



Scott Turansky, Senior Pastor
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ROMANS 16

Romans Series: How God Changes People

Are you ready? This is the last week in Romans. So let's talk to the Lord and prepare our time.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we are honored to be your children and we need that identity as being your kids more and more now in our lives. There are lines being drawn between Christians and non-Christians that are becoming more and more clear in some cases, and so I pray that you would give us courage, give us strength. Give us joy and peace that you have promised us that we can have as we identify ourselves with you. Give us wisdom to know how to speak out and to know how to relate to other people effectively as Christians. Lord, we ask that now as you open your word that you would, as you always do, teach us and reveal new things to us that we haven't seen before. That we'll apply to our lives and we'll take Jesus home into our practice this week and ask that you would be redeeming our lives in the course of this week so that we might do the things we need to do and believe the things we need to believe and even feel the things we need to feel as result of knowing you. In Jesus' name, amen.

I've personally really enjoyed this study in Romans. I've been a pastor for thirty-eight years. I've preached through Romans maybe four or five times in my history and each time I do I gain new insight and new information. The reason for that is because God's word is living and active. So as a young person I came to understand what that truth means. That every time I open God's word, no matter even if it's the same verse I looked at yesterday, today it may open some new avenue in my heart to understand God differently.

The Bible is not just a book like any ancient book. It's God's word that's living and active. It is a spiritual tool that God uses to connect with us. It's written by God Himself using the hands of people, as we're going to see today. In the midst of those hands that He uses to touch people's lives He speaks to us because it's His word and it's living and active. So I've benefited a lot.

I kind of wanted to go through the book this time by looking at how God changes people. We see how He redeems them, the Holy Spirit empowers them. We've seen how we wrestle with sin in Romans 7. We talk about how God designed the church and what the church is supposed to be like and then all these ten to twenty traits of a Christian, what a Christian looks like. All that stuff was so helpful for me to go through and understand how God changes people. So I've been really encouraged about that.

Next week we're going to start a new study. We're going to start a study in the book of Jonah. This is going to be interesting too. There are only 48 verses in the book of Jonah. You can read it in three minutes. It will probably take us four sermons to get through it because there are so

many rich principles within this passage. But it really ties back into this idea of following God and being connected to Him. So I really appreciate the study that we're going to take.

One college atheist professor made an off-handed remark in one of his lectures that referred to the legend of Jonah. One of the Christian students in the class raised his hand and said, "Why are you calling it a legend, Professor? It's in the Bible. It's true."

The professor was getting a little irritated and perturbed with the student and said, "Do you really think that a whale could swallow a person? I mean a whale has these things in his throat that prevent him from getting non-plankton big things and only the small things can get through. Science tells us that a whale couldn't swallow a man." The student pursuing the conversation says, "The Bible doesn't say it was a whale. The Bible says it was a large fish."

Now the professor is getting angry with the pursuing of the student, so he says, "Look, do you really believe a big fish could swallow a man and he could live for three days?"

The student said, "Well I'm not sure, but when I get to heaven I'll ask Jonah about being swallowed by the fish."

Now the professor is really angry and says, "Well what if he isn't in heaven?"

To which the student replied, "Well then you can ask him."

There's a lot of things in the book of Jonah that are a little fishy, so we'll have to be on the watch for that as we go through.

Now back to Romans. Let's finish Romans before we get into Jonah. In Romans 16, the book of Romans was written during winter of 57-58 A.D. Just think that was only about a little over twenty years after Christ was crucified. Yet the gospel had been spreading all over the world. And you know why it was spreading all over the world? Do you know the spark that did that? It was persecution, drama, killing people that sparked the gospel's movement all over the world. And that happens in any generation that when things get bad, the gospel gets brighter, people get saved. That's what's happening in the known world at that time. So now in the year 57-58 AD, Paul is in the city of Corinth.

Now I want you to see the bottom part of this map because it's going to show you where we're going to zoom in in a minute. Over on the right hand side we have Palestine. All this bottom part is Africa. We have Turkey in the middle there. Of course that's Greece and Italy. Now we zoom in on that into the part under Greece we see Corinth.

Now Corinth was a city where Paul was wintering. You don't travel much in the winter in those days. So he was wintering there in Corinth. During that time he determined that he would write a letter to the Romans, probably because of verse 1.

