

Paul's Hymn Of Praise

Romans 16:21-27

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We have come to the end of our study of the book of Romans (it's with mixed emotions—I'm both sad and glad.) I'm glad that we have studied the book of Romans and we've completed the whole book. We have looked at every verse, every chapter, and almost every word in every verse, as we've examined this marvelous letter of the book of Romans.

The book of Romans has been called Paul's "Magnum Opus." It is the most complete and mature expression of the apostles main doctrines of justification by faith, seen by many as the most important book of the Bible, and I do not disagree. If you study church history you'll discover that many of the great revivals in different periods broke out and resulted as the study of the book of Romans took place. The great Protestant reformer, Martin Luther, said that Romans is the chief book of the New Testament and deserves to be known by heart, word for word, by every Christian. The great New Testament scholar Godet said, "In studying it we find ourselves, at every word, face to face with the unfathomable."

We've come to the conclusion of our study, and there are two sections to our text tonight. I want you to notice them before we break it down. The first is greetings from Paul's friends (verses 21-24), and the second is the glory to Paul's God (verses 25-27) where he ends with a doxology of praise to God.

First let's look at verses 21-24 and see the greetings from some of Paul's friends in Corinth back to the city of Rome. Follow with me beginning in verse 21. Paul says, "Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you." What we have in these verses are some of Paul's friends greeting the believers that were there in Rome. Tertius wrote this epistle, "I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord. 23 Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother. 24 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." You would think that with that final 'amen,' that closing salutation, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," which is the theme of the book of Romans, and with a final 'amen' that Paul would be done, but then he goes on for three more verses and closes with the doxology.

I just want to touch on some of these friends. Paul was writing from the city of Corinth. Corinth is in Greece between Northern Greece, Macedonia, and southern Greece, Achaia. He was writing from the city of Corinth to the believers in Rome. He had never been to Rome. He just finished saying hello to about 26 individuals in the Roman church. By the way, Paul dictated this letter (as he did with most of his letters), and some of his friends said to Paul, "Let me say hi." Have you ever been with somebody and having a mutual friend you say, "Hey, I'm going to see Mike tomorrow." You say, "Oh, say hi to him for me," or "I'm going to see Mary tomorrow." "Oh, I know Mary. She's great. Say hi for me." So you say, "Hey, Suzi says hi," or "George says hi." You say 'hi' through a friend, and that's really what is happening here through this letter that Paul is writing. Those that were companions of him in the city of Corinth when he wrote it said,

“Hey, Paul, tell them hi for me.”

The first, and perhaps we know the most about (the others we know very little about) is Timotheus (in my King James translation) or Timothy. In your New Testament you have 1 and 2 Timothy—that’s the Timothy. Timotheus is what his mother would call him when he was in trouble or when she was angry with him. “Timotheus, get in here.” That’s elongated, but the short is Timothy. The name Timothy is a beautiful name. It means “one who honors God.” Certainly, Timothy was a man who honored God. One of the reasons Timothy is one of my favorite New Testament characters is because he was a pastor, a young pastor.

I’m a pastor. I’m not a young pastor, but I was a young pastor. I actually started pastoring when I was 20 years old. I wasn’t married until I was 25, so I’m a 20-year-old single dude. I remember being 20 years old and preaching. If someone 35 showed up I said, “An old person’s here at church today.” I really remember one night I was teaching and this guy, about 35, comes in. I got so nervous. I thought, “A really old guy just walked in. I don’t know what I’m going to do.” That’s why Paul wrote to Timothy and said, “Let no man despise your youth but be an example.” He told Timothy saying, “God has not given us a spirit of fear.” The word there “spirit of fear” in the Greek is timidity—being timid or shy. It’s believed, and I believe rightfully so, that Timothy, because of his age and position, was timid and shy and needed to be encouraged. Paul wrote these two pastoral epistles to this young pastor Timothy, 1 and 2 Timothy.

Timothy joined up with Paul and became a traveling companion, probably one of his closest traveling companions in Acts 16 in the city of Lystra. It was there that Paul had been stoned and drug out of the city as dead, yet God resurrected him and he went back in and preached the gospel again.

