

All Israel Will Be Saved - Part 4

By David Harrell

Bible Text: Romans 11:33-36
Preached on: Sunday, August 12, 2012

Do you find yourself breaking out at least privately in unrestrained worship over the grandeur of God's character and the work of his salvation? How often do you become so aware of the bottomless depths of divine riches, God's wisdom and his knowledge that your heart just overflows with wonder and praise? Unfortunately few believers really identify with this level of praise in private or in public. In fact, sometimes you can look around and even at our own church and look at believers during the time of singing and nothing is happening. In fact, some of you look like you have a gall bladder attack. There is something wrong. Others who are part of the Christian Church really have no appetite for the Word of God. They can sit for a movie for three hours, but they can't sit for 50 minutes for an exposition of the Word. It is amazing. If this describes you, perhaps what you will hear today will bring clarity, will bring conviction to your heart, because certainly God desires this level of worship to the very core of your being.

There is nothing mystical about developing a heart of praise. It is really quite simple. The more you love the God of the Word, the more you will love the Word of God. And this will lead to a deeper understanding of God's character and his gracious plan of redemption. And it will cause you to automatically burst forth in praise in your heart. Said differently, if you have a low view of God, a superficial love for him, he will not be your greatest joy. He will not be your satisfaction in life. And if you feed on the junk food of this world and you ruin your appetite for God's revelation of himself, the result is going to be that you will have no appetite for his Word. You will not therefore grasp the marvels of redemption, the marvels of his riches, his wisdom, his knowledge, his grace. And, moreover, what you will end up having is an appetite for things that are other than God.

And so these types of doxologies are going to be foreign to you. Rather than having a heart filled with wonder and praise, you are going to have a heart filled with worldliness and pride. You will be ruled by your flesh, not by the Spirit who is quenched and grieved in your life. So, dear Christian, please hear this as we prepare our hearts to understand this text this morning. The greatest measure of spiritual maturity is not religious activity. It is not your service for Christ necessarily, not your church attendance. The greatest measure of spiritual maturity is a heart that habitually and spontaneously erupts in exuberant praise over the grandeur of God's character and the glory of his marvelous plan of redemption.

I call it a secret devotion to God that results in doxologies of praise within the heart, a bursting forth in song. And, dear friends, there is nothing that brings more delight to God than a gracious soul expressing and celebrating the infinite perfections his nature, just the unfathomable benefits of his grace. We see this, for example, in the song of Moses and the sons of Israel after God had parted the sea and delivered them from Pharaoh's charioteers in Exodus 15:1. They say:

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I will sing to the LORD, for He is highly exalted; The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation; This is my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will extol Him.¹

Dear friend, when you truly grasp God's deliverance in your life, when you truly get a hold of his mercy that he has given to you, your soul will automatically burst forth in fervent doxology. We have been created for this very thing. And this is precisely what is happening here with the apostle Paul in this section of Scripture.

Paul can't contain himself any longer. He just can't hold it in any longer. For 11 chapters now he has been explaining the astonishing doctrines of salvation, especially justification by faith. Throughout his inspired revelation of these truths we have seen him repeatedly just get lost in adoration and awe of God's sovereign grace of which he himself is a product. The emphasis of his whole argument is the covenant faithfulness of God, especially as it relates to God's beloved enemy, his kinsmen, ethnic, national Israel. We have seen him interpret and reinterpret the covenant history of Israel from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and Moses and the Exodus. In Romans nine he speaks of Israel's election, in Romans 10, Israel's defection. Here in Romans 11 Israel's salvation which will ultimately fulfill God's purpose in choosing them in the first place as God declared through his servant Jeremiah chapter 13 verse 11:

"...that they might be for Me a people, for renown, for praise, and for glory."²

He has revealed to us that Israel's salvation, Israel's redemption is a magnificent demonstration of God's sovereign grace that ultimately brings glory to his name. This is his purpose in redeeming Israel. And as the prophet Isaiah said in chapter 43 verse 21:

"The people whom I formed for Myself, Will declare My praise."³

So Paul can't contain himself any longer. He has been explaining the interrelatedness of Jews and Gentiles in God's plan of salvation. He has revealed the mystery of Israel's partial hardening until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in and then all Israel is going to be saved. We can't even imagine how exciting this must have been for him, because remember, chapter nine verse two he said:

"I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites."⁴

¹ Exodus 15:1-2.

