

Romans 16:25-27

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning. Please take your copy of God's Word and join me in Romans chapter 16. Our text for today is Romans chapter 16, verses 25-27.

! And today, by God's great grace, we finish our study of Paul's letter to the Romans, provided I don't fall over. Before I read these final three verses and work to turn our attention to its content, I want to first make two initial comments.

First, a couple of weeks ago, I preached verses 1-16 and verses 21-24. These are kind of the greeting verses of chapter 16.

And you likely noted that your Bible probably doesn't have a verse 24. In fact, at one point in my sermon, I faltered on my verse count because I had a momentary lapse in memory.

I went three verses, and I want to correct that and also bring your attention to it because it's important. Now, your translation likely has a footnote that reads something like, so we typically preach here from the English Standard Version.

[1 : 24] I think many of you have this version. So you can see the footnote there that says, Some manuscripts, insert verse 24, The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Amen. Instances such as this give us opportunity to pause and consider the reliability of the Bible. Before we move on to verse 25, let's think about verse 24 or the lack thereof.

Now, our Bibles, collected together, translated, bound, are the result of compiling lots and lots and lots of early copies of these writings.

We have reason for confidence that these manuscripts are accurate because of how many there are and because of their great congruity. They agree there are so many copies and they are the same.

However, from time to time, they do not. So in this case, verse 24 of chapter 16 is one such example. Now, you may think that this is a reason for concern, but I want you to know that the contrary should be true for you.

[2 : 39] The number of times these early manuscripts disagree are minor. On these minor little things, there's just a handful of them. And when they do, careful translators labor to make the discrepancies clear to us.

So no one is trying to trick you. Here they're saying, look, there are some early manuscripts that also have this inserted verse 24. They could have just omitted verse 24 and renumbered the text. Would you have noticed? I wouldn't have. I wouldn't have even known that was the case. But rather, they are honest. And they are not honest with the goal of eroding your confidence, but with the goal of bolstering your confidence.

Right? We can know that these are the very words. In addition, in none of the instances where the early manuscripts disagree, do they do so in any way that changes the meaning of the text at all. In this case, we just see an insertion of verse 24 compounding the well wishes of Paul's closing remarks. And so there you see an example of that.

[3 : 52] Okay. Secondly, I want you to know how very much I have enjoyed studying Romans with you. And in some ways, as we've spent quite a bit of time in this book together, and I start to put the commentaries back on the shelf, it feels like the closing of a chapter.

I consider myself blessed beyond measure to have the opportunity to lead you week in and week out, to partner with other men in that work these past almost 16 years in the study of God's Word. So thank you for being a people of the book who desire to have it faithfully expounded each Sunday. Thank you for the healthy pressure to avoid innovation and to simply preach the text. I'm so glad that that's what you desire for me. I'm not pushing against your desires and opening up God's Word, but it's what you want me to do. And I am hopeful that the Lord will give us lots of

future time together to behold Him from the Bible in future texts.

Okay. That out of the way. Let's turn our attention to our final text in our study of Romans. Chapter 16, verses 25-27.

[5 : 15] Beloved, this is God's Word to us, written for His glory and our good. We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands.

Paul writes, Amen.

Amen. Amen. Paul ends this glorious letter with a doxology, with praise to God, which is befitting. He has spent the first 11 chapters of this letter doing theology proper. The first 11 chapters of Romans is Paul's magnum opus of Christian theology.

It is the most extensive and clearest defense of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone. And I have labored to tell you that's why we have studied this book.

[6 : 35] It speaks to the Christ followers' adoption in Jesus and identification with Christ as our federal head. Paul tells us that we are no longer captives of grace.

Paul tells us that we are no longer captives of grace. He speaks of the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit who intercedes for us, leads us in holiness, and helps us in all our affliction.

He gives us reason for patient hope as we stand in God's election, the certainty of coming glory, the confidence that nothing can separate us from the love of God, and total assurance in God's continued faithfulness.

He then works out what all this means for unbelieving people and for missions. Condemnation, justification, adoption, soteriology, pneumatology, missiology.

The final five chapters are applied theology. He answers the question, how should we live in response to these truths? These three final verses are doxology.

[7 : 43] And what is the aim of Paul's praise? It is God's glory. These three verses in English are only two sentences.

