

“Glory to God!” **Romans 11:33-36**

AN OVERVIEW OF PAUL’S ARGUMENT IN ROMANS 9 TO 11:

CH. 9: The present rejection of Jesus by most Jews is not a failure of God’s word but part of his sovereign plan.

CH. 10: At the same time, the Jews bear full responsibility for their unbelief.

CH. 11: However, all is not lost for the Jews, for God’s plan for the future is to save the majority of Jews, after God’s plan of salvation for the Gentiles has been completed.

I. God’s Glory Seen in His Plan of Salvation, 11:33a.

A. The only proper conclusion to grasping the mystery of God’s plan of salvation is praise!

1. In the previous verses (11:25-32) Paul made it clear that God’s plan to redeem the world is presently in three stages: (1) harden the Jews as a means to (2) bring the Gentiles to salvation, which is in turn a means to (3) bring the majority of Jews to salvation.

a. No person (and certainly no Jew!) would have ever come up with such a plan.

2. DISCUSSION: What can our study of such things sometimes lead to (in a negative sense) other than worship? What is life like for people who have no understanding of God’s plan for this world?

B. God’s grace, wisdom, and knowledge are especially seen in his plan to redeem Jews and Gentiles.

1. “Oh, the depths…” = The perfections of God’s glory are so great that one can only begin to grasp a small portion of what they truly are.

a. Augustine: *“I see the depths, but I cannot reach the bottom.”*

b. Calvin: *“Where God makes an end of teaching we make an end of learning.”*

2. “Riches” refers to God’s mercy (cf. 2:4; 9:23; 10:12; 11:12).

3. “Wisdom” and “knowledge” are very closely related, and, in God, inseparable.

a. *“Knowledge refers to God’s all-inclusive and exhaustive cognition and understanding, wisdom to the arrangement and adaptation of all things to the fulfillment of his holy designs. In God these are correlative, and it would be artificial to press the distinction unduly.”* --- John Murray

4. DISCUSSION: What does this teach us about the importance of carefully studying the difficult doctrines of Scripture? Why are we sometimes uncomfortable with the idea that we can’t fully grasp the ways of God?

II. God’s Glory Seen in His Wisdom, 11:33b-34

A. God’s creatures can only know the mind of God as far as he is willing to reveal it.

1. “Unsearchable” and “inscrutable” point to the vast chasm between God’s wisdom and knowledge and our own.

a. “Judgments” refers here to his plans and not his judicial punishment or reward of people.

2. “Who has known the mind of the Lord?” = The answer to this question has a dual nature, for in one sense no one knows the mind of the Lord, but in the gospel God has revealed some of his “mind” through the Holy Spirit, who is given to those who are united to Christ by faith (1 Corinthians 2:9-12).

a. This is a direction quotation from the Septuagint’s version of Isaiah 40:13.

3. DISCUSSION: How should this recognition fuel our hunger for God’s word?

B. God consults no one when he determines what he will do.

1. “Who has been his counselor?” = The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit did not stop to ask any creature (angelic or human) what a good plan would be!

a. Indeed, Scripture is clear that God always acts according to his plan (Ephesians 1:11). Or to put it another way, EVERYTHING that happens in the universe is part of God’s plan.

2. DISCUSSION: When we let this truth sink in, what should its effect be on our life?

III. God’s Glory Seen in His Grace, 11:35

A. Creatures are incapable of putting their Creator in their debt.

1. This verse is probably a reference to Job 41:11, where the inability of creatures to put God in debt owes to the fact that he created and, thus, owns everything.

B. Thus, any good shown to a creature is all of free sovereign grace.

1. Paul has already pointed to God’s self revelation that he is free to show favor to some of his sinful creatures and not to others (9:15-16).

2. No one can point to injustice in regards to those who are not made partakers of God’s redemptive favor.

3. DISCUSSION: In light of this verse, what happens to God’s glory if we don’t recognize his sovereignty in the salvation of sinners?

IV. God’s Glory Seen in His Supremacy, 11:36

A. God is the source of all things.

1. 11:36 begins with a “for,” which shows that this verse is giving a reason for the rhetorical questions in the previous two verses. It is because God is the source, sustainer, and goal of all things that no one can counsel God or put Him in one’s debt.

2. “From him” = God created all things, and all things are working according to his plan.

B. God is the sustainer of all things.

1. “Through him” = God is intricately involved in all the affairs of his creation.

a. Jesus said that not even a sparrow falls to the ground dead apart from the will of God (Matt. 10:29)!

b. Jesus upholds the whole world by the word of his power (Hebrews 11:3).

c. *“The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God so far manifest themselves in His providence, that it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men, and that not by a bare permission, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to His own holy ends; yet so, as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God; who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.”* Westminster Confession of Faith 5.4

2. **DISCUSSION:** What encouragement should we as Christians take from this?

C. God’s glory is the goal of all things!

1. “To him” = God works everything for his own glory!

a. This is the end of all that God does. In the final day, the redeemed will marvel and worship at the wisdom of God’s plan, and we will see how everything worked to most marvelously display His glory.

2. **DISCUSSION:** If this is God’s chief end, what must our chief end be? How would living in light of this change everything?