² Jeremiah 13:11.

³ Isaiah 43:21.

⁴ Romans 9:2-4.

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So naturally the only reasonable response here is for him to break out with this great doxology.

Now let's look closely at what the Holy Spirit inspires him to say. I hope that you received a hand out. If you didn't, I believe we have it on the screen here. This doxology is a nine line poem. Think of two book ends consisting of three members each, both of which encloses a middle section consisting of three double lines. The first book end has three members to it: riches, wisdom and knowledge. And then on the other side, the second book end has three members: from him, through him and to him. And then sandwiched in between the two bookends is the three lines in verses 34 and 35 that I will explain to you which really comment in reverse order on the first three characteristics of God that is identified in the opening line here in verse 33. And each opening line contains a parallel clause that even further describes the attribute that is praised in the preceding line. There is like an ascending praise here. And in the middle of these two book ends, as we will see, he has formulated some rhetorical questions that will give great glory to God.

Now in terms of an outline it recall quite simple. Number one, we are going to look at the inexhaustible depths of God's character in verses 33 through 35. And then, secondly, the infinite glory of God's purpose.

Now, frankly, we will only be able to mine those nuggets of truth that are closest to the surface here. Our lack of time and comprehension will not allow us to really excavate beyond the surface, but even with the wealth that we can accumulate in our short time together here this morning, as we just look at the surface here of divine revelation, we are going to be able to mine valuable resources, valuable jewels beyond a king's ransom. In fact, it was for this reason that David says in Psalm 119:127:

"I love Thy commandments Above gold, yes, above fine gold."⁵

That is how he saw Scripture. I hope that is how you see Scripture. I hope you have come here with such a love, with such a commitment to the Word of God that you have prepared your hearts and you see the value of this more than man's infatuation with the most precious metal on earth.

So let's look the inexhaustible depths of God's character. Notice verse 33 he says:

"Oh, the depth of the riches..."⁶

⁵ Psalm 119:27.

⁶ Romans 11:33.

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The term riches refers to wealth, the abundant resources. And in verse 36 Paul will affirm that everything is from him.

“For from Him... are all things.”⁷

He is the self-existent creator and sustainer of all things. He is infinite in wealth and resources. There is no limit to what he could create if he wanted to create even more. Do you realize that? Out of all that he has created, if he had wanted to do this over again an infinite number of times, he could do it. Moreover, his infinite wealth is seen in his attributes, his glorious perfections.

Now in order to even remotely understand this concept of the depth of God's riches, we must understand the holiness of God. You will recall that the cherubim that hover around God's throne cover their face as they attend to his wishes and they call him holy, holy, holy. The term holy means to be set apart. Not only from evil and sin, but even more importantly, you must understand that God is absolutely set apart from our nature. He has a nature that we cannot comprehend. To put it very simply, God is transcendent. He is totally other.

We have a little parakeet named blue. And I often find myself looking at blue and our eyes meet and I don't have a clue what he is thinking and he looks up at me and he doesn't have a clue what I am thinking. I was thinking about him actually this morning. He didn't know that I had been reviewing the apostle Paul's great doxology on the glory of God while I was listening to a Chopin nocturne that I used to play. He has no idea anything about me.

Now multiply that with an infinite number and that is what we are looking up at God. All we know is what he has revealed to us in his Word and in his creation. He is, according to Isaiah 57:15 the high and exalted one who lives forever, whose name is holy who dwells on a high and holy place. Beloved, holiness cannot be compared to anything we know, because all we know is unholy. We think in terms of finite time and space. We think in terms of possessing things, that things belong to us or we have certain resources. But God is the source of everything that exists. Oh, the depth of these riches. There is no limit to what he can create. He is also the source of our spiritual wealth. Indeed, we are, according to Ephesians one the recipients of the riches of his grace. Ephesians 3:16 tells us that we are strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner man according to the riches of his glory.

Beloved, we cannot comprehend the depth of his riches. But this aspect of his nature is included in the attribute of his holiness, the one that he used to describe himself the most in Scripture. Holiness is the all-encompassing attribute of God. It portrays his

⁷ Romans 11:36.

