***The Benediction
RO203-02***

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We turn to Romans 16:25-27. Our title is "The Benediction - Number 7."

**The Grace of a Loving God**

Everyone is born into the human race as a sinner totally disqualified for eternal life in Heaven. People are born spiritually dead and all they do therefore, is under the evil contamination of their Sin Natures. A spiritually dead person governed by the Old Sin Nature cannot produce one good work acceptable to a holy God for salvation. All that a person can do in this unsaved condition flows through the Sin Nature and therefore is contaminated by evil and rejected by God. Thus, no one can secure eternal life in Heaven by living a good life or doing good deeds, because those are not good deeds in the sight of God, only in the sight of men. Therefore, the lost sinner is doomed to spend eternity in the Lake of Fire and is totally incapable of doing one thing about it. For this reason, the apostle Paul wrote the letter to the Christians in Rome to explain the terrible human condition in sin, the absolute hopeless and helpless situation of every human being born into the race, and of the grace of God, the mighty marvelous grace of God, which has come up with a solution. The policy of God in dealing with the doomed human race is grace. Never forget that! The policy of God in dealing with the human race doomed in sin is grace. Since man cannot save himself from Hell, God does it for him.

The apostle Paul has carefully explained in Romans how God's grace brings salvation to lost sinners. Salvation is based on God's just wrath against sin, being satisfied by the payment of death by Jesus Christ on the cross who bore the moral guilt of all mankind. Therefore, God is now free to give salvation as a gift to anyone who will trust in His Son Jesus to save him. That's grace! Jesus Christ takes the sinner's guilt and gives the believer in return His own absolute righteousness. So, the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians summarizes that exchange in 2 Corinthians 5:21 in this way: "He [God the Father] made Him [God the Son] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Our moral guilt is swapped for the absolute righteousness of Jesus Christ. That is the policy of grace.

The divine policy of grace is clearly exemplified in the Church Age. God had a secret plan in the Old Testament, which was to be revealed and put into effect after the Jewish nation had rejected and crucified its Messiah Savior, Jesus Christ. This plan was designed to join together Jews and Gentiles into one body of people who trusted in Christ for salvation. This body of believers was called the Church and was designated the Royal Family of God. Church saints are the aristocrats of all the saints, of all the ages.

The era of the Church Age was to portray to all mankind and to angels the glories of the grace of a loving God. This grace was both the way of salvation and the way of life of the saved. And in that we find true personal freedom. God's grace is expressed in saving us. God's grace is expressed in the freedom with which we live our lives unto Him.

The grace of God, as exemplified in the Church Age, was revealed to the apostles of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul was the preeminent recipient of Church Age doctrines. This grace revelation was recorded in the New Testament Scriptures and is to be made known to all mankind. The purpose of this record of the grace of God was that helplessly lost sinners might respond with what Paul calls here at the end of Romans, the obedience of Faith to the gospel for salvation.

Satan, of course, has deceived the majority of the human race to pursue instead the obedience of works for salvation; and that never works. People try to mix the payment of Jesus Christ for sins with their own human good works to secure salvation, and in the process they actually negate the grace policy of God and therefore they cannot be saved. Ephesians 2:8-9 says that God saves on the basis of grace. Romans 11:6 tells us that grace and works are mutually incompatible and they are mutually exclusive. So, if you try to slip in a little of your human works, you've denied the grace basis for salvation and you will not be saved. That's why a large majority numbering into the millions of people who attend church regularly will never go to Heaven. They're going to a church system where they believe that they must live a good life. They must add water baptism. They must take the Lord's Supper. They must do any number of human rituals and works in order to keep saved. Therefore, they have never approached God on the basis of grace and they are lost.

Those who are not taught the mind of God through the doctrines of Scripture, of course, are always easy prey for Satan. People motivated by Satan in our world attack the authority of the Bible as the voice of God. They are all rebels like Cain.

