

From Theology to Doxology

11.16.25

Message 43

Romans Series

Romans 11:33–36 (CSB)

A HYMN OF PRAISE

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches
and the wisdom and the knowledge of God!
How unsearchable his judgments
and untraceable his ways!

³⁴ **For who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has been his counselor?**

³⁵ **And who has ever given to God,
that he should be repaid?**

³⁶ For from him and through him
and to him are all things.
To him be the glory forever. Amen.

Observations

A. The doctrinal section of the Book of Romans.

1. From here forward, Paul will show us how to live out the plan and purpose of God.
2. Far from feeling depressed or relieved that this part is over, Paul breaks out into a hymn or a doxology.
3. Of course, he is writing this and not singing it.

- a. But we can picture Paul putting down his quill, lifting his aging hands, the lamps casting shadows in the room, and Paul declaring:
- b. “oh, the depth of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God!
- c. Paul is so overwhelmed by the glory and the activity of God, that he can’t help but worship and write about God’s goodness.
- d. And the Holy Spirit led him in such a way that what he praised he wrote down and gave to us as Scripture.

What did Paul say?

B. First, he wrote of the depths of God that are far more than we possibly can discover.

- 1. The more we discover, the more we discover and the more reasons we have to worship.
- 2. Does anyone remember what it was like during the 80s and 90s, taking a young kid to Toys’ R Us for the first time?
 - a. AWE, Wonder, Amazement.
 - b. New discoveries on every aisle and new joys yet to be discovered.
 - c. I picture the child leading the front of the pack saying, “look it!” while the parent walks behind.
- 3. But now imagine that instead of the parent saying, “don’t touch, just look, put that back”
 - a. The one who walks with us is the grandparent and the owner of the store.
 - b. Instead of saying “don’t touch,” he picks up the greatest toys from the top of the shelves to show us.
 - c. He picks us up to touch that we never could touch.
 - d. He leads us to the warehouse where there is still more to discover!
- 4. The Apostle is overwhelmed by the God who allows him to discover and enjoy Him.

C. Second, Paul reveals the riches of God.

- 1. Paul quotes the OT teachings that we cannot teach God, give counsel to God, or even give to God.
- 2. As he tells us in verse 36, from him are all things.

3. Paul, in light of the glory and the gospel he has been writing about, sits in amazement at the plan of God.

a. Paul knows that we cannot get into God's head and read his mind, but He reads ours.

b. We cannot counsel God and dictate the future, but He directs our paths and pours out wisdom to all who seek and ask.

c. Truly, the words of Jeremiah 33:3 still apply:

³Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and incomprehensible things you do not know.

D. Third, Paul tells us we cannot outgive God.

a. We have nothing to give Him.

b. Who has ever given to God...

³⁴**For who has known the mind of the Lord?**

Or who has been his counselor?

³⁵**And who has ever given to God,**

that he should be repaid?

³⁶For from him and through him

and to him are all things.

c. The Apostle declares from the writings of Job and the prophets, God doesn't owe me, I owe Him.

1. Everything I am, everything I have, all that I am becoming already comes from God.

2. For all things are from him and through him and to him are all things!

E. The Great English Hymn writer, Isaac Watts, captured this beautifully.

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross: Isaac Watts

1 When I survey the wondrous cross
on which the Prince of glory died,
my richest gain I count but loss,
and pour contempt on all my pride.

2 Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast
save in the death of Christ, my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them through his blood.

3 See, from his head, his hands, his feet,
sorrow and love flow mingled down.
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
or thorns compose so rich a crown?

4 Were the whole realm of nature mine,
that were a present far too small.
Love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all.

1. Watts understood what it meant to move from Theology to Doxology.
2. To compose a holy pause, a proclamation of praise.
3. Julie and I have been to Watts' grave.
 - a. Buried in Bunhill Cemetery, surrounded by John Bunyan, Susanna Wesley, poet Robert Blake, and thousands of others, I wonder what Watts' reaction was the moment he met Jesus.
 - b. Did he sing in a perfect heavenly language the words:

“Were the whole realm of nature mine,
that were a present far too small.
Love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all.
 - c. Was he so in awe that language escaped him?
4. I know this:
 - a. When the Apostle Paul and Isaac Watts or any other believer entered into heaven, they counted no prayers or times of worship as a waste.
 - b. Every prayer, every praise, every spontaneous or planned hymn still paled in comparison to the glory that awaited them.

From Theology to Doxology

A. Paul now transitions Romans from Theology to Doxology¹

1. Theology, simply put, is the study of God.
 - a. Contained within Theology is the pursuit of knowing and understanding God
 - b. We all do theology at some level.
 - c. Understanding, knowing, and discovery are all acts of Theology.
 - d. We all must be Theologians, studying to show ourselves approved.
2. Doxology is “Short, spontaneous ascriptions of praise to God...”
 - a. Doxology in Paul’s letters has a form or pattern.
 - b. Paul could write doxology, just as he could write theology.