That's a translation choice, but they are only two sentences in the ESV. The first sentence begins with now in verse 25 and ends with Christ in verse 27.

You'll notice there the second sentence is amen. So most of these three verses is just this one sentence. And if we take it and simplify it, that sentence could read, now to God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ.

Now the idea of glory is not a simple idea to understand.

Some words are simple and easily defined, like the word apple. If you had never heard this word and asked me to define it, I could explain to you what it looks like, its size and color and texture, give you some idea of what it tastes like.

[9 : 07] In fact, I could probably define the word well enough for you that if you then saw an apple for the first time, you could say, this is an apple.

It was well explained to me. Think about the definition of apple in juxtaposition with the word awe. Apple and awe.

It is much more difficult for me to define this word. After all, it's a bit of a feeling, isn't it? What moves me to awe may be different than what moves you to awe.

We recently took a vacation to the beach, and I am not moved in awe at the beach. But I watch a lot of people do that, stare out at the horizon. It's amazing.

But put me in the mountains, and I may experience some awe. Further, I have only ever felt my awe.

[10 : 08] I can only explain to you what it feels like to me. I have never felt yours. This word is much, much more difficult to define. Glory is more like the word awe than apple in this way.

So, what is it? We can't just not define it. Here we have it in our scripture, and we have it in our scripture aplenty. So, what is it? Allow me to take you just to one other text to try to understand its meaning.

Put some bearing on the word glory for us this morning. So, turn with me, if you will, to Isaiah chapter 6, in verse 3, where Isaiah has a vision of heaven and sees one seraphim, a heavenly being, calling out to another seraphim.

And this is what he says. Isaiah 6, verse 3. You may even be familiar with this verse. The one seraphim calls out to the other seraphim, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. God's holiness is his eternal and infinite perfection and worth.

[11 : 27] We have been taught, rightly, that holiness can be understood as separation, as being set apart. God is unique in his perfection and worth.

It is intrinsic to him. It belongs to his very nature and it is not granted to him. It is who he is. God is holy.

The seraphim says that the Lord of hosts is holy, but not in Hebrew of saying that holy, holy, holy, which is a grammatical way in Hebrew of saying that he is completely holy, without any failure in his holiness and he is without compare.

So what does this seraphim go on to say in the rest of the verse? You may note, I hope you have it in front of you, I only read the first half. Then what does he say? The whole earth is full of his glory. So, I take this to mean that God's glory is God's holiness put on display. That's the way it's tangible to us.

[12 : 41] It is holiness beheld, understood, experienced. God's glory is the radiance of God's infinite perfection and worth, like the sun's light and warmth is the radiance of its combustive power. When we behold God's holiness, the proper response is that God has glory. Like we understand that he is glorious because he is holy.

So, glory, holiness on display, received, understood, experienced, appreciated, loved. So, with that definition in mind, let's go back to our text and my compounded sentence.

Now, to God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ. And the implication here seems to be that Paul wants glory to be granted or given to God.

God. But if glory is the radiance, the display of God's holiness, then how could he be given it? I think that what Paul is saying here, it's not that we add to the glory of God, but that we merely recognize the glory of God.

[14 : 12] We behold the glory of God. In the original text, the verb be is not in this verse at all. It certainly helps us understand it in English, but just says, now to God glory.

Now to God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ. And we began our study about this time of year two years ago.

If I'm not mistaken, it was on October 9th of 2022 that we picked up this text for the first time. We had some interruptions in there. We didn't stay with Romans the entire time, but it was about them. We believe that slow, careful study of God's word is of great benefit to us, but sometimes in the process, we can lose the forest for the trees. You may not realize that glory is a major through line of Paul's letter.

I'm sure we talked about it. Some, we may not have dealt with it well enough, but almost every chapter of Paul's Roman letter contains the word.

[15 : 30] And I venture to say, with slight trepidation, that every chapter contains the idea. Don't test me on that. But at least the word is in almost most every chapter.

In the most wonderful of ways, it would seem that Paul was riding his way to this doxological conclusion. Perhaps he was. I argue at verses 25 and 26 that these are Paul's summation that leads to such praise.

He's pulling the ideas together for this glory that he wants God to be recognized as God's. So, join me.

I know before I read large sections of Romans to you. We're not going to do that today, but join me in taking a brief tour back through the book with particular intention toward the thought of God's glory.

