

**Romans**  
**The Glory of God in the Gospel (Part 1)**  
**Romans 11:33-36**  
**September 08, 2019 AM**  
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Well, I invite you to take your Bibles, and it gives me great joy to say this, and turn with me again to the book of Romans. Romans, chapter 11. We come this morning to the very last part of that section that is Romans 9 through 11. And in it, we come to the great doxology with which Paul concludes the first 11 chapters of Romans. It is an exaltation of God.

In his book on God's attributes, A.W. Pink wrote this, about the sad state of the church, and he was writing of the church in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Listen to what he writes: "The God of this 20<sup>th</sup> century no more resembles the Supreme Sovereign of the Holy Scripture than does the dim flickering of a candle, the glory of the midday sun." The God of most evangelicals in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Pink said, is no more like the true God revealed in Scripture than a candle resembles the sun.

A.W. Tozer made the same point. He wrote this again last century:

The church has surrendered her once lofty concept of God and has substituted for it one so low, so ignoble as to be utterly unworthy of thinking worshipping men. This she has done, not deliberately, but little by little and without her knowledge, and her very unawareness only makes her situation all the more tragic.

Why does it matter? Well, Tozer goes on to say this:

Worship is pure or base as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God. For this reason, the gravest question before the church is always God himself; and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at any given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like. We tend, by a secret law of the soul, to move toward our mental image of God. What comes

into our minds when we think about God then is the most important thing about us.

Did you hear what he said? What you think God is like becomes the magnet toward which your soul either grows or begins a slippery decline into idolatry. So, what do you think about God? Sadly, many professing Christians, if they're honest with themselves, rarely think about God at all. Well, the passage that we will study this morning and the weeks to come will powerfully, profoundly, and permanently alter our conception of God if we will allow it to.

Because today in our study of Romans, we come to one of the richest, one of the most profound passages about God Himself in all Scripture. It rises like Everest from the landscape of the biblical revelation. Now just to remind you where we are, we pick up this morning where we left off a couple of months ago, at the end of Romans 11. We have completed the main argument of those three great chapters. You'll remember there is a brief introduction in chapter 9, verses 1 through 5 where Paul documents Israel's rejection of the gospel. And there he raises the question why God's chosen people have rejected the Messiah and His gospel.

He provides three answers to that question. First of all, "The Reality of Divine Election," chapter 9, verses 6 through 29. There he tells us, as we learned, it was never God's plan to save all of the ethnic descendants of Abraham, and that was demonstrated early on and throughout their history by the doctrine of sovereign election. He chose Abraham, then he chose Isaac, and not Ishmael, and Jacob, and not Esau, and so forth it goes.

A second answer to the question of why the Jews have rejected their Messiah is "The Reality of Human Responsibility," beginning in chapter 9, verse 30, running through chapter 10, verse 21. He says the Jewish people, and I would add all of those who reject Christ, Jew or Gentile, bear responsibility for their unbelief because they choose to reject God's gospel and embrace a false gospel, a gospel of human works and human achievement and human merit.

His third answer to the question is “The Reality of God’s Faithfulness,” and the answer is “the story isn’t over yet; stay tuned,” chapter 11, verses 1 through 32. He says God is always faithful to His promises and that means He still has a plan for Abraham’s ethnic descendants. As we saw in chapter 11, someday all Israel will be saved.

Paul finishes this section of the letter to the Romans, chapters 9 through 11. He finishes this section with a doxology. A doxology which is our adoration of God’s character. It’s chapter 11, verses 33 to 36. This is a monumental text. Listen to the great commentator Charles Hodge, Princeton theologian, writing about these verses. He writes:

The apostle, having finished his exhibition of the plan of redemption, having presented clearly the doctrine of justification, sanctification, the certainty of salvation to all believers, election, the calling of the Gentiles, the present rejection and final restoration of the Jews, in view of all wonders and all the glories of the divine dealings with men, Paul pours forth the sublime tribute to the wisdom, goodness, and sovereignty of God. (And then he adds this.) Few passages, even in the Scriptures, are to be compared with this.

Lloyd Jones writes, “It is beyond any question, one of the most glorious, wonderful, exalted statements to be found anywhere in the Bible.”

