

When Theology Births Doxology
(When the Study of God Initiates Praise of God)
Tom Rempel – Faith Bible Church
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We're in:

Romans 11:33-35

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

34 “For who has known the mind of the Lord,
or who has been his counselor?”

35 “Or who has given a gift to him
that he might be repaid?”

Now Paul breaks in to the first of five doxologies that will show up in the rest of this letter:

Romans 11:36

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

At 7:51 a.m. Friday morning, January 12, 2007, a young man emerged from the Washington D.C. Metro at L'Enfant Plaza and took a place near a trash receptacle. Dressed simply in a t-shirt, jeans and ball cap, he removed a violin from its small case and began to play. For the next 43 minutes he performed six classical pieces. More than 1,100 pedestrians passed by, yet virtually no one stopped to appreciate the sheer beauty of the moment. All were in a rush to carry out their tasks for the day. What they missed in their rushed lives was a free front-row ticket to a performance by one of world's most famous musicians. As a four-year-old he had been a declared a musical prodigy and now was an acclaimed virtuoso. Hundreds of people failed to pause long enough to appreciate the artistry of the great Joshua Bell as he performed some of the most elegant music ever written. And he played them skillfully on a hand-made 1713 Stradivarius appraised in value at more than \$3.5 million dollars!

So many of the wonderful, beautiful things of life are missed in the hurry and the rush. It's with that attitude that the Apostle Paul pens this verse, these verses in **Romans 11**. He has just come through eleven incredible chapters describing the indescribable, the amazing, the beyond-explanation saving grace and salvation plan of God. And then suddenly he just kind of

hits the air brakes, and he says, “Let’s pause for a moment and think about what we’ve just seen,” and he says, “Oh, the depths.”

Notice he doesn’t say, “Oh, the heights.” It was like back then Marth Reilly, the drummer’s brother, hadn’t created the lens that allowed the Hubble telescope to tell us how vast and large the heavens are. You could only study those by virtually the naked eye, but he said, “Oh, the depths”

When you look into it, there is a foundation there. There is a mine shaft that needs to be continually explored. There is Someone at the bottom of it all. There is a God Who is the foundation of all that is. He just asked us to slow it down a little bit and think on that. “Oh, the depth”

The unplumbable, un-mine-able depth. There’s always more to be ... just when you think you’ve got it figured out, suddenly you discover something more. Ten years ago when my father went to be with Jesus, that day when I went out, I remember walking into his study, and my brother-in-law had built the little cottage so that there was a window to the east because my dad was legally blind, and so he built it there so my dad’s desk could be in this eastern window. He had created a magnifying sheet of some kind on a frame, and my dad’s large – super-large-print Bible was under it. There by it were illegible notes – at the age of eighty-four my dad was still discovering new truths from the treasure of God’s Word. That’s what Paul’s talking about. He says, “Oh, the depths.”

Then he goes into five attributes of God that are beyond explanation, but they must be pursued. They must be meditated on.

Romans 11:33-35

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

He brings this out of what I think is the propositional summation of the first eleven chapters,

Romans 11:32

“For God has consigned all to disobedience.”

“Consigned,” as we said a couple of weeks ago, He has placed us in an inescapable dungeon, all people into this inescapable dungeon, having condemned them, having sentenced them, having declared, certified them as sinners in disobedience to Him, so that He might rescue all, so that He

might show mercy to all. That's the beauty of "the heathen are condemned, and the hypocrites condemned, and the Hebrew is condemned." He has taken everyone and has thrown us into the inescapable dungeon so that He by His grace might deliver us.

Thinking about that, Paul says, "We've got to stop and think about that. What are the riches?" Riches of such a God.

When we think of riches, we have a tendency to think in terms of wealth and material things, things we can touch, and certainly God is ...

Psalm 24:1

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof,
the world and those who dwell therein

He said that the children of Israel through Moses ...

