

# Sunday Worship Service 4\_10\_2022

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## SPEAKERS

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We're gonna take some time now to get a little more deeply into God's Word together. So as I invite you to do each week, I hope that you will have a copy of scripture out and open in front of you, as we go through this here this morning. If you have a personal Bible, or Bible app that you'd like to use, I hope you'll get that out. If you need something, there are red, Pew Bibles available in front of you there. And we will this morning be in Romans in the New Testament, right after the four Gospels and the book of Acts will find the letter that Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome or at the very end of it right at the end of chapter 16. here this morning. In fact, today, we are going to finish this series that we began seven months ago back at the start of September, as we looked at this letter together, it's been a long enough series, in fact that for some of you, this may be the only sermon series that you have experienced at Belfield, but don't worry, there's, there's a lot more than we have done in the past and Lord willing more that we'll do in the time to come. But we're gonna finish this one here now this morning, and since we're doing that, I can confess something to you all. I have always found Romans to be an invigorating and challenging encouraging and perhaps most convicting book in the entire Bible. I've been reading through it and studying it for years. I've committed large parts of it to memory, but I have always found the idea of preaching through Romans to be very daunting. There's a couple of reasons for that, you could make a very good argument that there is more secondary literature, commentaries, Bible studies, reference books, etc, published on the book of Romans throughout history than any other piece of literature period. Some of the most famous sermons in church history have been preached on this book, and some of the longest and most well known series have been preached through this particular book. One famous example some of you may know is the 12 year long series that Martyn Lloyd Jones preached at the latter half of the 20th century in London. So if you thought seven months was getting a little old, it could have been 12 years, right? That's one reason but also it's, there's so much going on. And this is such a powerful letter that preaching through this always felt to me like attempting to kind of recreate the Sistine Chapel or something. And yet, this is the inspired Word of God, the Spirit has worked powerfully through just the simple reading and sharing of this for millennia. So my prayer throughout this time that we spent in it has not been the trying to offer you some new or creative insights that no one has ever come up with before. nor has it been to overly complicate the very plain truths that it reveals to us. My prayer has simply been to help all of us hear more clearly the reverberating and triumphant announcement of the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and consider then what that means for us as individuals, but also as a community of faith. So we're going to attempt to do that just one more time here with

this letter this morning. But before we do, let's pray. Great and gracious God, we thank you for this time that we have to be here this morning. Quiet our distracted minds, calm or distraught hearts, Lord, let us hear what it is that you have to say. And then let us respond in ways that demonstrate our love for you and our love for others. And Father, I pray that the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts would be acceptable in Your sight for We pray this in the name of Jesus, amen. In the past few years, it's been the Marvel superhero movies that have really made famous the post credits scene. And by now, I'm sure that most of you know how this approach works, the movie itself ends and then the credits start to roll. And after a couple of minutes of that, seeing the names all these cast and crew and people that you don't really know, then there's another short scene or two that are included. And maybe it adds a little twist to the plot. Usually, it's just meant to entice you for whatever comes next. And as you get to the end of Romans, Paul includes something of a post credit scene here. He went through a long list of all these names that we looked at last week, people that he had ministered with for years, people who had helped him people who is introducing one to another people who is thanking for the work that they have done and then after that, he ends this one little passage here right at the end, and this is it. This is Romans chapter 16, verses 25 through 27. Now to Him who was 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 the glory forevermore through Jesus Christ. Amen. Right near to the end of his 1000 Plus page commentary on Romans, a biblical scholar Bruce Longenecker says about these verses, we cannot improve upon such a closing statement. And he's right. We can improve upon this and we're going to try to but we can try to explore this and see how much is going on even in just this little closing here and what it is that Paul is trying to communicate something we need to see in this little ending here, and we're gonna look at it with just two two main ideas here. The first is that there is a specific content to our faith. There is a specific content to our faith. The second idea is that doctrine is meant to prompt doxology doctrine is meant to prompt doxology. And after we look at those two ideas, since it's our last Sunday, in this letter, I'm just going to give us a little bit of a recap some of the things that I hope we have seen in this time in the letter that Paul wrote to the Romans, but we'll begin with this idea that there is a specific content to our faith. There's a real famous classic comic strip one of the peanuts strips one time where Linus and Charlie Brown are together. And Linus is talking to Charlie Brown about his belief in the Great Pumpkin and he says, The Great Pumpkin rises up out of the pumpkin patch at night, to give toys to all the good children in the world. And Charlie Brown says you're crazy. And Linus famously replies the way I see it, it doesn't matter what you believe, just so you're sincere. With that, quote, the author and illustrator Charles Schultz really perfectly encapsulates the mindset that a lot of people, even people within the church have, it doesn't matter the matter what you believe, so long as you're sincere. And yet, that's not the perspective that we find in Scripture. We're told in scripture that we do need to know who God is, we need to know what God has done for us in Jesus Christ, we need to know what that means for us in our lives. And in this world, there is something that we're supposed to know there is something in which we are supposed to put our faith. Let me just walk you through a few places where we see this modeled in Scripture, just a few of the examples. And Deuteronomy chapters five and six and chapter five, you have one of the places where the 10 commandments are shared. God is revealing his will for his people saying this is how I want you to live goes on and chapter six, to say, we all need to remember that the Lord is one we shall love the Lord with our heart, soul, strength and mind. There's something that we need to know it says something we are to believe about who God is, and what that means. Then it goes on to say parents, you need to teach this to your children. And it says to every one of us that these are the things we should be talking about when we are together. There's a particular content to these claims that we make. Then there's a great little story in the book of Second Kings chapter 22. You may know this story, it's one of the seasons in the life of the ancient nation of Israel and Judah were the kings for years and years had been leading the people away from God, where the kings were not focused on

