

Sermons through

# Romans

## A Doxological Benediction

*Romans 16:25-27*

*Part One*

*With Study Questions*

*Pastor Paul Viggiano  
Branch of Hope Church  
2370 W. Carson Street, #100  
Torrance, CA 90501  
212-6999  
pastorpaul@integrity.com  
[www.branchofhope.org](http://www.branchofhope.org)  
12/10/2017*

# A Doxological Benediction

*Romans 16:25-27*

*Part One*

**Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began 26 but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith – 27 to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen (Romans 16:25-27).**

## **Introduction**

Some of your Bibles will have a heading for the above section of Scripture as a doxology and others label it as a benediction. A doxology is a phrase or a song which brings glory to God. *Doxa* means glory and *logia* refers to some written expression. There is a brief hymn, written in the 1600s, many churches insert as a regular part of their liturgy entitled Doxology or The Doxology.

The word benediction is a compound of *bene*, meaning good or well, and *dictio*, meaning to speak. A benediction is offered at the conclusion of a church service as a source of comfort that all is well between you and God as you go on your way. We have all experienced the joy of a relationship, that has been harmed in one way or another, then hearing from the other party that everything is good.

Which is this, a doxology or a benediction? I am settled on the fact that it is both. It would be shortsighted to view a statement which brings glory to God as something that would extract from the benefit of God's people. We should rather think just the opposite. The more God is glorified the greater the benefit to all who have called upon His name. The glory of God is like a tide which raises all the boats that find themselves afloat by the blood of Christ.

**Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began (Romans 16:25).**

## **Who Is Able?**

What we see right up front in this beautiful passage is not a call to be strong, but rather a promise that strength will come. No doubt Christians are called to be strong, to keep the faith, to resist the devil, love God and others with all our hearts, souls, mind and strength. And we are called to pursue all these things to the end. But who among us has not felt ill-equipped for such a journey? How will we persevere if we are not somehow preserved?

The Apostle John calls us to **“walk in the light” (1 John 1:7)**. Perhaps we have interpreted walking in the light to mean we have become so obedient and faithful that we can content ourselves that God must be very pleased with us. I would submit that it is just the opposite. I can be very content in myself if I remain in the darkness where my sins are hidden through self-deceit and a cacophony of worldly voices are cheering me to sprint, rather than walk to my inevitable destruction.

We become small versions of Herod, believing in and promoting our own glory. Hearing and receiving the crowd chant **“The voice of a god, and not of man”** before being struck down by an angel of the Lord and eaten by worms (Acts 12:22-24). From royal robes to worm food in a moment!

No, if we walk in the light, we come to recognize quite soon that we are not up to the task. The light exposes our weakness. The light shows that the pursuit of high of human structure (whether that structure is morals, religious ceremonies, scientific innovation, etc.) designed to bring us into the glorious and favored presence of God is beyond us. The recurring theme of those seeking to walk in the light, making every effort to remain faithful, to love that which is good, resist that which is evil and persevere in this to the end is **“who is able?”** We find ourselves taking rank with the apostles asking Jesus **“who then can be saved” (Matthew 19:25)?**

And, of course the answer is always the answer that Jesus gave, **“With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible”**

**(Matthew 19:26).** As good Calvinists, we might recognize how impossible it is for any man, according to his own nature, to call upon Christ for salvation. But we also must realize how impossible it is for us to remain in the faith, to walk in the faith and to persevere in that faith. We need the power, the grace, the love and mercy of God as much now as the hour we first believed.

It is so easy to forget that. But God will from time to time will painfully remind us of what we should ever know. The Westminster Confession conveys it thus:

**The most wise, righteous, and gracious God doth oftentimes leave, for a season, His own children to manifold temptations, and the corruption of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, that they may be humbled; (2 Chron. 32:25–26, 31, 2 Sam. 24:1) and, to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon Himself, and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for sundry other just and holy ends. (2 Cor. 12:7–9, Ps. 73, Ps. 77:1, 10, 12, Mark 14:66–72, John 21:15–17)<sup>1</sup>**

The phrase I would bring our attention to is **“to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon Himself.”** It is for moments like this, when we truly begin to discover the **“strength of corruption and deceitfulness of our hearts”** that a doxological benediction like the one we’re studying becomes food for our souls. When we ask, “who is able” the answer is found here. It is God **“who is able.”** And it always has been.

It is so beautifully stated by Calvin:

**By adding, that God was able to confirm the Romans, he made them more certain of their final perseverance. And that they might acquiesce more fully in his power, he adds, that a testimony is borne to it in the gospel. Here you see, that the gospel not only promises to us present grace, but also brings**

---

<sup>1</sup> WCF, V, 5.