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consummate perfection, his majesty, his glory, the source of all riches, material and spiritual. Like no other attribute that he used to describe himself, his holiness stands along as the defining characteristic of his person. It alone is the quintessential summation of all of his attributes. He tells us in his Word that he is the great I am in Exodus three, the one who has life intrinsic to himself and in himself and meaning he is the utterly self-existent God. He is eternal, unchanging. There are no riches, there are no resources in existence that did not come from him. Therefore Paul says at the end of this doxology that from him and through him and to him are all things.

One of the most lofty descriptions of the majesty of God in all of Scripture is recorded in Moses' doxology in Exodus 15 verse 11. He says:

“Who is like Thee among the gods, O LORD? Who is like Thee, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?”⁸

Well, it is therefore fitting that Paul begins his paean of praise by saying:

“Oh, the depth of the riches.”⁹

And to give even further praise to this attribute, I want you to notice that Paul asks a rhetorical question that corresponds to this in verse 35. He says:

“WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM?”¹⁰

Well, the answer is obvious. No one. This is quoting Job 41:11 where we read:

“Who has given to Me that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is Mine.”¹¹

Think about it. To whom is God indebted? No one. We are indebted to him. And, dear Christian, this should be so astonishing to you. This should be so humbling that you just want to fall on your face in adoration and praise.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 8:9:

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”¹²

⁸ Exodus 15:11.

⁹ Romans 11:33.

¹⁰ Romans 11:35.

¹¹ Job 41:11.

¹² 2 Corinthians 8:9.

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Beloved, the impoverishment of Christ referred to there had nothing to do with his economic or material condition, but it had everything to do with his unimaginable condescension in his incarnation, that the eternal God had become man so that we could enjoy the everlasting riches of eternal life. And that is why Paul said later on in 2 Corinthians 9:15.

“Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!”¹³

The lyrics of Charles Wesley’s great hymn comes to mind.

Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

Now he goes on to elaborate on two distinct aspects of God’s riches that emerge from the context of Paul’s revelation concerning the mystery of God’s saving purposes, all these things that he has written in the previous chapters, especially as it relates to his beloved, God’s beloved enemy Israel. And he speaks therefore of his wisdom and God’s knowledge. And I have defined wisdom as God’s ability to determine the highest goal to be attained and then select the best means to accomplish it. And, of course, his goal is to bring glory to himself. Again, at the end of the doxology Paul says:

“To Him be the glory forever.”¹⁴

Now that is different than God’s knowledge. God’s knowledge pertains to his omniscience, his infinite ability to understand and to know all things knowable, past, present and future. Think of knowledge as the apprehension or the intuitive understanding of a thing and wisdom is the appointing or the ordering of all things.

We see the distinction between wisdom and knowledge, for example, in the gifts that the Spirit gives to some. 1 Corinthians 12:8 we read:

“For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit.”¹⁵

That word of wisdom is the ability to understand God’s Word and his will and then to skillfully apply that understanding to life and that gift of knowledge is the ability to understand and speak the meaning of God’s revealed truth with insight into the mysteries of his Word that cannot be known apart from Scripture.

¹³ 2 Corinthians 9:15.

¹⁴ Romans 11:36.

¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 12:8.

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Now I want you to notice as he goes on here he is astonished, first of all, with the depth of God's wisdom, not only the dept of his riches, but he splits off of that and speaks of God's wisdom in verse 33.

I want to ask you a question. What basis would we have for our faith and our hope in God if he were not all wise? If he had not in eternity past determined the highest goal to be attained, namely to bring him glory and then selected the best means to accomplish that end? What hope would we have? It is amazing to me to think that in his wisdom God ordained to allow evil to enter his perfect universe. In wisdom he ordained to allow the serpent to tempt Adam and Eve in the garden. In wisdom he set into motion his plan for Satan to bruise Christ on the heel at Calvary and for Christ to make that fatal blow upon Satan and bruise him on the head and gain the final triumph. In wisdom God predetermined a purpose for his chosen people Israel to play in his redemptive plan, to provide the world with a living illustration of his mercy and his love and his grace and to demonstrate that he alone is God. And in wisdom he made a covenant with Abraham and his physical and spiritual descendants. In wisdom he judicially hardened the hearts of many Israelites that Gentiles might be grafted into the root of covenantal blessing. In wisdom he chose to save some, but not all. In wisdom he is going to judge the nations. In wisdom he is going to establish his glorious kingdom on earth, that messianic kingdom the consummating bridge between human history and the eternal state. And in perfect absolute wisdom God seizes every opportunity to accomplish his wise plan that he designed. All his ways are perfect.

