

Calvary Church: Coordinated Curriculum 2007-2008

Romans: The Transforming Power of the Righteousness of God

Epilogue

The epilogue—a lesson designed to complete our study in Romans, to leave us with a key thought.

Main idea

Romans 16:27 to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen. (ESV)

Teaching ideas

This is a second review lesson, primarily focused on God.

How can we end our study of Romans and not stop and truly reflect on God?

How can we not worship God when we think about His plan of salvation?

We stated that the title and theme of the book of Romans was *the transforming power of the righteousness of God*. Our salvation is His doing. Our sanctification is empowered by Him. Our salvation, sanctification and interactions with others are driven by the character of God.

As I was planning this lesson I read a sermon on Romans 16:25-27 by John Piper that accomplished for me what I hoped the lesson would accomplish in our ABF teachers and classes. So though I have put this lesson together, it has been inspired by Dr. Piper so I have included his sermon in the appendix.

To the only wise God be glory forevermore

Introduction

What is beautiful?

How do you know something is beautiful?

We say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Does that mean that beauty is relative?

While it is hard to define beauty, we all know it when we see it: in the face of an individual, a sunrise or sunset, or in the mountains or canyons or rivers or lake.

So today, we are going to try to define what may be indefinable. We will seek to understand, define and respond to the glory of God.



Talk about it

Paul concludes the letter to the Romans with a doxology—a hymn of praise to God that crescendos with the final phrase, “to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ.”

What an appropriate conclusion to this letter. It truly has been all about God—all about His glory. It has been about God through Jesus Christ and to our eternal benefit.

So as we conclude, it is appropriate for us to finish where Paul concluded—in worship of God.

To God be the glory.

The glory of God was a key or the key motivating factor in Paul’s life. It serves as the framework or bookend for the whole letter.

Romans 1:5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, (ESV)

Romans 16:27 to the only wise **God be glory** forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen. (ESV)



Talk about it

But what is the glory of God?
How to do we “give glory” to God?

We often define “worship” as ascribing worth to God. But can we truly ascribe with words or even actions *worship*? Can we give something to the infinite, self-existent, God? Can we really give God something He already has? Can we give God what He already *is*?



Think about it

So what is “glory”?
In what sense do we “give glory” to God?

Let’s try to define “glory” from the uses in Romans. Here are all the occurrences of “glory” and “glorify.”

Romans 1:23 and exchanged the **glory of the immortal God** for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. (ESV)

Romans 2:7 to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; (ESV)

Romans 2:10 but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. (ESV)

Romans 3:7 But if through my lie God’s truth abounds to **his glory**, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? (ESV)

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the **glory of God**, (ESV)

Romans 4:20 No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave **glory to God**, (ESV)

Romans 5:2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the **glory of God**. (ESV)

Romans 6:4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the **glory of the Father**, we too might walk in newness of life. (ESV)

Romans 8:17-18 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order **that we may also be glorified with him**. 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the **glory** that is to be revealed to us. (ESV)

Romans 8:21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the **glory of the children of God**. (ESV)

Romans 8:30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also **glorified**. (ESV)

Romans 9:4 They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, **the glory**, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. (ESV)

Romans 9:23 in order to make known the riches of **his glory** for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— (ESV)

Romans 11:36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. **To him be glory forever**. Amen. (ESV)

Romans 15:6-7, 9 that together you **may with one voice glorify the God** and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 7 Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the **glory of God**. . . 9 and in order that the Gentiles might **glorify God** for his mercy. As it is written, “Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.” (ESV)

Romans 16:27 to the only wise **God be glory** forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen. (ESV)

Interaction/Group Activity: (Divide the class into groups of 4-5)



Talk about it

Group 1: Looking at the references in Romans to “glory” try to define “glory”

What is glory? What is glory when used of God? How does Paul use the term “glory?”

Group 2: Looking at the references in Romans for “glory”

In what sense do we “give glory” to God?

How do we “give glory” to God?

What does *not* give glory to God? How or when do we rob God of glory?

What gives glory to God?

All groups: Look at the two doxologies

What is similar in both? Particularly in relationship to glory, what is added in the second?

Why are these two doxologies a good summary of the whole book of Romans?

What is glory? What is glory when used of God? How does Paul use the term “glory?”

While we see glory used throughout the Bible and it is part of our Christian vocabulary, it is difficult to define. As with many of God’s attributes, since they are descriptions of the infinite God, our finite words will fall short of a complete explanation or definition. But by wrestling with words, we are forced to look at the different facets of God—as light being refracted by a prism—which should lead to better understanding and more passionate worship.

