

Romans 16:25-27

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[0 : 00] And take out, at least for some time, for us on Sunday morning, for the last time, and turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 16, beginning in verse 25.

And while you're doing that, the stab this morning about my contact was from last week. If you weren't here, I couldn't see, so I had somebody preach for me. And my glasses were broken. They're fixed, and I can see this morning. And it's such a wonderful thing to be able to look out and see you together as we gather.

Let me also say, as you're turning there, and as I'm getting situated here, that I really, really, really appreciate the way Wes is committed to bringing to us songs that have true content in them. He referred to the song we sang by Rich Mullins as, the words of it are the Apostles' Creed, and we don't actually affirm every part of the Apostles' Creed. That may come as a shock to you, but we don't believe that Jesus, when he was buried, descended to hell and preached the gospel. I'm not going to get into why we don't believe that. I think there's a very clear biblical explanation for it. But the Apostles' Creed affirms that, and so Wes wisely changed the wording, so we're not singing something that we don't affirm together as a church.

[1 : 14] Secondly, the song we just sang, you may know the words a little bit different. The second verse says, it was my sin that held him there, was the original writing of that. And Wes didn't appreciate the way it seemed that our sin had power over Christ.

So he changed the words to, it was his love that held him there. It was his desire to love us, to make the sacrifice for our sins that kept him on the cross, as he did it sacrificially as a volunteer in our place.

And so, I just want to point that out. I know some of you are looking for a home church right now. Some of you are settled here, but may not be here forever. And I just would encourage you that as you go places and you see what they have to offer, make sure that what they do is true in every way.

So let's learn to Romans chapter 16. I hope that you're there already. And before we get into this, I want to point out one potential discrepancy that you may notice in the text.

If you look carefully at your Bible, you will probably notice that you do not have a verse 24. Is that the case for everybody? Probably so.

[2 : 25] You do not have a verse 24. And if you carefully look at your footnotes, it will show you that this didn't exist. Verse 24 didn't exist in some of the early manuscripts. I just want to deal with that before we move on.

And then verse 24 in some of the later manuscripts says, The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. And simply because it's not in some of the early manuscripts, they've excluded it here.

At least in the ESV, they've excluded it by giving us a footnote. So, as you're looking around in the text, I know my eyes tend to wander a bit as I'm listening to sermons. Don't panic.

There's not a typo in your copy of God's Word. If it's excluded, that was for that very reason. And I take no issue with that. I also take no issue with it being included because it's very consistent.

There's no untruth there in the potential of verse 24. Well, we come to the end of Romans. I did a little bit of research just looking back at our recorded sermons.

[3 : 22] The first sermon that we preached on the book of Romans was on March 20th of 2011. I realized that at the time, Cademan, our three-year-old now, was not even one.

Sam, I believe, if I'm doing my math correctly, was pregnant with Judah, but we had no idea when that was the case. And we so now have a one-year-old as well. Life was a little bit different.

It seemed like a long, long time ago that we began looking at this book together. We have 72 sermons on record. Today would make 73. There were a few Sundays that were not recorded for various technological reasons.

For example, the Sunday that I unmuted the mic but had never turned it on, so there was just no power to it at all. So I would say we've done 75 to 76 sermons or so through the book of Romans. And I say braggadociosly with boasting that we have just barely scratched the surface of the book of Romans.

[4 : 23] Not to boast on me by any minute. If you are paying attention to my words, I'm actually deflecting that for myself. To say we have spent roughly two years with some breaks in there, 76 times together looking at this book.

And there is so much more to be wrung out of it. There's so much more depth to be found in it. I hope in this time together, though, that it's been beneficial to you.

I hope that the pages in your Bible, if we were to look at it, are looking a little more worn in this particular section. I hope also that you're not done with it. As we go from this and move on, we're going to be looking at the book of Nehemiah together beginning next week, Lord willing.

That you come back to Romans and you soak in it and you let it work in you and through you. It is certainly a precious, precious book. Martin Luther called it the greatest letter ever penned.

I look back, just of interest, just to look back at the very first sermon that I preached. And be aware, too, I didn't preach all of those sermons. I had lots of help throughout that. But I did preach the very first sermon that we did in the book of Romans.

[5 : 34] And I want to read to you something that I wrote and spoke at that time as a reminder to what we had hoped to accomplish as we studied the book of Romans together. I know many of you weren't here on March 20, 2011.

God has used Paul's letter to the Romans in mighty ways before. In AD 386, a man took up a scroll of the book of Romans and read from it. Chapter 13, verses 13 and 14.

He later wrote of the occasion. No further would I read, nor did I need. For instantly, as the sentence ended, by a light, as it were, or security infused into my heart, all the gloom of doubt vanished away.