You notice that all of his ways have a certain decorum to them. They are all orderly. All his resolves are guided by the reason and counsel of his own intimate understanding of how to attain that perfect goal of his glory throughout redemptive history. Moses said in Deuteronomy 32 verse four:

“His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He.”¹⁶

And in Proverbs three verse 19 we read:

“The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; By understanding He established the heavens.”¹⁷

Do you realize that God's sovereignty is actually an outworking of his perfect wisdom? Even as it relates to your salvation, as it relates to my salvation. Paul spoke of this in Ephesians one verse 11 as believers he said we have:

¹⁶ Deuteronomy 32:4.

¹⁷ Proverbs 3:19.

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“...been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.”¹⁸

So we are absolutely awed by his wisdom. We have to stand in silence before his plan. For example, we cannot comprehend why he saves some, but not all. We have no understanding of why he would do that. We cannot see the justice in allowing the wicked to prosper and the godly to suffer. But he wants us to relax knowing that all of these things are fruits of unerring righteousness ordered by an all wise God. God never makes mistakes. Aren't you thankful for that? There is nothing that could frustrate his plan.

Isaiah 55 verse 11 he says:

“So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.”¹⁹

Likewise in Isaiah 14 verse 24 and also in verse 27 we read:

“The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand.”²⁰

“For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?”²¹

Beloved, whatever your lot in life, wherever you are at right now, know this. What you re experiencing is yours by the hand of an all wise God who has called you to submit to his lordship for your good and for his glory.

Paul summarizes all of this later on at the end of Romans chapter 16 verse 25. Once again he can't contain himself so he just bursts forth and he says:

Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of

¹⁸ Ephesians 1:11-12.

¹⁹ Isaiah 55:11.

²⁰ Isaiah 14:24.

²¹ Isaiah 14:27.

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faith; to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever.
Amen.²²

Now because of the depths of divine wisdom, Paul asks the rhetorical question that corresponds to this attribute in verse 34 at the end he says:

“WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR?”²³

The answer is no one This is quoted from Isaiah 40 verse 13. There we read:

“Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, Or as His counselor has informed Him?”²⁴

Verse 14 goes on to say:

“With whom did He consult and who gave Him understanding? And who taught Him in the path of justice and taught Him knowledge, And informed Him of the way of understanding?”²⁵

Obviously no one. It is interesting, isn't it? None of us are born wise. None of us are born with any knowledge. We have to attain these things. And some do a better job than others for various reasons. In Job 28:12 we read:

“But where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?”²⁶

Then I love how God answers this in verse 28.

“Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; And to depart from evil is understanding.”²⁷

And it is God who imparts that wisdom to us by his regenerating grace. But you must understand what the apostle is referring to here. God is by nature boundless in wisdom and knowledge. And he has been from all eternity. God never turned to a counselor. Never went to a teacher to gain wisdom. As Paul contemplates all that he has just written he is just awe struck. He is just awestruck by the immeasurable perfections of God's wisdom. But notice he is also astonished with yet a second attribute that flows from the wellspring of divine riches and that is the knowledge of God.

Bear in mind. Unlike wisdom that refers to the appointing and the ordering of things,

²² Romans 16:25-27.

²³ Romans 11:34.

²⁴ Isaiah 40:13.

²⁵ Isaiah 40:14.

²⁶ Job 28:12.

²⁷ Job 28:28.

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knowledge pertains to God's omniscience, his infinite ability to understand and to know all things knowable, past, present and future, to apprehend, to intuitively understand the thing.

Psalm 147 verse five, the psalmist says:

“Great is our Lord, and abundant in strength; His understanding is infinite.”²⁸

That pretty well covers it, doesn't it?

