

# Romans 11:36

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Date: 30 September 2012

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     this universe, and very especially in the saving of your people. We thank you that as we consider this way in which you make yourself known, we can learn something of you and discover and realize that you are a God who is worthy to be worshiped. We do acknowledge that even in the reading of your revelation, in the hearing of your voice in creation and in the Scriptures, we stand in need of your help and enlightening, for without it we would not understand. But we do thank you that you are a God who not only makes yourself known, but helps us to understand that revelation of yourself and brings us to this place, the place of acknowledging who you are and of worshiping you for who you are. And if we have gathered this morning for that purpose, we do humbly acknowledge that we are here to praise your name because you are the one who have granted us the desire to do so. You are the one who have enabled us to do so. You are the one who has granted us the spiritual life that allows us to praise your high and great and holy name.

We ask then that you would help us this morning and help us to worship you in spirit and in truth. Help us to worship you in a manner that is fitting and pleasing to you.

And Lord, we pray that not only we who are gathered, but as we have sung, all the nations of the earth, that all might see what you have done, the God who brings deliverance and salvation to his people.

And we pray that today, as your people gather in all the nations of the world, that we would be very conscious of the fact that we are but one people gathering to worship, but one living and true God. We ask that you would be with us and help us, bless us and speak to us.

And all of these things we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. I'll invite the children to come to the first couple of pews.

[ 2 : 1 4 ]     Amen. Amen. Good morning.

I'm going to tell you about something that happened to me yesterday morning. I had a bit of a disappointment yesterday morning. The reason I was disappointed is that I was looking forward to what I thought was going to be a very exciting football match.

I was looking forward to the first couple of people who were going to play the first couple of people. Now, that's like a local derby. It's like a big match between cults and the grammar school.

So I was looking forward to it. I thought this is going to be a good match. It's going to be an exciting match. It's going to be quite close. They'll both be very good teams. And I was so looking forward to going and watching the match yesterday morning.

Well, I went along and, well, it was just a big disappointment. Now, you might say, or you might be thinking, well, why was it a big disappointment?

[ 3 : 3 6 ]     Was it a really poor match? Did it end up nil-nil? Or why was it such a disappointment? Well, I'll tell you why. Because the team from the grammar school turned up with eight players.

And it was an 11-a-side match. Imagine that. Eight players when they needed at least 11. Probably one or two more. So that if one or two got tired, they could give them a wee rest.

But just eight players. So, what to do? Well, all the cults boys were there. And, of course, the eight boys from the grammar school, they wanted to play.

They'd turned up to play. So the coaches had a wee chat. And they said, well, let's have a game anyway. And we'll see how we get on. Maybe we can lend you one or two players. And we'll just have a wee kickabout.

Well, that's what happened. And there was a game. But it really just wasn't very exciting. It wasn't the game we'd all been looking forward to. It didn't really mean anything. Because it wasn't going to be considered a proper game.

[ 4 : 37 ] Because one team didn't have enough players. So, all in all, it was a bit of a disappointment. Not just for me. But for the players as well. Speaking to one or two afterwards. And they said, well, that wasn't very good.

That wasn't much fun. That wasn't very exciting. So, it was a bit of a disappointment. Well, what can we say about those boys who didn't turn up?

Now, I don't know all of the boys who didn't turn up. So, I can't say this about all of them. Because I don't know for sure. But I was hearing that one of the reasons why some of the boys didn't turn up was because they had gone to play paintball.

Have any of you ever played paintball? I think maybe one or two. Paintball, I've never played. But I think it's pretty exciting. It's like a big battle with paint. Well, what couldn't be exciting about a battle with paint?

So, they'd gone off to play paintball. And so, they'd missed the match. Now, what do I make of that? Well, I would say three things about the boys who didn't turn up.

[ 5 : 41 ] And I hope I'm not being too harsh on them. But I would say they let themselves down. Because they're part of a team. They'd been chosen for the team. They'd agreed to be part of the team.

They knew they had an important game on. And they thought, ah, I won't bother turning up. I'll go and do something else. Something that I prefer to do. So, I think they let themselves down. But they also let their teammates down.