**to us an assurance of that grace which is to endure for ever; for God declares in it that he is our Father, not only at present, but that he will be so to the end: nay, his adoption extends beyond death, for it will conduct us to an eternal inheritance.**

## **My Gospel**

But how is this appropriated? When in my weakness I lift up my eyes to the hills, seeking help, from whence does my help come (Psalm 121)? How are these promises made mine? Paul is not random in his answer. The great redemption, Paul writes, is **“according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ.”** It was not just any gospel/good news. Paul was an agent of God’s revelation and he brought specific news as it related to the Triune God and Jesus Christ, fully God and fully Man, our only hope. **“No man cometh to the Father but by me” (John 14:6)** are the words of Jesus, arguably the most close-minded statement in human history.

Beware of the pluralistic ecumenism by which we find ourselves surrounded. We should be courteous, loving, giving and kind to all. But it is a violation of truth and rational thinking to suggest that there is more than one right answer to a question if those answers are in conflict with one another.

When Jesus speaks of the **“narrow gate...which leads to life”** and the **“broad gate which leads to destruction” (Matthew 7:13)**, there is a temptation to interpret His words as intolerant and perhaps they are. But they are intolerant the same way a math teacher is intolerant of any answer except for one. The student shouldn’t argue for many right answers to the math question. The student should posit that the right answers should coexist with the wrong answers. No, the student should desire to know that one right answer. All this to say that even an unbeliever should recognize the folly of those who would assert the legitimacy of conflicting truth statements. The broad gate is a fog.

So, what is Paul’s gospel...that means by which we are established?

## **Preaching Christ**

It is the preaching of Jesus Christ. Our hope from beginning to end is in the gospel.

**For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek (Romans 1:16).**

And the gospel, from beginning to end is the preaching of Jesus Christ; His person and work. By His person we mean who Christ is and by His work we mean what He does.

The means by which we are established, preserved, held together, sustained and made firm in the faith to the end is by the preaching of the Word. There seems to be a little confusion about preaching versus teaching. We often think of teaching as communicating theology and preaching as a challenge to live a certain way. When the pastor gets fired up, he has moved from teaching to preaching. And there may be some truth to that.

But the more defined distinction is the recognition that the preacher is a herald. He is someone called to cry out and proclaim a message. And it is message affecting all. We might of a town crier, sent by the authorities to make a public announcement on the streets of the city of the change in the law or announcing a new king. This is what the preacher does. He announces that the King has come. We might think of the angels heralding the message:

**For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord (Luke 2:11).**

The King has come and the preacher is to be a herald of this message. And if the preacher wishes to bring that message by which souls are saved and saved souls are continually established, his resource must be the Word of God. It is the word of God that is **“living and active” (Hebrews 4:12)**. Faith comes by hearing, it is written, but not by hearing just anything. We must hear **“the word of God” (Romans 10:17)**. As Paul would write his epistles from prison, he recognized that not human chain can bind the word of God.

**Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, 9 for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound (2 Timothy 2:8, 9)!**

Notice Paul's prayer as it related to the word:

**Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you (2 Thessalonians 3:1).**

So this doxological benediction praises God who is able to establish us through the preaching of the word. But the Apostle dials us in to what, or who, should be the focus of our preaching. It is **"the preaching of Jesus Christ."** As he wrote elsewhere:

**For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2).**

As if all the accomplishments of men and angels, kings and kingdoms, governments and the rulers who reign are like a **"drop from a bucket, and accounted as dust on the scales"** (Isaiah 40:15) in light of Christ and Him crucified. It seems so obvious that you wonder if you'll sound repetitious by asserting that the church ought to be about emphasizing the centrality of Christ and the cross.

**For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake (2 Corinthians 4:5).**

Yet, just this week a friend of mine posted a brief lecture from a Jesuit instructor of a local seminary. He was bemoaning the "Merry Christmas" wars that seem to take place more and more every year. Is Merry Christmas preferable to Happy Holidays? He was arguing that he didn't think Jesus would care. Leaving the holiday greeting issue aside, he said some other things that I found astonishing.

He said that Jesus wasn't **"concerned about promoting Himself but promoting what He called the 'reign of God'"**. By "reign of God" he

meant the kingdom of heaven. He taught that Jesus was about **“a reign of justice, peace and love. That was more important than any title for himself.”**

Of course we should be all for a reign of justice, peace and love. But if we lose the centrality of the person and work of Christ, the only ones reigning will be the world, the flesh and the devil. Of course Jesus was concerned about a **“title for himself”**. The proper and sincere apprehension of that title, according to Jesus was a gift from heaven.

**Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” 14 And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” 15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” 16 Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” 17 And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven (Matthew 16:13-17).**

The glorification of Christ is the substance of every true benediction for men. And it is through this that He preserves and establishes His children.

As Paul meditates on God’s ability to establish believers so that they persevere in the faith to the end, he gives God the glory because he deserves the credit for the perseverance of believers. Such perseverance has its roots in the power of the gospel, which centers on the person of Jesus Christ. Paul praises God because at this juncture of history he has unveiled the mystery of the gospel, which was hidden from previous generations but has now been eschatologically manifested and revealed through Jesus Christ. It is now God’s will or “command” that this gospel be disseminated among all peoples, so that they will experience the obedience that flows from faith.