As far as Timothy’s family background, it is interesting. Again, his father was a Gentile or a Greek, we don’t know his name, and his mother was a Jewess. Her name was Eunice. His grandmother’s name was Lois. The reason we know his mother’s and grandmother’s names is because Paul wrote to Timothy and said that from the time you were a little child you have known the Scriptures which are able to make you wise unto salvation. This young man, Timothy, a traveling missionary companion of Paul sent out on errands, had a godly mother and grandmother—never underestimate the influence of a mother and a grandmother. Amen, women? All the ladies say, “Amen! Preach it, Pastor.” I believe that this young Timothy was the man that he was not only because he was mentored by Paul, but he had a mother (and it started with his grandmother) that read him the Scriptures. So, Grandmoms, you have a job before you. Don’t just buy them candy and take them to Disneyland, read them the Word of God. Whenever you have that precious opportunity where your grandkids are in your care, read them Bible stories, pray with them daily, and I know that if you’re a grandmother they’re on your heart—you’re praying for your grandkids. Maybe they’re not young, but whatever age, you pray, you pray, you pray. I had a godly praying grandmother, and I’m convinced that God has used me the way He has because of my grandmother’s prayers, because of my mother’s prayers, and because of my wife’s prayers. So, thank God for praying wives, mothers, and

grandmothers!

Timothy's conversion was under the ministry of Paul, and he's called Paul's "son in the faith." He traveled with Paul, and he had an interesting temperament in that he was shy and needed, quite often, to be encouraged. I'm not going to take this much time on any of these other names, but I just can't resist. Hold your place here in Romans 16 and turn to Philippians 2 for just a moment. I want you to read what Paul said about this man Timothy. It's one of my favorite little sections in Philippians 2:19. Paul is talking to them about being humble, being a servant, thinking of others, and what popped in his mind? His traveling companion, Timothy. Notice how he describes him. He says, "But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state." Notice what he says about him in verse 20, "For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own," or most people are kind of into themselves, only living for themselves, and are only seeking their own concerns, but "not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him," that is, Timothy, "that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel. Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly."

I want you to notice what Paul says about Timothy (verse 20). "For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state," because most people are only thinking of themselves, "not the things which are Jesus Christ's." When Paul says, "For I have no man likeminded," he uses a very interesting Greek word which is the concept of a kindred spirit. It could be translated like-souled. We use the phrase "kindred spirit" because we have the same kind of heart. We are of a "kindred spirit." That's what he meant when he said "likeminded." He is of a kindred spirit. He loves the Lord, he loves people, and he sacrifices and serves. He is likeminded. He is a kindred spirit. He's of like soul, this man Timothy. What an amazing servant this man was—not thinking of his own interests but serving the Lord Jesus Christ by serving other individuals.

Go back with me to Romans 16. By the way, mentioned there in verse 21, Timothy is called a "workfellow," so he was a servant along with Paul. There are three other people in verse 21. Let me mention them very quickly—Lucius, Jason and Sosipater. We know nothing about them, and that's the end of them. There is a whole bunch of speculation, but since it's speculation I'm not going to spend pages like the commentaries do talking about them and then saying, "Oh, by the way, we don't really know anyway," so let's not talk about them.

We do know about this guy named Tertius (verse 22). It might confuse some people because he says, "who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord." What's the deal? I thought Paul wrote Romans? Paul dictated Romans to his amanuensis. He was his male secretary. So Paul was kind of walking around talking, and this fellow was writing down the words that Paul was giving him. You say, "Well, does that mean it still has apostolic authority?" Yes. "Does that mean that it's part of Scripture and given by inspiration of God?" Yes. It's possible that after this greeting, especially in this doxology that begins in verse 25, Paul took the pen and finished off this epistle which was kind of his stamp of authenticity. He would actually then, with his own hand,

conclude the letter; but up to this point this fellow Tertius had been the amanuensis and wrote what Paul had to say. He says 'hello.' I can almost feel that when he was being dictated to by Paul he was asking, "Can I say hello? Can I say hello? Can I say hello?" Paul said, "Okay, go ahead." So he says, "I, Tertius, salute you also."

Then there is a guy by the name of Gaius (verse 23) that you don't want to miss. He says, "... mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you." There is also a fellow by the name of Erastus who was actually the treasurer of the city of Corinth, so he was a wealthy individual. Paul had written to the Corinthians and said, For ye see your calling, brethren, now that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called," but he didn't say not any. Even this person of means became a believer and was part of the church there in Corinth. Gaius was his host. In other words, Paul was staying at his house. Then he says, "and of the whole church," also. It could be that the church met at Gaius' house or after church was over they went to Gaius' house. Wouldn't it be nice to have a house big enough to invite everybody over after church? They would meet in small homes as the church would be in the houses. Now, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." You say, "Well, Pastor John, why even read a bunch of names and people that you don't even know?" Again, I want to remind you of something. Paul was not only a soul winner, he was a friend maker. Paul was not only into evangelizing. He loved people, was connected, and involved with people. You cannot be a lone-ranger Christian. You have to be engaged with people, get to know people, be in fellowship with people, and stay in touch and connected with people.