Because the eight that did turn up, they were ready to play. They wanted to play. But they couldn't. Because three or four or five or six, I'm not sure just how many, just didn't bother turning up.

They went and did something else. So, they let themselves down. They let the team down. And it also meant that their team couldn't play properly. With eight players, they couldn't play properly.

I was watching the game, just the kickabout. And I noticed that two or three of their players were very good. Very good players. But they had no chance of winning a game with just eight players.

[ 6 : 40 ] The ones that were missing didn't allow the team to play properly. So, that's what was disappointing about yesterday.

I don't know if you knew that the Bible says that as Christians, we are part of a team. The Bible speaks of all of us as Christians as being part of a family or part of a team.

Sometimes it speaks of us as being part of a body. Just listen to what the Bible says. This is what the Apostle Paul says, writing to Christians like you and me who lived in a city called Corinth.

And he's talking about the church as a team. And listen to what he says. The body is a unit. He's talking about our bodies. He's giving that example.

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts. We have arms and legs and ears and noses. Well, just the one nose, I hope. But, you know, we have lots of parts. The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts.

- [ 7 : 41 ] And though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. And then listen to what Paul says. Now, you are the body of Christ. And he's speaking to the Christians.
- And each one of you is a part of it. Each one of you. And what he's saying is if one is missing, if one doesn't turn up, then the body really isn't as it's meant to be.
- And that's true for us as Christians. If we don't participate as members of the team, as members of the family, as part of the body, then we're a bit like the boys who didn't turn up yesterday.
- We're letting ourselves down because it's a great privilege to be part of the body of Christ, part of God's team. We're letting the other Christians down because they're not able to do everything by themselves.
- And we're not allowing the church to be and to do everything that God wants us to be and do. And so we're letting folk down, just like the boys let their teammates down yesterday.
- [ 8 : 45 ] And one thing I would say, and with this I finish, I don't want you to think that participating in the team, participating in God's team in the church is just about coming to church.
- Though that's important. Coming to the service, that's important. Of course, as children, that depends on your moms and dads bringing you. But it's not just about that. Though that's important. It's about how we live our lives every day.
- How you live your lives every day. As Christians. Living as those who are living lives. Pleasing to God. And serving God. That's your way of participating in the team that is the church.
- So I hope that you will do that. Don't be like those boys who thought, Oh, I'll just not bother turning up. I'll do something else. Sometimes Christians were like that. Say, Oh, I don't want to do that.
- I don't want to help in that way. I don't want to be involved. I've got something better to do. We're letting ourselves down. We're letting others down. And we're not allowing the church to be what God wants us to be.
- [ 9 : 45 ] So that's something for you to think about this morning. Well, we're going to sing again. But before we do, I just want to mention one thing that's important. And that is that after the service today, we have a congregational lunch.
- And you're all welcome to remain behind for that if you're able to. It is particularly intended to serve as a welcome from the congregation to those who have joined us recently, especially as students, but others also.
- But all are welcome. So just head downstairs after the service if you're able to participate in that lunch. Because we'll be having the lunch, we won't have tea and coffee immediately afterwards.
- We'll just head straight down for lunch. We'll be getting coffee after the lunch, but not immediately after the service. So that's one thing I just wanted to remind folk of. Well, we're going to sing again, and we're going to continue singing the psalm that we began singing, Psalm 98.
- And we're going to sing verses 4 through to the end of the psalm. It's on page 129. We'll sing these verses to the tune, Evan, acclaim the Lord, O all the earth!
- [ 10 : 54 ] Shout loudly and rejoice! Make music and be jubilant to Him. Lift up your voice! We'll sing verses 4 through to the end of the psalm. And we'll sing verses 4 through 9 of Psalm 98. And we'll sing and be jubilant to Him.
- Amen. Let's sing. Even if we're going to sing. Let's sing. And we'll sing. And we'll sing. Amen. And we'll sing. And we'll sing. And we'll sing. And we'll sing. And we'll sing.
- and rejoice. Make music and be jubilant through him lift up your voice.

With heart make music to the Lord. With heart his praises sing.

With trumpet and with horn rejoice before the Lord the King.

[ 12 : 01 ] Let earth and sea and all in them rejoice triumphantly.