God non leading in light of that. And so the people lost all sight of these things. And there's a priest named Hilkiah, who goes into the temple one day, and as he's cleaning out some things, he comes across a copy of the book of the law. And nobody knows what this is they hadn't seen in so long. Hilkiah brings it to the, to the king, King Josiah, at that point, it says it's read in the presence of the king and the king weeps and tears his clothes. Because if we didn't know this, we forgotten who God was what he had done for us what it means to be His people. Last fall or last winter, rather, we spent some time working through the Sermon on the Mount, you may know the very famous refrain that Jesus says many times in there, he says, You have heard it said this, but I'm telling you this. He's saying you thought you knew what this was all about. But you missed it, you've lost sight of it, you've gotten off track. So I need to show you what these things are really all about. When Paul was writing to the church in Corinth, at the end of the letter in First Corinthians 15, there's a part where he says what I received, I am passing on to you as of first importance, and he talks about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The little letter of Jude at the end of the New Testament, written by the half brother of Jesus, there's a verse near the beginning where he says, Beloved, I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, but I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered for the saints, because he's saying, there's something that you need to know about Jesus, and I'm afraid you've lost sight of it. So all through the Old Testament, we see these warnings about false prophets and the New Testament about false teachers and say, why why would never be such a consistent concern about that. It's because there is a specific content to our faith. In fact, even in this brief little conclusion, even in these couple closing verses, Paul was making some very specific claims. He's making some very professing some very particular beliefs. If you had that honor, you're looking at it. So these are there's some specific claims that Paul makes even in just that one closing sentence, which is really what it is. One of the things he says is that there is an eternal and only wise God who is worthy of glory forevermore. There is an eternal and only Why is God worthy of glory forevermore. That's a specific claim that he is making there. He goes on to say that this God has made himself known in and through the Scriptures, he speaks of the revelation of the mystery. And you remember that, in Scripture, when you see the word mystery there? It's not referring to like a puzzle that we need to solve by figuring out the clues. It's saying something that was hidden, and is now revealed or something that was not known, and is now known. He said this God has made known the good news of Jesus As Christ he's done that through the prophetic writings. He goes on to say that this is all he said, I want you to be strengthened by the gospel that by the preaching of Jesus Christ that's at the heart of all of this. This claim that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, came down, took on flesh lived a perfect life in our place, died, the death that our sins deserve, and has been raised again, as we will one day be in him, and is coming to usher in the fullness of the new creation. That's the gospel of Jesus Christ. There's a content to that Paul references this good news. He says, this is something for all the nations, God wants us to go out to all the nations for the obedience of faith. This is not something that is just a localized, little privatized thing. This is meant to go out to the world, he said to the nations, in order that people will respond in faith. That's what he means by the obedience, of faith. So look, even in just this little closing, even in this one sentence, don't lose sight of the fact that Paul was making some very specific claims he's professing very specific beliefs. Now, is there more to what Scripture teaches? And what we find right in that one little closing sentence there? Yes, of course, that doesn't cover everything. It doesn't cover all of it without any remainder. Are there questions that life is going to throw our way that we're not going to probably be able to answer just based on that short, little closing? Yes, of course, there are. Are there going to be things that we disagree about ways that we interpret or understand things that aren't all answered by just this little thing? Yes, I think we know the answer is there are. But even something like this, even this close to the letter, I hope you can see is entirely opposite of saying something like it doesn't matter what you believe, just so long as you're sincere. Paul's saying there is something you need to know there's something you need to know about who God is about what he's done for you and Jesus Christ, about what that means for you, and about what that means for this world. There's a specific content to our faith. Even that short passage shows us that the point,

