

Israel's Future Restoration – Part 3

Romans 11:25-36

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In the first 24 verses of Romans 11, Paul gives us four proofs that God is not through with Israel, that God has a future and a plan. I want to review this. (They're going to put the points on the screen for you.) This is Romans 11 that we've covered in these three weeks. The first proof Paul gave was the personal proof that God had saved him, that he was one of the Israelites. He gave his personal testimony how, "If God saved me, God is still saving Jews. He's not finished with the Jewish people." The second was the historical proof, verses 2-6, where he talked about the days of Elijah, how Elijah with the prophets of Baal and he was complaining that everyone had forsaken the Lord. God said to Elijah, "I have seven thousand that have not bowed their knee to Baal. I have a remnant." God always has a remnant of those who are elect that He has chosen.

The third section, verses 7-10, was the scriptural proof. Paul cited the Old Testament prophecies and promises of God that He was going to fulfill His purpose and plan in His covenants to the nation of Israel. We looked at this in depth the last two weeks, actually. In verses 11-24 is the dispensational proof how God was dealing with Israel, God was dealing with the Church, and the future restoration involved God's purpose and plan dispensationally. Now we find Paul has I think saved his best witness for the last; that is, fifthly, we're going to look at tonight the very character of God, verses 25-36.

Some may object to your own personal experience, some may even argue history and Scripture and prophecy, but the fact still remains that God does not change. We're going to see evidence in the text tonight of God's immutability, which means God doesn't change. God's the only thing in the whole universe that doesn't change. He is perfectly eternal and immutable. How marvelous that is! God's purpose and plan for Israel thus does not change because it's rooted in God's very immutable, unchanging, eternal nature. God has a future restoration planned for Israel rooted in His very nature.

The same thing holds true in a secondary sense, this is not the primary teaching of this chapter, but Paul had taught in the book of Romans that we are saved by God's grace, that God saves us by His grace and mercy. There is only one way God saves anyone at any time and that's by grace and mercy. No one is ever saved by law, no one is ever saved by being good, by being religious or because of their race or religion, we are all saved by the grace and mercy of God. We saw it in Romans 1-9, and we see it tonight in Romans 11, it's because we've all sinned and all fallen short of the glory of God. There's no one righteous, no, not one; thus God must save us by His mercy and by His grace. Amen? So He provides the cross of Christ to redeem us from our sin and to save us by His grace and by His marvelous, marvelous mercy. It's so very important.

I want you to note from our text six truths about God's grace and God's glorious mercy that are rooted in God's great character. The first, we're going to go through six of them if you're taking

notes, God's timing. When I say God's timing, I mean that in God's plan of redemption, God's plan with Israel dispensationally and God's plan with the Church, God's plan for the end of time, and God's plan for the future Kingdom, God has His own time clock. Have you found that to be true? God has His own time clock, and prophetically that clock revolves around the nation of Israel. Look at verse 25. He says, "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery;"—it's a good idea not to be ignorant. Someone said, "The largest Christian denomination in American is the ignorant brethren," and I think that's pretty good. We're so ignorant of the "mystery," especially the Gentile church today, and the "mystery" involves God's plan, God's purpose of allowing Israel to be blinded and set aside to show mercy on Gentiles and then for them to be restored.

That "mystery"...as I said last Wednesday night, a "mystery" in the Bible is something that cannot be known unless God reveals it, and He has. The mysteries mentioned in the Bible are not something you can't understand, it's that you can't understand them without revelation, and God has revealed this "mystery" to us in His Word. Obviously, the way we gain that knowledge is by His Word. We can't attain or achieve it by our own understanding. I've always loved the subject of revelation and that God is transcendent, and we cannot by searching find God. Anything we know about God, any relationship we have with God, God has to come to us; we cannot come to God. He did that in the Scriptures in choosing Abraham, giving him covenants and promises, choosing a nation by which to give His laws, covenants, and promises, and send the Redeemer by the Scriptures and by the laws of God, the Word of God—all the ways that God has reached out and come down to us. It's just a marvelous truth that God enlightens us. We don't have to be ignorant about this "mystery."