B. Theology is not satisfied until it results in Doxology.

1. When the discovery leads to praise, THAT is the goal.
2. To leave the information on the page, or the discovery on the shelf, is to rob theology of its ultimate purpose.
3. The toy on the shelf was DESIGNED to be taken home, played with, and enjoyed.
4. The glory of God that is revealed through Scripture is meant to be lived in, exalted in, enjoyed, and praised.

C. Explaining Glory:

1. To give God glory is not to add something to him; rather, it is an active acknowledgment or extolling of what he is or has already done (Ps 29:2; 96:8).²
2. Intrinsic and Ascribed.
3. Intrinsic is all that God is, and nothing I say can change that.
 - a. He will always be good, whether I claim that or not.
 - b. He will always be all-powerful, all-knowing, and eternal.

¹ Title found in Kent Hughes commentary on Romans.

² Peter T. O’Brien, “Benediction, Blessing, Doxology, Thanksgiving,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 69.

- c. That is who he is, regardless of what I say.
- 4. Ascribed is what we give Him.
 - a. When we worship and say He is worthy, I'm ascribing that to Him.
 - b. I don't make him worthy, I'm recognizing it.
 - c. The Angels in heaven who forever proclaim, "Holy, Holy, Holy" do not make God holy; they are merely proclaiming the great and glorious truth.
- 3. Theology moves to Doxology when we worship God and give Him glory.
- D. The doxology is an affirmation rather than a wish.³
 - 1. I'm not wishing God to be rich, full of wisdom, and knowledge.
 - 2. I'm not wishing God to have perfect judgment.
 - 3. HE IS all of this and so much more.
 - 4. And when we become AWARE of what is, we break out in praise and glory: DOXA
- E. Doxologies end with the Amen.
 - 1. The "amen" makes it clear that Paul's ascription of praise is not simply a matter of the lips, but is the spontaneous response of his whole being. Elsewhere he strikingly connects believers' response of "amen" to the faithfulness of God who has said yes to all his promises in Christ (2 Cor 1:20).⁴
 - 2. When we add the Amen, we are declaring that what has been said is sure, steady, and trustworthy.
 - 3. I'm attaching my agreement to what's been said, for better or worse.

A few thoughts about doxology for us today.

³ Peter T. O'Brien, "Benediction, Blessing, Doxology, Thanksgiving," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 69.

⁴ Peter T. O'Brien, "Benediction, Blessing, Doxology, Thanksgiving," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 69.

Comments

1. **Doxology/worship is the chief end of Theology.**

A. Why should we read Scripture?

1. To glorify God and to enjoy Him.
2. Why do we pray: to glorify God and enjoy Him.
3. Why do we sing: to glorify God and enjoy Him.
4. Why do we worship with other believers?
5. Why do we listen to sermons?
6. So that the discovery will lead us to glorify God and enjoy Him FOREVER!

B. The fulfillment of theology is found in doxology: **knowledge of God must lead us to praise God.**

1. Westminster Shorter Catechism: The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever
2. Unfortunately, it is possible to know the Bible and not know the God of the Bible.
 - a. We can read the Scripture and be atheists (no god) or deists (a god who does not intervene in the universe).
 - b. But **we cannot be a believer unless we allow the knowledge to transform us in such a way that we glorify God.**

C. How has your worship been?

1. All of us are worshipping something, but who are you worshipping?
2. **Christian Worship doesn't have any specific form, but it has a specific focus.**
 - a. Worship can include songs, but not all songs are worship.
 - b. Worship includes prayer, but not all prayer is Christian (all religions pray).
 - c. We may stand, we may kneel, we may cry, we may be silent.
 - d. If you have never kneeled in prayer, you probably should.
 - e. If you are always quiet, then try lifting up your voice.

f. If you are always loud, then try silence and stillness.

3. We must fight our flesh to stay focused on Jesus.

D. Is your Bible reading leading to worship?

1. We all know to read the Bible.

2. But reading for information is different from transformation.

3. As we approach Scripture to be transformed and changed, the result is not just better people but better worshippers.

#2. Our praise is enriched by quoting Scripture.

A. When I don't know what to say, don't forget Scripture

1. Paul weaves Scripture all throughout his writings and his doxologies.

2. What better prayers can be prayed than those inspired by the Holy Spirit!

3. When we are at a loss for words, use the words of Scripture.

4. The Psalms were on Jesus' lips throughout his last hours.

B. I want to encourage all of us to hide God's Word in our hearts.

1. There are so many great tools we can use to enrich our study.

2. Bible software and apps, Google and ChatGPT, are valuable tools.

a. ChatGPT can write a sermon better than I can.

b. But it can only inform us, never transform us.

c. At the entrance of Heaven, we will not be judged by what Google knew but what we believed.

