

Romans
The Glory of God in the Gospel (Part 4)
Romans 11:33-36
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Well, I do invite you to take your Bibles and turn with me to Romans, chapter 11, as we turn there for the last time in our study of Paul's letter, Romans, chapter 11. As you're turning there, just to mention a couple of things to you. One, we had the wonderful privilege this last Thursday to host the first annual Masters Fellowship Shepherd's Gathering. It's kind of an outshoot of the Shepherd's Conference, and we had the privilege of hosting pastors from our region, from Texas, Oklahoma, and some from Arkansas and Louisiana. We had somewhere between 60 and 70 pastors and their wives, just had a wonderful day of fellowship and encouragement. You pray that the Lord will use that to encourage these pastors from all over our area and our hearts as well.

Also let me mention that with the fall beginning, we are returning again to a Book-of-the-Month. Some of you have already been involved in that; others of you have not yet. This is a great chance to do that. I'm encouraging you to read a book that has a great potential to impact your soul and this month the book is by a Puritan, Thomas Goodwin, called The Heart of Christ. Some of you already are acquainted with the Puritans and enjoy their writings; others of you are a little frightened of that. This is a great entry point. It is a small book and yet it has been one of the most encouraging books in my life over the last two or three years. I've read it several times and found it to be a great blessing because it rehearses the fact that, just like Jesus's love for His disciples during that final period of His life, we see manifested in the Upper Room Discourse, His heart is exactly the same for us today as it was for them in those days, just a great encouragement. **I** want you to pick up a copy of that at the bookstore and read it; think you'll find it a great blessing to your soul, The Heart of Christ, by Thomas Goodwin.

Also, let me say on behalf of the elders, **I encourage** you to read the updated and expanded version of our church's distinctives. No, we haven't changed any of them; instead, what we've done, before now it's just been a sort of a collection of statements about contemporary issues, but we have rewritten it to really focus on our two great distinctives, the ones out in the lobby-- A High View of God and A High View of Scripture, explaining what that means and then

showing how those other issues relate to that. So I would encourage you to read that at your earliest convenience. You can access this new version on the website under the “About Us” tab. I encourage you to do that at some point this week, hopefully not now, but at some point this week, read that new updated version of the distinctives. And for those of you who may be electronically challenged, there are a few copies available out at the ministry center.

We are finishing, today, Paul's great doxology that comes at the end of Romans 11. This week, I read an article which put these words in huge contrast. Perhaps you saw the article or one like it. The BBC reported this week that the Beatles album, “Abbey Road,” returned to number one in the UK some 50 years after it first topped the album charts. Some of you are old enough **to** remember and have listened to the Beatles; others of you have experienced it in sort of a resurgence in our day.

Maybe you're familiar with “Abbey Road,” but perhaps you aren't as familiar with the last song that the Beatles recorded before their breakup in 1970, in April of that year. That last song that they recorded was called, “I, Me, Mine.” George Harrison wrote the lyrics and claimed that they were reflections about the human ego while he was on LSD. **But most** experts agree that it goes beyond that; they agree that it was really Harrison's commentary on the selfish conflict that was fracturing this band. Here's just the last verse of the last song that the Beatles recorded:

All I can hear
I me mine, I me mine, I me mine.
Even those tears
I me mine, I me mine, I me mine.
No-one's frightened of playing it.
Ev'ryone's saying it.
Flowing more freely than wine
All through your life, I me mine.

That's more than the last song of the Beatles. That is also the basic worldview of the fallen human heart. And that depraved, unbelieving worldview is the polar opposite of the biblical

worldview that we discover at the end of Romans, chapter 11. Because pagan worldviews, in the end, all focus on the happiness of man; the biblical worldview focuses on the glory of God.