If you have an understanding of Romans 9, 10, and 11, you understand more than the greatest philosophers and historians of the world, just understanding what's going on in the world by God's relationship to His people that He chose and to His plan for the Church in light of that.

Paul did not want them to, verse 25, "...be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits." He's speaking to the Gentiles, and as you go through this section tonight, it's important to try to ascertain he's addressing Gentiles or he's referring to Jews or the nation of Israel. He doesn't want us to, "...be wise in our own conceits,"—or wise in our own eyes. He doesn't want us to be proud or puffed up or to think that we're something special because God set Israel aside in order that we, as Gentiles, might be saved. Remember, as wild olive branches grafted into the natural olive trees, and being recipients of the root—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—Paul said, "Be not highminded, but fear...lest he also spare not thee." He says, "...that blindness,"—we've touched this already, but I wanted to make sure we understand it very clearly—"that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in."

It's so important to understand that Israel's present blindness or hardness of heart or their rejection is first of all partial. Make note of that. There are Jews being saved right now. People that are Jewish are coming to faith in Jesus Christ. But as a nation, they are temporarily hardened and blinded. But God, by His grace and by His mercy, reaches down and saves

these individuals. Then, notice that, "...is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." There are two statements: "in part," it's partial, and "until," it's temporary. That's one of the biggest and most important lessons to learn about Israel's present situation. Not all Israelites are lost, some have believed in Jesus, so it's partial and it's only temporary, "...until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." Blindness or hardening is partial, not total, and then it's temporary, not final, "until."

How long will Israel be blind? Glad you asked that question. The answer is, "...until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in," verse 25. What is that? Simply stated, it's the Church. When I say the Church, I mean the body of Christ. I'm thinking the Church universal not a particular local church or a denomination but the body of Christ which is made up of all true Christians, all true believers, the body of Christ universal.

I believe the Church began in Acts 2. It's so important to know when the birthday of the Church was. The Church was born in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came and they were baptized into Christ and connected to Him as their living head. Again, and some may argue with this, but I believe dispensationally that the Church will come to its time ending on earth at the rapture and that we will be, "...caught up...to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord," and then God is going to send that period of the last seven years of tribulation that the Second Coming of Christ will take place at which time, we're going to see tonight, all Israel will be saved or Israel will be restored in what's called the Kingdom Age or the Millennium, the thousand-year reign of Christ, and that will be the fulfillment of God's promises to David, known as the Davidic covenant, when his Son would sit upon the throne for one thousand years. I believe in a premillennial return of Jesus Christ, obviously as I just indicated, a pretribulational rapture, that we're caught up as the Church, "...the fulness of the Gentiles be come in," and that we're caught up to be with Christ, and then that period of the time of Jacob's trouble, the tribulation.

One of the primary purposes for the tribulation is not just for God to punish the wicked Gentile nations of the world, but for God to prepare Israel for her Messiah. That last seven years, which is the time of Jacob's trouble or the 70th week of Daniel's prophecy, at which the Antichrist will come, make a covenant with the nation of Israel for seven years, and then the Lord returns at the end of that seven years. There's a lot of information. You can do a study of the book of Revelation, Matthew 24, the Olivet Discourse, and fit all the little details in there, but that's the big picture.

At the end of the thousand-year reign of Christ, there'll be a new heaven and a new earth, Satan will be cast into hell, there will be final separation from evil, and we will live in the eternal state forever and ever and ever and ever and ever. I can't wait. How 'bout you? Amen? No more mass shootings. No more perversion or sin or rebellion against God. Anything that makes or loves a lie will all be shut out. Read the last chapter of the book of the Bible, Revelation, and read about this glorious, eternal state. How marvelous this will be, but understand the phrase, "...the fulness of the Gentiles," is referring to the Church Age. I believe that God is saving Jews and Gentiles, but the nation of Israel has been hardened temporarily

and partially during this time. It's no secret that they have returned to their land. They are in the Promised Land, and God has set the stage for them to see the Messiah return at the end of the seven years of tribulation.