I just want to show you this through line through the text and think about what Paul has taught us throughout this book together. So, I have a number of passages here.

[16 : 38] You're going to need to turn all the way back to Romans chapter 1. We're going to start with a verse that doesn't have the word glory in it, but the idea is there, and you'll understand why in just a moment.

And my intention is just to make some comments about these verses as I remember preaching them. I decided it would serve you for me not to go back through each of these sermons and copy and paste a bunch of text, because we don't have time for that this morning.

But I thought I'd think, what did we learn as we looked at these verses and walk through a set of them together? We're thinking about God's glory throughout the book of Romans.

So, chapter 1 and verse 5, Paul's talking about his apostleship being received through whom Christ, we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith.

The bell should be going off. The obedience of faith, for the sake of his name among all the nations. So, there's the idea, for the sake of his name among all the nations, that all peoples, this is the goal of his apostleship, that all peoples would know the glory of God.

[17:57] Now, I said that your bell should be going off. Why? Because at the end of verse 26, there he talks about bringing about the obedience of faith.

That very same phrase found there in Romans chapter 1 and verse 5. So, notice what Paul is saying in our text, verses 25 and 26.

This God we're going to ascribe glory to, recognize the glory of, is able to strengthen you according to my gospel, Paul's gospel, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

According to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret, Old Testament, but now has been disclosed, and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God to bring about the obedience of faith.

He's just saying there, right? God begins us and he keeps us by the gospel of Jesus Christ. And it was the thing that we did not fully understand Old Testament, but we now do New Testament.

[19:07] God's glory would be known through Jesus Christ. It's not too many verses later that Paul says in Romans chapter 1, verse 16 and 17, two verses that we spent three weeks on.

There he says, for I am not ashamed of the gospel, or you could read it in the positive, I am proud of the gospel. Why? Because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, the righteous shall live by faith. We are justified by grace alone through faith alone in the person and worth of Jesus Christ alone.

And this is the summary of what Paul is trying to teach us theologically throughout the entirety of this letter. And so, he launches shortly after those two verses into helping us understand why this matters.

Why is it important that we hear this good news of the gospel, that we care that it's the power of God for salvation? Why does it matter? Why do we need the righteousness of God?

[20:20] And he tells us it's because we are not righteous. in and of ourselves. We are not righteous. And he treats two groups of people, the Gentiles and the Jews.

First, he addresses the Gentiles, which certainly includes the Jewish people through 23. Supplicity, the Gentiles. Notice Romans 1, verse 21 through 23. He says, therefore, although they knew God, they did not honor, and this is the very same Greek word, it could be translated, they did not glorify him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

rather than recognizing the greatness of God, they instead said, we have instead said, we want to minimize God, we want to maximize other things.

I don't know that any of you have ever carved an image and bowed down to it, but we certainly worship other things than God.

[21:50] Exchange the glory of the immortal God for stuff that's not glorious and not immortal. He goes on to indict the Jews in Romans chapter 2 and verse 24, for as it is written, the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.

They, just like the Gentiles, just like us, were idolaters, believers. And because of that, God's glory was not made known amongst the Gentiles the way it was meant to be made known.

And then we come to Romans 3 and verse 23. Paul's bringing together Jew and Gentile. Let's make no qualms about it.

Two categories of people. Those not saved by Christ and those saved by Christ. There he says, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Do not have, cannot possess. We think this verse is speaking of the future glory that will be ours in Christ, but because of our sin, we need God's intervention to bring this about in our lives.

[23:09] So there's a problem, a great problem, and it's a problem that desperately needs a solution. What is that solution? We saw it back in Romans 1 verse 16 and 17.

By grace, through faith, in the person and work of Jesus Christ. We can have the salvation of our soul. So in Romans chapter 4, Paul's making this case and he's using Abraham as the archetype of

believing God by faith.

And he says there in verse 20, no unbelief made him waver concerning the promises of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God.

As he recognized, a scribe understood the greatness of God and the promises he had made to him, his faith was increased. Now, we go on, chapter 5.

Many of us walk in this in-between time. We walk in this time where we have been set free from the bondage of our sin. We've been justified by grace through faith in Christ, and yet we find ourselves still with the indwelling sin, always at our heels.

[24 : 28] We struggle in this life. We are pressured from without. Not an easy thing to live in this life. Paul does some beautiful things in chapter 5 and through the end of chapter 8.