This doxology comes at the end of Romans 11; it's one of the greatest passages in Scripture. It was the gospel that inspired it; the first 11 chapters as Paul unfolds for us the amazing plan of God in the issue of redemption. Paul was overwhelmed as he contemplated all that he had shared with us in the first 11 chapters, **unending** truth about the glory and greatness of God. He was overwhelmed with the unfathomable depth of the eternal plan of redemption, and it's in response to that that he wrote these verses. Let's read them again together, Romans 11, beginning in verse 33, and I will read it as we have discovered it to teach in verse 33.

Oh, the depth of the riches (That is the riches of God's mercy, and) 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 theme of this great doxology is simply this, the gospel displays the glory of God and, therefore, demands the worship of God; the gospel displays the glory of God and, therefore, demands the worship of God.

Over the last few weeks, we've been considering verses 33 to 35, where Paul establishes this simple truth, the gospel displays the glory of God. It displays His glory because it highlights God's inexhaustible attributes because it focuses on God's unfathomable decisions or decrees and His ways, His ways of operating. And then as we discovered last time we studied Romans together, having given us those two ways that the gospel displays God's glory, Paul then lays out the biblical evidence for that from two Old Testament texts. Paul goes on to show us that because the gospel so clearly, powerfully displays the glory of God; secondly, and this is what we come to this morning, the gospel demands the worship of God. That's the message of verse 36.

Now in verse 36, he begins by capturing, in a concise powerful theological statement, what we could call a summary of God's eternal glory, a summary of God's eternal glory. Notice how verse 36 begins, "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things." Now for just a moment, let the magnitude of that statement, its height and length and depth and breath, let it sink into your soul, "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things."

I just need to admit to you as we begin, that as a teacher, I can never do justice to that one simple sentence; because in three short prepositional phrases, the Holy Spirit captures something of the grandeur and the majesty of God. So we will not exhaust it, but what I want us to do this morning is **just to at least** plunge our toe into the ocean of meaning that's included in this great expression.

Notice verse 36 begins with the little word, "For," which means this is connected to Paul's previous argument. It could just be explaining verse 35, it could be explaining that the reason no one has ever given to God that He should have to be repaid **is** because all things come from Him. More likely though, I think that verse 36 is an intentional summary of the entire doxology so far. It points to the glory of God in His interaction with His creation. Here's the great display of the glory of God when it comes to the universe and all of the things that are in it "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things."

Now, you'll notice in the first half of verse 36, the pronoun, "Him," occurs three times. That led some of the older commentators to suggest that Paul is intentionally here referring to the three members of the Trinity. That view, however, is almost universally rejected today; and in fact, I would say it cannot be true because while Scripture does teach that all things are from the Father and that the work of creation and redemption are accomplished through the Son, nowhere does Scripture teach us that all things exist for the Spirit. Now, a much more natural way to take the "Him," the pronoun "Him" is to look for **the** antecedent. The antecedent of "Him" is God in verse 33. So Paul here is referring to God in a general sense; we could say to all three members of the Trinity.

Now, notice he says, “all things.” What does he mean by “all things?” Well, let me say that “all things” does not and cannot include the two things in the universe that Scripture tells us do not have their origin in God. There are two realities in the universe that do not trace back to God. The first of those is sin. 1 John 3, verse 8, says that ultimately sin traces back to Satan; it spontaneously generated in his heart, the greatest of God's creation, the Prime Minister of heaven, one of the covering cherubs. The second reality that we're told in Scripture does not originate with God is temptation. James 1:13, “...God cannot be tempted with evil, ... (neither does) He...tempt any (man).” So those two realities, sin and temptation, do not originate in God, but instead we're told originate, both of them, in Satan.

But that expression, “all things” then, must include everything else. It includes all things in creation, and it includes all things that He planned and executes for salvation, creation and salvation. We will see those things come up throughout our time together this morning.

Notice, first of all, that Paul says, “...All things...are...from Him.” They are from Him. Literally, the Greek text uses a preposition that means ‘out of’ so ‘out of Him, out of God, are all things.’ Where did everything come from? “From Him...are all things.” God is the original source of all things with those two biblical exceptions. Now this is true when it comes to creation which absolutely cuts contrary to the culture in which we live, because as you know, the prevailing cultural view of the origin of things is naturalism.

