

“The Doxology of Theology”

A “refrain” is the chorus of a song or musical tune. It is that part of the song repeated at the end of each verse because it emphasizes the main theme conveyed through the song.

These four verses could well compose a “refrain” for Romans 1-11 and certainly Romans 9-11. And why here and not at the end of Romans? Because these verses end the “theological” part of Romans and chapters 12-16 are the practical parts. The first section is the “Why,” and the last part is the “So what?” But the best part is always the theological part - the part where we learn about God.

We live in a generation that is only concerned about the “so what.” Give me the practical...put it into application for me. I don’t care about the why, just tell me how it will make my life better.

Oh, the shallowness of such a response. The best is God and who He is and what is He like. These verses are a repeating of the grand theme of God’s glory. They are a fitting doxology of praise for our God.

And yet, words almost fail us to describe what we have seen. Have you ever stood in a place where your mouth dropped, your eyes bulged and you were speechless.

Such is the case in these verses. We have stood on one of the highest mountain peaks of the Bible where the air is pure and celestial and we are speechless - all we can do is confess that God is just too awesome to explain with human tongue.

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December 11, 2011 10:15 a.m.
Charles Wesley in 1739 wrote:

Romans 11:33-36
Romans Series #88

“O for a thousand tongues to sing,
My great Redeemer’s praise,
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of his grace!”

This is the expression of verse 33. “Oh” - this is an exclamation, an emotional assertion of awe.

How do you respond to such grandeur? Such awe?

Let’s try for a few minutes to see what Paul is seeing. Why is God so awesome?

I. God is beyond the richest man.

A. God owns everything.

Psalm 24:1 “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness, thereof.”

Deut. 10:14 “Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it.”

B. God makes everything.

Genesis 1:1 “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” Psalm 8:3 “When I consider the work of your fingers.” Psalm 104: 24 “The earth is full of your possessions.”

The earth and the heavens are but the display case of God’s handiwork.

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Romans 11:33-36
Romans Series #88

He made it all out of nothing; thus His resources are infinite because He can make anything out of nothing and the supply of nothing is incalculable.

C. He Himself is the greatest Treasure

Who is more valuable? The artist or his art? The singer or his song?

II. God is beyond the thinking man.

A. He is beyond the thinking man in His depth.

He mentions “the depth...”

...with depth, there are things hidden, out of sight. Even in the clearest water, the depth of the water will prevent some things being seen.

...with depth, some things are unsearchable. You can't go there.

The deepest spot on Earth is the Mariana Trench located in the Pacific Ocean, 210 miles SW of Guam. It is 36,201 feet deep - seven miles. To give you an indication, the average depth of the Pacific Ocean is 13,740 feet. This is almost three times that.

The highest point on the earth is Mount Everest which is 29,035 feet. If you turned Mt. Everest downward, you would still have to go over 7,000 more feet to reach the deepest spot.

It was explored in 1960 by a manned submarine called the Trieste of the U.S. Navy. But there are questions about that exploration because it has never been repeatable. Even

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Romans 11:33-36
Romans Series #88

with modern technology, man has never been able to go there again.

And if you did go there, you would have to have special suits and oxygen levels.

Oh, the depths of the riches of our God. It can not be explored by natural man in a natural body suit.

I Corinthians 2:14 “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit...nor can he know them...” Verse 9-10 “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things God has prepared for those who love Him.” But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.”

Search out about the deepest gold mine in South Africa. It is 2 miles deep and has produced more than 100 million ounces of gold since the 1950's and is expected to produce at least a million ounces of gold every year for the next 20 years.

Oh, the depth of the riches of our God.

One other point...the depth implies reality. There is something down there and it implies a foundation. There is a bottom. But God is at the bottom of things. He is our foundation.

B. He is beyond the thinking man in His wisdom.

Man is a great thinker. The world's libraries attest to that. But there is not much wisdom.

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Romans 11:33-36
Romans Series #88

Wisdom - sophia - is one's ability to select the best means for the attainment of his goals.

C. He is beyond the thinking man in His knowledge.

Knowledge - gnosis - is one's insight into the very essence of things, people, ideas. Someone said, "speaks of God contemplating the relations of things...adopting means and methods."

But wisdom and knowledge go together.

Vincent said "Wisdom forms the plan..knowledge know the way of carrying it out."

God has a plan for every believer and He, alone, knows all the ins and outs necessary to carry it out.

But add one more piece to this wonderful puzzle.

D. He is beyond the thinking man in His judgements and ways.

The judgements are God's decisions, decrees, His legal determinations.

His ways are the methods or His means of operation. Paul says they "are past finding out." The word is a hunting term which speaks of not being able to track a hunted animal.

No one can get on his trail - no one can track Him down. No one can figure Him out completely and why He does what He does.

That is why God can say, "Jacob I love, Esau I hated" and it just messes us up. We claim God is unfair, unjust, unloving.

