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Sermon Notes

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## **The Closing Doxology**

### **Romans 16:25-27**

Finishing well:

So many projects in life are begun well, but finished poorly: a letter begun and not finished; a hobby project like a model ship of homemade dress that got too complicated to finish; an exercise program, complete with training video that you bought but never implemented

So many things we start with good intentions and then the busyness of life crowds us out and we never finish what we started

God is not like that... WHAT HE BEGINS HE FINISHES, and HE FINISHES with a flourish of GLORY:

- God's triumphant completion of creation

***Genesis 2:1-2 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. <sup>2</sup> By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.***

- Christ's final assessments of His life

***John 17:4 I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.***

- Christ's accomplishment of redemption

***John 19 Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.***

- Jesus' triumphant resurrection... a glorious end to His ministry on earth

***1 Peter 1:21 God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him***

- The Completion of the New Heavens and the New Earth:

***Revelation 21:1-2 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup> I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.***

***Revelation 21:9-11 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." <sup>10</sup> And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. <sup>11</sup> It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.***

- AND our own personal salvation:

***Hebrews 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith***

***Philippians 1:6 he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.***

***Romans 8:30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.***

What God starts, He finishes with abundant GLORY!!!

Therefore, we should imagine that the most gloriously clear description of the gospel should be finished well, with a display of glory... AND IT IS; we come to the end of the Book of Romans and we end with a doxology, a word of praise to God

## I. God IS the Gospel, so to God Be the Glory

### A. Finally: Focused on God Who IS the Gospel

1. Paul is ending this glorious letter... a survey of the doctrine and application of the Gospel of Jesus Christ
2. What better way to end it than to focus on the glory of God
3. This is a closing doxology that focuses totally on God

***"Now to him who is able to establish you... to the only wise God be glory forever..."***

- a. Paul ends by focusing totally on God the Father
- b. It is a thick, dense, theologically rich statement
- c. But don't lose your focus... it is a word of praise for God who deserves our eternal praise
4. It is reasonable to close this way, because Romans is the greatest statement of the Gospel in the Bible, and ultimately God IS the gospel
5. Note also this is exactly how Paul began this letter... so we have come full circle:

***Romans 1:1-4 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God-- <sup>2</sup> the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures <sup>3</sup> regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, <sup>4</sup> and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.***

B. God's Ultimate Purpose: To the Praise of His Glory

1. God saved us in Christ for one reason: for the praise of His glory
2. God redeemed us to praise Him eternally
3. Paul reveals this clearly in Ephesians... three times in Ephesians 1

***Ephesians 1:4-6 In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.***

4. So Paul brings us at last to the real purpose of the Gospel: the praise of God's glory

***“to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ”***

C. Benedictions in the Bible

1. Many doxologies and benedictions... FOCUS ON GOD

***Jude 1:24-25 To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy-- <sup>25</sup> to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.***

2. Psalms:
  - a. the Psalter is divided into five books
  - b. each of the books ends in a doxology

***Psalm 150:1-6 Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens. <sup>2</sup> Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness. <sup>3</sup> Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, <sup>4</sup> praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, <sup>5</sup> praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. <sup>6</sup> Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD.***

D. Praise the Chief Employment of Heaven

1. Book of Revelation saturated with praise
2. The twenty-four elders, living creatures and a hundred million angels are constantly praising God and giving Him glory, honor, and thanks
3. Jonathan Edwards, meditating on this, preached a sermon entitled “Praise: The Chief Employment of Heaven”... at the center of our heavenly reward is an overwhelming experience of delight in the presence of God

E. So “It Is Right to Give Him Thanks and Praise”

## II. The Gospel that Establishes Believers

***Romans 16:25 Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel***

### A. Non-Believers Unstable and Insecure

1. Satan is the ultimate, unstable being
  - a. He was cast down from heaven to roam the earth
  - b. He is filled with rage because he knows his time is short
  - c. In effect, he’s a homeless drifter just passing through, while we are eternal heirs of the earth
  - d. So Satan is pictured as restless, roaming the earth
  - e. So demons are also pictured this way
  - f. So also are wicked people pictured this way
  - g. UNSTABLE
2. The world itself is passing away... and everything not planted by the Father will be rooted out

### B. God Establishes Believers

1. How different for us!!!
2. Greek: “To establish” means to set on an unshakeable foundation; to strengthen, and reinforce

Illus. Student in Boston area, used to watch the building of a skyscraper; the basic law of such buildings, especially in the marshy back bay of Boston, that the foundation needs to go down as far as the building goes up; so day after day, you could hear the massive, automatic pile-driver machines pounding steel foundation pilings deeper and deeper into the earth; the rhythmic pounding of the piles was the beat to which I walked to my morning classes

GOD does that to our SOULS by the constant ministry of the word, of the Gospel... hearing its truths again and again and again drives the truth into our hearts

3. This is the very thing Paul wanted to come and do for them by his spiritual gifts

*<sup>NAU</sup> Romans 1:11 For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established*

But even if I can't come and do that, God can!!!