Donahue had a program this past week. I saw a small portion of it. It was a pornography king and queen in New York City whose program from midnight to 4:30 in the morning has become so vile that even the city of New York has now decreed that they are going to be off the air. You'd have been shocked by the blasphemous remarks that came out of the mouths of this man and woman, their hatred for the Bible, their ridicule of fundamentalist Christians, their antagonism toward biblical morality, and the utter vileness of what they were promoting, the moral corruption that they were declaring every American has a right to under the First Amendment.

Make no mistake about it, people who are motivated by Satan do not like the Bible and they don't like you people who believe that the Bible is the voice of God. Satan instead promotes religions which are man centered instead of Christ centered. The glory then goes to man and not to God. Human reason, which has been contaminated and disoriented by the sin nature, is placed above the doctrines of Scripture when it comes to determining how one goes to Heaven. So, people come up with their own plans and their own plans are always wrong. God's plan of grace salvation is the only one that is right. Only when God sovereignly chooses to break through man's Old Sin Nature blindness, therefore, and reveal grace salvation, does that individual get on the right track for Heaven. It is important to remember that. By nature, we don't like to go to Heaven by grace. By nature, we don't like to receive salvation as a gift. It is only when God breaks through that suddenly we see that that's the only way and there is no other way. Today, the answer to eternal life in Heaven is the policy of grace under which God is operating in the church age of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The natural state of our souls is one of confusion until the Word of God, the Bible, brings us to spiritual sanity. When we neglect the learning of doctrines, we are left to be victimized by the poisons which are fed up to our souls by the Old Sin Nature. Without the knowledge of doctrine to stabilize and give you orientation, the Sin Nature will pour up weakness and disorientation and deceit to your mind, and you will act upon them. The lives of Christians, there are many sorrows and confusions because they stop learning and responding with a positive volition to the Word of God.

**The Mystery of the Church**

That's why it's inconceivable to me that any Christian in this congregation, in this membership would not be storming into this room Sunday morning and Sunday night. If you don't and maybe you don't feel like it, ... sometimes people tell me that. They say 'I know I should be there, but I just don't go.' I understand that. The Sin Nature is got you hooked in a deceitful way. What you need to do is go to God and say, 'Almighty God, I have a serious problem and I need to have this spiritual problem resolved because I'm so dumb. I don't even know that I ought to be in church services morning and evening. I'm so stupid that I think there is something else that's important at that point in time, and I substitute that for being in the presence of instruction in the Word of God. Just admit that to God. If you had a serious physical sickness, you wouldn't stand around and hesitate to tell Him that you need some resolution of the problem. You'd be charging right up there if you've got any sense to the one person who can help you. And when you have this kind of an attitude that, 'well, it's nice to go to church,' instead of 'I'll die if I don't go to church,' it's like you will die if you don't have the physical healing you need, then you will get on track when you realize that it's going to cost you your spiritual well-being not to be here. I understand that you may not want to, but what I'm telling you is to ask God to overcome a serious defect in your character and you're thinking. Don't just excuse yourself. One of the great doctrines which is at issue today, is that which is dealing with this whole issue, the church, the body of Christ, what Christianity is all about. Much for you is personally at stake in this truth.

The apostle Paul speaks of the Church as the invisible body of Christ, expressed in a variety of visible organizations. God is forming in the Church from Jew and Gentile during this present age of grace, a special people for Himself. The Church was never meant to fulfill the covenant promises made to Israel. All those yet are to be fulfilled in the future. The Church was never revealed in the Old Testament though the Old Testament had gaps in its revelation for the Church Age. And the prophetic Scriptures, which delineate for us the progress of the Church and its ultimate end, is now more fascinating than ever. Do you realize that Saddam Hussein has put together a situation that has contributed enormously to a world cooperating together? It is not without reason that this man has been brought on the scene under the providence of God. He is fulfilling the great mission of God. He is bringing nations, of all things, our president and the butcher Gorbachev of Russia are sitting together at Helsinki even as we speak on how they can cooperate in the peace effort together. Would you have thought that could be possible previous to last November? This man is bringing the antagonists of the world together and creating a psychological condition of nations working together as one solid world group. It is a preparatory stage for the antichrist to take over and rule the world. Nations do not change their habits overnight. They have to be oriented to changes of attitude and outlook and this kind of cooperation. We live not only in an exciting era of human history, we are on the downside of the age of the Church. We are on the end of the line. We are no longer talking ages, we are talking a few years.