Romans 5:2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the **glory of God**. (ESV)

Romans 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the **glory** that is to be revealed to us. (ESV)

God’s glory is a **motivating** fact for us. It is something we anticipate in the future and something we will participate in. Those who are justified will share in God’s glory, will have access to His presence and enjoy His glory—through worship.

Romans 6:4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the **glory of the Father**, we too might walk in newness of life. (ESV)

Paul sees the glory of God as **powerful**, it is associated with the power of the resurrection. So in some way the “glory of God” is an outflow, manifestation of God—part of His essences.

Romans 8:21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the **glory of the children of God**. (ESV)

Romans 9:4 They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, **the glory**, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. (ESV)

Romans 9:23 in order to make known the riches of **his glory** for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— (ESV)

God’s glory is something He *can share* with His people!

Adding to the uses of glory in Romans, notice this sampling of glory in other Pauline letters.

1 Corinthians 10:31 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the **glory of God**. (ESV)

2 Corinthians 1:20 For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to **God for his glory**. (ESV)

2 Corinthians 3:18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the **glory of the Lord**, are being transformed into the same image from one **degree of glory to another**. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. (ESV)

2 Corinthians 4:4 In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the **glory of Christ, who is the image of God**. (ESV)

2 Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the **glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ**. (ESV)

2 Corinthians 4:17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an **eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison**, (ESV)

Colossians 1:27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the **glory** of this mystery, which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory**. (ESV)

Titus 2:13 waiting for our blessed hope, **the appearing of the glory** of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, (ESV)

Definition:

Glory is intrinsic to who God is— it is part of His essence, an attribute of God or sum total of all God’s attributes.

Glory is a manifestation of God’s presence—visible expression of the invisible God.

Glory is something that God does or can bestow on others— an action or expression/demonstration/manifestation of God.

Jesus is the glory of God—He is an exhibit of God’s glory (2 Corinthians 4:6, see also John 1:14; Hebrews 1:3)

A relationship with Jesus provides hope of future glory

The majesty of His holiness (see also Exodus 15:11; Psalm 93:1; 104:1; 145:5, 12; Isaiah 2:10)

The wonder of His presence

The power of His Word (promises) and works (Romans 6:5, see also Exodus 15:1, 6; Psalm 19:1; 111:3)

The splendor of His Person

His glory is great (Psalm 138:5), eternal (Psalm 104:31), rich (Ephesians 3:16) and should result in praise and exaltation of God (Romans 11:36; 16:27; Psalm 8:1; 113:4)

Summary

Glory is the eternal manifestation of God's Being.

The glory of God is a wonderful summary (short-hand) for the intrinsic beauty or splendor, divine Name and power, complete holiness and righteousness that emanates from His Person and His presence and can be enjoyed by His people who fully surrender to His rule.

What might help get at a definition of *the glory of God* is to contrast it with *the holiness of God*. God is *holy* means that God is in a class of perfection and greatness and value by himself. He is incomparable. His holiness is his utterly unique and perfect divine essence. It determines all that he is and does and is determined by nothing and no one outside himself. His holiness is what he is as God which no one else is, or ever will be, and it signifies his intrinsic, infinite worth.

Then we hear the angels in Isaiah 6:3 say, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory." The glory of God is the manifestation of his holiness. God's holiness is the incomparable perfection and greatness of his divine nature; his glory is the display of that holiness. His glory is the open revelation of the secret of his holiness. In Leviticus 10:3, God says, "I will be shown to be holy among those who are near me, and before all the people I will be glorified." When God shows himself to be holy, what we see is his glory—the beauty of holiness. The holiness of God is his concealed glory. The glory of God is his revealed holiness.

So here's my effort at a definition: The glory of God is *the infinite beauty and greatness of his manifold perfections*.¹



Think about it

In what sense do we "give glory" to God?
How do we "give glory" to God?

What does *not* give glory to God? How or when do we rob God of glory?

Romans 1:23 and exchanged the **glory of the immortal God** for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. (ESV)

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the **glory of God**, (ESV)

When we seek our own glory.

When we seek our own way.

When we disregard or ignore God and His ways.

When we do not respond to God the way He deserves and has designed, then we cannot give glory to God, we actually "exchange" His glory for something else.

What gives glory to God?

