

“To God Be the Glory Forever”
(Romans 11:33-36)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. Today, so many people want glory from men; they want recognition for something outstanding they do.
 - a. The athlete competes; the actor acts; the artist paints; the musician composes.
 - b. They work hard to do their best, so that others may marvel.

2. In a similar, but infinitely higher way, God also does what He does to receive glory from His creatures.
 - a. He creates so that we might marvel at His power.
 - b. He provides so that we might wonder at His goodness.
 - c. He redeems so that we might be amazed at His grace.
 - d. But unlike the athlete, actor, artist or musician, God actually deserves the glory.
 - e. He gave these the ability to do the things they do.
 - f. But no one has given to Him: all that He does comes from Himself.
 - g. God does His work that the angels may wonder and that we may marvel at who and what He is.

B. Preview.

1. Paul has told us about God’s plan to save the Jews and Gentiles in chapters 1-11.
 - a. He has shown us how man got into his predicament and what God has done to get him out.
 - b. In chapters 9-11, he showed us God’s plan now to save Jews.
 - (i) He sent His Son to His people, the Jews, but they rejected Him, so he hardened their hearts; not all, but most.
 - (ii) He then turned to the Gentiles and saved some of them, adding them to His covenant people, the Olive Tree.
 - (iii) But He did this to make the Jews jealous: When someone else gets what was promised to you, it makes you mad and makes you appreciate and want that thing more.
 - (iv) When the Jews see the Gentiles getting their blessings, their kingdom, their Christ, it provokes them to jealousy.
 - (v) And God saves them: if He was willing to bring the disobedient Gentiles into His household, how much more the children who were cast out.

2. This morning, as Paul considers the plan of God, the way He has worked all these things, he’s amazed at its scope and how it reveals His glory.
 - a. God has done all things well. He was even able to use the sins of His people to bring about their salvation and glory to His name.
 - b. This morning, let’s consider how we have reason to glorify God as well and to trust that He will work everything in our lives for His glory.

II. Sermon.

A. First, Paul would have us consider some of the things God has revealed about Himself and His glory through this plan.

1. First, His wisdom and knowledge: “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!” (v. 33).
 - a. Knowledge is the accumulation of, understanding of, facts; knowing what they are and how they relate to each other.
 - b. Wisdom is the ability to apply that knowledge to any situation to bring about certain results.
 - c. How deep is God’s knowledge, His wisdom?
 - d. Like everything else about Him, it’s infinite – there’s no limit to it.
 - e. He knows everything actual – past, present and future – and everything possible.
 - f. And He knows how to use that knowledge to bring about what He desires (not to mention the fact that He also has the power to do it).
 - g. That He was able to bring about the salvation of His people from both Jews and Gentiles from the sin and depravity of man reveals the depths of the riches of His knowledge and wisdom.

2. Second, Paul would have us consider God’s judgments and ways: “How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways” (v. 33)!

- a. His decisions – the choices He makes, His plans, the path He chooses, the way He decides to bring things about – are beyond our ability to understand.
- b. Eliphaz, the Temanite, when counseling Job, said, “I would place my cause before God; who does great and unsearchable things, wonders without number. He gives rain on the earth, and sends water on the fields, so that He sets on high those who are lowly, and those who mourn are lifted to safety. He frustrates the plotting of the shrewd, so that their hands cannot attain success. He captures the wise by their own shrewdness and the advice of the cunning is quickly thwarted. By day they meet with darkness, and grope at noon as in the night. But He saves from the sword of their mouth, and the poor from the hand of the mighty. So the helpless has hope, and unrighteousness must shut its mouth. Behold, how happy is the man whom God reproves, so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty. For He inflicts pain, and gives relief; He wounds, and His hands *also* heal” (Job 5:8-18).
- c. God is infinite, we are finite. His ways are far more than we can understand.
- d. But they are the best ways: they accomplish His purposes and bring glory to His name.

B. It’s because our knowledge and understanding is limited that Paul tells us, second, that we cannot question God in whatever He does.

