**V. Sovereignty of God 9:1-11:36**

**D. Doxology 11:33-36**

**“Bottomless”**

**Plumbing the depths of God’s mind**

**1. The awe of God’s mind expressed**

**:33 Oh, the depth of the riches**

**both of the wisdom**

**and knowledge of God!**

**How unsearchable are His judgments**

**and unfathomable His ways!**

**2. The awe of God’s mind pondered**

**:34 For who has known the mind of the Lord,**

**or who became His counselor?**

**:35 Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again?**

**3. The awe of God’s mind detailed**

**:36 For**

**from Him**

**and through Him**

**and to Him**

**are all things.**

**4. The awe of God’s mind extolled**

**To Him be the glory forever. Amen.**

Intro – Context

How very patient you have been with me, indulging me in this study these past four weeks. I first introduced this study of **the Solas of the Reformation** a month ago. As I told you then, I was hoping to capture some of the excitement generated by our Reformation tour in Europe. From the feedback received – weekly thus far, I trust that not only have we *captured* some of the excitement of the great event known as the Protestant Reformation, but we have spread that enthusiasm through our Church and beyond.

We come this morning to the last of these **Solas of the Reformation** – those five superlative Latin phrases that articulate the spirit and the principles of the reformation …

***Sola Scriptura* – Scripture alone** – the one source of Divine Revelation

***Solus Christus –* Christ alone** – the One source of Redemption and forgiveness of sin

***Sola Gratia* – Grace alone** – the one means of spiritual restoration

***Sola Fide –* Faith alone** – the one means of possessing Christ’s righteousness, being *justified* before a Holy God

***Soli Deo Gloria –* God’s glory alone** – the one great aim of every true child of God – that God would receive all Glory and Honor

As I have pointed out throughout our review of these statements, these were not tenets declared and recited *during* the Reformation. Rather, we see these things by looking back on the events and episodes of the reformation. But not only are these principles seen in the lives, the passions, the efforts, and the writings of the reformers, ultimately, but all of them also have their vigorous roots in Scripture itself.

The first thing that the reformers observed was a need to recognize the exclusivity of Scripture. The Roman Catholic Church had adopted numerous sources of *so-called* authority – tradition, Church councils, official interpretations of Catholic scholars, pronouncements and rulings issued by Popes – all of that was set against the authority of Scripture. At best, the Bible was an ‘also ran’ – not the sole source of authority, *‘the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience’*, as the Confessions set forth. But as soon as would-be reformers re-discovered the pure word of God, and rescued it from captivity to the Latin Vulgate, the principle of **Sola Scriptura** – *Scripture alone*, was born.

But with re-discovery of Scripture, **Sola Scriptura**, the reformation had begun. And it would be one of the greatest and most important events in history. Many errors and heretical ideas had crowded out the truth of the Gospel. So that reformation was crucial if not inevitable. And those who began to discover and proclaim these – until now – *hidden* truths were willing to give their lives for the mere articulation of them.

And **Sola Scriptura** soon opened the door to numerous other **Solas – *Solus Christus*** – Christ alone***, Sola Gratia*** – Grace alone***, and Sola Fide*** – Faith alone. **Sola Scriptura** opened the door to **Solus Christus**, Christ alone – that in Jesus Christ God has provided everything for salvation – that no one need add *anything* to Christ’s finished work of the Cross. Jesus Himself declared that He and He alone is **the way … the truth … and the life**, that **no one comes to the Father but through *Him.*** Jesus Christ is the One source of Redemption and forgiveness of sin.

As the reformers began to consider the teaching of Scripture regarding the Savior and salvation, it quickly became clear that salvation was by Grace alone. Up until the reformation, the means of salvation had come to be understood as a lifelong process of doing good works – a system of merit and reward. In plain terms, salvation could be earned. Grace is God’s provision as the only means of spiritual restoration. And the reformers understood that God’s grace was more than just *undeserved favor*. This grace also included a merciful removal out from under God’s awful wrath. Although we *deserved* God’s wrath, He instead bestows His richest favor upon us.