And naturalism, **at its** heart, has one basic proposition and that is matter is all that exists or ever has existed. It's how Carl Sagan began his famous television program. This is what evolutionists teach. Most evolutionists believe that matter has existed eternally. In other words, they give an attribute of God eternality to matter. But some evolutionists believe **that** matter is spontaneously self-generated, *ex nihilo*, out of nothing by chance, although ultimately even they don't believe it really comes out of nothing. They usually have space or something, energy, something has to exist for that to happen. You can see that both of those views, the view that matter is eternal or some sort of self-generating spontaneous creation of matter, both take far more faith to believe that there is an eternal God who made all things.

But understand then for most people, all things are either from matter or from chance or from both. Scripture teaches that the God of the Bible is the Creator; He is the original source of all things. He created all things by Himself.

Now, put on your thinking caps with me for a moment, and I want you to go back with me before there was anything but God. I want you to go back in eternity past; and if you can picture eternity past, if you can think about that reality, then understand this, there was no time, there was no matter, there was no space, there was absolutely nothing but God! And God, in the members of the Trinity, enjoyed perfect relationship and eternal joy together; that's all that existed. But then a plan to create the universe came from the mind of that One true eternal God in the counsel of His own being, and then He alone, having created that plan, executed that plan. Genesis 1:1 begins, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." And Genesis 1, of course, describes how that happened; it happened simply by the Word of God. God spoke everything around you into existence; He created this universe *ex nihilo*, that is out of nothing. He simply spoke and it came to be.

Isaiah 44:24 says, "Thus says... (Yahweh,) your Redeemer, and the one who formed you from the womb, 'I, ... (Yahweh,) am the maker of all things, Stretching out the heavens by Myself And spreading out the earth all alone.'" God says, "I did it and I did it by myself."

Of course, we know from the New Testament that the agent God used to accomplish that was His eternal Son, the second person of the Trinity. John 1:3 says, "All things came into being through Him, (speaking of Jesus) and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being." 1 Corinthians 8:6 says, "...yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things." 1 Corinthians 11:12, "...all things originate from God." Colossians 1:16, again speaking of Christ, "...by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities." In other words, whether it's the visible physical universe or whether it is the spiritual beings **that inhabit** the universe and heavens above, all things have been created through Him. So all things in creation then are "from Him;" they are out of Him.

But in the context of Romans 11, “from Him” must especially include all things involved in redemption because that's been the theme of this letter so far. All things involved in redemption, all things involving our salvation, brothers and sisters, are from Him. God is the One who initiated the eternal plan of salvation in eternity past in the Counsel of the Trinity. You see this alluded to in Ephesians, chapter 3, verse 11 where literally the Greek text says, “The purpose of the ages, the plan of the ages.” God created a plan of redemption in eternity past.

Then God acted in eternity past in sovereign election; we've just learned about that through chapters 9 through 11 of Romans. But listen to Ephesians 1:4, the Father “chose us in (Christ) before the foundation of the world.” Then at the right moment in human history, when the Romans had established ‘The Pax Romana’ which allowed free movement across all the nations of the Mediterranean world, when Alexander the Great had spread **the** Greek language, **the** market language of *Koine* Greek across all of the Mediterranean world, when everything was just right, Galatians 4:4 says:

When the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

He sent His Son, and of course, He sent His Son as **the** perfect sinless One, fully God, fully man. He lived for thirty-three years a life of perfect obedience to God's Law, and then understand this, God offered Christ as a sacrifice for human sin. That's why when John the Baptist saw Jesus in John 1:29, he says, “Behold the Lamb of God who (picks up and carries off) the sin of the world!” He was God's Lamb.

