



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Romans: 16:21-27

Romans

“To God Be The Glory”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Well, it is good to be back with you and I'll greet you the way I greeted the first service: Bună dimineața, which means good morning in Romanian, I think, because when I was over there, they told me about an American who'd been there just a little bit before me and he wanted to know how to say good morning; and they gave him a phrase, and he went around greeting everybody with that phrase. And he'd tell all the young ladies this phrase; and it turn out, he was saying, "I want to marry you. I want to marry you." But I think I said good morning.

We had a very good time. I took my daughter, Rachael, with me this time. First time I've ever taken someone in my family to Romania. But we went to a youth camp, and it's the first time I've done that. We went up into the mountains in Eastern Romania to a region I'd never been to before, and she enjoyed it so much she didn't want to leave. I was ready to leave, but she didn't; and I think that speaks more for the young people that were there than the camp itself.

The surroundings were beautiful, but the camp was Spartan to say the least. Someone told me it was built by the Hungarian Army in the 1940s. There was no electricity, except what was produced by the generator in the afternoon. So it was cold showers every morning for me, and I'm not used to that.

But we did a lot of teaching there at the camp with a number of young people. About 130 were there that week. The young people in Romania from the church that

put on the camp did a very good job. They were very earnest believers, very dedicated, and they worked very diligently and saw some fruit.

I also preached in the churches on the two Sundays that I was there, and I trust that the Lord blessed the ministry; and I hope he did. We sowed some seeds and he gives the growth. I didn't hear a lot of news while I was over there; no radios, no newspapers. I got a little bit of news when I came back through London, but very little.

And when I got back to the States, I heard that the stock market had crashed, that people were pulling their money out of the market, and I thought, "Well, whether the market goes up or down, or governments lose power or put in power, God's still sovereign and He reigns wherever we are."

Whether in Romania or America, God's on His throne, and that, I think, is one of the lessons that we get out of our final lesson in the book of Romans. And that's what we're going to look at this morning, Romans 16:21-27, as we conclude our studies in this magnificent epistle of the apostle Paul. He writes Timothy.

"Timothy my fellow worker greets you, and so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen. I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord. Gaius, host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer greets you, and Quartus, the brother. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

"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 which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen."

May the Lord this reading of His Word. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you for your goodness and your grace, your mercy to us. We have considered that week-in and week-out as we have gone through the book of Romans over the past year-and-a-half. I thank you for the privilege of being able to study and to teach this magnificent book. What a privilege it is, a privilege to possess it. And though we come to the conclusion of it this morning, we can pick it up this afternoon, we can read it tomorrow, we can read it every day of our lives.

You have blessed us with the possession of this book; in fact, all 66 books of your Word, and we thank you for it. We thank you for what it tells us, what it reveals. It reveals there is one God who subsists in three persons, and He is a God of grace, sovereign grace, who saves sinners. And we are reminded of that in this great book of the apostle and this text on which we conclude our studies. Bless us as we do that. Teach us; build us up in the faith; strengthen us.

I pray for those who are sick. We pray that you bless them. We pray for those who are facing surgeries or recovering. We pray for those who are experiencing various difficulties in life. We go through difficulties, Father, and yet, you're in control; and there's great comfort in knowing that. I pray that you would give encouragement to those who are facing difficulty. Give relief; give encouragement.

And for those of us who are enjoying good health, and have employment, and are surrounded by family friends, and enjoying the great blessings of life, all of which come from you, make us grateful. You can take them from us; you do; but always for a good reason, always to draw us to yourself to cause us to cast ourselves upon you. We tend to drift, Father, that's our nature, prone to wander. Keep us from doing that. You're the one who establishes us. We're reminded of that in our text, and so we pray for that. Establish us firmly in the faith; and may that be the result of our time of study together.

We pray for our nation. We pray you'd bless it. Bless our leaders with wisdom. We live in uncertain times, at least times that are uncertain to us. But, of course, you set the times and the epochs, and you put kings in power, and you take them

from power. You are in control of all things and so there's really nothing, nothing at all that's uncertain; and we can rest in that. But we pray for our nation and we pray for our leaders and pray that you give them wisdom as they seek to lead this nation of ours in perilous times. And may these be times of revival, and may we be the people who proclaim the gospel and proclaim it clearly.

