

PFRS Commentary

Romans 16:25-27

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Romans 16:25-27 (NKJV)

25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel¹ and the preaching² of Jesus Christ³, according to the revelation of the mystery⁴ kept secret⁶ since the world began⁵ 26 but now has been made manifest⁷, and by⁸ the prophetic Scriptures⁹ has been made known¹¹ to¹² all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God¹⁰, for obedience to the faith —

27 to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever¹³. Amen¹⁴.

(Numbering is ours)

Romans 16:25-27 (PFRV)

25 Now unto Him who is able to establish you according to my Gospel¹, and Jesus Christ's² preaching³, according to the revelation of the mystery⁴ from time eternal⁵ concealed⁶.

26 But now, having been made apparent⁷ through⁸ the prophetic Scriptures⁹, according to the commandment of the everlasting God¹⁰, was made known¹¹ for¹² all nations for the obedience of faith —

27 to God, alone wise, be the glory through Jesus Christ for the ages¹³, Amen¹⁴.

1. "according to my Gospel"

Many early Christians understood Paul's "according to my Gospel" to mean the Gospel of Luke, written by Paul's traveling companion and used in the Pauline churches. Ireneaus tell us;

*"Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him." (Against Heresies, Bk. III, i). "But surely if Luke, who always preached in company with Paul, and is called by him 'the beloved,' and with him performed the work of an evangelist, and was entrusted to hand down to us a Gospel, learned nothing different from him [Paul], as has been pointed out from his words," (ch. xiii). Tertullian writes; "For even Luke's form of the Gospel men usually ascribe to Paul. And it may well seem that the works which disciples publish belong to their masters."*¹

Caius writes;

"The third book of the Gospel, that according to Luke, the well-known physician Luke wrote in his own name, in order, after the ascension of Christ and when Paul had associated him with himself as one studious of right." (Frag. III, i). Eusebius adds: "But Luke, who was of Antiochian parentage and a physician by profession, and who was especially intimate with Paul and well acquainted with the rest of the apostles, has left us, in two inspired books, proofs of that spiritual healing art which he learned from them. One of these books is the Gospel, which he testifies that he wrote as those who were from the beginning eye

witnesses and ministers of the word delivered unto him, all of whom, as he says, he followed accurately from the first. The other book is the Acts of the Apostles which he composed not from the accounts of others, but from what he had seen himself. And they say that Paul meant to refer to Luke's Gospel wherever, as if speaking of some gospel of his own, he used the words, 'according to my Gospel.'"²

It is also quite apparent from internal evidence that Paul's oral Gospel and Luke's written Gospel were interdependent. For a good example of this connection compare Paul's recounting the Last Supper with Luke's account (cf. Luke 22:19 & 1 Cor. 11:23). Jesus' command, "*this do in remembrance of me,*" quoted by Paul, was recorded in Luke's Gospel alone. And Paul stated the source of this history, "*For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you...*" (v. 23) and then immediately gave the historical account including the Lord's command, "*this do in remembrance of me.*" It would seem then that Luke's Gospel was essentially what Paul preached, and according to Luke was gathered from both those who heard the Lord in person and also His "ministers" (Luke 1:1-2). Our view of Rom. 16:25 is consistent with the idea that Paul's "my Gospel" refers to that same "Gospel" of which Luke's is a written record. We see nothing in Paul's writings that would contradict this very early tradition, and no good reason to reject it. It could also refer to Paul's oral tradition (Gospel) which heavily influenced Luke's written Gospel. At any rate, it is critical that we acknowledge the clear interdependence between Paul's teaching and Luke's Gospel and Acts. This will become apparent later in this article as we address *the revelation of the mystery*.

2. "the preaching of Jesus Christ"

The proper rendering should be *Jesus Christ's preaching* as opposed to *the preaching about Jesus Christ*. That is, **the content or substance of Jesus' preaching**. *Jesus Christ*, in the clause το κηρυγμα Ιησου Χριστου (the preaching of Jesus Christ), is *subjective genitive*, not *objective genitive*. In every other occurrence of κηρυγμα (preaching) with a genitive noun in the NT, the genitive noun is *subjective genitive* (cf. Matt. 12:41, Luke 11:32, 1 Cor. 2:4, 1 Cor. 15:14). That two of these examples are also from Paul, and one from Paul's traveling companion, is significant and weighs heavily in favor of the *subjective genitive* in this verse. There are no examples of κηρυγμα to be found with an *objective genitive* referent in the NT or LXX (cf. Matt. 12:41 & Jonah 3:2 LXX). If the concept was the preaching about Jesus Christ, the emphasis would be on the action implied in "preaching" rather than the substance of what was preached. However, Paul used an articular accusative noun here for "preaching," which emphasizes substance not action. Had Paul wanted to emphasize the action of preaching (preaching about Jesus Christ), he would have used an aorist participle. Therefore, it is certain that Paul meant *Jesus Christ's own preaching* (message) as opposed to *the preaching about Jesus Christ*. This Greek rendering is also attested by Chrysostom (Homily XXVII), with none to the contrary in the patristic evidence. Most English versions read "*the preaching of Jesus Christ*," being vague enough to allow either interpretation. John Gill's Commentary supports our rendering. The Greek speaking early Church understood this passage the same.³