Deuteronomy 10:14

Behold, to the Lord your God (to Him) belong heaven and
the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it —

That Father that chose to adopt you and me, not because there was something about us that would make His family portrait look more attractive, more beautiful. There was nothing in us that drew His love or affection. But that Father that chose to call you His son, a joint heir with His Son, the Lord Jesus, that particular One is wealthy beyond any description. As one of the Psalmists says, "He owns the cattle on a thousand hills."

One of the core values of Faith Bible Church is that we are a people radically dependent upon God. That's an easy line to say, but it's a hard line to live, because when things get a little tough, we get to the end of the month and there's not enough resource to stretch to pay all our bills and all, what do we do? We start looking for alternative plans and supplies, and the reality is that our Heavenly Father owns the cattle on a thousand hills.

For some of us, He has chosen to give us an entire fattening pen full. For the rest of us, He just gives it to us a hamburger at a time. He knows what we can manage and what we can't. The reality is that His resources are unlimited. He says just think on that: "Oh, the depths of His riches."

What do you need that He can't supply? Is His arm too short to meet your need? But you see, the beauty of God's riches are not simply in the possession, but its beauty is in the riches of the spiritual values.

The riches of His grace," he calls it in **Ephesians 1:7**

That God would give to us what we do not deserve. How wealthy is that? Or the unsearchable riches of Christ. What does it mean to be "IN" Christ, in having my life there in Him living in me.

The riches of His kindness—**Romans 2:4**

The favor He shows toward us, when instead He should be retaliating against us. What unbelievable kindness he gives us. He summarizes it in ...

Romans 9:23

The riches of His glory

Paul says, "Just slow down a little bit and think about the beauty of both the material and spiritual riches of our Father.

He says then, "Consider His wisdom." Wisdom is a keen insight into life and dealing with the problems with understanding. Wisdom is knowing all the information and knowing what to do with it. And he says, "Consider God's wisdom." His divine plan to redeem sinful humanity. That's what he's been talking about it for eleven chapters. Think about the wisdom of a God that would know before the heavens were created and before my parents ever got married or ever thought about having me that all of the messes that I would make with my life, that He would have a solution for all of that. He would fix all of my messes. What kind of wisdom is that?

Proverbs 8:10-11

¹⁰ Take my instruction instead of silver,
and knowledge rather than choice gold,

¹¹ for wisdom is better than jewels,
and all that you may desire cannot compare with her.

I really thought by this time in the summer that this particular gathering of the saints would be completely full, and we would be adding chairs, but that four or five of us would gather at nine o'clock to study the Word and rich, because when you find out that my brother Phil Waite was teaching that

book of wisdom in the Ark at nine o'clock, you would all be there because it deals with every single issue you will ever face in any circumstance in all of your life. And it gives you the divine perspective on it. So he says, "Desire that."

Solomon, the great king of Israel, when given an opportunity to rub the jar of the genie and make any wish that he wanted to make, he said, "Oh that you would give me wisdom. I'm just a youth. I haven't got a clue to go out and come in, just give me wisdom."

And God said, "Because you asked for the right thing, I will add to that all of the wealth and all of the popularity that goes with it."

It's basically what Jesus was talking about in **Matthew 6** when he said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and everything else that is necessary to life will be added to you."

Paul says, "Just slow down a little bit and dig just a little bit deeper into the wisdom of God." Then he says ...

For His knowledge –

His knowledge is his comprehension of everything that is true. There is nothing that you know that God does not already know. **Psalm 139** was my fallback text this week with my brother's death, and it's just a reminder that God is sovereign over all, and He even knows us so well that before we ... it's like going to the coffee shop with your friend. The coffee shops in Lincoln are not known for their acoustic padding, and so before you've even said anything, we've already read your thoughts across the room. So it is, he says ...

Psalm 139:1

You('ve) search me and (you've) known me...

"Before a word is formed on the lips and the tongue You have already heard it." That's what he's talking about with God. So what information am I going to bring to God that He does not already have? What will I teach Him that He does not already know? There is no information that God is lacking. There is no insight that I can supply to Him that He does already have.