Bless us in this hour. Bless us this evening when we return and worship our Lord. May it be edifying. So to that end, bless us as we sing our final hymn. Prepare our heart for a time of study together we pray, in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] For as long as I have attended Believer's Chapel, and that's been for over 30 years, I can't remember a Sunday morning service that didn't begin in the same way with the doxology: "Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him all creatures here below. Praise Him above the heavenly hosts. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen."

That's how we begin our service, and it's how Paul ends his letter to the Romans with a doxology, a praise to God, for His glory. "To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be glory forever. Amen." And it is certainly a fitting way to end this great book in which Paul has explained the gospel of salvation in its broadest meaning, and in a logical way. He first stated the major theme of the book, "justification by faith," which is the gospel, the power of God for salvation. Then he explained man's need for the gospel, exposing our sin and guilt and our utter inability to save ourselves by an obedience to the law. We need righteousness, but we have none, and we are not able to produce it.

At the end of chapter 3 and through chapter 4, Paul explains that the righteousness that we need, the righteousness of God has been set forth in the cross and is received through faith, and faith alone. From chapter 5 on, we are seen as the people of God, at peace with God, through the sacrifice of Christ, and are able to say, "If God is for us, who is against us." In chapters 9 through 11, Paul demonstrates God's unchangeableness and His faithfulness to Israel, and then he states our obligations to God, and it all leads to the final doxology, "To God be the glory."

Now that's what we look at this morning. But first, before Paul gives his concluding praise to God, he sends more greetings to his friends. He's already given his own personal greetings to 26 people in Rome. We considered that on our last study. But now he passes on greetings from 8 companions who are with him in Corinth.

Among them were Timothy, his spiritual son; Gaius, his host; and Tertius, his secretary. So I'm going to make just a few comments on these individuals. Timothy is well-known to us. He was from Lystra in Southern Asia Minor, the son of a Jewish mother and a pagan father. He was converted through Paul's preaching and he became his life-long assistant in the ministry. We're very familiar with Timothy.

Little is known of the next three: Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater. Paul calls them his kinsmen, which suggests that they were fellow Jews. They may have been converts from Macedonia, men who were going to accompany him onto Jerusalem with the gift that he would take to the church there.

Tertius gives his greeting in verse 22, and he identifies himself as the one who wrote the letter, meaning he was Paul's scribe. Paul often dictated his letters and then at the end would take up the pen and write the final verses of the book. Tertius may have been the brother of Quartus, whom Paul mentions in verse 23 and Paul calls "the brother."

F. F. Bruce suggested that these two were brothers because Quartus is Latin for fourth, and Tertius means third, suggesting that Quartus was born just after Tertius so that they were brothers. Now that's speculation, but there's some reason to believe it.

Gaius was Paul's host and may have been Titius Justus who's mentioned in Acts 18:7, who lived next to the synagogue and welcomed Paul into his home after the Jews rejected the gospel. Erastus was the treasurer of the city, so he was an important man in Corinth. And all of these, along with the whole church in Corinth, sent their greetings to the church in Rome.

It's an interesting group that was gathered in the room with Paul. We know little about most of them, but their names reflect the make-up of the church. They are Latin, Greek, and Jewish names, all together with Paul, all with a common concern for the church in Rome, eager to send their greetings to the Christians there, though some of these men may not have known anyone in Rome. But they were eager to send their greetings; and what that shows is what we considered in our previous lesson, and that is that these early Christians were united, and had an affection for one another. There was a close bond of fellowship between them: Jews and Gentiles alike; different from one another, very different; but bound together in Christ as we are bound together to one another – all of us; you and I.

We're bound together in Jesus Christ if we're believers in Jesus Christ. And not only that, bound together with believer across the world; to those believers, those saints in Romania who send their greetings to you as these Christians Corinth sent their greetings to those in Rome. And so we should have a mutual affection and concern for one another. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. We have a common Heavenly Father, a common eternal destiny, and a common mission in this world. The ministry is personal, it is to people, and we are all part of the ministry – every one of us. Every one of you who have put your faith in Jesus Christ have been gifted and you have a ministry and a mission to perform in this world.

Our relationships our very important. They were important to Paul. He expresses that in these greetings that he gives. Relationships were important to him and to his friends, and they should be to us. When they are and when we function as a church, which means when we function as a body, then we do display that concern for one another; and in displaying that, we display the work of God's grace and bring great glory to Him. And that is the goal of God's people. In fact, that is the goal of all things, the glory of God.

