

**Title: Don't Unscrew the Inscrutable - Instead, Praise the Lord!**

**Text: Romans 11:28–36**

**Introduction**

[Dr. Bookman's quote...](#)

We are coming to a close of Paul's theology in the book of Romans.

Paul lands the plane in the enigmatic excursus of chapters 9-11!

We have dealt with some pretty heady topics in these chapters.

Election, Church, Israel, Etc...

And the one thing we have really come to understand is this. We cannot put our God in a box to accommodate our finite understanding.

That's what Calvinists do. That's what Arminians do. That's what Molenists do.

We all do this. And it calls for real humility to understand that while God has certainly revealed himself to us, we will NEVER be able to fully understand our God!

And this leads to the main idea this morning.

Why does God do what He does? Why does He allow what He allows?

(Krystal K.) Why? Why? Why?

**1 Corinthians 2:16 (ESV)**

*<sup>16</sup>"For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.*

And having the mind of Christ, we can see the ugliness of this life and understand that God is weaving together something beautiful for us to enjoy for ever and ever.

And because of this...

**Main Idea: God's Ways Should Always Lead to Praise !**

Why do we need to be careful about this?

Because, if we are not, we might become bitter when we don't fully understand what God is doing!

God can be trusted to be a God of mercy who desires to reach the lost with the transformational gospel of Jesus Christ.

There are three ideas in these verses that will help you understand why we should praise in light of God's inscrutable ways!

## 1. God's Ways Are Full of Mercy (vs. 28-32)

God's ways are full of mercy, and so is this passage. Look at how many times Paul uses the phrase...

### **Romans 11:28-32 ESV**

*As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy. For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.*

Four times Paul uses the term, **Mercy**.

In this case, the sense of mercy is to have pity.

Let's understand something clearly here. Don't go down the road in your head about God being fair - God is not fair, and you do not want Him to be. God is merciful, but not fair. If He were fair, you and I, all of us, would be burning in Hell right now. Thank God He isn't fair but that He is gracious and full of mercy, or pity for those who have rebelled against Him.

Verses 28-32 wrap up Paul's understanding of God's relationship with both Jews and Gentiles.

God's Chosen People are enemies of the beautiful message of the gospel.

What is the gospel? It is the Good News that Jesus Christ's sinless life, crucifixion on the cross, His death, and resurrection on the third day, satisfies God's wrath/anger against you. Why is God angry at you? For breaking His law over and over and over.

Jesus came to do what no one can do - what the Jews thought they could do - that is, live up to God's law.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of the Jewish people reject Jesus from the time He walked on this earth to this very day!

### **Romans 11:28 ESV**

*<sup>28</sup> As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers.*

Do you see what this verse says? They, the Jews are enemies of the gospel - FOR YOUR SAKE. For the sake of the church at Rome (comprised of Jews and non-Jews that love Jesus).

And for the sake of this church.

But this presents a problem. God promised to save and care for his people. Yet his people are enemies to the message of the gospel - the very point of God's redemptive plan for them and all people.

The Jews hate the message and killed the messenger - Jesus.

But Jesus was more than a messenger. Jesus is the Savior.

**Acts 3:11–23 ESV**

*<sup>11</sup> While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's. <sup>12</sup> And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? <sup>13</sup> The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. <sup>14</sup> But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, <sup>15</sup> and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. <sup>16</sup> And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all. <sup>17</sup> "And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. <sup>18</sup> But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. <sup>19</sup> Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, <sup>20</sup> that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, <sup>21</sup> whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. <sup>22</sup> Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. <sup>23</sup> And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.'*

And regardless of their hatred of the message and the God of the message, God will still, have mercy on them. Why?

Because God gave His word to their forefathers Abraham, Issac, and Jacob.

God made a one-sided deal or covenant with them, in particular with Abraham.

**Genesis 12:1–3 ESV**

*<sup>1</sup> Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

*The Abrahamic Covenant included the promise of land (Genesis 12:1). It was a specific land, an actual property, with dimensions specified in Genesis 15:18–21. In Genesis 13:15, God gives Abraham all the land that he can see, and the gift is declared to be "forever." God was not going to renege on His promise. The territory given as part of the Abrahamic Covenant is expanded in Deuteronomy 30:1–10, often called the Palestinian Covenant. - <https://www.gotquestions.org/Abrahamic-covenant.html>*

God chose Israel, called Israel, and blessed Israel.

And look at the beautiful promise in verse 29...

**Romans 11:29 ESV**

*<sup>29</sup> For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.*

Even though Israel was a disobedient people, God has not rejected them!

**1 Samuel 12:22 ESV**

*<sup>22</sup> For the LORD will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you a people for himself.*

**Isaiah 49:15 ESV**

*<sup>15</sup> "Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.*

*God selected "an entire nation to receive His special calling, covenant, and blessing and to serves as His witness nation." - MSB*

God is full of mercy. He extended mercy to the gentiles (you and me) and He extends mercy to the Jews as well.

