

**IT'S TIME TO SIMPLY PRAISE GOD!  
ROMANS 11:33-36**

**By Pastor John Carlini, D.Mn**

**M.I. WHEN WE COME TO THE PLACE WHERE WE REALIZE HOW HOLY AND RIGHTEOUS AND GREAT GOD IS, AND AT THE SAME TIME HOW WEAK AND PATHETIC AND UNDESERVING WE ARE, AND COME TO REALIZE THAT FOR NO GOOD REASON GOD CHOSE TO SAVE US AND MAKE US HIS CHILDREN, THE ONLY RESPONSE IS TO FALL ON OUR KNEES, THROW OUR HANDS IN THE AIR, AND PRAISE GOD.**

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- A. HE IS CREATOR**
- B. HE IS SUSTAINER**
- C. HE IS THE PURPOSE AND FULFILLMENT OF ALL**

## **IT'S TIME TO SIMPLY PRAISE GOD! ROMANS 11:33-36**

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Now that we're at the end of these two great theological sections in Romans, I'm almost feeling as if I have shortchanged you by preaching from such a simple, pragmatic perspective and because of that, you may not quite understand why Paul suddenly, for no apparent reason, breaks out into song and sings a doxology.

We have been saying all along however, that there are some things that we have not been able to understand from our human perspective. For example, God is perfectly holy and His justice demands that all sin and unrighteousness be punished, and further, nothing unholy or unrighteous can stand in the presence of God.

But here we are, you and I, this morning worshiping God in His presence, as His children. How can that be? We are unholy, unrighteous, sinful and dirty.

The explanation is that God sent His One and Only Son, Jesus to die for our sins. Jesus, the perfect and holy One, suffered and died for us. How can we ever make sense out of that? How is that right our just? Nevertheless, it is true.

We can never fully understand this salvation by grace through faith issue. It is beyond all our understanding of justice. In fact, religious people, good people, and successful people have a very difficult time with this concept. In order to be reconciled with God, we must come to the place where we realize that there is nothing good in us. He accepts us on the basis of His love and His work.

Then we talked about this doctrine of predestination: On one hand the Bible emphasizes the complete sovereignty and control of God and yet on the other hand the Bible emphasizes our ability to choose freely and to make decisions that affect our

destinies. As far as our salvation is concerned, the Bible makes it clear that God elected us, He chose us for salvation.

I think it is good to wrestle with all of these concepts up to a certain point. There comes a time, when the Apostle Paul in these 4 verses, puts his reason, his logic, and pride aside ... affirms the truths of Scripture, throws up his hands ... and sings the doxology.

I don't know why God chose to save me. I don't deserve it. There is nothing special or good about me. I can't understand why He saved me. ... But I'm glad He did.

It is at this time that I must simply and humbly Praise God! I have a lot of friends who I think have overused this Praise God phrase; you know they go around all day saying, "Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!" Sometimes I think this just lessens the impact of true Doxology.

Let me give you an example. There was this preacher who owned a mule. The preacher got a call to a different church so he had to sell the mule. One of his congregation members bought the mule. Immediately he got on it, kicked it a few times and said, "Giddy up," but the mule didn't move.

The preacher informed the guy that this was a preacher's mule and in order to make him go, you had to say, "Praise the Lord!" and in order to make him stop, you had to say, "Amen!" So the guy kicked the mule and hollered, "Praise the Lord!" The mule took off running wild; it was all this guy could do to hang on for dear life. He noticed the mule was headed straight for a cliff so the guy pulled back on the reigns, and hollered, "Whoa Boy! Stop! Hold up!" Nothing worked. The mule kept heading for the cliff at full speed. Finally the guy remembered the command, pulled back on the reigns one more time and hollered, "Amen!"

Right at the edge of the cliff the mule stopped on the dime. The guy was sweating. He took off his hat, wiped his brow, and sighed with relief, "Praise the Lord!"

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Sometimes we sing the Doxology without knowing what we are singing for. We have all kinds of ideas about why we sing the Doxology, and because we sing it every week, and we may do it out of habit. I think today's passage will give us some insight into why and when we are to sing Doxology. John Stott said that good Doxology is dependent on good theology, and it is our contemplation based on good solid theology that leads to authentic doxology.