I think the Westminster Confession Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Confession of Faith put it best in that famous first question and answer, "What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." Paul

believed that. He didn't have that statement before it, but it fills his letters. In fact, we find that great theme all the way through the Bible, and in an early expression of praise, Paul makes that very point that the Westminster Divines made.

Paul said in chapter 11 of this book, verse 36, " For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen." And he makes that his final declaration as he concludes this, his greatest epistle with his longest doxology. It has been described as having a liturgical tone, and that may be. It is a carefully crafted statement in which Paul covers the great themes of this epistle. But if it is liturgical, it is still a natural, personal, heart-felt expression of praise. Bishop Mole called it a "rapturous doxology." In it, Paul praises God for His power and His wisdom as they are reflected in His work of salvation to all the nations.

Paul begins in verse 25 with God's power, His great ability. "Now to him who is able to establish you." One thing of which Paul was certain, and for which he rejoiced and praised God for being was a God who is able. He used the same words in Ephesians 3:20, "Now to him who is able." Those are great words. God is able; He is able to do all things. There is no limit to His ability. He is omnipotent; He is all-powerful. That is the God who is working on our behalf, the all-powerful God.

In fact, Paul states in Ephesians 3:20 that He is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us. The omnipotent power that works within us is able to do far more exceedingly than we can ever imagine. He does more for us than we ever pray that He will do for us. The problem is never with God's power or ability, it's with our imperfect understanding of His power and our lack of trust in His ability to bless. He never disappoints the man, the woman, the child, who put their faith in Him. And we never are disappointed when we walk by faith. We may come up against obstacles and we may experience frustrations that we don't understand. But if we're trusting in Him, He never disappoints. So Paul praises Him for His power, praises Him as the God who is able; and what He is specifically able to do in Paul's mind, what Paul is specifically speaking of here is He is able to establish us. That is, He is able to make us firm and constant, and keep us from falling.

This word "establish" was used of Jesus in Luke 9:51 which states that He was determined to go to Jerusalem. Literally, He set His face to go, meaning, He fixed His mind on that purpose. It was established. His mind was fixed, established on that purpose, and nothing could turn it from that purpose. So establishing us is strengthening our faith, fixing it firmly so that it isn't unsettled by the circumstances of life.

Stock market goes up; the stock market goes down; there's great volatility. We see our 401(k) shrinking to half their value and we wonder what's going to happen. Circumstances of life can be very frustrating, can be very unnerving. We get a bad report from the doctor, our health begins to fail, it's unnerving; and yet, those who are trusting in Christ, those who are rooted in Him, who are in Him, are strengthened and established so that the circumstances of life do not shake us; or should not shake us, not as we understand Him and who He is.

Things in this world change, and this is a volatile world; and from our perspective, it's full of uncertainties. But one thing is certain: God is on His throne, He can never be shaken from it, and He's guiding all events according to His all-wise plan. And so God firmly establishes us so that we're not shaken by the events of life.

I think Paul's meaning here, his principle meaning is that our faith is not shaken when false teachers come into our midst or enter into our church like those that Paul warned of earlier in verses 17-20. They come, but we who have been established, we who are in Christ won't be drawn away by them, but will resist their influence. God establishes us so that we're not swept away by the various fad and the heresies that come along; but we are established by Him.

And not only that, not only will we not be influenced and drawn away, but we will also develop, and develop well mentally and emotionally. We will become mature Christians because of Him. We will become stable people; that's what He does.



Back in chapter 1, verse 11, Paul stated that when he came to Rome, he hoped to establish them. But he acknowledges here that he can only do that through God's help. Ultimately, that is God's work. We must look to Him for it. We must look to Him for this process of sanctification in which we are established, in which we are firmly rooted. It is the process whereby God renews our minds and makes us more and more like Jesus Christ in the way we think and in the way we act, and gives us wisdom and ability to deal with life, and deal with it wisely and properly. And that's what God does, and that is what Paul begins praising; and in this, Paul's doxology is much like the ones that end other books.

The author of Hebrews writes in Hebrews 13:20-21, "Now the God of peace equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight." Jude wrote, " Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy."

