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**Series: Romans: The Just Shall Live by Faith**  
**Message: All Glory to God**

**Transcribed Message**  
**May 29, 2022**  
**Romans 11:34-36**

When you think of the Great Reformation, your mind goes back to that historic event in 1517 in Wittenberg, Germany, when we think of Martin Luther. We think of him taking those 95 theses and nailing them to the door. We think of all that unfolded and all that has happened. We think of the five solas. The Latin word for alone that go along with the great Reformation. Scripture alone. Christ alone. Faith alone. And of course, we think in terms of the glory to God alone. That culminates all of that, right? To the glory of God alone. The capstone of the Reformation. I think you could argue that it is the capstone of all of Scripture. Over all of Scripture, there is this banner that might very well read to the glory of God alone. My prayer would be that it would be the capstone of Covenant Community Church that everything that happens in this place – from this gathering, to sports camp, ELL, to every ministry that we do – that it would fly under the banner to God alone be the glory. That is what we would want to be and that is who we are called to be. It was Charles Spurgeon who said it so well, “The highest science, the loftiest speculation, and the mightiest philosophy which can ever engage the attention of the child of God is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doing, and the existence of the great God...” and then he ended with this: “...whom we call our Father.” Isn’t that great? Whom we get to call our father. All of this in praise of His glory.

Our final study in Romans chapters 1 through 11 this morning we come to the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter and to verses 34 to 36. We simply want to stand in awe of God this morning who designs, who controls, who guides all of history in order that He can put on full display for everybody to see His greatness and His glory. Obviously being that we’re at this point, we have to start with a review because this is kind of like the final wrap-up for a while. It’s a good time to remind ourselves what we have said as we’ve gone through this amazing theological treatise to this point that we are all theologians. We’ve said that before. We’re all theologians. That’s the calling. Whether we’re a good

theologian or a bad theologian, we'll let that be decided another time. But the point is we're all theologians. If we're all theologians, the reality is we're all worshipers because theology, a right theology, always leads to worship. And worship of course is an expression of our theology. It is our response to this great and glorious God.

Just think of how a Sunday morning unfolds here at Covenant. We begin with a time that is dedicated to music in worship and praise of God. Just the songs we sang this morning, every one of them, lifts up the name of God. Every one of them is about praise and glory going to God. And then we transition in to prayer and into the Word. The Word that we hear hopefully compels us and motivates us. The theology of God's Word calls us to worship again. It is a beautiful cycle that God has put before us in this matter of theology leading to worship and worship based on our theology.

Secondly, we're to be captivated by God. If we're worshipers, then we're to be captivated by God. This isn't the only time that the apostle breaks into a doxology. He does it in Ephesians. You're familiar enough with Paul's writings to know that not always, but especially in Romans and Ephesians, he begins each of those books with an extended time of laying out Bible doctrine and truth. And then he moves in the second half, or the case of Romans in chapters 12 through 16, into the practical things. That's what he does in Ephesians. He comes to the end of the third chapter and he has laid out all these amazing truths. He says, "Now to Him who is able to do so far more abundantly than all that we ask or think according to the power at work within us. To Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations for ever and ever, amen." We don't study the Bible to fill our head with more facts. We don't study the Bible so that when we're sitting in a small group we can show somebody that we know more than they do about the Bible. That's pernicious. That's wrong. But that's not why we study the Bible. We study the Bible so that we are captivated by the truth of God's Word. We're captivated by God Himself that we are more compelled than ever to worship Him and to praise Him. That's why we give ourselves to the study of Scripture.

And then the last thing that we note is we're in one of the great transitions in all of the Bible. When we're in Romans 11:33 to 36, this is one of the great transitional sections in all of Scripture. As we've noted repeatedly, chapters 1 through 11 are what we would call orthodoxy. They're Paul putting forward sound doctrine. This whole matter

of the gospel and of salvation. Eleven chapters of putting this amazing theme before us. Then when you get to chapter 12 and all the way to chapter 16 it's orthopraxy. it's stepping into the practical application of this truth. Orthodoxy is always to lead to orthopraxy. It is what Paul does here. He takes us in this great transition and he basically shows us the path into the practical expression and outworking of these truths. Our first response to chapters 1 through 11 is to shout amen. I didn't even have to say it twice. I had thought: make a note. You may have to say this twice. How can you do anything other than say a glorious amen to everything that Paul has said to this point?

