

## The Epistle of Paul to the Romans

### VIII. Salutation (Rom. 16:1-27).

This is the concluding chapter of the Roman epistle. There are five parts to this chapter.

- A. The Commendation of Phoebe (16:1-2)
- B. Greetings to believers in Rome (16:3-16).
- C. Admonition and Encouragement (16:17-20).
- D. Greetings from Paul's companions (16:21-24).
- E. Paul's Doxology (16:25-27).

Part of this chapter could have been like a page from his prayer list. I am referring to verse 3 through 16. If Paul did not have a prayer book, they were names which were written on his heart, and for whom he must have prayed. It shows that the Apostle Paul was very much involved with people, the Lord's people. From the references we have to prayer in his epistle, he must have spent much of every day praying for people he knew throughout the Roman Empire.

#### A. The commendation of Phoebe (16:1-2).

16:1 However, the first one he mentioned was a lady by the name of Phoebe, and in his remarks Paul commended Phoebe to the believers at Rome. And at least these first two verses were his commendation of Phoebe to the church at Rome. She evidently was going to Rome from Cenchrea which was the eastern port of Corinth. This is an indication that Paul was in Corinth when he wrote this epistle to the church at Rome. Further, it may be an indication that Phoebe was the one who carried this epistle to Rome. This is the only time that she is mentioned in the NT, but from what Paul said about her in these first two verses, she had been an active helper in his ministry, as well as to many others.

She is called "a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea." This probably means that she did what older ladies who were mature in the faith did, and that was to minister to the poor and the sick of their own sex, which would include the widows. Why she would have been going to Rome, we are not told. But that she was going seems certain by Paul's reference to her here, commending her to the church at Rome. The verb "commend" lit. means that he was *standing with* her.

16:2 Although the believers at Rome (at least most of them) would not have known Phoebe, this note from Paul meant that she would be welcomed in the church at Rome, and that they would support her in whatever needs she might have. This was the ordinary way some well-known believer would commend another believer to an individual or church where that person had not been known before. When Paul wrote to Philemon about his runaway slave, Onesimus, Paul's letter assured Philemon that Onesimus had really been saved, and that Philemon should not hesitate to take him back.

Paul referred to such letters when he wrote the following to the church at Corinth:

- 1 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?
- 2 Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men (2 Cor. 3:1-2).

Beginning with verse 3 and going down through verse 16 we have a series of greeting to believers in Rome. In our outline it is:

#### B. Greetings to believers in Rome (16:3-16).

The word “greet” which appear repeatedly through these verses, means *to wish a person well*. It normally would have to do with physical well-being, but among believers it would carry with it a hope, and most likely, a prayer for the blessing of the Lord upon them. Haldane mentioned in this custom which was common among unbelievers, that what Paul did shows that there is not harm, and probably some good, in following such customs that people have who don’t know the Lord. To wish people a “good day” that even Christians are concerned about the health and welfare even of people that we do not know. We ought to be interested in people and do whatever we can to be kind and helpful to them.

A. T. Robertson traced the movement of Aquila and Priscilla from Rome to Corinth to Ephesus, then back to Rome, and eventually to Corinth. At the time Paul wrote this Roman epistle, they were in Rome, and, as verse 5 indicates, the church at Rome was meeting in their house. Paul called them his own “helpers in Christ.” It is common to speak of the people in Hebrews 11 as being in the NT “hall of fame.” Well, there is also a NT “hall of fame,” and Paul would give Aquila and Priscilla that honor. They were tent makers like he was, and so he had two real connections with him. They were his “helpers,” and had been on more than one occasion. At one time they were used by the Lord to save the Apostle Paul from death. Paul didn’t mention when that was, probably because everyone knew about it. But Paul gave them thanks here, and said that “all the churches of the Gentiles” were likewise thankful because after that event, whatever it was and whenever it was, it was before Paul had gone into some areas to preach the Gospel to Gentiles who had been saved under his ministry.

This helps us to understand that in the day when we stand before the Lord to receive our rewards, we are going to be surprised when we see people receiving rewards who worked behind the scenes here on earth.

Now these greetings were probably to be delivered by Phoebe.

16:5 Paul sent greetings to the whole church.