Let streams well hounds and martyrs sing together joyfully.

Now let sing and sing before the Lord who comes to judge the air.

He'll judge the world in righteousness that people sing his truth.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. We're going to read the Bible in the New Testament in Paul's letter to the Romans.

[ 13 : 08 ] The Apostle Paul's letter to the Romans, and we're going to read in chapter 11 from verse 25. It's on page 1138 in the church Bible.

Romans chapter 11 reading from verse 25. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. God bless you in the heart of our scriptural, Romans 8, James.

Amen. And he's coming to the end of that, and as he comes to the end, he's going to then proceed to talk about the consequences of that, the ethical implications for those of us who are the objects of God's grace. So, these verses, and especially the closing verses of chapter 11, form a kind of linchpin, really, to the whole letter, concluding what has gone before, but also introducing what is to follow. So, it's good to just have that in mind as we read these verses, and particularly verses 33 to 36, which is what we're going to be concentrating our attention on this morning. But our reading will be from verse 25 in chapter 11, and we'll read through to verse 8 of chapter 12. So, Romans chapter 11, reading from verse 25.

I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited. Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and so all Israel will be saved. As it is written, the Deliverer will come from Zion. He will turn godlessness away from Jacob. This is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.

[ 15 : 16 ] As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account, but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs. For God's gifts and His call are irrevocable.

Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. For God has bound all men over to disobedience, so that He may have mercy on them all. Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable His judgments and His paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor? Who has ever given to God that God should repay Him? For from Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. This is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, His good, pleasing, and perfect will. For by the grace given me, I say to every one of you, do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

We have different gifts according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve. If it is teaching, let him teach. If it is encouraging, let him encourage. If it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously. If it is leadership, let him govern diligently. If it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. The Word of God. Let's bow our heads again in prayer.

[ 17 : 52 ] Our God, as we would approach you again in prayer this morning, we are conscious of the truth of what we have read. Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable your judgments and your paths beyond tracing out. We stand with a deep sense of privilege that we are able to know you and to approach you and to speak to you, and yet we do so conscious that our knowledge is partial. It is limited, for we come to a God who is unfathomable, a God who is inscrutable, a God who we will never know fully, though we do praise you and thank you that we know you truly. We thank you that in Jesus we have been granted this great privilege of knowing you, and yet we recognize that and give thanks for that in the understanding and knowledge that you are way beyond what we are, and we cannot and never will fully fathom you, for you are the great God, the God from whom and through whom and to whom all things are. And as we even ponder on these things that with Paul we recognize we have difficulty doing, we ask that we would know your help and direction. We come to you this morning then to recognize in some measure who you are, in the measure that we have been able to understand you, to praise you, and to lift you up, to thank you for all that you have done and continue to do for us. We come also to confess our sins, for we fall so very far short. We think of the very reasonable demand that you make of us, that we would present our bodies, our lives as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to you. And we're conscious that in the week that has passed, we have fallen short. We have chosen not to do so. We have chosen to do our own thing, knowing that which we ought to do, we have left it undone. Indeed, knowing those things we ought not to do, these very things we do and have done. And we come confessing that and asking that you would forgive us. We pray that you would help us, help us to recognize and understand the reasonableness of your demand that our whole lives be handed over to you in your service. Grant us the desire to live such lives. Grant us the capacity to live lives that are useful and pleasing to you.

Help us to recognize, as we have been thinking even with the children, that as part of your family, we all have a part to play. As members of the body. And forgive us for the times when we have let the side down, when we have not turned up, when we have been occupied in other matters, selfishly and without thought for others.

Forgive us for these things and help us rather to live our lives as we ought and as we have been called to live them. So we do pray that you would forgive us. And as we confess our sins, as we recognize our need for forgiveness, so also we receive the forgiveness that you are ever ready and able to give.