That man was Aurelius Augustine, Augustine of Hippo. A thousand years later, an Augustinian monk was teaching the book of Romans to his students and struggled with the expression, the righteousness of God.

When he came to understand it, he wrote, This man was Martin Luther.

[6 : 50] Several centuries later, another man would record the account of his salvation in these words, I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the epistle to the Romans.

About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for my salvation.

And an assurance was given me that had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death. This man's name was John Wesley.

I long to see, I wrote this here, I long to see us join this great lineage. Let it be said one day, when Christ's family church studied Romans together, there ignited a flame amongst them that spread throughout North Georgia and beyond.

And we have yet to see that flame extinguished. Has that been accomplished in our hearts? Are the truths contained in Paul's letter to the Romans working on us in this way?

[7 : 58] It's my prayer that it is. It's with some sorrow I come to the end of Romans. And as I looked over the past two weeks, I had an extra week due to the contact issue to revisit what it was I was going to say this morning.

I struggled with how do I conclude this book? Because honestly, what I really want to do is go back to the beginning and start all over, just to be sure that you've got it. Just to be sure that the truth really worked into you.

Because we're not going to come back to the book of Romans together for quite some time. Praise God that I'm young enough that at least statistically, I'll still be preaching the gospel. I may get hit by a bus, but statistically I'll be preaching the gospel, and we'll have another chance to preach through the book of Romans.

I hope in ten years or so at Christ Family Church we go back through Romans together. But I struggled. How do I close this up? How is it that I reintroduce and drive these truths?

And then I realized that Paul had the same struggle, but he does so beautifully in these last three verses. These last three verses are a doxology, a glory saying if you translate that literally, or an ascribing of glory.

[9:08] They happen occasionally throughout the scriptures. We see people just burst into praise of God in light of the truths that they've been proclaiming. And here we see Paul burst into, as a closing to this grand letter, a doxology.

Read with me. Now to him who is able to strengthen you, according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mysteries that was kept secret for long ages, but has now 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, to the only wise God, be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ.

Amen. Let's pray together. Father God, I praise you this morning for Paul's letter to the Romans. We know that by your Spirit, you moved in him to pen these words.

And as such, they are your very words. And they were delivered to the churches in Rome for their benefit. And they have been immortalized for ours.

We can see, Father, that these are your words for us this day. And I pray, Father, that you will find us, and if you don't find us this way, you will work in us, and desire to meet with you, and to hear from you this morning.

[10:29] I pray this in Christ's name. Amen. So even as we come to the closing here, as Sinclair Ferguson put it, even in the conclusion of Paul's letter to the Romans, we must apply a great deal of gray matter.

He doesn't sum it up for us quite simply, does he? It's rather complex. I'm kind of looking forward to Nehemiah being a narrative mix. It'll exercise a different part of my brain. I know most of you won't be able to see this, but this is the sentence diagrammed Greek from these last three verses.

I've been doing this kind of stuff for the last couple of years. I'm really tired. This is what I'm spending my time doing if you want to take a look at that later. Feel free to do that. A great deal of gray matter still must be applied to this.

So let me see if I can break it down for you simply. Beginning in verse 25, he says, Now to him who is able, and he elaborates upon that, but if you will, allow me to extract the middle and note that what he's saying is, Now to him who is able, to the only wise God, skip to verse 27, Now to him who is able, to the only wise God, be glory forevermore, through Jesus Christ.

Amen. So the overarching thing he's trying to accomplish here, the main point of the text, is that Paul is giving to God the glory that's due him.

[11:51] Right? For two things. For his power, and for his wisdom. Verse 25, the very beginning, says, Now to him who is able to strengthen you, and I think our English text kind of loses the veracity of the word able.

The word able here, I think would be better translated power. So now to him who has the power, or to him who has the strength to strengthen.

The word here, able, in the Greek, in the original language, is dynamai. Bring any other words in the English language to your mind? It's the root word of the word dynamite.

Dynamite sets out to accomplish the very thing it was meant to accomplish. A person who knows the power of dynamite puts dynamite in place, and it accomplishes the thing that it was set to. And here we have God who has infinite power to accomplish whatever it is that he wants to accomplish. And it's consistent, and it's appropriate that Paul ends praising God for his power. Because if you'll turn back to the beginning of Romans, to chapter 1, verse 16, the thesis statement, if you'll allow, of the book of Romans.

[13:10] Paul says, For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. It's the same word. It is the ability of God.

In it is the veracity of the gospel. The very substance. This gospel is the power of God. And recall as well, in chapter 1, verse 11, he says, For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you.

As he longs to come to them, he writes them a letter that accomplishes this very thing. And he has the confidence that God has the ability, the power, the strength, to strengthen them.