Chapters 1-11 of Romans have dealt with some deep theological concepts and starting with chapter 12, the Apostle Paul is going to deal with some very practical concepts. But before he goes on to the practical, he feels the need to pause after all that heavy theology and praise God. Here is the basis of good doxology and the basis for singing Praise to God: **WHEN WE COME TO THE PLACE WHERE WE REALIZE HOW HOLY AND RIGHTEOUS AND GREAT GOD IS, AND AT THE SAME TIME HOW WEAK AND PATHETIC AND UNDESERVING WE ARE, AND COME TO REALIZE THAT FOR NO GOOD REASON GOD CHOSE TO SAVE US AND MAKE US HIS CHILDREN, THE ONLY RESPONSE IS TO FALL ON OUR KNEES, THROW OUR HANDS IN THE AIR, AND PRAISE GOD.**

Hasn't that been the theme of Romans so far? We deserve hell, yet God gives us heaven. We deserve death, yet God gives us life. We deserve separation from God but God promises to never leave us nor forsake us. He says that nothing in this world or the

next can ever separate us from His love in Christ Jesus. We deserve nothing, yet God gives us everything.

I. HOW GREAT THOU ART! (Vs. 33a)  
**THE GOD WE WORSHIP IS A POWERFUL, MIGHTY, AND HOLY GOD.**

After thinking about the first half of verse 33, we want to stand up and sing, “How great Thou art!” In other words, the Apostle Paul has come to realize that: **THE GOD WE WORSHIP IS A POWERFUL, A MIGHTY, AND A HOLY GOD.** Now this sentence can be translated in two different ways. The NIV and the NASB both translate it something like this, “Oh, the depth of the riches of both the wisdom and knowledge of God.” In other words, Paul is talking about the wisdom and knowledge of God, how deep and rich they are.

A. THE DEPTH OF GOD’S RICHES

On the other hand, the NLT talks about the depth of God’s riches, His wisdom, and His knowledge. Do you see the difference? Here Paul is focused on the riches, the wisdom, and the knowledge. As you can see on your outlines, I have chosen the NLT’s translation and I will focus on the riches, the wisdom, and the knowledge.

Please don’t miss the first word in this verse, “Oh!” It is both a sigh, like, “Ohhhh,” and it is exclamatory like, “Oh!” Paul is standing in awe of these truths. For those of you who have ever gone hiking, it is like you trek up the paths of a mountain, when all of a sudden you come to a vista, and see this magnificent view. You are stunned. All you can say is, “Wow! Oh my!” Now add to that the word depth. Paul is saying, “Oh the depth of.” The word for depth could be used for something as unfathomable or deep as hell itself. Paul is saying that as he thinks about God’s riches,

wisdom, and knowledge, they are unfathomable. We can only understand them at a surface, superficial level.

First he talks about the depth of God's riches, but now certainly this can mean material riches. God owns the entire universe and everything that is in it. However, it is more likely that Paul is talking about the unfathomable depth of God's love, grace, and mercy. How deep is God's love? He sent His One and Only Son Jesus to die for you and me. How deep is God's grace? He gives us salvation and relationship even though we could never deserve this or earn it on our own. How deep is His mercy? Instead of punishing us for our sins, He laid the penalty of our sins on Jesus. I can't even begin to imagine how wonderful that is. I, like you, and like all sheep have gone astray. I had turned to my own way, rejected God's ways and rebelled against Him; yet when I was most hopeless, He came to me and offered me a deal, His Son for my life. How could God do that? Why did He do that? The Bible says He did it because of the depth of the riches of His love for me. I can talk about this concept with words, but I can't fully fathom the reality of it. I must simply accept it and sing the Doxology. Praise God!