however, is not to just pass along some divine data. Paul's goal here is not to just throw some interesting information our way, the good news about who God is what he has done for us, and what that means is meant to elicit our praise. It's meant to elicit our praise doctrine is meant to prompt doxology. Now, let me explain to you what I mean by these terms, how I'm using them. So we understand in the same way, when I say doctrine, I'm simply referring to the central claims of the Christian faith, the things that we believe to be true. What it is that we believe about God, what he's done for us what that means. It's revealed to us in Scripture, it's centered on Jesus Christ. That's what I mean by that. doxology, then is really just some kind of responsive praise that is offered to God. The word the Greek word there literally means a word of glory. It means a word of glory. It's just a responsive praise and ascription of adoration that is offered to God, oftentimes, it's a song, but it's not always a song. It can be a prayer, it can just be the meditations of our hearts, it can be a response that we have. Sometimes we hear the doxology. And we think specifically of the very famous song, the very well known song that is included in a lot of churches. In fact, we are going to include it at the end of our service today. Technically, that's called the common doxology was written in 1674 by a man named Thomas Q. But a doxology is any kind of just responsive praise that is offered to God because of these things. That's what it's meant to prompt. So doctrine without doxology is lifeless. What doxology without doctrine is aimless. Let me tell you what I mean by that. Saying the doctrine without doxology is lifeless, is saying is not about just having the proper information. You can memorize the entire Bible. In fact, go go for it. See if you can write, you can memorize the entire Bible. You could spend your life studying the intricacies and all the nuances of theology, but if it doesn't lead you to love God more, and you haven't accomplished anything, he hasn't done anything for you. There's a famous passage in the prophet Isaiah where he says these people draw near to Me with their lips, and they honor me with their mouth, but their heart is far from me. And he's referring to the hypocrisy and the hypocritical behavior that we can demonstrate. It's also a way of him saying you can know all the right things to say, and your heart can be entirely far from me. Doctrine found doxology is lifeless. doxology without doctrine, however, is aimless because you could be caught up in the greatest demonstrative fervor. You could have a deep sense of zeal and energy about something but if you're not directing that, to the Triune God who created all things and redeemed a people for Himself through the work of Jesus Christ, then you're not really worshiping God. You're just a fusing emotion. doxology without doctrines on understanding of what do I believe? Where am I pointing these things? what's at the heart of it is just aimless. Here Paul shows a great example. This is this is a wonderful little case study of how these things just fit together seamlessly of how they're just woven together here. He's not separating some of the claims he's trying to make with his love for God and His adoration. It's just woven together, he's closing with this a skirt ascription of adoration and praise, and it's doing so in a way where he's also communicating the very distinctive claims of the gospel. And that is a model that we find elsewhere in Scripture. All through Scripture, we see that same kind of model, even the simplest acts of doxology, the simplest acts of praise, whether they're songs or prayers, or just responses in Scripture, always have a particular content to them, showing us who God is and what He has done for his people and what that means for so let me just walk you through a few examples of these kinds of models. In Exodus, chapter 15, verse 21, this is a this is right after God parted the waters of the Red Sea and led the people of Israel out and beginning on the way on the journey to the promised land. And right after they did that Miriam leads the people of God in a song, they're celebrating what God has done. And she says this, Sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously the horse and his rider he is thrown into the sea, Sing to the Lord for His triumph gloriously his horse, and his rider is thrown into the sea, even in that there are specific things that are being said, Sing to the Lord, the name use there as the divine name, Yahweh. This is specifically being offered up to the Lord. Why, because of what he's done. He's just led us through the waters of the Red Sea, miraculously, and taking care of our enemies for us. You can look at the entire Psalms, the entire Book of Psalms really are all songs and prayers offered up to God that are telling us who he is, what he's done. And what that means. For us. The entire Book of Psalms is the biggest example of it. Then you're gonna get the gospel, the first couple chapters of