To strengthen them according to the gospel and to the preaching of Jesus Christ, which he elaborates on here to say, according to my gospel, this thing that is precious to me, these very words that I have penned for you, my gospel, and the very words of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

That's why he uses these two phrases in this way. So, God is able, by the power of the gospel, to strengthen us, to make us firm, to make us stable, to help us to stand fast in Christian living.

[14:33] Beloved, it is foolish for us to look to any other source for strength for Christian living than to the gospel.

The gospel is the source of all strength for proper living in God's kingdom. It's foolish to look to pop psychology. It makes no sense. The gospel is the power of God for righteousness.

Notice what he goes on to praise him for in verse 26. To bring about what? He's going to strengthen us according to the gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ to bring about the obedience of faith.

That's what all this crazy diagramming helps you see. This is the connection that he's making for us. That he strengthens us by the gospel to bring about obedience of faith.

That we might walk in his ways. Be not just hearers but doers of the word of God. And this is the power of God at work in us.

[15:41] He praises us also for his wisdom. Recall at the end of chapter 11 verse 33 that he bursts forth into one of these doxologies.

We turn back just a bit. Verse 33 he says, Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways.

So as Paul comes to close out this book, just as I feel the desire to go back through it again to make sure that you get these important gospel truths that they have worked down into your heart in such a way that they've taken root and they're now causing Christian living to come out of who you are. You've changed your very being. As Paul, I'm sure, experiences the same emotion, he comforts himself by praising God for his strength and his wisdom.

As Paul concludes his letter, he's able to say, I've done my part. He hands it, we suppose, more than likely to Phoebe to deliver it to the church in Rome. And he knows that God's sovereign purpose will be carried out for his people.

[16:56] That brought comfort to me this past two weeks. It's good. We've finished the book of Romans. And I can have confidence in the fact that it is God's power, his strength, his ability, which will accomplish in you his good pleasure.

But this gospel we should talk more about, right? It's the strength of God to us. Charles Spurgeon wrote, See what vitality the gospel has.

Plunge her under the wave and she rises, the pure for her washing. Thrust her in the fire and she comes out the more bright for her burning. Cut her in sunder and each piece shall make another church.

Behead her and like the hydra of old she shall have a hundred heads for every one you cut away. She cannot die, she must live, for she has the power of God within her.

We should talk about that gospel. Here, Paul calls it the mystery that was kept secret for long ages, that was hidden, that was veiled from those readers of the scriptures, from God's people.

[18:07] They didn't see that Jesus was the puzzle piece that made it all make sense. I think most of us in this room have probably done a jigsaw puzzle at one point in your life.

Maybe you went through a jigsaw puzzle phase and you always had the picture on the box. If you really wanted to challenge yourself you threw the box away. You had the picture on the box to look at and you got the edge pieces, you did all those types of things.

And if you were missing one piece at the very end of putting all the puzzle together, the puzzle still looked like the picture, did it not? It was just one piece in a much larger picture. Like you got the corner of the barn was there.

You could imagine it being there. The wagon wheel still exists in your mind because it was just a little piece. In the same way the scriptures have painted for us a puzzle of how it was that God was going to redeem his people.

But in this case Jesus was the missing piece but he was so key to it that everything else was blurry. It was put together for them but they couldn't quite see the whole picture.

[19:08] And then Jesus comes and plugs in that perfectly and everything becomes abundantly clear. We can see that Jesus is the offspring of Eve that crushes the head of Satan spoken of in

Genesis 3.

In Genesis 22 Abraham was told that the nations would be blessed in him. Jesus is that blessing. Jesus is the spotless lamb foreshadowed in Exodus 12.

Jesus is the ruling king of Psalm 2. Jesus is the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. All of it comes into perfect clarity when Jesus came on to the scene.

And this mystery like this puzzle even the apostles didn't fully realize what it all meant until Jesus expounded it for them.

Until he met them on the road and taught himself from the scriptures. Until he said in John 10 14 and 16 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.

[20 : 10] Just as the father knows me and I know the father and I lay down my life for the sheep and I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also and they will listen to my voice so it will be one flock one shepherd.

And in Matthew 28 19 he sends the disciples to go and make disciples of all the nations. And suddenly these promises these realities are coming into clear focus for even the disciples.

They are seeing how it is that the promises to Abraham are to be fulfilled. It is all coming into clear focus. And this book is a magnificent presentation of the gospel of Christ.

A mind-blowingly brilliant presentation of the gospel of Christ. And on a number of occasions I have summed it up for you but I feel like I just haven't done it quite the justice it deserves.

And so in my studying last week I came across a prayer that John Piper wrote. I want to read it to you and I'm going to insert the reference for you as he's quoting scripture throughout this.

[21 : 11] And so I just ask you if you need to close your eyes to pay attention just try to listen carefully to this as he praises God for the things he's accomplished in Christ.

