

For God's Glory

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Preacher: Steve Jeffrey

[0 : 00] It'll be a couple of weeks and in a couple of weeks it'll be 486 years since William Tyndale was strangled to death and his body was burned at the stake for translating the Bible into the English language.

So it is no small matter for you to have the Bible open this morning and to engage what he gave his life for.

And he gave his life for it because he saw, was someone who experienced the gospel, transformation his life as the hope of all of humanity and we need to see what he saw.

And so his life was changed, transformed. In fact, it's reported that the very last words he spoke were a prayer. Lord, open the eyes of the King of England that he might see glory of Christ in the gospel and his life be transformed.

And so in the introduction to the book of Romans, in the edition of the English Bible that he translated two years before his death, which he was killed at the age of 42, he wrote this.

[1 : 30] This epistle, this epistle, this epistle is the principle and the most excellent part of the New Testament. Most pure gospel and a light and a way in unto the whole of scripture.

I think it is important that every Christian not only know it by rote, know it by heart, know it by heart, but also to exercise himself there in it continually.

In other words, put it to practice continually. No person can read it too often or study it too well. For the more it is studied, the easier it is.

And the more it is searched, the more precious things are found in it. So great a treasure of spiritual things lie hid therein.

That's what we've been looking at since the first of May this year, the book of Romans. Romans is the most closely reasoned and compelling book of the New Testament. The massive theology of the first 11 chapters logically proceeds from the statement of the gospel in the very opening verses of chapter 1 to the need of the gospel that you see in chapters 1 to 3.

[3 : 01] Human sin. Next, it describes the provision of a right standing with God that comes by faith in Christ in chapters 3 and 4.

Then our position in Christ is beautifully described in chapter 5 as God making a new humanity in Christ. And the secret of our spiritual victory of our overcoming in the end is mapped out in chapters 6, 7 and 8.

Chapters 9 to 11 is a vindication of God's work through all of history to find its culmination in Christ for his glory.

And as Paul concludes his massive theological argument, his foundational theology gives way to worship, which is where all theology ends.

With worship of God. Chapter 36. Everything is about him.

[4 : 19] To him be glory forever. Amen. Amen. Then follows on the conclusion of that, a compelling call to live out the theology in practical Christian living in chapters 12 to 15.

Paul exhorts, he commands, and he encourages us to practice our theology by using our gifts to serve one another in love. We are to subject ourselves to the authority over us.

Living by the law of love in the church, offering all of life to God. That's the magnificent structure of this greatest theological essays ever written.

There is nothing like the book of Romans. What we have in front of us is a transforming worldview where I see my life in clarity and where it fits for all time and eternity.

As I began this series on the 1st of May, I said that there is no doubt about the power of the book of Romans to radically change lives. And the reason Romans has proved to be so life-changing and history-shaping is because of the gospel.

[5 : 55] It's because of the gospel. The gospel changes lives. It can change your life. It's because of the gospel.

It can change your life.

heart has he brought transformation and change in your life over these past few months? I'm not asking you, first and foremost, when you become a Christian. If you have, that is remarkable and massive change in your life. I'm asking you, for those who are Christian, what has changed for you? If nothing's changed, I grieve that that would be the case. Hear these words. Recently, an ex-pastor of St. Paul's visited this church, had face-to-face contact with a number of you. He said two things to me afterwards.

It's wonderful to see the transformation of that person over the last five to six years, how they've grown. He also said, these people, nothing's changed. They're still the same.

[8 : 17] Still the same. And so now we come to the last chapter of the fitting final words of this whole letter. Three points in your St. Paul's app. Partners for God's glory, glory stealers, and glory to God alone. So if you've got the St. Paul's app, open it up along with your Bibles. Not just because Tyndall gave his life for it, but because it is the Word of God, and that it is through God's Word that he brings transformation to our life. So first of all, partners for God's glory.

Now, as Paul winds up his letter, he sends greetings to 26 individuals, 24 of whom he names. Now, this is not just a skip over irrelevant list of names. You know, Paul's getting a little bit personal at the end of it kind of thing. This is a glimpse. What we have here is a glimpse of God's purpose for all of Romans. This is God's new society that the gospel builds. This is what God has been doing through the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ for his glory. What you notice in this list of names is the diversity of the early church, race, rank, and gender. What is confirmed in this list is what we know already. The church in Rome had Jew and Gentile members. Aquila and Priscilla in verse 3 were Jewish, as are Adronicus and Junia in verse 7, and Herodian in verse 11. Some of the names on the list were probably of royal rank or certainly high rank in society. Aristopoulos in verse 10 and Narcissus in verse 11. Both are said to be heads of household or an estate. It is most likely that Aristopoulos was the grandson of Herod the Great and of the current Roman emperor in the day, Claudius. Narcissus was a well-known and a rich and powerful person who exercised a very significant influence over emperor Claudius. These are people in the royal court. And yet in a different way, the most distinguished here is Rufus. What a name. It's a name that's really got to come back on, don't you think?

