

CHAPTER XVI

ROMANS 16:25-27 - FAREWELL DOXOLOGY IN THE GOSPEL

THIS is one of Paul's great doxologies (cf. 11:33-36; I Tim. 1:17; 6:15-16), and perhaps it was written by his own hand following the closing greeting of secretary Tertius, v. 22. Nowhere else does the Apostle give such an effusive and specific declaration concerning the glory that is due to God on account of the manifold wonders of the gospel. Surely this is fitting with regard to the most profound and panoramic representation of the gospel in all of the Bible. Indeed it would seem that here is a brief collage of the major gospel elements that have been communicated. The singular desire that solicits a chorus of agreement from his addressees is found in v. 27, namely, "[According to Paul's fervent longing] let the glory be attributed to God." Everything else modifies this priority, though the two principle reasons are His ability to save and His incomparable wisdom.

A. TO GOD BE THE GLORY WHO IS ABLE TO SAVE, V. 25-26.

Concerning the basic doctrinal elements of these verses, perhaps the order we might accept here as normative, would be: 1. The prophets write Scripture. 2. Consequently the gospel is proclaimed. 3. The mystery, formerly silent, is revealed. 4. This proclamation is now universal. 5. The desired response is the obedience of faith. 6. The result of authentic faith is ongoing establishment through the gospel. However, since Paul is addressing believers, according to 1:11 and so here, he commences with point 6 which is his immediate goal, namely the strengthening of the saints leading to stability through their better apprehension of the gospel.

1. His gospel aims at the strengthening of believers, v. 25a.

The accomplishment of salvation is according to God "who is able/sovereignly qualified" and yet uses means including the gospel of Jesus Christ, preaching, Scripture, the prophets. However, for the Christian, these means are intended to result in his "establishment" or firm footing in the faith. As in every other usage by Paul of $\sigma\tau\eta\rho\acute{\iota}\zeta\omega$, *stērizō*, (1:11; I Thess. 3:3, 13; II Thess. 2:17; 3:3), so here the meaning is that of strengthening the church as a whole and the Christian in particular, making him steadfast through gospel sanctification.¹ This represents the fundamental and encompassing purpose of Romans (1:15). But the obvious implication here is that God will certainly accomplish this purpose of edification and completion, with all of its complexity, and for this reason He is to be glorified.

¹ Notice how Luke uses the strengthened form, $\varepsilon\pi\iota\sigma\tau\eta\rho\acute{\iota}\zeta\omega$, *epistērizō*, to describe Paul's nurture of churches previously planted in Asia Minor (Acts 14:22:15:41).

2. His gospel is the preaching of Christ, v. 25b.

According to Paul, at the root of the Christian being established is “my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ.” He delights to write of “my gospel” (2:16; II Tim. 2:8), not because of any sense of exclusive ownership, or difference with regard to say James, Peter, and John (Gal. 2:9; cf. I Cor. 15:11). However Paul’s gospel does have an element of distinctiveness in that it is one of direct revelation from Christ (Gal. 1:11-12) that included an authoritative charge for delivery to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). Thus he is a herald bearing “the proclamation,” or τὸ κήρυγμα, to kērugma, the jewel of the gospel (II Cor. 4:7) as a message to be delivered as received and commissioned (Gal. 2:7; Eph. 3:6-7; I Tim. 1:11; II Tim. 1:10-11). Hence, that God should effectively accomplish His saving purposes through this human agency, even the “foremost of sinners” (I Tim. 1:15), is further cause for Him to be glorified.

3. His gospel is a mystery revelation, v. 25c.

Certainly the gospel proclamation focuses on the person and work of Jesus Christ, yet there is a facet of this revelation that is a present wonderment. It is the aspect of “mystery,” μυστήριον mustērion, that newly revealed truth previously hidden from view, “kept secret [silent, σιγάω, sigāō] for long ages past,” which is the incorporation of the Gentiles, or “nations,” (v. 26b, cf. Eph. 3:6) into the promised blessing of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3). Such a truth was very much at the heart of Paul’s distinctive ministry, even as he has repeatedly emphasized (1:5, 13; 3:29; 9:23-24, 30; 11:11-32; 15:8-19, 27; 16:3-4). So this weaving together of the saving destiny of Jew and Gentile, neither being totally or utterly forsaken, is to Paul an astonishment here worthy of declaring God’s glory, even as he declares his same intent for the same reason in 11:33-36.