When will this time take place? When is, "...the fulness of the Gentiles"? I believe that when that last individual gets saved and God's time—not ours—is complete, and He takes the Church, His bride, to heaven, "...to meet them in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

In Acts 15:14, James is speaking, who happens to be the Lord's brother, and they're having the meeting about the Gentiles' relationship to the law, and is it okay if Gentiles can be saved, and that whole Jewish-Gentile debate, James says, "Simeon,"—Peter—"hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name." He made reference to God visiting the Gentiles and taking a people out for His name, and Peter was used by God to go to Cornelius' house, who was a Gentile, and preach the gospel to them and see them saved and filled with the Holy Spirit.

When Peter went to the house, he said, "I've seen that God has showed me that I should not call anything common or unclean. It's not right for me to be here with you, but if God wants to save you, okay, here I am." It's a great way for a preacher to open his message for a group of people, "I don't want to be here. I don't really know how God can save you, but anyway, here I am. I'm going to preach to you, anyway." God saved them, and Peter was blown away by God's mercy and gave him the vision of the sheet coming down on the rooftop and all the creepy, unclean animals, and God saying to Peter, "Arise, kill and eat." Peter said, "I've never eaten anything common or unclean." God said, "What I call clean, thou call not common or unclean." God was going to save Gentiles, and the Jews needed to open their hearts and accept them as brothers in Christ.

When and how will this "fulness" come to an end? At the rapture. So, Church starts in Acts 2, Church ends on earth, but not in heaven, in the rapture of the Church. Jesus promised to come again, John 14, right?, and receive us to Himself, "...that where I am, there ye may be also." In 1 Thessalonians 4:13 Paul says, "But I would not have you be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain...shall be caught up,"—the Greek word is *harpazō* which means to snatch up or take up by force—"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up...and the dead in Christ shall rise first...to meet the Lord in the air."

In 1 Corinthians 15:51-58, Paul says, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep,"—or die—"but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." At the end of 1 Corinthians 15, he talks about the rapture of the Church. God's timing is when, "...the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." God will rapture I believe the Church, and He will begin to work again with Israel. Many Jews will get saved in the tribulation period. We read about the 144,000 sealed and no doubt being a witness to their own people. It will be a time of greatest

evangelism to the Jewish people in history.

The second aspect of God's character that indicates God has a plan and a future for Israel is His promises. So, His timing, verse 25, and then His promise, verse 26, "And so all Israel shall be saved." Remember, there's no break between verses 25 and 26, "...until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, And so all Israel shall be saved." This is future promise of God saving Israel. Not every individual Jewish person is going to be saved or go to heaven, but those who believe and repent and trust in Christ, and then nationally they will become again His covenant people in a unique relationship.

Verse 26, "...as it is written, There shall come out of Sion,"—he's quoting from the Old Testament—"the Deliverer,"—who is Christ—"and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob,"—which is another reference for Israel, so he very clearly indicates that even the Old Testament indicates that Israel will be restored, verse 26, shall be saved and that will be when, "...the Deliverer,—shall come unto Zion—"and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob."

In Isaiah 59:20, write down these verses, this is what he quotes here in verse 26. It says, "And the Redeemer shall come to Zion." Zion, by the way, is another term for Jerusalem. The mountain that Jerusalem sits on is called Mount Zion, so it's another term for Jerusalem. "And the Redeemer shall come to Zion,"—this is not His first coming, this is His Second Coming—"and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD." He comes to Zion, comes to those of Israel who turn to the Lord, and God forgives their transgression or their sins. There's also a reference in Psalm 14:7. He seems to be drawing from Isaiah 59:20, but here's another verse that could be used from this perspective, "Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! when the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad." Both of those verses are very clear that God is going to come back and restore the nation of Israel.

Look again at verse 26. "And so all Israel shall be saved...There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob,"—or Israel. (Can we put the chart again quickly on the screen?) I don't want to get bogged down, I want to stay with our text. I just wanted you to get it in front of your eyes again. We won't go into the 70 weeks of Daniel, but the 70 weeks of Daniel started in 445 BC, Nehemiah 2, which is actually 70 seven-year periods, and it covered a period of 490 years. From 445 BC, Nehemiah 2, all the way past the Church Age to the end of the tribulation period in which we have in Revelation 19 the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. I've indicated Armageddon is taking place at that time at the end of the tribulation, but we understand that when Christ was crucified, that 70 sevens of Daniel, that 490 years, that only 483 years have been fulfilled up to the death of Messiah, that He came and was cut off. You can read Daniel 9 and get that information on the 70 weeks, but from the Cross, that time period of 490 years stopped. We're in the Church Age right now, there's seven years left to be fulfilled. There are 483 fulfilled, 7 years left to make the 490 years, which takes you out to the coming again of Messiah.

