

**EXEGETICAL  
NOTES  
EPISTLE  
TEXTS**

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**Series B**

**Festival Season Sundays**

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## Advent IV: Rom. 16:25-27: Eternal Glory to the Only Wise God!

1. In Nestle-Aland XXVI vss. 25-27 are enclosed in single square brackets. This means that the editors consider these vss. of doubtful authenticity though the apparatus assumes in principle that this reading is part of the text. What causes the difficulty is that these vss. are not found in the same place in all original documents. The apparatus informs us that some omit these words altogether; some add them after 14:23; some add them after 15:33; some add them after 14:23 and 15:33; some add them here and after 14:23. The most reliable texts add them here only. KJV adds them here because the Textus Receptus adds them here. All of our current versions have these words here only. No sane-minded scholar considers these words spurious.
2. The comments by commentators on these vss. are interesting: Franzmann says: "Paul began the body of his letter with the proclamation of the power of God at work in his Gospel (1:16). What wondrous things that power can do and does, his whole letter has set forth in unparalleled fullness. Paul closes with a hymn in praise of the God who has power; He is a God at hand, able to sustain the Romans in their conspicuous and responsible place, able to strengthen them for the greater tasks that Paul's coming will open to them." Kretzmann: "Paul closes it (the letter) with such a remarkable doxology, a veritable effusion of glowing thoughts, interwoven with a beautiful eulogy of the Gospel. He gives all glory to God, to Him that is able to make the Christians firm and constant in faith and holy life." Bengel: "A doxology closes the whole epistle, as one closed the doctrinal part of it, 11:36. So II Pet. 3:18; Jude vs. 25. The last words of this epistle correspond exactly to the first, 1:1-5. Especially on the power of God, the Gospel, Jesus Christ, the Scriptures, obedience of faith, all nations." Sanday and Headlam: "The Epistle concludes in a manner unusual in St. Paul with a doxology or ascription of praise, in which incidentally all the great thoughts of the Epistle are summed up. Although doxologies are not uncommon in these Epistles (Gal. 1:5; Rom. 11:36), they are not usually so long or so heavily weighted; but Eph. 3:21; Phil. 4:20; I Tim. 1:17 offer quite sufficient parallels. . . . Ascriptions of praise at the conclusion of other Epp. are common, Heb. 13:20,21; Jude 24,25." This doxology is the grandest hymn of praise in the New Testament. It has often been said that the Epistle to the Romans is a grand summary of all of Christian Doctrine. This doxology is fitting for such a great book.
3. Vs. 25: Vss. 25-27 comprise one sentence. Grammatically speaking vs. 27 is the main clause. NKJV translates thus: "to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen." This translation assumes that we omit the relative pronoun hō in vs. 27 as an inferior reading. Codex Vaticanus does not read hō here. None of our modern versions read it. Therefore we repeat, vs. 27 is the main clause. Vss. 25-26 stand in apposition to monō sophō theō in vs. 27. The majority of our versions translate de with "now." It indicates the conclusion of the Epistle. The dative tō dunamenō (as well as monō sophō theō in vs. 27) is a dative of possession. Glory and praise belong to God. dunamenō is the substantival use of the participle. Note that it is present tense. He is constantly able. humas is emphatic by position. Rienecker-Rogers tells us that stērizō means "to make firm, to make stable, to establish." RSV renders it "to strengthen." AAT has "to make strong." It covers both justification and sanctification, faith and living, in the life of the Christian. JB evidently wants to make sure that we do not omit Christian living here: "Glory to him who is able to give you the strength to live according to the