Most people testify that they become a part of a church because a friend or family member invited them. Most people who come to this church come because someone invited and connected with them and have gotten to know them. It's so very important that we stay connected with people, are engaged with others, we have a heart for people, and stay connected in fellowship with other believers. Not only do you have this great theology in the book of Romans, but you have this warm personal touch of Paul's love for the brethren and his encouragement of fellowshiping with the brothers.

In conclusion (verses 25-27), we have what is considered by many to be the greatest doxology that Paul penned in the New Testament. It is the longest and the only one that appears at the end of an epistle. Go with me beginning at verse 25. "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, 26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith," and then it's kind of "Whew!" 27 To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen."

Paul closes, as I said, with a doxology. A doxology is a conclusion of praise, a word of praise to God. I've called this teaching a hymn of praise. It's the longest doxology anywhere in the Scriptures, let alone of the pen of Paul. This great passage of praise sums up the central themes found in the book of Romans. We won't go too deep into this aspect, but I just want to kind of whet your appetite to think about this as we go through.

All of the great and main themes of the book of Romans are found in this doxology. You can actually take the doxology and find all of the main themes found in the book of Romans. So, Paul the mastermind, the great theologian, breaks forth in a word of praise, but he takes the themes of the book and wraps them in three verses. They wrap around the very nature, character, and being of God in praise to God. I want you to notice them as I kind of unpack it for you. The first, Paul gives praise to the powerful God. How that ties in with the book of Romans is that God in His power and to the power of the gospel saves sinners. Amen? That's the theme of the book of Romans. Look at verse 25. "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel," the theme of the book of Romans, "and the preaching of Jesus Christ," Who has been the theme of the book of Romans, "according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began," that mystery was unfolded, Romans 9-11.

How did the book of Romans start (Romans 1:16)? The gospel is the power of God. (You guys are either asleep, so tired, or you don't want to say anything. You're just waiting for me to give you the answers or I'm not making it very clear.) Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the what? Gospel, for it is what? The power of God...(let's keep going here, let's try this again) unto what? Salvation." (See me after church. I'll put a star in your Bibles.) I'm not ashamed of the gospel of God, it's the power of God to salvation! Here the focus is sanctification, but he opens and ends the gospel with the power of God. Let me tell you, it took the power of God to reach down in the horrible pit that we were in and lift us up and save us. Amen? That was the power of God! If we were to hear your testimony tonight about how you lived in darkness and now you're a child of God, that would be a demonstration of the power of God would it not? Was it not the power of God that changed your heart and transformed your life? The power of God that keeps you and sanctifies you? He starts and ends with the power of God to do what? Establish you. It's God's power that saves you. It's God's power that strengthens you. God's power helps us stand strong and stable in our faith against error to live in holiness in the time of temptation or persecution—God's power in salvation and now God's power in sanctification.

Have you tapped into God's power to save you? Have you trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior? Did you know that you're not saved because you go to church? You're not saved because you've been baptized. You're not saved because you don't say bad words, you don't drink or get drunk, and you don't sleep around so you're a good person—you're saved. No. You're not saved because of those things. You're saved because you've put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit comes into your heart and life and you are regenerated or given new life. You're made new through the power of the Holy Spirit. That's what it means to be saved. Once you're saved, it's the power of God that strengthens you, and Paul mentions that there in this doxology. "Now to him that is of power to stablish you...," the idea is strengthen you. I need God's power to strengthen me. Now that He has saved me, I need His strength to live the Christian life.

Notice in verse 25 how God strengthens us through His power. Paul says it starts according to "my gospel". He says, "Now to him that is of power to stablish you," or strengthen you, "according to my gospel." I've had people freak out and all upset because Paul called it 'his

gospel'—"Who does he think he is?" Paul wasn't talking about the idea that he originated the gospel. Paul wasn't saying the gospel was my idea. Paul wasn't saying, "I thought it up." Paul was saying it's been entrusted to me, and it's the gospel that I preach. Do you know the same thing is true of you and me? Did you know that God has entrusted you with the gospel? You better know the gospel if God has entrusted you with the gospel. Not only has He entrusted us with the gospel, but He has commissioned us to share the gospel. (By the way, if you haven't gone through the book of Romans, maybe you're new to Wednesday nights, then go back and listen to all the studies through the book of Romans and familiarize yourself with its themes and teachings. It will transform your life.) The gospel was Paul's in that it was entrusted to him, and he was commissioned to preach that gospel. That's how God works by His power.