Closely connected to **Sola Gratia** was the fourth Sola, **Sola Fide**, which Luther said was the most important Sola of all. That is because this Sola rested upon the liberating truth of *Justification by Faith –* faith alone in Christ alone for Salvation. The Catholic Church, as I’ve said, thought nothing of adding works to faith for salvation. Salvation, again, was not possible without human effort, good works. They referred to it as ‘patching’ – adding what they believed was lacking in Christ’s work. The reformers rejected this ‘patching’ altogether. They saw that Scripture taught salvation by faith, not works, or even faith plus works. They preached Faith alone in Christ alone.

Well, that brings us to the last of the Solas in our study - **Soli Deo Gloria** – the glory of God alone. Now, a natural inclination here would be to think of this with regard to *the chief end of man –* that we are to seek to glorify God as our *primary goal* in life. That is true. But the rest of the Solas are all oriented around *salvation.* And it should be so regarding *Soli Deo Gloria* – to the glory of God, not man*.* When we speak of this particular principle of the reformation, we must first consider *why* the reformers would have identified the opposite – *the glory of man* – as a concern. You see, as we have seen again and again throughout our study, the Roman Catholic Church was presenting a path to salvation that was dependent upon man’s work – the keeping of rules, attending Mass, taking communion, praying over beads, going to confession, and all of the rest. They did this because, based on their *anthropology,* their doctrine of man, they believed that man had the innate capacity to *do* good, even to earn one’s salvation. And that ability, together with various measures of success in such pursuit, only fed their human pride. Man was glorified *just* in his ability to do good. Not only *could* they earn their salvation, but they were actively engaged in doing so. This system was no different than that of the Jewish Pharisees before them – salvation by Law-keeping. But the idea of earning one’s salvation is an idea not limited to the Jews and the Catholics. The idea of contributing to our salvation has been called the darling religion of humanity – how can I *merit*, or *earn*, or *contribute* to, or *participate* in, or *repay* my salvation. All of that is to the glory of man.

Now we have seen in weeks past, that the reformers had a completely different understanding of man’s state before God. They understood the Bible to teach that man was *spiritually dead*. And that, before a man could do a single thing that would be pleasing in God’s sight, he or she must first be brought to life, regenerated – that secret action of the Holy Spirit by which a dead sinner is brought to life *spiritually* and enabled to a life of faith with which to glorify God. The doctrine of regeneration is presented in many places in the New Testament. We certainly see Christ’s call for such in His interaction with sneaky Nicodemus. **You must be born again**, Jesus told the nervous Pharisee.

We see regeneration in numerous places in Paul’s epistles. We saw it last week as we considered the spiritual status of unbelievers there in Ephesians 2 – **you were dead in your trespasses and sins**, Paul says. Because of the sin of Adam and Eve as our garden representatives, we are *spiritually dead …* **But God**. **But God**, Paul says in the subsequent verses of that chapter, **But God … made us alive**. He brought us to life. He regenerated us.

He says the same thing in Titus, chapter 3 –

Titus 3:4-7

:4 But

**when the kindness of God our Savior**

**and His love for mankind appeared,**

**:5 He saved us,**

**not on the basis of deeds**

**which we have done in righteousness,**

**but according to His mercy,**

**by the washing of regeneration**

**and renewing by the Holy Spirit,**

:6 whom He poured out upon us richly

through Jesus Christ our Savior,

:7 that

being justified by His grace

we might be made heirs

according to the hope of eternal life.

The apostle Peter tells us of the doctrine of regeneration. In 1st Peter 1:3, Peter says, **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who**  according to His great mercy **has caused us to be born again …**

Listen to Spurgeon on this subject.

First, he speaks of the desperate need of regeneration.