That's why he says in ...

Isaiah 40:13

Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD,
or what man shows him his counsel?

What counselor will God seek out? What plan will he come together with that He does not have. Paul says, “Just slow down and think about all that we have studied in these eleven chapters of **Romans** and ask yourselves this question: What is there that God does not already know? Before you verbalize your need to God, He already knows what you’re going to ask.

His Judgments: “How unsearchable are His judgments? We just came through three chapters of trying to explain how God had made a promise to a people that He created for a specific purpose, be a light to the world, and how He had made that promise, and yet everything, humanly speaking, looks like God had broken His word, that promise He made to Israel that He would make them a great nation and all the world would be blessed through them, it seemed like God had dropped the ball on that. Then while they’re rejecting the God Who created them for a specific purpose, the Gentiles are rising up, celebrating the fact that this God was willing to embrace them.

Finally, you get to **Romans 11**, he goes, “Here how God’s going to resolve it. He’s going to take both of you, and He’s going to put you back into the original route, and those that belong there that were removed because they weren’t fruitful, they’ll be put back in. And those of you that don’t belong, the wild branch, you’ll be grafted in. A miracle will happen. You’ll become sweet-fruit, producing.

He said then, “How unsearchable are his judgments,” who would question God’s decision-making, His decrees, His understanding? He decides, and He is decisive.

So, who’s He going to call to be His counselor?

God doesn’t have a cabinet that He goes to and says, “You know, that Faith Bible Church bunch, they really messed things up again. How we gonna fix that? Anybody got any insight, any ideas, something you could provide for Me that I could know how to go in there and do that?” He says to them, “His judgments, His decisions, they’re absolutely right.”

And then, “How inscrutable,” beyond understanding, beyond research, beyond comprehension, “are His ways,” or his paths?”

You see we can see the footprint of God in our lives. But who of us has ever been able to look and say, “There in my rear-view mirror is the footprint of God which logically is leading to ... ?” I don’t know.

That’s why James says here, “You say you’re going to go to this city or that city tomorrow, and you’re going to make a mega-profit?” And he says, “You don’t even know what tomorrow holds.” He said, “What you should say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will do this and that, because we can see His footprints, but who of us know where they lead?’”

Sometimes His footprints seem to make absolutely no sense. Why would God to Ur of the Chaldeans in the Persian Gulf area? Why would He call Abraham from a family of idol worshippers and make him this incredible promise, “If you will obey me and follow me, I will bless you. I will make your name great. Through you all the nations of the world will be blessed. If you can count the stars or count the sands of the seashore, that’s how many your descendants will be.”

And twenty-five years later he’s still waiting? Who could see where ... why is there a twenty-five-year delay? I can see the footprints of God in the past, but Abraham is here, and where do they lead? And suddenly God changes His name so every time he signs his debit card receipt, it’s “The Father of Many.” So, the clerk being gracious and kind of friendly says, “How’s your day going?”

“Fine.”

“Have a good one.” I have no idea what “Have a good one” means, but they say, “Have a good one, and oh, by the way, WOW! That’s quite a name, so how many kids do you have?”

“Well, not very many.”

“Like how many?”

“Well, like this many?” (Forms a zero with his thumb and forefinger.)

Where was that footprint leading?

Or Moses. I mean, he's old enough to know his mother and his family. And then they take him out of his home, and they put him in the home of the queen, and he's raised in the palace. He's adopted into luxury. He's given the greatest education ever, but he never forgot who he was and whose he was.

One day he stands there, and he sees an Egyptian slave-master beating up on one of his people, and he steps in, decides to intervene, and involuntary manslaughter. The Egyptian abuser is dead, and so he digs sand and covers him up. The next day he sees two of his own people, two Hebrews fighting, and he says, "What are you guys doing?" The worst part about being a peacemaker is you live on the highway on the dotted line, you get hit from both sides.

They looked at him, and they said, "So what are you going to do? Are you going to kill one of us like you did the Egyptian yesterday?" And for the next forty years he has a part-time job with his father-in-law herding his father-in-law's sheep in the desert. He didn't even have his own flock.