As we come and pray to you this morning, we also would intercede on behalf of this, your world. And we pray for it. We pray for those nations that are going through times of trial and struggle. Perhaps that is true of all nations in one measure or another. But we think of those that have particular difficulties. We think of the continent that we are part of, the continent of Europe. And we think of many nations that are going through very difficult times financially, even our own nation, but particularly we think of Greece and Spain and Portugal and Ireland and others. We think of Spain especially. And that its plight has been in the news, particularly in these days with deep austerity measures and very large unemployment, especially among the young. And then, just in these past days, the flooding in the south of the country that has taken many lives and left so many homeless and deprived of all that they had owned and gathered together. And Lord, we do pray for those who are suffering in this way even now. We pray for those who have lost loved ones. We pray for those who have lost their homes and their crops and their crops. And we ask that you would be with them. We pray for the work of the gospel in that nation. We pray that you would own and prosper all that is done to make known the good news concerning Jesus Christ there. We do pray for our own nation. We thank you for it. We thank you for the many privileges that we enjoy in so many ways. We thank you for our relative material prosperity, for the manner in which we are provided with education and health. We all enjoy a comfortable housing of one kind or another. We are richly blessed. And we think of the provision that is made for our bodily needs, for our own health. We do pray for those who are involved and engaged in that work. We think of those who are using their intelligence and their ability to investigate, to research treatments and new medicines that can help those who are sick.

We pray that you would bless and prosper all those involved in that type of work and research. And help them to recognize that in these things too, everything that they do must be done in the sight of God and in a manner that is pleasing to you. We pray for those who work as doctors and nurses and medical professionals of one kind or another in our hospitals and surgeries in our own city. And we pray that you would bless them.

[ 24 : 16 ] We thank you for those of our own number who work in that way and pray that you would help them and direct them in all that they do and in the difficult jobs that they perform. We pray for those who care for the sick, not only medical professionals, but family members who dedicate often their whole lives to the care of others, depriving themselves of much perhaps out of love for those who are sick and unwell. We pray for them. We pray that you would give them especially health and strength, physical and emotional and spiritual in the performing of often very difficult tasks. Lord, we do pray that these things. We pray for our own church, not only our congregation, but looking beyond across the country. And we think especially at this time of those who have begun a new chapter in their lives as congregations with new ministries beginning. We think especially of the work in air with the induction just on Friday of the new minister there. And we pray for minister and congregation alike. And also for new ministries in Glasgow and in Tain and in Caithness and London and indeed elsewhere. And we pray that you would be pleased to own and to prosper and to bless all those who are engaged in making known the good news concerning Jesus Christ. And of course, we happily recognize that that is not simply a task of ministers and leaders, but of all of your people. So, Lord, we do commend to you all of these things. We pray now that you would continue with us as we turn to your Word, to sing it again, and also to meditate on it, that you would speak to us through it. And all of these things we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, before we do turn to the passage that we read just a moment ago in the book of Romans, and we will sing again. We're going to sing in Psalm 145 on page 189 in our psalm books, and we'll sing verses 1 to 7 of Psalm 145.

We'll sing these verses to the tune Ellers. I will exalt you, O my God and King, forever I will praise your holy name. I will extol your name forevermore. Day after day, your praise I will proclaim.

Now, let's stand to sing these verses of Psalm 145. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[ 28 : 02 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

The love works that you have done, I too will make it upon your feet, and your majestic acts I will become.

May you rejoice, Savior, in their own hands, and your abundant grace will celebrate.

The righteousness that you have shown to them, in praise and joyful song they will be lit.

[ 29 : 37 ] Amen. A couple of Sundays ago, I rather cavalierly indicated my intention to spend three Sunday mornings pondering on life, the universe, and everything.

And well, two Sundays ago we considered the matter of life, and especially how the Father sent Jesus into the world, that we might know and experience eternal life, or life to the full, a life knowing and serving God.

And then last Sunday, we thought of the universe, and in particular, how the universe, the cosmos, the world, is related to the person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ, the one who, as John reveals in the first chapter of his gospel, is distinct from the universe, or the world.

He came into the world.

[ 31 : 14 ] Well, I would imagine there must be quite a lot that you can say about everything. Well, the expression, all things, and we focus really on that particular expression that we can take as equivalent to everything.

The expression, all things, is one that is repeatedly found in the New Testament in particular. Now, this in itself is revealing that there would be this repeated occurrence of this expression, all things.