Dear Christian, this is a cause for great celebration and that is exactly what the apostle is doing here. I mean, think about it. God knows all things possible. Do you realize that he knew all things knowable about his creation before he created anything? You are going to have to stick with me here for a moment, because this is stretching us as we think about these great truths. Let's talk about his knowledge. Think of it past, present and future. He knows all things past as if they were happening right now in the present. In fact, there is nothing necessarily past or future with him. Because he is the eternal God that transcends time and space, everything for him is present. But in order for us to understand, of course, he knows all things past. In fact, God used this as an argument to elevate his preeminence over the pagan idols in Isaiah 41 verse 22. There he says:

“Let them bring forth and declare to us what is going to take place; As for the former events, declare what they were, That we may consider them, and know their outcome; Or announce to us what is coming.”²⁹

Obviously no one, no idol can do that. And because God knows all things past, he knows the sins of all men. Many passages speak to this, Job 14 verse 17. We read:

“My transgression is sealed up in a bag, And Thou dost wrap up my iniquity.”³⁰

We read in Scripture that God is able to bring to men's minds the remembrance of their past sins, to bring conviction. And he has to be able to do this in order to perfectly judge all men, some day. But he also knows all things present. So many passages that speak to this. Psalm 147 beginning at verse four we read:

He counts the number of the stars; He gives names to all of them. Great is our Lord, and abundant in strength; His understanding is infinite.³¹

²⁸ Psalm 147:5.

²⁹ Isaiah 41:22.

³⁰ Job 14:17.

³¹ Psalm 147:4-5.

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Well, you might ask: How many stars are there? We don't really know, but I did some research and the current count in the observable universe is 300 sextillion. I am not sure how much that is, but it is probably somewhere around the national debt, you know? I mean that is just inconceivable, isn't it? Not only does he know them all by number, but he has got names for all of them. He knows all things present. He knows every intimate detail of all of his creatures, every little creature.

Psalm 50 verse 11.

"I know every bird of the mountains, And everything that moves in the field is Mine."³²

Matthew 10 verse 30 Jesus said:

"But the very hairs of your head are all numbered."³³

2 Timothy 2:19:

"The Lord knows those who are His."³⁴

He also knows those who are not his and the day of judgment, according to Mathew 7:23 he will declare to them:

"I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS."³⁵

Genesis 6:5 we read that the Lord knows every inclination of the hearts of men. In other words he knows what their imaginations are. Proverbs 5:21 we read:

"For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the LORD, And He watches all his paths."³⁶

That should be sobering to each of us. You think there is anything you do that escapes his notice?

1 Corinthians 4:5. One day he will, quote:

"...disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God."³⁷

³² Psalm 50:11.

³³ Matthew 10:30.

³⁴ 2 Timothy 2:19.

³⁵ Matthew 7:23.

³⁶ Proverbs 5:21.

³⁷ 1 Corinthians 4:5.

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Psalm 139 beginning in verse one we read:

“O LORD, Thou hast searched me and known me. Thou dost know when I sit down and when I rise up.”³⁸

Thou is an emphatic personal pronoun. It is written in such a way in the original language to say, “You, yes, you,” or in other words, “You alone dost know when I sit down and when I rise up. You alone dost understand my thought from afar. You alone dost scrutinize my path and my lying down and art intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue. Behold, oh Lord, you and you alone dost know it all.”

He says in verse six:

“Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is too high, I cannot attain to it.”³⁹

He knows all things past and present. He also knows all things future. And I might say in kindness but as forthrightly as I know how, only a fool would say otherwise. Let me tell you why. Think about it. Once nothing existed but God. He knew nothing past because nothing was yet past. Nor was there anything present because nothing existed save himself, right? Therefore everything he knew with respect to creation and with respect to history was all future. So of course he knows the future, because once the future only existed in the present. Obviously he was not ignorant of what he was going to create. He was not ignorant of how his creation would operate in his wise plan. Why? Because he knew the future as if it had already occurred.

His predictions in Scripture attest to his incomprehensible perfection. This is what separates true God from false gods. God foreknows all things even those things that we would consider accidents, things that happen by chance, like the random arrow that struck and killed Ahab in 1 Kings 22:34. God foreknows the free and voluntary acts of man.