You could see the footprint of God rescuing this baby who was born under a death penalty and saving his life and putting him in the palace and giving him all that. But what is this desert thing all about?

Or Israel. You can see the footprints of God all over Egypt as God stepped in, and He left ten big ones there with all the miracles of deliverance and the signs and the wonders, but the footprint of God that was heavy in the sands on the dry bottom the Red Sea, but suddenly they find themselves in the wilderness, and they're having, like, eighty-six funerals a day for nearly forty years.

So, it's only three months from crossing the Red Sea if they made a straight route all the way up to the land of the promise. What was God doing with those ... where do they lead?

Or David. He is the anointed, appointed king of Israel. It happened when Samuel was led by the Spirit of God to his house, and he says to Jesse, "You have a son here that's going to be the next king of Israel," and the oldest comes in, and he's every inch looking like a king.

And God said, “Wait a minute, don’t be looking at the outside thing.” Man looks at the outside, God looks at the heart. And seven sons of Jesse parade through the living room, and the Spirit of God keeps saying, “Not him. Not him. Not him.” And finally they’re out of sons, and he goes, “Do you have any others?”

Dad goes, “Aw, gee, I almost forgot about the little redhead out in the sheep fields.” And he brings David in, and he’s the one. For a decade and a half, he runs for his life. He splits his time between the pasture and the palace taking care of an insane king and playing music for the commander-in-chief for the military who couldn’t even hit a harp player with a spear when he’s sitting behind the instrument. It’s like, where is God when he’s waiting in the caves of the wilderness for the day of his appointment?

What about Paul? Man, he had it made. He had been spotless, without blemish as far as keeping the law went. He had all the birth pedigree, had all the education and everything. He had life, as it were, on a silver platter. And then he meets Jesus, and the next thing that happens is that he gets beat up in every city he goes to. They throw him out thinking he’s dead. They throw him in jail, and he spends all of those years just running from one town to the other telling them about Jesus. You could see the footprint of God on his life up to that Damascus Road thing, but what went wrong with the plan of God from that point on?

How inscrutable are His ways.

Proverbs 16:9

The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.

Some of us are asking that question. Where are the footprints of God leading? What is it that God is doing? It seems as though He has abandoned His authority, and He has left the phone off the hook, as it were. I’m talking, and He’s not doing.

I love this from Martin Luther and James Boice:

We are accustomed to admit freely that God is more powerful than we are, but not that He is wiser than we are. To be sure, we say that He is; but when it comes to a showdown, we do not want to act on what we say. From our perspective, the workings of God are irregular, and we like our events to run like a train

on fixed timetables and along predictable tracks. Because they don't, we are always thinking of how we would be able to do things better. What that means is that we do not trust God to order both the ends and the means to those ends. How inscrutable are His ways.

And now he moves to the argument, he gives three rhetorical questions ...

Romans 11:34-35

34 "For who has known the mind of the Lord,
or who has been his counselor

35 "Or who has given a gift to him
that he might be repaid?"

Who has known the mind of the Lord? **Job 11:7-9**, Job's friends who are trying to give him comfort and encouragement, council in the midst of his sorrow throw out great theological observations, most of which are pretty accurate, but they don't fit the situation at hand.

One of them challenges, "Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty? Their measure is longer than the earth and wider than the sea. Job, Job, why are you protesting here. Do you know the mind of God?"

I want to point out that Job's friends were his friends when they sat silently for seven days. It's when they opened their mouths that things went south.

After the funeral the other day, my sister-in-law said to Linda, "What am I supposed to do with these things that people say?" One of her friends had come up, and she's got her kids there and her grand kids there, and one of her friends came to her and three times said, "All of these are going to be gone before you know it."

Our answer to her was that when Ann Marie died, we created a fictitious, stupid-comment book. Some of our family members have a whole chapter dedicated to them.

The friends of Job. They got the theology right. They got the application wrong.

