

Sermons through

# Romans

## A Doxological Benediction

*Romans 16:25-27*

*Part Three*

*With Study Questions*

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# A Doxological Benediction

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*Part Three*

**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).**

## **Review**

One of the more popular verses during Christmas is found in Luke's gospel, where it is written:

**Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men (Luke 2:14)!**

This is one of the many statements in Scripture equating the glory of God with the benefit of those who trust in Him. Let us be reminded that these closing verses in Romans form a *Doxological Benediction*. It is doxological in that it brings glory to God and it is a benediction in that it expresses God's good will toward those who trust in Him.

**Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ (Romans 16:25a).**

Christians are called to be **"strong in the Lord"** (Ephesians 6:10) and **"endure(s) to the end"** (Matthew 10:22). But here the focus of our attention is not on our own steps or the disciplines of our own hearts. Paul begins with **"Now to Him"** *to de dunameno* **"to Him now able."** There is certainly a place for a person to **"examine"** himself (1 Corinthians 11:28; 2 Corinthians 13:5).

But when we find ourselves, while seeking to run the race of faith, encumbered by the weights, ropes, nets and talons of sin and weakness, we would do well to fix our eyes elsewhere. As it is written,

**...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith  
(Hebrews 12:2)**

Before there is “now to you” or “now to me” there must be “**Now to Him.**” This doxological benediction does not begin with a call to be strong but with a promise that strength will come. There is very much a “**Be still and know that I am God**” (Psalm 46:9) promise to this.

And the means by which this strength and preserving power of God comes is by the gospel—the preaching of Jesus Christ. We are to ever preach regarding who Jesus is, what He has done and continues to do.

**...according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began (Romans 16:25b).**

It wasn't as if the gospel was not presented and clear from the beginning (Genesis 3:15). But the world chose to recline *keitai* in the arms of the wicked one (1 John 5:19). But in His victory, Jesus would be given “**all authority in heaven and on earth**”. How glorious that the Great Commission of Matthew 28, to “**make disciples of all nations**” carries with it a guarantee of success. For the devil is “**bound**” *edesen* in such a way that he can “**deceive the nations no more**” (Revelation 20:3). Jesus has entered the strong man's house, “**bound**” *dese* him (Matthew 12:29), and is taking back that which belongs to Him.

It was according to God's infinite wisdom and timing that Christ and the New Covenant in His blood would begin to unfold throughout the earth. That which was veiled would now be revealed. At the time of Christ the whole world lay under the sway of the wicked one (1 John 5:19). All the towers and fig leaves (whether psychological, political, philosophical or technological) men would seek to construct to reach a full, meaningful and prosperous self-actualization would always end in flames.

The “why” of this mystery, kept secret since the world began, is that we might recognize our utter and eternal dependence upon Christ. That we might not repose in the world, the flesh or the devil but in Christ alone.

That we might “**abide under the shadow of the Almighty**” and “**say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress’**” (Psalm 91:1, 2). We continue:

**...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 16:26-27).**

## **Made Manifest**

As a child, I would look forward to the fireworks display during the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. The sky was dark and you could see a single string of light ascending in the sky. That single string of light would eventually explode, lighting up its dark surroundings.

The nation of Israel was like that single string of light. But God had made a glorious promise to Abraham that through his seed “**all the families of the earth shall be blessed**” (Genesis 12:3b). The birth of Christ was like the explosion of that firework. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream began to see its fulfillment. The “**stone**” who is Christ, would come during the fourth kingdom, Rome. He would break into pieces the oppressive nations of “**iron, bronze, clay, silver and gold**” and that stone would grow to become a glorious “**mountain**” of grace filling “**the whole earth**” (Daniel 2).

Paul rejoiced in that he saw the beginning of that promise being fulfilled. He writes, “**but now made manifest**” *phanerothentos de nun*. It is now made clear. The message is clear and God is removing the veil of sin crusted over human hearts. The means by which this great promise, the Great Commission is being fulfilled is by the “**preaching of Jesus Christ**” who we know “**by the prophetic Scriptures**”.

**So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17).**

## **The Prophetic Scriptures**

It is little wonder that the enemy of men’s souls will do all within his waning power to remove the Scriptures from the conversation. The

strategies over the years have varied. There are times and places where the word of God is disallowed by governments, with the threat of death. At times disallowed by the church with the threat of excommunication. During the so-called age of reason and enlightenment, it was ridiculed in terms of its message and ethics and derided as unnecessary to the human experience.

What of our culture? If you can't keep it out of people's hands or kill people for possessing the Scriptures, what is the strategy? Former Mars Hill mega-church pastor, Rob Bell, continues the enlightenment folly. Most infamously on the massive Oprah Winfrey stage, when asked about gay marriage. He suggested that,

**We're moments away. I think the culture is already there. And the church will continue to be even more irrelevant when it quotes letters from 2,000 years ago as their best defense.**

Let it be both an encouragement and a warning that the church holdfast to a faith defined and determined by God-breathed Scriptures.

