

IN PRAISE OF GOD, PT. 2
ROMANS 11:36

In an article entitled, "How Big is God?" David Coppedge, a scientist with the Jet Propulsion Laboratory writes that a manned flight to Pluto going at the maximum speed of Apollo astronauts, would take 17 years before it could park



in a hangar at the Pluto Interplanetary Airport. And as far away as Pluto is, consider this — if the distance between the sun and Pluto (17 years away from us) were represented by a one-foot ruler, the distance to the nearest star to us would be over a mile away (more than 5000x as far)!

...[Further] if [our] galaxy were represented as the size of North America, our entire solar system would fit in a coffee cup somewhere in Idaho.

Astronomers estimate that there are as many galaxies outside the Milky Way as there are stars in it. The Hubble Ultra Deep Field, taken in 2004, imaged 10,000 galaxies in a cone of space so slim you could cover it with a grain of sand held at arm's length. Integrated over the entire sky, that would mean there are more than 100 billion galaxies in the visible universe, many with more than 100 billion stars each.

And, as Coppedge notes, "God gives names to all of them" (Ps. 147:4). The vastness of God is incomprehensible. A reasonable question, then, is "How do you 'synthesize' God?" How do you summarize the infinite? How do you condense the nature and actions of God into a book, or chapter, or paragraph? Paul actually finds a way to speak about the nature of God in a concise sentence: "From Him and through Him and to Him are all things." Those three statements provide a framework for understanding God.

As Paul concludes his explanation of all the doctrinal truths he has explained in Rom. 1-11, he explodes in a benediction of praise in Romans 11:33-36 that we summarized this way:

LET THE REVELATION OF GOD'S SALVATION LEAD YOU TO PRAISE GOD.

Last week we noted that verses 33-36 are likely a hymn that Paul wrote in four parts — an exclamation, a question, an affirmation, and an ascription. This morning we look more carefully at the last two parts of that song, considering **the character of God that makes Him glorious** and praiseworthy:

1. Because God is God... (v. 36a)

2. ...Give Him Glory (v. 36b)

- ✓ What is God's glory?
- ✓ What does it mean to glorify God?
- ✓ Why should we glorify God?

1. Because God is God... (v. 36a)

- When Paul says **all things** what does He mean? He means **all things** that are consistent with His nature and character:
 - ✓ **All things** does have a limitation: God is not the originator of sin (sin is Satanic, 1 Jn. 3:8) and He is not the source of temptation (Js. 1:13).
 - ✓ But all other parts of the *created* universe are part of these “all things.” John Calvin is exactly right when he says, “There is not an atom of the universe in which you cannot see some brilliant sparks at least of His glory.” [in Bavinck, *Doctrine of God*.]
 - ✓ He also is speaking of the created “spiritual universe” — all of salvation is from Him (chs. 9-11). That’s been the emphasis from 3:21 – 11:36 — man is incapable of saving Himself, and salvation is only by God. By way of reminder, consider what he has already written in this letter (1:16a; 6:23). There is no part of salvation that is accomplished by man on his own — it’s God’s choice (9:18).

• God is the SOURCE of all things

- ✓ All things are **from Him**. God is the source of everything that exists. There is nothing that exists anywhere in any part of creation that does not originate from Him.
- ✓ Everything in creation exists because of Him: Gen. 1:1ff; 1 Chron. 29:14; Ps. 8:3-5; Is. 44:24; Jn. 1:3f; Acts 17:25-26; 1 Cor. 11:12; 15:27-28; Col 1:16; 1 Tim. 6:13; Heb. 2:8, 10; Rev. 4:11; 5:13.
- ✓ Everything in the new creation (salvation) exists because of Him (no one is saved apart from Him): Jn. 1:16-17, 29; 17:10; 1 Cor. 2:6-7; Eph. 1:10, 22; 3:11; Tt. 1:2; 1 Pt. 1:3; Rev. 21:5. And this has been repeated as a theme throughout Romans (3:24, 26; 4:5, 24-25; 5:9, 21; 6:4, 8-10; 7:24b-25; 8:1-2, 11, 33-35, 37; 9:15-16; 11:5-6; 25-27). God alone is the source of salvation. There is salvation in no one else; nothing else will ever provide spiritual salvation.
- ✓ Paul’s emphasis in chs. 9-11 on God’s salvation was to keep men humble (9:20-21; 10:6-7; 11:18, 25); when we recognize that God is behind all things in our life and salvation, we will not be proud.