Romans 4:20 No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave **glory to God**, (ESV)

¹ John Piper, sermon "To Him Be Glory Forevermore" from the series *Romans: The Greatest Letter Ever Written* December 17, 2006, (http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/BySeries/2/1914_To_Him_Be_Glory_Forevermore).

In Romans 4:20, in the midst of the discussion of Abraham’s salvation by faith alone, Paul states that that “as he grew strong in his faith” (notice that though faith can be expressed as a point in time, it can also develop or grow) he “gave glory to God.”

The question becomes, which came first?

Did he give glory to God and therefore grow strong in faith?

Was the giving of glory to God what caused his faith to grow?

Or did he grow in faith and therefore gave glory to God?

Was the growing of faith what enabled him to give glory to God?

A corollary question, how is our faith tied to giving God glory?

Abraham’s growth in faith was through his acknowledgement of God. The more God is central, the more we surrender, the more our faith grows.

Abraham was strengthened “by giving glory to God” (δοῦς δόξαν τῷ θεῷ, *dous doxan tō theō*). Here the God-centered character of faith emerges again. The secret of Abraham’s faith is that he acknowledged God’s glory by acknowledging his ability to carry out his promises as the resurrecting and sovereign God. We have seen that the fundamental sin of human beings is the failure to give glory to God (Rom. 1:21–23), the worship of the creature rather than the Creator (1:25; cf. Byrne 1996: 154–55). By contrast, faith glorifies God because it acknowledges that life must be lived in complete dependence on him (Nygren 1949: 182). The supreme way to worship God is not to work for him (4:4–5) but to trust that he will fulfill his promises. As Schlatter (1995: 116) says, “To disavow the credibility of God is to refuse him the honor that the individual owes him.”⁸ This observation is the point of the second participial clause. Abraham grew strong in faith “by being fully assured that God is able to do what he had promised” (πληροφορηθεὶς ὅτι ὁ ἐπήγγελται δυνατός ἐστὶν καὶ ποιῆσαι, *plērophorētheis hoti ho epēngeltai dynatos estin kai poiēsai*). The substance of this clause is not greatly different from the former one. The full assurance (cf. Rom. 14:5; Col. 4:12) in Abraham’s faith did not stem from his unusual abilities (cf. Rom. 4:19). Its origins lay in contemplating the power of God (cf. v. 17), for he surely has the power to accomplish what he has promised.²

From these verses then, we learn that we give God glory when we surrender to Him, giving Him the rightful place of Ruler in our lives.

Our surrender to Him because He is the sovereign King, leads to our own empowerment in faith.

Romans 15:6-7 that together you **may with one voice glorify the God** and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 7 Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the **glory of God**. (ESV)

We give glory to God when we live the way He desires, when our surrender to Him is evident in our relationship with others.

Now let’s compare the two doxologies.

Romans 11:36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. **To him be glory** forever. Amen. (ESV)

Romans 16:27 to the only wise **God be glory** forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen. (ESV)

Both statements are verbless clauses, “to him glory” and “to . . . God glory”. Both are statements and prayers.

God is glorious.

God deserves to be glorified.

⁸ Calvin (1960: 99) remarks, “No greater honour can be given to God than by sealing His truth by our faith. On the other hand, no greater insult can be shown to Him than by rejecting the grace which He offers us, or by detracting from the authority of His Word. For this reason the main thing in the worship of God is to embrace His promises with obedience. True religion begins with faith.”

²Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 238.

So as Paul concludes his letter to the Romans with all its rich theology and practical ecclesiology, the final statement is that in Jesus Christ God's glory crescendos.

His glory reaches its apex through the work and ministry of Jesus Christ, and the Gentiles show that God is glorious by entrusting their lives to him. The most magnificent thing of all is that the glory will never end.³

Summary

Giving glory to God does not add anything to who God is, but it does result in honoring Him.
Giving glory to God involves surrendering to Him.

Living for the glory of God will change our perspective—it is not about us, but all about Him.
Living for the glory of God will change our relationships—because He is most glorified in the unity of the community.

Living for the glory of God will change our affections—we will no longer be focused on the insignificant and temporal but on the eternal and permanent.

Living for the glory of God will challenge us to speak to Him, about Him and for Him.

To God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ.

³Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 816.

Appendix: The glory of God, by John Piper

From the series: [Romans: The Greatest Letter Ever Written](#)

From the topic: [The Glory of God](#)

To Him Be Glory Forevermore

By John Piper December 17, 2006

Romans 16:25-27

Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Last week we talked mainly about the *wisdom* of God because in verse 27 Paul says, “To the only *wise* God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.” This week we will talk about the *glory* of God because in the last words of his letter, Paul bows his head, as it were, and lifts his hands, no longer teaching or defending or explaining or confirming; he is simply worshiping. “To the only wise God be *glory* forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.”