It's revealing in reminding us that the message of the Bible is one that concerns all things. It concerns everything.

Everything. The Bible story, rather than the Bible stories, the Bible story is what we might call, to use modern language, a mega-narrative.

That is, a story that concerns and explains all things. Everything. Everything. Now, of the many occasions where the New Testament speaks of all things, I want us to consider one in particular, and a very dramatic and revealing use of this expression, all things.

[ 32 : 34 ] We've read in Romans 11, and we remind ourselves of what we read there in verse 36. Romans 11, in verse 36.

For from Him, that is God, for from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.

Now, this very bold statement of the Apostle Paul is able to stand alone as a declaration concerning God and can be understood and considered, at least in some measure, with no reference to the occasion or the moment when Paul erupts in doxological praise with these words.

It can be considered, is what I'm saying, on a stand-alone basis. For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.

But though it can be considered in that way, it is also true that it carries even greater weight and significance given its pivotal position in this letter.

[ 33 : 48 ] Now, I made fleeting reference to that in introducing the reading of our passage this morning. You see, in this letter to the Romans, Paul has been considering the big truths concerning man's condition and God's saving response.

And he has been dealing with them, inspired by the Spirit of God, in a magisterial fashion. And as he has been doing all of this, he comes to a conclusion of sorts and quite fittingly expresses himself in this way.

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. So, these words and the dexology that they form part of do form or do constitute a very fitting conclusion to the first half, or the first part in any case, of Paul's letter to the Romans.

But they also serve as a very fitting foundation for the remainder of the letter, where Paul does proceed to deal with the Christian life to be lived by those who are the grateful objects of God's salvation.

And even in the few verses that we read as we went through into chapter 12, we noticed how Paul moves on to very practical matters of the Christian life and of how we are to participate in and be part of the church of Jesus Christ.

[ 35 : 15 ] So, we think of these words of Paul, recognizing that even as they stand alone, there is much that could be said, but particularly recognizing their significance in the occasion or the location that they have within this letter.

Now, there are three questions that will allow us to consider this, we might call it, a one-sentence doctrine of God. For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.

Three questions that will help us to consider this statement, this affirmation concerning God. The first one is, I suppose, a preliminary one that will allow us to set the scene and then proceed.

And I'll mention what the three questions are, and then we can attempt to deal with them in order. First of all, we want to ask and answer the question, what does the all things refer to?

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. But what is Paul referring to when he speaks of all things? That's the first question. The second question is, what does God have to do with all things?

[ 36 : 31 ] Having established what the all things refers to, we then have, in a way, the more fundamental question, well, what does God have to do with all things?

And then, thirdly, what must be our response in the light of what we learn about God and His relationship to all things?

So, these are the three questions. The first one, what does all things refer to? Now, that may seem like a bit of a silly question. Surely, all things is precisely that.

All things. What isn't there to understand? The totality of the created order, the universe and everything in it. All things.

Everything. Everything without exception. If you can imagine anything. Well, that comes under the umbrella of all things. And that is the case.

[ 37 : 33 ] All things, as Paul uses it here, can and should be understood as all things or everything. But having recognized that, might it also be that Paul, while using the expression in that all-inclusive manner, also has in mind all things in the context of all that he has been dealing with and expounding on in his letter thus far.

Namely, all things concerning God's work of salvation. You see, what we've already suggested is that this forms a fitting conclusion to the first part of his letter, where he has been dealing very particularly and in considerable detail with God's saving work.

And having been considering these matters and with his mind filled with all that he has been penning in this letter, he then erupts in this declaration.



For from him and through him and to him are all things. And so might it be that while the expression ought to be understood in its most all-inclusive way as referring to everything, I think it is reasonable to suggest that in Paul's mind there is a particular sense that he is thinking of all things concerning our salvation.

Of course, we don't need to choose between these two possibilities. Understanding all things in the broadest fashion necessarily will include all things relating to our salvation.

[ 39 : 16 ] But that said, it does seem, I would suggest, reasonable to imagine that Paul has, particularly in mind God's redeeming purposes and work in and through Jesus Christ, as he expresses himself in this wonderful way.

So that's a brief answer, as I say, almost a preliminary matter to be dealt with in order that we can understand what is being said or have greater insight into what is being said.