Schreiner, T. R. (1998). Romans (Vol. 6, p. 815). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.



The strengthening envisioned is the ability to resist temptations and trials with the result that they do not forsake and abandon the Christian faith (cf. 1 Thess. 3:2, 13; 2 Thess. 2:17; 3:3; cf. Rom. 1:11; so Käsemann 1980: 423; Dunn 1988b: 914).

Schreiner, T. R. (1998). Romans (Vol. 6, p. 811). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

2 and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith,

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (1 Th 3:2). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

13 so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (1 Th 3:13). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

17 comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (2 Th 2:17). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

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

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (2 Th 3:3). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

7 so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8 who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (1 Co 1:6–9). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Preaching of Jesus is not the preaching that Jesus did but the preaching about Him.

**Establish** *sterixai*-- to cause someone to become stronger in the sense of more firm and unchanging in attitude or belief — ‘to strengthen, to make more firm.’

**Preaching** *kerygma*-the noun form of *karusso* which means to preach or herald. herald’s office, cry out, proclaim. Sermon, message, proclamation. A public notice

Rather, they are like sheep among wolves (Mt. 10:16), will be persecuted as their Master was (Jn. 15:20), and are as it were dedicated to death (Rev. 12:11). Yet this does not prevent the message from taking its irresistible and victorious course through the world (2 Tim. 2:9; 2 Th. 3:1). The stress, then, falls on the verb *kerýssō*, not the noun *kéryx*.

Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (pp. 431–432). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

10 And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. 11 And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (Re 12:10–11). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

## Verse 26

**but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith –**

And as it might have created some doubt how this mystery, concealed for so many ages, could have so suddenly emerged, he teaches us, that this has not happened through the hasty doings of men, or through chance, but through the eternal ordination of God. Here, also, he closes up the door against all those curious questions which the waywardness of the human mind is wont to raise; for whatever happens suddenly and unexpectedly, they think, happens at random; and hence they absurdly conclude, that the works of God are unreasonable; or at least they entangle themselves in many perplexing doubts. Paul therefore reminds us, that what appeared then suddenly had been decreed by God before the foundation of the world.

Calvin, J., & Owen, J. (2010). Commentary on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans (p. 554). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

26. But is now made manifest – The reference here is to that peculiar feature of the Gospel economy which Paul himself was specially employed to carry into practical effect and to unfold by his teaching – the introduction of the Gentile believers to an equality with their Jewish brethren, and the new, and, to the Jews, quite unexpected form which this gave to the whole Kingdom of God (compare Eph 3:1-10, &c.). This the apostle calls here a mystery hitherto undisclosed, in what sense Ro 16:27 will show, but now fully unfolded; and his prayer for the Roman Christians, in the form of a doxology to Him who was able to do what he asked, is that they might be established in the truth of the Gospel, not only in its essential character, but specially in that feature of it which gave themselves, as Gentile believers, their whole standing among the people of God.

Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Vol. 2, p. 260). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

When Paul says that the gospel “has been made known ... according to the command of the eternal God” (κατ’ ἐπιταγὴν τοῦ αἰωνίου θεοῦ ... γνωρισθέντος, kat’ epitagēn tou aiōniou theou ... gnōrīsthentos), he is not reflecting on the responsibility to preach the gospel by human beings. Instead the emphasis is on God’s ordination and determination that the gospel would be known at this specific time in salvation history (cf. Sanday and Headlam 1902: 435).

Schreiner, T. R. (1998). *Romans* (Vol. 6, p. 813). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Gentiles participate in the Abrahamic blessing through the obedience that flows from faith. Paul never conceived of salvation taking root among the nations without a change of behavior. The gospel that takes hold of human beings changes them so that they become servants of righteousness. Such new behavior, however, has its roots in faith, in trusting God for the strength and power to live a new life. 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.

Schreiner, T. R. (1998). *Romans* (Vol. 6, p. 815). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

**obedience** hypakoen 1. HUPAKOĒ (ὑπακοή, (5218)), obedience (hupo, under, akouō, to hear), is used

Vine, W. E., & Bruce, F. F. (1981). *Vine’s Expository dictionary of Old and New Testament words* (Vol. 2, pp. 122–123). Old Tappan NJ: Revell.

13 And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (1 Th 2:13). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

**...to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen (Romans 16:27).**

At its outset, this is an ascription of glory to the power that could do all this; at its close it ascribes glory to the wisdom that planned and that presides over the gathering of a redeemed people out of all nations. The apostle adds his devout “Amen,” which the reader – if he has followed him with the astonishment and delight of him who pens these words – will fervently echo.

Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible (Vol. 2, p. 261). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

As Christians are held up and carried through solely by divine power, working through the glorious Gospel, so to that power, and to the wisdom that brought that Gospel nigh to them, they should ascribe all the glory of their stability now, as they certainly will of their victory at last

Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible (Vol. 2, p. 261). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

## Questions for Study

1. How can small talk be helpful (pages 2, 3)?
2. What are ways you have/can encourage others (page 3)?