Before I get into this, let me just give you an overview of where we're going. We're going to see a lot of individual people that he's going to refer to here, number one. Secondly, we're going to see a parenthesis about a prayer protection that's going to take place in the middle, and then we're going to look at a doxology at the end. So that's where we're headed in the last chapter of the book of Romans.

Verse 1 reads this way. *I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae.*

Now Cenchreae is nearby Corinth. You can see it. Phoebe had probably announced somehow, she's a deacon, she's a leader in the church, there's connections there, she probably announced she's going to Rome.

Paul got this idea of saying, "If you're going to Rome, I'm going write a letter to those people there. I've not been to Rome before, but I have a lot of friends there (as we're going to see in the passage). I want to greet some of those people and I want to share with them some theology about how God made us and how God changes us." So he writes the book of Romans for us so that we can understand this. Then these people who are going to receive it are getting it as well.

Now Phoebe is in verse 1 and she's the one who's likely going to deliver the letter. That's why she's introduced right here in the beginning. In fact the verse continues in verse 2 – *I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me.* So she's probably the person carrying the letter off to Rome.

She's a benefactor. A benefactor is someone who gives to someone, usually in the form of money, and Paul was a person who was a missionary and he relied on the gifts that people would help him in order to sustain what he was doing. She was one of his financial support team, so he's grateful for her in acknowledging that.

But I want you to see in verse 2 I was just struck by these words. *I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people.* What does that mean? *Worthy of his people.* What it means is there are times when we greet someone that as Christians we just welcome someone because that's doing it in a way that's worthy of his people.

There's some times when I'm speaking in a church around the country and the pastor introduces us and he says, "Let's give a nice warm, Christ church welcome to Dr. Turansky and Mrs. Miller." Then everybody claps and we come up on stage. That nice warm welcome is what we're talking about here. When she comes to you, give her a welcome that's worthy of who we are as Christians. We welcome each other in the midst of that. That's verse 2.

Let's go into verse 3 because in verse 3 we have a ministry couple. This ministry couple is a significant pair of people and we see them mentioned several times in the Bible. Verse 3 reads this way: *Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. Greet also the church that meets at their house.*

So Aquila and Priscilla are a ministry couple and they surface several times in the Bible. They're on the move. Now they're in Rome apparently. But we see them in Ephesus earlier. So Paul knows who they are. They minister to Paul. Now we end up with them ministering in this particular situation in Rome. I'm just impressed with this couple. I don't think they had children.

Or maybe their children are gone. We don't hear anything about kids and they're traveling a lot, so I don't think they had children. But they were just such an encouraging couple. They used their relationship to get together to be a ministry.

Let me read to you from the book of Acts where they surface again. In verse 24 it says – *Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos (he was a young preacher who just got on fire for the Lord and wanted to share the message of the gospel with others), a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John.*

Some of his theology was a little bit off. He was missing something. So how did they handle it? Did they stand up in the synagogue and say, “That’s wrong”? Did they post on Twitter all kinds of things that were bad about him? No, they didn’t do that. They have such a gentle response. I like that. *He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.* I just sense the gentleness in this couple that God is using them to bring about fuller understanding.

First of all, I want to encourage you single people that hope to someday get married, find someone that shares your faith and the passion that you have for Jesus Christ. Because you want your relationship together to not just be about you too. You want it to be about a mission that you have to share with other people and to pass that message on. Choose wisely. Don't just find someone who says they're a Christian. Find someone who's going somewhere in their relationship with Christ. So together you're able to foster this relationship that becomes a ministry. That's what these guys did. They were a ministry couple and it's powerful, as they use their relationship together to help other people.

More and more today as I work with families to try to help them be successful, that is on the phone when I'm counseling people or I'm teaching in some city trying to help them, one of the things I'm saying to them is this: God designed your family for a purpose and that purpose is to bless the world and to care for others. But if your family is so caught up in fighting, kids can't follow instructions, parents are yelling at kids, disrespect is coming from the teenagers, you can't get chores done, and then your family can't look outside and bless other people, you got to be so focused on yourself then you're distracted from the mission that God has for you. I want you to know that the work we're going to do to help you be a stronger family is not just so you can all get along better. The purpose of you getting along better is so your family can be a ministry to other people, to a world that is hurting out there that needs help.