**Romans 11:31–32 ESV**

*<sup>31</sup> so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy. <sup>32</sup> For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.*

God is FULL of mercy.

Need I remind you of what you deserve from God?

And yet God doesn't vent His full wrath on you when you sin.

God has had an enormous amount of pity on you. He is so patient and kind. He does not act toward us in the way we deserve...

**Romans 2:4 ESV**

*<sup>4</sup> Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?*

*"That God is rich in mercy means that your regions of deepest shame and regret are not hotels through which divine mercy passes but homes in which divine mercy abides. It means the things about you that make you cringe most, make him hug hardest. It means his mercy is not calculating and cautious, like ours. It is unrestrained, flood-like, sweeping, magnanimous. It means our haunting shame is not a problem for him, but the very thing he loves most to work with. It means our sins do not cause his love to take a hit. Our sins cause his love to surge forward all the more. It means on that day when we stand before him, quietly, unhurriedly, we will weep with relief, shocked at how impoverished a view of his mercy-rich heart we had."*

— **Dane C. Ortlund, Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers**

This is our Jesus! Have you turned to Him? Why wouldn't you?

**Illustration - Jesus on the Cross - "Father forgive them..."**

**Luke 23:33–34 ESV**

*<sup>33</sup> And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. <sup>34</sup> And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments.*

God has mercy on the Jews, gentiles, and will, in the future, once again have mercy on the Israelites as a nation as he lifts his judicial hardening from them.

God is not fair - but He is full of Mercy!

In your personal prayer time, take time to praise Him for His mercy.

**Review** - God's Ways Should Always Lead to Praise!

1. God's Ways Are Full of Mercy

**2. God's Ways Are His and His Alone (vs. 33-35)**

Sometimes as Christians, we are under the delusion that God owes us an explanation of His ways.

Allow me to be clear - HE DOES NOT!

There is no other being like our God!

**Romans 11:33–35 ESV**

*Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" God's wisdom is beyond compare.*

**Psalms 104:24 ESV**

*<sup>24</sup> O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.*

God's knowledge is supreme!

**1 Samuel 2:3 ESV**

*<sup>3</sup> Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.*

**Psalms 147:5 ESV**

*<sup>5</sup> Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.*

God's Judgments - His purposes or his decrees are beyond our finite understanding.

**Deuteronomy 29:29 ESV**

*<sup>29</sup> "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.*

His ways are Inscrutable.

ἀνεξιχνίαστος (*anexichniastos*) - inscrutable, incomprehensible - The Bible Knowledge Commentary (11:33–36)

*anexichniastoi* - “incapable of being traced by footprints.”

Two places in the NT. Here and [Eph 3:8](#)

**Ephesians 3:8 ESV**

*<sup>8</sup> To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,*

Paul then quotes two Old Testament writers. In verse 34, he quotes [Isaiah 40:13](#)

**Romans 11:34 ESV**

*<sup>34</sup> “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?”*

And then a free quotation from [Job 41:11](#)

**Romans 11:35 ESV**

*<sup>35</sup> “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?”*

**Job 41:11 ESV**

*<sup>11</sup> Who has first given to me, that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine.*

Job is the prime illustration of God not having to explain himself to anyone...

**Job 38:1–12 NLT**

*<sup>1</sup> Then the LORD answered Job from the whirlwind: <sup>2</sup> “Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorant words? <sup>3</sup> Brace yourself like a man, because I have some questions for you, and you must answer them. <sup>4</sup> “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if you know so much. <sup>5</sup> Who determined its dimensions and stretched out the surveying line? <sup>6</sup> What supports its foundations, and who laid its cornerstone <sup>7</sup> as the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy? <sup>8</sup> “Who kept the sea inside its boundaries as it burst from the womb, <sup>9</sup> and as I clothed it with clouds and wrapped it in thick darkness? <sup>10</sup> For I locked it behind barred gates, limiting its shores. <sup>11</sup> I said, ‘This far and no farther will you come. Here your proud waves must stop!’ <sup>12</sup> “Have you ever commanded the morning to appear and caused the dawn to rise in the east?”*

God goes on for two chapters here and then two more asking Job to explain this life and world to Him.

Okay, so what do you think when you read these verses in Romans with me? Do you feel like our God is a God that needs to explain Himself to you?

No! In fact, the reality is God can do with His creation, which includes you, whatever He wants, whenever He wants, however He wants!

It is only because He is gracious and merciful.

God needs not to explain Himself to anyone. Yet God has revealed Himself to His creation not to explain himself but to offer eternal life through Christ!

Do you rest in God's plan for you and His creation, or do you demand for God to answer your questions and demands? Where is your heart concerning God?