Paul’s doxology here in these verses, as we will see, informed by the Scripture. It’s informed by the Old Testament. And yet it is at the same time his own heart expressing itself in humble adoration, just as should be true for each of us who have been redeemed as he was redeemed. Let’s read it together for the first time together. Romans, chapter 11, verse 33:

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? OR WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE

PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

The message of these verses is, at first reading, extremely clear. It is this: the gospel displays the glory of God. The gospel displays the glory of God and therefore demands the worship of God. Maybe if you're honest with yourself, you have to admit that you struggle in your heart to truly worship God individually or corporately when we do so together. You want to, if you're in Christ. You have a desire to. God has made you a worshipper. You do so to some extent. But if there is any struggle at all, let me say, it is for one primary reason, and that is because your God is too small. That's the reason.

In one of his letters to Erasmus, the Dutch humanist, his antagonist in the time of the Reformation, Martin Luther wrote this: "Your thoughts of God are too human." Luther was simply reflecting the Psalmist in Psalm 50, verse 21, where God says this:

"These things you have done and I kept silence;  
(And listen to this)  
You thought that I was just like you."

That's God to His people. "You thought I was just like you." Too small. Too human.

Let me just say that if you're a Christian, if you truly have been redeemed, once you gain a greater, a more appropriate view of the character of God, it can't help but produce praise and worship in your soul. So, then the theme of this wonderful doxology is that the gospel displays the glory of God, and properly understood, demands the worship of God. So, let's look at it together.

First of all, the gospel displays the glory of God. We see this in verses 33 to 35. What prompts Paul's outburst of praise that we've just read together? He breaks out into doxology for several reasons, and it's clear here in the context. First of all, because of what has not been revealed to us. In these chapters, about election and about Israel and the Gentiles, Paul explains a great deal

to us, but he leaves us, let's be honest about this, he leaves us with questions unanswered. Not every single question that we have has been answered in this passage. And Paul was content with that. In fact, he is going to focus in this doxology on the fact that God's ways are beyond our understanding.

You see, Paul understood Deuteronomy 29:29 that "the secret things belong to the LORD our GOD, but the things revealed belong to us and to our (children) forever." There are two categories of knowledge. There are the things God has chosen to reveal to us. They are here in His Word. But God has not chosen to reveal everything to us. And "the secret things belong to the LORD our GOD." Paul understood that, and he was content with that because he knew that even for those questions, he didn't have answers for, there were answers, and God had them. And so, he could exalt God.

There's a second reason I think he breaks out into praise, not only because of what has not been revealed to us, but what has been revealed to us. Remember this comes at the end of 11 long chapters of the gospel, and what has been made clear to us about God and about Christ and about the gospel. This is an outburst of praise in response to that. In fact, he even very specifically, notice chapter 11, verse 25, he tells us something that has been revealed. "I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery," something that we would never have known on our own, but that God has now chosen to reveal. What is that mystery? "That a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, and so all Israel will be saved." Paul tells us about the future, and he celebrates in his doxology, not only what God has not revealed, but what God has revealed in 11 wonderful chapters.

I would add a third aspect that prompts Paul's doxology. Not only what He has not revealed, what He has revealed, but what he has revealed that we can't fully grasp. Because we're going to see in verses, and we read it just now in verse 33. "How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD?" We don't know everything that's in the mind of God. And so, at the same time that he is celebrating what we know because it's been revealed to us, he is also celebrating the greatness of God in the things that have been revealed that we don't even fully grasp.

So, understand then, the primary cause of his praise and worship in this doxology is because of the rich theology that he came to understand, and then he is explaining to us. The theology in the immediate context, notice verse 32, what prompts this doxology immediately. “For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.” God had this plan with the Jews and the Gentiles, so that he could show mercy to Jew and Gentile. And he says, “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!”

But not merely the immediate context but the larger context of chapters 9 through 11. Paul is responding here to the revelation of God’s unconditional election of Israel as a nation, as a people, and his election of individuals, both Jews and Gentiles to salvation. But I think this doxology also is Paul’s response to the entire letter so far. This is the summary of all that he has been explaining about the gospel in these 11 chapters. One author puts it this way:

In these 11 chapters, Paul's horizons are vast. He takes in time and eternity, history and eschatology, justification, sanctification, glorification! Now, he stops out of breath! Before Paul goes on to outline the practical implications of the gospel in chapters 12 through 16, he falls down before God and worships.

