



Title: Living Faithful and Free

Text: Romans 16:24-27

Date: July 30, 2023

Main Idea: Christians should glorify God by preaching the Gospel.

Group Study Guide

*This lesson is for the Group Leader to use to teach the lesson and facilitate the discussion. It is not intended that you will use every question in this guide during your group time. You will likely only be able to cover 4-5 questions, depending on how discussion goes. This guide is longer than what you will need but provides the freedom and flexibility to pull questions out for discussion that will best serve your group time.

Tip: You may want to pull one question from each section for discussion or spend more time on a particular section than another on. It's totally up to your discretion.

Introduction

Icebreaker Question: How do you say goodbye to family or friends when you leave their company? Or how do you sign off an email or text?

READ ROMANS 16:24-27

Highlight – What stands out?

1. What is the purpose of a doxology? What stands out to you about this section of praise?

A liturgical formula of praise to God
Typically found at the end of a church service

2. Describe the outline of Romans (from a bird's eye view). What can you remember from our study?

Ch. 1 - 4 The Gospel reveals God's righteousness

Ch. 5 - 8 The Gospel creates a new humanity

Ch. 9 - 11 The Gospel fulfills God's promise to Israel

Ch. 12 - 16 The Gospel unifies the Church

(From the Bible Project)

3. What is a new truth or piece of doctrine you learned from our study of the book of Romans? (Chapters 1 - 11)

Answers will vary

List of previous main ideas at end of this lesson for ideas of answers

4. What is a new command that you learned from our study from the book of Romans? (Chapters 12 - 16)

Answers will vary

Explain – What does this mean?

1. What are the main 4 components of the doxology of Romans?

- a. Power of God
 - b. Gospel of Christ
 - c. The evangelization of the nations
 - d. The praise of God's wisdom
2. How does Paul want to see the Roman church strengthened?
- a. Translation of 'now to him who is able to strengthen you' : now to him who is able to *establish* you.
 - i. A technical term for nurturing new converts and strengthening young churches.
 - b. The Roman church to be a multi-ethnic church that strengthens its members in truth, holiness, and unity. (Stott)
3. How does the doxology of Romans compare to the introduction of Romans?
- a. Reference to the Scriptures
 - b. Commission of God to evangelize
 - c. Obedience of faith
 - d. All the nations are mentioned

Apply – How does this change me?

1. What changes to your life have you made since studying the book of Romans? How has God given you a bigger vision of him?

Answers will vary

2. Paul ends his letter with praise to God about his power and how his gospel is being spread to all nations. How can you contribute to this praise and share the gospel with someone you encounter this week?

Answers will vary

3. Paul's goal was to unite Jew and Gentile around the shared Gospel that saves them. Is there someone you need to reconcile with?

Answers will vary

Respond – What’s my next step?

1. What change will you make to your life now that we have concluded our study of Romans?

2. If someone asked you on the street, what is the message of the book of Romans, how would you answer? What truths would you focus on?

As we wrap up Romans, it's helpful to think back to all the main ideas from previous lessons. Remember, Romans is a letter written to a group of people, so the themes and ideas all tie together. Here is an overview of Romans from previous lessons. Which of these ideas stood out to you most?

Romans 1: 1 ; 15 - 17 Romans is a book for our moment, calling us to rally around the gospel.

Romans 1: 1 - 7 Paul is eager that the Roman church understands the gospel that saved them—both Jew and Gentile.

Romans 1: 8 - 17 Paul is eager to visit Rome so he can continue to see fruit in Gospel ministry there.

Romans 1: 18 - 32 The root of our unrighteous condition is exchanging the truth about God for a lie.

Romans 2: 1 - 11 PAUL PROVES THAT JEWS AND GENTILES STAND UPON THE SAME LEVEL BEFORE THE JUSTICE OF GOD (TAKEN FROM MATTHEW HENRY).

Romans 2: 11 - 29 God shows no partiality.

Romans 3: 1 - 20 No one is righteous, neither Jews nor Greeks; but all have a faithful, just, righteous God whose power can and will save those who believe.

