

“REMEMBER OUR GLORIOUS GOD”
OR, “AS WE LEAVE...”
ROMANS 16:21-27

We don't write as many letters as we used to write. But we still write often to others in emails. And if you write enough of them, you may have an automated “signature” that you use. Or you might try to be creative with your sign-offs. Often, I will simply say something like, “thanks.” But that seems a little shallow. So inc.com has come to our rescue with 70 suggestions for email sign-offs:

- Something formal: all my best, best, best regards, best wishes, sending you the best, congratulations, faithfully, goodbye, looking forward, regards, respectfully, speak to you soon, warm regards/wishes, warmly, wishing you a wonderful day, yours truly.
- Something friendly: cheers, enjoy your day/week, happy Sunday, hope this helps, make it a great day, pleasure catching up with you, see you tomorrow, sending good vibes, you're the best, your friend.
- Something appreciative: all my thanks, I can't thank you enough, I owe you, much appreciated, thank you for everything, thank you in advance, thanks for reading, thanks for your help, you're a lifesaver.
- Something funny: anonymously, congrats on reading the whole email, I need coffee, one step closer to Friday, so long — farewell, the end, live long and prosper, peace out, tag — you're it, tootles.

Endings can be hard. You want to strike just the right note to your note. I don't know if Paul puzzled over what to say at the end of his letter to Rome. But I know he hit the right note. In the final seven verses of the greatest letter in the greatest book ever written, Paul reminds us of this truth:

THE REVELATION OF GOD'S SALVATION IS FOR OUR GOOD — AND HIS GLORY.

As Paul ends his letter he offers **two final reminders** both of which emphasize God's glory. We might call these the final “take away” from the book. As we leave Romans, remember:

- 1. Final Greetings: Remember the Grace of God to Sustain **MINISTRY** (vv. 21-23)**
- 2. Final Praise: Remember the Glory of God to Establish **LIFE** (vv. 25-27)**
 - ✓ He Keeps Us in **SALVATION** (v. 25a)
 - ✓ He Has Not **HIDDEN** Himself (or His Salvation) (v. 25b)
 - ✓ His Salvation Plan (Unexpectedly) Includes **US** (v. 26)
 - ✓ He Deserves **GLORY** (v. 27)

1. Final Greetings: Remember the Grace of God to Sustain MINISTRY (vv. 21-23)

- In verses 1-16, Paul sent a long list of greetings to particular members of the Roman church. After the brief warning given in vv. 17-20, Paul returns to the theme of greetings, apparently triggered by the phrase, “all the churches of Christ greet you” (v. 16b).
- In these three verses, he identifies eight particular people who also send *greetings* to Rome:
 - ✓ **Timothy** (21) — his beloved disciple and son (child; 1 Tim. 1:2).
 - Timothy converted to Christ through his mother’s and grandmother’s influence (Acts 16:1-3); he started traveling with Paul in Derbe/Lystra going with Paul on two missionary journeys, and was with him in Corinth as Paul wrote Romans, and would also be with Paul in Rome when he was imprisoned there (Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1). He later would become the pastor/elder of the Ephesian church (1 Tim. 1:3).
 - Paul calls him a *fellow worker* — someone who worked alongside him; given their travels and their deep affection for one another, that is a fitting designation.
 - ✓ **Lucius** — perhaps (likely?) the same Lucius in Acts 13:1; he may have been the first bishop of the church in Cenchrea, a sister church of Corinth (16:1).
 - ✓ **Jason** — likely this was the Jason of Acts 17:5-9 who hosted Paul on his visit to Thessalonica.
 - ✓ **Sosipater** — is probably the formal name of Sopater (Acts 20:4), though because they are both common names we can’t be dogmatic about that.
 - All three of these men are called *kinsmen*, which often refers to biological relatives; Paul also used it to refer to Israelites (9:3).
 - So Paul means that these three are not only “kin” ethnically, but they are also “kin” in Christ.
 - ✓ In v. 22, **Tertius** sends his own greeting; he as Paul’s amanuensis (scribe), writing down what Paul dictated to him (something that was common for ancient writers). Maybe Paul took a moment to think of other names and Tertius quickly added his own greeting. His greeting is *in the Lord*, i.e., while he is affirming his fellowship with them, he identifies their relationship is because of Christ.
 - ✓ **Gaius** (v. 23) also sends greetings. He was prominent in the church as he was evidently providing hospitality for Paul while he was in Rome; he either hosted a Corinthian home church in his home, or providing hospitality and lodging for whoever needed it in Corinth (uncertain); we can deduce that he cared for people (was hospitable), and was prosperous and financially able to provide.
 - ✓ **Erastus** — is called a “city treasurer” — perhaps something like a city manager. He was the “steward” of the city. There is an inscription in Corinth of an Erastus who was a “commissioner of public works” — while the position is different it is possible he could have held both positions at different times. What *is* clear is that this is a man of civil influence in Corinth.