• God is the SUSTAINER of all things

- ✓ All things are **through Him**. He keeps all things in the world and in the spiritual world moving in just the way He intends it to go and be. He is the means by which all things are upheld.
- ✓ Everything in creation continues because of Him and is under His sovereign authority: Acts 17:28; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3; Ps. 33:11; Prov. 16:33.
- ✓ Everything in the new creation continues in salvation and is kept in salvation by Him: Acts 11:18; Eph. 2:8; Phil. 1:6; 1 Pt. 1:4-5; Rom. 5:1, 10, 17; 6:6, 17-18, 22-23; 8:29-30, 35-39; 11:29.

- God is the **GOAL** of all things

- ✓ All things are **to Him**. All things are created for Him — for His pleasure and for His exaltation.
- ✓ All things in creation reveal His nature and character: Ps. 19:1ff; Rom. 1:20; . Even the minds and consciences of all men in creation reveal the nature of God (Rom. 2:14-15). No one can get away from the reality of God's supremacy over all things because no one can escape his own conscience (unless he finally kills it — and that only brings damnation).
- ✓ All things in the new creation reveal His character and nature: Ps. 25:11; 31:3; 79:9; 109:21; Jer. 14:7; Rom. 9:23; 15:7. Why does God save us and keep us? Yes, so that we receive adoption and blessing and hope... But ultimately, our salvation is not about us — our salvation doesn't terminate on us. Our salvation is not ultimate; it is penultimate. Our salvation is so that God is honored as the most exalted Person in existence. Our salvation is to make all men delight in Him.
- ✓ Since God is the source, sustainer, and goal of all things, what is the benefit to us? George Swinnock simply says, "God is everything. If He is yours, nothing can hurt you. If He is yours, everything will help you." [Yuille, *A Labor of Love*.]
- ✓ Again, this keeps us from ungodly, foolish pride. It keeps us from presuming a position on earth or in Heaven which does not belong to us (Dan. 4:30; 1 Pt. 5:6). "To think that you are the center of the universe is a classic demonstration of spiritual insanity." [Pennington]
- ✓ And since He is everything to all men everywhere, then it also demands a response by us, which is what Paul says next...

2. ...Give Him Glory (v. 36b)

- Paul not only reveals the greatness of God with these three short prepositional phrases, but he finishes where all good theology finishes. He worships God. Truth about God should lead us to delight in God. Theology should end in worship. Bible intake should end in savoring God. A consideration of God should result in us making much about God:

"To pretend homage to God and intend only the advantage to myself is rather to mock God than to worship Him. When we believe we ought to be satisfied rather than God glorified, we set God below ourselves and imagine that He should submit His own honor to our advantages." [Stephen Charnock.]

- What is God's glory?

- ✓ God's glory is the central theme of Scripture. It is the dominating truth that ties Scripture together.
- ✓ *God's glory is the fullness of all that He is.* The OT word means "heaviness, weight" and suggests that God is weightier than any other thing or person. So He is "glorious" and "majestic." This glory is internal to Him — "it is the excellency of his Divine nature'...God is glorious internally according to his 'own knowledge, love, and delight in himself.'" [Vandrunen, *God's Glory Alone*, 29.]

