

SERVE AND GIVE GLORY TO GOD
(SUNDAY, AUGUST 25, 2013)

Scripture reading – Hab. 2; Rom. 16:21-27

INTRODUCTION

I preached our first sermon from Romans the first Sunday of November in 2011. Today is the 60th Sunday we spend in the book of Romans as we cover the final verses of this great book.¹ This sermon will conclude our series in Romans though I will be preaching one more sermon from the book next Sunday, Lord willing.

The closing verses of Romans bring together two important subjects – service for Christ and God’s sovereignty, wisdom, and glory in saving sinners.

Man’s chief end the Westminster Shorter Catechism reminds us is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Christians face two challenges. We have to constantly be reminded that the goal of life is not our own happiness. God’s glory is the great end. The second and related challenge is seeking to do this through the business and complexity of life. How do you practically speaking bring glory to our great God while changing diapers, cleaning your home, performing your normal work responsibilities?

We live unfortunately today in the age of “Reality Television.” Imagine you were the subject of a reality TV program and yet you didn’t know that the cameras and microphones were capturing your life. If someone watched a reality show on your life, would it come across to a viewer that the goal of your life is truly to bring glory to God? How would that be demonstrated?

Romans ends calling you to make sure your life is focused on bringing glory to God. There is also the great reminder of God’s grace. God does call you to serve Him. But God first of all is the one who allows you to serve Him. He is the God who establishes you through the gospel.

Serve and give glory to the God who establishes you.

We will look at verses 21-27 in two parts, vv. 21-24 and vv. 25-27.

1. GOD DESIRES HIS PEOPLE TRULY WORK TOGETHER FOR GOSPEL ADVANCEMENT, VV. 21-24

Rom. 16:21 Timothy, my fellow worker, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my countrymen, greet you. **22** I, Tertius, who wrote *this* epistle, greet you in the Lord.
23 Gaius, my host and *the host* of the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the treasurer

¹ This amazingly was what I set as my goal from November 6, 2011.

of the city, greets you, and Quartus, a brother. **24** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

Two weeks ago we looked at a listing of 26 women and men. Here verses 21-23 list 8 more men. Why is this listing here? Last week we looked at the warning, promise, and blessing in verses 17-20. I think we can understand the flow of the text as follows. As Paul expressed his love, appreciation, and greetings to those he knew in Rome, he was reminded of the dangers they faced and so following these greeting we are not surprised to see him warn about those who cause division and offenses.

The listing of names that we now consider are those who were with Paul in Corinth when he wrote the letter to the Romans in A.D. 57. Paul lists 8 people who in different ways worked with Paul for the advancement of the gospel. And one of the things we see even from this listing is that we don't all have the same calling. God has given to each of you different talents and abilities. What should unite us is our desire to bring glory to God and to see the message of the gospel brought to those who do not yet believe.

Let us consider briefly this listing of names.

Timothy is one you should know. Timothy is called a fellow worker. I think we can say that he is perhaps Paul's closest ministry associate. He is mentioned in at least 11 books in the NT and is listed as a co-author of 6 of Paul's letters.²

Timothy was a young man when Paul met him in the city of Lystra on his "second" missionary journey. Timothy was with Paul now in Corinth and would be with him when he was imprisoned in Rome.

When Paul wrote 1 and 2 Timothy, Timothy was serving in Ephesus. Hebrews 13:23 tells us that Timothy was imprisoned for a time and had recently been set free when the book of Hebrews was written.

Timothy then is one of God's great examples of His grace and an encouragement especially that young men be serious about seeking to serve.

1Tim. 4:12 Let no one **despise your youth**, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater are identified as countrymen of Paul, which might mean not simply that they were fellow Jews but relatives of Paul.

² Moo, 934.

Some think Lucius might be Dr. Luke the author of the gospel. Others are doubtful about this identification. Jason is likely the same Jason mentioned in Acts 17 from the city of Thessalonica. Jason's house was attacked by a mob and he was dragged with other brethren to the rulers of the city and accused of treason against Caesar. He had to make a payment of security or a bail payment in order to be set free.

Sosipater is likely the same person, Sopoater of Berea, who is mentioned in Acts 20:4.