Isaiah chapter 45 verse 11:

“Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: “Ask Me about the things to come concerning My sons, And you shall commit to Me the work of My hands.”⁴⁰

Think about it. If the free acts of men were unknown to God, how in the world could he govern his universe? How could he predict the future of prophecy? On what basis could we possibly believe Scripture?

³⁸ Psalm 139:1.

³⁹ Psalm 149:6.

⁴⁰ Isaiah 45:11.

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Proverbs 19:21.

“Many are the plans in a man’s heart, But the counsel of the LORD, it will stand.”⁴¹

Think about it. Not the minutest part of the universe could come into being apart from his will nor can anything occur apart from the decree of the one who, according to Acts 15:18 makes all things known from of old.

Isaiah 46 verse nine attest this great attribute.

Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, ‘My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure’⁴²

Do you realize that even your days are numbered by God? Job 14 verse five says man’s days are determined.

“The number of his months is with Thee, And his limits Thou hast set so that he cannot pass.”⁴³

Beloved, if God were not omniscient, able to know the future as perfectly as he knows the things present and past, he would be constantly learning. Right? He would be constantly adapting. Therefore, he could not be immutable, right? He would always be having to change from imperfection to perfection as he acquires more knowledge. And nor could he be sovereign. He couldn’t possibly know the end from the beginning. He couldn’t possibly orchestrate all things to accomplish what he decreed in eternity past. And so, again, we would have no basis for our faith, no basis for our hope. God would have no knowledge whether or not things would work out in the way that he planned.

Think of the story of Joseph. If God didn’t know the future he would have been ignorant about what was going to happen to Joseph that he would be thrown into a pit, that he would be sold to the Egyptians. God would have had to have scrambled to see what was going on with Potiphar and then Potiphar’s wife and then the free will of Pharaoh and all that he did. All of that would have been a surprise to him and he would have to be adapting all the time. If that were true, God’s decrees and his severing will would be subject to the will of man. Beloved, that is not the God of the Bible. He would be unable to govern man in history by his providence and we would be without hope. But in truth

⁴¹ Proverbs 19:21.

⁴² Isaiah 46:9-10.

⁴³ Job 14:5.

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God knows his own decrees. He knows his will and must therefore know all things future in order to accomplish this, the precise fulfillment of his ancient prophecies testify to this.

Now think about this from Paul's perspective as we wrap this up this morning. Paul is longing to see his kinsmen come to Christ and he could look back over Scripture, great theologian that he was and he could realize that the wisdom of God he promised Abraham that his descendants would be vast like the number of the stars. They would be a great nation, that they would be his witnesses people, that they would be blessed above all the peoples of the earth, that the Messiah would come from him and so forth. He could look back even later in Deuteronomy four and see where God in his wisdom promised to scatter Israel among the nations because of their sin. They would become few in number. Eventually, though, he would have compassion on them. Deuteronomy 4:31:

“For the LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them.”⁴⁴

And as God foreknew and foreordained all things Paul could look and see that, yes, indeed, as God said, they sinned. Then they were dispersed among the nations. And now as God promised they are beginning to return back again in their unbelief, because God knows all things past, present and future. Paul could rejoice knowing that God has promised that one day all Israel will be saved.

So because of the depths of God's knowledge, Paul now asks the rhetorical question that corresponds to this attribute in verse 34. He says:

“WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD?”⁴⁵

The answer, again, is no one. This question is quoted almost unchanged from the Septuagint version in Isaiah 40 verse 13 where we read:

“Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, Or as His counselor has informed Him?”⁴⁶

Obviously no one.

Paul speaks of this in 1 Corinthians two verse 16.

“For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE SHOULD INSTRUCT HIM?”⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Deuteronomy 4:31.

⁴⁵ Romans 11:34.

⁴⁶ Isaiah 40:13.

⁴⁷ 1 Corinthians 2:16.

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And we are reminded by the prophet Isaiah in chapter 55 verse eight:

“‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Neither are your ways My ways,’ declares the LORD.”⁴⁸

The example of the parakeet comes to mind. He goes on to say:

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.”⁴⁹

Well, what is the response to this?