This church therefore must be understood. It is a unique body of believers in God's plan of the ages with unique privileges and the apostle Paul thinks it's so important that he gets to the end of one of the most tremendous books of the New Testament, the greatest dissertation on the grace of God and Free Grace Salvation, and what does he do? He stops and talks about the mystery of the Church. Because if you don't understand this, Satan's got you. Once you understand the church, you will understand freedom. You will understand personal grace. You will understand functioning in the devil's world. You'll understand how to make yourself rich for all eternity. You will understand how to have a life now that is significant to yourself and to everybody around you. God's main purpose today is that every Christian may learn to obey all that God has commanded for the Church Age believer.

Where did the church come from? To understand the church, you must understand its relationship to the Jews' religious system, which we call Judaism. Judaism is God's way of dealing with mankind in the Old Testament. Christianity is His way of dealing with mankind in the New Testament. These 2 systems are totally different. They are 2 totally different eras or dispensations. Judaism is older and it is more well established in the minds of people. It was there for centuries. So people still resist the fact that Judaism has been set aside. Certainly the Jews resist that idea. So, people fail to view Christianity as something entirely separate from Judaism. They think it grew out of Judaism. They hang on to elements of Judaism and try to incorporate it into Christianity. They do not understand the distinctions between the law era and the grace era.

In the recent articles run in the Times Herald on coach Tom Landry of the Dallas Cowboys, the only coach the Cowboys have ever had to this day. In the articles, they go side by side, Landry's summary of his autobiography and somebody else's who's writing an opposition biography of Landry. This commentator thought he was very cute by challenging Landry's image of Christianity because he is known as a Christian man of integrity. So, he said very smugly in this article how he had asked Landry whether it bothered him that he played football games actually working on the Sabbath day. I know every one of you could have answered that question, but Landry couldn't. Instead, he came up with a weak kneed response of, 'well, that's how the system works.' Boy, how much sin can you cover with that kind of answer? He obviously had not been trained enough in doctrine to assert to this smart-alec, 'You have asked a Biblical question, therefore, I must give you a Biblical answer. Number one, Sunday is not the Sabbath day. Saturday is the Sabbath Day because it belongs to the era of Judaism. In the era of the Church and Christianity, Sunday is the Lord's Day that we have set aside as a special day. But it is no different from every other day of the week. We are free on Sunday in contrast to the Sabbath Saturday, we are free to be very active. On the Sabbath day, you have to rest. That's what the word meant. But on Sunday you can play football and beat your brains out and it's perfectly OK.' He had an opportunity to put this guy in his place and make the distinction between Israel and the Church. Isn't it amazing that Christians can miss something as pivotal and crucial as that?