Good News" etc. We have three kata phrases in this text: two in vs. 25 and one in 26. The translations of the three are interesting in the versions: KJV, NKJV, RSV and NASB have "according, according, according." TEV has "according, according, by;" AAT has "by, by, as;" and NIV reads "by, according, by." The commentators ask whether these three phrases denote correspondence or cause. As becomes clear in vs. 26, the very purpose and cause of the Gospel is to give me true faith in Christ and obedient living in keeping therewith. In vs. 26 the Gospel is called "good news, proclamation, revelation of mystery." These terms are synonymous and embellish each other. Note that the first two are articular and that the third is likewise definite because it is modified by a genitive. The Gospel is THE good news, THE proclamation and THE revelation of the mystery, par excellence. No one has ever heard better news than this. It is the New Testament's greatest proclamation. Even unbelievers are made aware of this. And, by virtue of the fact that it is THE revelation of God's mystery, all synergism is eliminated. Man's reason is incapable of originating such a plan and he is not even able to believe it of his own strength. Why does Paul call it "my" Gospel? Three versions make it a subjective genitive and we think that is correct: TEV and JB have "the Good News I preach." AAT reads "by the good news I bring." kai is evidently epexegetical, meaning "namely." Jēsou Christou is plainly objective genitive: "the proclamation about Jesus Christ." The proclamation is nothing more and nothing less than Jesus Christ. Lenski says that the second kata phrase stands in apposition to the first kata phrase. mustēriou is likewise an objective genitive. The revelation of the mystery means the participle modifying mustēriou. The mystery was kept secret, quiet, hidden. chronois aiōniois is a dative of time. It is variously translated "since the world began, for long ages, for long ages in the past, for endless ages." Lenski says: "During all those past ages no public proclamation in the world." Kretzmann: "It had been hidden, kept secret, unknown and undiscoverable by human reason, from ancient times, from eternity. The counsel of God for the redemption of mankind had been hid in God, Eph. 3:9, and it had not been made known in its fulness and glory for several millenniums after the creation of the world." Franzmann: "Christ is the disclosure of the 'mystery' of God, the revelation of His long counsels of salvation that worked in strange and secret ways for long ages, all through the dark and inconspicuous history of His little people Israel." Stoeckhardt: "The eternal times extend from eternity through the eons of the pre-Christian era until the time designated by 'now'. . . Already the children of the Old Covenant hoped in Christ. Nevertheless, the mystery of eternity could with right be designated as something secret because the Savior had not yet appeared, because complete understanding of prophecy was lacking, because the report concerning Christ was limited to a small area and hidden to the world at large. . . . The preaching of the Gospel is in this present era until the end of the world the greatest and most important work on earth." Bengel: "The TIMES are pointed out, which at their very beginning, as it were, touched upon previous ETERNITY, and as it were, mingled with it. Not eternity itself, of which the TIMES are, as it were, streams. . . . In the prophets the calling of the Gentiles had been predicted, but the Jews did not understand it." Sanday and Headlam: "God who rules over all the aeons or periods in time is working out an eternal purpose in the world. For ages it was a mystery, now in these last days it has been revealed." Cranfield points out that the first kata phrase modifies the infinitive stērixai. This kata phrase runs to Christou. God is able to strengthen you in keeping with, according to, by the good news

which is also the proclamation of Jesus Christ. Cranfield feels that the second kata phrase, which runs through to the end of vs. 26, modifies to kērugma. On this he comments: "The manifestation, which has taken place in the gospel events and their subsequent proclamation, and is contrasted with the hiddenness of the mystery in the past, is a manifestation which is properly understood in its true significance only in the light of its OT foreshadowing and attestation. It is when the manifestation of the mystery is understood as the fulfilment of God's promises made in the OT (cf. 1:2), as attested, interpreted, clarified, by the OT that it is truly understood as the gospel of God for all mankind." At this point cf. I Cor. 2:6.7.10; Eph. 3:3.5.6; Tit. 1:2.3; II Tim. 1:9.10. On these thoughts Sanday and Headlam: "This is the thought which underlies much of the argument of chps. 9-11, and is indirectly implied in the first eight chapters."