3. "my Gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ"

The entire clause, το ευαγγελιον μου και το κηρυγμα Ιησου Χριστου (lit. "the gospel of mine and the preaching of Jesus Christ"), forms a Sharp TSKTS construction (Sharp's rule VI, ie, article - substantive - kai - article - substantive). The two substantives, *gospel* and *preaching*, are therefore being distinguished because both substantives have the definite article. Had Paul used the Sharp TSKS construction (Sharp's rule I, ie. article-substantive-kai-substantive), the idea would be just the opposite, uniting the two substantives in some kind of union. The implication would be that the *gospel* of Paul and *preaching* of Jesus Christ referred to the same thing, or at least were being viewed together as a unit. That is, "*the preaching of Jesus Christ*" would be a restating or further explaining the meaning of "*my gospel*," with Paul himself being the one performing the action implied in the word *preaching*. However, Paul's use of the TSKTS construction strongly implies he meant to distinguish *my gospel* from *the preaching of Jesus Christ*. The former being Paul's own (or the Gospel of Luke), and the latter that which Jesus Christ Himself preached. This is very weighty support for our observation in note 2, that Jesus Christ is *subjective genitive*. Paul's *gospel* and Jesus Christ's *preaching* are to be distinguished as distinct things in this context. This is not to say they are different gospels or that their content is different. It merely means that *Paul's gospel* is not the same thing as *Jesus' preaching*. The preaching was done by Jesus Christ Himself, not Paul's preaching about Jesus Christ, as has been wrongly claimed by some.

4. "the revelation of the mystery"

This should not be understood as something completely unheard of previously being made known for the first time. The word *mystery* implies something cryptic, known but not understood, in virtually every other occurrence in Scripture.⁴ The word *revelation* implies an uncovering of something formerly concealed from common view or knowledge, but not entirely unknown previously. For example, Christ's second coming is frequently called the *revelation* of Jesus Christ. It is not that He was never before heard of or seen, and will then be seen for the first time. Rather, the idea is that He will be fully known or become common knowledge. All "mystery" about Him will be seen and understood fully. The concept of the "mystery" of the Gospel being known but not understood in the Old Testament was plainly articulated by Peter.

"Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things which angels desire to look into." (1 Pet 1:10-12 NKJV)

5. "since the world began"

The words χρονοις αιωνοις literally mean *time eternal*.

6. "kept secret"

Lit. *concealed* or *silent*.

7. "has been made manifest"

The Greek word φανερωθεντος (*having been made apparent*) is an aorist passive participle. The aorist references the whole act, implying that Paul was referring to an event (the revelation of the mystery), rather than a process, particularly one that was ongoing, which the aorist tense usually forbids. It is also in the passive voice. Thus, "*having been made apparent*" is the best rendering. The implication from the context is that the mystery was made apparent through the two channels mentioned in the previous verse, ie, Paul's gospel and Jesus Christ's preaching.

8. "by"

The Greek word is "δια" meaning *the channel of an act* - "*through*."

9. "by the prophetic Scriptures"

The KJV rendering, "*by the Scriptures of the prophets*," is incorrect. The word προφητικων is an adjective not a genitive noun. "*Prophetic Scriptures*" is the correct rendering, as in virtually all modern translations. This should not be interpreted as referring to the New Testament Epistles being written by Paul, as some have mistakenly claimed. Nowhere in the New Testament has Paul or any other writer referred to any NT book as "*Scripture*." All other occurrences of γραφων (Scripture), whether singular or plural, with or without the definite article, always refer to Old Testament Scriptures. On the other hand, there is a subtle difference between "*the prophetic Scriptures*" and "*the Scriptures of the prophets*." The former implies Old Testament Scripture that is prophetic in nature, whether from the Law, the Prophets, or the Writings. The latter implies exclusively the Prophets, (Isaiah to Malachi). It is clear Paul meant that the mystery had been revealed through the agency of the various prophetic Scriptures scattered throughout the Old Testament. That is, the prophetic Scriptures which prophesy of Christ and the Gospel.