Our Focus: The Glory of God

So we will focus today on the glory of God. Here’s the plan: First, I will try to do the impossible and define the indefinable, *the glory of God*; second, we will look at the words “to him *be* glory” in Romans 16:27, and ask what it means to say “glory *be* to something.” And third, instead of a systematic treatment of Paul’s understanding of the glory of God, we will start with chapter one and simply walk through the entire book and see the role that the glory of God plays in the book of Romans as a whole. My prayer is that you see and love the glory of God for what it is.

Defining the Glory of God

First, an attempt at the impossible—a definition of *the glory of God*. The reason I say it is impossible is that *glory* is more like the word *beauty* than it is like the word *basketball*. You can define a basketball by saying its round, inflated, about nine or ten inches in diameter; it’s used in a game to bounce and put through a hoop. But you can’t do the same with the word *beauty*. We all know it exists, but the reason we can talk about it is because we have seen it, not because we can say it.

What might help get at a definition of *the glory of God* is to contrast it with *the holiness of God*. God is *holy* means that God is in a class of perfection and greatness and value by himself. He is incomparable. His holiness is *his utterly unique and perfect divine essence*. It determines all that he is and does and is determined by nothing and no one outside himself. His holiness is what he is as God which no one else is, or ever will be, and it signifies his intrinsic, infinite worth.

Then we hear the angels in Isaiah 6:3 say, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory.” The glory of God is the *manifestation* of his holiness. God’s *holiness* is the incomparable perfection and greatness of his divine nature; his *glory* is the display of that holiness. His glory is the open revelation of the secret of his holiness. In Leviticus 10:3, God says, “I will be shown to *be holy* among those who are near me, and before all the people I will be *glorified*.” When God shows himself to *be* holy, what we *see* is his glory—the *beauty* of holiness. The holiness of God is his concealed glory. The glory of God is his revealed holiness.

So here’s my effort at a definition: **The glory of God is the infinite beauty and greatness of his manifold perfections.**

To God Be Glory

Second, what do we mean, for example, in verse 27, when we say, “To God *be* glory”? In the way Paul wrote it, there is no verb at all. It simply says literally, “To him, glory!” I think the absence of any verb opens the meaning to both a **worshipful statement of fact and a worshipful expression of longing.** The statement of fact would be: “To him belongs glory!” In other words, we are heralding the truth in worship: God is glorious! Whether you or I see it or not, God has it and displays it.

On the other hand, the expression of longing would be, “May glory be given to him!” That is, may people see him as glorious and praise him as glorious. “Give him glory,” not in the sense of adding anything to his glory, but acknowledging it and treasuring it. So when Paul leaves the verb out and simply says, “To the only wise God, glory!” I think he has both of these in mind: God *is* glorious! And the longing, the prayer: May all the nations see it and acknowledge it and value it as their highest treasure!

So as we turn to chapter one and our walk through Romans, keep this in mind. Paul’s final word in Romans (just before “through Jesus Christ! Amen.”) is his acclamation of the greatest fact of all: God is glorious! And his aspiration for all the nations: May you see it and savor it above all things!

The Glory of God in Romans

I think we need to start with Romans 1:5—even though the word *glory* is not there—because the substance is there so clearly as the goal of Paul’s life and ministry—and ours! “We have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith *for the sake of his name* among all the nations.” *For the sake of his name among all the nations* means that Paul’s goal is that the name of Christ be seen as infinitely glorious above all other names and all other persons and all other ideas and all other possessions and all other possible dreams. In other words, his aim is that the glory of Christ be known and valued in all the world above all other things.

Exchanging the Glory of God

But the presence of Jesus Christ assumes the need for a Savior. Paul backs up and explains why there is a universal need for a Savior. First, he addresses the condition of the nations outside Israel in Romans 1:21 and says, “For although they knew God, they did not honor (the word is “glorify,” *doxasan*) him as God or give thanks to him.” How did they not glorify him? What have human beings done? Verse 23 gives the answer: They “exchanged the *glory* of the immortal God for images.” And of course, the image most common then and today is not one that we carve in wood or stone, but the one we see in the mirror. (This is why the gospel, as we saw last week, is designed by the wisdom of God to strip us of all grounds for boasting in ourselves and make the Lord the only object of our exultation—this is the universal need of the nations who have exchanged the glory of God.)

Blaspheming the Glory of God

Then Paul turns to his own Jewish people and shows that they are in a similar condition and need a Savior. For example, after multiple indictments, he says in Romans 2:24, “For, as it is written, ‘The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.’” In other words, you do not glorify God’s name; you bring it into reproach.

Lacking the Glory of God

Paul sums up the condition of all humans in Romans 3:23 with this virtual definition of sin: “For all have sinned and fall short of [literally, *lack*] the glory of God.” This links back to Romans 1:23. We have all exchanged the glory of God for other things. That is why we “lack” it, or “fall short” of it, and that is the very essence of sin. We are created to treasure the glory of God above all things, and none of us does that. Which means we have committed an outrageous crime against God. Far more serious than murder or rape or theft or lying. Therefore, we stand under the wrath of God and need a Savior.

Faith Glorifies God

It’s tempting here to move immediately to Romans 3:24 (and the following verses) and talk about how Jesus saves us through his death, but I will save that for our final message on Romans next week. Let’s stay on the track of glory and keep going. The salvation from sin and death and judgment that Christ brings is received by faith. Paul illustrates this faith with the case of Abraham in Romans 4:20 and shows how it relates to the glory of God: “No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God [literally, *giving glory to God*].” In other words, one reason that *faith* is the way God saves us is that faith gives glory to God. That is, faith calls attention to and magnifies the glory of God. Faith puts us in the position of weak and dependent and puts God in the position of strong and independent and merciful. So faith is essential to displaying the glory of God.

The Hope of Glory

Then in chapters five and eight, Paul shows that our salvation through Christ secures for us the hope of the glory of God. This is ultimate gift of the gospel. But this hope happens to us in two senses: We see and experience the glory of God in full display, instead of in a mirror dimly, and we are transformed by it into glorious, God-reflecting beings ourselves.

First, consider Romans 5:1-2, “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice *in hope of the glory of God*.” We are justified now by faith. We are declared righteous now. That gives us incomparable peace with God—in *fact* and in *feeling*. But in this life, there are many hard things both emotionally and physically and relationally. Without the hope of something more, we would be of all men most to be pitied. And there *is* more. And the greatest thing that Christians hope for is to see and enjoy the greatest beauty in the universe—the greatest good and the greatest power and the greatest justice and grace, namely, the glory of God—the beautiful

totality of God’s infinite and manifold perfections. Verse 2: “We have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice *in hope of the glory of God*.”

The Glory That Will Be Revealed to Us

In Romans 8:18, Paul says this hope makes all the sufferings we have to experience in this life worth it: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” The glory of God will be so overwhelmingly satisfying that the horrors of a long illness and a painful death will be as nothing in comparison. “For this slight momentary affliction [this whole painful life seen as momentary!] is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison” (2 Corinthians 4:17).

The Glory of the Children of God

Then in Romans 8:21 and 8:30, he speaks of our sharing in that glory so that we become glorious, God-reflecting persons. Verse 21: “The creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of *the glory of the children of God*.” First, we are made glorious at the resurrection; then the whole creation is made a suitable habitation for the glorious children of God. Then verse 30 says that it is so certain that Paul can speak of it as virtually completed: “And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified *he also glorified*.” So the glory of God is our supreme hope, both in the sense of *seeing* and *being*—we *see* it and all our longings for beauty are satisfied, and we are changed by it and all our longings for *being* beautiful, uncontaminated reflectors of God’s glory are satisfied. *Beholding* and *becoming*.

To Make Known the Riches of His Glory

Then in chapter nine, Paul begins to tackle the question of God’s faithfulness to his covenant with Israel, and the related question arises in verse 14 about God’s righteousness in view of his sovereignty over so much lostness and so much evil. In verses 22-23, Paul gives his ultimate and final answer to the question, and he does it with a view to the glory of God. He says, “What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order *to make known the riches of his glory* for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand *for glory*.” In other words, the final argument for the righteousness of God in a world with so much evil and destruction is that this evil serves the revelation of God’s glory. That is, God’s just judgment of it and God’s gracious rescue from it display more fully the glory of God than if there had been no evil.

It is hard to overstate the centrality and ultimacy of the glory of God in view of Romans 9:23. The highest and deepest and most ultimate answer to why the world is the way it is when God is sovereign is that *in his infinite wisdom this world reveals the fullness of his glory*—including the glory of wrath and power (v. 22) as well as mercy. If you grasp the biblical vision of God and his glory as the highest value of the universe, you will become a strong and gracious and useful person in the world—for the glory of God.

To Him Be Glory Forever

Then, as Paul finishes his description of the inscrutable ways of God in dealing with Israel and the nations in Romans 9-11, he concludes with the doxology that we focused on last time: “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen” (Romans 11:36). God is the ultimate origin, the ultimate sustaining power, and the ultimate goal of all things. Therefore, to him, glory! To him belongs the glory. And may all praises rise to him!

With One Voice, Glorify Jesus’ Father

Then in Romans 15, as Paul is finishing his handling of how weak and strong Christians should relate to each other in the church, he tells them the purpose of the church and how Christ set the pattern for how to build the church. The purpose of the church is in verses 5-6: “May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice *glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*.” That’s why Christ bought and builds the church. Not just isolated, individual worship, but united voices, whether speaking or singing, that glorify God. Displaying the glory of God is the aim of the church.

Welcome One Another for the Glory of God

Then in verse 7, Paul gives Christ as the pattern for building this church. He says, “Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, *for the glory of God*.” Christ does everything he does—including welcoming you into his family, building his church—“for the glory of God.” You are saved by Christ for the glory of God. You are welcomed into his friendship for the glory of God. This is humbling because we are never the final reason for anything; God is. And it is gloriously good news, because we wouldn’t want it any other way. God gets the glory; we get the joy.

To Glorify God for His Mercy

And then in verses 8-9, Paul underscores Christ's pattern of building the church by showing that this is the very reason he came for the nations: "For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and *in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.*" Christ came to prove that God is faithful to his promises and to be glorified among the nations. That is why evangelism and missions and church planting and *Treasuring Christ Together* and *Bethlehem* exist.

The Glory of God in the Gospel

Which brings us finally back to where we started in the closing doxology of Romans 16:27, "To the only wise God, glory! Forevermore, through Jesus Christ! Amen."

Is that the cry of your heart? Do you love the glory of God? God is calling for your attention and admiration every day because Psalm 19:1 says, "The heavens declare the glory of God." And Isaiah 6:3 says, "The whole earth is full of his glory!" God is calling out to you: Behold my glory! And next week we will see that the gospel itself—the gospel of Christ crucified and risen—is radiant with the glory of God in the face of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6).

Do you see it and do you love it? You were made for this. Something deep in your soul is saying to you: I was made for this—to behold the glory of God and to become a glorious, God-reflecting person. Receive the Lord Jesus Christ and you will become a child of God (John 1:12), and if you become a child of God, you will see him and love him and grow up—all the way up—to be like him. Unspeakably glorious.

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From the series: [Romans: The Greatest Letter Ever Written](#)

From the topic: A Final Prayer

Jesus Christ in the Book of Romans

By John Piper December 24, 2006

Romans 16:27

To the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Lord Jesus, for the last eight and a half years I have spoken from this pulpit primarily *about* you from the book of Romans. Not only *about* you—I have also spoken *to* you before every message, seeking your help to preach the truth of your word and not my own. Indeed, I have tried to speak as in God’s sight, in your strength, in the way that Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 2:17: “For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God’s word, but as men of sincerity, as from God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.” So I have tried to unfold the meaning of your word in the book of Romans by speaking from you and through you, praying to you even as I spoke.

Eight Years of Speaking *About* You

But mainly I have spoken *about* you. That’s what preaching is. That’s what you meant it to be when you sent your ministers to preach the gospel. Two times in the book of Romans you say that the gospel is *the gospel of Christ* (Romans 15:19) or *the gospel of God’s Son* (Romans 1:9). You make plain that it’s about you. And so you meant for the preaching of the gospel to be mainly about yourself—“the preaching of Jesus Christ” (Romans 16:25). So I do not regret that these eight and a half years have been *about* you. That was your design. That was my delight. I pray that you would sanctify those eight years to the people for the glory of your name and the good of your people and the blessing of the world.

Now Speaking *to* You

But, Lord, it has seemed to me in these recent days that the time has come not merely to speak mainly *about* you, but to speak mainly *to* you. I have always been helped St. Augustine’s *Confessions*. What a great work you did in his life! What a legacy he left to the world because of you! But what is so remarkable about those three hundred pages is that every line is addressed to you and to the Father. He did not just write about what you did in his life. He prayed his entire book to you. Everything he said, he said to you.

Lord, that’s what I would like to do in this final focus on the book of Romans. I would like to speak to you. I would like to praise you and thank you and ask you to make these eight years of messages soul-saving, and faith-building, and missions-mobilizing, and justice-advancing, and a great honor to you. I thank you for the permission to do this. I do not assume that it is a wise or good thing to do. The daughter you gave me did not think it was a good idea. She said, “If you pray for thirty minutes, we’ll have to keep our eyes closed and it will be boring.” And Lord, you know what a sin it is to bore your people with the word of God.

Looking at Your People, Speaking to You

But you showed me something as I sought your permission to do this. You showed me Romans 8:9-10. I asked you, Lord, won’t it be very awkward for me to be talking to you and yet looking at the people? Won’t they feel strange? We don’t usually talk to one person and look at another person. That’s why we usually close our eyes when we pray. But then I read this in your word about my brothers and sisters who sit today under this word: “You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But *if Christ is in you*, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” Lord, what are you saying here in the words, “but if Christ is in you”? Are you not saying, “I am present and dwelling in every believer in this room”?

So, Lord, if I would look toward you as I pray, where shall I look? And you seem to answer, “You may look at my people, because that is where I am. If anyone does not have my Spirit, he does not belong to me. But there are many in this room who belong to me. I dwell in them. I am in heaven on the throne, and I am on the earth in my people.” And so, Lord Jesus, I thank you for this permission to speak to you and look at your people. Indeed, I pray that when I look at them, while talking to you, the wonder that you dwell in them, will become a precious Christmas gift this season. Indeed, may the memory that on Christmas Eve 2006 Pastor John prayed his entire sermon and looked at his people, remind them for years to come that Christ is in them, and therefore, they are his.

The Desire to Praise You

As we come to the end of this book, my overwhelming desire is to praise you—and through you to praise God the Father with the help of God the Holy Spirit—for the glorious Person you have revealed yourself to be in this letter, and, second, to thank you for all that you accomplished for us, and third, to embrace afresh all the benefits obtained

for us in that accomplishment, and, finally, to rededicate ourselves to your invincible purpose for this world. Perhaps, O Lord, you would grant, that many who have not prayed to you in along time might find themselves caught up with me at some point so that my praying becomes our praying.

Praise for the Person that You Are

Who are you, then, Jesus Christ? Who is this babe whose birth we mark tomorrow? Your servant Paul poured out his answer at the beginning of Romans: “God . . . promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures [the gospel] concerning *his Son*, who was *descended from David* according to the flesh and was declared to be the *Son of God* in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, *Jesus Christ our Lord*” (Romans 1:2-4).

You are the Christ, the Messiah, the long awaited King of Israel, the son of David, the One to fulfill all the promises, the One to bring the kingdom of God. And you are the Son of God. Not like we are sons of God, but eternally the Son of God, so that you yourself are very God of very God. Is this not why you inspired Paul to say in Romans 9:3 that you are “the Christ *who is God* over all, blessed forever”? We worship you, our Lord and our God.

When you were born of the virgin Mary, you did not come into being then. No. The apostle said in Romans 8:3 that God sent “his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.” You did not originate in flesh. You were sent into flesh. Flesh, just like ours, only without sin. You are the sinless, incarnate, second person of the Godhead, the eternal Son of God, made flesh, to be the Messiah, to be the Son of David, and to be the Savior—“Jesus.” Your own angel told Joseph, “You shall call his name *Jesus*, for he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

We praise you and we worship you, Jesus the Savior, Christ the Messiah, Son of David, Son of God, Lord—the name used in the Old Testament for God—very God. Amen!

Thankfulness for What You Have Accomplished for Us

And with all of our hearts, now we thank you for what you accomplished for us when you came. No one else could do it. It had to be you, or there would be no salvation from our sin and from your own wrath—the wrath of the Lamb (Revelation 6:16). Only you could do it. That’s what your servant meant in Romans 8:3: “God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin . . .” Only you, Lord Jesus, only God-made-flesh, could accomplish what had to be done if we were to be saved. No ordinary man would do.

You were a faithful “servant to the circumcised to show God’s truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs” (Romans 15:3). You secured every promise God ever made.

You were sinlessly (Romans 8:3) obedient to your Father your whole life and fulfilled all righteousness at every point where we have failed. And that obedience reached its most glorious climax when you became “obedient unto death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:8). “For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so *by the one man’s obedience* the many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:19).

O how you suffered and bore reproach on our behalf. “For [you] did not please [yourself], but as it is written, ‘The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me’” (Romans 15:3).

And then you died. And this was the most important moment in the history of the world. Once for all, sins were paid for. Nothing before, and nothing since, has contributed anything to the payment you made for sins when you died. “For while we were still weak, at the right time [you] died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, [you] Christ died for us” (Romans 5 6-8).

And then you rose from the dead three days later, never to die again. “We know that [you] Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over [you]!” (Romans 6:9). You were “declared to be the Son of God in power . . . by [your] resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4).

And you did not die without us. But you took us—all of your elect, the ones who trust in you—you took us into death with you, so that the curse of our death might be behind us and not in front of us. “For if we have been united with [you] in a death like [yours], we shall certainly be united with [you] in a resurrection like [yours]” (Romans 6:5).

And when you died, our sin was condemned in your flesh! “By sending his own Son [by sending you!] in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, [God] condemned sin in the flesh” (Romans 8:3). Were clearer words ever spoken, Lord Jesus, concerning the glory of penal substitution—this glorious doctrine that today, to our shame in the church, is so embattled and denied? That God, in your flesh, condemned sin. Not yours. Ours. Ours! You, the substitute sacrifice. You were “wounded for our transgressions; [you were] crushed for our iniquities; upon [you] was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with [your] stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5). O Lord, rescue this

great truth from the mangling hands of foolish men! And may it be the foundation of all our faith and joy and worship and obedience!

And because you bore God’s condemnation in your flesh for our sins, there is redemption (Romans 3:24). The forgiveness of sins—countless sins—was purchased once for all. Nothing we do can add to your payment. Every debt that we ever had has been paid up in full by your blood, O Lamb of God.

And all your obedience and all your righteousness was consummated when you died so there would be for us a perfect righteousness by which we could stand acceptable to God—justified by grace alone, through faith alone, on the basis of your imputed righteousness alone, to the glory of God alone (Romans 5:19; 4:25).

And by all this, and as the goal of all this, the greatest good of the gospel was achieved for us: reconciliation with God. Not just forgiveness of sins, not just imputed righteousness, but being at home in the presence of your Father and our God. “While we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son” (Romans 5:10). Your death, Lord Jesus, restored us to what we were created for: seeing and enjoying and reflecting God.

And what is all this, but eternal life—to know and enjoy God forever? All because of you: “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in [you!] Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

O how much more could we say about your work for us: your sending work (Romans 1:5), your faith-awakening work (Romans 10:17), your welcoming work (Romans 15:7), your church-building, church-uniting work (Romans 12:5), your signs and wonders and sanctifying work (Romans 15:18-19)!

Embracing Your Gifts Afresh

But we turn now, Lord, from thanking you for your work to embrace afresh—perhaps some of us here for the first time—the benefits you obtained for us by your work. By faith we take them, receive them, embrace them, treasure them, knowing full well that this very gift-receiving faith is a gift (Romans 10:17).

- We embrace the truth that we have died to sin and to the law and now belong to you alone, alive from the dead forever (Romans 6:2-5; 7:4-6).
- We embrace afresh the forgiveness of our sins (Romans 4:6-7).
- We embrace the reality that our condemnation is past (Romans 8:1).
- We exult in the truth that our justifying righteousness is unshakable, because it is performed by you, not by us (Romans 5:17-19; 4:4-9).
- We affirm with joy that you indwell us by your Spirit and are with us forever (Romans 8:10).
- We embrace the truth that you unite us to each other in loving harmony (Romans 15:5; 12:16).
- We hold fast the promise that we are being conformed to your image, and that your death and resurrection guarantees that this will be completed (Romans 8:28-30).
- We receive the gift that you enable us to do significant work for the advance of your kingdom (Romans 15:18).
- We glory in the truth that we are fellow heirs with you of all that God owns and all that God is (Romans 8:17; 4:13).
- And we take heart that nothing can separate us from your invincible love or from the love of God the Father because of your work on our behalf (Romans 8:32-39).
- And rooted in all of this, we receive afresh the promise of your everlasting joy. In Paul’s words, spoken to us on your behalf, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope” (Romans 15:13).

Rededication to Your Purpose for the World

And because of all this, O Lord, henceforth we dedicate ourselves again to your invincible purpose for the world. None of us knows if we will to see another Christmas Eve. That matters very little. What matters is the glory of your supreme worth, and the glory of your Father. And the upbuilding your church in unshakable faith. And the evangelization of the nations. And the salvation of perishing sinners. And to that end, we rededicate ourselves to your purpose—to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through you and the great salvation that you have accomplished. “To the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ. Amen.”

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