Psalm 92:5

How great are Your works, Lord, how profound Your thoughts—

Who has known the mind of the Lord? He says in **Isaiah 28**, “My ways are not your ways. My thoughts are beyond your thoughts.”

Ecclesiastes 3:11

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the heart of man; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

The solution is this, if I cannot understand what I can see, how will I ever understand the things I do not see. There comes a time when you have just got to step back and let God be God. I can't explain the obvious, how am I going to explain that which is not.

The answer to question 1, “Who has known the mind of the Lord?” In the margin of your Bible write this “No one.” That's the answer.

Question number two: “Who has been His counselor? Who has God nominated for His cabinet? Who has gone through the clearance process in order that they can advise God how to manage life?”

I want you to turn to the book of **Job 38**, and I'm asking you to turn there because I want you to mark some key phrases as we go. After his friends have pontificated with lack of wisdom and not much sensitivity, then Job has a round with God. God sets his friends aside, and God begins to deal with Job directly. The Lord said to Job out of the whirlwind ... underline this ...

Job 38:2

“Who is this that darkens counsel
by words without knowledge?”

I love this next one. He repeats it later ...

Job 38:2

(Dress for action like) a man;
I will question you,
and you make it known to me.

“So, OK, Job, you've got all the answers, man-up. Get yourself ready. We're going to have a man-to-man thing. Notice ...

Job 38:4

Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?

Notice ...

Job 38:12

Have you (commanded) the morning (since your days began) and caused the dawn to know its place?

Job 38:16

Have you entered into the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep?

Job 38:18

Have you comprehended the ... expanse of the earth?
(Declare) if you know all this.

Job 38:22

Have you entered the storehouses of the snow, or (have you) seen the storehouses of the hail?

Job 38:31

Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades (and) ... loose the cords of Orion ... ?

Job 38:32

Can you lead forth the Mazzaroth in their season, or can you guide the Bear with its children?

Job 38:33

Do you know the ordinances of the heavens?
Can you establish their rule on the earth?

Job 38:34

Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, that a flood of waters may cover you?

Job 38:35

Can you send forth lightnings, that they may go and say to you, "Here we are"?

Job 38:39

Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions?

This is kind of like when I used to correct my kids, they say, “Dad, we get it, already.”

I’d say, “Yeah, but I’m not done.”

“I know you get it Job, but I don’t think you get it yet, Job.”

Job 39:1-2

¹ Do you know when the mountain goats give birth?

Do you observe the calving of the does?

² Can you number the months that they fulfill,
and do you know the time when they give birth?

Job 39:10

Can you bind (the wild oxen) in the furrow with ropes,
(so that) he harrow(s) the valleys after you?

Job 39:11

Will you depend on him because (of) his (great)
strength, ... will you leave to him your labor?

Job 39:12

Do you have faith in him that he will return
your grain and gather it to your threshing floor?

Job 39:19

Do you give the horse his might?

Job 39:20

Do you make him leap like the locust?

Job 39:26

Is it by your understanding that the hawk
soars and spreads his wings toward the south?

Job 39:27

Is it at your command that the eagle
mounts up and makes his nest on high?

Job 40:2

Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty?
He who argues with God, let him answer it.

Job 40:7-9

⁷ (He says it, again. Man up) Dress for action like a man;
I will question you, and you make it known to me.

⁸ Will you even put me in the wrong?
Will you condemn me that you may be in the right?

⁹ Have you an arm like God,
and can you thunder with a voice like his?

... and at this point my children are going, “Dad, I get it, it’s a nothing ...

“I’m not done yet.”

Job 41:1-2

¹ Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook ...

² Can you put a rope in his nose
or pierce his jaw with a hook?

Job 41:5

Will you play with him as (you play) with a bird,
or will you put him on a leash for your girls?

Job 41:7

Can you fill his skin with harpoons
or his head with fishing spears?