Evangelical repentance can never exist in an unrenewed soul. We are as helpless to cooperate in our regeneration as we are to cooperate in the work of Calvary … though the new birth is absolutely necessary, it is absolutely impossible to thee, unless God the Spirit shall do it …

He then explains this mysterious process …

The Spirit of God must new make you, ye must be born again. The same power which raised Christ Jesus from the dead must be exerted in raising us from the dead … Charles Spurgeon, in Iain Murray's Forgotten Spurgeon, pp. 86-88

And because God initiates the work of salvation by the Holy Spirit’s work of regeneration – to God *alone* belongs the Glory. As God so clearly declared it with regard to idols, Isaiah 42:8, **I will not give my glory to another.** God will not share His glory with anyone – not even mankind in his salvation. Salvation is God’s promise. It is accomplished according to His plan of redemption. It is secured by the work of His Son. And it is applied by His Holy Spirit. Why should anyone be allowed to share in God’s glory? The praise for our salvation should be to God alone.

So, instead of feeding the glory of man, the reformers understood that in salvation, God alone received all the glory – **Soli Deo Gloria.** And for our consideration of this last and wonderful *superlative,* I’d like to take us this morning to Romans, chapter 11. These verses come, as you likely know, at the end of Paul’s wonderful and rich doctrinal portion of this letter. In those first eleven chapters, he has set forth God’s great plan of salvation – that it is all by God’s grace, that we – as sinners – contribute nothing.

**Read Romans 11:33-36 🡪**

Please allow me to give you some context on this passage. This will be a review for a few of you. The Book of Romans has a very convenient little outline. It almost sounds embellished – especially since it’s almost naturally alliterated. All of the major points of the simple outline start with the letter ‘S’.

**Sin** – as we reviewed a few weeks ago, chapters 1 thru 3

**Salvation** – which we also reviewed, chapters 4 and 5

**Sanctification** – chapters 6 thru 8

and **Sovereignty** – chapters 9 thru 11

If you want the fifth ‘S’ – it’s **Service** – chapters 12-16.

**Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, Sovereignty, and Service**

Our focus this morning is the subject of **Sovereignty** found, again, in chapters 9 thru 11. And here in chapters 9 thru 11, Paul is establishing the **sovereignty of God** with regard to His mercy. He declares that God is sovereign over the nations. And he shows that God is also sovereign over individuals as well.

Now, the initial dilemma that Paul addresses in chapter 9 is essentially this – Israel was *supposed* to be the *chosen people,* and yet, the great majority of them rejected Jesus the Messiah outright. Would you glance at chapter 9, verse :6, as Paul begins his explanation …

:6 But it is not as though the word of God has failed.

For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel;

:7 neither are they all children because they are Abraham's

descendants,

but:

"through Isaac your descendants will be named."

:8 That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of

God,

but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.

Paul says that there is divine sovereignty woven even into that promise. God never promised that every Jewish person ever born would be saved – but **through Isaac your descendants will be named.** There is divine sovereignty in that.

God’s sovereignty is also seen next in Isaac’s sons, **Jacob** and **Esau** – verse :13 – **Jacob I have loved, but Esau I hated.** Again, divine sovereignty.

And Paul braces himself for a strong reaction – a challenge of fairness – to which he speaks in verse :14-16 …

:14 What shall we say then?

There is no injustice with God, is there?

May it never be!

:15 For He says to Moses,

"I will have mercy on whom I have mercy,

and I will have compassion on whom I have

compassion."

God is sovereign in the distribution of His mercy. And note Paul’s conclusion in verse :16 …

:16 So then it does not depend on the man who wills

or the man who runs,

but on God who has mercy.

And what is Paul’s explanation for what seems to be an inconsistency with God? Why should the Gentiles – of all people – be saved when the chosen people of God, Israel, largely were not? Look at verses :30-33 …

:30 What shall we say then?

That Gentiles,

who did not pursue righteousness,

attained righteousness,

even the righteousness which is by faith;

:31 but Israel,

pursuing a law of righteousness,

did not arrive at that law.

:32 Why?

Because they did not pursue it by faith,

but as though it were by works.

No one has ever been saved by keeping the Law – **pursuing a law of righteousness** by works – not even good Israelites. Because salvation was always to be humbly received by **faith,** not **by works.** And thus, the Gentiles reaped a glorious benefit – salvation by the **righteousness** of God.