You know, like parents have got to, someone's got to call their son Rufus somewhere. Verse 13. What makes him distinguished? His father is Simon of Cyrene, the man who carried the cross of Christ to the place of execution. And yet on the other end of the social rank here are Ampliatus in verse 8, Urbanus in verse 9, Hermes in 12, and Philogochus and Julia in verse 12. They are common names for slaves in the first century in the Roman Empire. You had people in the court. You had people who were slaves in the church in Rome. Then there's the gender diversity of the church. Nine of the 26 persons here are greeted are women. And Paul particularly marks out four of them in the deepest level of encouragement in this list. Singles out Mary, Tryphena and Tryphosa, who are twins, and Persis as having worked hard. The word here implies a strong exertion for the church, for serving Christ.

This, along with the comments about Phoebe in verse 1, shows that women were active and influential in the ongoing ministry and the mission of the church. Priscilla was one of Paul's fellow workers, Junia, a well-known missionary, and Phoebe, a deacon, a servant of the church. And so we have here in this list of names a picture of God's pattern for his new society in Jesus as a richly diverse one.

But the second thing we see in this list is the unity of this richly diverse people. There is a profound unity that transcends the differences. Four times Paul calls his friends here as being in Christ. Five times as being in the Lord. Twice he uses the language of a family unit in referring to them as sisters and brothers. He even calls some of them his beloved.

[14 : 04] My beloved. It's often translated as dear friends in the English. He also mentions two experiences that strengthen Christian unity. Namely, they are fellow workers, partners, verses 3 and 9, and they are fellow sufferers in verses 4 and 7.

Not just a mere glimpse into the makeup of the church in Rome. The church is the only community in the world where Jesus Christ has broken down the barriers of division.

salvation. Why? Because we saw in chapter 5 that his whole purpose of salvation was not so that you could go to heaven because he's building a new society for his glory. That's what he's doing. A new people for his glory.

So let me take you back very quickly into chapter 15 as we looked at last week. Not because James didn't do it well, but because it serves my purpose here right now.

Chapter 15. As Paul is finishing his handling of how weak and strong should relate to each other in the church, he tells them the purpose of the church.

[15:48] The purpose of St. Paul's Chatswood. And how Christ has set the pattern for how to build the church. The purpose is in verses 5 and 6.

That's why Christ has saved you.

It's why he builds his church. It's why he has bought it and builds it. Not isolated individual worship, but unified voices, whether speaking or singing for the glory of God.

That's the purpose. Displaying the magnificence, the glory of God is the aim of the church.

Then in verse 7, Paul gives, this is chapter 15 still, gives Christ as the pattern for building his church. He says, Therefore, welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you.

[17:10] Why? For the glory of God. That is, Jesus does everything he does, including welcoming you into his family as his much-loved child, building his church for the glory of God.

You are saved by Christ for the glory of God. You are welcomed into friendship for the glory of God. He is humbling. Sorry, this is humbling because it means that we are never the final reason for anything.

That is culture shaping in an age of excessive individualism, where everything exists for my reasoning and my purpose.

Romans says, No! You exist for something greater. Something more joy-filling. Has it not escaped anyone that the more excessive we become in our individualism, the more anxiety rises in our culture?

It is gloriously good news because we should not want anything else but the glory of God.

[18:43] God gets the glory and we get the joy. Then in verses 8, I'm still back in chapter 15.

Verses 8 and 9, Paul underscores Christ's pattern of building the church by showing that this is the very reason he came for the nations.

We're in mission month. This is the reason right here. For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, in order that the Gentiles, the nations, might glorify God for his mercy.

Christ came to prove that God is faithful to his promises and to be glorified to the nations, amongst the nations.

That is why evangelism, it's why missions, it's why church planning, it's why treasuring together and St. Paul's exists.

St. Paul exists. Not for our name, but for God's glory. The vision of the church, the Roman gives us here in this list of names, is a family drawn from every nation, tribe, people and language who are singing God's praise from mouths and hearts unified in him, in the gospel.

[20:15] And it is to be the vision of this church, laboring and suffering together to bring glory to God for our joy. What a picture we have.

And that's why Paul makes this sharp transition. It feels like a very sharp transition into verse 17, from greeting this church with warmth to a warning, this church of glory stealers.

In verse 17, he warns the church family about divisions and obstacles. He's warning those who would actively cause division.

Described in verse 18 as not serving our Lord, but their own appetites. How are these glory stealers recognised?

They are divisive. They teach what is contrary to the gospel. They are self-serving. And they persuade people through their flattery.