- ✓ *God's glory is also the revelation of all that He is.* He is not only internally glorious, but He has put that glory on display — which is the purpose of creation and the new creation.
- ✓ *Where have we seen God's glory?* Everywhere! It is in the sky and the stars; it is in the mountains and ocean; it is in the diversity of people; it is in the creative ability of men; it is seen when He walked with Adam and Eve and spoke to Moses in the burning bush and to Job from the whirlwind (Job 38:1ff) and revealed himself in the visions to Isaiah (Is. 6:1-8) and John (Revelation).
- ✓ God's glory is most supremely in His humility to redeem men by taking on humanity and dying on the cross: **Phil. 2:5-8**. God's glory is most clearly seen in His greatest humility — incarnation and crucifixion that redeems sinners who were created in His image but rebelled against Him.
- ✓ I want you to notice one particular thread of the revelation of God's glory in Scripture:
 - When Israel left Egypt, God revealed Himself to them day and night as a cloud and a pillar of fire
 - He further came to dwell in the Tabernacle in the Holy of Holies (**Ex. 40:33-35ff**)
 - When Israel settled in the land of Canaan, God dwelt in the Temple (**1 Kings 8:6, 10-12**). This was a manifestation that God was with His people — providing, protecting, and keeping.
 - When Israel rebelled against God, He sent them into captivity in Babylon. And listen to what the prophet Ezekiel said about that: **Ezekiel 10:1, 4, 18-19**. God, who had evidenced His presence with Israel in the wilderness and in the Temple is now (seemingly) "absent" from His people. For ~600 years. "What looked to be stable and sure proved to be nothing of the sort. The hoped for resting place of the ark would soon be decimated. What Moses feared in the wilderness had finally come to pass: the glory of the Lord abandoned his sinful people." [Vandrunen, 63] Can you imagine the feeling of hopelessness for Ezekiel and Israel?
 - Then came a strange announcement: **Mt. 1:23**. God who has been absent has now returned, which is what made **Lk. 2:13-14** so compelling — God's glory has returned! And everything in Jesus' life revealed the Father's glory (**Jn. 1:14, 18**).
 - And then almost as soon as He came, He was gone again: in a scene reminiscent of Ezekiel, we read this: **Acts 1:9**. The glory was here, then gone, then back, and then gone again.
 - But when Christ left, He also left with a promise: **Acts 1:10-11**.
 - His glory — His presence and fulness — will come again: **Rev. 19:1, 11-16; 21:22-27**.
- ✓ When Paul says, "to God be the glory," he is seeing the fulfillment of God's promises to His people and he is recognizing that God has done supremely what only God can do so he explodes in praise.

- **What does it mean to glorify God?**

- ✓ *To glorify God means that we reveal God for who He is.* We are exposing the nature of God and telling others of Him, which is what Romans 1-11 has been, and why Paul can sum up those chapters with this one phrase — **to Him be the glory...** (cf. also Jn. 8:54; 12:23ff; 14:13; 17:1-5; 1 Pt. 4:11, 16). Every decision we make every day reveals what we think about God — words, food, activities...

- ✓ God's glory is evidenced through us — how we live and how we suffer (e.g., 1 Pt. 2:12).
- ✓ *To glorify God means that we delight in God for who He is.* To glorify God also means to take pleasure in Him — e.g., Mt. 5:16; 15:31; Rom. 15:9; 1 Pt. 1:8; 2:12.
- ✓ To glorify Him so that He is revealed is a stewardship and act of obedience; to delight in Him is an even greater form of revelation, because it demonstrates that He and His sovereignty and commands over us are our treasure and satisfaction.
- ✓ To glorify Him is also our eternal task and privilege — God's glory will be revealed, exalted and delighted in *forever*. His glory is not something we take pleasure in once — it is something in which we always take pleasure. It is a task begun at salvation, continued through our lives, and culminated in eternity, for all eternity (which is to say, it will never end).
- ✓ To glorify God is to affirm what believers have always said about Him. Don't overlook the final word of v. 36 — **Amen**. It means, "Truly," or "let it be so." It is how believers have always affirmed the truth of God — "Yes — it is true!" When we say, "Amen," we are joining that chorus.
- ✓ The vision statement for GBC is that we exist to Shepherd God's people by God's grace, for God's glory. And when we say that God's glory is our goal we mean we are working to point people to the truth of who He is (revealing Him) and discipling them to love Him (delighting in Him).
- ✓ If you are not a follower of Jesus Christ, you are not glorifying Him. You are not doing what you were created to do. And He will hold you accountable for that (Rom. 3:23). The essence of sin is to refuse to live for God's glory. But God has come near in Christ. He has revealed His greatness through the humility of the cross. He has made salvation available to Jew and Gentile, alike. And if you confess and believe, you will be saved (10:9-10, 13). Will you please believe, starting today?

- **Why should we glorify God?**

- ✓ We should glorify God because only He is worthy — there is no one like God.
- ✓ We should glorify God because it demonstrates to others that He is our treasure —
- ✓ We should glorify God because not glorifying God is the most basic act of rebellion by those who do not trust God (Rom. 1:20-22) — and notice that their rebellion is folly.
- ✓ We should glorify God because that is what we are created to do, and there is nothing greater that we might do in response to who He is and the greatness of what He has done for us.
- ✓ Let us avoid the tragedy denoted by Elizabeth Barrett Browning:
 "Earth's crammed with Heaven, and every common bush afire with God
 But only he who sees takes off his shoes; the rest sit 'round and pluck blackberries." — a wasted life.

BENEDICTION: Romans 11:33-36