That's why I'm so pleased with these people, Aquila and Priscilla, and the way that they're acknowledged here in the passage in verses 3-4.

Then also notice in verse 5 it says, *Greet also the church that meets at their house.* Churches met in homes in those days. They had synagogues that they could get to, but those are Jewish synagogues where teaching would take place, but they went and they fellowshiped in homes. So it's great when many of us open up our homes and we share that way. It's just a way for us to use our lives as a ministry to other people.

Let's go on to verse 5. *Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia.* Now I don't know who these people are, so I'm just going to read through them. God knows who they are.

Verse 6 – *Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you.* That's a nice statement about Mary.

Verse 7 – *Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.* So here's two people that were in prison with Paul.

Paul has relationships with all of these people. He's going to see people over there in Rome that he's talking about and he's got people nearby and he's got these relationships with all of these people. It's cool what he's doing. He's met them in different circumstances. In this case, these guys were in prison with him.

Now I would suggest that you and I have been able to cross paths in this church and God has allowed us for a period of time to walk alongside each other. For how long, I don't know. But for the time being we're all together. Some of you came from other churches where you walked alongside of people for a while and God blessed you and you found friends in those places and you still have those relationships where you are in situations like that. We all find ourselves in those paths and God uses those to foster this depth of relationship.

You can sense in Paul's language here that he's really grateful for the experiences with other Christians, even the midst of going to prison. He found God at work even in the prison situation. I want to suggest that God is at work in whatever you're doing, and that as we find Christians and acknowledge them and see God work, good things happen. It's a beautiful picture of what's being described. We only get little hints of what's happening, but again, Paul met these people on the road or in prison and God did some good things there.

Verse 8 – *Greet Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord.* You have to wonder, what's behind that? He's in Rome, this Ampliatus. Paul's in Corinth, but somehow he knows him and he's a *dear friend in the Lord.*

Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys. Greet Apelles, whose fidelity to Christ has stood the test. Let me just park there for a moment because I want you to see, especially young people, there's a test and life is a test. There are challenges that come. Irritating brothers. Bosses that are annoying. Schools that don't give you exactly what they want you to do. Jobs situations that are a problem. Each one of those is a test. Do you have this internal strength, this internal character to meet the test? That's the question.

Paul is acknowledging this guy, Apelles. He acknowledges this guy, Apelles, because he was a guy who stood the test. He had what it takes to meet the challenges that were out there. I really like that. He had an integrity. The integrity of metal says that it's strong enough to take on the task that we're going to put it through. Does our character, does our heart have the integrity to meet the challenges, or are we going to blow up in anger, or are we going to be irritated, or are

we going to criticize other people? Do we have the integrity? This guy did. *Greet Apelles, whose fidelity to Christ has stood the test.*

Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus. Greet Herodion, my fellow Jew. Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord. Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord.

Now there are four people who are mentioned in this chapter who work hard in the Lord. All of them are women. I would suggest that church really needs men and really needs women. These women are drawn attention to because of their hard work. God bless you, whether you're a man or a woman, for the hard work that you do to help the church be the church. Whether that's coming in early and setting up, or staying late and cleaning up, or opening your home during the week for a home fellowship, or contacting people in the course of the week, or caring for people who need to be cared for, the hard work that you do is commendable. Paul is drawing attention to these four women.

The fourth one is in the next part of verse 12. He says, *Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord.*

Verse 13 – *Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too.* Isn't that neat?

I'm convinced that God has designed the church to be a place where families are able to be ministers, single people can minister, couples can minister, everybody's doing their ministry, but sometimes family breaks down and problems occur in family life. So divorce happens or children run away from the faith or bad things happen in relationships with people. So those relationships within family are strained. We do all we can to work on those relationships to build them, but God has designed a blanket called His family, the church that fits over all of that to fill in all of the gaps. So Paul is saying here to *greet Rufus, but also the mother because the mother was a mother to me.* So she took on this role somehow in Paul's life to be an encourager and to care for him.

First of all, as a dad, I pray for my kids. I continue to pray for my kids even though they're all grown out of the house. We pray that God will bring Christians into their lives, Christian mentors, Christian friends. Why? Because when God does it He works through those Christians to help that young person form their belief and understanding of the world. It brings comrades that can be closer than anyone else as Christians are key people in their lives. We as parents pray for that. Young people, I would encourage you find Christian mentors.