4. Vs. 26: We mentioned above that according to Cranfield the second kata phrase, vs. 26 modifies kērugma. If so, it is adjectival, giving further information about to kērugma Jēsou Christou. mystēriou is modified by three adjectives: sesigēmenou, phanerōthentos and gnōristhentos. The de in vs. 26 contrasts the first two adjectives: "but now had been made manifest" (NKJV). The te, meaning "and", joins the second and third adjectives. The mystery which at first was kept secret, has now been made manifest and has been made known. The dia phrase denotes agency. It denotes the OT prophetic writings. The kata phrase denotes correspondence, cause or means: "In keeping with the command of the eternal God." The first eis phrase plainly denotes purpose: "for the purpose of the obedience of faith." It is not easy to classify pisteōs as a genitive. It could be appositional: faith is obedience. It might be called adjectival: the obedience of a Christian is of a certain type, faith obedience. Or perhaps subjective: faith causes obedience. Arndt says: ". . .the obedience of faith, that is, simply faith." Most versions take the second eis phrase with gnōristhentos: "made known to all the nations." Thus KJV, NKJV, NASB, TEV, NEB, AAT and JB. But NIV takes it differently: "so that all nations might believe and obey him." Our versions take ethnē as "nations." Lenski understands it as Gentiles." Perhaps JB likewise: "broadcast to pagans everywhere." On this vs. Lenski: "'The publication' means a making manifest plus a making known. It began when Jesus sent the apostles into all the world to make it resound with the Gospel. . . . 'Writings' differentiates this means from the kērugma, which is oral, the voice of the heralds, Christ's apostles. But the apostles preached Christ not apart from or as different from, the Old Testament prophets. . . . Paul's Epistle constantly quotes the prophets. . . . Now the fulfillment had come, and now at last the prophetic writings became a means for reaching the whole world." Kretzmann: "Through the preaching of the Gospel the very writings of the prophets are made clear and are shown to contain glorious Gospel-truths." Franzmann: "All nations now shall know the God who hid Himself so long in Israel." Stoeckhardt: "The Gospel brings along with it that they who have come to faith also persevere in faith." We quote this and more in the original German: "Das Evangelium, das von Gott verordnet ist, um den Gehorsam des Glaubens zu stande zu bringen, bringt mit sich, dasz die, welche zum Glauben gekommen sind, auch im Glauben beharren. Der Gott, welcher durch die Predigt von Jesu Christo den Glauben wirkt, kann und wird auch durch dieselbe Predigt die Glaebigen im seligmachenden Glauben staerken und erhalten bis ans Ende." Sanday and Headlam: "In this passage still carrying on the explanation of kērugma, four main ideas of the Apostolic

preaching are touched upon--the continuity of the Gospel, the Apostolic commission, salvation through faith, the preaching to the Gentiles." Like Lenski, they understand ethnē of Gentiles. Think for a moment: What is the greatest proclamation of NT times? Democracy? No. Communism? No. Islam? No. Science? No. It is what Rev. 14:6 calls "the everlasting Gospel." By the way, many are of the opinion that Rev. 14:6 speaks of Dr. Martin Luther proclaiming the Gospel.

5. Vs. 27: Are monō and sophō two individual adjectives modifying theou or does monō modify only sophō? The versions reflect this difficulty: KJV: "to God only wise;" NKJV: "to God alone wise;" RSV, NIV, AAT, NASB: "to the only wise God;" TEV: "to the only God, who alone is all-wise;" JB: "He alone is wisdom." Lenski says: "No one who could also be called wise can be placed beside him." Arndt: "Here the apostle calls God the only wise one." Bengel: "God's wisdom is glorified by the gospel in the Church, Eph. 3:10. 'That is of power' (vs. 25) and 'wise' are joined here, as I Cor. 1:24, where Christ is called 'the power of God and the wisdom of God' who through Christ appears as wise alone." Most plainly here dia Jēsou Christou denotes Christ as Mediator between God and man. We would never have known God as the only wise one unless Christ had reconciled us to God and made this known in the Gospel. As mentioned above, we consider the rel. pro. hō, along with Vaticanus, the versions and many commentators, as not part of the original text. Sanday and Headlam on vss. 25-27: "The doxology sums up all the great ideas of the Epistle: The power of the Gospel which St. Paul was commissioned to preach; the revelation in it of the eternal purpose of God; its contents, faith; its sphere, all the nations of the earth; its author, the one wise God, whose wisdom is thus vindicated--all these thoughts had been continually dwelt on."
6. No greater or weightier doxology than these vss. appears anywhere in literature. Here is the ultimate commentary on I Chron. 16:34 which passage occurs at least a dozen times in the OT. Likewise Ps. 150 on which our common doxology (TLH 644; LW 461) is based. This is evidently what J.S. Bach meant when he appended the words "Soli Deo Gloria" to his individual compositions.