Oh, how foolish to question God. Let me remind you this is a life of faith. Jesus did not say, "Come follow me and you will understand it all. I will explain it to you. You will see it clearly." No - He just said, "Follow me."

Romans 3:4 "Let God be true but every man a liar."

The old hymn said, "Bye and bye, we'll understand it better."

So, put it all together. God has a plan and He knows how to carry it out but it is not always easy for us to see.

Would you have sent redemption to the world by having your King born to a virgin teenager, her life turned into a scandal, and let your King be rejected, ridiculed, die a horrible death and be a "man of sorrows?"

What about your life? You are questioning God for the disease, loss of job, divorce, financial hurt, betrayal and you are tempted to quit on God.

Nancy Leigh DeMoss spoke on this passage in 2007 and said, "Do we love Him for who He is or are we just paid lovers? Loving Him for what He can give us and what we think of Him?"

Don't prostitute His love. When we are tempted to walk away from God because we don't understand the current situation, then what it reveals is we may be a follower of Christ only for our good? In other words, we thought "He had a wonderful plan for our life" and we wanted a "wonderful life" - and we were more in love with ourselves than Him.

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Romans 11:33-36
Romans Series #88

He does have a wonderful plan and He knows how to bring it all together. That is wisdom and knowledge.

He knows the very molecules, atoms, electrons, protons, neutrons of everything. He knows all that happens in the thinking minds and wills of every human - past, present and future.

He knows how all the facts and events of every kind relate to each other and affect each other and is able to “make all things work for our good. (Romans 8:28) He knows your history, your beginning, all that has happened to you, your family situation, financial situation, your motives, your insecurities and He is able in His wisdom to put a thousand different things together that you cannot see and work it for your good and His glory.

WELL GLORY!

But no matter how much we study or gain in knowledge, we must confess with David in Psalm 139:6 that “such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is too high, I cannot attain to it.”

Verse 34 Paul quotes Isaiah 40: 13 (also quoted in I Cor. 2:16) about who can know the mind of the Lord. Who can know how the mind of God works. No one can fully understand.

Isaiah 55:8-9 “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith 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.”

Back to verse 34 - “Who has been His counselor?” Who has advised God? While man is instructed in Proverbs 11:14 to

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Romans 11:33-36
Romans Series #88

find “safety in a multitude of counselors.” God is safe all on His own and needs no counsel. He is His own counselor!!!!

Paul has not understood everything. He is not ending this section proclaiming he understands it all, that he has worked it all out like a geometrical problem, but he comes to leave the rest to God.

Many times in life nothing is left to say, “I cannot grasp thy mind, but with my whole heart I trust thy love.”

When you can't trace God's hand, you can trust His heart.

III. God is beyond needing man.

A. God needs nothing from man.

Here Paul quotes Job 41:11. Who among us can give to God anything that originated with you? We can give God something but He gave us the power, products and prestige to make it. So, it really came from Him.

We have nothing that we can give to God that God didn't first give to us.

And we can't give God something expecting something back from Him. No man can give to God that God owes him some repayment. God is indebted to no one.

God is totally self-sustainable. He needs nothing or no one in order to survive or carry on.

He is not better by acquiring us to be His sons and daughters, and He is no less without us.

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Romans Series #88

Acts 17:25 “God is not served by human hands as though he needed anything, for he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything.”

A. God has all things in Him.

In verse 36, He is listed as three things:

1. He is our Source - “For of Him” Everything originates with God.
2. He is our Sustainer - “Through Him” Everything flows through God.

He upholds the universe by the word of His power. We can't even hold ourselves together. But He holds things together.

3. He is our Supreme purpose - “To Him are all things” Everything is for God. He is the sense and goal of all things. For all things were created for Him and for His pleasure.

B. God's goal is to whom be glory forever.

Glory - doxa - the highest honor, worship, praise, reverence.

Forever - without end.

Now here is the kicker - who is the “Him?”

It is Jesus - Colossians 1:16-17 “For by Him all things were created that are in Heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible,...All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.”

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Romans Series #88

Thus, Revelation 4:10-11 “the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; For you created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.”

Colossians 2:3 “In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

Our response: Amen. - “so be it.”

We praise Him, we worship Him. We make our affirmation that we agree. We submit to Him, to His holy and eternal purposes.

So, we come to give praise to God and recognize His glory. The Westminster Catechism is right when it declares, “the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever.”

Romans 1:21 tells us the greatest crime is that we don't glorify God ... “because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God...”

If you don't have a God-centered world, then you will be adrift on a sea of shifting emotions. You will become depressed, angry, bitter, perplexed, confused. You will have no reference point for your life if you don't get this - “From Him are all things.”

It's all about Him!!! Not about us.

So, we say, “Yes, Lord. We lay our bodies on your altar. Do what you wish with us.” Romans 12:1