All the writers agree: God equips us for every good thing, He keeps us from stumbling. God is the one who establishes us and makes us firm in the faith, and consistent in our conduct. It is God that does it. It occurs by His power and so His ability is praised. But God uses men and He uses means to do this, and His main means of sanctifying us, of changing us and strengthening us is His Word.

Here, Paul refers to it as the gospel, being established happens," he says, "according to my gospel," meaning the gospel he preached. It's not my gospel as opposed to Peter's gospel, but it is the gospel that Paul had believed and had received as His own, and so he called it "my gospel." He defines it further as the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery. So the gospel is more than the basic call to salvation, it is the whole range of Christian doctrine. It is what Paul has explained in the book of Romans.

The book of Romans is the gospel. It is the fullness of the gospel. Christ, His person, and His work, and the mystery which God has revealed, that is the broad range of doctrine; what Paul calls the gospel. But central to it all, central to everything that he has proclaimed in this book of Romans is Christ. There's no gospel

apart from Christ understood as Paul and the apostles proclaimed him, as the eternal Son of God and the Son of David. That's how Paul introduces him at the very beginning of this book. The Son of God, the Son of David who was crucified for our sins and raised from the dead. Christ is the gospel.

Paul also taught the mystery, what he refers to here as having been kept secret for long ages past. In the Bible, a mystery is not something that is mysterious, it is a truth that could not be known except by revelation. It is a secret that has been revealed. Paul doesn't define the mystery here, but many have explained it as a reference to the gospel, God's way of salvation, which people could not have worked out for themselves, and could only be known by revelation. And that's true, of course.

The gospel is Revelation. No one; no one has come to an understanding of the gospel of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, by themselves. You look at religions today, you look at religion through history; and while it varies in various ways, the fundamental characteristic of all religion is a work of salvation; doing something; by good deeds, or by ceremonies, or sacrifices, or whatever; doing something to obtain the approval and the acceptance of God.

The gospel is different from that. The gospel is salvation through grace alone. It's a gift, a free gift. Man could never have worked that out or come to that on his own. The gospel is revelation; and so it's true that the gospel as some has explained in defining the mystery is revelation. But the gospel was not hidden in the ages past, so I don't think that those who have explained the mystery, as Paul explained the gospel, have explained it correctly because it's been known from the beginning.

The Old Testament is filled with the gospel. In fact, Paul's proof that the gospel that he preached is true, that it is the gospel, is the Old Testament. He cited Genesis 15:6. He cited Habakkuk 2:4 to show that salvation has always been by faith. The only other time that Paul uses this word "mystery" in the book of Romans is in chapter 11, where in verse 25, it refers to Israel's temporary hardening. And because of Israel's hardening and the judgment that's come upon the nations, salvation has

gone to the Gentiles. And so it speaks of the present hardening of Israel and the present salvation of Gentiles.

So it has to do with Gentile salvation. But more specifically, the mystery refers to the equality of the Gentile with the Jew in salvation. That is how Paul explains the mystery more fully in other places, particularly in Ephesians, chapter 3, where he writes in verse 6, "To be specific," speaking of the mystery, " that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel." Fellow partakers with the Jews.

Now Gentiles were saved in the Old Testament, but they entered salvation through Israel by becoming Jews. Rahab and Ruth, both Gentiles; one a Canaanite, one a Moabitess, both became Israelites. Even Naaman, after being cured of leprosy and believing the Lord, returned to Damascus with a load of earth from Israel showing His connection to the land and to the people of God. But now it's different. Gentiles are equal with Jews in the body of Christ. Jews are not preeminent over Gentiles; Gentiles are not preeminent over Jews. We are equal in Christ.

In Colossians 1:26-27, Paul speaks of this mystery among the Gentiles that was hidden from the ages past, something that was not known in the past, but now is manifested; and he defines it as, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." So the mystery is that we are in Christ and Christ is in us. We, both Jews and Gentiles alike are indwelt with the Holy Spirit equally, and have a common destiny.

There is still a kingdom for Israel, for ethnic Israel. God will keep His promise to the nation. He's faithful to His Word But we will share equally in their inheritance. We have been grafted into their olive tree, Paul explained. We, Gentile believers, are equal partners with Jewish believers. "This is now manifested," Paul says in verse 26. In other words, "This mystery that was previously hidden has been made known in the present by the Scriptures of the prophets," Paul says.