When I was in college I still remember this dear couple that became dear mentors of mine. I had a great family – brothers and sisters, parents who loved the Lord, a church to be a part of. But there was one couple I remember during my college years that had tremendous impact on me. Fred and Judy Clark were their names.

I was going to college at a secular university and I was taking philosophy courses and psychology courses and I was kind of an intellectual guy. I like to dialogue with people.

Philosophy is all about life. Psychology is all about people. In all of those cases there's a lot of humanism taught in secular environment about how life happens and how people are made. So continually in my classes I would talk about Christianity and I would get slapped down so fast. I became so aware of what I didn't know about Christianity.

I would go over to Fred and Judy Clark's and they would feed me Os Guinness tapes and other tapes of great Christian speakers that would help me understand more about the faith. Maybe I couldn't explain it real well in my classes, but I could at least understand it myself. I felt like when I was done with college I could write a book called (and maybe someday I will) *How to Get a Christian Education Out of a Secular School*. Because I'm convinced that we can do that if we have God as our teacher, the Holy Spirit as our counselor to guide us through the challenges that we face. We can get a Christian education in any kind of situation and God can do an amazing work inside of us in the midst of those kinds of places. So I'm really grateful for Fred and Judy Clark and the work they did in my life.

I would encourage you to be closely connected. Maybe it's in your home fellowship. Maybe it's whether they're friends that you have, but you've got some Christian mentors or Christians who are connected to you to help inspire you, encourage you forward.

Notice these words. I just think this is what's embodied in what Paul is saying. *Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too*. We don't even know what her name is, but she's been this caring, spiritual influence in Paul's life. I would encourage you to invest in the next generation that you want to be that spiritual person in someone else's life as well.

Verse 14. Let's go on. *Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the other brothers and sisters with them* (as if maybe they're another house church over here as well). I'm not sure, but they're a group.

Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the Lord's people who are with them. Maybe they're another house church. We're not sure. But some group of people.

How Paul knows all these people, I don't know. He seems to know a lot of people. And he's not even in Rome. He's in Corinth writing to these people and he's greeting all of them.

Greetings are important to Paul. As we see in the next verse he says, *Greet one another with a holy kiss*. You know how sometimes even in American culture, but much more in other cultures, we'll hug with cheeks. But in another culture often it's hug on this side with your cheeks touching on both sides. This kiss you're giving, he's saying, *Greet one another with a holy kiss*.

And then notice he makes this next statement. *All the churches of Christ send greetings*. So he's telling them greet one another. He's saying, "I'm greeting you guys and all the churches here give greetings." I would suggest to you that Paul's idea of greeting is pretty elevated. He thinks that greetings are important.

In fact I encourage families that are having problems with communication, I say to parents here's what you want to do. You want to greet your kids every morning when they get up, every night before they go to bed. Greet when they come home from school, greet them before they go to work. Greet several times. Husbands and wives, you want to have a stronger relationship? Greet more. Maybe not with the holy kiss, but just greeting is a valuable thing that we do. Paul is emphasizing the greeting here and that's pretty important.

Let me give you an illustration of this because I don't think in America we really get this idea of greeting like Paul is talking about. I went to Kenya on three different mission trips in the Nineties. Back to the same group of people, basically, or I saw them there on each of the three trips.

On the first trip I went (the services are different there, believe me), at one point in the service the pastor says, "This is the time for you to get up and bring greetings to the church here from back at your church in New Jersey." I didn't know what that meant. But I got up and I said, "I just want to bring you greetings back from the church in New Jersey." That's about all I said and sat down, not fully understanding what they were talking about.

It became more clear as my time with them continued because when it was time for me to go home they said at the very end, "We want you to send greetings back to the church in New Jersey." So everybody waved. So I'm standing up here with the pastor and he's saying to everybody, "Everybody wave and send your greetings," so everybody in the congregation waves their hands. And he says, "Okay. You scoop those up."

I'm saying, "What?"

"Take your hands and do this. Scoop them up." So I scooped up all the greetings. I felt like I actually had something then.

