

Strengthening, Evangelism and Praise

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[0 : 00] in and the verses at the end of the chapter from verse 25 let's just read through them one more time romans 16 verse 25 now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of jesus christ according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations according to the command of the eternal god to bring about the obedience of faith to the only wise god be glory forevermore through jesus christ amen well paul very often poses challenges for those who preach the gospel when he gives a paragraph like that that's just one sentence that's packed full of various emphases and you can see that he is here caught up in praise to god he very frequently as you know finishes his epistles his letters with what we call doxologies which is just an ascription of praise or attributing of praise to god and this is one that is longer than usual it doesn't often come to that sort of stretched out sentence but it's important to notice the features of it and we'll go through it uh very quickly but the one thing you do notice here is that it's very very like the introduction to romans and if you compare the two passages uh passage in chapter one as we read at the very beginning of chapter one and compare that uh you can do it when you've got more time yourselves as well but they're very similar in their emphasis in fact the same topics pretty much are dealt with in the first uh opening paragraph of romans as you have here in the concluding paragraph and it's about god it's about the gospel it's about jesus christ and a bit it's about the way in which that has come to be revealed to us having uh had the revelation previously of the old testament as well but this particular paragraph at the end of romans we can say that god and the gospel of jesus christ are set before us in relation to three things um you might pick out some others as well but we focus on these three tonight there's the emphasis on strengthening spiritual strengthening now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and so on there's an emphasis too on evangelizing it's not actually said to be evangelizing but you can see the way that uh he talks about how things have been disclosed through the prophetic writings and made known to all nations according to the command of the eternal god in other words the proclamation of the gospel the disseminating of the gospel the testifying of the church to the gospel in the time of paul and since then is something that is here built into the passage and very importantly is brought before us as an ongoing requirement of god's church by the command of god himself and the third thing of course is praise uh the passage comes to uh conclude to the only wise god be glory forevermore through jesus christ amen so let's look at these and go through the passage in turn as i say it's somewhat difficult just to get a stopping or a breathing spot before you move on to the next topic or next part of the topics that he's dealing with so the strengthening first of all now unto him who's able to strengthen you according to my gospel well the word therefore strengthen there is elsewhere elsewhere translated in the new testament as established

and paul is talking about coming to be established in our faith established in our relationship with god in our relationship one with another in our relationship with the truth of god in the gospel itself being established is really sometimes portrayed as setting down roots i think we mentioned this on lord's day morning being rooted and grounded in christ and the two images that you have there are a plant or a tree that's coming to set down roots for its stability for its establishment and they're also built up it's the imagery of a building that's being put together in the structure of it so as to be strong against whatever forces and stresses it has to bear and these two images really apply to the christians development and indeed the development of christians together of the church of god established rooted grounded all of these words tell us that here is something really important remember paul was in most of his letters he was writing to relatively young churches churches that were full of young believers who had come mostly from paganism though some came of course from a jewish background as well but they were actually in need of being established they didn't have many of them certainly those who came from a pagan background they didn't have the knowledge of the old testament they didn't have the knowledge of these promises of god the revelation of the old testament it was a very quick learning curve for them if you like as they were led into the teaching of salvation in christ by the likes of the apostle paul you may remember that paul himself actually engaged in this kind of thing just to give you one example of that if you refer to act chapter 18 and at verse 23 you can see that how on his travels paul actually went to corinth as you know we saw recently how he addressed the areopagus in in athens and you see in verse chapter 18 he comes to corinth he left athens he went to corinth and then towards the end of the chapter you see the rest of his journey at that stage described and when you come to verse 22 when he landed in keseria he went up and greeted the church and then went down to antioch after spending some time there he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of galatia and phrygia strengthening all the disciples that was his aim that was his business he went around these places strengthening the disciples of christ the followers of christ they needed strengthening for so many reasons and they were being strengthened as he says here in romans at the end of romans being strengthened through the gospel through paul's preaching of the gospel and teaching of the gospel and that's really important for us always to remember as well we are strengthened certainly in our individual relationship with god we need to be strengthened there as we deal uh personally with god as individual christians in our own personal relationship with a savior but very often you'll find in the right in the writings of paul and the other apostles that there's actually more emphasis on the development of god's people as a body as a body together as christians as they develop in their understanding of their salvation of the of the doctrine of god and of christ and salvation it is together that they learn and come to be established and that means we need each other although we need god first and foremost but we need each other for our