Then, God, having sacrificed His Son for the forgiveness of our sins, raised Him from the dead. Ephesians 1:20 says, “He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.” And God did all of this so that His Son would be the center of everything. Ephesians 1:10, God intends to sum “up...all things in Christ, things in...heaven and things on the earth.” Or, as Paul puts it in Philippians 2:9 through 11, “God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name.” What's the name above every name? It's not Jesus. There are a lot of people named Jesus. It's the name “Lord.” He goes on to say:

So that (someday) at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Where did that plan come from? What was the source of that incredible plan of redemption? In 1 Corinthians, chapter 2, verses 6 and 7, Paul says it came from God. He says:

We...speak (a) wisdom...not of this age...but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory.

It was God's wisdom; it was His plan. He initiated the plan, "From Him are all things."

Back in our text, Romans, chapter 11, Paul adds that "all things... (are) through Him," through Him. How do all things that God created continue to exist and how are they governed and directed? "Through Him...are all things." When it comes to creation, "through Him" means that God is the perpetual ruler and sustainer of all that He created. Solely through His wisdom and His power, everything in creation continues to be sustained in its existence and to be guided toward the ends for which He created it. That's what the Bible teaches, that's what, if you're Christian, you believe. But that is not what most people around us believe. The people around us believe that life is random; they believe that everything that exists in the physical world, in human history, in each person's life, is characterized solely by randomness. There is no aim, there is no purpose to what happens because there's no designer, there is no creator, there is no sustainer, there is no God; and therefore, life has no meaning.

And if you doubt where that philosophy leads, just keep reading the news. Compare that pagan worldview with Scripture's affirmation that God sustains everything that He made. Acts 17:25, Paul talking to the philosophers on Mars Hill, says this about God; "...He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things."

Listen, as you sit here this morning, the fact that your heart keeps beating, the fact that you keep breathing, is because God has given that to you. You are sustained in life "through Him," and the moment that God decides your life is done, it's gone that moment. He is the one who sustains all things.

Paul goes on in Acts 17:28 in that same message to say, "...in Him we live and move and exist." I want you to turn with me to 1 Corinthians, chapter 8. This is one of those passages that if you don't know it, you need to know it. 1 Corinthians, chapter 8, as Paul begins to deal with the issue of Christian liberty, he talks about the fact that there really is only one God, and all the gods of the nations don't really exist, and so he says in verse 6, "...for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, (That is what we've already seen.) and we exist for Him; (We're **going to** see that in just a moment. And now notice the end.) and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him," we exist through Him. Colossians 1:17 says, "...in Him (in Jesus Christ.) all things hold together." Hebrews 1:3 says, "...He (speaking again of Christ) ...upholds all things by the word of His power." It's the word of Christ that keeps this universe operating. Hebrews 2:10 says, God is the one "through whom are all things." So understand that when it says, "all things...are...through Him," it means that God is the one who sustains everything He created.

But let's take that a step **further**. God also directs all things to the ends for which He created them. He not only sustains them, but He governs and directs them to the place He wants them to be; He's in charge. He rules! So many texts, but listen to David's great prayer in 1 Chronicles 29:11:

Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, (Listen to this.) indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; (It all belongs to God, and then he says this,) Yours is the dominion, O LORD.

In other words, they don't just belong to You, You rule over them all. And then it says, "You exalt Yourself as head over all." Psalm 33:11 says, "The counsel of the LORD stands forever, (and) The plans of His heart from generation to generation." So God not only sustains all of creation, He directs and governs it to the ends that He has decided.

But this isn't just true of creation. It's also true that in redemption, "all things...are...through Him." In Ephesians, chapter 1, Paul is talking about our salvation, about the redemption we enjoy in Jesus Christ; and buried in the very middle of that passage in verse 11, of Ephesians 1,

we read this, "...we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will." All things in salvation are through Him. Your salvation was through Him from the beginning.

You know, some of us grew up in churches where we were taught that our salvation, at least in part, was through us. That's not what the Bible teaches. The Bible says our salvation, "...all things pertaining to our salvation were through Him."