So let's close out these verses in this chapter by looking at how great is our God. We looked last week at verse 33 and we saw those three declarations: the riches of God, the wisdom of God, the knowledge of God. Now from those three declarations Paul is going to then transition to three questions. Three questions in verses 34 and 35. Let me ask you a question. What kind of questions do you think Paul is going to ask in these two verses? Very good. Rhetorical. Do you think Paul might ask some more rhetorical questions? Yes, I think he might. That's what he does. Let's look at three rhetorical questions. As I go through these, I look back at verse 33 and it seems to me in reverse order he just deals with each of these three declarations. Look at that.

This is the first one. Who has known the mind of the Lord? He takes us back. What an audacious thought. Who has known the mind of the Lord? It takes us right back to verse 33 where Paul said, "O, the depths of the knowledge of God." Who has known the mind of the Lord? The answer to this rhetorical question absolutely has to be nobody. Nobody has known the mind of the Lord. No one has known the mind of the Lord. It's Isaiah 55. We know these verses: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." That is Isaiah 55.

What Paul does in Romans 11:34 and 35 in asking these questions is he does go back to inferences and references in Isaiah 40. In Isaiah 40, Isaiah is speaking to the two southern tribes of Israel. The 10 northern tribes have already been carried off into captivity to Assyria. Now Isaiah is speaking to the two southern tribes and he is warning them that because of their rejection of God and of His Word and of His truth they are

soon going to be carried off into Babylon. They too are going to experience an exile under God's discipline. That's what he refers to here when he asks this question: who has known the mind of the Lord? Isaiah raises that in Isaiah 40. What Paul does as he goes back to that 40<sup>th</sup> chapter in verse 17 is to speak a word of hope and to speak a word of comfort in the midst of this coming and impending discipline. Paul reminds them of this in verse 17. "All the nations are as nothing before Him. They are accounted by Him as less than nothing and emptiness. To whom then will you liken God or what likeness will compare with Him?" Nobody. Nothing. There isn't anything that you could say that would be adequate in answering this question. Who has known the mind of the Lord?

The truth of the matter is we don't know what God knows, right? We don't know what God knows. We sometimes say to each other I know what you're thinking. I know why you did that. Do we? If you're really good at bluffing, maybe you can convince somebody that you know what they're thinking, but most of the time we don't know. We don't have any idea what somebody else is thinking. We don't have any idea what the motivation for their actions or their words are. That's exactly the point here. We don't know. We don't know what each other is thinking. How in the world could we possibly audaciously think that we could know the mind of God?

One thing that we can do, one thing that we must do, when God speaks, we must speak. When God says something, we must say what He has said. That is for sure. That is the self-revelation that God has given to us. When God says "thus saith the Lord" when we're reading His Word, and we understand the wisdom and the knowledge and the truth of God that we can proclaim with confidence. Beyond that, Paul is saying, who has known the mind of the Lord. Humble yourself before God.

The second question that he asks is also a rhetorical one. Who has been His counselor? Who has been His counselor? The word for "counselor" here is the word fellow advisor. Fellow advisor. Okay, if it was audacious to think that you would know the thoughts of God, it's equally audacious to think that you are His fellow counselor, right? You're His counselor? Again, Paul takes us back to that Isaiah passage, that 40<sup>th</sup> chapter. There this time in verse 13 he says, "Who has measured the Spirit of the Lord? Or what man shows Him his counsel? Who did He consult and who made Him

understand? Who taught Him the path of justice and taught Him knowledge and showed Him the way of understanding.” The imagery of Isaiah 40 is the royal court. In Isaiah's mind as he paints this picture, who is the counselor to the king? That is what he wants us to envision. He wants us to envision a king on the throne. Who surrounds the king? Administers. His counselors. His advisors. What is true of every king? What is true of every president? What is true of every leader at the very top? They're always vulnerable to the council around them. They're always vulnerable to the council around them. They can't possibly know everything. They can't possibly have a handle on everything so they're relying on their counselors. They're relying on those who give them advice.