Now, Paul enters into a very lengthy and detailed discussion of this in chapters 10 and 11. For our purposes this morning, again, Paul is establishing God’s sovereignty over nations and individuals with regard to salvation. And in 11:32, Paul’s discussion draws quickly to a close. And what is Paul's attitude? Academic? No. Stoic? No. Pensive? No. Stunned, amazed, awe-struck, and humbled to the core of his being. It wouldn't surprise me in the least if Paul wrote these words from his knees as he struggled to see the page through tear-filled eyes. Because suddenly, in verse :33, Paul erupts with a doxology. The abruptness and depth of Paul’s declaration here presents it, not as cold and planned, but emotional and spontaneous.

Now, a doxology, in Scripture, is an utterance of awe and adoration. It calls attention to God. Its purpose is to glorify God. And because of that, a doxology is usually a testimony of praise for the richness of some attribute of God. Doxologies are regular features in Paul’s writings. In Romans 16:27, Paul praises God because He **is able to establish *us*** in Christ. In Ephesians 3, Paul glorifies God for his ability **to do far more abundantly than we ask or think.** In the opening verses of Galatians, Paul issues a doxology because, in Christ, God has ***willed*** our **rescue** from sin. There are many more of these purposeful doxologies. But here at the end of Romans 11, Paul bursts forth with praise for the depths of God mind and being – depths that we will never plumb. In other words, Paul stands here in awe of God –not so much for what he does know about Him, but for what he does *not* know. God is grand to him, **deep, unsearchable, unfathomable**. He does acknowledge God’s incredible mercy and immeasurable wisdom. But mostly he praises God with an awareness that he can never fully comprehend Him.

Many pastors and scholars have wondered at the extent of Paul’s praise here – is it only in response for his argument in chapters 9 thru 11? I don’t think so. In all likelihood, Paul’s song of praise here is in response to all of the marvelous truth that he has reviewed since the beginning of this epistle – **Sin, Salvation, Sanctification,** and **Sovereignty.** All of it – but especially these last few chapters extolling God’s sovereignty. It puts everything into perspective. Man is appropriately seen to be very small and finite. While God is presented as all-important, all-powerful, Almighty God. And yet, even in that greatness, God bestows His infinite mercy upon both individuals and entire nations. Questions abound as to the outworking of this Divine Mercy. But what we do know of God’s plans and purposes are enough to lead us to humble praise.

**“Bottomless”**

**Sounding the depths of God’s mind**

**1. The awe of God’s mind expressed**

**:33 Oh, the depth of the riches**

**both of the wisdom**

**and knowledge of God!**

**How unsearchable are His judgments**

**and unfathomable His ways!**

As I have already indicated, Paul erupts suddenly with a declaration of praise for God **the depth** of God’s **riches, wisdom, and knowledge.** This word, “Oh”, a single letter in the Greek and in many translations, marks a sudden exclamation. Paul is captured using this little word only a few times – in the book of Acts and in his letters. Jesus employs it to indicate an abrupt change of direction …

**O woman, your faith is great …** Mt 15:28

**O unbelieving generation …** Mk 9:19

**O foolish men and slow of heart to believe …** Lk 24:25

Paul uses the word similarly in conversation …

**But do you suppose this, O man …** Romans 2:3

**On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God?** Romans 9:20

And so, here, Paul is abruptly crying out it praise to God. And he continues, **Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!**

Paul uses this manner of referencing God’s unending supply on several occasions. For example, in Romans 8:39, he says that ***neither* height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God!** What a profound thought. And based on the grammatical form of the three words that follow – **riches, wisdom,** and **knowledge** – it indicates that they are all modified by this word **depth** – **depth of riches**, **depth of wisdom**, **depth of knowledge**. There is an inexhaustible supply of all of those resources.

When he speaks of **the depths of riches** here, he refers to the incalculable, immeasurable, inexhaustible, supply of God’s reserves. There is an infinite supply of divine resources – particularly of His grace and mercy.