#### B. THE DEPTH OF GOD'S WISDOM

Next, Paul talks about the depth of God's wisdom. God designed life and He knows how it is to be lived. For the Hebrews, wisdom was being able to apply God's laws to everyday situations and everyday life. Paul has given us a lot of theology in chapters 1-11 and now starting at chapter 12 he is going to tell us how it applies to everyday life. He is going to show us what living this theology in community looks like. But specifically Paul is contemplating the wisdom of God in how He was able to build a blended family of both Jews and Gentiles. For us, we are to look at our church and stand in awe that God has blended us into a family of people from many different cultures,

ethnicities, and different backgrounds. What are the chances of all of us getting together and getting along? It is beyond reason, yet we find ourselves here today as a blended family in Christ.

For Paul, the wisdom of God used the free will and disobedience of people to bring about His plan. The Jews were supposed to carry God's message to all nations, however, they never seemed to quite do that. In fact when the promised Messiah, Jesus came, they rejected Him. So God took that occasion to present the Gospel message to the Gentiles. But, there will come a time when the Jews turn back to God and embrace Jesus as the Messiah. God has accomplished His purpose and His purpose is that, in heaven someday, there will be people from every tongue, every tribe, and every nation together in heaven singing praises to Him. I stand in awe as I look at how close our church mirrors that image. All I can say is, "I don't know how we got here, but Praise God!"

### C. THE DEPTH OF GOD'S KNOWLEDGE

Then Paul goes on to talk about the depth of God's knowledge. Yes, God knows every fact and every single thing science can discover. Remember, God created it all. But in light of what we have studied, Paul is thinking about the fact that God is the only One who knows the beginning and the end, and in light of that, Paul is thinking about God's foreknowledge. God knew that He was going to save you and me. God predestined our salvation. God elected us, He called us, and He justified us. God is now sanctifying us and one day He will glorify us! Does that not just want to make you get up and say, "Praise the Lord!"?

Look we will never be able to understand the depths of God's love, mercy, or grace. It is unfathomable. We will never be able to understand His wisdom or His knowledge. It is enough to know that He understands and that He is wise. I will follow

and say, “Praise God!” **THE GOD WE WORSHIP IS A POWERFUL, MIGHTY, AND HOLY GOD.**

II. HOW SMALL ARE WE! (Vs. 33b-35)  
**IT IS NOTHING BUT PURE HUBRIS / ARROGANCE TO COME BEFORE GOD WITH ANY SENSE OF ENTITLEMENT. WE EXIST ONLY BY GOD’S LOVE. WE ARE SAVED ONLY BY GOD’S GRACE. WE STAND IN HIS PRESENCE ONLY BY GOD’S MERCY.**

Now if you look carefully at the second half of verse 33 through the end of verse 35, you can see how small we are in comparison to God: **IT IS NOTHING SHORT OF PURE HUBRIS / ARROGANCE TO COME BEFORE GOD WITH ANY SENSE OF ENTITLEMENT. WE EXIST ONLY BY GOD’S LOVE. WE ARE SAVED ONLY BY GOD’S GRACE. WE STAND IN HIS PRESENCE ONLY BY GOD’S MERCY.** You may recognize that as a summary of what we just talked about.

Now this is why I think the NLT is right in treating riches as a separate entity. If you look at the next couple of phrases, you will notice that Paul now deals with these three topics in reverse order, from a human perspective. This seems to be a hymn that Paul is composing. It is poetic. You will notice the parallelism and the theme of threes.

A. OUR LIMITED KNOWLEDGE (V. 33b)

In the second half of verse 33, the Apostle reminds us of our limited knowledge. God’s knowledge is unfathomable. In comparison, how puny are our minds? We don’t even have the mental capability to follow God’s logic and reason. Yet ... we think we are so smart. We as human beings think we are smart enough to sit in judgment of the Bible. I think of the hubris of modern day science. I have heard lectures and read books that claim to know how the universe started. Scientists will say, “We know ...” and then go on to give some hypothesis, only to be overturned by other scientist a few years later. It is amazing to me how apodictic these scientists speak. The point is that we are always

working from very limited data. We can never have the whole picture in our minds. I think science and medicine would do themselves a favor by being a little more humble in their approach to knowledge.

The trap is that the more educated we get, the more arrogant we become. We think that all of the answers to our problems can be solved with a little more science, a little more technology and a little more money.