A perfect picture of this is in the Old Testament. Remember when Absalom rebelled against David and declared himself to be the king. David's counselor was a man named Ahithophel who switched sides and decided Absalom was the guy to go with. I'm switching over to be Absalom's advisor. Hushei was also an advisor. David asked him to stay in the royal court and hopefully give any counter advice to that which Ahithophel gave to Absalom. You remember how that story unfolded as they came together to counsel the king. Ahithophel said Absalom, what you need to do today is you need to get your army together and you need to chase after your father David, and you need to overtake him and you need to crush them because he's vulnerable right now. He's discouraged. He's running from Jerusalem. Frankly, from a human perspective, that would be great counsel. But Hushei remember stepped forward and said no, don't, Absalom. Don't do that. Your father is a mighty warrior. Your father is a great King. Your father is right now preparing a trap for you and your men to come and fall into. Of course, that wasn't the case at all. But it was a picture of a king vulnerable to the advice and counsel of those around him. That's what Paul is speaking of here. Human leaders are limited. God has no advisors.

God doesn't have an office close by His Oval Office. You want to know who is powerful in Washington DC? Just take a quick tour through the West Wing and see who has an office closest to the Oval Office, who gets the office closest to the president. If you're over in the executive building, you're out of the loop. But if you're in the West Wing and even if you've got a cubbyhole next to the Oval Office you're in a place of power. You're in a place of influence. God doesn't have anybody around Him like that.

Just envision that. There isn't anybody in heaven saying that was my idea. I suggested that to God and He thought it was a good idea so He did it. No, that is silly. Nobody, Paul says, gives counsel to God.

As a part of that, of course we're in no position to tell God anything, are we? We're in no position to tell God anything but that doesn't mean we don't try. That doesn't mean we don't do that occasionally. You may look at something in your life right now this morning and you might say, God, I've got a better plan than the one that seems to be unfolding in my life right now. I've got a better idea for how this should work out. This looks like a mistake. Whatever that might be that is going on in your life right now. God, I think I could offer a suggestion on how this could be better. We have to ask ourselves ... really? The line forms over here for those who think they're capable of giving counsel to God. Who do you suppose is going to get in that line? I hope nobody.

The third question: who has given a gift? Who has given a gift? Here Paul quotes from Job. He goes to Job 35 and Job 41 and remember last week from that 33<sup>rd</sup> verse when we looked at the depth of the riches of God. We said He made it all. He created it all. It's all His, right? This one is the counter to that one. Who has given Him a gift? Paul's point is simply this. God's self-sufficiency, God's absolute riches are closely related to His wisdom and His knowledge. He needs absolutely nothing. He needs nothing. God is a debtor to no one. There's nothing that we can do to obligate God back to us. There's nothing we can do to obligate God to do something for us.

When we hear this false teaching of “you do this for God and He's obligated to do this back for you”, you give a certain amount of money or you sow some seeds and God is just going to explode your bank account because He's obligated to do that. No, He's not. That again is as offensive to God as it is to try to earn your salvation. You can't obligate yourself to God. You can't cause God to be indebted to you. He is giving all that He is giving by His grace. What could we possibly give Him that He hasn't already given us? Every good and every perfect gift comes down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variable neither shadow of turning. Everything that we have He's already given to us.

When I look at these three questions back over against these three declarations, to me I just want to write over all of this – this is the sovereignty of God. This is a picture

of the sovereignty of God. God is so big and I am so small. God is so big and I am so small.

When Paul has worked his way through these three rhetorical questions, he then comes to three reasons to praise. That's the beginning of verse 36. In that one statement "from Him and through Him and to Him are all things." It is like Paul can't contain himself any longer. He gets to this point and this is one of the most comprehensive statements I would suggest to you in all of Scripture in terms of its breadth, its height, its width, its depth. For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. I think this is rightly what we would call a Christian worldview. This is a Christian worldview. You live your life according to that statement and you are living out truly a Christian worldview. In a Christian worldview, we're basically continually dethroning man, dethroning ourselves, and we're continually elevating God. In every circumstance of our life, every walk of our every area of our life. To Him. Through Him. For Him. This is what life is to be measured by. Right here it is.

Here is a trivia question. Who could possibly tell me the title of the last song the Beatles recorded? Some of you are like who? No, not the Who. The Beatles. Does anybody know the title of the last song the Beatles recorded? It written by George Harrison? You know what it was? "I, Me, Mine." That was their last song. It was Harrison taking a jab at the whole group. "I, Me, Mine". The exact opposite of what Paul says here. Here's Paul's statement.