establishment and for our growth in the knowledge of god and here in verse you find that he is saying he's able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of jesus christ but you notice it is god who does the establishing while we need each other to a certain extent while it's a privilege and indeed it's a benefit to be together as we are this evening we need these regular meetings in order to share with each other our progress in the gospel and to come through the gospel to grow in that respect but it is god him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of jesus christ and you see how all that hangs together it is god who does the strengthening the word here is closely related to our english word dynamic or dynamic or dynamism and it means really the power of god the energy that god himself has that is how we come to be established it's the energy of god it's the holy spirit it is god through his holy spirit uh using his power to establish us to bring us to be more and more rooted in in christ and in our development of growth from that but yes it's god who strengthens you but you see it's according to my gospel it's not god outside of the gospel it's not god strengthening us and then the gospel is doing something else he is strengthening according to my gospel and the preaching of jesus christ somebody mentioned in prayer one of the brothers in prayer mentioned uh already this evening uh the privilege of being together the necessity of being together uh and how we come under preaching of the word even on a night like this and that's our intention that's why i have the midweek prayer meeting it's not just for prayer um some people think it might be better with having more prayer but certainly my own aim and the aim of others like me i think is to have this meeting in the middle of the week where we're able to hopefully give uh the kind of teaching from god's word that is not primarily evangelistic but a building the kind of teaching that really goes towards the establishing of people in their faith in their relationship with god because that's what he's saying now to him who is able to strengthen you god who has the dynamism to strengthen you but it's according to my gospel and the preaching of jesus christ that's what the gospel is really about as well as for the awakening of people to faith and that's exactly what you find in the beginning of at the beginning of romans as well if you recall that's the opening uh the opening uh the opening uh the opening of of teaching in in the epistle uh where you just find that same emphasis on the gospel a servant of jesus christ called to be an apostle set apart for the gospel of god which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scripture concerning his son what is the substance of the gospel the substance of the gospel is not a philosophic teaching substance of the gospel is not even the doctrine of justification important though that is the substance of the gospel is the person of jesus the person of christ himself in his person and work as the savior that is paul saying to the romans at the beginning and at the end of of this letter it's according to my gospel and the preaching

of jesus christ as the substance of the gospel the core of the gospel everything in the gospel message everything in the gospel that's contained and it is built around the person the central doctrine the foundational doctrine of christ himself now that's uh so important for us here this evening because as we said earlier this is really one of the purposes that for which we gather of course we gather primarily to worship god but within the worship of god you have the preaching of the gospel you have praying to god and along with that you have uh the the people of god as a fellowship sharing together in that experience and sadly a lot of people don't see the need for attending a midweek meeting i don't know why that is uh it's sad really from my point of view certainly because this passage itself makes it clear that when we come in the middle of the week as was described in one of the prayers as an oasis we're traveling through a desert we're traveling through the desert of this world and that desert out there of this world is so arid you've only got to look at and listen to the pronouncements of the world to the pronouncement even of some of our political leader to the pronouncements of what you find in terms of the world's philosophy and that sort of worldview that's anti-christian you've only got to listen to that for a few moments to realize we're walking through a desert we need to be established we need to be established by the gospel by the power of god so that we grow in the knowledge of god so that we're able to face the temptations the world throws at us that we're able to overcome the things that the world is full of and that we're able to have a path through the desert that's fueled by the power of god this is why we come to be together like this and see if you can persuade others to actually join us in this particular meeting because in the middle of the week it is so important it's a long way from one sabbath one lord's day to the next spiritually speaking i might say it's only six days seven days but when you add up the number of hours that we spend under the word and especially under the preaching of the word what do we have we have something like 30 to 40 minutes each end of a lord's day an hour and a half at the very most of the word preached midweek we have say half an hour and look at all the voices and look at all the other things that you have to contend with through the week we need the power of god the dynamism of god we need this oasis in the middle of the week and we would love to see more of these pews filled and if you are watching online i'm saying this so often and we realize that our live stream and our zoom is so important for those who simply cannot get to the services whether it's midweek or lord's day but nevertheless of those for those who can actually be together undoubtedly that's the emphasis of scripture that we that we come together as the scripture often puts it to worship the lord lord's day and midweek or wherever so he is saying here now to him who is able he wants to get to the point of praising him at the end of the passage that's just that's just so typical of paul isn't he he's just drawn away by the holy spirit as the holy spirit fills his mind and fills his heart um he's led into this long string of of uh connected topics connected points that he puts together eventually he gets to uh to the only wise god be glory forever and more uh through jesus christ but he begins now unto him who is able and then you've got all of

