



Rooted

in the soil of a
vibrant, growing faith

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Romans 11.33-36
May 4th & 5th

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I. Connecting With One Another

Think of a time you received something you needed, but didn't deserve – or when you were given something that changed your life forever.

How did you respond? By brushing it off with a nonchalant shoulder shrug? Or with a heartfelt exclamation of gratitude?

II. Introduction to this Study

This is week 5 of our series "Rooted: In the Soil of a Vibrant, Growing Faith", in which we're examining the *Solas* of the Protestant Reformation. As we've seen, these essential "onlys" provide the basis of biblical Christianity: Scripture, Jesus, grace, faith, and this week, glory to God. If you've missed any of the previous four study guides or messages, click onto gspc.org/dig-deeper.

This week's study – and this weekend's message – is the fifth and final of the *Solas* (though we will continue discussing what it means to be "Rooted" for another two weeks before kicking off our summer study of 1st John). This week's "only" was referred to by the Reformers as *Soli Deo Gloria*, or, "Glory to God alone." If we have truly grasped the previous four *Solas* throughout the past weeks, we will naturally respond by giving all glory to God alone!

But it works the other way, too. If we neglect giving glory to God, we will neglect Scripture, Jesus, Grace, and Faith. Pastor John Piper has stated that giving glory to God is the "continental divide" of theology: "If you really believe this, all rivers of your thinking run toward God. If you do not, all rivers run toward man. Settling this issue is worth many nights of prayer and months of study."

III. Study the Text

- a. Read Romans 11.33-36 aloud (in fact, maybe do so a couple times – in a couple different translations?). How would you restate these sentences in your own words?
- b. These verses serve as a conclusion to the first 11 chapters of Paul's magnum opus, in which he has described God's good creation, humanity's fall into sin, the redeeming work of Jesus, and how we can be included in it. These words, then, are Paul's response of praise to God's plan of salvation!

Instead of basking in how he has got it all figured out (and it certainly seems like he does, doesn't he?) Paul revels in the mystery of God's work. Why, in the middle of writing in great detail about God's plan of salvation, do you think Paul writes these words? Do you have a similar response when you meditate on God?

- c. In verses 34 and 35, Paul quotes Isaiah 40.13 and Job 41.11. Of course, he cites only these singular verses, though in the first century a much larger portion of the Scriptures from which he quotes would be implied – and recalled – by his audience. Interestingly, earlier in Romans 11, Paul engages what the gospel means for God's chosen people Israel. Do you think it's a coincidence, then, that he quotes from the Hebrew Scriptures here?

Read Isaiah 40.1-36 or Job 40.1-41.11 (or both!). How does reading these verses that would have been familiar to Paul's first century audience open up your understanding of Romans 11?

- d. Reread Romans 11.36. How would you put this one verse, in your own words?

Why do you think Paul says that "from" God, "through" God, and "to" (or "for") God are all things? How would you explain each of these three prepositions?

Read 1st Corinthians 8.4-6, 1st Corinthians 15.20-28, and Colossians 1.15-20, passages where similar terminology is used. How do these passages help you understand Paul's assertion that God is the source, medium, and goal of everything? What questions do you still have?

- e. The second half of Romans 11.36 states, "To him be the glory forever! Amen." The word translated "glory" in Greek is *doxa*, the root of the word doxology. It can refer to splendor, brightness, magnificence, excellence, majesty, and exaltation, as well as the appropriate response to such things: praise, honor, and glory.

How do each of these words help you understand what Paul is getting at? Which do you think he meant *doxa* to communicate: God's majesty or our praise?

- f. Read Romans 12.1-3. Isn't it interesting that after declaring the majesty and praise of God, Paul begins chapter 12 (well, there weren't any chapter markers, really) by outlining our response to the glory of God.

What is the connection between his doxology in Romans 11.33-36 with his "Therefore, I urge you" in 12.1-3? Why do you think Paul speaks of "renewing our minds" and how we "think of ourselves"?

- g. Read John 17.1-12 (noting, especially, where Jesus speaks of glory). How does His prayer help you understand the "from", "through", and "to"?

IV. Reflect and Respond

- a. In what ways can we - unlike Paul - "make God too small", assuming we've got it all figured out? How could we correct that way of thinking?
- b. Have you ever heard someone assert they "knew the mind of the Lord" in some way (which, of course, is different than hearing God's voice to us)? Have you ever heard someone declare that God "owes them" somehow? How would Paul (and Job and Isaiah!) respond?
- c. In what ways does our surrounding culture distract us from the majesty of God? How does that affect our response of praise?
- d. How does reflecting upon the glory of God help bring together each of the four previous *Solas* we've studied? How does reflecting upon God's *doxa* beckon you to *doxa* in response?
- e. As you seek to "renew your mind", how could knowing that all things are "from", "through", and "to" God transform your Christian journey?

V. Spend some time in prayer:

- a. Pray for our congregation, Session, and Presbytery in the midst of our ongoing denominational discernment process: That we would be led by God's Spirit of truth,
- b. Lift up those who will lead us in worship this weekend, that God would lead them, that they might most appropriately lead us,
- c. Pray for those in our community who do not know the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ, and ask that God would give you individually and Good Shepherd as a community boldness in sharing the gospel,
- d. Ask God to guide us as we seek to connect with Him, grow in Him, and serve Him and the people He loves.