- ✓ **Quartus** is unknown apart from this verse; some have suggested that he is the brother of Tertius because their names mean “third” and “fourth.” That’s mere speculation.
- There is one notable difference in this list of names from the list of names in vv. 1-16 — there are no women in this list, while approx. 1/3 of the names in the other list were women. Not sure why.
- There are still a variety of roles and functions — vocational elders and laymen; wealthy and “average;” socially prominent and socially obscure. What should we make of this list? Many of the same kinds of principles that we talked about two weeks ago in the opening verses apply to these verses as well.
 - ✓ *Some members may be less well-known, but no one is unknown.*
 - ✓ *Regardless of prominence, every member has a role in the body.*
 - ✓ *Treat every member with the dignity and affection of Christ, to whom every member belongs.* There seems to be an eagerness from these men to send their greetings (affection and desire to be hospitable) to a church where they have never been — “Paul, send greetings from me!”
 - ✓ *However diverse we are as individual people, our unity in Christ is greater.*
 - Paul identifies all of these men, except for Erastus, by their spiritual relationship and not their civil relationship (job, civil role, church position, etc.) — fellow-worker, kinsmen, host, brother.
 - And Tertius makes sure to identify union **in Christ** as the binding agent with Corinth — and that was a major emphasis of Paul in this letter: **6:11; 8:1-2, 39; 12:5**. It also was the basis for many of the greetings earlier in the chapter (**16:2-3, 7-13**).
 - I’m sure there are many personal preferences that are common in our church body; but I love it when we have diverse preferences and love and care for each other anyway: music, politics,...
 - It is good to have conversations about things of common interest (plants, house projects, sports), but it always makes me rejoice when I consistently hear you speaking about biblical topics and encouraging one another in Christ — that’s a good implication from our spiritual union.

2. Final Praise: Remember the Glory of God to Establish **LIFE** (vv. 25-27)

- The brackets around v. 24 —
 - ✓ We also do not have original biblical documents — we don’t have Paul’s actual letters, for instance. The oldest documents we have are copies of copies (“third generation” manuscripts).
 - ✓ So scholars are constantly comparing and contrasting documents (and we have thousands!) to discern what the original authors actually wrote.
 - ✓ Sometimes there are differences because of honest mistakes and errors (usually easily discerned)
 - ✓ Sometimes there are errors because a copyist tries to “fix” what he thinks is an error or omission that isn’t an error. So *occasionally* they will add things that weren’t in the original text in front of them and that creates differences among the manuscripts.

- ✓ That has happened with v. 24. As we read the final chapters, it seems like Paul has tried to “stop” several times (15:33; 16:20, 24, 25-27). But did Paul write them all? As we have looked at the evidence, it seems quite clear that v. 24 was not written by Paul but inserted by someone who thought the book should end there, because the oldest manuscripts don’t have this verse.
- ✓ We should be encouraged that we can discern and be confident in what Paul really wrote.
- ✓ [This benediction has been called “the finest of Paul’s doxologies.” [Robertson] It is the longest and most solemn of his doxologies/benedictions. [Fitzmyer] It is sublime and echoes 11:33-36 and tells us of His ability to establish us (and keep us) in eternal life.
- ✓ He wrote about the revelation of God — and the revelation of His salvation.