Now that raises a question. It's been revealed by the prophets. How can the prophets of the Old Testament make known truth that was not known in the time of

the prophets. After all, this is a mystery. A mystery was not known previously, it's been made known in the present. So if it's a mystery, half of the Old Testaments prophets reveal it; and, of course, they couldn't have revealed it if it's a mystery. Paul is not referring to Old Testaments prophets here, he's referring to the prophets of the New Testament.

Of the gifts that Christ gave to the church, the first two Paul listed in Ephesians 4:11 are apostles and prophets, and he's referring here to the apostolic writings which literally in the Greek text is prophetic writings. And it is very important that the church understand these writings and understand the mystery that has been revealed: all believers are equally joined together and equally joined to Christ. We must know that so that we will be unified, and so that we will have a common affection for one another and be united in the ministry.

It's important that we know these things. We are in Christ and Christ is in us. Each of us has the Spirit of God and has him equally. That is the reason that we are established now and why we will be established for all eternity. Our strength and our life is in Christ and Christ alone. And Paul marveled at this. He marveled at God's grace, that it would join Jew and Gentile together.

We may not marvel over that as Paul would have, or Paul did, because today, things are a little different from Paul's day. In that time, there was a great divide between the Jew and the Gentile. It was great antipathy between them; they despised one another. God has brought these two together: Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave and free – brought them together in a loving relationship, a unity together; all kinds of people together in one people, the people of God. So Paul marveled over that. He marveled at God's plan of salvation. It is a great plan. It is a worldwide plan in its scope.

Paul says, "The mystery which is a revelation of grace," he says, "it has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith." The boundaries have been broken down. The gospel is now to be proclaimed everywhere so that people everywhere might hear and believe. There are no restrictions.

The gospel applies universally. It is for sinners wherever they are; whoever they are; how great their sin may be. It is for all who simply believe and trust in him. It's for all who obey the call of the gospel, to receive the gospel and trust in Christ. That's God's grace. It is apart from works; it is apart from any achievement we might be able to claim; it is apart from heredity; it is apart from everything in us. It's all of God.

Paul says that it is this gospel of grace, broadly speaking, this Christian doctrine that is the means that God uses to establish us and cause us to mature, to grow in the faith. He uses means – and that's very important to realize – He uses gifted men. He's given gifted men to the church and He uses all kinds of means: the experiences of life; the literature that godly men write. But it is God who does it, and that is what Paul stresses at the beginning of this doxology. It is God who is able to establish you. It is not other people; not even other teachers, orthodox teachers. It is God working through His Word and we are always to be looking to him.

We have a tendency, I guess it's human nature. But we have a tendency to look to men or to look to women, to look to people, whoever might be our teacher, and to begin to depend on those individuals. We're not to do that; not to depend on others, not even good teachers, godly men and women. We are to look to the Lord. We are to lean only on him, to trust in him; and as we do that, we grow strong as we learn His Word.

Men will fail us. And if men don't fail us in their personal relationships with us, well they die and they leave us. We need to depend on the one who never dies, the one who never departs, and His Word which is inerrant. And as we learn it, and as we obey him and live by faith in him, we grow increasingly stronger.

And that's God's goal for us. He is faithful. His thoughts increasingly become our thoughts. We have a greater knowledge of truth as we learn His Word and depend upon Him, and with a greater knowledge of His truth, greater ability to apply that truth to our lives, and to trust him; and God blesses. He can calm our hearts from all

fear and protect us from all danger so that we can live boldly, and live courageously, and we can live wisely for him. Only way to do that is to apply ourselves to the Word of God.

All of that occurs. It becomes our experience in proportion to our knowledge and the application of God's truth to our lives. And that is what God blesses in our lives. That is how He makes us unshakable. That is how He establishes us. So study; become students of God's Word. It is an investment that pays off.

There is a story that I've told, and I've heard it told as well, but one that B. B. Warfield told in order to illustrate the value of children learning the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Confession of Faith. It's a story that occurred in the 1800s.

An officer in the United States Army was in a great western town that was going through a great deal of social upheaval. There were riots in the streets, the streets were overrun with crime and dangerous people. But one day, the officer saw a man walking down the street through all of this, through all of this chaos, with an uncommon calmness and firmness of bearing. As the officer passed the man, he couldn't help but turn around and look back at him; and when he did, he saw that the stranger had stopped and done the same thing. And having noticed the officer looking at him, the stranger began to approach him, he came up to him, and he touched the officer on his chest with his forefinger and he said, "What is the chief end of man?" And he answered, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever."

