

To God Be Glory Forevermore
Romans 16:25-27

Intro

In a 2019 Washington Post article about famous last sentences of books in American literature, book critic Ron Charles wrote

“A book can only end one of two ways: truthfully or artfully.” Alas, most don’t end truthfully or artfully, but there are rare exceptions: novels that conclude with such gracefully calibrated language that we close the back cover and feel physically imprinted, as though the words were pressed into us by a weight we can hardly fathom. (Ron Charles - Washington Post)

The end of a book can make all the difference in how we remember the impact that a particular book has on us. Some examples:

And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God bless us, everyone! (*A Christmas Carol*, Charles Dickens)

“In the deep glens where they lived all things were older than man and they hummed of mystery.” (*The Road*, Cormac McCarthy)

But wherever they go, and whatever happens to them on the way, in that enchanted place on the top of the Forest a little boy and his Bear will always be playing. (*The House at Pooh Corner*, A.A. Milne)

In the beautiful modern masterpiece “Gilead” by Marilynne Robinson - 77-year-old pastor John Ames in his final words written to his 7-year-old son before he dies - “I’ll pray, and then I’ll sleep”

The way a book concludes can leave an Indelible impression that lingers in the mind and heart

As we reach the last sentences of this divinely inspired book - this letter to the church in Rome we encounter a beautiful doxology. But far more than the impact of any novel these words hold truthfully and artfully truly press into us with a weight we can hardly fathom

As we have seen throughout Romans that the ultimate goal of the proclamation and application of the Gospel is doxology - the worship of God - only appropriate to end on this not or jubilant worship

Three reasons to praise and glorify God as we come to the end of this divinely inspired letter

I. He Strengthens Us

- A. In effect pulling together the threads of his introduction - you may recall the thesis of this letter way back in chapter 1

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Romans 1:16)

1. So, from the outset, the apostle Paul has been unfolding the gospel - the good news of the crucified and resurrected and reigning Jesus Christ - his grace for underserving, hell-bound sinners like you and me and how the Gospel has the power to not only save us but also the power to sustain us to the day of Christ - power to transform us bit by bit to be people who imperfectly but sincerely reflect the glory of Jesus Christ - EAGER TO PREACH TO CHRISTIANS
 2. So, Paul as he concludes gives glory to God - the one who is behind this power - he gives glory v. 25 to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ - for the the gospel is not disembodied list of truth claims - the gospel resides in a person - the good news IS IN Jesus Christ - all that he is and has done for us
 - a) My gospel = simply means the gospel = what he has proclaimed throughout this letter and the gospel present throughout holy Scripture
- B. One of our unwavering theological convictions at this church and throughout our denomination in SGC is that we are gospel-centered in our doctrine and practice - here is an essential reason why practically speaking we organize ourselves in this way - we need strength - in ourselves we are weak
- C. The gospel frees us to be honest with ourselves - we waver - we fail - inconsistent - we wander - we need to be strengthened to persevere in the faith as we make our way towards eternity - that strength we need flows to us from God through the gospel applied by the Holy Spirit - not vague sense of disembodied strength - IN AND THROUGH JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED - In and through the Gospel we find POWER TO SAVE AND POWER TO SANCTIFY AND STEADY AND STRENGTHEN US

[11] Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. [12] I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. [13] I can do all things through him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:11-13)

1. Not about how to win college football games or to get to the next level in your career or set a personal record on your dead lift - it is a deep and abiding settledness of heart that finds contentment and satisfaction in any and all circumstances because we have Christ himself - strengthening our souls by his grace

his love and personal care - the secret of facing suffering with joy even through tears is in Christ - the secret of fending off a lingering desire to fill our lives with things - God comes to us through the gospel and invites us to find our satisfaction in Jesus Christ - not in sin and self

D. Application

1. Preaching matters - not just any kind of preaching - preaching that is centered on the gospel of Jesus Christ - the preaching of Jesus Christ
 - a) Sundays are a big deal - to take a casual approach - not immediately discernible but over time...

Illustration: Visited a church once - be nice to your family at Christmas time

- b) Will churches like that stand in the face of increasing opposition and hostility? Is there strength in cultural Christianity of hitting church up for a little boost a couple times month? NO
 - (1) Here's what's waiting for us on the other side of a post-Christian culture that maligns and ridicules biblical Christianity - strength - Christ
2. Suffering Christian - weak - he is able to strengthen you - remember his wounds of love - his sacrifice for you - he has not and will not abandon - the gospel is the guarantee of his heart toward you - his heart is to gently meet you now in your need - to strengthen you to take you to the end of your suffering and ultimately into his glorious rest
 - a) We join Paul in glorifying God for his kindness in exerting his strengthening power to us in Christ

II. He Reveals Jesus Christ

- A. v. 25b he describes that this gospel is according to the revelation of the mystery - kept secret for long ages - but has now been disclosed through the prophetic writings
 1. What exactly is he talking about - this mystery in the prophetic writings - he is referring to the Old Testament Scriptures?
 2. From the very first God was making promises that there was one who was coming to save sinners and bring the kingdom of God into the earth - none more central than the promise God made to Abraham in Gen.12 and reiterated in Gen. 17 - that in him and through his offspring all of the world would be blessed
 3. Through the centuries as God continued to speak to his people through the prophets this declaration of a coming messiah was repeated again and again - through the centuries Israel - the people of God - knew that the atoning sacrifices of bulls and goats and so forth could not finally and fully take away sin for they had to

be repeated each day - was mystery - who was coming - how would God resolve all this? FOR INSTANCE

[6] The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, [7] keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty... (Exodus 34:6-7)