But then he saluted a man named Epaenetus. This is the only time that Paul mentioned him, but the fact that Paul called him “my wellbeloved,” means that Paul was especially fond of him. The best reading of this verse seems to be Asia, instead of Achaia. Corinth was located in the territory known as Achaia, but it seems that Epaenetus was from the Roman province of Asia. That was the territory where the seven church of Revelation 2 and 3 were located. For Epaenetus to have been “the firstfruits” of Asia meant that he was the first of many who followed in that province where the Gospel was especially blessed by the Lord, and many, many came to the Lord. So Paul had a good reason to be thankful for Epaenetus. He was the first to come to Christ, but many more followed him.

16:6 There are six Marys mentioned in the NT. It is very unlikely that this Mary is mentioned anywhere else in the NT. Some scholars feel that she may have been a Gentile because Paul did not claim any relationship with her. But some place, other than Rome, she had “bestowed much labor” on Paul. It is interesting to see how many women Paul mentioned as having been helpers to him in the work that the Lord had called him to do.

16:7 Andronicus and Junias were Paul’s kinsmen, that is, related to him by blood (which seems to be the idea in the word “kinsmen” which Paul used. Some say that they may have been husband and wife. It may be that they were brother and sister since when Paul spoke of them as related that he used the plural. Of course one could have been related by marriage through the other to Paul. The only conclusion that we can come to about how they were related to Paul is that we just don’t know.

But there are several facts that we do know. They both had been saved before the Apostle Paul was saved. They were well-known to the apostles. And on some occasion (and again Paul did not say because the fact was

probably known in Rome, they had been imprisoned along with the Apostle Paul. It is interesting to learn even a little about the people who were friends of the Apostle Paul, many of whom had served the Lord with him in different places.

16:8 Sandy and Headlam say that Ampliatus was a common slave name among the Romans. He, too, is only remembered here.

16:9 The same appears to be true of Urbanus, *i.e.*, that this is a Roman slave name. Perhaps the mention of Ampliatus is what brought the name of Urbanus to mind. If these were slaves, or former slaves, it is interesting to think of how they were associated with Paul in serving the Lord. God is no respecter of persons. He saves the free and He saves the slaves, makes them brothers in the family of God, and makes them useful in the service of the Lord.

Stachys is a rare Greek name, so it seems that he must have been a Gentile. But in some ancient findings it has been linked to a member, or members, of the imperial household. If so, we have a slave and a member of the royal family mentioned together in the same verse. In Philippians 4:22 Paul mentioned believers who were in Caesar's household. Believers may be separated in many ways by birth and social standing, but in Christ they all stand on the same ground.

16:10 Nowhere else in Scripture do we find Apelles mentioned, but he is given a tremendous commendation by the Apostle Paul. Apelles was "approved in Christ." This means that in some special way he had gone through some testing, and had stood firm against the trial he had gone through. We don't know the circumstances, but we see the result and that is what matters. It was not that he just had the approval of the church, but that he had the approval of the Lord, and had shown in some unmistakable way that he truly belonged to Christ.

In Aristobulus we have a family mentioned, the first one. The idea that Aristobulus was no longer living, or that his family and household servants were believers, but he was not, are mere speculations which cannot be proved.

16:11 Herodion was another of Paul's relatives. And then Paul mentioned another family, the household of Narcissus, but the phrase, "which are in the Lord," seems to indicate that there were members of this family who were not in the Lord.

16:12 Tryphaena and Tryphosa were probably sisters, and maybe even twins. Paul commended them for their labor. He used a word which speaks of working until they were weary. It indicates that they did not spare themselves in the work that they did, so great was their love for the Lord.

Another woman who fell into the same category with Tryphaena and Tryphosa was Persis. She devoted herself tirelessly to the work of the Lord and to the Lord.

16:13 The name Rufus is usually linked to a man by this name, mentioned in Mark 15:21 as one of the sons of Simon the man from Cyrene who was forced to carry the Cross of our Lord. If this is true, it would appear that his father, Simon, was not living at this time. But being called "chosen in the Lord," there must have been indisputable evidence in his life that he really know the Lord.

We have no other evidence that Paul had a brother by this name, and surely if that had been the case here, Paul would have made that clear. But what he probably meant was that he knew that Rufus was a true believer because he had been in his home many times, and that Rufus' mother was more like a mother to him as well.

16:14 We can only speculate why Paul mentioned these five men together. They may have been very close friends. Their names suggest that they were a combination of slaves and free men.

And then Paul simply listed more names in verse 15.