4. God is ABLE to establish us! He is able to set us on a foundation and to make us strong

*Psalm 40:1-3 I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. <sup>2</sup> He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. <sup>3</sup> He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God.*

5. God is ABLE... meditate on that! He is able to establish you, to give you a solid foundation, to put the unshakeable rock of Jesus Christ under your feet, to make you strong against the storm, established, firm, unmoved

C. God Establishes Believers Through the Gospel

*Romans 16:25 Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel*

1. "My gospel" = the gospel that Paul preached
  - a. The exact same gospel as Peters, John's, and all the other apostles
  - b. Paul is NOT saying it is the gospel he invented or made up

*Galatians 1:11-12 I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. <sup>12</sup> I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.*

- c. Rather Paul is identifying the message he preached: gospel he has unfolded in Romans
- d. More than that, though, is the sense of passionate ownership: MY GOSPEL
  - i) The gospel that saved my soul
  - ii) The gospel that is my life's treasure, the pearl of great price that I sold everything I owned to purchase

iii) The gospel is my hope, my strength, my life, my peace, my everything

2. It is Paul's Gospel that establishes believers

- a. A comprehensive message of full salvation from sin
  - i) Justification through faith alone
  - ii) Sanctification by cooperation between the Spirit and the believer
  - iii) Glorification at death and the resurrection of the body
- b. Continued immersion in this gospel message is essential to the finishing of God's saving work in us
- c. God establishes believers by ONGOING EXPOSURE to the gospel Paul preached

God establishes us by the gospel

AND by the proclamation of Jesus Christ

D. Review: What is Paul's gospel? Next week, overview of the full book of Romans

- 1. All have sinned
- 2. Justified freely by grace through the shed blood of Christ
- 3. Sanctified daily by presenting our bodies to God and our members to His control; putting sin to death daily by the power of the Spirit

III. The Gospel that Proclaims Jesus Christ

***"... and the proclamation of Jesus Christ"***

A. All Roads Lead to Jesus Christ

- 1. Christ is the center of the Gospel as He is the center of the Bible and of all of human history
- 2. The proclamation of Jesus Christ has ongoing power to establish the soul
- 3. When we first heard of Christ, faith sprung up in our hearts

***<sup>ESV</sup> Romans 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.***

- 4. So also faith is nurtured by hearing Christ proclaimed

- a. Even mature believers are not done needing to hear Christ proclaimed
- b. Our bodies need food, our souls need Christ... specifically to hear Him proclaimed

## B. The Preaching of Christ: Paul's Supreme Commitment

1. "Proclamation" = work of a herald
2. Paul says he was appointed a "herald" of the gospel

A herald is a messenger sent from a King or some other leader who bears official tidings

Colonial era, the "Town Crier" rang a bell and proclaimed news vital for everyone to hear

3. This was Paul's supreme commitment

***1 Corinthians 2:1-4*** *When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. <sup>2</sup> For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. <sup>4</sup> My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power,*

## C. The Gospel Proclaims the Glory of Christ

1. Proclaiming Jesus as the fulfillment of ancient prophecies glorifies Christ
2. Proclaiming the full deity and full humanity of Jesus glorifies Christ
3. Proclaiming human sin as an otherwise unsolvable problem glorifies Christ... He is the only Savior of the world
4. Proclaiming the death of Christ, His blood shed on the cross as the power of God for the satisfaction of His justice and the appeasement of His wrath glorifies Christ
5. Proclaiming the resurrection of Christ as the hope of our future resurrection and the liberation of all of creation from its bondage to decay glorifies Christ
6. This Gospel is about Christ from first to last, and it brings Him great glory
7. Proclaiming the glory of Christ is essential to the completion of our salvation

***Romans 16:25*** *Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ*

## IV. The Gospel that Reveals Mysteries

***Romans 16:25-26 according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past,<sup>26</sup> but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God***