At the moment of your salvation, God the Father issued what theologians call, "The Effectual Call" through the gospel that you were hearing. Maybe you had heard the gospel many times before, but that time, **whether** you were reading the Bible, or you were hearing a friend share the gospel, or you were hearing a message like this one, in that gospel, the Father was calling you. It's described in John, chapter 6, verse 44, as the Father drawing you. He is the one who drew you to Himself at that moment.

Here's how it's described in Acts 16:14 with Lydia, one of the early converts in Europe. It says, "...Lydia...was listening; (to Paul) and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul." That's what happened to you if you're in Christ. He then made you alive through the regeneration of the Spirit. He gave you life; you were spiritually dead; and in a moment's time, through that call, He awakened you to new life. Ephesians, chapter 2, verse 5, says, "...when we were dead in our transgressions, (God) made us alive together with Christ, (by grace you have been saved)." And then **in** that new life, He gave you faith and repentance to respond to the gospel. Acts 11:18 says, "...God has granted...the repentance that leads to life." He's given it as a gift of grace. Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that (faith is) not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."

God went on in response to that faith, all of this happening in a moment's time, at the moment of your salvation. He justified you, He declared you right before His Law, He positionally sanctified you. That is He set you apart unto Himself as His own special possession, and He adopted you as His child. Then He began the process of and is continuing today to sanctify you,

to make you progressively more like Jesus Christ; and someday, He will glorify you. But understand, it is all through the sovereign gracious work of God; "...from Him...are all things."

Turn back to Romans, chapter 8; this is exactly what Paul reminded us of and what we call "The Golden Chain of Redemption" as he links together God's eternal purpose, acting out in our lives to save us. Look at the end of verse 29, Romans 8:29; that's where we pick it up because he refers to those who are called, there's that effectual call, according to God's purpose, and then he explained how this all unfolds. "For those whom He foreknew, (That is He predetermined a relationship with, that's election.) He also predestined (Or predetermined our destiny to what end?) to become conformed to the image of His Son." That's what you're predestined for; "...so that He would be the firstborn (Christ) among many brethren." Now watch the links, verse 30, "and these whom He predestined, He also called; and **these** whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified." Notice that the subject of every one of those verbs is who? God, He, He, He, He!

Turn over to Philippians, chapter 1; in verse 6, Paul makes the same point. He says, "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began (speaking of God) He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." I love that verse because do you realize what Paul is saying? Paul is saying, "If you're a Christian, God began that work in you, He is continuing that work in you **as** he says in chapter 2, "God is at work in you to will and to work for his good pleasure," and He will perfect that work in you. He began it, He's doing the work, and He'll bring it to completion. "Through him...are all things!"

Go back to Romans, chapter 11, because Paul adds, thirdly, that "...all things...are...to Him," to Him. God is the final end of all things. When it comes to why all things exist, or to what end, or to what purpose they exist, if you ask the average person on the street today, they may not be able to actually formulate it, but I can promise you this, the primary view out there that you will find is a view that philosophers called humanism. The idea that all things exist for us!

After the advent of Darwinism, humanism became the main standard bearer for the idea that our happiness is the goal of life. Reduced to its simplest and most individualistic expression,

humanism teaches this, listen carefully; because this is what you encounter all day, every day outside of the Christian community, and sometimes unfortunately even within the Christian community. But here's what humanism teaches. The end of all being is the happiness of man. The end of all being is the happiness of man. At first, when humanism began, to its credit, it meant mankind's happiness with a focus on philanthropy and humanitarian ideas. But eventually, fairly soon actually, and certainly it's true today, that goal has become much coarser. Today, the goal of life is not mankind's happiness, but my personal happiness. It's about "I, Me, Mine !" It couldn't be said any better.

The best biblical expression of humanism I think **comes from** the lips of Nebuchadnezzar before his conversion in Daniel, chapter 4, verse 30. Listen to how filled with humanism this verse is. Here's Nebuchadnezzar, "The king reflected and said, 'Is this not Babylon the great?'" He's speaking both of the city and of the Empire that he loved and ruled. He says, "Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built? (It is from me.) ...by the might of my power (It exists through me.) and for the glory of my majesty." It exists for me! That is the theme verse of our culture.