We have become so smart that we have become stupid. We have become our own gods. Perhaps we should be humbled a little by Paul's comparison between God and us. God is grand and majestic while we are puny and pathetic. Our knowledge is limited.

#### B. OUR LIMITED WISDOM (V. 34)

Next, Paul reminds us in verse 34 that our wisdom is limited as well. Paul now quotes from Isaiah 40:13. He says, "Who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been His counselor?" Which of us does God come to for counsel? The answer is of course, "None of us." Yet, how many of us are really interested in going to God for wisdom? I think most of us think that we know what's best for our lives. Not only do we think we know what's best for our lives, we think we know what's best for our children's lives, our spouses' lives, and in general, we think we know what's best for everyone's life.

I think that for the most part, we go to God with our plan for what we think will make us happy. Then we go to God in prayer and ask God to bring that about. We are even smart enough to go and find Bible verses that back up our position; and when God doesn't go along with our plan, we become angry with God and disappointed.

The sad thing is that even when God opposes us and the bottom falls out of life, we are still unrepentant and think we are wise and know what's good for us.

The only way to find true wisdom in life is to humbly submit to God. We are to ask Him what His will is for our lives and submit to His leading and His timing. God is wise, not us.

### C. OUR LIMITED RESOURCES (V. 35)

And finally, verse 35 reminds us that we have limited resources. This quote could be taken from Job 41:3 where at first it looks as if this refers to material riches or favors. Listen to this question very carefully because I think it betrays some of our faulty thinking. Paul asks, “Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?” What answer does Paul expect? No one! No one has ever given something to God or done God a favor that God now owes them. Yet isn’t that the way we think? If I go to church on Sundays, if I obey the commands in the Bible, if I give money to church, do good and mind my own business, then things should go my way. I shouldn’t experience pain. I shouldn’t get sick. I shouldn’t experience financial setbacks. Life should go well for me.

Then when setbacks come my way, when I get sick, when relationships go bad, when I lose my job, I start to blame God. I say, “Why is this happening to me God?” Only we say it with a tone of, “I don’t deserve this God. You are unfair.” Oops, here it is again, that sense of entitlement. Remember, it is not my goodness, or my righteousness, or my wisdom, or my knowledge that gets me into heaven. In fact these things separate me from God. It is God’s love, God’s mercy, God’s grace, God’s wisdom and knowledge that devised a plan to save me. There is nothing good or deserving in me. I stand bankrupt before God. Here is the truth: **IT IS NOTHING SHORT OF PURE HUBRIS / ARROGANCE TO COME BEFORE GOD WITH ANY SENSE OF ENTITLEMENT. WE EXIST ONLY BY GOD’S LOVE. WE ARE SAVED ONLY**

**BY GOD’S GRACE. WE STAND IN HIS PRESENCE ONLY BY GOD’S MERCY.**

When we come to understand how great God is, how pathetic we are, and the intricate plan God worked out so we could be reconciled with Him, we are now in a place to sing Doxology.

**III. PRAISE GOD FROM WHOM ALL BLESSINGS FLOW (Vs. 36)  
GOD IS TRULY THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA. HE IS THE BEGINNING AND THE END OF ALL THAT IS. AND WE ARE HIS CHILDREN. THERE IS NOTHING TO EXPLAIN OR UNDERSTAND. WE ARE SIMPLY TO PRAISE GOD FROM WHOM ALL BLESSINGS FLOW.**

We are now ready to sing with Paul in verse 36, “Praise God from whom all blessings flow!” **GOD IS TRULY THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA. HE IS THE BEGINNING AND THE END OF ALL THAT IS. AND WE ARE HIS CHILDREN. THERE IS NOTHING TO EXPLAIN OR UNDERSTAND. WE ARE TO PRAISE GOD FROM WHOM ALL BLESSINGS FLOW.**

Good Doxology is based on a good theological understanding of who God is, who we are, and the fact that He has chosen us for no good reason to be His children. Doxology is all about God.

**A. HE IS CREATOR**

Paul starts out, “For from Him.” God is the creator. Everything that exists has its origin in God. Through Jesus all things were created. He is the Alpha.