[21:25] They have no love for Jesus in the end. They love themselves. They have a rampant, expressive individualism.

It's about them. They have no desire to be his willing servants and disciples. They are utterly self-centred. And their desire is to rob you of gospel hope and joy.

Now, one of the subtle ways that this has been happening across the Western church for decades is that the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is less about divine rescue mission for God's glory and

more about Jesus coming as on a self-help mission to help you realise your true self. It's turning the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ around to the point where you are not in desperate need of rescue that you are dead in your transgressions and sins into a he saw potential in you. And so the gospel becomes about you. Turns Jesus into a love guru who is there to affirm my opinions, to affirm my decisions in life and it results in a discipleship that is radically individualistic where the church exists for my needs, to provide programs for me and my needs.

[23 : 19] It's about Jesus being my saviour. His job is to provide for me eternal life in heaven but has no knowledge of his lordship over my life right now.

Where I submit to him, Jesus becomes the extra fuel in my tank to get to the destination that I've chosen for my life. It knows little of sacrifice, of service, it only knows a life of comfort and security all in the name of Christ.

The late J.I. Packer called it laid-back religion. He did not know of the term excessive individualism when he wrote that book.

And yet excessive individualism is the culture that we are all marinating in right now. Everything exists for my glory.

And it robs God of his glory and it robs you of gospel joy and hope. So how are these glory stealers stopped?

[24 : 43] We're back into chapter 16, verse 19. I want you to be wise about what is good and innocent about what is evil.

The way to stop glory stealers is in fact to grow in wisdom and obedience to God.

That is, glory stealers are stopped the more and more we see and we are conformed to God's glory. And what that means is that against every bit of teaching you hear, against every moral issue you face, every choice that you are confronted with every day, there are at least three questions to throw against it.

Does it agree with scripture? Does it glorify the Lord Jesus? Does it promote goodness for others?

[25 : 47] Three questions. In other words, is it about me giving my life for the glory of God?

Does this decision that I'm making now make much of me or make much of Christ? And the assurance is for the Christian who continues to pursue that life that the ultimate glory stealer, Satan himself, verse 20, will be crushed.

Satan was defeated by the death and the resurrection of Jesus, but he is yet to concede his defeat. This is the great encouragement here for the church of Jesus Christ.

Satan, who is the great liar, the great liar, and one of his chief weapons is divisive, half-truth gospel that puts you at the center of everything.

And when you're at the center of everything, it means you must push other people away. Everyone else is a threat to you being at the center because everyone else wants your throne.

[27 : 13] And it divides the church again and again and again and again and again and again. And the great news of verse 20 is that Satan has been, he is being, and he will be defeated.

And we, the church, are called to resist him. And the promise here in these verses is that we, the church of Jesus Christ, are not passive in this.

We play a part in the victory, Christ's victory over Satan. How does that happen? Mission month.

Well, more specifically, mission. Satan suffers a blow every single time someone puts their faith in Jesus Christ and receives his righteousness and escapes eternal damnation.

That's punching Satan, poof, in the belly. Every time that happens. We take part in this victory every single time we obey our heavenly father joyfully.

[28 : 28] And every time God's people worship together in faith and unity. and every time we sacrifice for God's mission to advance it in this world.

We play a part in crushing Satan. The great liar and deceiver. And so that brings me to the end of Romans.

What's the ending of Romans? The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. That is, what Paul does here at the end is he takes us back to the beginning.

He takes us back to the gospel. Back to chapter one. His aim is for us to give glory to God by reminding us once more of the gospel.

He reminds us firstly of what the gospel does. In verse 25, he says that the gospel is God's way of establishing us. The gospel is the power of God.

[29 : 40] The gospel is how God changes people and changes their futures. Paul doesn't simply say here, the gospel is able to save you.

I mean, that's how it's normally communicated in the Western church. The gospel is God's way of saving you.

It is. But he says here, it's God's way of establishing you. The gospel is not only the entry point of the Christian life.

It is also the way that we continue in, we grow in, and we enjoy the Christian life in Jesus. The gospel saves us.

The gospel transforms us. In other words, Paul says here, the way to beat the glory stealers, continue in the gospel.

[30 : 39] Continue embracing it. Continue applying it to your life. It is the window through which you are to view your life, which you are to view society, which you are to view the world, which you are to view your future.

The gospel window. And then, he reminds us in verse 25 what the gospel is. The message I proclaim is about Jesus Christ.

The center of the gospel is Jesus, the divine man who laid aside his glory, became like us in human form, died on the cross for our sin, rose triumphant over all that is evil and wicked so that we might partake in his glory for God's glory.

Jesus Christ, who now rules as the king over all of creation for all of eternity. The gospel is Jesus. Jesus. No one else can save us.