Romans 3: 21 - 26 All have sinned before a holy God, but all are freely forgiven by faith in the finished work of his Son, Jesus Christ

Romans 3: 27 - 31 Justification is through faith, not through works.

Romans 4: 1 - 12 Prior to any works done by Abraham, he was justified by God due to his belief in Him.

Romans 4: 13 - 25 Paul sets forward that Abraham is the father for ALL who believe by faith.

Romans 5: 1 - 5 Believers are justified by faith and have hope in glory of God.

Romans 5: 6 - 11 GOD'S LOVE HAS EXCHANGED OUR SIN FOR HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS

Romans 5: 12 - 21 Paul is summarizing the story of our victorious Savior, which spans from Gen to Rev, into two paragraphs for the Romans. And you can tell by reading his summary how much love and adoration Paul has for what God (through Jesus) has done for humanity.

Romans 6: 1 - 4 We are buried with Christ, and raised to walk in newness of life.

Romans 6: 5 - 14 Through our union with Christ, we are dead to sin and alive to God—live like it!

Romans 6: 15 - 23 God is the true slavemaster that gives the gift of eternal life. Sin is the imposter slavemaster that pays the wage of death.

Romans 7: 1 - 6 Having died with Christ, we are freed from the law, given new life in him to bear fruit.

Romans 7: 7 - 25 While the law does reveal our sin, the law is unable to save us from our sin.

Romans 8: 1 - 8 In Christ, we are free from our sin that once condemned us.

Romans 8: 9 - 11 Followers of Christ have the Spirit of God residing in them.

Romans 8: 12 - 17 : The Spirit dwells in believers and acts in their lives by killing off sinful ways and reminding our spirits of our eternal status with God.

Romans 8: 18 - 27 Present suffering in our broken world pales in comparison to the future glory to be revealed to the believer

Romans 8: 28 - 30 God works all things together for good for those who love Him.

Romans 8: 31 - 39 Nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.

Romans 9: 1 - 13 All those who are part of Israel, by faith, are the true Israel.

Romans 9: 14 - 33 : God is a merciful and gracious God to sinners throughout the scriptures, from the beginning of time until now

Romans 10: 1 - 13 : Righteousness has been by faith from the beginning and everyone, Jew and Gentile, who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.
Romans 10: 14 - 21 : Israel's present rejection and unbelief leads to the Gentiles future reality and saving belief.

Romans 11: 1 - 16 God has not rejected Israel but in His grace has both preserved a believing remnant and will work the salvation of the Gentiles for greater blessings for all, both Jews and Gentiles.

Romans 11: 16 - 36 God's plans and purposes in salvation for both Jews and Gentiles are greater than we can imagine or understand, leading us to worship and glorify Him.

Romans 12: 1 - 2 We offer our body as a living sacrifice to Christ because of the "mercies of God" and to be transformed in Christ.

Romans 12: 3 - 21 Because of our new, redeemed nature, we can love and serve one another with the gifts that God has given us.

Romans 13: 1 - 7 God has ordained the authorities in this world; because He has all sovereignty over them, we can obey the authorities over us, trusting that God is over them and working through them for His greater purpose.

Romans 14: 13 - 15:13 The "strong" conscience should defer to the "weak" conscience so as to not place a stumbling block before them and for the unity of the church – to worship God with the unity of one voice.

Romans 15: 14 - 33 A believer's call is to follow Christ, our ministry is an overflow of that walk with Him.

Commentary: Taken from John Stott's commentary on Romans 16:1-23

Note to Group Leaders: You also have your F.F. Bruce Commentary on Romans you were given on Team Night. You can use that one, in addition to this one, to help you grasp the text. Reach out to Courtney Reissig if you need one or haven't received yours.

3. Paul's doxology (25–27)

Paul's doxology is an eloquent and appropriate conclusion to his letter, for he takes up its central themes, summarizes them and relates them to one another.²⁰ Although the grammar of the doxology is not easy to unravel, it contains profound truths about God and the gospel. It consists of four parts which focus respectively on the power of God, the gospel of Christ, the evangelization of the nations and the praise of God's wisdom.