How did God respond to that assertion of humanism, that assertion of the end of all being is the happiness of man; that all things exist from me and through me and to me? God immediately struck Nebuchadnezzar with insanity. Now, why? I mean, God doesn't strike everybody who comes to that conclusion with insanity. Why did He do that to one of the greatest kings to ever rule on this planet? Because, God wanted to make him an object lesson! God was essentially saying in striking Nebuchadnezzar with insanity that such a self-centered, self-consumed worldview is insane. To think that you are the center of the universe is a classic demonstration of spiritual insanity.

Instead, the Scriptures teach that God is the end for which everything was made. Jonathan Edwards, in his amazing little pamphlet called "The End for which God Created the World," writes this, "All that is ever spoken of in the Scripture as an ultimate end of God's works is included in that one phrase, 'The glory of God.'" Robert Raymond writes, "The Christian who gives the Bible its due, will learn that the (Listen to this now.) the impulse that drives God and

the thing He pursues in everything He does is His own glory.” He is the heir, the goal, the terminus of all things. Why did everything come into existence and where is everything headed? “...all things (exist) for...Him and...to Him,” for Him and to Him! That certainly includes everything in creation.

Let's take it in those two parts because I think they're both implied in this expression. All things exist in creation “for Him.” That is, for His benefit, for His purposes. Colossians 1:16, “...all things have been created through Him and for Him.” Hebrews 1:2, “in these last days (God) has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things.” He's the one who gets it all; it's for Him. Hebrews 2:10 describes God as the one, “for whom are all things.” So everything that has been created exists for God.

But we could also add that all things exist “to Him.” God is the end for which everything was created. All things exist to bring Him glory. I mean, think about the different categories. God's glory is the ultimate end that God had in creating the universe. Psalm 19:1, “The heavens are telling...the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.” A couple of weeks ago, I described for you something of **the** contemporary understanding of the magnitude of the universe. Listen, all of that doesn't exist to make you feel small although it does that. It exists to give you some glimpse of the greatness, the grandeur, the majesty of God.

God not only created the universe for His own glory, He created man for His own glory. The first question in the Westminster Shorter Catechism is, “What is the chief end of man?” and what's the response? “To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever!” That's the chief end of man. You see this, negatively, in Romans 1; turn back to Romans 1. Notice verse 18:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. (Notice what men do; fallen men) suppress, (that is, they hold down) the truth (about God) in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

Listen, if you're here this morning **and** you're playing around with the idea that you're an agnostic or an atheist, you need to understand that that is a moral decision and not an intellectual one. God has made it clear to you that there is a God, that He exists.

Let me put it bluntly, God doesn't believe in atheists. He goes on to say:

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

This, by the way, is why six out of seven people on this planet, while they may end up with the wrong object to worship, understand that there is some sort of a supreme being because it is so clear and obvious.

Now, notice verse 18, they failed to respond to the truth about God. How should they have responded? Verse 21, "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God." Literally, the Greek text says, "They did not glorify Him as God." Do you understand man's great end is to give glory to God and to fail to do so is the greatest sin?

I mean, maybe you're not a Christian, and you're sitting in here this morning feeling pretty good about your moral condition. You know, "I'm a pretty good person. I haven't done this and I haven't done that." You understand that the greatest sin you have ever committed is to fail to give the God who created you, who sustained your life, who gives you all things, the glory that He deserves? There's nothing you can do that's a greater affront to Him than that. Isaiah 42:8 says, "I am (Yahweh), that is My name; (and) I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images." Every intelligent being exists to bring glory to God.