“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!”⁵⁰

The word judgments refers to his decisions. It is impossible for us to ever fully understand what God is doing apart from what he has told us. All of this is unfathomable. It comes from a Greek term that speaks of footprints or tracks, animal tracks that cannot be traced. We are incapable of fully understanding what he is up to. He cannot be fully understood. And so this is the astonishment and the adoration that erupts from the apostle’s heart concerning the inexhaustible depths of God’s character. And then he closes with a final benediction, a benediction of awe concerning, secondly, the infinite glory of God’s purpose, verse 36.

“For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.”⁵¹

Said differently God is the originator, God is the sustainer and the goal of all things that exist, all things that he has created. Everything comes from him. Everything is preserved by him and everything ends in him.

Beloved, this is why we want to be a God centered church and not a man centered church, preaching a God centered gospel, not a man centered gospel, living God centered lives, not man centered lives. So for this reason Paul ascribes to God not merely glory, but he says, the glory, the supreme glory. And then what a fitting one word conclusions. Amen. All of Paul’s arguments and explanations of God’s plan of redemption he says, “Oh, amen.” With one word he express his joyful confidence in the one true God. And thus ends the doctrinal portion of his epistle to be followed by a very practical section,

⁴⁸ Isaiah 55:8.

⁴⁹ Isaiah 55:9.

⁵⁰ Romans 11:33.

⁵¹ Romans 11:36.

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five chapters regarding the character and conduct of our lives, how we should live regarding these truths.

Now as we close, I want to challenge you, as always. Dear Christian, bring your life right now to this song of praise. Let it be to you a hymn of joyful confidence. Despite your sin, your sorrow, the deep mysteries of the circumstances of your life, know this, that an all wise and all knowing and all powerful God is at work in you to conform you to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. He knows everything about you. He is causing all things, as Paul says to work together for good to those who love God to those who are called according to his purpose. And what is his purpose? To bring glory to himself. That should be the center of gravity around which your life orbits. What a staggering promise, because you are hidden in Christ, everything that happens to you, no matter how painful, no matter how confusing is all part of the plan of an all wise, good, loving, merciful, faithful God. And we could celebrate this. And I would ask you to ask yourself. Am I so astonished by a holy and righteous God that I find myself routinely lost in the wonder of his divine perfections? I find myself routinely lost in the glory of his grace for my life. Oh, I hope that is true for you. If not, you have a very low view of God and a very high view of self. So I would admonish you to grow up. Get to know your God. You cannot praise a God you do not know. God promises in Jeremiah 29:13:

“And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.”⁵²

Rest assured, dear friends, one day nothing will be able to restrain your praise. With the 24 elders described in Revelation four verse 10 we will join the one who will:

“...will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ‘Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created.’”⁵³

Amen.

Doesn't it make you want to sing? As I was studying this passage and culling out all of the things that I want to say that I don't have time to say, I found my heart going repeatedly to that great hymn. Praise ye the Lord. Will you sing it with me?

Praise ye the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!
O my soul, praise Him, for He is thy health and salvation!
All ye who hear, Brothers and sisters, draw near;
Praise Him in glad adoration!

⁵² Jeremiah 29:13.

⁵³ Revelation 4:10-11.

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Praise ye the Lord, who o'er all things so wondrously reigneth,
Shelters thee under His wings, yea, so gently sustaineth!
Hast thou not seen How thy desires e'er have been
Granted in what He ordaineth?

Praise ye the Lord, who with marvelous wisdom hath made thee!
Decked thee with health, and with loving hand guided and stayed thee;
How oft in grief Hath not He brought thee relief,
Spreading His wings for to shade thee!

Praise ye the Lord! O let all that is in me adore Him!
All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before Him!
Let the Amen Sound from His people again:
Gladly for aye we adore Him.

Father, we thank you for your riches, for your wisdom, for your knowledge, of the grace that you have lavished upon us as your people. We are such debtors that grace. We praise you and we ask now that you will dismiss us with these great truths resonating within our heart. May we live out the praise that is in our hearts that others might see the transforming power of the gospel. And, Lord, if there is anyone within the sound of my voice that does not know you, oh God, by your grace, would you overwhelm them with conviction. May they see the sword of divine justice looming over their head and, Lord, will you cause them to run from that wrath and fall before the cross and cry out for the mercy that you will so quickly give. We commit that to your sovereign purposes. Dismiss us now with your grace in Jesus' name. Amen.

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