First, Paul writes of *the power of God. Now to him who is able (dynamenō, has the dynamis) to establish you....* Although this accurately translates the Greek, it is an awkward introduction, and JB does better to begin with a noun: 'Glory be to him who is able ...!' It can hardly be an accident that Romans begins and ends with a reference to the power of God through the gospel. If the gospel

²⁰ Complex textual questions surround the end of Romans in general and the doxology in particular. The manuscript evidence suggests that two editions of Romans were in circulation, a longer and a shorter. Origen wrote that Marcion, the second-century heretic, on account of his hostility to the Old Testament and Judaism, was responsible for the shorter edition which omitted the last two chapters. Other scholars suggest that Paul himself authorized the publication of two editions, one with and one without the long list of greetings. The doxology (verses 25–27) and the grace (verses 20 and 27) also occur in different places. The standard commentaries provide the details. So does Dr Bruce Metzger in his *Textual Commentary* (pp. 533ff., 540). Despite the textual uncertainties, the authenticity of Romans 16 is not in doubt, and the themes of the doxology at the end of the letter dovetail beautifully with those of its introduction. For a stout defence of the integrity of Rom. 16 see Donfried, 'A Short Note on Romans 16', pp. 44ff., 119f.

JB The Jerusalem Bible (1966).

is God's power to save (1:16), it is also God's power to establish. *Stērizō* (to establish) is almost a technical term for nurturing new converts and strengthening young churches. Luke uses it in the Acts (or rather the cognate verb *epistērizō*) of Paul and his fellow missionaries, who deliberately revisited the churches they had planted, in order to 'establish' them.²¹ And Paul himself uses the verb in his letters in relation to making Christians firm, strong and stable, whether in their faith (against error), in their holiness (against temptation) or in their courage (against persecution).²² So the vision conjured up by the doxology's opening words is of God's ability to establish the multi-ethnic church in Rome, of which Paul has been dreaming, and to strengthen its members in truth, holiness and unity.

Secondly, Paul writes of *the gospel of Christ*. For God is able to establish you, he says, *by* (literally 'according to') *my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past* (25), *but now revealed ...* (26a). The Greek sentence has three coordinate clauses, namely 'according to my gospel', 'and [according to] the proclamation of Jesus Christ', and 'according to the revelation of the mystery'. But the first two are almost identical, since Paul's gospel was essentially a proclamation (*kērygma*) of Christ. What Paul is affirming is that God's power to establish the church is part of his gospel, of his proclamation. This reminds us of the first three verses of his letter, in which he described himself as 'set apart for the gospel of God ... regarding his Son'. Now he refers to 'the gospel of God' as 'my gospel' (*cf.* 2:16), because it had been revealed and entrusted to him by God, and the gospel 'regarding his Son' he calls 'the proclamation of Jesus Christ'.

The third coordinate clause ('according to the revelation of the mystery') emphasizes the fact that his gospel is revealed truth. It is a 'mystery', that is to say, a truth or cluster of truths *hidden for long ages past, but now revealed*. What is included in the 'mystery' Paul does not here explain. But he does elsewhere. God's secret, hitherto concealed but now revealed, is essentially Jesus Christ himself in his fulness,²³ and in particular Christ for and in the Gentiles,²⁴ so that Gentiles now have an equal share with Israel in God's promise.²⁵ The mystery also includes good news for Jews as well as Gentiles, namely that one day 'all Israel will be saved' (11:25f.). And it looks forward to the future glory,²⁶ when God will bring all things together under one head, Christ.²⁷ Thus the mystery begins, continues and ends with Christ.

²¹ *E.g.* Acts 14:21f.; 15:41; 18:23.

²² *E.g.* Rom. 1:11; 1 Cor. 1:8; 2 Cor. 1:21; Col. 2:7; 1 Thes. 3:2, 13; 2 Thes. 2:17; 3:7.

²³ Col. 2:2.

²⁴ Col. 1:27.

²⁵ Eph. 3:6ff.; 6:19f.