I hope I don't confuse you utterly and completely, but this is all laid out in Daniel 9, and we see

in Matthew 24, Revelation 6-19 all laid out. I wanted you to see it again. This Church Age I believe is a dispensation, a time period, when God's saving us, of course by His grace, but forming the body of Christ, which we also know as the bride of Christ, right? and that we are the bride of Christ, we'll be caught up to meet our heavenly bridegroom. It is a parenthetical section between the first 69 weeks, or sevens, and the 70th week, the tribulation period. How long will it last? I don't know. It's lasted two thousand five hundred years now, and we don't know how long it will go, or a couple thousand years. Who knows what's going to happen, how long it will last. I would be blessed if the Lord came tonight, but there are people that we love and care about that need Christ, right?

I got saved in 1971. How many of you were either not born, not here. If you weren't born, you weren't saved, but how many of you were saved—born again, a Christian—in 1971? Let me reverse that. How many of you weren't saved in 1971? In 1971 I was praying, "Come, Lord Jesus." Aren't you glad He didn't? Aren't you glad that He has a time? You say, "Not only was I not saved, I wasn't even born. How old are you, Pastor?" We're praying for the Lord to come, but there's people who still need to be saved. You know, there were people probably praying, "Come, Lord Jesus," before I was born, before I was saved, so I'm glad that God waited in His mercy and saved me by His grace. God does have a time, and that time He's going to come very soon when the Church is caught up.

The tribulation technically doesn't start with the rapture, it starts with the coming of the Antichrist. I don't think the Antichrist can be fully revealed until the Church is taken out, that's why I think it's vain to try to figure out who he is. When the Antichrist comes, he will make a covenant—listen carefully—with Israel for one week, that's one seven-year period, it's the tribulation period. It's divided into two, three-and-a-half year periods, seven years. In the middle of the tribulation will be what's called the "abomination of desolation" spoken of by Daniel the prophet, and in Daniel 9, Daniel prophesied about it; but the Antichrist will erect an image of himself in a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, command everyone to worship him. The Jews thought he was their Messiah, and then they'll realize he was not. Jesus said that they should flee into the desert, they will be protected and preserved, but in the last three-and-a-half years there will be great wrath of God being poured out upon this Christ-rejecting world and many Jews coming to faith in Jesus Christ during that time, which ends with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, Revelation 19.

You can't have the Kingdom Age without the King, so Jesus comes back and sets up the Kingdom Age. I believe in a literal, visible, bodily return of Jesus Christ. The same Jesus who was crucified, buried, and rose from the dead; the same Jesus that stood on Mount Olivet and literally just ascended right back up into heaven, and they saw Him go, and the angels showed up and said, "The same Jesus which you've just seen go will come in like manner."

The rapture is not really a coming of the Lord to earth, it's a catching of the Church to heaven, and the Church is in heaven during the tribulation period. There is absolutely no reference to the Church on earth between Revelation 6 and 19. All this tribulation period, no Church on earth; saints, yes, because they were saved in the tribulation. They're called tribulation saints,

but they're not part of the Church, which has a beginning, Acts 2, and an ending, the rapture, "... caught up...to meet the Lord in the air." Who will go in the rapture? All those who are born again, all those who are saved who are part of the Church. It's not for the "deeper life club." It's not for the "super saints." If you're saved, you're going to be caught up, but you want to be living for the Lord so that you won't be ashamed at His coming and that you will be rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ for your faithful service, and you'll hear those words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

We see God's timing, verse 25; we see God's promise, verse 26; let's move on, verses 27-28, God's covenant. "For this is my covenant,"—he's referring to "the Deliverer" coming out of Zion and turning ungodliness away from Jacob, which, by the way, is the new covenant, Jeremiah 31—"unto them, when I shall take away their sins." God's going to nationally purge Israel, who are made up of believing Jews and shall have their sins removed. Verse 28, "As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes." In verse 28 he's saying, "Now, they may at this time be enemies of the Church or of the gospel of Christ, but they are beloved of God for the fathers' sake." Now, whether this is God the Father's love for them, it seems better to interpret this as being the Fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob because of God's promises to them, they are still beloved. Even though they are partially blind, even though they are temporarily in a state of hardness and rejection, they're still beloved by God, and God has a purpose and a plan for them.