When I came home and I stood in the pulpit, I said, "I have something to give you. I have greetings. Here they are from all of the people in Kenya in the Kenyan church."

The next time I was getting ready to leave, I said, "I'm getting ready to go back and they want me to take greetings, so would you all please wave and I'll scoop those up and I'll tote those back over there." So that's what he's talking about here when he's saying we're giving you the greeting.

It's very valuable. Why? Because we have a connection with those people in Kenya. You don't even know who they are. Paul has a connection with those people he knows, but he's greeting all of those people in there because there's a connection and the connection is the fact that we all have the Spirit of God inside of us. We feel that connection because God is at work there and He's working here. God is working all over the world in powerful ways. So the greetings are important for him.

I would suggest by looking at these verses that effective ministry begins and ends with people. This section rattles off twenty-eight different people that were connected to Paul, either directly or indirectly. I think it's rather odd to end an epistle as theological and deep as this one with a whole chapter on greetings. You almost feel like, wow, this is an odd way to end a book. But I

think that as we look at all these different twenty people and we start kind of looking at the greetings, we learn three things about God. Let me just point these out to you that I think might be helpful for you.

One is to show us that God cares about individuals and knows them by name. We sing that song, *He Knows My Name*, because we know that God has a personal relationship available for each one of us. I say available because some people don't take advantage of it. I would say even some Christians don't take advantage of the personal relationship that you can have with Jesus Christ. That personal relationship with God knows your name and He cares about you. John 10 says *the sheep hears his voice, he calls them by name, and they follow him out*. God knows our names. He cares about the individuality of people and He cares about those names. We're not just all numbers with God. He knows our names, number one.

Number two – He demonstrates that God keeps records of His people. Especially the faithfulness that they have in life. Other people might not see what you do, that you're hard working in the Lord. But God does and He takes note of that.

And thirdly to show us that all people, all backgrounds, race, ethnic origin, economic status are welcome in God's church. God looks past those things when His church comes together to provide unity and also diversity to illustrate what the church is all about. In this passage we have singles, we have married people, we have people that are couples, we have people that are men and women, some of them are social elites, others are slaves. We have new Christians, we have mature believers, we have Greeks, we have Romans, we have Jews. We have people that Paul found in the synagogues. Some of them he found in the marketplace, some of them he found in church, some of them he found in jail. We have all kinds of connections that are found here and I think it illustrates for us all that God's church is very diverse and we can enjoy that diversity. The differences that get between us are not to push us apart, but that God's Spirit will draw us together and use that diversity in some great ways.

Well starting in verse 17 we have this interlude, I want to say, or maybe that's not a good word. He puts in here four verses of protection of the church, from 17-20. I want to read those and then we'll make a couple comments about the protection that God wants us to have for His church.

Verse 17 says – *I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.*

Our church, Calvary Chapel Living Hope, is blessed with a tremendous amount of unity. I'm really grateful. We don't have a lot of fighting and arguing and people complaining. We just don't have that. We have a lot of unity and we want to protect that. So I'm asking you to do that, that you're looking around the church and as people come into our fellowship if you sense that there's a divisive spirit among that person, then challenge them. Or talk to me about that and we'll take that action.

There's action needed sometimes in the course of the church and here's why. The church has open doors. It invites anybody and everybody to come. We invite people with problems. Anybody with problems can come here. Sometimes people with problems come into a fellowship and they're not quite ready for growth and the humility necessary and they need to be challenged. Some people can't even be in a fellowship yet because they aren't to a place where they can accept God's grace or be able to respect other people. So that's a challenge. We want to be open. We want to be that kind of place where people can come in. But when that divisiveness starts to take place, we need to take action as a body and do something about it. I encourage you to be a part of that as you're moving forward.

Verse 19 – *Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I rejoice because of you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.*

Here's another way to protect the church. We're not spending a lot of time. We're not trying to experience evil. Okay? What we're trying to do is understand more about the good. The more we become experienced in good, the more we'll be able to repel the evil. So that's another way to protect the church, protect ourselves.

And lastly, verse 20. *The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.* We have to realize that we're in a spiritual battle. That spiritual battle means that there are attacks that are outside and God wants to crush Satan. So we want to be a part of that crushing of Satan. We want to be a part of acknowledging what God wants to do. So protection is very important. Watching, guarding the church, guarding what we all have.