I've said it a million times, but I'll say it again. There's no substitute for the preaching of the gospel, and the church must not, cannot, and, I pray to God, will not ever stop preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. The day we do that, we don't have a church we have a social club. We're no different than the world. We have what the world doesn't have—we have the good news. Where in the world right now do you have good news? You don't. The good news is the gospel. By the way, that's what the book of Romans is—from beginning to end—it's the gospel. It's the good news, and he talks about that.

Notice also (verse 25), "and the preaching of Jesus Christ," how fitting that he talks about the power of God to establish you through my gospel in which is what? The preaching of Jesus Christ. Why can't we understand that? There is no substitute for preaching the gospel, and the preaching of the gospel is the preaching of a Person—that Person is Jesus Christ. Did you know that if you're wrong about Jesus you're wrong about God? Did you know that if you don't have Jesus you don't have God? Sometimes people say, "You Christians. You're all into Jesus. Why are you so into Jesus?" If you don't have Jesus you don't have God. If you don't know Jesus you don't know God. The only way to get to God is through Jesus, and Jesus is God. Amen? The Bible says, "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." You can't say, "We're into God, but we're not into Jesus." You can have a false view of Jesus.

I was at the beach the other day (where else would Pastor John be on Monday but at the beach), and there was a Jehovah's Witness stand set up with a Jehovah's Witness there. I thought, "Should I stop?" I recently encountered them at LAX, and I stopped. Who knows. I'm praying that God used something I said, but this time I don't know if it was because I was at the beach or what. I just prayed for them and walked by. Let me tell you, the Jehovah's Witness don't have the Jesus of the Bible. They're not preaching the Jesus of the New Testament. They don't have God. They don't have Christ. They don't have Jesus. That's not mean or mean-spirited or being exclusive, that's just truth. Without Jesus you don't have anything, and I believe that as the church we need to focus on Jesus. We need to preach Jesus. We need to tell people about Jesus. We need to preach Jesus Christ. Amen? We need to get excited about Jesus and in telling people about Jesus. We have the gospel! We've spent all these weeks studying the book of Romans, now it's our job to go out and tell other people. "Have you heard the good news about Jesus Christ, what He's done for you, what He can do for you, and who He is?" It's a simple message, but it's the power of God unto salvation as well as

sanctification.

Notice it's also the gospel that was a mystery (verse 25). "...according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began." In other words, in the Old Testament they didn't fully understand the gospel. They didn't understand God's grace. They didn't understand that Jesus would come, die on the cross, and rise from the dead. They didn't understand that God would even save Gentiles—that Jew and Gentile would become one in the church, the body of Christ. They didn't understand these things, but now they've been revealed to us as the Spirit of God has given the apostles this insight as through Jesus Christ, and it's revealed for us in the New Testament. So, what does Paul do? He starts with praise for the God of power.

The second thing Paul does (verse 26) is praise the eternal God. He moves from the powerful God to the eternal God. He says, "But now is made manifest," I want you to notice the end of verse 25 he talks about it being hidden, it "was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest." So, a New Testament mystery is something that cannot be known unless God reveals it, and He does reveal it. It's made manifest...How? "...by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations..." the gospel is for all nations, and it comes through "...the obedience of faith." Again, the theme of the book of Romans—we are justified or saved by faith in Jesus Christ. The gospel is revealed by God (Paul says it was hidden but now it's revealed), God has made it known by the Scriptures of the prophets or literally through prophetic writings, and we understand it fully and clearly through the New Testament. If we just had the Old Testament we'd be in trouble. Thank God for the New Testament and the light that it shares! "...according to the commandment of the everlasting God," which by the way is the great commission to go out and preach this gospel to every tribe and every kindred and every man for all nations (verse 26) and is to bring a response of "...obedience of faith." So, the gospel is received how? By faith, by believing in Jesus Christ; so He's the everlasting God.