### A. God's Secret Counsels Gradually Revealed

1. Before the foundation of the world, God the Father established the plan for the salvation of the human race
  - a. "hidden for long ages past"... before time began
  - b. God had worked out the plan and kept it hidden
  - c. As redemptive history unfolded, God paid out the truth a little at a time
2. These counsels were hidden in God but became revealed at the proper time through the prophets

***Deuteronomy 29:29 The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever***

3. It is part of the blessing of the Gospel to God's chosen people that He reveals everything to them plainly and clearly

***Matthew 13:11-12 He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. <sup>12</sup> Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.***

### B. "Mysteries" of the Bible

1. Not like Agatha Christie or Sherlock Holmes
2. Definitely not like CLUE: **"Col. Mustard in the conservatory with the lead pipe"**
3. Rather a Biblical mystery is something hidden in God that we can never know unless He reveals it to us
4. Many mysteries in the Bible
  - a. The mystery of godliness (1 Timothy 3:16)
  - b. The mystery of lawlessness (2 Thess. 2:7-8)
  - c. The mystery of the rapture (1 Corinthians 15:51)



- d. The mystery of the Kingdom of God (Mark 4:11)
  - e. The mystery of Christ's will (Ephesians 1:9)
  - f. The mystery of Christ (Colossians 2:2)
  - g. The mystery of marriage as a picture of Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:32)
  - h. The mystery of the gospel (Ephesians 6:19)
  - i. The mystery of Christ in you, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:26-27)
  - j. The mystery of the faith (1 Timothy 3:9)
  - k. Unexplainable mysteries of the future in the Book of Revelation (1:20, 10:7, 17:5, 17:7)
5. Central mystery of the New Covenant: the salvation of Gentiles as if they were Jews, through faith in a Jewish Messiah, through adoption as Abraham's sons, through being grafted into a Jewish olive tree, through the circumcision of the heart not the flesh

#### C. Revealed by the Prophets in the Scriptures

1. Old Testament prophets spoke the mysteries of Christ and of the Gospel
2. BUT they didn't understand them fully
3. Genesis 3 spoke of the Seed of the woman who would crush the serpent's head
4. Genesis 12 spoke of the seed of Abraham through whom all peoples on earth would be blessed
5. The Law of Moses spoke of the Passover Lamb whose blood saved Israel from the Angel of Death; and of the Atoning Sacrifice poured out on the Mercy seat
6. Psalm 22 spoke of the Crucifixion of Christ and the glories that would follow
7. Isaiah 53 spoke of the Suffering Servant
8. Psalm 16 spoke of the resurrection of Christ
9. Psalm 110 spoke of the Christ sitting at the right hand of God
10. Daniel 7 spoke of the Son of Man who was given authority, glory and sovereign power and who would be worshiped by all the nations on earth

#### D. Revealed by the Apostles in the Scriptures

1. The fuller revelation of the mysteries of the New Covenant
2. Paul says he is a steward of the mysteries of God

***ESV 1 Corinthians 4:1 This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.***

3. He says God used the holy apostles and prophets to reveal the mystery of the Gospel

#### E. Promises Made and Kept

1. The whole Bible can be summed up like this: Promises Made and Promises Kept: the Old Testament is “Promises Made” and the New Testament is “Promises Kept”
2. This mystery was spoken of to Abraham, a promise made to him

***Genesis 12:3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."***

3. Now in Christ’s death and resurrection, and in the coming of the Holy Spirit, and in the spread of the Gospel to the Gentile nations, and in the great ingathering of the Gentiles by the power of God, this promise has been kept

#### V. The Gospel that Produces Obedience Among the Nations

***Romans 16:25-26 Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, <sup>26</sup> but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God,***

##### A. The Command of the Eternal God

1. God is eternal: He is above time, the creator of time, not the servant of it
  - a. God knew all these things before the creation of the world
  - b. That is the foundation of predictive prophecy
2. It was the will of God for the apostles and prophets to reveal the mystery of the Gospel

***Matthew 11:25-26 At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. <sup>26</sup> Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.***

3. God gave the command and the word went forth

4. God chose to reveal His Son in all His glory... and to make Him the Savior of a countless multitude from every tribe and language and people and nation
5. The prophets obeyed the command to write their prophecies about Christ
6. The apostles obeyed the command to preach in Jesus the fulfillment of the ages

#### B. The Gospel Is a Command to be Obeyed

1. In like manner, the gospel itself is a command to be obeyed

***Romans 16:26 but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him***

2. What command? Look at Jesus' first proclamation of the gospel

***Matthew 4:17 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."***

3. So, the gospel is a command:

***1 Peter 4:17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?***

***Hebrews 2:1-3 We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. <sup>2</sup> For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, <sup>3</sup> how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.***