"Ah," the man said, "I knew you were a Shorter Catechism boy by your looks." And the officer replied, "Why, that's just what I was thinking of you." Warfield concludes, "It is worthwhile to be a Shorter Catechism boy. They grow to be men. And better than that, they are exceedingly apt to grow to be men of God." So as we study God's truth, the great doctrines of God's Word – so as we study God's Word that we grow, that we are established, that we become strong and consistent in our behavior.

People do not rise higher than their view of God. That is a good statement and an important statement. It's not original with me, but it's true. People do not rise higher than their view of God. And as we study God's Word, we find a big God, a great God, a God who is able and more than able. That is certainly the God of the book of Romans. He is the absolutely sovereign God who knows the end from the beginning. And the reason He knows the end from the beginning, the reason He knows all things is because He has planned all things. And everything is working according to His plan, and His plan cannot fail. He will accomplish His purpose.

Donald Grey Barnhouse wrote in the last chapter of his commentary on Romans, "The sovereignty of God is the most important of all theological doctrines." It is true. The sovereignty of God is true and it is important. We cannot give glory to him if He is not absolutely sovereign. And we could have no assurance of hope for the present or the future if God is not absolutely sovereign. So there's no greater comfort than that, than the sovereignty of God, that God is in control of this world whether the stock market goes up or down, or whatever happens in governments far away.

Different kind of things are happening and lots of things are happening. Whatever happens, God's in control of it all. He's sovereign, He's ruling, He's got a plan for this world, and not just generally speaking in all of its details. In fact, your life and all it's details, God's in control and working those details if you're a believer in Jesus Christ, working all of those details to a good and glorious end. And we know that all is working for good because, one, the Bible says so; and that settles the issue. But we know this theologically because the all-powerful God is also the all-wise God. He's not simply brute force.

What a terrifying thing that would be if God was mere power. He could destroy us as easily as He could save us. He would be a capricious kind of God. He's not that way at all. God's power, His great power is governed by His great wisdom so that it is used perfectly, both for the good of His people and for His own glory.

So having praised God's power, Paul ends his doxology in verse 27 on the attribute of God's wisdom. "To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen."

That statement, "The only wise God," expresses the fundamental truth of the Bible, that there's only one God, and He is the God of the Bible. He's the Lord God. The Bible opens with that truth. "In the beginning God." The Bible doesn't try to prove the existence of God, it assumes the existence of God. That's the precept position of the Bible, and it's the assumption of the Bible because all men know there's a God. We know that because we're made in the image of God.

Now some men are clever and they have various ways of suppressing the knowledge. In fact, all men have that. That's characteristic of the natural man, and they may develop all kinds of well-developed reasons for there being no God, and they may convince themselves and come to the point where they truly do not believe there's a God. But men know inherently that there's a God because they're in the image of God. And so the Bible begins with that great declaration, "In the beginning God." He is the creator of all things; all other gods are false.

The Ten Commandments begin with that: "You shall have no other gods before me." Have no other gods before me because there are no other gods; they're false. Only the Lord God is worthy of our worship and He deserves our worship, and the Bible requires that we believe that and that we worship him alone.

As Paul comes to the end of his book, he draws attention to that fundamental truth: there is only one God and all the glory goes to him. Faithfulness to that truth though is tested in every age; and the years after Paul wrote these words, the faithfulness of the church was severely tested by the Caesars. It was an age of polytheism, and a pluralistic age, and a tolerant age. People were allowed to worship various gods. They could worship Christ. But they were also required to show loyalty to the Empire by declaring Caesar is lord. Christians could not do that.



The Bible demands that all glory and worship go to God alone. As a result, a lot of Christian blood was shed throughout the Empire. But that is what these words require, complete commitment to the one God who is the only Creator and Savior; and we have no other gods before him. We are to have no other gods before him.

The tests that we face in the 21st century are different, and yet, really the same. Ours is a secular world, and yet, it's filled with the gods of materialism, and we are tempted to worship them. We are tempted to bow, and follow, and be led by the spirit of this age. It's all around us. It's subtle and it's strong, and we're tempted to bow down to it. But if we confess what Paul confesses here, that God is the only God, then we must give all the glory to him; worship only him; love him with all our heart, soul, and mind. That's what's required of the Christian. That means our lives are to be arranged for Him, for His service and worship, which is the best life.