3. Typing prompts is not the same as hiding God's Word in our hearts.

4. Psalm 119:11 (CSB) "I have treasured your word in my heart so that I may not sin against you.

C. I know many of us love the idea of pushing back against social media, Big Tech, Big Government, and all those things.

1. What if the greatest act of subversion and cultural reform we could do right now was to memorize Scripture?
2. When we deposit Scripture in our lives by active and regular reading, we are preparing the foundation for God's transformation in our lives.
3. What we will find is that the Scriptures will inform our prayers, our songs, our advice, and our relationships.

#3. Doxology isn't a waste of time or space.

A. As I'm reading Romans, this section feels like a waste of time or space.

1. Theology isn't wasted and application feels important.
2. But why is it that we don't value praise the same way?

B. Fight the temptation to see praise and adoration as extra and unnecessary.

1. Perhaps what your walk with Jesus needs is more time for adoration and worship.
2. To be lost in the glory, the DOXA of God.

C. Fight the danger of our relationships becoming transactional.

1. New couples love to spend time together.
2. Talking, chatting, breathing....it's sickening to those around us.
3. But that time isn't wasted.
4. The longer we are married, the more it becomes about survival.
5. Kisses and hugs become optional or transactional; conversations become practical instead of intimate.
6. What used to be enjoyable feels like a waste of time.
7. YET!!!! How sweet it is to love someone for a lifetime!

D. Lust is temporary, infatuation is momentary, but love is enduring.

1. We lose the adoration when we move from intimacy to transaction.
2. Oh, my friends, I implore you: ADORATION is not a waste of time.
3. From the innermost being, we lift our hands, our heads, and our voices and declare the glories of God.

One Final Illustration of moving from knowing to worship.

Story

On a beautiful evening in 1901, a cowboy working in New Mexico named Jim White noticed something strange rising out of the ground up into the sky. At first he thought it was a column of smoke, but there was no fire. What was it?

As Jim would later recount: "During my life on the range I'd seen plenty of prairie whirlwinds, but this thing didn't move: it remained in one spot, spinning its way upward. I watched it for perhaps a half hour until my curiosity got the better of me. Then I began investigating."

What Jim White found was a large hole in the ground and a countless number of bats flying up into the night sky. "I ... sat for perhaps an hour watching bats fly out. I couldn't estimate the number, but I knew that it must run into millions. The more I thought of it the more I realized that any hole in the ground which could house such a gigantic army of bats must be a whale of a big cave. I crept between cactus until I lay on the brink of the chasm, and looked down. During all the years I'd known of the place, I'd never taken the trouble to do this. There was no bottom in sight! I shall never forget the feeling of aweness it gave me."

The "aweness" of peering into the mouth of the large cave grew exponentially when he was able to climb underground. What Jim White saw below the surface changed the course of his life.

"I returned to the cave with some crude tools and a kerosene lantern. I cut sticks of wood from nearby shrubs and built a rope ladder in order to descend into the mouth of the cave." When White ran out of rope, he lit his lantern and saw a tunnel off to his right about 20 feet down. Holding onto the wall, he descended into a huge chamber.

"I explored the tunnel to the left first, finding the bat cave. Returning to the large room, I headed for the tunnel to the right where I saw a wonderland. Enormous stalagmites rose from the floor, clusters of stalactites in a variety of colors hung from above and onyxlined pools full of pure water sparkled brilliantly on the floor."

Jim White had discovered the Carlsbad Caverns. He came back to the caves again and again, often staying as long as three days within the caves. In time he decided to devote his life to exploring their beauty. The years he spent in their depths made Jim the foremost authority on the caverns.

But the cowboy didn't want to keep his find to himself. The more he saw below the surface the more he wanted to show others.

He built and installed a series of ladders and pathways that made the caves more accessible. He even invented a "bucket elevator" to give visitors an opportunity to fully access the wonders that lay below the surface. And those who had no money got their tour for free. Jim White

couldn't help himself. He felt compelled to show people the beauty he had discovered below the surface, to help people appreciate the grandeur beneath their gaze.⁵

A. The more you and I explore below the surface, the more compelled we will feel to make the discovery known.

1. Whether it is a kid at Toys R Us, Jim White's Cavern, or a sinner who has discovered the incomprehensible grace of God, **discoveries shouldn't be hidden but shared.**
2. That feeling to share the discovery is a form of praise, worship, adoration, and doxology.

B. What can I do?

1. **Start exploring with the goal of worshipping.**
2. **Don't apologize for praise breaks.**
3. **Worship and Pray through your Bible Reading.**

Closing Doxology:

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
Amen.

⁵ J. Kent Edwards, *Deep Preaching: Creating Sermons That Go beyond the Superficial* (Nashville, TN: B&H Books, 2009), 90–91.