I think that’s exactly how this doxology fits into the book of Romans. He just can’t help himself as he rehearses all that he has laid out before us about God and His gospel. He’s out of breath. And before he can go on about the practical implications of it, he falls down and worships. The gospel inspired this doxology. Paul was overwhelmed with the unfathomable depth of the eternal plan of redemption. So, let’s look at it together.

Paul begins with this display of the glory of the God in the gospel by meditating on God’s inexhaustible attributes. Notice verse 33 begins, “Oh, the depth.” That is followed in Greek, and it doesn’t show quite as clearly in English, but if you look at the marginal note in your Bible, you’ll see it followed by three genitives. So, you have “Oh, the depth,” with three genitives: “of the riches,” “of the wisdom,” and “of the knowledge.” Okay?

Now the reason I tell you that is because there are two possible options for understanding the structure of the first part of verse 33. The New American Standard Bible that we use here makes one of those choices. The ESV, which some of you have, makes the other choice. Let me give you the two options for the structure, the beginning of verse 33.

The first option is that Paul is highlighting only two attributes of God. Here's how the NAS puts it. If you have that, you can look. "Oh, the depth of the riches both (one) of the wisdom and (two) of the knowledge of God." This option takes that expression, "the depth of the riches," as describing two attributes of God, His wisdom and His knowledge. That is possible. That is a possible option. There's no question about it.

The ESV takes the other option, and it says, "No, Paul is not highlighting two attributes of God here. He is highlighting three attributes of God, and the genitive expressions "of" are all parallel. So, here's, by the way, I should say, the NAS acknowledges this. A good translation does give you the options, and the NAS, if you look at the marginal note, acknowledges this may be what Paul means. But this option says that the exclamation, "Oh, the depth!" is followed by three parallel genitives that are describing three separate attributes of God. Listen to the ESV, "Oh, the depth of (one) the riches, and (two) the wisdom, and (three) the knowledge of God!" Those are both valid options.

So, the question is how do we decide? Well, I hate to tell you this, but in this case, the original language doesn't solve this problem because both are possible in the Greek text. And secondly, our English translations and many of our English commentators are equally divided choosing one or the other of these options. So, how do we decide? Well, ultimately you will have to make that decision, but let me tell you why I'm convinced of the second. I'm convinced Paul intended to highlight three separate attributes, and I'm convinced of it for three reasons. I'm going to give you two this week, and the Lord willing, next week, I'll give you the third. Here are two reasons I'm convinced of it.

First of all, because in the context, Paul has been focusing specifically on the riches of what? Of God's mercy and His grace. He's been focusing on that. Go back to chapter 9. In this section, you can see it. Chapter 9, verse 15.

He says to Moses, “I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY... I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION.” (Again, the mercy of God in verse 16.) “So... it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.” (Verse 18.) “So then He has mercy on whom he desires, and He hardens those whom he desires.”

Verse 23 speaks of the believers as vessels of mercy. Go to chapter 11 and the immediate context. Look at verse 30. “For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of (the Jewish) disobedience, so these also now have been disobedient that because of the mercy shown to you they may also now be shown mercy. For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all. Oh, the depth of the riches,” meaning of God’s mercy.

A second reason that I would say this is true is that throughout the book of Romans, Paul has used this word “riches of God’s mercy and grace.” The word “riches” itself. Go back to chapter 9, verse 23. You know, let’s go back one farther. This one isn’t specifically applicable, but I’ll show it to you. Romans chapter 2, verse 4. He uses this word riches. Here he says, “Do you think lightly of the riches (and notice what it is) of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance (expressed to unbelievers there)?”

When you come to chapter 9, verse 23, it’s clearly believers. God worked in election, verse 23 says, “to make known (notice this) the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy.” Now when we walked through that text, I explained that to you that really what he’s saying is “the riches of His glorious mercy.” That’s what he’s saying. Look at chapter 10, verse 12. Again, he uses this word “riches” in this context. “There is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call (upon).” What kind of riches? The riches of mercy and grace.



Look at chapter 11, verse 12. “Now if their transgression (that is, the Jewish transgression) is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!” Riches in what way? Riches unto the display of God’s mercy, the display of God’s grace in saving them. So then, I think when you come to chapter 11, verse 33, Paul is highlighting here not two, but three distinct attributes as the ESV captures it. So, we’re going to take it as three separate attributes.