Young people may think that that is a restricting kind of life. No, it's not. The world will tell you that. But the Lord says that His yoke is light, it's easy, and it's the best life because His ways are wise. And it's God's wisdom that Paul is chiefly praising here. He is the only wise God.

His wisdom is seen all around us. We see His wisdom in His works. We see it in the things that are in nature in the beauty and the order of it all. In fact, the psalmist praised that. He said, "The heavens are declaring the glory of God." And we see His glory everywhere. But as great as that display of wisdom is – the display in the heavens, and the nature, and the world around us – it is the wisdom that God revealed in the mystery that Paul just mentioned that called for this response of praise to the only wise God; that God's grace could save the Gentiles as it did amazed the apostle Paul.

They were lost in utter darkness, separated from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, outside the Covenants, without hope and without God in the world, as Paul told the Ephesians. But those same Gentiles have been brought nearer by the blood of Christ. And not only nearer, they have been made equals with Jews in Christ, fellow heirs with them.

Only great wisdom could bring Jews and Gentiles together as equals. Only God's unsearchable wisdom could bring about Gentile blessing as God has done, and done so in an amazing way through Jewish failure, breaking off the natural branches of the olive tree, which occasion the engrafting of the wild branches, the Gentiles. And yet through that engrafting by means of Gentile salvation, God will provoke Jews to jealousy, and ultimately save Israel and bless the whole world.

If Israel's failure meant blessing to the Gentiles, what will Israel's restoration mean but salvation to the world. Now that's the goal of God's plan in this world. That is a plan of wisdom, and that plan astounded the apostle. But every aspect of God's plan of salvation shows great wisdom, which confounds the wisdom of the world and makes it foolish.

Wisdom is a branch of knowledge. It is the skillful use of knowledge in the selecting and adapting the right means for fulfilling the best purpose. To understand the greatness of God's wisdom and salvation, we must understand the greatness of the problem that it solved, which was how to preserve God's justice while saving sinful people.

How can a holy God forgive sinners and remain holy? He cannot ignore sin. That would be unjust and unrighteous. But He cannot ignore sinners, God is love. It is His nature to be merciful. And so the problem to be solved was how to save sinners and be just in doing it.

God's solution was found in a substitute, His own Son, who was qualified to represent men because He became a man; and He's able to save a multitude because He is God. He made an infinite sacrifice which demonstrated God's glory in His love, and holiness, and power to save, because by His blood, Christ saved an innumerable multitude. That is a plan that man could not have imagined and could not have implemented. And so Paul says, "To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever."

It is glory that is through Jesus Christ, because it is only through Jesus Christ that we can know and approach God. He said that himself in John 14:6, " I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me."

There are not many ways to God; there are not many ways of salvation. There is but one way and that's through faith in Jesus Christ. We cannot know God the Father unless we know God the Son. God has not known and glorified apart from faith in Jesus Christ as God's eternal, unique Son, and our personal Savior. Salvation is only in him.

That is the great theme of this book. And to that theme, and to all of the truth of this great book, this book which the Swiss commentator Frédéric Godet called, "The cathedral of the Christian faith." To all of this, Paul says, "Amen." That mean it is all true and I believe it. I set my seal upon it.

Do you do that? Do you agree and say amen to all that Paul has written in this doxology and through out this great book of Romans? Have you believed in Jesus Christ as your Savior? If not, then I invite you to do so. It is necessary that you do so, because as Paul said, "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal like in Christ Jesus our Lord."

So receive that free gift of God by believing in His Son who died in the place of sinners so that all who believe in him would be forgiven, given life forever, and the ability to then glorify God by manifesting His grace to others. May God help you to do that. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you for your goodness and your grace, and we thank you for the great privilege we have had to study this magnificent book, this cathedral of the Christian faith, the book of Romans. Father, you have blessed us abundantly. You have blessed every believer in Jesus Christ beyond imagination. You have done far more exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or thing, and we thank you for that.

May we live lives that reflect that appreciation, live lives to your glory. Help us to understand these things better that we might do so, that we might live lives to the glory of God. We pray these things in His name, the name of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.