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Sermon Notes

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## **O The Depths of the Riches!!**

**Romans 11:33-36**

### Introduction

Here we come to the most difficult passage in Romans for me to preach. We have been through some amazingly complex and difficult passages... on God's unconditional election and predestination, on God shaping vessels of wrath and vessels of mercy. We have been through some very tough passages of controversial material on the exclusivity of Christ and on the wickedness and universality of sin.

But I have never preached a passage so difficult to preach as this one. And I am not the only one who has thought so.

Listen to Charles Spurgeon:

"I will affirm that there is no man living who can preach from this text a sermon worthy of it. Nay, that among all the sacred orators and the eloquent pleaders for God, there did never live and never will live a man capable of reaching the height of the great argument contained in these few simple words. I utterly despair of success, and therefore will not make an attempt to work out the infinite glory of this sentence. Our great God alone can expound this verse, for he only knows Himself, and He only can worthily set forth His own perfections." ["Laus Deo", May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1864, no. 572]

I am content in knowing that God Himself WILL preach this text to you who have trusted in Christ... He will preach it to you now through the Holy Spirit, and He will SHOW you its truths for all eternity. Forever, He will be proclaiming this truth to you:

***Romans 11:33-36 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! <sup>34</sup> "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" <sup>35</sup> "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" <sup>36</sup> For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.***

Here we come to the proper final resting place of all deep theology... the terminal stop of all deep human thoughts of God. It is called WORSHIP

Worship = Revelation and Response

God reveals and we respond. If we are saved, the more He reveals the deeper is our response. And in Romans, God has revealed more of His hidden counsels and private judgments than anywhere else in the universe. He has shown us more of Himself here than anywhere else in creation. And the view is astounding!

The deeper our understanding the more profound will be our worship... our STUNNED AND AMAZED STUPEFIED WONDER... put your hand over your mouth, take your breath away, speechless, stammering wonder at ALMIGHTY GOD, His ways, His plans, His thoughts, His actions, and His strategies

So my goal today is to stimulate you to the wonder and worship Paul felt when he first penned these words. I want to destroy the BOREDOM and DEADNESS of any of your souls, but I cannot do it. Only the Spirit of God can! May He do so now.

In 1855, a group of forty- niners led by James Mason Hutchings entered the Yosemite Valley and discovered a different kind of gold than the one they originally sought in the West. Rumors of a 1000-foot waterfall and sheer mountain walls soaring thousands of feet above the valley floor were circulating throughout California, and Hutchings set out to find it. He wanted to see if the valley was as impressive as the stories and legends about it suggested. When the group entered the valley in June of 1855 and stood below the 1,430-foot Yosemite Falls, Hutchings wrote that it was **"beyond the power of language to describe the awe-inspiring majesty of the darkly frowning and overhanging mountain walls of solid granite that here hem you in on every side, as though they would threaten you with instantaneous destruction if not total annihilation, did you attempt for a moment to deny their power"**

That may be how the Apostle Paul felt when he surveyed the truths of God that the Spirit had inspired him to write.

Yet this is the level of experience most adults have to hit to experience wonder and amazement. We become so jaded and hardened by sin and disappointments and unrealized expectations that we rarely are caught in wonder any more. When was the last time you had your breath taken away by wonder or amazement?

But a child sees everything fresh and new! Everything is a source of wonder and amazement

**Have you lost the sense of wonder, the sense of amazement? Are your eyes dull like those of a cow, without a touch of wonder? Are your eyes flat, bored, sightless, colorless, DEAD?**

**Have you lost the ability to be amazed? Are you jaded by years of disappointments and frustrations? Or are you still able to marvel in amazement, to exclaim in a single syllable of wonder: O!!!**

I. A Tiny Word of Wonder: O!!!

A. A Single Syllable Speaks Eternal Worship

1. Theology was not meant only to instruct our intellects with unfathomable facts
2. Still less was theology meant to be only the grist for our mental mills, providing many battle grounds of debate and controversy
3. Least of all was theology meant to BORE us and turn us off
4. Deep study of God was ultimately meant for one purpose: to be lost in wonder, admiration and praise of the eternal Being who created us to love Him

*Changed from glory into glory,  
Till in heaven we take our place,  
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,  
Lost in wonder, love, and praise.*

Heaven is a place of self-forgetfulness... where the individual beings there are so astonished at the perfections and the glories of God that they lose themselves in wonder

When was the last time that Christian doctrine ASTONISHED you?