The **riches of *God’s* wisdom** refers to the divine insight God possesses for the execution of His plans. God is able to determine the best course for any given situation. He is able to order all of life according to His purposes. We know this from Romans 8:28, **God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God … called according to His purpose.**

The inexhaustible **riches of *God’s* knowledge** is His basis for his ***wise*** determinations. God sees all possibilities, contingencies, and effects at once. God knows *everything* that is ever possible to know. And God simply *knows* – he didn't have to learn. He knows all things future and past, large and small. Nothing can be hidden from Him, whether good or evil, as the writer of Proverbs admitted, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, watching the evil and the good" (Prov. 15:3; cf 2 Chr. 16:9). The Psalmist humbly acknowledged God’s **knowledge** this way, Psalm 139:2–4 …

:2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up;

You understand my thought from afar.

:3 You scrutinize my path and my lying down,

And are intimately acquainted with all my ways.

:4 Even before there is a word on my tongue,

Behold, O LORD, You know it all.

We can think of ***God’s* knowledge** as a sea of information and understanding. It is the exercise of His *omniscience.* And this **knowledge** guides the exercise of His **wisdom** in that which will bring Him the most glory.

In the latter half of verse :33, Paul mentions two other aspects of God’s mental capacity – **His judgments** and **His ways.** His **judgments** and His **ways** speak of God's decision making, sovereignty in action, God being God! And, like His **wisdom and knowledge** which are inexhaustible, so also these elements. **His judgements**, Paul describes as **unsearchable** and **His ways, unfathomable.**

With regard to God’s **unsearchable judgments**, Paul points to the impossibility of fully figuring out what God is doing – as well as His reasons for what He is doing. The Bible often presents God as incomprehensible, **Can you discover the depths of God?** (Job 11:7-9; also Ps. 145:3; Is. 40:25, 55:8-9). What unfolds in life is cloaked in God’s secret counsels – His divine decrees. This is why Paul refers to them as **unsearchable**. God does not seek our opinion, our counsel, nor does He inform us of the reasons for His courses. And they cannot be dissected and determined by human investigation.

Likewise, Paul says, ***God’s* ways** are **unfathomable.** God’s courses, the directions He takes, His methods, His processes, are all hidden in the secret counsels of the Godhead. To the wisest human mind, they are **unfathomable**. They cannot be lined out. God may not be tracked or figured out. No other than Job acknowledged that God **does great and unsearchable things, Wonders without number …** (5:9) … ***He*** does great things, unfathomable, And wondrous works without number. (9:10) There is no higher viewpoint than God’s to observe and scrutinize His doings. As one humble pastor said it, 'We can only wonder and adore. We can never understand.' (Hodge)

Awe!!!

**“Bottomless”**

**Plumbing the depths of God’s mind**

**1. The awe of God’s mind expressed**

**:33 Oh, the depth of the riches**

**both of the wisdom**

**and knowledge of God!**

**How unsearchable are His judgments**

**and unfathomable His ways!**

**2. The awe of God’s mind pondered**

**:34 For who has known the mind of the Lord,**

**or who became His counselor?**

**:35 Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again?**

But Paul wishes to further plumb the depths and **ponder God’s mind.** And for this, he advances a series of questions in verses :34-35.

**:34 For who has known the mind of the Lord,**

**or who became His counselor?**

**:35 Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to**

**him again?**

All three of these questions are somewhat rhetorical. We know the answer to them all – No one! No one has **known the mind of the Lord.** No one has ***counselled*** the Lord. No one has put God in debt by **first *giving* to Him.** And the implications of each of the questions is worse, more outlandish than the previous. The audacity behind each of the questions grows.

This first question in verse :34, **who has known the mind of the Lord**, is particularly rhetorical in light of everything that Paul has just said in verse :33 regarding ***God’s* wisdom, knowledge, judgments**, and **ways.** No one has figured out God or His doings. Man’s **knowledge** is woefully finite; God’s is magnificently infinite. Until He reveals his mind to us, His plans and directions and decrees are infinitely beyond us. We cannot begin to comprehend God and His ways. And so, Paul asks, **who has known the mind of the Lord?** Paul is just adding proof here to what he has stated in verse :33 – that God’s **wisdom and knowledge, His judgments and … His ways** are beyond our discovery. Paul, here in verse :34, may either be loosely quoting or at least alluding to Isaiah chapter 40. Would you turn there, briefly – Isaiah, chapter 40. In that amazing chapter, where Isaiah is introducing the coming Messiah, there, in the third stanza – verses :12-17, God defends His wisdom …

Isaiah 40:12–17

:12 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand,

And marked off the heavens by the span,

And calculated the dust of the earth by the measure,

And weighed the mountains in a balance

And the hills in a pair of scales?