**Review** - God's Ways Should Always Lead to Praise!

1. God's Ways Are Full of Mercy
2. God's Ways Are His and His Alone

**3. God's Ways Will Lead His People To a Symphony of Praise (vs. 36)**

**Romans 11:36 ESV**

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

We have traveled through some of the most difficult-to-understand chapters in the New Testament.

We have discussed the church, Israel, justification, sanctification, election, and adoption, of God's people.

And as we have discovered, there is precious little we have to do with salvation.

**Psalm 3:8 ESV**

*<sup>8</sup> Salvation belongs to the LORD; your blessing be on your people! Selah*

**Psalm 62:1 ESV**

*<sup>1</sup> For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation.*

You've heard the old hymn written by Priscilla j. Owens

**Jesus Saves**

*We have heard the joyful sound:  
Jesus saves! Jesus saves!  
Spread the tidings all around:  
Jesus saves! Jesus saves!  
Bear the news to ev'ry land,  
Climb the steeps and cross the waves;  
Onward! 'tis our Lord's command;  
Jesus saves! Jesus saves!*

As you've heard me say many times through these chapters, "The only thing you bring to your salvation is the SIN that made it necessary." (This is a quote from Jonathan Edwards.)

And so, with this thought in mind, look back at the last three verses in this chapter (with an emphasis on the last one...)

**Romans 11:34–36 ESV**

*<sup>34</sup> “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” <sup>35</sup> “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” <sup>36</sup> **For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.***

Isn't verse 36 an amazing recognition of who God truly is?

It is a doxological commemoration of the God of all creation, who is the only One worthy of our praise!

Let's break it down...

**“From Him”** - God is the SOURCE of all things!

**“Through Him”** - God is the AGENCY by which all things come into existence!

**“To Him”** - God is the GOAL for all things that exist!

**“be glory forever.”** - And what is the goal of all creation? To bring Him glory!

**“Amen”** - “Let it be so,” “Truly”

These phrases should do one thing for us! Cause us to praise HIM!

*Have you ever been to a symphony?*

Friends! God's ways are so amazing, so breathtaking, so beautiful in their simplicity and their complexity that the only logical conclusion is raw, unmitigated praise! A Symphony of praise is all our God deserves.

**Revelation 7:9–12 ESV**

*<sup>9</sup> After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, <sup>10</sup> and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” <sup>11</sup> And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, <sup>12</sup> saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”*

When you start to realize that the Christian life is more about God and less about you, praise for the Lord makes more and more sense.

So, how can you grow in your praise?

Well, remember these ideas...

**Review** - God's Ways Should Always Lead to Praise!

1. God's Ways Are Full of Mercy
2. God's Ways Are His and His Alone
3. God's Ways Will Lead His People To a Symphony of Praise

**Conclusion**

**Practical Ways to Grow in Praise Rooted in Israel...**

**1. Towdah (Exodus 27:6-7, Romans 12:1)**

"Sacrifice;" expressed in Mosaic Law **offerings**, Jesus' example of being a "living sacrifice" to God.

**2. Yadah (Exodus 17:11, 1 Timothy 2:8)**

"Lifting of hands;" reaching out to God, declaring our dependence on Him, and proclaiming our love for our Father.

**3. Barak/Barouch (Exodus 34:8, Psalm 5:7)**

"Bowling;" giving reverence to God in recognition of His holiness and sovereignty over everything that lives.

**4. Shabach (Psalm 47:1, Isaiah 12:6)**

"Shout;" to lift up your voice and praise God with all of one's might.

**5. Zama (Psalm 150:3-5, Ephesians 5:19)**

"Sing/play instruments;" playing music to express joy in God's presence.

**6. Halal (2 Samuel 6:14, Psalm 149:3)**

"Celebrate/boast/rave;" **root word for "hallelujah,"** to express praise for God through physical motion.

**7. Tehillah (Psalm 22:25, Isaiah 61:1-3)**

"Sing/dance/praise;" to use many ways to praise God (all of the above!)

Life doesn't always make sense. Sometimes it is hard, and sometimes it is easy.

Oftentimes it is just beyond our comprehension.

What should we do?

**Don't Unscrew the Inscrutable - Instead, Praise the Lord!**

**Psalm 150 ESV**

*<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens! <sup>2</sup> Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness! <sup>3</sup> Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! <sup>4</sup> Praise him with tambourine and dance;*

*praise him with strings and pipe! <sup>5</sup> Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! <sup>6</sup> Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!*

### **Connection Group Reflection Questions**

1. How have you experienced God's mercy recently?
2. What has his mercy taught you about Him and you?
3. Can you rest in the fact that God's ways are his and his alone? How do you accomplish this rest?
4. How well do you praise the Lord? Out of the seven Hebrew words for praise, which one do you resonate with? Which one is the most challenging for you?
5. Spend time praising God together!