Verse 28, "...the gospel," is actually the main theme of the whole book of Romans. Now, I'm sorry that we didn't study Romans 1-8, and we just did chapters 9, 10, 11, but you would actually benefit if you go back to our website and listen to my previous teachings on Romans, "In the Grip of Grace" and study Romans 1-8. Then, because we're not going to do Romans 12-16, you should jump over and start in Romans 12 and go through the entire book of Romans. I wanted to talk about Israel, God's plan for them: Past, Present, and Future. He says, "For this is my covenant." Covenant is mentioned in Isaiah 59:21, Jeremiah 31:31-34. There's four facets to it: I will put My law in their hearts. I love this! He writes His law on the fleshly tablets of our hearts; I will be their God and they will be my people; they shall all know Me from the least to the greatest; and I will forgive their iniquities and remember their sin no more. Remember, the covenant is the new covenant, and we as Gentiles are just grafted in and beneficiaries of that new covenant. "...but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes." If Israel was not chosen because of its goodness, can it be rejected because of its sin? The answer is no.

The same thing applies to you and me as believers. If you are not chosen because of your goodness, you can't be lost because of your sins. Now, am I saying, "You should go out and sin that grace may abound?" No way, God forbid. If God saved you by His grace...if it begins with grace, it ends in glory. Read Romans 8, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." In verse 1 it says, "...who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." That phrase does not appear until verse 4. It doesn't belong in verse 1. You can do your own homework and check it out. It starts with no condemnation, it ends with nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. What starts with grace, ends in

glory. God's saving grace with Israel, electing them by His sovereign grace, and He will restore them as well by His grace and by His mercy. How marvelous that is! Election is based on grace, not merit.

Let me give you the fourth, verse 29, God's nature—God's timing, God's promise, God's covenant, God's nature, verse 29. “For,”—no break again, it's giving us the reason or the rationale—“the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” In other words, they're not rescinded. They're not revoked. They're not taking away. Verse 29, my dearly beloved, is a clear and firm affirmation of God's grace in salvation. Speaking of Israel in the context, what God has promised Israel, God always keeps His promises. What God has promised you, John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” God's gifts and calling are without repentance. In other words, God will not revoke, God will not rescind, God will not remove. That's a marvelous truth! God's nature as God's gifts and callings are irrevocable. Why? Because God's sovereign election of Israel, like that of individual believers today, is unconditional, unchangeable because it's rooted in the immutable nature of God.

What are “the gifts and calling of God”? Well, make note of Romans 9:4-5 where he described the covenants, the promises, the fathers, all the blessings that God gave to Israel, those gifts; and the “calling” in Romans 11:28 is God's election of them, which is irrevocable. Write down Numbers 23:19, “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent,” so whatever God has promised, He will keep. He won't lie.

Malachi 3:6, “For I am the LORD, I change not.” Wouldn't it be a bummer if God made a promise and saved you by His grace, then a few months later said, “You know, I'm getting really sick and tired of you. I've changed My mind. You're out of My family. Get lost.” That'd be frightening, wouldn't it? Some people think that's the case, so they're always living in fear that they're going to get kicked out of God's family. They're always living in fear that they haven't been good enough. You've never been good enough, you will never be good enough. You're saved by God's grace, so just accept that and rest in that. God doesn't change. God's elective purpose cannot change because God does not change.

Let me rip off some ways God doesn't change. God's life does not change, it's eternal. He is eternal life. God's character does not change, He's immutable. God's truth does not change, God doesn't change His mind. God's ways do not change. God's purpose does not change. God's Son, Jesus Christ, does not change, Hebrews 13:8, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” He's unchanging. Israel's unbelief does not change God's will to be consistent with Himself and true to His Word no matter what men may do. Romans 3:3-4, Paul says, “For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? 4 God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar.”