What we can say here is that Timothy along with Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, were key members of Paul's team, some of whom had suffered threat and great opposition for their commitment to the gospel.

Not every believer is called to be a martyr. Not every believer is going to be thrown into jail or beaten by mobs. But if there is no opposition in your life from the world or supposed friends and family, maybe you are being timid in your witness for Christ. Service for Jesus Christ often is quite dangerous, and yet there is no greater risk to take than to devote yourself to His service.

Verses 23 and 24 introduce us to four other servants of Christ who served with Paul.

Tertius is the first listed in verse 22. He was the scribe who actually wrote the book of Romans as Paul directed him what to write. It is very likely that Paul had very poor vision. A scribe would have been a necessity for Paul though it was also common at that time to use a scribe. Tertius in verse 22 expressed his love and greetings for those in Rome.

There are perhaps three men with the name Gaius in the NT. Most likely the Gaius here is the same one mentioned in 1 Cor. 1:14.

1Cor. 1:14 I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,

Gaius served as Paul's host while he stayed in Corinth. He is also listed as the whole of the whole church, which might mean that his home was used to host the worship services of the church in Corinth.³ Others believe this means that Gaius welcomed into his home any Christian who needed housing.⁴

Erastus might also be the same man mentioned in Acts 19:22 who was sent along with Timothy into Macedonia. Here we see that Erastus held an important position in Corinth as the treasurer of the city. He likely was a man of some wealth and social status and yet most importantly one who served Jesus Christ. Finally we have listed one named Quartus about whom we know nothing except that he was a brother, a fellow believer.

³ Dunn, 910-911.

⁴ Moo, 935.

Col. 3:22 Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. **23** And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, **24** knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

2. GOD DESIRES YOU ALWAYS PRAISE HIM FOR HIS SOVEREIGN AND GRACIOUS WORK IN YOUR LIFE, VV. 25-27

Rom. 16:25 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.

This is a rather complex benediction in terms of sentence structure. What is not difficult to see is that this benediction directs us to bring glory to the only wise God.

What does it mean to bring glory to God? Let me explore this topic by thinking of the relationship of parents and children.

As parents we delight in our children, most of the time that is. We love to see them do well in either academics, art, and sports. Parents can be very annoying in fact when they go on and on about how wonderful their children are. Hopefully as children, you also have the desire to please your parents. There should be properly in you the motivation to obey and to make your parents happy. This relationship of parents and children is related to glory.

God also delights in His creation. God delights in His sons and daughters.

1John 3:1 **Behold what manner** of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

The duty of bringing glory to God means that with each day and moment, we seek to live in relationship with God so that all we do is designed to show His greatness and our love for Him. There should be constantly the actions, attitudes, and thoughts of praise, thanksgiving, and sincere desire to obey and please Him.

For we realize there is no end to how much God deserves our praise.

All other activities have a limit. All other people have a limit. The idolatry of so much of Western Culture is that these limits are removed and so foolish people and trivial activities are held as the most important things – entertainment and sports being at the top of the list for most people.

Seeking to please people can be very dangerous. It can easily become an idol. But seeking to please God never should have a limit.

Psa. 27:4 One *thing* I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to inquire in His temple.

It is easy to think about gathering for worship in terms of what we like – we like to sing, we enjoy other aspects of the service, we like to see our friends and family. Is this what is most important? Do you come believing that your greatest purpose is to bring glory to God through Jesus Christ? It is not about your needs or desires, though they have their place. You need God's grace. You need what God alone can do, but the most important aspect is that you have come to praise God.

Those who do not gather for worship are making a statement about God, that gathering as the body of Christ is not all that important. That is dangerous thinking.

The closing verses of Romans have an important connection with some of the darkest verses in Romans found in chapter 1. There are quite a few statements in Romans 1 which describes the rebellion of men and women. One of those key verses is 1:21.

Rom. 1:21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

If you are trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation, then you have been delivered from darkness and futile thoughts so that can you can now bring glory to God. This is the great reason why God has created and has saved you.

What else do we see in this great benediction?

Let me mention 6 things.

First, God establishes you through the gospel and the preaching of the gospel.