There was a problem in the early church. For 7 years, there were no Gentiles in the Church until Cornelius came in with his family. When they came in, and then Gentiles up in Antioch, Syria were coming in. This caused a lot of confusion because it was hard even for the apostles to believe that Gentiles were going to be part of this new body. They thought it was only going to be Jews. So, they had a church conference in Jerusalem. You can read about in Acts 15:13-21. At the conference, James, the pastor-teacher of the Jerusalem church, stood up and summarized their conclusions in which he said: God has a program for Israel, He has never rescinded that; He is yet going to build up what James called the Tabernacle of David (because it's going to be the kingdom of David) that He has temporarily postponed; that while He builds of it for Himself a body of people from Jews and Gentiles for His Son, the Church. And when He has completed the Church, James said, He will return to building up the fallen Tabernacle of David. So, he made it very clear that God's covenants to Israel had not been rescinded. They will be fulfilled. They are now in abeyance while God is dealing with a whole new thing. God is building an aristocracy of believers such as the Jews never dreamed of being, a real aristocracy of believers in the Church who know their stuff, who have what no saint in history has ever had before: God the Holy Spirit living 24 hours a day within him, and the Word of God clearly fully disclosed before him, the full canon of Scripture fully taught the principles of Scripture so that the Christian who knows doctrine and is in temporal fellowship with the Holy Spirit is a winner in everything you do in life. The connection is impossible to beat. This is what carried the humanity of our Lord when He was on this earth. The indwelling of the Spirit and His knowledge of doctrine took Him right to the cross and right through it. So, the Jerusalem Council they settled that right now, God is dealing with a different group of people. The time of these things were set in order: first the Church, then the return to Israel at the Second Coming of Christ.

The Church had a very separate beginning from Judaism. John 1:17 points that out. Israel had rejected the kingdom offer of Jesus Christ. That is one of the things that Paul indicated in Romans 15:8. "For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers." Jesus Christ came. His first mission was to fulfill the covenants based upon the covenants with Abraham, fulfill the covenants with the Jewish people. What do they do? They murdered Him. They rejected His fulfillment. They would not have Him rule over them as their king though He was the only one who had the legal right to do so in the line of David. What do they do? John 1:11 tells us that instead, "He [Christ] came to His own [The Jewish people], and those who were His own did not receive Him." So, the Jews rejected the kingdom offer. And out of that rejection came the crucifixion of Christ. That laid the groundwork for the new age of the Church. Jesus turned them from Jewish rejection, and He left them on their own in their rebellion.

**Jesus Reveals the Secret**

If you turn to Matthew 16:18, we have a very pivotal Scripture that you should understand about the Church. Matthew 16:18, the Lord Jesus Christ has stepped outside of the promised land. He's at a place called Ceasarea Philippi, which is gentile territory. And interestingly enough, while in gentile territory He reveals the new plan. The secret is broken. Matthew 16:18, "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church [5 enormously significant words]; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it." Jesus moved over to this gentile territory, Ceasarea Philippi, His disciples came with Him. This statement follows a remark, an inquiry, concerning who He was that begins up in verse 13. "Now when Jesus came into the district of Ceasarea Philippi, He began asking His disciples, saying, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist; and others Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' And Simon Peter answered and said, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.'" He had answered exactly right. In that answer he indicated that he had a totally different view, the disciples had a totally different view than the rest of the Jews who had rejected Jesus Christ.

Then Jesus goes on to say verse 18. Upon verse 18 is built the whole concept of the Roman Catholic papacy. So, you should know what verse 18 is saying. In verse 18 we read, "And I also say to you are Peter, and upon this rock." The Greek word here is "Petra," this rock. The word "Petra" p e t r a, means "a mass of rock." We would say "bedrock." It refers to Jesus Christ specifically when He says, "This rock," He is referring to the testimony that Peter has just given about who Jesus is. Christ is the bedrock upon which the church will be built. Now, just before it, He says to him, "you are Peter." The word Peter looks like this in the Greek Bible, it's "Petros," p e t r o s. The word petros means pebble, it's "a detached stone;" two very dramatically different words in the Greek Bible. Petros, that's what Peter's name is. But that was just a little rock, something you could take and throw. Jesus is making kind of a play on words. He says, "You're called a pebble, ... you're a pebble. But upon this bedrock of your testimony concerning Jesus Christ as the Son of the living God, I will build My church."

This is confirmed, Christ as the rock, in 1 Corinthians 10:4, where we read, "and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock [Speaking of the children of Israel in the wilderness, drinking water from the rock, from a spiritual rock...] which followed them; and the rock was Christ." When Moses struck that rock and brought water out of it in the wilderness for the people, that rock represented Christ as the water of life. And here you have a very clear relationship of the Messiah Savior as the rock.