A few years ago at one of our men’s Bible studies one of our teachers said, “You know, the theology of Job’s friends was not very far off. But the application of it was not appropriate to the moment.” That being said, though it was said of Job, “Even in this he did not sin against God.” Job’s one fault was this, Job spent his time defending himself, “I’ve done nothing. I’m innocent. There’s nothing in my life. There’s no secret sins that God has proven.”

The problem with Job was not that he was not innocent. It’s that he defended himself, and he should have been defending the righteousness of God.

That's why Paul says back here ...

Romans 11:34

... who (will be) his counselor? Who knows His mind?

And then the third one ... the answer to the second question is, "No one."
Write that in the margin of your Bible, "No one."

Rhetorical question number three, "Who has given a gift to Him that He might be repaid?"

What have you ever done or given that puts God in a position where He is obligated to respond favorably to you? I trust that you use the **Luke 16** model as Jesus gave it to the Disciples, and He said, "We are to use the mammon of unrighteousness," or use our cash or money in order to buy friends for the kingdom friends for heaven. So you take a work associate out for a hamburger, you pick up the check and you pay for it so that they feel obligated to you, that for when you begin to tell them about their need for a savior and eternal destiny that they go, "Oh, I don't really want to hear this, but he bought my burger; therefore, I am obligated to do that." That's what it means to put someone in your debt.

And He says, "So who is it that has put Me in their debt?"

Turn to **1 Chronicles**, all the way back to the left in your Old Testament. **1 Chronicles 29**. King David the great king of Israel, the one that was the model for every other king. They were either compared to or contrasted with him. At the end of his life he had this desire that he would build a place for God to meet with the people. He's living in this big, fancy palace, and he says, "God's living in a tent, and I want to do something about that."

The pastor comes to him and says, "It's a great idea, but you're not the right guy for that."

Rather than go suck his thumb and pout, David decided that he would make it possible for his son to do it, and he began to make donations of millions of dollars toward the building of the Temple. Those that worked on his cabinet, his advisors, they got all excited about what he was doing. They started throwing their piggy banks into the heap as well. Then when this big collection was taking place, then they spent thousands and thousands of

dollars on a worship service with sacrificed animals and everything like that. Right in the middle of it, David says ...

1 Chronicles 29:10

Therefore, David blessed the LORD in the presence of all the assembly. And David said: “Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever.

Notice this is the great king of Israel says ...

1 Chronicles 29:11

Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all.

WOW! What a humble thing to say by the greatest king in the history of the nation.

1 Chronicles 29:22-14

¹² Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. ¹³ And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.

¹⁴ “But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you.

We can't even indebt God because whatever it is that we give to God is His to begin with. He simply trusted us with it as stewards. The great David with all the wealth that he had and all the influences, “God it's Yours,” to all that.

One author suggested there are three ways that we in the midst of our journey and our not understanding the footprints of God and where they lead seek to indebt God to us. The one way we do it is when we think we have found in Him some fault and criticize or complain about something, believing that God has made a mistake, and He ought to correct it.

“God, what are You thinking? What were You doing?”

The second way is when we think we have caught God doing some injustice. That's evident when we say, “It's just not right ... not right. That is not fair.

That is not just.” The beauty of **Romans 1-11** is this, we don’t want a God of justice because if God is a God of justice and gives us what we deserve, we are all sentenced to an eternal separation from God. We want a God of grace and mercy. But in our day-to-day activities when things don’t go the way we hoped they would go, we immediately accuse God of not being just, “It’s just not fair.”

The third way is when we think that we have obligated God by some act of service, banking our credits with Him for future favors. When the wheels fall off and we say, “Are you kidding me? After all of these years of putting you first, of serving you, all the sacrifices I’ve made, all the other compromises I made just so that I could ... , and then this is the way You treat those who respond to you in such a way?” Somehow we believe that we have paid it forward; therefore, God owe us better.

The answer to the question number three, “Who has given God a gift that He might be repaid?” The answer is, “No one. No one.”