Notice he begins in verse 33 of chapter 11 with an interjection, “Oh!” That word is a Greek word that expresses just like in English an emotional response of awe in response to the truth. In fact, it could be translated as “I am amazed at!” That’s the idea. “Oh! I’m amazed!” Paul was stunned. He was overcome with awe as he reflected on the depth of these truths about God. “Oh!” And then he says, “Oh, the depth.”

The word for depth when it refers to something metaphorical usually, in fact, always refers to something with two, sort of, ideas. First of all, something so remote that it’s difficult to discover. “Oh, the depth.” And secondly, something so abundant that it’s impossible to exhaust. “Oh, the depth.” This word “depth” is used most often in the Septuagint of the ocean depths. Psalms 68:3, Amos 9:3, Jonah 2:3, and other passages. Like the depth of the ocean.

Most of us don’t think much about the ocean, but do you understand that the deepest point in the world’s oceans is the Marianas Trench in the Western Pacific? Here’s how one reference work describes the Marianas Trench. “It’s the deepest natural trench in the world. It is a crescent-shaped trough in the earth’s crust, averaging about 1,580 miles long to 1500 miles long, 43 miles wide, so a giant moon-shaped crescent in the bottom of the ocean. The maximum known depth is 6.8 miles. If Mount Everest were placed into the Marianas Trench, Everest’s peak would still be 1.2 miles underwater. It’s mammoth in its depths. Now you can understand why Paul uses this word in this concept to describe God and His character. In fact, in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 10, he says “the Spirit searches...the depths of God.”

Here Paul says that these attributes of God he's about to talk about are like the depths of the ocean in that they are incomprehensible. They can't be fully known or discovered or plumbed. They're just too deep. So, we can talk about these things, we can understand much about them, but we can never fully plumb the depths of these realities about God. And he's saying that like the ocean, these things in God are inexhaustible. God possesses these realities in an unlimited way. As Paul reflects on these three attributes of God, he's struck with the fact that each of them is incomprehensible and inexhaustible. Let's look at them together.

Notice the first: God's mercy, captured in that expression at the beginning of verse 33, "Oh, the depth of the riches...of God!" The riches of God's mercy and grace." Paul loves to use this word "riches" to describe the grace and mercy that God extends to undeserving sinners. I've already shown you that in Romans. Let me show you that in Ephesians. Turn to Ephesians, chapter 1, verse 7. He says, "In (Christ, in the beloved) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace."

Look at chapter 2, verse 4. Paul becomes more personal in this description of this. He says in verse 1, "You were dead in your trespasses and sins." Verse 4. "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved). Verse 7. You have been saved, notice, so that, He made you alive. He saved you, verse 7) "so that in the ages to come (in the coming ages of time) He (will) show (to you) the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward (you) in Christ Jesus." Do you understand God's going to spend eternity showing you how inexhaustible His grace is? That's what he's saying.

Look at chapter 3, verse 8. "To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ." What does he mean "the riches of Christ"? He's ultimately talking primarily about the gospel and all that Christ has accomplished on our behalf. Verse 16, "(my prayer)," Paul says, "(is) that (God) would

grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man.”

Now go back to Romans, chapter 11, because in the context of Romans 11:33 when Paul says, “the riches,” he clearly means the riches of God’s mercy. That’s where he ended verse 32. “That He might show mercy to all. Oh, the depth of the riches (of God’s mercy).” Paul is saying God’s mercy in the gospel can never be fully comprehended, and it can never be exhausted. We don’t know many things that can’t be exhausted in our world. We talk all the time about the earth’s resources being used up although the news of the earth’s demise is greatly exaggerated. God created this planet to sustain our lives, and He’s the One who will ultimately destroy it.

But think about things that seem inexhaustible to us in this world. Think about the richest man in the world and his wealth. His name is Jeff Bezos, the CEO of Amazon. He has a net worth, we’re told, of 131 billion dollars. Business Insider, earlier this year in an article, estimated that last year, okay, Bezos earned. You ready for this? 6.5 billion dollars a month, 1.5 billion dollars a week, 215 million dollars a day, 9 million dollars an hour. I know what some of you are thinking, “I got the wrong job.” And 149 thousand dollars a minute. But we know from history that while that seems like an inexhaustible supply of wealth, it can be gone in a day. Just read a little bit about the Great Depression.