Fifth on the list, verses 30-32, God's mercy. Notice it, verses 30-32, “For as ye in times past have not believed,”—he's speaking to Gentiles. This is where you have the ye's and theirs and thee's and they's. I'll try to explain who's who. You can read Romans 1 of the description of the

wicked, sinful, guilty Gentile world. "...yet have now obtained mercy,"—that's a blessing —"through their,"—that is, Israel's—"unbelief: 31 Even so have these,"—that is, Israel—"also now not believed, that through your,"—that is, Gentiles—"mercy they also may obtain mercy,"—that is, Israel, so he's really explaining. Verses 30-32 is in many ways a summary of all that he said in Romans 9, 10, and 11, so those three verses are a summary of Romans 9, 10, and 11.

Verse 32, "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all." God has literally locked up all people, Jews and Gentiles, in unbelief in order that He can show mercy on all. It doesn't mean all will be saved. This is not teaching universalism, but those who believe in Christ and repent and trust Him shall be saved. As I said, these verses are a summary of what God is doing.

Let me read verse 32 out of the New Living Translation. "For God has imprisoned everyone in disobedience,"—so that would be Jew and Gentile—"so he could have mercy on everyone." That word "imprisoned" has the idea of locked in a cage. It's actually a hunting term where a hunter would lock an animal that he caught in a cage, so God puts all mankind in the cage so that He can open the door mercifully, we get what we don't deserve, and graciously He can save us in a wonderful way by His grace. What a picture that is of God's mercy to the Gentiles and also how God will show mercy to Israel. If God shows mercy to Gentiles who were pagan and heathen and lost, Romans 1, they end that section with reprobate minds doing things which are not pleasing and right before God...As you look at our culture today, it fits so clearly, Romans 1, the degeneration of man; but God showed mercy to us, so God is also going to show mercy to the nation of Israel. We're saved because of God's mercy, Ephesians 2:4, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us."

First Timothy 1:13, Paul says, "...but I obtained mercy." Also, to receive mercy, we must see our need of mercy. Do you ever think about that? To be a recipient of mercy, you must see your need for mercy. Read the parable that Jesus gave of the Pharisee and the tax collector. One man beat upon his chest and said, "God, be merciful to me a sinner," and went home justified. The other man said, "God, I thank You I'm not like other men," and was boasting of his goodness. He went home unjustified. There was no mercy shown to that man because he didn't see and wasn't aware of his own sin.

Last, but not least (I'm sorry I have to move quickly through this, I won't go too quick) is the wisdom of God. We have the timing of God, the promise of God, the covenant of God, the nature of God, the mercy of God, and it closes, verses 33-36, with I believe the greatest doxology in all of the Bible, and it indicates as a good Bible student realizes that doctrine leads to and should result in doxology. When we understand God's will and ways and mercy and grace, all we're left to do is be able to praise God from whom all blessings flow. There needs to be an understanding that true worship is an outflow, a response to God's mercy to us.

Let's just read it, then I'll give you some introductory thoughts and we'll break it down. He closes with verse 33, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! 34 For who hath known

the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? 35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?" Notice those question marks, verses 34-35.

Verse 36, "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." What a marvelous, marvelous conclusion not only to Romans 9, 10, and 11, but to Romans 1-11. This is the doctrinal section of Romans complete. Someone described Paul at the end of Romans 11 as standing on the mountain peak of God's revelation and looking back over the vast landscape of God saving man by His grace and all he could do was just break forth in doxology and praise. To put it in a more primitive language, he was just blown away.

Have you ever been on a hike and you get up to a mountain peak and all of the sudden you see the beautiful vista of the mountain peaks in the distance and the whole layout and it just takes your breath away. You're just, "Awwww! That's so beautiful." When you're going up the valley you don't really see much beauty and then you get to the top and look out over the whole vista. Paul looked back over eleven chapters and says, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

All of this was given to Paul by revelation. This wasn't Paul's concoction or his own ideas. This is God giving this information to Paul, who gave it to us. Alva J. McClain has written an excellent commentary on Romans called *The Gospel of Grace* said this about this closing doxology in Romans 9, 10, 11. He said, "The person who has mastered the first eleven chapters of the book of Romans knows more about the philosophy of history than all the wisest historians that the world has ever seen." I love that.