Paul says, “Dig down deep in this, into the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge, the judgments and the ways of God. Ask yourself the question, “Who has known the mind of the LORD?” or “Who has been His counselor?” “Who has given a gift to Him that He should be repaid?”

He breaks out in this doxology, “It is according to His sovereign will, for from Him it is according to His sovereign action through Him according to His sovereign glory to him.”

I just want you to take a moment and trace down two Scriptures in the New Testament to mark in your Bible. I want you to go to ...

1 Corinthians 8:5-6

⁵ For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”— ⁶ yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

Colossians 1:15-20

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him

all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. First of all, all that is created is His. He sovereignly made it. He sovereignly rules it. He sovereignly has set its purpose.

Isaiah 45:18

¹⁸ For thus says the Lord,
who created the heavens
(he is God!),
who formed the earth and made it
(he established it;
he did not create it empty,
he formed it to be inhabited!):
“I am the Lord, and there is no other.

He is also the author of our salvation. That’s the argument that Paul has made for eleven chapters. Representative of many of the **Psalms**:

Psalms 3:8

Salvation belongs to the Lord;
Your blessing be on Your people.

WOW! “How deep are His riches, His wisdom, His knowledge, His judgment, His paths.” We like Job having finally been reprovved and given a chance to respond, He said in ...

Job 42:1-3

¹ Then Job answered the Lord and said:
² “I know that you can do all things,
and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.
³ ‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

Job 42:5-6

⁵ I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees you;
⁶ therefore I ... repent in dust and ashes.”

One author articulated it brilliantly ...

Perhaps you are one who has been losing heart. You began the Christian life with confidence some years ago, but the details of your life have not worked out as you expected. As far as you can tell, you have not become a great saint. You are no great model of what it is to be a prayer warrior, neither have you been terribly effective as an evangelist. Even your personal relationships have not gone as smoothly or triumphantly as you had hoped. And much of your work, even your Christian work, seems wasted. Don't lose heart! God knows what He is doing in your life. You cannot search out His eternal decrees or judgments or perceive the end of the path on which He has been leading you, but this does not mean that God is confused, the outcome doubtful, or the final achievement vague. Fix your eyes on what is seen—on God. Trust Him ... and go on!

Paul's conclusion in all that he went through is this ...

EVERY painful path has a Divine purpose—how we conduct ourselves in such wasting times in the stuff of victories! In hard times, we are humbled, he is our Comforter, we are exhorted and encouraged, and He lives to be our guide. Where we do not see, we walk by faith in His sovereign care and loving purposes.

We, like Job are left with this one, final doxology ...

To Him be glory forever. AMEN!

When we begin to comprehend a little bit, the sovereignty of Almighty God, we have only one choice, and that is to get out of God's face and to get on our own before Him.

Isaiah 42:6, 8

I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you I am the Lord; that is My name; My glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.

Last Saturday about 9:30 I was in my office wrestling with this text, and the phrase that I was working on is the phrase, "How inscrutable are His ways," and my phone rang, and it was my niece, and she said, "Uncle Tom, my dad

just died in a car wreck.” That phrase, “How inscrutable are His ways,” is the anchor that we hold to.

Abraham could not see where the footprints of God were leading. Moses couldn't comprehend, nor Israel, nor David, nor Paul. But what about Jesus? His Father had said of Him, “This is My Son, Whom I love. With Him I am well-pleased.” If ever a life was so completely guided by God or any human life ever so qualified, so comprehensively, for the description for a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

Divine guidance set Jesus at a distance from his family and fellow-townsmen, brought Him into conflict with all the nation's leaders, both religious and civil, and led finally to betrayal, arrest, and the cross By every human standard of reckoning, the cross as a waste—the waste of a young life, the waste of a prophet's influence, the waste of a leader's potential. Yet we know the secret of its meaning and achievement only from God's own statements. It was by that means that God accomplished the salvation of a lost human race. That waste was actually the focal point of all history and the highest of all achievements. It was a perfect and necessary plan which will ultimately have a grand and blessed consummation!

To Him be the glory forever ... Amen.