But the depth of the riches of God’s mercy and grace in Jesus Christ can’t even be fully known, much less exhausted! This is how God reveals Himself. Go back to Exodus chapter 34. I love this text because in chapter 33, verse 18, Moses says, “(God) show me your glory!” and verse 19, God says, “(Okay, I’ll show you my glory. Here it is.) I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you.” You see the goodness of God is His glory. And what is that goodness?

Look down at chapter 34, verse 6. “Then the Lord passed by in front of Him and proclaimed, ‘The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and (full of compassion, full of)

grace, slow to anger, abounding in (steadfast love, and faithfulness who keeps steadfast love for thousands, that is, for thousands of generations) who forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin. (And) He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.”

How do you respond to the goodness of God that overcomes His justice, that satisfies His justice, through the life and death of Jesus Christ? Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship. God has an inexhaustible supply of mercy and grace. Isaiah 55, verse 7 says:

Let the wicked forsake his way  
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;  
And return to the LORD,  
And He will (What?)...abundantly pardon.”

Not just pardon. I mean, pardon’s enough, right? You get a pardon, you’re done. Your criminal record is gone. God says, “No, no, that’s not how I work. I will abundantly pardon. I will pardon to pardon.”

Micah, chapter 7, verses 18 to 20 says:

Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity?  
And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession?  
He does not retain His anger forever,  
Because He delights in unchanging love.  
He will again have compassion on us;  
He will tread our iniquities under foot.  
(Listen to this.)  
Yes, You will cast all their sins  
Into (Here's our word.) the depths of the sea.

Like the Marianas Trench. They're gone and gone forever. Listen, are you here this morning weighed down by the sheer number or the horrific guilt of your sins? There's hope for you in the gospel. Romans 5:20 says, "where sin increased, grace abounds all the more." Or listen again to Ephesians 1:7, "In (Christ), we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace." You see, on the cross, God punished Jesus as if He had lived the wicked sinful lives, committed all the sinful acts of everyone who would ever believe in Him.

So, if you will believe on Him, even today, God will credit your sins to Christ, and Christ will have died for the payment of those sins, satisfying in full the justice of God. And then God does something even more amazing, I think, and that is He takes Jesus' righteousness, 2 Corinthians 5:21, and credits it to us. He will treat you from this moment forward, if you will repent and believe in His Son, he will treat you from today on as if you had lived the perfect life of Jesus Christ. And that's how He will treat forever.

I plead with you this morning. If you're not in Christ, hear the gospel. You've maybe heard it many times before. Hear it, and respond in repentance in faith. Where you sit, cry out to God as a beggar, and God will hear because He abounds in mercy. "Oh, the depth of the riches (of God's mercy and grace)." No wonder Paul breaks out in praise.

There's a second attribute back in Romans 11 that prompts his doxology. Not only the riches of God's mercy, but secondly, God's wisdom. Verse 33, "Oh, the depth...of the wisdom of God." Although wisdom and knowledge are similar, Paul intends, I think, two separate ideas. Knowledge is the comprehension or the intellectual grasp of something. Wisdom is the capacity to truly understand it and respond accordingly.

J. I. Packer defines wisdom this way in his book on God. He says, "Wisdom is the power to see and the inclination to choose the best and highest goal together with the surest means of attaining it." The best goal, the best means. Charles Hodge in his Systematic Theology points out that we see God's wisdom, "in the selection of proper ends and of proper means for the accomplishment

of those ends.” You see, wisdom is the skill to use the knowledge you have to pursue the best ends using the best means. And God possesses great wisdom. Job 9:4 says, God is “wise in heart.” Daniel 2:20.

Daniel said,

“Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever,  
For wisdom belongs to him.”

Jeremiah 10:7.

“Who would not fear You, O King of the nations?  
Indeed, it is Your due!  
(Listen to this.)  
For among all the wise men of the nations  
And in all their kingdoms,  
There is none like you.”

Put together the wisest men and women on this planet and put their wisdom together, and it won’t even begin to rival the wisdom of God. In His love and mercy and grace, God determined to act for our redemption to save us. But how? How could it be accomplished? Well, in the infinite wisdom of God, He determined the best ends, which was to save those on whom He set His love, to give a love gift to His son. That was the best ends. We sang about together this morning. But what means would He use? Well, He also decided the best means to achieve those ends throughout the book of Romans.

The depth of God’s wisdom is displayed in several ways. I’m not going to take time to walk these through with you. I just want to prompt your mind. These slides will be available. You can go back and look at them and study them in more depth as you choose. But here’s how God’s wisdom is displayed.