- He Keeps Us in SALVATION (v. 25a)

- ✓ The main idea of the benediction doesn’t arrive until the last verse; **to Him** doesn’t get completed until Paul says, **be the glory forever** (v. 27). [In fact, these verses are one long incomplete sentence.]
- ✓ Even as we begin to read, though, we understand that Paul is summarizing essential theological truths — these are at the foundation of what we believe about God and salvation.
- ✓ This benediction also echoes much of his introduction in 1:1ff. He ends where he began. [Moo]
- ✓ Paul’s first statement is that God is **able to establish you**.
 - The word means to confirm or strengthen. The idea is that God is the only One who can settle anyone and make him confident and firm. We can be confident in this world about the next world only because of the work of God to save us.
 - What’s interesting about this word is how Paul uses it in 1:11 — there he says that he wanted to minister to the Romans to “establish them” but here he says God is the One who establishes.
 - What Paul wants to do is only possible through the ability of God (only He **is able**, 1:16).
- ✓ That establishment comes by **my gospel** and the **preaching of** (about) **Jesus Christ**.
 - When Paul says “my gospel” he doesn’t mean he is the origin of the gospel. Yes, this is the gospel message he preaches (cf. 2:16), but it is the gospel given to him by God (1:1, 9).
 - He means the gospel he preaches is consistent with what others preach (which has been one of his objectives in this book as he solicits help for his missionary venture). The reason he quotes so much from the OT (~ 60x) is to demonstrate his solidarity with the gospel of Scripture.
 - Notice that he also relates (joins) the ideas of his gospel to the **preaching of Christ**. This alludes to what he said in 10:14-17 — there is only one message to preach that will save people: Jesus Christ. Paul was compelled to preach Christ because only Christ saves (2 Cor. 4:5-6).
 - ... Man is a sinner, incapable of saving himself (3:10-18)
 - ... Christ is a Savior who died in the place of sinners, providing His righteousness (3:24)
 - ... Faith is the means by which salvation is granted (3:26, 28; 4:1ff) — “I can’t...You must!”
 - ... Transformation is the goal for which we are saved (6:4ff)
 - ... If you don’t believe today, you must believe; it is your only hope...

- ✓ Our stability (**established**) in this world is only in the gospel, given by God's grace.

- He Has Not **HIDDEN** Himself (or His Salvation) (v. 25b)

- ✓ There is a fullness of the gospel that is spoken of in the OT that is hidden until the NT and Christ.
- ✓ The particular preaching of Christ that had been entrusted to Paul was the **revelation of the mystery** (11:25; Eph. 3:3ff). What Paul is particularly involved in doing is revealing and exposing that which had been hidden.
- ✓ The full impact of the gospel **has been kept secret** — there was silence throughout the OT about it. Now it has been revealed and exposed.
- ✓ This speaks of the astounding grace of God. The One who is self-satisfied and “full” in His Triune relationship, creates mankind as a demonstration of His power and then reveals Himself to that created man. The One who is immense, infinite, and eternal is by definition unknowable to those who are localized, finite, and terminal (11:34-35).
- ✓ That is the One who has revealed Himself to us — telling us about Himself, making Himself known, and inviting us into fellowship with Him.
 - The revelation of His nature was given to all men (1:19-20)
 - The means of salvation was put on display (3:25).
- ✓ This majestic God is not unknown and hidden, but accessible and inviting.

- His Salvation Plan (Unexpectedly) Includes **US** (v. 26)