1. Who can know what is in the mind of God when He does what He does? Who can instruct Him or teach Him? “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor” (v. 34)?
 - a. We don’t know everything. We don’t know what He is doing.
 - b. Being finite, we can’t even understand what He is doing.

- c. Therefore, we're not qualified to counsel Him in what to do, not in our own lives, or in anyone else's.
 - d. God knows what He's doing. He doesn't need our help.
2. He doesn't need anything from us: He is the source and supplier of everything: "Who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again" (v. 35).
- a. God is no man's debtor.
 - b. We have nothing to offer Him that isn't already His.
 - c. And what we have, He doesn't really need.
- C. And this brings us to the third and main point: Because He is all knowing, all wise, the Sovereign Lord and the supplier of all good things, He is to be glorified in everything. "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen" (v. 36).
- 1. God is the source of all things. Everything that is, everything we have comes "from Him" (v. 36).
 - 2. He is the One who has made all things and given us everything we have: it has come "through Him" (v. 36).
 - 3. And everything that He has made has His glory as its goal, its purpose: "to Him are all things."
 - 4. This is why Paul says, "To Him be the glory."
 - a. Everything God has done, He had done for the highest possible reason: to bring glory to Himself.
 - (i) To glorify His knowledge and wisdom.
 - (ii) His power and strength.
 - (iii) And especially His mercy and grace through the Gospel.
 - b. And He can do these things to draw attention to Himself without sinning, because He is worthy.

III. Application.

- A. In applying this, I would first point out how good it is to know that God knows everything and has infinite wisdom.
- 1. Nothing we do or have done or will do surprises God.
 - a. He knows the sins we have committed, the difficult times we have gone through.
 - b. He knows our situations, what we're going through now, what we think and feel, our weaknesses and failings.
 - c. He knows what we will yet go through before we leave this world.
 - d. And yet He loved us, chose us, called us, saved us and still bears with us.
 - 2. Not only that, in His infinite wisdom, He will use all these things in His plan to bring about good.
 - a. He will use our situations, difficulties, sins to glorify Himself.
 - b. He will also sanctify us through them, make us more like His Son, draw us closer.

- c. Just as He did in the lives of His elect Jews and Gentiles, so He does in our lives, if we love Him and are trusting in His Son. “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose” (Rom. 8:28).
 - d. This is one good reason to praise and bless His name.
- B. Second, realize as a part of this that none of these things have happened by accident; they are all a part of His plan.
- 1. The Lord not only knows what we are going through, He made it happen.
 - 2. In His infinite knowledge and wisdom, He planned it.
 - 3. In His limitless power, He brought it about.
 - 4. These things are not outside of His control, but perfectly in that control.
- C. Third, we can't understand everything about His plan or why He does what He does.
- 1. We may never understand it fully.
 - 2. But we can trust that His plan, based on infinite knowledge and wisdom is best, whatever it is, because His Word says so.
- D. Fourth, if we are ever tempted to question God, we should first question ourselves.
- 1. Who are we to question God?
 - 2. We know so little; He knows so much.
 - 3. He says that His way is the best, and so we must believe that and trust Him.
- E. Finally, let's not forget that what God has done, He has done primarily for His glory.
- 1. The goal of His plan is not our immediate comfort.
 - 2. Ultimately, it will work together for our good, but it's not always easy to go through.
 - a. I'm sure Luther didn't enjoy being branded a heretic.
 - b. Cranmer didn't enjoy being burned at the stake.
 - c. The multitude of Christians who have suffered torture and being thrown to wild animals and being drawn and quartered didn't enjoy those things either.
 - 3. Our immediate happiness is not God's goal, His glory is, and our happiness ultimately grows out of that.
 - a. And so let's set our hearts to glorify Him.
 - b. Edwards once wrote, “*Resolved*, When I fear misfortunes and adversity, to examine whether I have done my duty, and resolve to do it, and let the event be just as providence orders it. I will, as far as I can, be concerned about nothing but my duty, and my sin.” *June 9, and July 13, 1723*.
 - c. Let's make it our joy and our duty to glorify God no matter what we must face in life and leave the results in His gracious hands. Amen.