Let me make it very personal. The reason you exist is to bring glory to God and you know what? You will bring glory to God. Every person in this room without exception, Christian, non-Christian, moral, immoral, doesn't matter; you will give glory to God. If you refuse to repent and believe the gospel of His Son, you will bring Him glory someday as a perfect demonstration of His justice and His wrath. Or, if you will repent and believe, you will bring God glory as **an** eternal demonstration of His great mercy and grace, but give Him glory, you

will! The end of all being is the glory of God; it's the ultimate reason all things exist; and either way, your life will glorify God forever.

But again, this is not just true in creation; this is also true in redemption. All of those whom the Father chose and called and saved, He did so, listen to this, for Him, for Him. He saved you for Himself so that He could adopt you, so that He could be your Father. Look at Ephesians, chapter 1; Ephesians, chapter 1, verse 4. Notice the second half of verse 4, "In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ (And notice that little expression.) to Himself," to Himself. You are a Christian for Him.

He also chose you and called you and saved you not only for Himself, but also for His Son. John 17 says that the Father in eternity past gave a redeemed humanity to His Son as an expression of His love. Over and over again in John 17, Jesus refers to "those whom You gave me," those whom You gave Me. And toward the end of that chapter, He turns and speaks of us, those of us who would believe through the apostles' words, and He says of us, "Those whom You gave me. I want them to be with me where I am."

You understand that you are "for Him?" That God saved you in order to fulfill a promise of love He made to His Son in eternity past; that He would give Him as a gift as an expression of His love of redeemed humanity, and you are simply swept up in the great drama of the love of the Father for the Son. "For Him!"

All whom the Father saved are also "to Him." That is they exist, we exist as the redeemed for His glory. If you're still in Ephesians 1, notice this; Ephesians 1:3 down through verse 14, is another doxology. Paul begins his letter to the Ephesians with a doxology, and he talks about the redemption that we enjoy, and he focuses on all three members of the Trinity. In verses 3 through 6, he focuses on the Father, and notice the Father's role that he highlights here was election. Verse 4, "just as (the Father) chose us in (Christ) before the foundation of the world, (in order) that we (could belong to Him as His children.)" Verse 5, why did the Father do this? Verse 6, "to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved."

Beginning in verse 7 and running down through verse 12, he talks about the Son's role in redemption; that He accomplished our redemption; He saved us to what end? Verse 12, "to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory." In verses 13 and 14, he talks about the role of the Spirit **who** saved us and sealed us, who guarantees our eventual salvation. Why? Verse 14, "...to the praise of His glory!" That's why God did it all. You exist as a believer to Him to the end of His glory.

The way Peter puts it in 1 Peter 2:9 is, "...you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, (Listen to this.) so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." You exist to Him; you exist as a Christian to His glory. So there it is; the first half of verse 36 is a summary of God's eternal glory.

Paul then provides us with a summary in the second half of the verse; a summary of our eternal worship, a summary of our eternal worship. Notice verse 36, "...To Him be the glory forever, Amen." May God receive the glory! What does that mean? You know, as Christians, we use that word because it's a biblical word; we don't really use it outside of the Christian context much. But what is God's glory? Well, when it's used of God in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, the word 'glory' is a word which simply means 'weighty, majestic.' And so, **it's used** of God in two ways. First of all, it describes the inherent, internal weightiness or majesty and honor of God. That is, it describes what God is and what God would be if no one ever saw it. He would be glorious if there was nobody else to see it. It's simply who He is. There's a weightiness, a majesty to Him.

But the second way this word 'glory' is used is to describe the external manifestation of God's inherent intrinsic majesty. This is what God does. Now God acts and we get to see His glory; we get to see the reality of who He is, the weightiness of His person. That's His glory! "To Him be the glory forever."

Now don't misunderstand Paul here. We cannot add anything to the intrinsic glory of God. Glory already belongs to God. The Old Testament often says God's glory or the glory of God or His glory. All those expressions declare **that glory rather rightly** belongs to God alone. Glory is His. I Peter 4:11, says of God, "...to whom belongs the glory." So we aren't called to add to the intrinsic glory of God, but rather to praise and worship Him because of His intrinsic glory. This is to ascribe glory to God because He has glory. This is Psalm 29, 1 and 2 where it says, "Ascribe to the LORD the glory due...His name." It's to respond to God's intrinsic glory. That's what Paul does here at the end of Romans 11. Notice what he says, "To Him be the glory forever. Amen."