The third thing Paul does is give glory to the only wise God (verse 27)—the all-powerful God, the eternal God, and the only wise God. The gods of the heathen are not wise. Notice verse 27, "To God only wise," I love that, "be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen." I want you to notice the fact that we have seen the wisdom of God unfolded in the book of Romans, so how does he end? The only wise God. All of the wisdom of God in saving sinful man has been revealed in the book of Romans, so he ends with this word of praise and worship and doxology to the only wise God. The wisdom of God in justifying sinners by faith—that's wise—the wisdom of God in sanctifying saints by the Spirit, Romans 5-8; and we saw the wisdom of God in Romans 9-11 in human history—Israel's election, Israel's rejection, and Israel's restoration. Wait until we study the book of Daniel. It'll blow your mind to just see this sovereign God who sits in the heavens, He rules in the affairs of man, and He sets up kingdoms and takes down kingdoms. The whole universe is in the hands of God. He is in control. It brings such confident living to our hearts. That God is glorified...how? Through Jesus Christ (verse 27).

In the book of Romans God's wisdom has been revealed, and in the book of Romans God is

glorified. God gets all the praise, all the honor, all the glory for how He saves sinners. No one is going to be bragging in heaven—"I've knocked on so many doors to get to here. I've sold so many magazines. I was baptized face forward, face backwards, dunked, sprinkled. I made sure that I was really saved." No. No one is going to be doing that. What are we going to do when we get to heaven? We're going to be singing thank you and praise and glory to Jesus Christ! Amen? To Him be the glory! That's why Paul ends that way in verse 27, "To God only wise, be glory..." God's wisdom is seen in Jesus Christ. You got that? In Christ are hidden, the Bible says in Colossians 2:3, "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

Do you know it's impossible to think too highly of Christ? The most exalted thought that you could ever have about Jesus Christ is not too exalted. Hidden in Christ are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. In Christ the fullness of the Godhead dwelleth bodily. In the cross of Christ God has rescued us, salvation; revealed His love, revelation; and overcome evil, conquest. God is so wise! Do you know if God trusted me to figure out how to save sinners we'd all be lost? If God left it up to me, how to save myself, I'd be lost. So, God in His wisdom, in His infinite wisdom, sent His only begotten Son. Jesus entered the world through the womb of a virgin by the name of Mary, and God the Son took on full humanity—wisdom of all wisdom—something beyond anything we can even comprehend!

You can never fully get your mind around what theologians call the hypostatic union, two full natures—fully man and fully God—in one Person, Jesus Christ (the God-man). No one has ever been the God-man before, and no one will ever be the God-man after Him. He is the God-man, and He lived a perfectly sinless life—never ever ever sinned. Then, He chose voluntarily, willingly, to go to a cross and to lay down His life to pay for your sin and my sin. He didn't have to die. Do you know that Jesus at any moment He wanted could've just ascended bodily right back to heaven? He could've just pushed the eject button and WHOOT (it probably would've sounded like that) right back to heaven. "See you guys later, I'm outta here." But, He carried a cross and allowed Himself to be nailed to that cross. Your sin and my sin were actually placed upon Him. The death of Jesus Christ, make no mistakes about this, was the substitution. He took your place. He died in your stead. Your sin was placed upon Jesus Christ when He died on that cross. He was buried, and three days later He rose from the dead.

When I say 'rose from the dead' I mean that He came back to life in a glorified, immortal eternal body. The stone was rolled away, not so Jesus could get out but so others could get in and see that Christ was risen. For a period of 40 days, Jesus appeared to His disciples and proved that He had risen from the dead. Then, He pushes the eject button and ascended back into heaven. Guess what He does? He sits up in heaven right now and saves—anyone who will call on the name of the Lord can be saved! Buddha didn't do that. Confucius didn't do that. Mohammad hasn't done that. No one has done that but Jesus Christ, and He's the only One who can save you. That's the good news! That's the gospel! That's the power of God unto salvation! That's the message that we have to share! That's the message the world doesn't know and we have and need to share with them. It's an only hope—it's their only hope.

Maybe, just maybe, you're here tonight and you say, "Pastor John, I don't know if I'm really

saved. I don't really know if I'm born again. I don't know that if I died I'd go to heaven. I don't know that if I died right now I'd go to heaven. I don't know that I've really trusted Jesus Christ. I don't know that I'm really forgiven of my sins. I believe in God, and I want to be a Christian, but I'm not sure I've really received Christ." I want to give you an opportunity to do that right now. I'm going to invite you to pray a prayer inviting Christ to come into your heart and receive Him tonight. Don't leave here tonight without knowing that you're saved, that you're forgiven, that if you died you'd go to heaven. Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer.