

THE GOSPEL IN CAPSULE

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Here is a document that has been said to be the most magnificent ever written because it covers such a broad spectrum of truth. The book of Romans is a summary of what God has done from the beginning of the world to bring sinful, alienated man back to Himself.

In the final paragraph of this letter, Paul brings it all together in these words:

Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever (16:25-27).

That passage is such a fitting summary to what we have been studying in Romans. As Paul brings this letter to a conclusion he is going to emphasize some of the greatest truths that have ever entered our minds. He will speak about God, Christ, God's revelation to us, and our response to God.

For Paul, God is at the center of everything. God has acted on our behalf in the world through Jesus Christ. But we would know nothing about it if God had not revealed His will to us. When we see that will, we will know how we are to respond to God.

I. THE ALMIGHTY GOD

God is not only the Creator of the world but also the Sustainer of it. He is involved in the world He made. He is at the center of the world and Paul's thinking.

What does Paul tell us about God in the final paragraph of his letter?

He Is Eternal

He says that God is everlasting or *eternal* (16:26). God did not begin with the world. He did not begin in the minds of feeble men. God has always been. He called the world into existence and made man in His own image. The Psalmist put it this way in Psalms 90:1, 2, "From everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God." God was here before the world began. He will be here when the world is no more. He is present now to help those of us who have come to love and obey Him.

He Is Wise

God is *wise* (16:27). In God we find supreme intelligence. In His supreme intelligence He worked out a plan for man and made it known to man. That plan is called often in Scripture "the wisdom of God." God's wisdom makes it possible for sinful men to be saved.

He Is Powerful

He also says, "Now to Him who is *able* to establish you." God does not lack any power. He does not lack any strength to do anything that is within His nature and will. Obviously, God does not contradict His nature of holiness. The Bible says it is impossible for God to lie. But God is able to do anything that is in harmony with His nature and will. That is the reason that His children may call upon Him in everything, being fully assured that He is able to do whatever is in harmony with His will. In Ephesians 3:20, 21,

Paul said that God “is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think.” If we let our imaginations run wild, we cannot think of a single thing beyond God’s power. If God is kept from acting in one way or another, it is only because that action is outside His will, contrary to His nature.

Deep in the Old Testament, in the book of Daniel, we meet Daniel’s three friends, Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego. They were so loyal to God that they would not hearken unto the king’s commandment to bow down before an image that he had erected. He threatened them. He said, “If you do not bow down I will have you cast into the furnace of fire.” They said, “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire. If He does not, we are not going to worship the golden image.” That is a wonderful attitude. We all have trials and afflictions, and we may cry out to God to deliver us. We should be fully aware that God is able to deliver us. But if he does not, we still will declare our loyalty to Him.

He Is Worthy

He says in verse 27, “To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever.” The word that comes to mind is that God is *worthy*. God is worthy of our praise, devotion, and obedience of our lives simply because of who He is. In Revelation 4 John was given a view of heaven. He saw a great throne and One who sat upon it. He does not give us a physical description of the One who occupied that throne, for God is spirit. He does not have a physical body. But He is described with grandeur. Round about His throne are four living creatures. Beyond those creatures are twenty four elders upon thrones. These elders are joined by countless angels. All give praise to the One upon the throne because He is worthy. The reason He is worthy is because He created everything and made man for Him self. God is worthy of our praise and devotion.

II. THE DIVINE REVELATION

After speaking of God, Paul reminds us in this last paragraph that God has revealed a message to His creature, man. We can know some things about God simply from our observation. We can look at this universe and say, “It took great power to make the world.” We can know

that God is powerful. In fact, if we are to know God’s will for us, we must have a revelation from God. God has revealed a message to man. What can we say about that message?

First, Paul says that it was a *mystery* (16:25). He speaks of God’s mystery which was kept secret since the world began. God had a plan in His mind from eternity. Neither man nor angel knew anything about it. God revealed it. It was covered; therefore, it was called a mystery until God revealed it. When He revealed His will for man, it was no longer a mystery. Notice the word *manifested* in verse 26. God manifested or disclosed His message. He made it known unto men.

How did God go about revealing His plan for man to man? In verse 26 He said, “But now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, . . .” First, God began to unveil His will for man through His Old Testament prophets. He revealed the message to them that He wanted men to know; they spoke His Word; and they wrote His Word down. That is what the Old Testament is about. The New Testament says, “Men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God,” (2 Peter 1:21). Second Timothy 3:16 says, “All Scripture is inspired by God.” *God by His spirit revealed His message to His servants.*

In the New Testament we have the same kind of revelation. God by His Spirit revealed His Word; men spoke that Word and wrote it down for us. The Bible, therefore, is an inspired revelation from God to man. In 1 Corinthians 2:13 Paul shows how those men of God received the message of God: “Which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.” The Holy Spirit came upon God’s servants and revealed to them exactly the words He wanted written down. That truth tells me that when the Bible is properly translated into our language we have the very Word of God.

III. THE ANOINTED ONE

Then Paul in this last paragraph of Romans speaks of Jesus Christ, for the revelation of God concerns Jesus. In the Old Testament the revelation of God said, “Jesus Christ is coming.” In the New Testament in the first four books—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—we are told that

Jesus Christ is here. In the rest of the New Testament, we are informed that Jesus Christ is coming again. The Bible is about Christ. He is the golden thread that runs from Genesis to Revelation. When God revealed His Word to man, that Word reveals Jesus Christ.

What does God's revelation bring to us about Jesus? It is Jesus Christ crucified, dying for our sins, buried, raised again, glorified, and coming. We see our need of salvation when we think of our sins. Jesus Christ is the only answer. He came and died for our sins. Being buried, death could not hold Him. He was raised from the dead, and He lives forever.

IV. THE HUMAN RESPONSE

As another point in this last paragraph of Romans, Paul speaks of man's response to all that God has done in His revelation and through Jesus Christ. What is the key to man's response to God? The obedience of faith! (16:26). Paul began this letter in 1:5 by speaking of the obedience of faith.

Do you believe in the God who has revealed His will to man in the Bible? Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Savior of the world? If you do, how have you demonstrated your faith? In chapter 6 Paul said, "God be thanked. You were the servants of sin, but you have obeyed from the heart the form of teaching

delivered; and being then made free from sin became the servants of righteousness" (6:17, 18). He said you have obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine or the form of teaching. What is the form into which we are to pour ourselves? It is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Paul said we have died to sin as Christ died for sin. He said we are buried with Him by baptism into death. As Christ was buried we are buried. He said we are raised to walk in newness of life. As Christ was raised we are raised. When we have obeyed the form of teaching, we become the servants of righteousness. It is man's response to God by the obedience of faith. God's great men and women of the Bible always manifested their faith by what they did. Faith is seen not by what one says so much as by what one does.

CONCLUSION

Paul starts and finishes the letter to the Romans with the obedience of faith. What has your faith ever prompted you to do? Faith must always lead us to do the will of God in our lives. Let us remember that Jesus Christ is the Author of eternal salvation unto all them who obey Him (Hebrews 5:9). It is the obedience of faith that has an impact not only on our lives but on the lives of those we touch every day. That is our response to His plan which pleases God.

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