No one else can change us. The gospel is Jesus Christ, the rescuer and the ruler who was predicted, as it says, has been revealed and is now proclaimed to the ends of the earth.

[32 : 07] Proclaimed, as verse 26 says, so that all nations might believe and obey him in verse 26.

And for 20 centuries since Paul wrote these words, this gospel has been proclaimed and lives have been changed from every language, tribe, people, and nation as they embrace Jesus as saviour and lord for the glory of God and for their joy.

And maybe that's the step you need to take today. And so as we get to the end of Romans, we join with Paul in verse 27, to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ.

Amen. But I'm not finished yet. God's glory, I've used it multiple times.

It's in fact the title of this talk. What is it? God's glory is the beginning, it is the end, it is the purpose of all things.

[33 : 34] It is the pinnacle, it is the top of all of Paul's theological reasoning. It's the thing that binds all of his theology together.

It's the thing and I, for the sake of your time, I really wanted to go through every single chapter of Romans and show you glory of God, glory of God, it comes up in every single chapter and section of this book.

It's what holds it all together. It's the glue. So what does it mean? What does it mean, the glory of God? Well, it's almost impossible to define.

The reason I say that, the word glory is almost the same is the word beauty. It's more like beauty than it is like basketball.

Right? Bear with me. You can define a basketball by saying it's round, it's inflated, it's used to bounce and you've got to put it through this hoop thing.

[34 : 49] it's part of a game. But you can't do the same with the word beauty. As the saying goes, beauty is in the eyes of the beholder.

What might help is to get a definition of the glory of God is to contrast it with the holiness of God, which we can define to a degree.

God is holy means that God is in a class of perfection and greatness and value in and of himself, by himself.

He is incomparable. Nothing compares with him. He defines all things but it's not defined by anything. His holiness is his utterly unique and perfect divine essence.

It determines all that he is, all that he does, and it's determined by nothing and no one outside of himself. His being is not determined by anything else.

[36 : 03] His holiness is what he is as God, which no one else is or ever will be, and it signifies his intrinsic infinite worth in and of himself.

His holiness is the incomparable perfection and greatness of his divine nature. and we would not know him unless he was to reveal himself to us.

So great is his holiness. We have no comprehension of grasping his holiness unless he was to reveal it to us and that is what his glory is.

his glory is when he chooses to reveal himself. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord almighty.

Isaiah 6, 3. The whole earth is full of his glory. He has himself.

[37 : 24] He glory. His glory is the open revelation of the secret of his holiness.

When God shows himself to be holy, what we see is glory, magnificence. glory is the beauty of his holiness is what we see.

The glory of God is the infinite beauty and greatness of his manifold perfections. So what do we mean? What does Paul mean when he says to God be glory?

What does that mean? As he ends the book of Romans, to God be glory, what does he mean by that? Because if he can understand that, it helps us understand what happens to us?

How do we do this? Now the way that Paul wrote this in the original language, there is no verb in this. That's a doing word.

[38 : 37] I have to keep telling myself that, verb, doing word, right? It simply says in the original language, to him glory. I think it is both a worshipful statement of fact and it's a expression of longing.

In worship, we herald the fact that God is glorious. We've done it already this morning. Whether we said or not, we're glorious.

He has it, he displays it. The expression of longing is something like, may glory be given to him, may people see him as glorious, may they praise him as glorious.

So when I asked you at the beginning of this message, what change has happened? That's the change I'm looking for. That's what this whole Romans is about.

Are you seeing and praising the glory of God more? Paul. In other words, the longing here from Paul right at the end is may the nations acknowledge him and treasure him.

[40 : 15] These are the final words in Romans and I want to ask you, are they the cry of your heart? Do you love Jesus?

do you love the glory of God? If your journey in Romans has been, oh, I've got a bit more clarity on that verse that's troubling me all these years, but it hasn't flown over into surrender, adoration, you haven't seen the glory of God.

God is calling for your attention in Romans. He is calling for your adoration in Romans and he's calling for your attention and your adoration every single day of the year because Psalm 19 verse 1 says the heavens declare the glory of God.

God is calling out to you behold my beauty behold my glory the gospel is radiant with the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ read your Bibles and see see his beauty see his glory do you see it 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 Jesus reflecting person receive the Lord Jesus and you will become a child of God and if you become a child of God you will see him and you will love him and grow up all the way up to be like him for his glory this is

God's plan for the nations it is plans for all people it's his plans for you it's his plans for this church and so in the words of Martin Luther have you got the breakthrough yet do not plead for it this morning do not sit there in the malaise of well I want Jesus to come into my heart 20 years ago that's good enough don't sit there move towards Christ do you love God more are you enjoying your identity as a child of God more are you offering yourself to

[43 : 42] God in new ways for his glory and your joy more