Talk about the way we're freed from sin, the way we're empowered by the Spirit. Look what he does in chapter 5, verse 1 and 2. He says, Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Not only a status peace with God, we're no longer his enemy, but we also experience peace with God. Through him, verse 2, says, we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

One day, on the other side, forever. The life, we're going to behold him forever. The hope of the glory of God.

And he elaborates on this quite a bit, and we'll skip ahead to Romans chapter 8 and verse 18. He says, Therefore, I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

[25 : 54] Not even worth setting on the scale the glory so outweighs all of the momentary affliction we'll experience in this life.

And Paul had a place to speak to this. Things in the Bible are true. Whether or not you think they're true, they're there, and so we should believe them. But I know often we think, well, you couldn't possibly understand what I've experienced.

I think Paul has suffered more than you or I. 2 Corinthians chapter 11. He says, five times I received at the hands of the Jews forty lashes less one.

Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked a night and a day. I was adrift at sea on frequent journeys in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers, in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

And apart from these things, there's the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

That's where Paul speaks from when he says, I consider the sufferings of this present time not even worth with the glory that's going to be revealed to us.

[27 : 19] And he goes on, right, he speaks about our groaning and longing for the glory of God to be revealed to us. In verse 21 of chapter 11, 8, he says that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

That's an amazing phrase at the end of verse 21. One day we will be set free from this flesh. We no longer have to sin, but we carry around this baggage, sinful flesh.

And one day it will be gone. And we will only be able to honor God with everything that we do. I hope you long for that day the way I long for that day.

And Paul here says, calls this the glory of the children of God. We will become more perfect image bearers of our God.

God. We will be clear reflections of who he is, having redeemed us from our sin. Completely, totally, delivered forever.

[28 : 37] The creation itself is longing for this day to come. And this status is not a thing that we achieve on our own. It is a thing that God begins and it is a thing that he accomplishes.

Paul tells us further in Romans chapter 8 verse 30. Those whom he predestined he also called. And those whom he called he also justified. And those whom he justified he also glorified.

Guaranteed, future tense, thing that will happen. Chapter 8 is the very center of this letter.

It is a wonderful, wonderful chapter. Mull it over. Read it through. Memorize it. I promise. It will serve your soul. Long for the glory that will be revealed to us.

To behold God fully and to reflect perfectly that glory is going to be the great joy of eternity. And Paul begins to wrestle after that with the state of lostness.

[29 : 45] He's particularly concerned about Israelites, his brethren in the flesh. He launches into that in Romans chapter 9 and completes those thoughts through chapter 11.

In verse 22 and 23, he says this of chapter 9. verse 23, what if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy which he has prepared beforehand for glory.

So the sad state of the lostness of this world, we rightly understand, is also for the glory of God. God to show himself as just but also to show himself as merciful. Then at the end of Romans 11, Paul works through all of those implications for the Gentiles and the Jews and we gave much time to all of that.

He launches there into a doxology and in verse 36 he says, for from him, God the source of all things and through him the sustaining power of all things and to him the goal of all things.

[31 : 17] To him be glory forever. Amen. Or to him glory forever. Amen. Sounds much like the end of our text today.

Then he goes on in chapter 12 to talk about the Christian life and the way that life is supposed to bear out in light of all of this truth. And there's a particular emphasis which kind of comes to a head in chapter 14 and then into chapter 15 about Christian unity.

Bearing with one another in love. Expressing love to one another. Building the church. Why? For the glory of God. Paul writes in Romans 15 and verse 7, Therefore, welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you for the glory of God.

God would be made known as glorious. glory of glory of Jesus Christ.

Through this great work that he's doing, showing himself to be merciful in the person and work of Jesus Christ. How is it that God's holiness is most readily displayed?

[32 : 42] in that, his most lovingly expressed act, the person and work of Jesus Christ. Theology, beloved, rightly done, always leads to doxology.

We are not doing theology well if it's just facts and figures, things to debate with one another. It should bring us to praise every single time.

It should bring us to humiliate ourselves and a magnification of our God. All that he's done, all that he's promised to do, his very person, right, to God glory.

It should be our earnest desire to praise God and to see him praised amongst all peoples. And Paul says, Amen.

May it be. Let's pray together.