Luke's Gospel, he's telling the story about the beginning of the birth of Jesus and the beginning of things there. There's an example from Mary when she is told that the Holy Spirit is going to come upon her and she's going to conceive and have a child and she responds with this praise the song she says, My soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, and goes on to say why. Little bit after that. Zechariah the father of John the Baptist offers a kind of a prophecy prayer, when he is told and what it is that John the Baptist will do. He said, Blessed be the God of Israel, because He has redeemed his people and he is faithful to his covenant promises. Even the angels when they show up at the birth of Jesus, and they say Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to men, they're telling you why it is they are praising God, they're making a claim about that. Today's Palm Sunday, we've talked about that. That's another example. When Jesus entered into Jerusalem that says that he was riding on a donkey and the crowds gathered round, and they were waving their poems and singing praises and putting their cloaks down on the road so that he could walk over them, they were treating him like a king. That's how you would treat a king. When they entered in the crowds. We're saying Hosanna, to the son of David bless it is he who comes in the name of the Lord Hosanna in the highest. They're acknowledging why it is they are responding in praise to God, because the Promised Messiah, the Son of David has come. Because God has to be praised for fulfilling His promises. I'll just give you one last example, because I'm just trying to show you that they're everywhere in Scripture, this model. Later in Revelation, John has given a vision. And he sees all of creation and people gathered around in front of the throne. And the song they sing is this Worthy are you to take the scroll to open it seals for you were slain, and by your bloody ransom people forgotten from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you've made them a kingdom, and priests are gone, and they shall reign on the earth. The very song they're singing is a proclamation of the gospel, you are worthy to receive this praise because of what you have done. You have ransom people from every tribe, and language and people and nation, you made them priests, and they're going to reign here on this earth. As a model we see everywhere and when I'm just trying to hope hoping that we can see together in this is that our worship is something that has to engage the head and the heart. It's something that has to engage the head and the heart, we're real good at splitting those things. And separating those things and just drilling down on the one that we happen to like a little bit better. But it has to engage the head and the heart. It's not just about having specific lyrics in songs, although that is a part of it. The songs we sing do shape our beliefs a lot more than we often realize. But it's about understanding who God is what he has done for us in Jesus, what that means for us and for this world and where the story is heading. And none of us know these things intuitively. We're not just born knowing these things. At the 830 service, we had the opportunity to celebrate a baptism cared and care at Macomb presented her daughter isla. And part of the promises that we make in baptism is to help raise someone with this understanding. So they know who God is what he has done for them what that means we don't just know these things on our own. And yet this has to produce praise. This has to lead to celebration. This has to lead to adoration. We do this Yes, through our songs, but also through our prayers, even just through the intentional act, even if it's just you intentionally drawing nearer to God, that is a response of praise. So at the end of the even at the end of the time, here this morning, look, the question is not what facts did I learn? Nor is it what feeling did I experience? The question is have I love the Lord with all of my heart and soul and strength and mind? Because that's what I'm called to do. Doctrine is meant to prompt doxology. If you've been with us for any the last couple months, you know that the letter to Romans is the most sustained presentation of doctrine anywhere in Scripture. And yet, oftentimes, in this Paul just stops to offer up a word of praise. And he is intentionally closing the letter in that spirit. It's all about then offering this praise to God, something that fills our head but also forms our hearts. Now, having said that, let's look at some of the things that we have seen in this letter. Let me offer you a little recap here of Romans, one of the things that I want to show you is that this ending these couple of final verses are an intentional echo of the very beginning. This is Romans chapter one, verses one through seven. I'm not gonna read the entire letter to you Don't worry. Romans chapter one, verses one through seven, when he begins the letter he says this, Paul, a servant of Christ, Jesus called to be an apostle, set

apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning his son who was descended from David according to the flesh, and was declared to be the Son of God and power, according to the spirit of holiness, by His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord through whom we have received grace and apostleship, to bring about the obedience of faith, for the sake of His name among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, to all those in Rome, who are loved by God and called to be saints, Grace to You, and peace from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. If you didn't hear it all there, now, I want you to please go back later and look at those things. So many of the phrases, the words, the themes are exactly the same in the beginning. And in the end. It's just a good way of maybe you know, the famous thing, if you're trying to be a good communicator, what they tell you to do is, tell them what you're going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you told them. You were here, that is exactly what Paul does here, says, These are the things I'm going to talk about with you. I'm going to talk about the gospel, how it's good news for all nations, and what that means for you. And when we first looked at that, the reason that pictures up there now, when we first looked at that I offered you that illustration to say that opening is like Paul beginning to paint a large mural outside, he's just at this point, he just kind of sketching out the shapes, putting some basic colors in there. And maybe you can start to see where this thing is heading. He's just giving you a little image of like, this is where the picture is going. And then as he goes through the letter, he fills it all in with great depth with stunning beauty, stunning beauty and his clarity. And then at the end of it, he's going back and saying, Don't Forget all these things that we talked about. And the gospel is the theme of this letter, the good news of salvation and Jesus, it's the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. Let me give you just a little rundown of the things we've seen then in there. We need that good news because every one of us has exchanged the truth of God for a lie and we have plunged headfirst into idolatry and immorality and injustice. No one is excused from this doesn't matter if you come from a Jewish background or a Gentile background, Paul says everyone has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and are justified only by God's grace. Abraham was the example of that. He believed God God credited to him his righteousness. And there's a change then, instead of being identified with Adam, the one who brought sin and death into this world, we are identified with Jesus Christ, the ones who brings life and righteousness into this world. And yet, there's a struggle that goes on. We know the things we're supposed to do, we don't do them. We know the things we're not supposed to do, we do them. But there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. In fact, there's nothing that can separate us from the love of God. In Christ Jesus, our Lord. God's purposes are absolutely sure and certain, and he will accomplish them. The same Lord as Lord of all everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. And this change is something for us individually. And together. We're meant to come together in a new way, the way that we live out this faith, the way that we act in the public sphere, the way that we demonstrate a love to one another even in the times we disagree, all of these bear witness to the gospel. That's just a little thematic walkthrough of some of the things that we have seen in Romans and it builds up to just this word of praise here at the end, Paul saying Don't forget all of these things. It's how he ends his letter. But it doesn't mean I don't want you to be done spending time with this letter. In fact, in 1546, Martin Luther in a commentary that he wrote on Romans Luther said this, this epistle was really the chief part of the New Testament, it is the purest depiction of the gospel, it's worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word by heart, but that you should occupy occupy yourself with it every day, as if daily bread for the sole, it can never be read or contemplated too much or too well. And the more it's dealt with, the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes. With this, as you can never spend too much time with this. So we're going to start and go through the whole series. Again, I'm just we won't, we won't do that. Read it though. Spend time with it. To sit down and read part of this again, and again, read it straight through, it'll take you a little bit, but commit to that, see how these things are displayed in all of their beauty and all of their brilliance, what it means to know that in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself. Throughout the week, I found myself trying to come up with some grand closing illustration or story or really eloquent rhetorical flourish through

which we could end this series. But I kept coming back to that observation from Bruce Longnecker that I shared with you where he says we cannot improve upon such a closing statement. So I gave up trying, and I figured that I'm just going to end by reading this to you one more time. This is the word of the Lord. Now to Him who was able to strengthen you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to 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