16:15 Here Paul added four more names and the unnamed sister of Nereus. Paul obviously believed that they all were true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

16:16 The people of God are characterized by love for one another. The holy kiss was so-called to distinguish it from that which would be sinful. It was an expression of affection for men with men, and for women with women. It amounted to a cheek to cheek show of affection, in much the same way that we shake hands with each other. Paul was encouraging them to greet each other, not to do it on his behalf. The very way that Paul mentioned those whom he knew in the church, many with loving terms, was further evidence that we as the people of God need to love each other, to seek each other's spiritual blessing. On the other hand we should never participate in anything that would tend to divide believers, or to harm any child of God in any way.

Paul, as an apostle, had the right to sending greetings to all of the believers in Rome from "the churches of Christ" throughout the Empire. These were local churches, and they were called churches. That name has been set aside by many groups of believers today, and that is further evidence of the degeneration that has become so common among those who profess to be Christians. A church is a called-out group of people, called out of the world, called to be different from the world, but left in the geographical world to spread the only message of salvation that there is, and to join together for the exaltation and glory of the Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The holy kiss was to stress the importance of holiness of life among every member of the body of Christ.

Now we are ready for the second division of this last chapter of Romans:

### **C. Admonition and Encouragement (16:17-20).**

16:17 Many who have written commentaries on Romans, find it somewhat surprising that, at the end of an epistle which is, as Sandy and Headlam said, "so completely destitute of direct controversy" (p. 429), we should come upon such a strong warning against false teachers. There is no hint in the epistle that these teachers were already in Rome, but Paul, who was well-acquainted with the tactics of their Enemy, the Devil, knew that for Paul to have written, and for him to be planning to go there, false teachers would not be far behind. In fact, Paul was obviously concerned that the false teachers might get to Rome before he did. And this may be an added reason for Paul's writing at this particular time.

It is a reminder that we are in a warfare, and as far as time is concerned, it is unending. It is a spiritual warfare against God and His truth. And the demonic forces are so great in number that he is capable of waging war everywhere at the same time.

But we can learn an important lesson from Paul at this point in the epistle. What had he been doing throughout this epistle? Even though he knew they were well taught, and were blessed with many who were capable of teaching the truth of God, yet he wrote to them almost like they knew nothing, or very little at the best, to make sure that they had in writing a clear, thorough explanation of the Gospel and its bearing upon their daily lives. So his realization that the church at Rome would not be excluded from the Devil's "hit list" (so to speak), we see here at the end that a deep concern which had been in Paul's heart all along as he wrote, suddenly could not be suppressed any longer, and here it boiled over.

Paul used this word three times in the practical section of this epistle: first, in 12:1; second, in 15:30; and third, here in 16:17. In the first two he was making an earnest appeal to them, hoping and expecting that they would respond in a positive way. Here in verse 17 of chapter 16 it carried with it not only an appeal, but a warning. It could hardly have been stronger. And being a command in the present tense, he meant that this is something that they were to do constantly. They were never to let up on their vigilance concerning false teachers. They were to expect that people, sometimes men, sometimes women, sometimes both, who were causing divisions, introducing strange doctrines or perversions of true doctrine.

I want to read to you what Charles Hodge, who taught the Pauline epistles at Princeton Seminary from 1822 to 1878, had to say about this verse, and particularly on the words “divisions and offenses.” Here is what he said:

There were probably two evils in the apostle’s mind when he wrote this passage; the divisions occasioned by erroneous doctrines, and the offences or scandals occasioned by the evil conduct of false teachers. Almost all forms of error which distracted the early church, were intimately connected with practical evils of a moral character. This was the case to a certain extent with the Judaizers; who not only disturbed the church by insisting on the observance of the Mosaic law, but also pressed some of their doctrines to an immoral extreme; see 1 Cor. 5:1-5. It was still more obviously the case with those errorists, infected with a false philosophy, who are described in Col. 2:10-23; 1 Tim. 4:1-8. These evils were equally opposed to the doctrines taught by the apostle. Those who caused these dissensions, Paul commands Christians, first *to mark* (*σκοπεῖν*), *i.e.*, to notice carefully, and not allow them to pursue their corrupting course unheeded; and, secondly, *to avoid*, *i.e.*, to break off connection with them (p. 450).

What Dr. Hodge was saying is that you can’t effect what people believe without also affecting the way they live. Any departure from the truth of the Word of God is to be viewed with suspicion and dealt with immediately. Solomon wrote long before the Apostle Paul, that one class of people that the Lord hates are those who sow discord among brethren. See Proverbs 6:19.