It's displayed in the eternal plan of redemption. In chapter 16, verse 25, Paul calls it a "secret for long ages past," that has now been revealed. It was an eternal plan. We were chosen in Christ "before the foundation of the world," Ephesians 1. Romans 3:21, it was the plan that existed when the Old Testament was written and is now manifest.

Secondly, the wisdom of God is shown in the person of Jesus Christ, the Godman, as our Savior. Only God's wisdom could have come up with that. Chapter 1, verses 3 and 4, talks about "(He's the Son of) David according to the flesh, (but)... declared to be the Son of God with power." He had to be both, and the wisdom of God saw that in order to save us, our Savior had to be one of us, and yet without sin, and yet only God could deal with the infinite cost of all the sins of all of those who would ever believe in Him.

The saving power of the Gospel is another display of God's wisdom. Think about this in Romans, chapter 1, Paul says, "(For in the gospel, there is saving power through the work of the Spirit.) It is the power of God (unto) salvation (for) everyone who believes." That's the wisdom of God. A message, a simple message, like the one you just heard summarized a moment ago, that simple message is God's power. That's God's wisdom.

God's wisdom is shown through the means of justification, and it's by faith alone. Look at chapter 3, verse 21.

But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God (this gift of righteousness that comes. How?) through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there's no distinction; ...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Verse 24, and all are) justified (those who are justified are justified, are declared right with God) as a gift by His grace (How?) through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ.

Fifthly, we see God's wisdom in the purpose of the cross in satisfying the justice of God. In chapter 3, verses 25 and 26, he calls what Christ did on the cross propitiation, the

satisfaction of God's justice. That is the wisdom of God. God couldn't just say, "I forgive," because in doing so He would have destroyed His justice, so He had to satisfy that justice, and He did so on Christ on the cross. That's the wisdom of God.

We see the wisdom of God in the appointment of Adam and Christ as our legal representatives because how could a God treat the unjust as if they were just. That violates His own principles of justice unless He first appoints Adam and Christ as our legal representatives who act in our place and then He can treat us either in keeping with what they deserve, badly with Adam, or what they deserve as righteous with Christ.

Number seven, we see the wisdom of God in the security of the justified believer because of regeneration and because of the indwelling Spirit. Listen, you are secure because God made you a new creation. He didn't just forgive your sin. He made you new, and He put His Spirit within you. That assures that you will reach glory.

Number eight, the unconditional election of undeserving sinners, chapters 9 through 11. That's the wisdom of God. We saw it unfold, the choice of preaching as the method of announcing that message is another display of God's wisdom. God says there has to be someone to proclaim the message. Romans 10, the historical plan that He had for the Jews and the Gentiles. Listen, when you look at all of that, what do you respond with? You respond with Paul, "Oh, the depth...of the wisdom of God."

Romans 11:33, Paul's making the point that the depth of God's wisdom is revealed in the gospel. In fact, look at chapter 16, look at how he ends this book. Having said everything that he has to say about the gospel, verse 27, "To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen!" The only place he can go in the end is to say, "Look at the depth of the wisdom of God."

There's a third attribute that provokes Paul to doxology, and that is God's knowledge. Back in chapter 11, "Oh, the depth...of the knowledge of God." This is celebrating the reality of God's omniscience, the fact that God is all-knowing. A. W. Pink writes this:



God is omniscient. He knows everything: everything possible, everything actual, all events, all creatures of the past, the present, and the future. He is perfectly acquainted with every detail in the life of every being in heaven, in earth, and in hell. Nothing escapes His notice; nothing can be hidden from Him; nothing is forgotten by Him. He never errs; He never changes; He never overlooks anything.

“Oh, the depth of... the knowledge of God.” You say, “How does God’s knowledge factor into the Gospel. What is Paul, what point is he making?” Well, think of it this way. Imagine how wise your decisions could be if you knew everything that could happen, and you knew everything that will happen. Well, that’s exactly what God knows. Because God knows all things, actual and possible, He is able to make perfectly wise decisions.

You see, in verse 33, Paul is carried away in rapture and praise of God for how His comprehensive knowledge allowed Him to conceive and to carry out all the details and to create the wise plan of redemption. His knowledge of everything led Him to wisdom, the best ends and the best means. As Hodge writes,

Paul focuses on God’s all-comprehending knowledge, which surveyed all the subjects of this work, all the necessities and circumstances, all the means required for the accomplishment of the divine purpose, and all the results of those means from the beginning to end.