William MacDonald in his *Believer's Bible Commentary* said, "Paul has expounded the marvelous plan of salvation by which a just God saves ungodly sinners and still is just in doing so. He has shown how Christ's work brought more glory to God, more blessings to man than Adam lost through his sin. He has explained how grace produces holy living in a way that law could never do. He has traced the unbreakable chain of God's purpose from foreknowledge to eventual glorification. He's set forth the doctrine of sovereign election as a companion of the doctrine of human responsibility. He has traced the justice and harmony of God's dispensational dealings with Israel and the nations. Now nothing could be more appropriate for him to burst forth in a hymn of praise and worship." Paul looked at all these glorious truths of God's revelation.

Now, it begins in verse 33 with an astonished exclamation, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God,"—are what?—"unsearchable,"—that means you can't comprehend them or understand them. Again, they must come by revelation. They can't be sought out. "...his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" which means untrackable. All that we just learned is something that God gave us by revelation and think of as riches and His goodness and His wisdom and the knowledge of God.

Secondly, it continues with a rhetorical question or with a series of rhetorical questions, verses 34-35. "For who hath known the mind of the Lord?" The answer is no one. No one knows

more than God. No one counsels God. "...or who hath been his counsellor?" Well, we try to counsel Him, right? We try to tell Him how He ought to do things and how to run the world, but it's pretty futile.

Verse 35, "Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?" It's a little challenging to understand the way that's phrased, but verse 35 is actually saying no one obligates God, no one makes God his debtor, no one says, "Okay, God, you owe me. I've performed. Look how good I am," or you give to God so that God has to give back to you. What it's saying is that we're all recipients of God's grace, that no one can obligate God to them. You can't counsel God, you can't understand God, and you can't obligate God. Like, "God, You've got to take me into heaven because I've been baptized, and I've been a good person, and I go to church, even on Wednesday night and endure those sermons of John Miller. If anybody can sit through those sermons on Wednesday night, they outta be allowed to go to heaven." He's basically saying that we're saved by grace in verse 35. You can't obligate God to you. You can't be good enough for God to have to help you or save you. It has to be grace and mercy. If there wasn't grace and mercy, we couldn't be saved.

Paul closes, verse 36, by making this theological affirmation, "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things." This "of him" is that God is the source. All things come from God. Amen? "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Before that, God is eternal. You know, the only thing that is eternal is God, even the angels were created by God, an eternal God. You say, "I can't figure that out. I can't understand. Who made God?" No one made God. He's eternal. Everything comes out of God or from God. And, the phrase, "...and through him," means that He's the sustainer. He is the source of all things. He is the sustainer of all things, and then, "and to him," He's the goal. Think about all comes from God, all is sustained by God, and all goes back to God. Everything in the universe will eventually come back to God and bring Him glory. How marvelous that is!

Someone said, "God the Father is the source, God the Son is the sustainer, and God the Holy Spirit brings it all together and brings it back to glorify God the Father and God the Son throughout out all eternity." He's the alpha and omega and every letter in the alphabet in between.

The final conclusion, verse 36, is that He is the One, "...to whom be glory for ever. Amen." Theology, our belief about God, ends in doxology, our worship of God, and should never be separated. You know, a lot of churches today like to worship and they get all excited, and we should, we should be exuberant and enthusiastic, but there's no theology. What are they worshipping? They're worshipping worship. They're worshipping their emotions. Then, there are other churches that are all theology and no fervent worship. We need a balance of both. We need to be theologians that are on fire. Amen? The more we know and understand God's Word, the more we should worship Him. We can't worship the God we don't know or understand, so we have to have theology. But theology should lead to doxology. Beware of an imbalance. Never divide theology from doxology.

I know I've got to wrap this up, but let me close by just mentioning the next verse is Romans 12:1, right? Guess what it says. "I beseech you,"—I beg you—"by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable...which is your reasonable service,"—act of worship. What better thing to do when you look back over the landscape of God's redemptive plan and purpose than to say, "God, take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee." Amen?