This is also indicated in Psalm 18:31. The Messiah is viewed as the rock. Psalm 18:31, "For who is God, but the LORD? And who is a rock except our God."

So, this analogy of God as a bedrock is both in the Old Testament and is specifically applied in the New Testament to Jesus Christ. It is connected back to Peter's confession. This word Petros is masculine. This word Petra is feminine. That's important. Petros is masculine, a little pebble, because it's used here as this man's name. But Petra is the bedrock and it is referring to that testimony of Christ as the living God. What Peter was, was a chip off the big rock, Christ. All believers in the Church Age, therefore, are called living stones. We're all living Petros's. 1 Peter 2:5 indicates that we who are members of the body of Christ are all a living stone built into that structure. Peter was merely one of the living stones making up the universal church. Jesus Christ was the foundation, not Peter as the first Roman Catholic priest claiming apostolic authority.

1 Corinthians 3:11, Paul says, "For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Christ Jesus." Christ Jesus is the Petra. He's the bedrock upon which the Church, the body of Christ, is built.

You should remember, you should be aware of the fact that in the Roman Catholic Church there was no such thing as the Bishop of Rome being the leading bishop and being known as the Pope, the papa of the church until after the year 600. For 6 centuries, the Roman Catholics can't even go back to their records, Roman law, church law, church records, not once can they say 'you see here, even in our church records, we looked upon the bishop of Rome as the leader of all the church and the vicar, the representative of Christ on this earth.' As a matter of fact, Augustine, who lived in the fourth century, said if anybody tries from Rome to exercise authority in North Africa, which is where Augustine operated from, he will discover our resistance. Augustine, who was the Father of the Roman Catholic Church, said, 'Don't let the bishop of Rome come over here to try to exercise authority over the churches in North Africa.' So, this whole concept of the pope as the representative voice of God upon this earth is a total distortion of that Scripture.

Nevertheless, Matthew 16:18 is an important Scripture for us as Christians to understand that upon Peter's testimony of who Jesus was as the Son of God, an organism would grow called the Church, and the gates of Hades itself would never overpower it. Notice the words, "I [a new work to be accomplished by Christ alone from heaven] will [It's a future event from this point of time as Jesus stood there in Ceasarea Philippi, it was not in existence in the Old Testament like the A-mill's try to claim.] build [The Church had to come into existence by a gradual process over a period of time, one believer being added to the body as a living stone, one by one, and this living stone being incorporated into the body of Christ by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, of which 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 describe how at the point of salvation you were baptized into this body.]" "I will build My [My belongs to Jesus Christ. It is His church, My] church [The body, the word church means called out one's, called out assembly of believers.]"

In Matthew 16:19, the Roman Catholics say this is our proof that the Pope speaks for God. "And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." This was indeed given in a special way to Peter on the day of Pentecost, because he is the one who opened the door to Heaven with his sermon that day.

But the keys later, as in John 20:22 and 23, you will discover that the same keys were given to all the disciples, not just to Peter. Let's look at that. John 20:22 and 23, all of you had that key the same as Peter did. John 20:22 and 23, "And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.'" What He is talking about here is the capacity of the believer to give the information for salvation. That's rare. A lot of Christians do not have this key. They don't even know how to open the door to salvation because they don't understand free grace salvation. All the Lordship Salvation people have lost the key that unlocks the door into eternal life. You can tell a person how to go to Heaven and that action, if believed, will be sealed in Heaven. You can keep this thing from him and you will deny him access into Heaven. If he's been elected by God, somebody else will open the door for him. But it is within your power to open the door into eternal life by your testimony of the gospel.