As God looked at what He could do, He knew it all. He knew everything possible. He knew everything actual. And from that, He laid out a perfectly wise plan. Do you see why Paul would say, “Oh, the depth of the riches of God’s mercy and grace. Oh, the depth of God’s wisdom. And oh, the depth of God’s knowledge.” What an amazing start to this doxology.

So, what should be our response to these great, inexhaustible attributes of God? They should be the same responses as Paul's. Let me give you three of them. Number one, exclamation. The first word of Paul's doxology is just that, exclamation. "Oh!" Listen, folks, that tells us something. That tells us that knowing the truth about God and His character should move us emotionally. We should be amazed. We should be in awe. We should be stunned by God's greatness and goodness. And let me say, if we're not, the problem is not with God. The problem is with us. Our God is too small, too human. We don't fully grasp the reality of who He is.

I'll just tell you as one who's had the joy for many years of studying God's Word for up to usually about 30 hours a week is my commitment when I'm teaching two different sermons on Sunday, two different passages. Thirty hours a week now for the better part of 16 years. Here's two constant realities that I have seen. Number one, God is amazing, and number two, I'm always amazed.

There's a second response that should be ours, and that is meditation. In Greek, in the original language, it's apparent from the parallel structure of these verses, and even from Paul's choice of words, of similar, sounding words, that these verses are a poem. Verses 33 to 36 are a poem. And you can see that our English Bible doesn't set it off that way, but even the translators, or not translators, but those who put together the Greek testament from all the manuscript evidence, they put these verses as poetry in the Greek text because they are. These verses aren't found anywhere else as a collection, as a poem, so this is a poem that Paul himself wrote. In other words, Paul spent a lot of time reflecting on these truths about God and pulling them together into a piece of poetry. He meditated on God.

Can I challenge you that you and I should imitate Paul and the Psalmists in doing the same thing? When's the last time you thought about God? Here's what the Psalmist says, Psalm 63:6, "I will meditate on You." Psalm 145:5, "On the glorious splendor of Your majesty...I will meditate." Let me just challenge you to take this passage we're working through over these weeks and think about it.

What is meditation? Meditation is two things. It's choosing to think deeply about a passage of Scripture in order one, to better understand it, and two, to decide how you should respond, what to do about it. That's it. That's meditation. Choose to think deeply about this passage that talks about God in order to better understand the passage and to decide how you ought to respond as a result. That's meditation. Let me challenge you. Your response to God should be exclamation, and it should be meditation.

Thirdly, it should be adoration. You see, Romans 11 reminds us that theology and doxology are inseparably united. There is no true doxology without theology. In other words, you can work up emotion, a lot of people in the Christian world do, but it's not real worship without theology. Worship is a response to God's self-revelation in the Word, the Word written, and the Word incarnate. True worship can only arise from a growing knowledge and understanding of who God is and what He has done. That's what provoked Paul's doxology.

Lloyd-Jones writes, "It is the contemplation of the truth with the mind that always moves the heart." Let me say that again. But just as there is no true doxology without theology, there is no legitimate theology without doxology. The kind of knowledge of God that is purely academic is fatally and fundamentally flawed. If you can study God, if you can study the Bible, if you can study the truth about God, and your heart isn't carried away like Paul's in doxology, there is something terribly wrong with your heart.

A spiritual apprehension of the nature of God will always find us on our faces before Him, out of breath like Paul was as he wrote this doxology. Bishop Moule writes, "Beware equally of an un-devotional theology and an un-theological devotion." May God give us the right balance. "Oh, the depth of the riches (and) the wisdom and the knowledge of God."

Let's pray together. Father, we do thank you for the great truths that we have already seen about You. Oh, God, may we respond being amazed, being stunned, being

overwhelmed. Father, don't let us treat these truths about you in a pedestrian, ordinary way. May we respond with meditation. May we think about You. Father, may it never be said of us that we rarely think about You at all. And Father, I pray that our hearts would be filled with true worship and adoration, with doxology. Lord, I pray for those who may be here this morning who are not in Christ. Oh, God, open their minds and hearts to see the glory of Your own character in the gospel. And may they respond in faith to the riches of Your mercy in Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.