these things in between before he reaches the point that he wants to get to but you're thankful to god tonight and i'm thankful to god tonight that he has taken that distance to reach the end of the passage because it's so filled with precious truths and he says it's according to the gospel my gospel and the preaching of jesus christ but then he goes further back he says that itself is according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations and you come across this word mystery in the writings of paul especially and when you read about this word mister you come across it in paul's writings it doesn't mean something you cannot understand it doesn't mean something that's completely bamboozling you as you look at it it's actually to do with what is partially revealed in the old testament and he talks here about the prophetic writings having made it known but it's as you find in ephesians especially chapter three it makes it clear there what this mystery is and the mystery is explained there as the the mystery of christ which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations but as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the spirit this mystery is that the gentiles are fellow heirs members of the same body and partakers of the promise in christ jesus through the gospel now there's a lot of of teaching in that itself but what paul means by this is the the way in which the revelation of salvation in christ came gradually to be revealed but especially now revealed in the new testament age christ himself having come christ having died christ having risen from the dead ascended to glory the holy spirit having come and with the power of the holy spirit led the apostles first then the church afterwards into a better greater understanding of the truth it's a real widening out of the truth of god of god's revelation of himself and now he's saying this has been disclosed through the prophetic writings that has been made known to all the nations so it's a strengthening a strengthening a strengthening according to the gospel and the gospel itself is preceded by the prophetic writings of the old testament which led the way to the coming of christ and the writings of the apostles but that brings us to the second point which is evangelizing it has been disclosed through the prophetic writings according to the command of of made known to all nations according to the command of the eternal god see up to the coming of christ god's revelation of himself and of salvation of redemption was largely confined to the people of israel to the descendants of abraham the jewish people you might say but of course one of the great emphases from the time of christ onwards is that the gentiles have to be incorporated as we mentioned in regard to the mystery as he calls it and for the gentiles to be incorporated the gentiles are you and i people who are not of a jewish background and to be incorporated into the church it's by means of the gospel and by means of the gospel that mystery is large is then unfolded more and more and as the gentiles come to be included it is a new insight into the nature of the nature of god's church because it's not that god had a church in the old testament

[20:13] and then he has a church now in the new testament it's not that he had a church comprised mostly of jewish people but from the time of christ onwards he has a church comprised of gentiles as well as jews god has only one church right through from the beginning of time a church that experiences increasingly god's revelation of himself and as you find that from the old testament coming into the new testament here is paul saying now it has been made known to all the nations the gospel has gone out beyond jerusalem it's being carried into the world and that message of the gospel has reached into the far corners of the world of course in our own day not that every single tribe or or every single part of the globe has been penetrated by the light of the gospel but by and large it is certainly the case and this is the teaching jesus actually gave to the disciples and they gave to the disciples in the likes of luke 24 on in his conversation with them on the way to emmaus he took them back to what had happened in jerusalem he questioned them as if he didn't know and then he revealed himself to them he spoke about all the things uh beginning with uh the old testament beginning with moses and all the prophets he revealed to them in all the word in all the scriptures the things concerning himself himself and from then on the apostles took this word into the world and you see it's commanded here by god made known to all the nations according to the command of the eternal god now that reminds us of something really important something very close to matthew 28 verses 11 to 20 which we saw recently uh i think it was on the morning of the baptisms go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the father and of the son and of the holy spirit teaching them to observe all things that i have commanded you and behold i'm with you to the end of the age here is something that reminds us of that too it's according to the command of the eternal god yes we go and evangelize people around us we go out and evangelize with the gospel of god because it's the desire of our hearts to see people converted and people saved but what paul is reminding us here is that behind that there is an actual divine command we're commanded to do it it's not something optional it's not something the church has actually invented it's not something that came along somewhere along the history path from the time of jesus to the present age or in some earlier centuries it is something that has been commanded by the eternal god why do we go out with the gospel why are we still anticipating and longing to be able to go out into our own locality with the gospel like we were beginning to do and and doing over the years but especially we had started like in mackenzie park for example uh just before the lockdown came in we had to stop that uh we need to pick that up again why do we need to go back why do we need to go out to people who don't actually know the gospel with the gospel will god not bring them will god actually not save them where they are well you can see from this it's by the preaching of jesus christ as we come to be strengthened so we come actually to be incorporated into the church by the preaching of jesus christ by the teaching of the gospel and we need to go with the gospel because god has commanded it because god is saying go