This new body of believers officially began on the Day of Pentecost. It's described in Acts 2:1-4 with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, as the Holy Spirit came down for the first time and fused together 100 and 20 believers into a group called the Church, which means 'the called out ones.' In John 14:16-20, we have a picture of church age relationships with the Holy Spirit and with the Lord Jesus Christ. John 14:16-20, Jesus says, "And I will ask the Father, He will give you another Helper that He may be with you forever; [Jesus is about ready to return to Heaven. They need another helper, and that's going to be the Holy Spirit to carry them through in Satan's world.] 17. That is the spirit of truth, [God the Holy Spirit] whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. After a little while the world will behold Me no more; but you will behold Me; because I live, you shall live also. In that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you and Me, and I and you." And there is the picture of Church Age relationship. Christ, who is united to the Father and indwells you and you are in Him. You are irrevocably tied to the second person of the Trinity. Every day of your life, Christ lives within you. He goes where you go; He is party to everything you do and think and say. He is there for fellowship. He is there to be your companion. You are indwelt by the Holy Spirit every moment of the day. He is there to enable you, to empower you, to help you to use doctrine in a way so that you do right.

Acts 1:5 says that the baptism of the Holy Spirit will happen on the day of Pentecost. You can compare John 14:20. That's what took place. Acts 11:15 says that the baptism of the Holy Spirit happened for the first time on the day of Pentecost, and that was the beginning of the Church Age. It is the baptism of the Holy Spirit which is so distorted by the charismatics that is your entrance into the body of Christ. That happened for the first time on the day of Pentecost. And each time a believer trusts in Christ, he enters the body of Christ through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. So, the Church started in one spot in Jerusalem. Within 30 years it covered the known world. In Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost these believers were made one in Christ. They were forever united in an aristocracy of believers never known in the history of the world before.

At that point, just as now, when a person is born again, he is also filled with the Holy Spirit. He is in full fellowship with God the Father. You know the principal of the inner and outer circles: of stepping out of that fellowship with sin, coming back in with confession of known sins. On this day of Pentecost, these 120 believers were given special spiritual gifts. Each of them was given an ability with which to serve God and enrich their eternity in Heaven. Some of those gifts do not exist anymore. One of the most prominent ones on the day of Pentecost was speaking in foreign languages. That one was completed when the Scriptures were completed.

**New Relationships**

These Jewish believers were now placed in Christ with some brand new relationships, [5] things that nobody who had been born again had ever experienced before in the history of the human race. One of them was the baptism of the Holy Spirit, to be joined irrevocably to the second person of the Trinity. No Jew would have ever dared to dream of that kind of a relationship. Secondly, to be indwelt permanently by the Spirit of God. Nobody would have imagined such a thing. Third, to have spiritual gifts, at least one. A lot of you people have more than one with which to serve God. Some of them have been phased out, nine of them still exist. [Next,] to be regenerated: that is to be made spiritually alive, to be born again. [Finally,] to be sealed: God the Holy Spirit puts a stamp upon you, which means you cannot ever be lost again. You're destined for Heaven. After Pentecost, these Jewish believers were the Church and they received the same 5 things as born again people as we do today.

In Acts 19, verses one through 7 you have some Jewish believers who have been saved under John and you see the incident that they didn't understand how to come into the new age. At that time, Paul had to put his hands upon them to give them the Holy Spirit, to bring them into the new age. Later, that system, that way was phased out after the period of transition from Judaism to Christianity, people immediately entered the body of Christ.

So, with that little brief review, I again remind you that you are a distinct people in Christ as believers. You have a separate origin and you have separate, very powerful, distinctive relationships to the living God.

**The Final Verse in Romans - A Benediction**

With that final touch upon the mystery, the secret of the church and its reality in our lives, the center of everything that we do now, the apostle Paul comes to the final verse of his letter in Romans 16:27. He concludes the epistle with once more a final benediction. When he completed the portion of this letter which dealt particularly with the Jewish people, and you'll remember chapters 9:10-11, he ended with a benediction in Romans 11:36. When he came to the end of the main body of doctrinal teachings in Chapter 15, he again ended with a benediction, Romans 15:33. After completing the section on special greetings to Christian brethren in Rome, he again concludes with a benediction in Romans 16:24. Now he comes to the very end of the letter and he ends with one more brief benediction.