4. His gospel is inscripturated, v. 26a.

“But now,” a dormant truth has erupted, has become “manifest,” the aorist of φανερώω, phaneroō, indicating an historic intervention (Gal. 4:4). To be sure “the Scriptures of the prophets” have always contained the truth of the gospel and particularly with regard to the Gentiles, 1:1-2; 3:21, as Paul has amply demonstrated, 15:8-19. Even so, only at the coming of Christ has the relative silence been broken; a distinctive and universal aspect has burst forth. Haldane adds: “The Jews were prone to consider the blessings of the Messiah as confined to themselves; but they had no warrant, or even plausible pretext, for this error in their own Scriptures.”² Even so this timing is according to “the [authoritative] commandment of the eternal God.” The neglect of the Jews cannot thwart God’s design to save the Gentiles, and this also is a great stimulant to the glorification of God.

² Robert Haldane, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 659.

5. His gospel solicits the obedience of faith, v. 26b.

The thrust here does not merely describe a possibility, but a God ordained certainty. Thus Paul assures us that his authorized gospel proclamation will be both fruitful and ecumenical. The “obedience of faith,” which phrase is identically used in 1:5, represents the apostolic conviction of an authentic harvest that will be identified by its “readiness to yield to the demands of faith.” As Moo points out, this understanding of faith that is qualified by the thought of obedience, is elsewhere described in Romans, 1:8 and 16:9; 10:16a and 10:16b; 11:23 and 11:30-31.³ Such initial faith results in the life of faith. History has not failed to reflect the Apostle’s expectation at this point, that is with regard to the expansion of the gospel in the Gentile world. This effectual global outreach that is productive of authentic faith is certainly cause for God to be glorified.

6. His gospel is universal, v. 26c.

In Ephesians 3:4-11 we have the definitive explanation concerning the revelation of the “mystery,” “which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, of which I [Paul] was made a minister.” So here, this same “mystery . . . has been made known to all the nations [Gentiles].” Again, this is God’s “establishment,” v. 25a, which conveys the great vista of His saving intent that is far beyond the anticipation of man; and therefore this is something to be acknowledged as sublimely glorious.

B. TO GOD BE THE GLORY WHO ALONE IS WISE THROUGH THE GOSPEL, V. 27.

Surely we have a recollection here of the thought of 11:33-36: “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom [σοφία, sophia] and knowledge of God. . . . To Him be the glory forever. Amen,” especially in the light of the fact that both doxologies are concerned with the relationship between Jew and Gentile in the purposes of God.

1. Glorify Him as uniquely wise.

In the midst of a world of gods, there is only one God who is wise in His saving ways with mankind, in the same manner that God is the sole and only God (I Tim. 1:17; Jude 25). Stephen Charnock adds: “As Christ saith, ‘None is good but God’ (Matt. 19:17), so the apostle saith, none wise but God. As all creatures are unclean in regard of his purity, so they are all fools in regard of his wisdom, yea, the glorious angels themselves (Job 4:18). Wisdom is the royalty of God; the proper dialect of all his ways and works. No creature can lay claim to it; he is so wise, that he is wisdom itself.”⁴ As Haldane comments: “The gods of the heathen are not wise. The god of the Deist is not

³ Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 52n.

⁴ Stephen Charnock, *The Works of Stephen Charnock*, II, p. 10. This verse is the basis of Charnock’s comprehensive study here of the wisdom of God, pp. 3-98.

wise. The god of the Arian is not wise. No view ever given of the Divine character exhibits the infinite wisdom of God in redemption, but what is found in the Gospel.”⁵

2. Glorify Him as uniquely wise through Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ was wisdom in the bosom of the Father in eternity past (Prov. 8:12-31; John 1:1, 18); he has become wisdom incarnate, even from his youth (Luke 2:40), that is “the power of God and the wisdom of God . . . who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (I Cor. 1:24, 30). As Isaac Watts has penned:

The Lord, descending from above,
 Invites his children near,
 While power, and truth, and boundless love
 Display there glories here.
 Here, in thy gospel’s wondrous frame,
 Fresh wisdom we pursue;
 A thousand angels learn thy name,
 Beyond whate’er they knew.
 Thy name is writ in fairest lines;
 Thy wonders here we trace;
 Wisdom through all the mystery shines,
 And shines in Jesus’ face.

3. Glorify Him as uniquely wise forever.

Unlike the temporal character of the Law, that “was added . . . until the seed [Christ] would come” (Gal. 3:19), that was appointed “until the date set by the father” (Gal. 4:2), that “came in so that the transgression would increase” (Rom. 5:20), the gospel was ordained as an “eternal gospel” (Rev. 14:6; cf. Heb. 13:20) so that “grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 5:21; cf. 6:22). Here is cause for God to be glorified forever. Here the saints at Rome are encouraged to offer their “amen” of heartfelt agreement.

⁵ Haldane, *Romans*, p. 660.