make disciples for me but it's his command that sends us out not in our own strength and just as the dynamism of god is there for the building up of his people for the strengthening of his people the same dynamism is there for the converting of people for bringing them to know him as their savior what marvelous gospel this is because it does those two things it brings people to know jesus as the savior and having come to know jesus that same gospel builds them up roots them in their faith this is a marvelous privilege tonight to know this and to know this is really so essential for us to then build on that knowledge or carry that knowledge into action in terms of making disciples and following the command of god but you see it's according to the command of the eternal god to bring about the obedience of faith here we are we're still going through this long sentence and when you think he's finished one thing and he has and has to take a lot more time than we've got tonight to look at each of these topics and you think well what's next surely that's really enough to be going on with and he moves on to something else and he says something related of course what is the gospel about why does god command that we evangelize with the gospel what is the intention what is the purpose well it's to bring about the obedience of faith and again if you go back to the very beginning of of romans that's exactly what he began with a servant of jesus christ called to be an apostle set apart for the gospel of god and i can see all the way through there as we've read it through whom we have received grace and apostleship what to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations you know it's a very sad thing when the church loses sight of the purpose of the gospel the primary purpose of the gospel when the church takes the gospel and makes it really no more than a political or social movement when that is the main emphasis as sadly you find in our present day though it's not new by any means the aim of the gospel is not to bring about political change or social change these things may be carried in with it certainly and of course social change is important to bring people from poverty to actually have a more meaningful life all of these things but the main purpose the primary purpose of the gospel is to bring about the obedience of faith in other words faith in christ putting your trust in christ and that involves essentially the element of obedience faith is not just believing some things to be true or some things have that some things have taken place in the history of the world faith is placing your trust and confidence in christ giving yourself over to christ for him to be your master for him to direct your life for him to save you from your sins that is the purpose of the gospel and so that obedience of faith is one of the elements that we keep in mind when we actually are dealing with the world around us and seeking to present the gospel to them everything of course to the glory of god as he finishes as as we'll see with the final point but you see how he's how he's going through these points reminding us yes we are being strengthened according to the gospel and the preaching of jesus christ which itself is according

to the revelation it's an amplification of the revelation of the mystery that was kept for so long secret or largely covered but now has been disclosed and has been made known to all the nations according to the command of the eternal god to bring about the obedience of faith when you're praying for people to be converted to the gospel that's what you're praying for you're praying that they'll come to the obedience of faith that they will come willingly and lovingly to embrace jesus christ as their lord that they will come to be obedient to him and that we ourselves as christians will follow through with the obedience that coming to christ involves so that that is deepened and our understanding is deepened and our commitment is deepened and our response to being in christ is enlarged in terms of our coming to serve him in the world it's for our strengthening it's for our evangelizing seeking by god's power and grace that people will come to the obedience of faith to be committed to christ to be saved under his lordship but he's now reached the point for which which he intended from verse 25 to the only wise god be glory forevermore through jesus christ amen to the only wise god isn't that a precious emphasis because everything to do with this right through from the beginning of verse 25 indeed for the whole of romans and all the rest of god's revelation but let's just confine it to this everything to do with this salvation everything to do with these elements these points that paul is throwing throwing our minds to is according to the wisdom of god it is to the wise god that we give glory i think it's one of the most essential things that we need to keep putting to ourselves as we experience life's changes that god is wise that god only is wise with perfect wisdom and when he changes my life about here and there and gives me different experiences from one week to the next or even from one day to the next am i going to stop believing that he's wise just because i don't understand and follow all the different ways in which these avenues of experience lead me of course not god and god's wisdom are essential to our understanding of the gospel of salvation of our own development as christians to the only wise god never doubt the wisdom of god never think that somehow or other god has ceased to be fully wise that somehow or other he really doesn't know what he's doing how much it baffles us how much it fails to uh we fail to understand the ways of god and if we understood all the ways of god we would be god never ever doubt his wisdom never think that somehow what he's doing in your life is not according to his wisdom his plan his purpose the final end that he has in view for his people to him be glory forevermore through jesus christ well even the ascription of praise

and the bringing of glory to god is through jesus christ everything goes through jesus christ our experience of redemption and what it is our experience of god's comfort of god's guidance our experience of forgiveness our experience of every single thing we are and know in relation to god as our savior as our god it's through jesus christ and as you go on into eternity and you think about as far as possible though it's not very far what heaven is going to be like to be in the very immediate presence of god even there it is through the mediation of christ that we come in perfection to enjoy the beauty of god to worship him in perfection it's through christ as because of christ it's in christ to him be glory the only wise god be glory forevermore through jesus christ amen may god bless these thoughts on this word