4. How can God forgive iniquity and at the same by no means clear the guilty - only through a substitute - only through one who had no guilt willingly bearing the judgment for guilty so that God could forgive our iniquity and justify the ungodly and remain just and holy - A mystery - BUT NOW - now the mystery is resolved - because CHRIST HAS COME - with him a new insight - a new understanding that of the OT points toward him

[25] And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! [26] Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" [27] And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luke 24:25-27)

5. It was hiding in plain sight! The mystery is resolved - In the revelation of Jesus Christ we have a EUREKA moment - a cry of joy or satisfaction when one finds or discovers
- B. Thought he is unthinkable transcendent - God is not in the nebulous ether - distant and incomprehensible - sort of mystical, mysterious, religious or spiritual jargon - he is in the business of disclosing and revealing - and making known the grace and glories of Jesus Christ

Illustration: Bob Stengel - cookies

1. Ancient - challenges - Anywhere you crack open your Bible you should rightly expect and anticipate in some sense an encounter with Jesus Christ

For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. (Romans 15:4)

2. WHATEVER Here's why - because it all points to Christ - he is able to strengthen you through this revelation

C. Application

1. No commands here - simply an invitation to savor and celebrate God's kindness in revealing Christ to us - we join Paul in giving GLORY TO GOD

- a) One more reason

III. He Saves Sinners

- A. V 26 - this powerful gospel - this glorious Savior has been made know to all nations - this gospel is the instrument through which God is creating for himself a multi-ethnic church from every tribe and nation and tongue
 - 1. Indeed, as Jesus said in Matt. 24 - the end of this age - the days of sin and death - and the inauguration of the glorious eternal coming age will not come until this gospel is proclaimed throughout the whole world
- B. Because it is in and through the proclamation of the gospel God brings about the obedience of faith - faith comes by hearing the word of Christ - and that the only saving response to the Gospel is faith alone in Christ alone for the glory of God alone as sinners receive the grace of God and are transformed slowly but surely to be more like Christ - obedience of faith

Paul never conceived of salvation taking root among the nations without a change of behavior. The gospel that takes hold of human beings changes them so that they become servants of righteousness. Such new behavior, however, has its roots in faith, in trusting God for the strength and power to live a new life. The gospel does not summon people to exercise their own moral virtue. It calls them to put their trust in God, who raised Jesus from the dead. By trusting him they will be filled with the power to live fruitful lives. (Doug Moo)

- 1. Gospel doctrine creates Gospel culture

Francis Schaeffer spoke of “orthodoxy of doctrine and orthodoxy of community” together as equally significant. Do we consider a culture of beautiful humaneness so essential to our integrity before the Lord and our witness to the world that we too are compelled to speak of orthodoxy of community, worthy of the same attention, prestige and authority as our doctrine? (Ray Ortlund)

- C. All of this v. 26 - according to the command of the eternal God - our eternal God chose to touch down into this world in Christ to save sinners - he is completely in charge of the whole operation - he did not simply create the possibility that the nations might hear the gospel and be reconciled to him - he commanded and executed and established that all of this would definitely happen in Christ
 - 1. He didn't create potential salvation in Christ with the possibility that if some people have enough smarts about them, they would put their faith in Christ - he is sovereign over it all - the gospel has been made known and will be made know in all of the earth because God has commanded it to be so - such is the glory of his sovereign grace

a) You are not insignificant to God - OH MY FRIEND - YOU HAVE BEEN SWEEPED UP INTO THE GRAND, SWEEPING PLAN AND PURPOSES OF GOD TO CREATE A WORLDWIDE PEOPLE FOR HIMSELF - GLORY!

D. V. 27 it is only fitting and appropriate in light of all these glorious realities for Paul to declare I - to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ

1. In light of the grace and power and wisdom of our God - how can we not join Paul in an endless hallelujah to our King - Our God of grace who reveals the Savior - eternal and all wise

[33] Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! [34] "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" [35] "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" [36] For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. (Romans 11:33-36)

2. it is no wonder that the song of heaven is

...Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." (Revelation 7:12)

3. We join Paul and indeed heaven's song now entering into the glory and worship of God

**Oh, perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
to ev'ry believer the promise of God.
The vilest offender who truly believes,
that moment from Jesus a pardon receives. [Refrain]
Great things he hath taught us, great things he hath done,
and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son,
but purer, and higher, and greater will be
our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see.
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,
and give him the glory, great things he hath done.**

E. Application

1. CALL TO UNBELIEVERS Do you see and feel the glory of our God - the greatness of his love and mercy - the immensity of his grace? TURN FROM SIN AND ENTRUST YOURSELVES TO JESUS CHRIST - TAKE HIM WITH THE EMPTY HANDS OF FAITH

- a) BELOVED - savor and celebrate - WE HAVE REASON ENOUGH TO REJOICE AND GLORIFY GOD IN THIS CHURCH!
2. A GENTLE QUESTION - Are others around us more aware of our grumbling, complaining, criticism or of our joy in God - our rejoicing in him? HOW CAN WE NOT BE THOSE WHO LIVE LIVES LOUDLY GLORIFYING GOD IN EVERY SEASON
3. Oh, may we - yes let us always be those who feel the weight and imprint of what Paul is describing in these verses to strengthen and steady - to commission us to our neighbors and the nations - singing and rejoicing all the way into the redemption of all things
 - a) THIS IS THE ENVIRONMENT OF REVIVAL

How John Knox explained the Scottish Reformation: "God gave his Holy Spirit to simple men in great abundance."

b) PRAY

Close

As a good book concludes and we close the cover the effect is that **we feel physically imprinted, as though the words were pressed into us by a weight we can hardly fathom.**

OH, THAT WOULD God physically imprint the glories of Christ and him crucified upon our lives and let our joy, worship, and zeal reveal the weight and glory of that imprint.

SO THAT EACH DAY WE DECLARE WITH PAUL - To the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

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