Jesus preached the revelation of the mystery to His disciples from the prophetic Scriptures immediately after His resurrection. This was recorded by Luke, Paul's companion, as follows:

"Then He said to them, 'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?' And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.... Then He said to them, 'These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.' And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, 'Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the

dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things'." (Luke 24:25-27 & 44-48 NKJV)⁵

It is deserving of notice that Luke's Gospel is the only one of the four that records the revelation of the mystery by Jesus to the disciples from the Old Testament prophetic Scriptures. This could be the reason Paul indicated that *my Gospel* (meaning Luke's Gospel and/or Paul's oral preaching) and *Jesus Christ's preaching* (as described exclusively by Luke {ch. 24}) was the source of this *revelation of the mystery*. Through the *revelation of the mystery from the prophetic Scriptures* the Romans could be *established* in the Faith. It is therefore beneficial for us to also be established in the Faith through a comprehensive understanding of Christ and the Gospel as portrayed in the Old Testament *prophetic Scriptures*.

Paul stated plainly, in his defense before Agrippa, that his Gospel was entirely contained within the Old Testament prophetic Scriptures.

"Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come-- that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles." (Acts 26:22-23 NKJV)

10. "according to the commandment of the everlasting God"

Compare John 12:49 & John 16:25 & Luke 24:26-27,44-46, in that order for the explanation of how the mystery was revealed, by the command of the Father, through Christ to the disciples.

11. "has been made known"

As in note 7, the verb *γνωρισθεντος* is in the aorist tense. This indicates an event, not an ongoing process. That is, *the revelation of the mystery*, through the agency of *the prophetic Scriptures*, has been made known.

12. "to"

The preposition *εις* indicates *leading unto*. It points to movement toward the goal, which in this case is the obedience of all nations to the gospel. Paul was not indicating that it had already been made known to all nations, as NKJV implies. That simply was not true at the time of the writing. Nor did he mean it was in the process of being made known to all nations, as the KJV implies. That would require the use of the present tense verb not the aorist. The NKJV correctly recognizes the aorist tense verb as indicating a past completed event. But, by wrongly translating *εις* as "to" instead of "for" implies something that was simply not true — the past completion of the Great Commission. The KJV's wrong translation of the verb in the present tense implies that the revelation of the mystery was an ongoing process as the Gospel spread to the nations. The only interpretation that is consistent with the Greek syntax is that the

mystery had been made known, through the agency of the prophetic Scriptures, in order (toward the goal) that all nations might believe. The best and simplest rendering of εἰς here is "for." The NIV also captures the correct meaning in dynamic equivalence, "so that all nations might believe." The NASB makes the same mistake as the NKJV.

13. "forever" Lit. "for the ages."

14. Verses 25-27 are all one grammatically complete sentence. "Now unto Him ... to God alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for the ages, Amen." The simple subject and object are "Glory (subject) be to God (object)." The verb "be" is understood and the simple predicate is the indirect object "to Him" or "to God." Everything else in these three verses consists of modifiers. The subject, "Glory" comes at the end of the sentence in verse 27 making it very emphatic. The object "God" in verse 27 and "Him" in verse 25 are in apposition. Apposition denotes a grammatical construction in which two nouns (or substantive constructions) have the same referent and stand in the same syntactical relation to the rest of the sentence. So the main idea of the entire sentence is a doxology to God.

Other observations:

Paul's closing statement in the book of Romans is parallel to his opening statement of the same book. A comparison of these two passages sheds great light on the meaning of Romans 16:25-27.

Rom. 1:1-5

- 1 Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to **the gospel of God**
- 2 which He promised before through His prophets **in the Holy Scriptures**,
- 3 concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh,
- 4 and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.
- 5 Through Him we have received grace and apostleship **for obedience to the faith among all nations** for His name,

Romans 1:1-5 (NKJV)	Romans 16:25-27
the gospel of God	my gospel and Jesus Christ's preaching
which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures	made apparent through the prophetic Scriptures
for obedience to the faith for all nations	was made known for all nations for the obedience of faith

The "Gospel of God" in chapter one is clearly parallel to both "my Gospel" and "the preaching of Jesus Christ" in chapter 16. Both passages connect the Gospel to the Old Testament Scriptures. The term "prophetic Scriptures" in chapter 16 does not refer to

New Testament Epistles currently being written. The parallel statement in chapter one unmistakably indicates that the Gospel was contained in the Old Testament Scriptures. Both passages indicate this "Gospel" is the one made known in order to be proclaimed to all nations. It is therefore obvious that Paul's Gospel cannot be separated from Old Testament prophecy, or from the Gospel preached by Jesus Himself. This fact deals a fatal blow to traditional dispensationalism's understanding of the "mystery."

For more information regarding the "mystery," see our articles in the "Doctrinal Studies" section, under the "Chiliasm / Progressive Dispensationalism" heading, in particular, "The Mystery Revealed," and "Paul and the Mystery."

Notes:

1. Against Marcion, Bk. IV, ch. v
2. Eusebius, History Bk. III, iv; see also: Jerome and Gennadius, VII; Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:11.
3. John Chrysostom, Homily XXVII.
4. See Mark 4:11-12; 2 Thess. 2:7; Rev. 1:20; Rev. 10:7; Rev. 17:7.
5. See also Acts 1:3.