The verb establish is interesting; it is where we get our word steroid, which in some forms people take in the quest to become strengthened. Here the meaning is that God causes you to become inwardly firm or committed. God does this through the glorious message of the gospel.

The gospel is not only the fact that God saves according to His power and according to what Jesus Christ has accomplished, but it is supremely about the triumph of Jesus Christ. He is Lord. He has risen from the dead. He is given the name above every name. The gospel is not just about your salvation but your salvation in connection with a glorious Lord and Savior. And what security is found when the gospel message is the anchor for your soul.

2Tim. 1:12 For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.

Second, the gospel is the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began. The word mystery refers to something not mysterious but something not capable of full understanding without greater revelation.

In the person and work of Jesus Christ we come to now understand not only the fullness of God's grace and forgiveness but also come to understand how not just Israel but also the nations would come to know and experience God's salvation.

Think of the millions of sacrifices that were offered during the days of the Old Covenant administration. For several thousand years, the sacrifices pointed to the final sacrifice. There was knowledge but nothing like the knowledge that would come in understanding that Jesus Christ is the great and final sacrifice. Men and women from other nations were brought into saving covenant with God as we read in the OT Scriptures, but nothing even close to the expansion of God's saving grace that followed the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ.

Third, Paul says that the revelation of the mystery occurs by the prophetic Scriptures. Does that surprise you? It should for a moment until we consider what this means. Paul has already spoken about the preaching of the gospel. And when Paul and the other apostles first preached the gospel, they preached it using the OT Scriptures as their foundation.

What changed? Why was their mystery even when the OT prophetic Scriptures had been given?

Two things were needed. The completion of the work of Jesus Christ and His interpretation of the OT Scriptures which the disciples learned from Him.

Sometimes when you see the answer you better see how you could have gotten the answer but couldn't without the added revelation.

If you look through the book of Romans and Acts especially you see how many times the OT is used as the basis for preaching and witness. Now that we have the completed canon of Scripture, we now can use the gospels and the entire word of God in our witnessing and preaching.

Fourth, the nations have come to know according to the commandment of the everlasting God. I think there is a connection here with the previous phrase, translated as “since the world began.” Look at the end of verse 25. The phrase, “since the world began” literally is time eternal or long ages. The word everlasting is the same word eternal. For a long time the mystery was hidden. But the God who is not bound by time gave command that the nations would come to know. All of this is God’s glorious plan.

Fifth, the goal is that men and women would be brought to obedience to the faith. Here is a very clear connection with the opening verses of Romans.

Rom. 1:5 Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name,

John Calvin suggested the obedience of faith means the true receiving of the gospel message – a message that is obeyed by faith. This is certainly a possible definition. Others have suggested that obedience that is the result of true faith.⁵ I think this definition is very much in line with the book of Romans. Salvation is always through faith in Jesus Christ. True salvation must be shown through obedience to Jesus Christ. Paul wanted to evangelize and establish firm, faithful churches.⁶

Sixth, Paul especially emphasizes that God alone is wise. Why does Paul highlight wisdom? Certainly we are not to conclude that wisdom is somehow more important than God’s other attributes – His perfection, power, justice, etc. Especially as we think of God’s plan of salvation we are properly led to marvel at God’s wisdom.

One of the greatest boasts of men and women today is how wise we think we are. Think of how much money is spent in America on supposed education. It has to be more than a trillion dollars. But how much of this supposed wisdom is absolute rubbish and folly? Very much of it unfortunately. The same thing was true in the days of Paul. Greek and Roman culture prided itself also in its supposed wisdom.

And before God changed our foolish and darkened hearts, we also would have boasted in our own wisdom. Eve ate of the fruit thinking she would be made wise.

⁵ Witherington, 35.

⁶ See also Moo, 52-53.

So I think appropriately in our praise of God we are especially to praise Him that He is the only source of wisdom.

1Cor. 1:20 Where *is* the wise? Where *is* the scribe? Where *is* the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? **21** For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

CONCLUSION:

Serve and give glory to the God who establishes you.

What might be keeping you from service and from truly bringing glory to God?

Seek to renew your focus on truly seeking the glory of God in all things.

Marvel in the wisdom and grace of God, the God who is able to establish you.

Closing Hymn: 433

BENEDICTION – HEBREWS 13:20-21

Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.