:13 Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD,

Or as His counselor has informed Him?

:14 With whom did He consult and who gave Him understanding?

And who taught Him in the path of justice

and taught Him knowledge

And informed Him of the way of understanding?

Now, as I said, the implications of each of the questions is more outlandish than the previous. Here in Paul’s second question, **who became His counselor?**, Paul moves beyond a mere *ability* to know God’s mind, to the ability to *know* something that God does not, so as to educate Him, ***counsel*** Him, to come alongside of God to help Him in His decision making in superintending the universe.

When we seek counsel, we seek someone with some insight that we lack, some experience, some training. This is the outrageous thought behind this question. Has *anyone ever* possessed a measure of knowledge that God Himself did not possess? Ludicrous. God is independent of all of our thinking.

Now some people might recoil back from the thought of ***counselling*** God. But they think nothing of questioning or criticizing His decisions. ***Counselling*** God! Can we think of anything more audacious than that? Well, Paul can.

And we have a third – even more disturbing – question there in verse :35 …

**:35 Or who has first given to Him**

**that it might be paid back to him again?**

Here, it isn’t enough just to be able to figure out God, to ***know*** His **mind**, or worse yet, to be so brash as to give Him advice. The idea behind Paul’s question here in verse :35 involves putting God in debt. This is such a troubling thought. It is nothing short of blasphemous. And yet, that’s what the system of the Pharisees had become – a system of works – salvation by Law-keeping – which *obligated* God to save them.

Luke 10:25 lawyer’s question – **what shall I do to inherit eternal life?**

And the Roman Catholic system was no different. During those thousand years of spiritual darkness, during which the Bible was effectively withheld from her people, the simple message of the Gospel – salvation by faith in Christ – the Gospel had become horribly disfigured. Christianity had become a system of merit and reward – a never ending pursuit of so-called grace that never provided sinners biblical assurance of salvation. It was a system that sought to obligate God.

Paul contrasts these two concepts earlier in Romans 11. In verse :6, he says, **If it** [salvation] **is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.** The two systems are diametrically opposed to one another – it’s either salvation by works or salvation by grace. As Paul sharply rebuked the Galatians, **if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.**

God caught Job in the same troubling dilemma – 42:11 – a and He posed a very similar question …

**Who has given to Me that I should repay him?**

**Whatever is under the whole heaven is Mine.**

What does God need? Nothing. So we could never manipulate Him into a position of obligation. The truth is – we have nothing, we can give nothing, and we can do nothing to merit our salvation by obligating God. David knew this principle well, when he prayed …

1 Chronicles 29:14 “But who am I and who are my people that we should be able to offer as generously as this? For all things come from You, and from Your hand we have given You.

God’s grace and mercy can never be earned God owes us nothing and can never be placed in a position of obligation to us. God always takes the initiative in the salvation of souls. As Paul challenged the Corinthians, **What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?** (1st Cor. 4:7) We are not, never will be, never could be justified before God based on our merit, our works. We are only justified before Him based on Christ’s merits.

**“Bottomless”**

**Plumbing the depths of God’s mind**

**1. The awe of God’s mind expressed**

**:33 Oh, the depth of the riches**

**both of the wisdom**

**and knowledge of God!**

**How unsearchable are His judgments**

**and unfathomable His ways!**

**2. The awe of God’s mind pondered**

**:34 For who has known the mind of the Lord,**

**or who became His counselor?**

**:35 Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again?**

**3. The awe of God’s mind detailed**

**:36 For**

**from Him**

**and through Him**

**and to Him**

**are all things.**

Paul builds upon the argument set forth thus far by reminding us that God is the magnanimous giver of all things. As James tells us, **Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights …** Paul begins here in verse :35 with that familiar little word, **For**. He is providing the support, the reasoning for his profound statements in verses :33-35. Of course no man can put God in a position of obligation – because God Himself is the One from whom all things come – **from Him and through Him and to Him**. He is the divine source of everything. He is the gracious means of everything. And He is the deserving recipient of all that reflects and returns.