With all of our hearts now we thank you for what you accomplished for us when you came. No one else could do it. It had to be you or there would be no salvation from our sin and from our own wrath the wrath of the Lamb.

Only you could do it. That's what your servant means in Romans 8.3 God has done what the law weakened by the flesh could not do by sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin.

Only you Lord Jesus only God made flesh could accomplish what had to be done if we were to be saved. No ordinary man would do. You were a faithful servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs.

Chapter 15 verse 3 You secured every promise God ever made. You were sinlessly chapter 8 verse 3 obedient to your Father your whole life and fulfilled all righteousness at every point where we have failed.

[22 : 21] And that obedience reaches the most glorious climax when you became obedient unto death even death on a cross. For as by one man's disobedience the many were made sinners so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

Chapter 5 verse 19 Oh how you suffered and bore reproach on our behalf for you did not please yourself but as it is written the reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.

Chapter 15 verse 3 And then you died. And this is the most important moment in the history of the world. Once for all sins were paid for. Nothing before and nothing since has contributed anything to the payment you made for sins when you died.

For while we were still weak at the right time you died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die. But God shows his love for us and that while we were still sinners you Christ died for us.

Chapter 5 verses 6 through 8 And then you rose from the dead three days later never to die again. We know that you Christ being raised from the dead will never die again. Death no longer has dominion over you.

[23 : 32] Chapter 6 verse 9 You were declared to be the Son of God in power by your resurrection from the dead. Chapter 1 verse 4 And you did not die without us but you took us all of your elect the ones who trust in you you took us into death with you so that the curse of your death might be behind us and not in front of us.

For if we have been united with you in a death like yours we shall certainly be united with you in a resurrection like yours. Chapter 6 verse 5 I hope your hearts are warming.

And when you died our sin was condemned in your flesh by sending his own Son by sending you in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin God condemned sin in the flesh.

Chapter 8 verse 3 Were clear words ever spoken Lord Jesus concerning the glory of penal substitution. this glorious doctrine that today to our shame in the church is so embattled and denied that God in your flesh condemned sin not yours ours our sin you the substitute sacrifice you were wounded for our transgressions you were crushed for our iniquities upon you was the chastisement that brought us peace and with your stripes we are healed.

O Lord rescue this great truth from the mangling hands of foolish men and may it be the foundation of all our faith and joy and worship and obedience and because you bore God's condemnation in your flesh for our sins there is redemption chapter 3 verse 24 the forgiveness of sins countless sins was purchased once for all nothing we do can add to your payment every debt that we ever has had was paid up in full by your blood O Lamb of God and all your obedience and all your righteousness was consummated when you died so there would be for us a perfect righteousness by which we could stand acceptable to God justified by grace alone through faith alone on the basis of your imputed righteousness alone to the glory of God alone chapter 5 verse 19 and 4 verse 25 and by all this and as the goal of all this the greatest good of the gospel was achieved for us reconciliation with God not just forgiveness of sins not just imputed righteousness but being at home in the presence of your Father and our God while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son chapter 5 verse 10 your death

[26 : 01] Lord Jesus restored us to what we were created for seeing and enjoying and reflecting God and what is all this but eternal life to know and enjoy God forever all because of you for the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in you Christ Jesus our Lord chapter 6 verse 23 oh how much more we could say about your work for us your sending work chapter 1 verse 5 your faith awakening work chapter 10 verse 17 your welcoming work chapter 15 verse 7 your church building church uniting work chapter 12 verse 5 your signs and wonders and sanctifying work chapter 15 verse 18 and 19 what a glorious glorious gospel we have received and this book is such a precious treatise to that end not that we just know these things that is not why Paul wrote the letter he didn't write a systematic theology that we might debate with others that we might boast in our knowledge that our wisdom somehow becomes valuable to us but to produce in us righteousness in chapter 11 he concludes his doctrine in chapter 12 he goes on to talk about how these things ought to work in and through our lives and he so beautifully sums this up as he begins to talk about how this power of God works in us to bring about the obedience of faith to say to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ Amen that is the desired work of this book this is why Paul penned it this is why the spirit moved through him this is why I believe we are moved to preach through the book of Romans that these doctrines might work down in us so that they will work back out of us to the glory of God to the nations is that the desire of your heart does the gospel does even my reading

I know sometimes somebody reads something to you it's hard to click your brain into what's going on but I hope that as you hear these things this great gospel proclamation that it that it awakens your soul that it causes you to spring to life to the praise of our God and that you can't wait to stand up and sing praises to a name to partake in the Lord's supper that you can't wait to get out of here that you might go and share his glorious goodness with the world do you desire to see God's glory spread it belongs to him it's his it's our work to ascribe it to him to let our lives be a doxology that is my desire as we complete this book that you see that that is what the gospel should be doing in your life let's pray together thank you Thank you.