**To the Only Wise God**

He says, "To the only wise God." The word "only" is the Greek word "monos." Paul directs the final word of praise to the sovereign God. He refers to the only eternal God that exists. In Isaiah 44:6, Isaiah puts it this way: "Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me.'" Paul reminds us once more that he's speaking about the only God that there is. He is in contrast to all the false imagined god of mankind. One of the prominent gods in the world today is Allah. Don't forget Allah is a demon. The Allah of Islam is a demon god. He is not the God of Heaven. Hinduism has its many gods. The New Age has its human gods. Certainly Mormonism have totally distorted God into an exalted human being. The gods of man's religion are represented in idols: behind those idols, they are worshiping demons. The true God, Paul reminds us, stands alone. He is the absolute sovereign king of the universe. In Deuteronomy, Moses near the time of his death, Deuteronomy 32:39 says "See now that I, I am He, and there is no god besides Me; It is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded, and it is I who heal; and there is no one who can deliver from My hand." Do you understand what that verse is saying? It says that this God is not just the only God, He is totally sovereign. He is king. Nobody tells Him what to do. "I am He. There is no god beside me." He decides who is going to go to death. He decides who is going to stay alive. He decides who is going to get wounded and survive and be healed and those who will not survive and be healed. There is no one who can deliver you out of the hand of God when He decides to take some action with you. He is the sovereign and true God. What Paul has taught in his letter to the Roman Christians has come from this true God, this only God. Paul gives true information about the holiness, the wrath, the grace, the gospel, the absolute righteousness, and the peace of this only God. The living and true God alone, therefore, has the right to make rules for mankind and to judge accordingly.

The true Godhead, of course, is made up of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, of one essence. Paul says He's the only God. He is also the "wise God," [wise is the Greek word] sophos. This word [sophos] refers to the capacity to apply information appropriately, knowing how to make things work right. God is omniscient, so He's not limited in knowledge the way we are. God's wisdom is His divine viewpoint applied to life situations. Human wisdom is often the height of stupidity in reference to the real world. People think that they can trust their own reasoning powers and arrive at wisdom. They can't. Instead, people end up doing what Proverbs 14:12 says they end up on the way of death. Everything that is right in the world today comes from God's divine viewpoint wisdom. Everything which is wrong in the world today comes from man's human viewpoint wisdom. James 3:13-17 make that contrast between God's wisdom and man's wisdom. It was Satan you will remember who thought that he could arrive at wisdom apart from God and he bombed out completely. The result since has been chaos for angels, for mankind, and for nature. The only source of smarts in the world is God, and He alone can get the credit.

God makes arrogant man with his confidence in his own wisdom look pretty stupid. In 1 Corinthians 1:19-20 Paul says, "For it is written, 'I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE.' Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?" And every day God is frustrating man's human wisdom. He has been doing that since ancient times, frustrating the confidence of man's wisdom, which wants to operate apart from biblical principles. In Isaiah 29:13-14 the prophet says, "Then the Lord said, 'Because this people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote, Therefore behold, I will once again deal marvelously with this people, wondrously marvelous; And the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, And the discernment of their discerning men shall be concealed.'" Isn't it amazing how often the smartest people in the world, the leadership of our world, the leadership of the institutions of our society, can make the dumbest moves and be exposed for being the fools that they are? Why, because they have low IQs? No, because they are ignoring the principles of the Word of God. So every day, God is frustrating human wisdom and exalting His wisdom. People do not possess God's wisdom, of course, until they're born again spiritually and can be enlightened by the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 2:6-13 make it clear that until you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and you're in fellowship with Him, you never have any real wisdom.

