God graciously
made known

God establishes us with the Gospel. But Paul calls it an unveiled "mystery." In the Greek, a *mystērion* isn't a puzzle you have to solve. It is a divine secret that was completely unknowable by human logic, until God graciously pulled back the curtain to reveal it.

One body through the gospel

“This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body...”

Ephesians 3:4–6

What is the mystery? To understand this, we have to let Scripture interpret Scripture. Keep a finger in Romans and turn with me to Ephesians chapter 3. In verses 4 through 6, Paul explicitly defines this mystery for us: "This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body..." - Eph. 3:4-6

One family in Christ

Phoebe, Prisca and Aquila
Jews and Greeks
Sharing bread and bearing
one another's burdens

Romans 16:1–16

Do you see the brilliance of this? Think back a few weeks ago to that long list of names we read in Romans 16:1-16. Paul greeted Phoebe, a wealthy Gentile businesswoman. He greeted Prisca and Aquila, Jewish tentmakers. He greeted slaves and aristocrats, Jews and Greeks. Historically bitter enemies who wouldn't even eat at the same table were now worshiping in the same living rooms, sharing the same bread, and bearing one another's burdens. That is the mystery! God's anchor is the historical, revealed truth that: Christ has torn down the dividing walls of hostility. We are anchored not by a secret knowledge, but by an open, historical revelation found in the Scriptures that makes us one family.

Christ has torn down the dividing walls of hostility

He has built us into one family.

› [Transition] To understand how shocking that statement was to a 1st-century audience, you have to picture the Temple in Jerusalem. In Paul's day, there was a literal, four-and-a-half-foot stone wall separating the outer Court of the Gentiles from the inner courts where the Jewish people worshipped. It was called the Soreg. Archaeologists have actually excavated the stone warning signs that hung on this wall. They were written in big, bold Greek and Latin letters, and they read: "No foreigner may enter within the barricade... Whoever is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death." That wall was the ultimate architectural monument to human hostility and division. But the unveiled mystery of the gospel is that Jesus Christ took a sledgehammer to that wall! Think back a few weeks ago to that long list of names we read in Romans 16:1-16. Paul greeted Phoebe, a wealthy Gentile businesswoman. He greeted Prisca and Aquila, Jewish tentmakers. He greeted slaves and aristocrats, Jews and Greeks. Historically bitter enemies who lived under the threat of death if they crossed that wall were now worshiping in the same living rooms, sharing the same bread, and bearing one another's burdens. That is the mystery! God's anchor is the historical, revealed truth that Christ has dismantled our hostility and built us into one new family.

Grace is a power to be lived

God's grace leads us
into active obedience.

› [Transition to Point III] God didn't tear down the wall of hostility just so we could stand around and admire the rubble. God didn't pour this massive foundation just to leave the construction site empty. Grace is not just a theology to be studied; it is a power to be lived. God anchored us in this mystery for a highly specific, active reason. Look at the end of verse 26 for our third stage:



The Purpose that Directs Us

"so that all the Gentiles
might come to the
obedience of faith."

Romans 16:26b

III. The Purpose that Directs Us (v. 26b) Here we see that active part of grace. Remember: Grace is not just a theology to be studied; it is a power to be lived. Look at the end of verse 26. God revealed this mystery: "so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience of faith."

The obedience of faith

Romans 1:5

The letter
begins here

Romans 16:26

The letter
ends here

This phrase, the "obedience of faith," is the theological bookend of the entire letter of Romans. Paul used this exact phrase in chapter 1, verse 5, to start the letter, and he uses it here to close it. We have to get this right because in modern Christianity, we tend to fall into

Two traps

Legalism

"Obey the rules
so that God
will accept you."

Cheap grace

Belief without
a changed life

Two deadly traps: 1. Legalism. Legalism says, "Obey the rules so that God will accept you." 2. Cheap Grace. Cheap grace says, "Just believe the facts about Jesus, and it doesn't matter how you live."

At the edge of the Jordan

The river is at flood stage.
God promises a crossing.
The priests must step
into the water.

Joshua 3

To understand how the "obedience of faith" shatters both of these traps, consider with me Joshua chapter 3. The Israelites are standing on the edge of the Promised Land. Between them and their inheritance is the Jordan River. Scripture specifically notes that it was harvest time, meaning the river was at flood stage—it was a raging, turbulent, deadly wall of water. › Talk about the flood level sign at the Jordan river near Jericho God does tell Joshua, "I am going to stop the water so you can cross." But God attaches a terrifying command to that promise. God tells Joshua to have the priests to pick up the Ark of the Covenant, walk down the bank, and step directly into the raging flood. • God said the water would not part until the soles of the priests' feet actually touched the water.

Responses to the river

Cheap grace

Stay safely
on the bank

Legalism

Swim across
in my own
strength

Think about how the two traps respond to that river. • Cheap grace says, "I believe God is powerful enough to part the river! But I'm going to stay right here, safely on the dry bank, until He does it." • Legalism says, "God is holy, so I am going to try to swim across this deadly flood in my own strength to prove I am worthy."