- ✓ This mystery was hidden (25b), but now is revealed. Paul mentions revelation 3x — **revelation** (25), **manifested** (26a), and **made known** (26b). He wants us to know that nothing has been hidden from us — God is not playing a divinely frustrating game of hide and seek. No tricks w/ Him.
- ✓ Paul is also being very emphatic — **but now** — there as a secret, but NOW there is NOT! (Like a couple that has not said anything about a pregnancy but *now* they are telling everyone!)
- ✓ What has been revealed? That salvation is made known **to all the nations**...
 - The Gentiles get the gospel (1:5). The Gentiles receive blessings from the promises to Israel.
 - This promise to the Gentiles not fully explained in the OT, but there were hints to it. This full revelation is now in harmony with **the Scriptures of the prophets** (the OT allusions).
 - It is as if Paul is saying, “Now we know the full meaning of the OT — it’s all exposed.”
 - Where were these promises made? Cf. **Gen. 12:3** (key verse to understand Romans); **Is. 42:6**; 49:22; **66:18-21**; cf. Paul’s use of the OT — **9:25-26**, 30; 11:8-10f; **15:9-12**.
- ✓ One more time Paul affirms to the Romans the orthodoxy of the gospel he preaches and that the gospel includes the Gentiles, which should bring about **obedience of faith** — the revelation of God is that Gentiles (as well as Jews) come to a genuine faith that produces obedience to Christ.
- ✓ There is no such thing as a rebel against God who has faith. We will at times struggle to obey, but there is a delight and pursuit of obedience (1:8; 15:18)

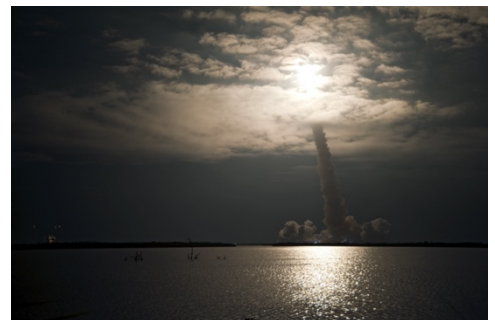
• He Deserves **GLORY** (v. 27)

- ✓ In the final verse Paul comes to the intent and purpose of the benediction
- ✓ There is **only one wise God** — that phrase can be translated “to the only God, who is wise” (meaning the only God is also wise) or “the only wise God” (meaning all other God’s are not wise). Either way, Paul is affirming that God alone is God and He alone is wise. There is no one else like Him (11:33).
- ✓ Praise comes to God through the work of **Jesus Christ** — the Christ in whom the revelation of God’s salvation plan is made is the means by which God is praised.
- ✓ To this great God **be the glory forever**. God is glorious (majestic) and God receives glory (worship).
- ✓ “There is not an atom of the universe in which you cannot see some sparks of His glory.” [Calvin]
- ✓ To give God glory means two things:
 - We *reveal* God for who He is — He is majestic and great (8:37-39; 11:33-36).
 - We *delight* in God for who He is — because He is great, we want to have fellowship with Him. We want *Him*. The goal of the gospel is to get us to God so that we enjoy Him.
 - ... We don’t want what God gives. We want God.
 - ... We don’t want possessions in this world. We want fellowship in this and the next world.
 - ... We were made for this:

“Why do we seek spectacles? Because we’re human - hard-wired with an unquenchable appetite to see glory. Our hearts seek splendor as our eyes scan for greatness. We cannot help it. The world aches to be awed. That ache was made for God. The world seeks it mainly through movies — and in entertainment and politics and true crime and celebrity gossip and warfare and live sports. Unfortunately, we are all very easily conned into wasting our time on what adds no value to our lives. Aldous Huxley called it “mans’ almost infinite appetite for distraction.” [Tony Reinke, *Competing Spectacles*, 18.]

CONCLUSION: I have told the story previously, but it fits well here.

In late August of 1983 I was living in Florida and between semesters in college; that month the Space Shuttle was launched at night for the first time and a buddy and I said, “Why not?? Let’s go.” So we drove a couple of hours south, found a position on the road along with hundreds (thousands?) of other cars and waited for the countdown, listening to the news on the radio and talking with other watchers. Finally, at 2:30 in the morning, the boosters ignited and there was liftoff — and **the light filled the sky** and the surrounding area. I don’t mean this flippantly — it was an awe-inspiring moment of power and worship. And in moments **it was dark**.



We traveled hours for five minutes of wonder. What we need is the vision of a greater glory. And that vision is in our hands, in the Word of God which reveals our God and our salvation. Captivation by and delight in that glory so that it goes throughout Granbury and the nations is the message/culmination of Romans.