As we sit here today there are thousands of people, and others who join with them, in watching for any suspicious people or activity which could threaten our security as a nation. It does not cease day nor night. It is, as we have learned to say, 24-7 – twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. That is what Paul was exhorting the people of God in Rome to do.

16:18 The people whom the Apostle Paul was talking about did not serve our Lord Jesus Christ (note the use which Paul made here of our Lord’s full Name and Title. They may talk about Him, but they are not serving Him. Actually they are His enemies, and they are serving “their own belly.” This means that they were seeking to exalt themselves. They are seeking our money, or to gain power over us, or perhaps even have sensual objectives. But the key to understanding what they are doing is where their teaching departs from or is never found in the Word of God. But it also has to do with what they teach, not just about “Jesus,” but about “our Lord Jesus Christ.” Note “our Lord Jesus Christ” in verses 20 and 24.

But beyond knowing what their objectives are, *how do they do it?*

“By good words and fair speeches.” “Good words” are those which appear to be true. They may be partially true, but not completely true. They are spoken for the effect that they will have, not for their truthfulness. “Fair speeches,” on the other hand, are words of flattery and praise, to make a person feel good about himself. False teachers become masters at knowing how to manipulate people. Their method is to “deceive the hearts of the simple.” Satan used deception to tempt Eve into sin. Cf. 2 Cor. 11:3 where Paul said that “the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety.” He is a master deceiver, and he is busy doing his evil work every day.

What did Paul mean by “the simple”? This is the person who is unsuspecting. He does not believe that others will harm him, or do evil to Him. In a word, he is naive. He is untaught, but thinks that he knows. That is why Paul took the time to write this epistle to the Roman church. Generally, they were well taught. But Paul was particularly concerned about those who had been exposed to the teaching of the truth, but who did not really understand it.

16:19 Here Paul was ending on the same note with which he began. See Romans 1:8:

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

As a church they were well taught, given to obedience, progressing in godliness. But even those who are well-taught can be deceived and fall into sin if they grow satisfied with what they know, and do not keep pressing on to greater understanding and obedience to the Word. None of us is safe. And so Paul said, after recognizing the godly character of the people of God in Rome, that he wanted them remain wise concerning that which is good in the sight of God, but simple and undefiled as far as sin is concerned.

The Devil has deceived many who profess to know the Lord, that if they are going to know what sin really is, they must experience sin. But that is not the way to learn about sin. When we sin we are blinded to its nature and to its effect. If we want to learn about sin, the best way is by seeing how sin is exposed for what it is in the Bible. Sin will fill the heart with a lot of misery and regrets. True joy is found only in knowing the Lord and living in obedience to His Word.

16:20 As I pointed out to you in our brief survey of this last part of the epistle, this verse is a prayer. Paul prayed before he taught, and he prayed after he taught. He knew that his teaching would not reach the hearts of the people of God unless the Lord put it there.

Paul addressed God as “the God of peace.” He had done this in Romans 15:33. He did it again in Philippians 4:9:

9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

And we find it yet again in that great benediction in Hebrews 13:20-21:

20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

God is “the God of peace” because He is the only true source of peace that there is. We live in a world which talks a lot about peace, but it is largely like it was in Jeremiah’s day: “Peace, peace, when there is no peace” (Jer. 6:14; 8:11). Peace means true happiness. Peace is not dependent upon outward circumstances, but upon a right relationship with God in our hearts. Peace is not dependent upon who we are, but upon Who God is. Peace does not come through sin, but through the forgiveness of sin. Cf. Romans 5:1. Peace is one thing that we need every day. Peace comes in answer to prayer. Cf. Philippians 4:6-7. Peace is strength. We learn this from Isaiah 26:3-4, keeping our minds focused upon the Lord. What Paul had just been writing about in verses 17 through 19, will bring peace to our hearts. Peace is the heritage of those of us who know the Lord. The Lord Jesus Christ is “the Prince of peace” (Isa. 9:6). It must be one of our two greatest needs for the apostles to introduce their epistles with “grace and peace,” or “grace, mercy, and peace.” And you have both of them here: “the God of peace” and “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

And one of the greatest reasons for our peace is that He is a defeated foe. He seems to have things going his

way today, but he was defeated at the Cross. “Shortly” obviously did not mean today or tomorrow from Paul’s perspective. It can begin at any time. But “shortly” means that it is going to happen quickly when it does take place. The bruising of Satan is what the Lord promised in Gen. 3:15,

15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

But notice here that it is not the Lord’s feet that Paul was speaking about, but “your feet,” the saints’ feet. The victory will be ours, but it was secured for us, first, by the promise of God (as we have seen), and, second, by the work of Christ on the Cross:

14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Heb. 2:14-15).