5. Are you still AMAZED that God would save you? Do you hear the amazement in Charles Wesley's Hymn, "And Can It Be"?

**And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Savior's blood!  
Died he for me? who caused his pain! For me? who him to death pursued?  
Amazing love! How can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?**

6. Do you join Paul in uttering this simple word of worship: O!!!

B. Look at this Majestic God! Ponder Him... Stare at Him... Be Overwhelmed

1. Paul's doctrine has been totally God-centered
2. The "O" is totally focused on God

***Romans 11:33-36 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge OF GOD!  
How unsearchable HIS judgments, and HIS paths beyond tracing out! <sup>34</sup>  
"Who has known the mind of THE LORD? Or who has been HIS counselor?"  
<sup>35</sup> "Who has ever given to GOD, that GOD should repay him?" <sup>36</sup> For from  
HIM and through HIM and to HIM are all things. To HIM be the glory  
forever! Amen.***

3. What amazes Paul here is God... and what Paul's own writing of the doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ reveals about God
  - a. He marvels at the justice of God and the compassion of God and the love of God and the power of God and the mercy of God and the wrath of God

- b. It is what Romans 1-11 reveals about God that brings forth this single syllable of O!!
- c. A word of deep wonder and passion... ideas SET ON FIRE by love

During the First Great Awakening, the most astonishing and effective preacher of the gospel was George Whitefield:

His preaching was unforgettable. Using startling images he could make his listeners feel the pain of sin and the terror of hell, as well as the enticements and delights of heaven. Then with tears in his voice he could describe the love of Christ until his audience cried with him for forgiveness. Whitefield was so effective in His preaching that a famous actor of his day, David Garrick, said this: **“I would give a hundred guineas if I could only say “Oh!” like Mr. Whitefield!”**

I believe the Apostle Paul could say “OH!” with the same passion as George Whitefield, for it was the same Holy Spirit pressing the same doctrines into his heart, and igniting those doctrines with the same fire in both men

- 4. True worship: God reveals, we respond
  - a. Jesus taught us clearly about worship

***John 4:23-24 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.***

- b. There MUST be true doctrine, or it is an idol we are worshiping
- c. There MUST be true affection, true passion, true wonder and love, or we are merely actors, hypocrites going through the motions
- d. God is a passionate being, and He created us in His image
- e. Paul uses a single word to speak of eternal worship: O!!

Heavenly worship is PASSIONATE and active

The twenty-four elders are constantly falling down before the throne

The seraphim are constantly calling to one another: “Holy holy holy”

The angels are constantly breaking out into song or calling in a loud voice

NO ONE IS BORED IN HEAVEN!!!

So Paul breaks forth with some heavenly praise in a single word, O!!!

C. Context: Celebration What God Has Revealed

1. Larger context: eleven chapters probing the depths of God's plan of salvation

- a. Romans 1:16-17: The gospel is the power of God for salvation
- b. Romans 1-3: All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God
- c. Romans 3:21-26: The glowing heart of the gospel

***Romans 3:21-25 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. <sup>22</sup> This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. <sup>25</sup> God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.***

- d. Romans 4: Justification by faith alone
- e. Romans 5: Assurance of salvation... peace with God, access by faith, grace, dead in Adam, alive in Christ
- f. Romans 6: Sanctification... living as those freed from sin
- g. Romans 7: The struggle with sin
- h. Romans 8: The Spirit-filled life, adoption as the children of God, the absolute certainties of God's purposes for the elect... foreknown, predestined, called, justified, glorified; nothing can separate us from the love of Christ

2. Immediate context: Completing one of the deepest and most complex sections of God's Word: Romans 9-11

- a. Tracing out what cannot be traced out: God's sovereign dealings with the Jews
- b. Paul's anguish for his countrymen
- c. The central issue: Romans 9:6... **has God's word failed?**
- d. Paul's first answer: unconditional election of some for salvation and others for hardening

***Romans 9:11-12 before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad-- in order that God's purpose in election might stand: <sup>12</sup> not by works but by him who calls-- she was told, "The older will serve the younger."***

**Romans 9:15-18** *"I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." <sup>16</sup> It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. ... Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.*