Certainly a pastor or a leader has a responsibility for protecting, but all of us have a responsibility to protect the church. So I would encourage you to take that to heart. The reason for that is because the body is not an organization. It's not a convention. You may see conventions trying to establish unity. Some conventions will be more difficult than others to obtain unity in their political convention. We are not a convention and we are not an organization. We are an organism. God calls us a body. A body needs to be protected, it needs to be nurtured, it needs to be exercised, and it needs to be fed. So as a church we do this work, this supernatural work that we all do. We come together, whether that's coming together on Sunday or during the week for prayer or for Bible study or just calling somebody up. As we're doing that, God is doing something amazing inside of us. It's an organism that we are.

It's a beautiful thing to be a part of a church. I hope that if you're a part of this you don't call this "your church;" you call it "my church." Because you're part of it. You're part of what God wants to do here. We take it seriously.

Verse 21 we're going to go back to greetings. But this is a different kind of greeting, instead of greeting the people in Rome and how he's going to give greetings from the people here in Corinth. Verse 21 – *Timothy, my co-worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my fellow Jews.* Now look at verse 22. *I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord.*

So here's how I imagine this taking place. Paul is staying probably in the home of Gaius (who's in the next verse) who has offered his hospitality to Paul, and everybody knows that Paul is writing a letter to the Romans. So when they see him writing or working on his letter, then they probably say, "Oh be sure to tell them greetings from me!" So you have these different greetings coming. Timothy says, "Hey, greet those people for me – Lucius, Jason, Sosipater."

Now Tertius, we see, is like the scribe. He's the secretary involved. This gives us a little insight into how the Bible came together as people actually wrote it down. So Paul probably had a scribe or secretary who is taking down Paul's notes and writing them down for him in this passage. So Tertius says, "Hey, can I write in here my greeting to these people?" So we have it included here in the text. *I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord.*

Verse 23 – *Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings.* So Gaius is probably mulling around, "Hey, he's writing that letter? Be sure to greet those people over there."

Erastus, who is the city's director of public works, and our brother Quartus send you their greetings. So again, greetings coming from the people that Paul is coming in contact with that knows he's writing the letter, so they're attaching their greeting as well.

Verse 25 is going to take us into the doxology and we'll conclude with these verses and not only conclude the chapter or the sermon, but we'll conclude the book. We'll end it here with verses 25-27. I want you to see that the main verb is in verse 27 of these whole verses. It says *be glorified*. So God be glorified is the verb that we're getting to, but we have a bunch of things to list first before we get to it, starting in verse 25 that kind of, I think, summarize Paul's understanding of the gospel and the book that he's written to them.

He says – *Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith—to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.*

What Paul is saying is let's just go back and I want to glorify God because God is the one who established you in the gospel of good news that I provide for you. This message about Jesus Christ is central that's in keeping with this revelation of the idea of mystery that formerly was not revealed, but now revealed. So before we had all kinds of things going on with the prophets in the Old Testament prophesying about what would happen, and now we have Jesus being revealed in a powerful way. That's the mystery being revealed here. He's acknowledging all of these things so that we can *come obedience that comes from faith*. All of that under God's wisdom and we acknowledge that. So *to God be the glory. Amen.*

I would suggest that as we understand this book more and we understand the theology that's here, we get a greater picture of God. We glorify Him. We thank Him for who He is. And we're able then to look into our world and we're able to say, "God, we recognize that you're in control. We recognize that you're in charge. We recognize that you're working. God, would you work in

my life? I need you today. I need you to work in my heart.” Because God is the one who changes people and He uses us to bring about that change to others.

Let’s pray together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we thank you for your greatness, your immensity, and your power. We thank you for your sovereignty and being in control of our world now as you were back in those days. Lord, every day when we get up we want to be able to say, “This is the day the Lord has made,” and we want to rejoice and be glad in it because we know that you’re in control and want to glorify you today. So Lord, I pray that as we see dark times in our world that you would help us to shine with your light to be that bright place where people can see you, who you are, and that you are our hope in life, you are the one we can come to. You are our still water, as we read in Psalm 23. That we can find that peace that you restore our souls. Continue to do that deep work in our lives and grow us to be the people that you want us to be. In Jesus’ name, amen.