This is, of course, talking about Theos, God, He is the only God. Here Paul is referring to the "wise God." It is God the Father who is the only God, and who is the wise God. You'll notice if you look back up to verse 25 that Paul begins the sentence and he sort of interrupts himself. In verse 25 he says, "Now to Him who is able," and then he goes on and says several other things and actually it's in verse 27 that he picks up what he started to say: "Now to Him who is able." Who's that? Verse 27, "to the only wise God." So, he's talking here in all this section about God the Father, the only true wise God. In verse 25, he focuses on the power of God to save, "to Him, who is able." In verse 27, he focuses on God's marvelous plan for salvation. This is through, by means of, Jesus Christ. John. 14:6 says nobody comes to the Father except through Jesus Christ.

**Through Christ, Glory**

And through Jesus Christ, we bring to God the Father "glory." This is the Greek word "doxa," and doxa means to honor, to praise, to exalt. God alone is entitled to be glorified by all mankind because of what we read in Romans 5:8. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." On the basis of that expression of love, God is the only one that deserves glory. I am very uncomfortable when human beings are exalted. I'm very uncomfortable when people in spiritual ministries are praised to too far as if they were the source of this great glory and blessing and impact. Always remember that the agent is a frail creature who might disappoint you somewhere along the line. The source of blessing is through that creature who may be instructing you, but it is from the God who is totally reliable and your eyes must be on Him. You glorify Him. You do not glorify the communicator. God is glorified because He directs His love to lost sinners. And then He is to be glorified by us because He didn't wait for us to decide to search Him out. 1 John 4:10 reminds us: "In this is love, not that we loved God [we never would have], but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation [the covering, the satisfaction] for our sins." God is to be glorified because He made the provision and then He went looking for you. In this plan of Free Grace salvation, we have this great comparison to the folly of human plans of salvation. In His loving provision of daily logistical grace, He is to be praised. He is to be praised in His purpose of releasing the believer from the limitations of time and space to reside forever in Heaven with Himself. Someday you will enjoy God forever right there in Heaven. For that, He is to be glorified.

**One Day at a Time Under the Grace of God**

So, I remind you a principle that is easy to forget. We Christians live our lives one day at a time. Those of you who are overwhelmed by something at the moment need to remember that you live your days, you live your life, one day at a time under the grace of God. We serve Him day-by-day, one day at a time, until He relieves us of our command and takes us home to Heaven. That's why we glorify Him, a God who expects us and enables us to live one day at a time. And as long as there's breath in our bodies and blood in our veins, we are His servants, the servants of the most high God. The outward man indeed of the believer is being daily eroded by the sin nature; the body is breaking down. A lady on the phone called me. She has a physical problem. Last night as we spoke, she just broke down for a moment and said, "I just wish I could get well again." At her age, that's not going to be easy to do. The sin nature, the older you get the more rapidly erodes the body. But the amazing thing is that we glorify this God, whatever our stage, because we live it one day at a time and He gives us capacity for that day. The outward man while it is deteriorating, we must remember that the inward man at the same time is rapidly growing daily in the grace of God. Every day you're becoming more Christlike if you're functioning on the Word of God.

And Paul says, that this glory to this only God who is wise is through Jesus Christ to be glorified "forever." The Greek says, "unto the ages of the ages." He to whom, God the Father through Jesus Christ, the glory belongs to the ages of ages.

Then Paul ends with the word "Amen." This is a fitting ending to his letter which expounds the grace of God; to ascribe eternal glory to God the Father, and then to close with this pronouncement "Amen," which is an expression of confirmation. Paul ends his letter to the Christians in Rome with a very moving, adoring upward look to God the Father. Paul stands overwhelmed at this moment with awe that God could and would save sinners at such cost to Himself. While they were yet sinners, while they were yet His enemies, while they yet hated Him, that's what He came through for us. We the redeemed indeed have good reason to glorify God daily in our conduct, in our service and with our treasures. You glorify God in your conduct, in your service, and with your treasures. We have good reason to do that. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all, amen.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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