- e. Paul's second answer: the stumbling of the Jews over Christ because they sought to establish their own righteousness
- f. Paul's third answer: salvation is essentially simple: faith comes by hearing, justification comes by faith
- g. Paul's fourth answer: the rejection of the Jewish nation is not total... Paul himself is a Jew, and in every generation there will be a Jewish remnant

**Romans 11:5-6** *at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. <sup>6</sup> And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.*

- h. Paul's fifth answer: the rejection of the Jewish nation is not purposeless... it is part of God's sovereign plan to save the Gentiles
  - i. Paul's final answer: the rejection of the Jewish nation is not final... "All Israel will be saved"
3. Overall structure: Romans 1-11 is the doctrine of the gospel of Christ; Romans 12-16 is a practical, daily life application of the gospel; this doxology is a clear line of demarcation
  4. Paul can do nothing less than fall down on his face in wonder and marvel at the intricacies and complexities of the salvation plan of God

Application: Does theology make you worship? Do you stand in awe at who God is and what God has done and what God has promised He is going to do?

Paul is experiencing a moment of sheer worship... when his theology wells up inside him and perhaps tears come to his eyes and he is overcome with emotion and knowledge and expectation and faith... and all he can do is pen the letter O!! And to follow it with the greatest doxology ever written

And the focus is God and His incredible plan

## II. The Unfathomable Depths of God's Wisdom (vs. 33)

**Romans 11:33-36** *Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!*

### A. The Depths of God

1. God created oceans to give us a sense of scope... of the depths of His own being and plans

Illus. In 1521, Ferdinand Magellan, in the process of leading the first ships to circumnavigate the globe, attempted to sound the depths of the central Pacific ocean; he spliced six lengthy lines together and attached them to a cannonball; he lowered the cannon ball until the line ran out... 400 fathoms or about 2400 feet. He concluded the ocean immeasurably deep... literally “unfathomable” At that place in the Pacific, he would have probably needed as many as 50 lines spliced together to hit bottom

2. The ocean depths are limited, however... God is not
  - a. Man has probed the depths of the Marianas Trench, the deepest part of the worlds ocean in a specially made submarine called a bathysphere
  - b. But humanity can never probe the depths of the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God
3. Depths: implies mystery and complexity, in addition to infinity
4. Sense of the scope of something

***Ephesians 3:18-19 to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,<sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.***

To know the unknowable, to measure the immeasurable... the sense of INFINITY

5. Perhaps the idea of a DEEP OCEAN is insufficient... maybe DEEP SPACE is better... space swallows up all human ingenuity and imagination

On June 12, 1983, while traveling at over 30,000 mph, the Pioneer 10 spacecraft became the first human-made object to exit our solar system. At that speed, only after 300,000 years will the craft pass near the star Ross 248, a red dwarf in the constellation Taurus. Ross 248 is about 10.1 light-years from Earth, or about 59.3 trillion miles away. Most likely history will end before it reaches its starry destination

Space is TOO BIG for us to probe, its depths too immeasurable

THAT IS MORE LIKE WHAT PAUL IS TALKING ABOUT... the depths of the riches of God

## B. Riches

1. Idea: limitless riches... a bottomless reserve of wealth
2. Paul frequently uses the idea of riches to speak of GOSPEL BLESSINGS

***Romans 9:23 What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory***

***Romans 10:12-13 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile-- the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, <sup>13</sup> for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."***

***Romans 11:12 But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!***

This is the immeasurable WEALTH of gospel riches... to be totally forgiven by God the Father through the blood of God the Son... to be adopted into God's own family; to be given an inheritance among the saints in the New Heaven and New Earth

It was Jesus who spoke of the riches of the gospel first:

***Matthew 13:44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field."***

3. The Gospel has made us IMMEASURABLY RICH... but here Paul speaks of the depths of the riches of God's wisdom and knowledge

#### C. Wisdom and Knowledge

1. The focus here is on God's incredibly deep thoughts... so deep they cannot be measured
2. We should not here make a strong distinction between wisdom and knowledge... it just has to do with the way God thinks, the way God thought before the foundation of the world
3. God's thoughts are complex, hard to understand, very deep
4. Wisdom & Knowledge = God's ability to search out all the possible universes He might have created, all the possible paths history might have traced out, and to choose the BEST one; and the wisdom to know the Best ultimate goal, and the best detailed plan to get there
5. Paul says God's thoughts themselves are infinitely deep and infinitely rich and valuable

### III. The Untraceable Mysteries of God's Paths (vs. 33)

***Romans 11:33 How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!***

#### A. Paul: Humbled by His Own Theology

1. Paul traces out the salvation plan of God in Romans 1-11

2. Paul especially considers God's way of locking all humanity into the prison of disobedience so that He can have mercy on them all
3. He considers how God has sent Christ to be rejected and slaughtered by His own people, the Jews... thus providing atonement for the wicked humans He would save
4. He ponders how God raised Christ from the dead, and then sent messengers to the Jews first; but they rejected the messengers and the gospel went out to Gentiles
5. He considers how God will use the astonishing advance of the gospel among Gentiles to make the Jews jealous and bring them to salvation

#### B. "Unsearchable Judgments"

1. As we have already said... too deep for us to figure out
2. Here: "Judgments" does not so much mean the judgment of God in punishing sinners, although that is part of it
3. It more has to do with what God decreed, what He decided to do with redemptive history before the creation of the world

God sitting on His throne before He had ever said "Let there be light"; pondering all the millennia of human history and all the billions of people He would create; pondering what He would do with all of it, what was His judgment, His decision for the human race, and for each individual human being

4. UNSEARCHABLE... cannot be fathomed, cannot be comprehended!!
5. People try to reconcile divine sovereignty and human responsibility... and they never will fully understand it
6. BE HUMBLLED

Like Job, we are confronted with a being so immense, with an intellect so soaring, all we can do is shut our questioning mouths, quiet our questioning hearts, fall on our faces and be satisfied that God's decisions are perfect and unsearchable

#### C. "Paths Beyond Tracking"

1. Image is of a skilled hunter or tracker
  - a. Out west, "mountain men" can follow the trail of certain animals over mountains and through valleys
  - b. Daniel Boone was an expert tracker in the wilderness of 18<sup>th</sup> century Kentucky... he could track deer, or bear, or an Indian war party

- c. Bloodhounds can track escaped prisoners by their tracks and their scent
  - d. Humans and animals follow in a line, one foot after another... they make a trail that can be tracked
2. God's paths CANNOT BE TRACED OUT
- a. You cannot connect the dots
  - b. You look at what He has done and what He is doing... and you can't figure it out
  - c. You may be tempted to question His wisdom, His power, or His goodness
  - d. But you cannot follow Him, because He is working at an infinitely higher level than any of us are

#### D. Solomon's Wisdom Inadequate

1. The wisest man that ever lived, other than Christ
2. Humbled at what God had revealed even at that point!!

***Ecclesiastes 3:11 God has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.***

#### IV. The Absolute Independence of God's Position (vs. 34-35)

***Romans 11:34-35 "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" <sup>35</sup> "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?"***

##### A. Context: God's Confrontation with Job

1. Paul is quoting the Book of Job here
2. Job suffered greatly, losing all of his possessions and children, then struck with dread illnesses that left him nearly dead
3. At first he did not question God, but merely worshipped
4. But the circumstances had God's desired effect... causing hidden attitudes of disrespect toward God to bubble to the surface

***Job 19:6-8 God has wronged me and drawn his net around me. <sup>7</sup> "Though I cry, 'I've been wronged!' I get no response; though I call for help, there is no justice. <sup>8</sup> He has blocked my way so I cannot pass; he has shrouded my paths in darkness.***

5. Job repeatedly demanded a hearing with God so he could make his defence

***Job 31:35 "Oh, that I had someone to hear me! I sign now my defense-- let the Almighty answer me; let my accuser put his indictment in writing.***

6. God listened for a while, then summoned Job to a hearing... no, it would not be Job questioning God, but God questioning Job

***Job 38:1-12 Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm. He said: <sup>2</sup> "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? <sup>3</sup> Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. <sup>4</sup> "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. <sup>5</sup> Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? <sup>6</sup> On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone-- <sup>7</sup> while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy? <sup>8</sup> "Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb, <sup>9</sup> when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness, <sup>10</sup> when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place, <sup>11</sup> when I said, 'This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt'? <sup>12</sup> "Have you ever given orders to the morning, or shown the dawn its place...***

***Job 38:32-35 Can you bring forth the constellations in their seasons or lead out the Bear with its cubs? <sup>33</sup> Do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you set up God's dominion over the earth? <sup>34</sup> "Can you raise your voice to the clouds and cover yourself with a flood of water? <sup>35</sup> Do you send the lightning bolts on their way? Do they report to you, 'Here we are'?***

God did nothing more than ask Job a series of questions which put Job in his place

Where were you when I did such and such?

Did I ask your advice when I did this or that?

Are you able to do such and such?

When God was done with Job, he was thoroughly humbled and completely put in his place... and he was already healed from the real disease of his soul—sinful rebellion against Almighty God. It is the same plague that has beset us ever since Adam fell

So Job finished with this:

***Job 40:3-5 Then Job answered the LORD: <sup>4</sup> "I am unworthy-- how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth. <sup>5</sup> I spoke once, but I have no answer-- twice, but I will say no more."***

***Job 42:2-6 "I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. <sup>3</sup> You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. <sup>4</sup>***

***"You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.' <sup>5</sup> My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. <sup>6</sup> Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."***

#### B. Humanity Put in its Place in this Doxology

1. What God's speech did for Job in the Old Testament, Paul's doxology does in the new
2. Paul has briefly probed the depths of God's unsearchable wisdom in salvation
3. Paul has touched on God's absolute sovereignty in salvation... on unconditional election, on a mercy given only as God sees fit, on a compassion that God bestows when and if He so chooses
4. Paul has traced out God's heartwrenching dealings with the Jews in hardening their hearts against Christ, but finished with an astonishing mystery concerning a future generation of Jews: **"All Israel will be saved"**
5. Human beings start to roil and rise and argue against God, to question Him, to demand answers to our questions
6. It is just as we do in our daily lives when some adverse providence crosses us and hurts us and disappoints us and takes from us what we thought was really ours
7. Then do we murmur against Almighty God and question Him about His justice
8. This doxology humbles us to the core... but like Job, we are left delighted and exhilarated filled with wonder and astonishment and amazement as we say with him: **"I despise myself in dust and ashes!!"**

Three questions

#### C. Who Has Known the Mind of the Lord?

1. Do you understand God's mind?
2. Solomon said a king's mind is deep and his counsels are subtle and complex. So be careful when dealing with kings, because you never know what they're going to do!

***Proverbs 25:3 As the heavens are high and the earth is deep, so the hearts of kings are unsearchable.***

Solomon's father, King David, killed men who thought he would reward them... some lied and said they'd killed Saul during a battle; others came with the head of Ish-Bosheth, who was waging war against David. All thought David would reward them, David ordered them all put to death

3. How much more is that true of God's mind!! Do you know the deep things of the mind of God? Do you know for certain what He will do?
4. No sinful man nor created angel has ever known the mind of God... BUT CHRIST HAS and so has the Holy Spirit
5. Christ searched the counsels of the Father's mind and revealed some of them to us by His teaching, His miracles, His death on the cross and His resurrection
6. The Holy Spirit searches the deep things of God and reveals some of them to us Christians as He wills and for the accomplishment of His mysterious plan
7. BUT no mere man or woman has ever known the mind of God

#### D. Who Has Been God's Counselor?

##### 1. Does God Ever Ask Advice?

2. Would God come to you and say, "I am in a quandary here... I'm really perplexed about what to do. In fact things seems to be spinning out of my control... WHAT SHOULD I DO???"
3. Can you imagine God wanting to probe the depths of your wisdom, your vast experience in life, your judgments... can you imagine GIVING ALMIGHTY GOD ADVICE on how to run this universe?
4. Is there any good thought or plan that you could tell God that He did not think of already?
5. Is there any mistake or trap that you could tell God to avoid that He did not already anticipate and deal with?
6. And yet how many arrogant human beings want to sit at God's right hand and give Him advice! How many question God's judgments, and impugn His decisions! How many want to put the Eternal God on the stand and cross-examine Him for taking the life of a loved one, or for sending a hurricane, or permitting an accident, or refusing to answer a prayer?

#### E. Can You Give God Anything That Is Not His Already?

1. Can any artist paint a picture of something that was not first in the mind of God?
2. Can any photographer capture something that was not first in the mind of God?
3. Can any inventor exult over some invention that God did not first think of?
4. Can any explorer find some new place that God did not first put there?