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.” The best MSS reading is, “The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.” This is a special way to express endearment to the Lord. This is the way Stephen spoke to the Lord as he died: “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” This is true in Hebrews 13:20, “Now the Lord of peace...”

And so this ends this section on admonition and encouragement.

And now we come to:

#### **D. Greetings from Paul’s companions (16:21-24).**

In verses 1 through 16 of this chapter Paul had sent his greetings to his friends in Rome. Now in these verses he sends greetings from his friends who were with him in Corinth. There are eight names here.

16:21 Timothy is often mentioned at the beginning of Paul’s epistles, and so it is unusual for him not to be mentioned until the end. We don’t know why this was, but possibly because this epistle was of special importance, as we have seen in chapter 15, as coming from Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. He was very special to the Apostle Paul, as Paul said in his letter to the church of Philippi. See Philippians 2:19-24.

Robertson says that Lucius was not Luke, but probably Lucius of Cyrene mentioned in Acts 13:1. Jason was Paul’s host in Thessalonica. See Acts 17:5-9. And Sosipater, Robertson said, ‘may be the longer form of Sopater of Acts 20:4. They probably were not blood relatives, but simply fellow-Jews.

16:22 Evidently Paul had poor eyesight, and so he used others to write for him as he dictated to them. This is the only time that Tertius is mentioned in Paul’s epistles, even though in other epistles he said that others had written for him. Tertius may have been involved in some of the others such as in 2 Thessalonians 3:17; 1 Corinthians 16:21; Col. 4:18.

16:23 Gaius was the man in whose home Paul was staying in Corinth. He is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:14. It may have been that it was in Gaius’ home that the church at Corinth met. That may be what Paul was indicating when he mentioned “the whole church.”

Erastus is mentioned again in 2 Timothy 4:20. Paul called him here “the chamberlain of the city,” *i.e.*, of the city of Corinth. He was a prominent official in the city government, possibly the manager of the city’s property.

This is the only place that Quartus is mentioned. Paul called him “a brother,” probably meaning *a brother in the Lord*.

It would seem that the church in Rome would have known these men. Otherwise we would wonder why Paul would mention them. But this is like many details given to us in Scripture, we just don’t know anything but what is mentioned in the text.

16:24 This verse may have been added at a later time. So it is not found in the more reliable MSS.

Now we come to the final point of the epistle:

### **E. Paul’s Doxology (16:25-27).**

This has been called “the finest of Paul’s doxologies” (Robertson, IV, 430). It is unusual because of its length and also because it contains so much doctrine. Sandy and Headlam said that “all of the great thoughts of the epistle are summed up” here (S & H, p. 432).

16:25 When Paul began this epistle, he stated in verses 11 and 12 of chapter 1 what his main purpose would be if he were able to come to them in Rome. This is what he said:

11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;

12 That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me (Rom. 1:11-12).

Now, at the end of the epistle, he mentions that this was his purpose in writing this epistle. He used the same Greek verb in 16:25 that he had used in 1:11. What does it mean? It means that he really wanted to see them grounded in the truth of the Gospel. Paul expressed it this way in his Ephesian letter,

14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ (Eph. 4:14-15).

Paul was laying a foundation in Romans that, under the blessing of the Lord, would form a solid foundation for every believer in Christ who was in Rome. When Paul wrote to the Galatian churches, he said this:

6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:6-7).

We could add to this Paul’s words to the church at Corinth. Paul charged them with living as men and not as the people of God should live. And going through the epistle we see how he dealt with first one problem and then of another. But this is what he said near the beginning of the epistle:

6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:6-7).

The problem is the same everywhere, in all churches. Believers need to be grounded in the truth, established in the teaching of God’s Word, so that when trials come along, or false teachers appear on the scene, the people of God will not be moved. It is really discouraging today to see how quickly people follow one movement, and



then another comes along, and off they go after something else. And they move around like they were on wheels instead of being built on a solid foundation.