Paul tells us first of all that **all things** are **from Him**. He is the Creator and Giver of everything. In Him, **all things** have their origin. Not only **from Him**, but **all things** are **through Him**. God is the sustainer of **all things**. God alone is the Sovereign guide and Ruler – the Overseer of all. Through His agency **all things** are directed where and how He would have them to serve. He alone is the sustainer of **all things.** And Paul says that **all things** are **to Him** – ultimately everything redounds to God. God is the end of **all things**. Everything returns to Him who gave it, perfectly fulfilling His design. He is the recipient of the return on investment. He is the *reason* why **all things** were created and bestowed in the first place. Pause and consider … what has God given? God has given to us with exceedingly great generosity.

**Creation** – seas, land, mountains, sun-moon-stars, creatures, trees!, people

**Food** - Psalm 65

:9 You visit the earth and cause it to overflow; You greatly enrich it; The stream of God is full of water; You prepare their grain, for thus You prepare the earth. :10 You water its furrows abundantly, You settle its ridges, You soften it with showers, You bless its growth.

**Family & Friends … children**

**All things** – Let’s be honest – **all things** is quite extensive … as the apostle Paul said … **He Himself gives to all life, breath, and all things.** We don’t often pause to acknowledge that even the oxygen we breathe and the natural process of taking it in is a gift …

But God has also given / made provision what we need most – **forgiveness** – because as Paul says it earlier in this epistle … **all have sinned & fall short of the glory of God'**

**All have sinned** – every person in this room, indeed every person ever born, has sinned – it's not whether we have sinned – but merely a question of how many sins we have committed … and how frequently.

**A Savior** – the Lord Jesus Christ – John 3:16

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that **He gave** His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

**“Bottomless”**

**Plumbing the depths of God’s mind**

**1. The awe of God’s mind expressed**

**:33 Oh, the depth of the riches**

**both of the wisdom**

**and knowledge of God!**

**How unsearchable are His judgments**

**and unfathomable His ways!**

**2. The awe of God’s mind pondered**

**:34 For who has known the mind of the Lord,**

**or who became His counselor?**

**:35 Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again?**

**3. The awe of God’s mind detailed**

**:36 For**

**from Him**

**and through Him**

**and to Him**

**are all things.**

**4. The awe of God’s mind extolled**

**To Him be the glory forever. Amen.**

**To Him be the glory forever. Amen.**

Well, how do we respond to all of that **the awe of God’s mind expressed** – verse :33**, the awe of God’s mind pondered** – verses :34-35**, the awe of God’s mind detailed** – verse :36? God’s **knowledge** and **ways** are not only beyond our comprehension, we are completely inadequate to understand, let alone instruct Him. All things are His and ultimately *for* Him. He does not provide us here with neatly packaged answers to all of life’s questions and conundrums. But neither has Paul left us without cause to humbly worship God. We are not left holding a bag of mysteries. He points us to the greatest cause of worship – the salvation which He alone has provided. How do we react to all of that? Well, look at Paul’s response there at the end of verse :36 – praise, a doxology, a declaration of God’s greatness. That to which Paul is responding here is to what God has revealed in His Son – that **apart from the Law**, **God’s righteousness** has not only been **revealed**, but can be received and possessed **by faith in Jesus Christ**, that we can be **justified** by God **through the redemption** which He provided by our Savior, **Christ Jesus.** (Ro 3:21-26)And Paul declares that everything is *only* for God’s Glory. Soli Deo Gloria – to the glory of God *alone.*

Paul’s closing doxology … chapter 16 …

:25 Now to Him

who is able to establish you

according to my gospel

and the preaching of Jesus Christ,

according to the revelation of the mystery

which has been kept secret for long ages past,

:26 but now is manifested,

and by the Scriptures of the prophets,

according to the commandment of the eternal

God,

has been made known to all the nations,

leading to obedience of faith;

:27 to the only wise God,

through Jesus Christ,

be the glory forever. Amen.