5. Can any poet or hymnwriter pen something that God did not think of first?
6. Can any skilled musician compose a work that God did not hear in His mind first?
7. Can any human being ever give anything to God that God did not really have first?
8. Where then is worship? If we are only giving to God what is already His, why does He command it?
  - a. Is God needy, yearning for something, sending us out on some scavenger hunt to find some item He doesn't own already, so that we should find it and bring it back to Him and make Him happy?
  - b. Is God needing us to delight Him with some composition or painting or financial offering or poem or good deed or bundle of wild flowers or something from the heart that wasn't His already?
  - c. Surely then God commands us to worship Him not because what we offer isn't His already, but because HE LOVES US AND IN HIS PRESENCE IS THE FULLNESS OF JOY... inside Him and inside Him alone there is happiness and joy forever
  - d. He is saying "Worship me because it will make you happy to do so... I am already eternally and forever happy... and I want you to be as well!!"

F. Does God Ever Owe Anyone Anything?

***Romans 11:35-36 "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" <sup>36</sup> For from him and through him and to him are all things.***

1. This is so profound, and it cuts out much false human understanding
2. "Everything is MINE ALREADY" says God
3. You cannot hand anything to God and then stand waiting as though He now owes you the corresponding item in return!!

Illus. Foundational principle of business transactions: I give you your price, you give me the item. I hand over the money, you hand over the car or the clothes or the groceries or the jewelry or the book. Intrinsic to the exchange is a moment of indebtedness

GOD IS NEVER INDEBTED TO ANYONE

Thus we do not view Him as a shopkeeper, selling salvation

His price is repentance and faith, and it is ours to give. When we give it, He owes us salvation

NO NEVER!!! God doesn't owe anyone anything ever. AND we should not suppose the faith and repentance are ours to give apart from God anyway.

OUR FAITH AND REPENTANCE THEMSELVES ARE GIFTS FROM GOD

***For from him and through him and to him are all things.***

If you have anything to offer, God gave it to you first! And it really belongs to Him anyway

God will never owe you anything, and there is no demand you can make on Him that He will be obligated to pay

And He doesn't owe the gospel to a single rebellious sinner or to an unreached people group

4. God will never be in a position of indebtedness... but He will be delighted to pay all of your debts!!

## V. The Centrality of God's Ownership and Glory (vs. 36)

***Romans 11:36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.***

### A. From Him, Through Him, To Him

1. Absolute centrality of God in His universe
2. God is the Alpha and the Omega and every letter in between
  - a. "From Him" = God is the originator, the creator
  - b. "Through Him" = God is the sustainer and upholder of all things at every moment
  - c. "To Him" = God is the final destination and will take all things back and judge all moral agents for their actions and motives

### B. All Things

1. The Spiritual Realms

***For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever!***

2. Physical Creation

***For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever!***

3. History

***For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever!***

4. The Gospel of Jesus Christ
  - a. From Him: it was His plan of salvation before the foundation of the world
  - b. Through Him: He unfolded it through generations, brought it to pass through Christ, accomplished it completely
  - c. To Him: He alone will get the glory for it
5. The Gifts and Ministries of the Spirit
6. All things pertaining to us personally

***For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever!***

- a. Our birth advantages and disadvantages
- b. Our wealth or our poverty
- c. Our intelligence
- d. Our physical advantages and disadvantages: height, appearance, hair color, blemishes, accents, athletic ability
- e. Our spiritual upbringing
- f. Our hearing of the gospel
- g. Our faith and repentance
- h. Our spiritual gifts and ministries
- i. Our spiritual fruitfulness
- j. Our daily existence... the food we eat, the air we breathe
- k. Our common experiences and our unique experiences
- l. The day of our birth and the day of our death

***“From Him and through Him and to Him are all things***

C. To God Be the Glory FOREVER... Amen

## VI. Application

This passage is so overwhelming and pervasive and all-consuming, it's hard to imagine an area of life not touched by it

I'll give you five words that will help you apply it

**First, to a non-Christian, come to Christ!!! Trust in His blood for your salvation**

To Christians:

1. Assess
  - a. Is your heart cold toward God?
  - b. Are you delighted in Christ or distant from Him?
  - c. Are you cold in public or private worship?
2. Acknowledge
  - a. personal sin, worldliness and hardness of heart
  - b. Take responsibility for the state of your heart toward God
3. Accept
  - a. everything that comes to you is from God... no accidents, no random chance
  - b. Don't boast
  - c. Don't covet
  - d. Don't complain
4. Anticipate
  - a. Look forward to heaven
  - b. Look forward to face to face fellowship with such a God as this
  - c. Trust such a mighty God to get you there
5. Adore
  - a. worship Him NOW
  - b. Go over this doxology line by line and kindle afresh your love for God