Now this is an expression of both Paul's desire and it's a prayer at the same time. He's saying, "May the one true God, may the original source of all things, the perpetual ruler and sustainer of all things, and the final end of all things receive the glory." By the way, notice he doesn't say, "May He receive glory," because people can receive glory from time to time. It says, "May He receive the glory." That's true in both Greek and English. May He receive the supreme glory-- the ultimate glory.

So, all glory intrinsically belongs to God; therefore like Paul, we should desire and pray that all glory be rightfully ascribed to Him. That should be our desire, that should be our prayer, that should be our motive, that should be our ambition, that should be our daily practice. This is such a perpetual theme of Scripture.

Look at Romans 16, verse 27. I just want to show you a few references; I'm not even going to highlight all the ones in my notes. Let me just highlight a couple for you just to make this point, to punctuate it. Romans 16:27, stay with me here, let's look to several. First of all, "to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen." Go over to Ephesians, chapter 3, verse 21, "to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen." Look at Philippians, chapter 4, verse 20, "Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen." 1 Timothy, chapter 1, verse 17, "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." Go to Hebrews, chapter 13; Hebrews, chapter 13, and notice verse 20:

Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, **even** Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Jude, verse 25, “to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.” And when you get to Revelation chapter 4 and chapter 5, what do you find **the** all the angels and all of the redeemed gathered around the throne of God doing? They’re ascribing glory to God! That is the response of a regenerate heart.

Now go back to Romans 11, and notice how Paul finishes, how he finishes chapter 11. Verse 36, “...To Him be the glory forever.” That word ‘forever’ actually translates a Greek preposition that literally translated is, “To Him be the glory into the ages.” It pictures eternity as a successive series of ages, one after another, like the waves hit the ocean shore, age after age, hits the shoreline of eternity, and may God receive the glory into the ages.

And then Paul finishes with his own affirmation of these great truths, “Amen!” We’ve discovered that that word ‘amen’ is actually a Hebrew word, and it’s transliterated into the Greek language and then eventually into English; all the same and it basically means this, “It’s true and may it happen! Amen! It’s true and may it happen. I agree and let it be so!”

Let me ask you, “Is that the response of your heart?” Here’s a test of the reality of your faith in Jesus Christ. When you rehearse the great truths about God in this doxology, when you think about all that God has done in salvation, do you respond like Paul from your heart with, “Amen, I agree and let it be so!” If not, then there is a serious question about whether you’ve come to understand or enjoy these realities. “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory into the ages. I agree and let it be so!”

Let’s pray together. Father, I pray that you would take my weak and inadequate attempt to capture this passage and to somehow describe the glory and majesty of your person, that you would take those feeble attempts and your Holy Spirit, through your Word, would grant true

illumination to the hearts of those who are your own, and that all who belong to you would find their hearts lifted in praise and worship and adoration just like Paul's. Father, fill our hearts and lives daily with praise and thanksgiving and worship.

I also pray, Father, for those who may be here this morning who are not followers of Jesus Christ, maybe who came in knowing that, perhaps who have discovered it even while they're here. Lord, I pray that you would help them to see the travesty of a worldview best captured by, "I, Me, Mine." Raise their eyes to see the glory of your plan, the glory of the gospel, that they can have forgiveness in and through your Son in His life and death and resurrection, through repentance and faith in Him. And, Lord, seeing something of your glory, may you call them to yourself even today. We pray in Jesus's name, Amen.

Our prayer room will be open after the service just to my right; there's a room before you get to that exit door that's marked. After the closing song, you come, give us a chance to direct you from the Scriptures if we can help you in any way. Seth's coming now to lead us in a closing song. Well, let's stand together as we sing just the first and last verses of hymn 33, "Our Sovereign God."