**B. HE IS SUSTAINER**

Paul continues, “And through Him.” God is the sustainer. God sustains the universe. Not only did God create us, but when we fell into sin and rebellion, Jesus came to redeem us. God continues to hold all things together.

**C. HE IS THE PURPOSE AND FULFILLMENT OF ALL**

And Paul ends with, “and into Him.” God is the purpose and fulfillment of all. God knows the end, the purpose of all things. God is Omega. God knows the final outcome of everything. All things, all history, each one of us is progressing to our final destinies which God has planned out in advance for us.

This is why Paul could say with such confidence that, “God works all things together for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purposes.”

That’s why Paul could say, “I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither present things or things to come, not powers, not height nor depth, or any created thing will ever be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” **GOD IS TRULY THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA. HE IS THE BEGINNING AND THE END OF ALL THAT IS. AND WE ARE HIS CHILDREN. THERE IS NOTHING TO EXPLAIN OR UNDERSTAND. WE ARE TO PRAISE GOD FROM WHOM ALL BLESSINGS FLOW.**

This is important; Paul has made it clear which God He is going to praise, he is praising the God of the Bible. Paul has spent 11 chapters describing the God we worship with careful theology. When he thinks about this God and the relationship this God has chosen to have with human beings, Paul breaks out into Doxology by saying, “To HIM, ... be the glory forever, Amen.” That is what Doxology is all about: **WHEN WE COME TO THE PLACE WHERE WE REALIZE HOW HOLY AND RIGHTEOUS AND GREAT GOD IS, AND AT THE SAME TIME HOW WEAK AND PATHETIC AND UNDESERVING WE ARE, AND COME TO REALIZE THAT FOR NO GOOD REASON GOD CHOSE TO SAVE US AND MAKE US HIS CHILDREN, THE ONLY RESPONSE IS TO FALL ON OUR KNEES,**

**THROW OUR HANDS IN THE AIR, AND PRAISE GOD.** Doxology is all about our response to the depth of God's riches, His wisdom, and His knowledge.

Listen to this story Chuck Colson tells in his book Kingdoms in Conflict where Chuck writes,

**“Easter weekend at Walla Walla ended with a fitting post-script, yet another sign of the Kingdom at work. Fred, a young man with a heroin habit and a robbery record, had done time at Walla Walla. The family of one of his robbery victims had prayed for him for years, visited him in prison, and eventually led him to Christ. During a subsequent parole hearing, Fred confessed to additional crimes for which he had not been convicted, explaining to the startled parole board that as a Christian, he felt he could not do otherwise. Fred's original conviction was overturned; he was released from prison and began to rebuild his life. He became active in a local church and got involved in a Christian ex-prisoner fellowship while awaiting his retrial.**

**As it happened, Fred's case was scheduled to be heard on Easter Monday. The Seattle Superior Court was filled with friends, family, and supporters who had already testified on his behalf. Fred had freely confessed his guilt; and now he told Judge Francis Holman that he was prepared to accept whatever punishment the judge deemed appropriate. ‘For in any event,’ said Fred, ‘I am ready to go back to prison and serve Jesus Christ in there.’**

**The judge leaned back in his tall leather chair and ticked off a long list of possible sentences. There was an awkward, drawn-out silence.**

**Then Judge Holman pounded his gavel. Ten years on each count of robbery --- suspended. Fred would be free on probation, providing he would continue in a drug-treatment program and make restitution to his victims at 150 percent of their loss, or \$2,200. He looked down at Fred again, his face still solemn: ‘We send you on your way with best wishes.’**

**For a moment no one moved. Then Fred's pastor jumped to his feet and gestured to the packed courtroom. ‘Let's sing it!’ he shouted.**

**A reporter for the Seattle Times captured what came next: ‘Everyone stood up, little old ladies in spring dresses, ex-cons, girls in jeans, men in business suits, a biker with his motorcycle jacket and helmet, prison guards – and they began to sing: ‘Praise God from whom all blessings flow ...’”**

My friends, Brothers and sisters in Christ; that's what Doxology is about. Think about God's grand and mysterious plan of salvation ... and how He was gracious enough to include you and me in it.