²⁶ 1 Cor. 2:7ff.

²⁷ Eph. 1:9f.

Thirdly, Paul writes of *the evangelization of the nations*. It is important to grasp that Paul is stating three truths about the mystery, which are summed up by the verbs *hidden*, *revealed* and *made known*. It is not just that the mystery was long concealed, but has now been revealed, namely through the life, death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus. The third fact is that this good news must be, and is already being, made known throughout the world: *made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him* (26b).

Consider now four significant features of the universal 'making known' of the gospel mystery, which are strongly reminiscent of the letter's opening paragraph (1:1–5). Both passages (the introduction and the doxology) refer to the Scriptures, the commission of God to evangelize, the obedience of faith, and all the nations.

First, the mystery is being made known *through the prophetic writings*, which must mean Old Testament Scripture. But how can God be making known his mystery through the Old Testament now, when it has been in existence for centuries? The answer seems to be that, following the saving events of Christ, God has given his people a new Christological understanding of the Old Testament as bearing witness to Christ (*cf.* 1:2; 3:21). In consequence, it is through the apostolic declaration that 'the Christ is Jesus'²⁸ that the gospel is spreading.

Second, the clause *by the command of the eternal God* must refer to the universal commission to preach the gospel, for behind the risen Christ who gave it there stood the eternal God, whose everlasting purpose it is to save and unite Jews and Gentiles in Christ.

Third, the clause 'unto obedience of faith' (translated *might believe and obey him*) comes next in the Greek text. It is identical with 1:5. The proper response to the gospel is faith, as Paul has stressed throughout his letter, but it is a faith which itself is obedient and which issues in a life of obedience.

Fourth, the contemporary 'making known' of God's mystery is for *all nations*, so that they will believe and obey. No limit is placed on the beneficiaries of the gospel; it is intended for everybody.

So this fourfold scheme of the making known of the gospel through Scripture, by God's command, unto obedience of faith, for all the nations, exactly corresponds to the letter's opening, which refers to the gospel as being, among other things, according to the Scriptures, through the grace and apostleship given to Paul and others, unto obedience of faith, and for all the nations.

Finally, Paul concludes *in praise of God's wisdom: to the only wise God be glory for ever through Jesus Christ! Amen* (27). God's wisdom is seen in Christ himself, 'in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge',²⁹

²⁸ *Cf.* Acts 17:1ff.

²⁹ Col. 2:3; *cf.* 1 Cor. 1:30.

above all in his cross which, though foolish to human beings, is the wisdom of God,³⁰ in God's decision to save the world not through its own wisdom but through the folly of the gospel,³¹ in the extraordinary phenomenon of the emerging multiracial, multicultural church;³² and in his purpose ultimately to unite everything under Christ.³³ No wonder Paul has already broken out in praise of God's wisdom: 'Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!' (11:33). No wonder he does it again at the end of his letter. Indeed, God's redeemed people will spend eternity ascribing to him 'praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honour and power and strength'.³⁴ That is, they will worship him for his power and wisdom displayed in salvation.

It is fair then to say that the major themes of Paul's letter are encapsulated in the doxology: the power of God to save and to establish; the gospel and the mystery, once hidden and now revealed, which are Christ crucified and risen; the Christ-centred witness of Old Testament Scripture; the commission of God to make the good news universally known; the summons to all the nations to respond with the obedience of faith and the saving wisdom of God, to whom all glory is due for ever¹

Additional Resources:

Podcast: Knowing Faith Podcast: #149 Romans 16:

<https://www.trainingthechurch.com/episodes/episode-149-romans-16>

Course Notes: The Gospel Coalition, Dr. Michael Kruger Study of Romans:

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/study-romans-kruger/#romans-16>

Video: Bible Project 2nd part of Romans:

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/romans-5-16/>

³⁰ 1 Cor. 1:24.

³¹ 1 Cor. 1:21.

³² Eph. 3:10.

³³ Eph. 1:8ff.

³⁴ Rev. 7:12.

¹ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Romans: God's Good News for the World*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 403–406.