Now Paul was one of the greatest teachers who ever lived, second only we might say to our Lord Jesus Christ. He had written the greatest work on the Gospel that has ever been written. It was written so that it would be read, and Paul has sought to explain the truth as clearly as he could under the blessing of God. But what was he doing in these last verses of this great masterpiece? *He was committing his work to God, telling the people that God was the only One Who could see that they were established in the truth.* Paul did not want them trusting in him. He certainly did not want them to be trusting in themselves, nor in each other. *He wanted them to know that only God could establish them, could make them strong and consistent and stable in the truth. And this was his prayer that the Lord would be doing just that in the life of every child of God in Rome – and everywhere else!* We can read Romans, and I hope that you will continue to read it. We can study it, as we have. Even if we were to memorize it (and I can't think of any better way that we could spend our time). But God is the only One Who can establish us in the truth! I hope that all of us understand this great principle of Scripture, and that we never forget it. It is up to us to see that we read and study and possibly memorize this letter, but we need to be trusting the Lord to make it profitable and fruitful and joyful to us. We are only going to be strong in the Word, and unshakeable, if we are looking to the Lord to teach us and to empower us to live as God wants us to live.

But how did Paul go on to explain what he meant.

He was speaking about being established in the Gospel. Remember what Jerry Bridges has told us so often, that we need to preach the Gospel to ourselves every day. Why? So that God may establish us in the truth of the Gospel in such a way that we will never move away from it. Do we really believe that salvation is all of God? I hope you remember that the Gospel does not just tell us how we are saved, but it includes what happens to us after we are saved, and the glorious creatures we are going to be when the work is finished – not my work, or your work, but God's work! It begins with justification, moves on to sanctification, and finally is completed in glorification.

But know also it has to do with “the preaching of Jesus Christ.” Jesus Christ is the reason we are justified, and He is the reason we are being sanctified, and He is going to see to it that we are glorified. Jesus Christ is the Gospel.

But then Paul added, “according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began.” You see, our salvation was planned by the Members of the Godhead before creation came into being. It was all before the foundation of the world. God determined how there could be salvation, and even chose those whom He was going to save. The Lord Jesus Christ was appointed by God to be the Savior. And it is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict us of our sins, and to draw us to Christ by faith.

Now all of this was revealed progressively through Scripture. It was all planned in eternity past, but it was not all made known all at once. God was slowly revealing this great secret which was revealed bit by bit as we go through the OT. But when Christ came, the whole secret was revealed. And with the writing of Paul's letter to the church at Rome, for the first time in all of human history, the revelation has been completed. Doubtless there will be other wonderful things that we will learn when we get to heaven, or when the Lord comes, but the revelation of the Gospel is now complete. Nothing needs to be added to it (and so don't believe those who come along claiming to make our Bibles more complete), and nothing can be taken away from it – and woe to any person who tries to do either.

Now move on to verse 26, but notice that verses 25, 26, and 27 are just one long sentence.

16:26 Now this revelation has been “manifest,” revealed, completed. And it is “by the scriptures of the prophets.” Paul was referring here to the NT prophets. A prophet is one who receives his message from God, and delivers it to the people. The Apostle Paul was one of these prophets. So were Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. So were James and Peter and Jude. We need them all. They wrote about the Gospel “according to the commandment of the everlasting God.” It was ordered by God. Its writing was supervised from beginning to end by God, and it has been sent out to the nations of the earth “for the obedience of faith.” The whole story is told in this doxology.

But who gets the glory? Read on in verse 27.

16:27 The wisdom of God is seen in creation. And it is certainly seen in the unfolding of history. But nowhere is the wisdom of God more evident than in the Gospel. Who would ever have had the wisdom to plan and provide such a salvation except God. Paul couldn’t have done it. Isaiah couldn’t have done it. Moses couldn’t have done it. Abraham couldn’t have done it. Who did?

The glory goes, all of it, to God, Who in heaven and earth is really the only one who is wise. But we are so lacking in any kind of merit with God that even seeking to glorify Him for this wonderful, amazing, all-sufficient salvation, we can only bring our praises to Him “through Jesus Christ. And it is going to be this way forever! And then Paul, perhaps quite exhausted with all of this truth, and overwhelmed with the debt of praise that we all owe to God, said, “Amen.”

The book of Romans is finished. But the praise that is to be offered to God for salvation, will never come to an end. I almost feel that the book of Romans ought to be completed with a prayer such as comes at the end of the book of the Revelation: “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” But I am not going to run the risk of doing that mainly because I am going to have my time occupied, as you are, until the Lord comes and even after that glorious event, with praising God that He ever chose me to be one of His sheep.

– The End –