Faith trusts God and takes the step

“Because I completely trust
the Word of the Lord,
I am lifting my foot
and stepping into the flood.”

But the obedience of faith like here in Rom. 16:26, looks at the raging water, looks at the promise of God, and says: "Because I completely trust the Word of the Lord, I am lifting my foot and stepping into the flood." Faith is not passive agreement on the riverbank, "wait for God to prove it first or just get it done my way! Believing God means doing what He commands, exactly how He commands it, the moment He calls you to do it. God did not reveal the massive mystery of the gospel just to satisfy your theological curiosity. He revealed it so you would step into the water.

True faith cannot sit still

Hearing God's Word
leads to doing God's Word.

James 1

If your faith doesn't change your hands and your feet, it is not the faith of Romans. James chapter 1 warns us, if you are merely a hearer of the Word but never a doer, you are completely deceiving yourself. True faith cannot sit still.

Everyday obedience

Money and work
Words at home
Hidden sin
Forgiveness

• The obedience of faith dictates how you manage your bank account on Tuesday. • It dictates how you speak to your spouse when you are exhausted on Thursday. • It governs your integrity at work. • It demands that you kill the secret sin you've been hiding. • It empowers you to step into the terrifying waters of forgiving the person who wronged you.

Created for good works

“For we are His workmanship,
created in Christ Jesus
for good works, which God
prepared beforehand so that
we would walk in them.”

Ephesians 2:10

We are not saved by our works, but by grace through faith we are absolutely saved to work! Remember Ephesians 2:10 “10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” God establishes you by grace so that your life can bear the fruit of active, trusting obedience.

The response is worship

We cannot boast.

We cannot take the credit.

When you finally step back and look at what God has done—when you realize that He took spiritually dead rebels, anchored them with an impossible gospel through Jesus Christ, and empowered them to step out in joyful obedience—there is only one thing left to do. •You cannot boast. • You cannot take the credit. The only rational response to the finished work of God is absolute, unfiltered worship. Paul's very last breath of his letter is...

IV The Praise that Defines Us

“...to the only wise God,
be glory forever through
Jesus Christ! Amen.”

Romans 16:27

IV. The Praise that Defines Us (v. 27) Paul can't hold back his worship any longer. Verse 27: "...to the only wise God, be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen."

Grace moves us to praise

Relief after difficult news

Reconciliation in a broken family

The reality of forgiveness

Have you ever been so moved by something God has revealed to you—about His grace, or about what He has done in your own life—that you just couldn't hold back your worship any longer? • Maybe it was sitting in a doctor's office, bracing for the worst, and finally hearing the word "benign." • Maybe it was watching a deeply broken relationship in your family experience a miraculous reconciliation when you thought all hope was lost. • Maybe it was that quiet moment when the sheer, crushing weight of your own forgiveness finally became real to you, and all you could do was bow your head in gratitude. When you realize what you actually deserved, and you see what God actually gave you, spontaneous praise is the only logical response. That is exactly where Paul is standing at the end of Romans.

The wisdom of the gospel

Human wisdom

A kingdom
through might

God's wisdom

A kingdom
through
a Roman cross

Why does Paul highlight God's wisdom here? Why not His power, or His love? Because: Human wisdom could never, ever have devised the gospel!

- Human wisdom says, "Let the strong survive and the weak perish."
- God's wisdom says, "I will send the Strongest to die for the weakest."
- Human wisdom says to build a kingdom through military might.
- God's wisdom builds a kingdom through a Roman cross.

The wisdom of God

“Oh, the depths of the riches
of the wisdom of God!”

Romans 11:33

God used the stumbling of Israel to bring salvation to the Gentiles, to create one new, united building. “Oh, the depths of the riches of the wisdom of God!” - Rom. 11:33 When we truly grasp how brilliantly God has orchestrated redemptive history, our only logical, rational response is doxology.

God's wisdom for our unknown tomorrows

We have seen His wisdom
in our redemption.

It is a worship that silences our deepest anxieties, reminding us that if God was wise enough to solve the eternal problem of our sin, He is more than capable of handling the details of our lives today. We can absolutely trust God's infinite wisdom for our unknown tomorrows, because we have seen His infinite wisdom in our redemption!

Whose wisdom are we building our lives upon?

› [Conclusion] As we close the book of Romans today, the question before us is simple: Whose wisdom are we building our lives upon? Are we trying to span the impossible gaps of our lives using the conventional wisdom of this world? Are we trying to manage our own spiritual stability? Or are we resting in the unveiled mystery of the gospel?

Only God is able

Rest in the only wise God.
Walk in joyful obedience.
Live in continual praise.

You cannot establish yourself. Only God is able. • May we be a people who rest entirely on the only wise God. • May we be a people whose faith moves our feet into joyful obedience. • May our lives become a continuous doxology to the One who loved us, saved us, and established us forever.