It all centers around three little prepositions. That's what I love about this. One of the most comprehensive statements in all of Scripture and it all hinges on three little prepositions which just underscores the greatness of God. He can just show us all that there is to see about Him in that way, defining who He is in three statements. For all things are from Him. That's talking about origin. It is talking about the source. If we ask where did all of this stuff come from? Well, it came from God. He is the creator. In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. There was nothing made without Him. If He didn't make it, there was nothing. Without Him, there was nothing made that was made. There was nothing. Evolutionary materialists or creationists, there has to be a beginning. Matter is not eternal. There has to be a beginning point. the smartest people in the world that are

trying to put forward a picture of where this came from. Some of the smartest people in the world, I guess I should say, trying to give us a picture of where this world came from are faced with something coming out of nothing. In their minds, they're willing to so compromise their intellect if they come up with an explanation for how that's possible. Nothing becomes something. God answers that though, doesn't He? He tells us it's all from Him. He's the originator of it all. He is the source. It's through Him. He is the sustainer. He's the agent. If God were to remove for one second His providential sovereign hand over our world, we would devolve quickly into utter chaos. There isn't one of the tiniest atoms, the tiniest particle in our world that isn't under His control and isn't under His direction. He sustains it all.

And then to Him. That's purpose and goal. Notice it is all things. It is all things. Nothing is left out of this. I think of John in Revelation chapter 4. "The 24 elders fell down before Him who is seated on the throne and they worship Him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne saying 'Worthy are You, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things and by Your will they existed and were created.'"

All of that, all of that points then to this one climactic goal at the end of verse 36 "for from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever, amen." My friends, I would suggest to you that the mysteries of God, the mysteries of God will lead us into one of two directions. You will say to these mysteries and to these things that we cannot comprehend and fully understand, you will say I don't understand. God, I demand that You explain Yourself, and you become a skeptic. You step away from the faith. Or, you bow the knee to the knowledge of God who is great, who is too vast, who is too infinite to ever comprehend in all of His ways and all of His doings. This is why human pride is so offensive in the face of God's sovereignty. In our arrogance, we step out of our role and we step into God's.

Understand the Hebrew word here in the Old Testament for glory. *Doxa* here in the New Testament. But in the Old Testament *kavod*. It is a word that speaks of something that is heavy. It speaks to something that is weighty. It speaks to us of something that is mighty. That's the picture that Paul wants us to see here. For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be greatness, heaviness. We



give God the weight that He deserves. God is truly big and we are comparably so very small. We stand in awe of the God who designs and controls history and displays for us His name and His glory in all of that. Paul says now that you've finished Romans 1 through 11, you are ready to worship. Now you are ready to go from orthodoxy to orthopraxy. You're ready to step into how it is that you present your body as a living sacrifice wholly acceptable unto God. Now we understand why it's the most reasonable thing that we could possibly do in light of all that he has said.

What do we take away this morning? Our privilege as Christ followers is not only to express praise to God at every opportunity, but it is to show it by how we live our lives. That's what Paul presses into next. Do it all to the praise of His glory. Our great God knows all things perfectly. Our great God is going to judge all things thoroughly. Our great God is going to reign forever sovereignly. What more can we do but bow the knee in worship and gratitude and praise?

But of course, to be able to truly do that, we have to step out of a works-oriented view of salvation that would suggest there's something that I can do to commend myself to God. I have to step into the grace and the mercy that God has provided in His Son Jesus. I have to lay aside any thought that God needs something from me and realize that God has given me everything that I need. He has done so through what Jesus has done for us on the cross. If you want to be a true worshiper of God with us and you've never trusted Jesus as your Savior, this morning I would call out to you, invite you, implore you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and Him alone and you too will be given the gift of eternal life.

Let's pray. Gracious Father, we are so, so, very grateful. Lord, we just are in awe of what your Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul has given us in these 11 chapters of Romans culminating in this amazing expression. Father, that we would live our lives to the praise of Your glory. That we would live our lives every day understanding how great You are and truly how small we are. That we would cast every care upon You, knowing that You care for us. Father, I pray even now in these closing moments that if there is someone here, someone that is listening and watching, that has never put their trust in Jesus as their own personal Savior for the forgiveness of their sins, I pray that You would give them that grace to step by faith into that truth, to let go of any earthly

efforts that they are putting forward and trust in Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone, to the glory of God alone. We ask in Jesus's name, amen.