[in other words, the Old Covenant had to be obeyed and disobedience was punished; so also the New Covenant must be obeyed, and the punishment for disobedience is eternity in hell]

#### C. Obedience the Mark of Saving Faith

***Romans 16:26 so that all nations might believe and obey him***

1. It is impossible to separate genuine saving faith from obedience to God

***Romans 1:5 Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith.***

- a. Seen clearly in the parallel expressions at the beginning and end of this letter
- b. What was famous about this church in Rome?
- c. Chapter 1

***Romans 1:8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world.***

d. Chapter 16

***Romans 16:19 For the report of your obedience has reached to all***

e. Paul almost can't separate the report of their faith and of their obedience

f. Saving faith ALWAYS produces a lifestyle of obedience to God

2. The essence of sin is rebellion against God the King

3. Saving faith is the remedy to the rebellion of sin... and full submission to Christ's kingly yoke is the essence of our salvation

***Matthew 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."***

4. Therefore a lifestyle of obedience to the commands of God is the surest proof of saving faith

***Romans 6:16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey-- whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?***

***Romans 6:17 But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted.***

***Philippians 2:12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed-- not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence-- continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling***

***James 2:14 What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?***

D. The Obedience of the Nations

1. Paul speaks of the obedience of the nations... of the Gentiles

2. The Gospel of Christ is a command given to the entire world, to all nations, to turn from wickedness and rebellion

***[to the Areopagus philosophers] Acts 17:29-30 Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone-- an image made by man's design and skill. <sup>30</sup> In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.***

## VI. The Gospel that is the Wisdom of God

### *“To the only wise God...”*

#### A. The Highest Display of the Wisdom of God: The Gospel

1. The very thing that Paul celebrated with the doxology at the end of Romans 11
2. The gospel message is infinitely wise
  - a. Exalting God’s perfections: His justice, His mercy, His wrath, His compassion, His sovereignty, His foreknowledge, His love, His patience, His power
  - b. Nowhere are these attributes seen more clearly than in the cross of Jesus Christ
  - c. Only a perfectly wise God could work out a way of saving rebellious sinners in every age of human history and in every tribe and nation on earth SUCH THAT their pride is laid low and their hearts lifted into eternally joyful praise
  - d. Only a perfectly wise God could craft a way to save both Jews and Gentiles alike and make them one in Christ
  - e. Only a perfectly wise God could make this plan and carry it out

#### B. Jesus Christ: The Wisdom of God

1. In the end, Christ Himself is the wisdom of God
2. All of God’s wisdom is wrapped up and hidden in Christ
3. Christ Himself was the wisest man that ever lived
  - a. Before Christ, that honor belonged to Solomon
  - b. The Queen of Sheba visited Solomon to see if his reality equaled his reputation; she tested him with hard questions, and nothing was too difficult for him to answer; and she saw the arrangement of his palace and how perfectly orderly it all was... she was overwhelmed

***1 Kings 10:1-8 She said to the king, "The report I heard in my own country about your achievements and your wisdom is true. <sup>7</sup> But I did not believe these things until I came and saw with my own eyes. Indeed, not even half was told me; in wisdom and wealth you have far exceeded the report I heard. <sup>8</sup> How happy your men***

***must be! How happy your officials, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom!***

- c. Solomon seemed to know about everything under God's blue sky... no question was too difficult for him
- d. But Solomon was nothing compared to Christ:

***Matthew 12:42 The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here.***

### C. What Does Christ Give Us? Salvation

1. Christ's wisdom lay not only in His answers to difficult questions but in His perfect life and His mission:
  - a. His perfect life: the only man who ever faced every single temptation hurled at Him and defeated them all
  - b. His mission: to die an atoning death on the cross and give us full forgiveness for our sins and perfect righteousness for Judgment Day
2. This is the wisdom of God in Christ... the salvation of our souls
3. This has been the message of Romans... the message of wisdom from God

***1 Corinthians 1:30-31 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God-- that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. <sup>31</sup> Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."***

### D. What Does Christ Give God? The Glory

***Romans 16:27 to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.***

Application:

- ❖ Come to Christ
- ❖ Focus on God WHO IS ABLE TO ESTABLISH YOU
- ❖ Keep saturating your mind in the Gospel (Read through Romans)
- ❖ Assess your obedience

❖ Delight in the glory of God that will be your inheritance