**...knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, 21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20, 21).**

What do we make of Paul's language, "**made known to all nations**"? We read earlier in Romans that the faith of the saints in the church was "**spoken of throughout the whole world**" (Romans 1:8). We also read that at Pentecost there were "**devout men from every nation under heaven**" (Acts 2:5). We must be careful not to make too much or too little out of such language.

Some would read this as to localize the faith. That is to say, that because in the eyes of the writers of Scripture, the Mayan, Aztecs, Eskimo's and Mongolians are most certainly excluded, that the gospel was not designed to be global blessing. Others, who are more wooden in their approach, would conclude that the Mayans must have been at Pentecost. Neither of these positions are viable.

We need to allow for a literary devices and hyperbole, while at the same time not allowing it to entirely dominate and deconstruct the simple meaning of the text. At Jesus' Triumphal Entry, when the Pharisees lamented saying, "**Look, the world has gone after Him**" (John 12:19), they didn't mean every last single person in the world. Similarly, when we say The World Series, we recognize that this doesn't include some pretty good baseball teams from Japan, Puerto Rico and Cuba.

What Paul was talking about when he wrote about the gospel being "**made known to all the nations**" was likely the entire, known civilized world at the time-i.e. the Roman Empire. At the same time, the language which accompanies God's overall plan of redemption does not allow for there to be a border not crossed by His grace.

**All the ends of the world Shall remember and turn to the LORD, And all the families of the nations Shall worship before You (Psalm 22:27).**

**Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession (Psalm 2:8).**

**May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth (Psalm 72:8)!**

**May all kings fall down before him, all nations serve him (Psalm 72:11)!**

**All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name (Psalm 86:9).**

**I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6b).**

And there are many, many more passages in Scripture teaching of God's overall plan to bless the world, to bring His Joy to the World. As the Christmas Carol so accurately reflects, "Far as the curse is found."

**Obedience to the Faith**

When Paul writes that all this is taking place “**according to the commandment of the everlasting God,**” he is not likely writing this as a charge to preach the gospel (something he certainly does elsewhere and often). What he appears to be emphasizing here is that the entire enterprise of the advancement of Christ’s kingdom is by God’s ordination and determination.

It is also worth noting that God’s ordained plan includes “**obedience to the faith**”. This is yet another hot button of controversy. There is a never-ending dialogue of what role obedience plays in the salvation of our souls.

Some would remove obedience entirely. When serving with a parachurch ministry fresh out of college, I had many colleagues who were convinced that if they could just get a person to pray a prayer that would ensure their salvation. A friend and I were street witnessing to a gentleman who made it quite clear he was not interested in the gospel. My friend continued to try to get him to simply pray the prayer. I quietly shared with my friend that this man is uninterested and I don’t think merely getting him to mouth a prayer is going to help. He chastised me with the words, “I don’t believe in Lordship salvation.”

This all may sound quite odd but it is not as rare as one might think. A few years back I was listening to J. Vernon McGee give his testimony on the radio. He shared that he accepted Christ as his Savior at a certain point in his life but accepted Christ as his Lord at a subsequent point. This is patently unbiblical. Neither Jesus nor Paul (nor any other writer of Scripture) offered a view of the faith that did not include an obedience and transformed life. If the gospel has taken hold of you, it has taken hold of all of you.

Jesus was not unclear that we cannot serve two masters.

**No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other (Matthew 6:24).**

Are we truly going to suggest that we can claim Jesus as our savior while (according to His own teaching) hate Him as Lord?

But there is a critical distinction which needs to be made. A person's repentance, obedience and willingness to serve Christ, though necessary in terms of fruit, can contribute nothing to our justification before God. My obedience can never make God love me more or save me more. Obedience is the fruit of God's love and salvation, not the means by which that love and salvation is obtained. The means is the instrument of faith, faith alone.

### Questions for Study

1. What are some reasons why a doxology is beneficial to man (page 2)?
2. Discuss why there are times when we should examine our own hearts and times when we should look elsewhere. Where should we look (pages 2, 3)?
3. How does the Great Commission interact with Revelation 20 and the binding of Satan (page 3)?
4. What began to happen at the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ? How was this a fulfillment of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (page 4)?
5. Why are the Scriptures so critical? What are different ways the Scriptures are assaulted (pages 4, 5)?
6. Are there borders or categories that the gospel will never cross? Explain (page 6).
7. Is it possible to have Jesus as Savior but not Lord (page 7)?
8. In what respect is obedience necessary (page 7)?