For from him and through him and to him are all things. But that does lead us on to our second question. And our second question is, what does God have to do with all things?

Many of the early church fathers were rather taken with the idea that we have in this expression, that is, for from him and through him and to him are all things, we have a veiled or not so veiled allusion or reference to the Trinity.

And you can see the attraction of that idea. From God the Father and through God the Son, so far so good, and to God the Spirit. So that's when things kind of break down a little.

[ 40 : 36 ] Of course, given what we were talking about even last week concerning Jesus Christ and his relation to the cosmos, to the universe, we notice that God created all things, created the cosmos, created the universe through Jesus Christ.

And so we can see the attraction of this idea. But there is that problem that I've just noticed, that it doesn't seem to fit with our understanding, or certainly what we have revealed to us in the Bible, concerning the persons of the Trinity, to make that division attractive, though it might appear.

I think rather the reasonable way of understanding what Paul is saying is that he is speaking of God. He is speaking of the Godhead.

He is speaking of God, as we know, revealed to us in three persons. But he is speaking of God, without any intention of differentiating between the persons.

For from God, and through God, and to God are all things. But what is being said of God, with the language of from, and through, and to?

[ 41 : 54 ] One translation stroke paraphrase that I think captures what is being said is as follows, or reads as follows.

All comes from God. All lives by God. All ends in God. Or if we were to use three words to describe God on the basis of this expression of Paul's, we could speak of God as the originator of all things, as the sustainer of all things, and as the goal or the end of all things.

And as we think of these truths concerning God that Paul is making known to us, we can also apply this to God's work of creation, and to his work of redemption.

We can really apply it to everything, but we can apply it particularly to these two great works of God, that they are from, through, and to. So, we think of God's work of creation.

We think of this universe that he has created. Well, the universe comes from God. He created it. But we know that the universe is also upheld and sustained by God.

[ 43 : 16 ] It exists through him. And we know that its purpose, the purpose of this great universe that he has created, is to reveal and to bring glory to God.

We think of God's work of redemption. And there we can say with so much confidence and assurance that salvation is from God, born in the love and genius of the Godhead.

We know that salvation is secured and applied by God, that were it not for God, none of his saving work could be applied and enjoyed and experienced by any of us.

It's from God. It's through God. And we also know that it's to God, that its purpose is to bring praise and glory to God. That is why God has saved you.

If you are a believer, if you are trusting in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, that you might bring glory to him. He is the end of your salvation.

[ 44 : 20 ] He is the end of your life. All of God. Everything is all of God. So what does God have to do with all things?

Well, in this very succinct but very eloquent fashion, Paul gives an answer to that question. For from him and through him and to him are all things.

But that leads us on to the third question that we want to pose and consider this morning, which is this. What must be our response in the light of what we learn or hopefully have learned about God in what Paul says here?

I think we can answer that question negatively and positively. Or to put it in maybe more helpful terms, we can answer that question in terms of what we must not or cannot do and that which we must do.

So we're talking about our response to these truths concerning God, that all things are from him and through him and to him. How are we to respond? Well, there are those things that we must not do and there are those things that we must do.

[ 45 : 40 ] And in identifying those two aspects, we're going to rely on what Paul himself says in the immediately preceding and immediately following verses to this central declaration.

First of all then, what we must not, what we cannot do.

Well, here we're going to think about what he says and we're going to think about it very fleetingly, but we're going to think about what Paul says in these immediately preceding verses from verse 33 to verse 35.

And there Paul identifies those things that we cannot do, we must not do in the light of this great truth that from God and through God and to God are all things.

The first thing that we must not and cannot do is we must not imagine that we can fathom God. Read what Paul says there in verse 33. Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out.

[ 46 : 52 ] God is unfathomable. You'll never get to the bottom of God. God is, to use language that is sometimes used, inscrutable.

He's beyond finding out. What is it that provokes this awestruck cry of Paul? Oh, the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God.

What is it that immediately provokes him to express himself in that way? Well, specifically and particularly, as we've already noted, it is his consideration of God's work of salvation.

Paul, in the light of what God reveals to him, cries out, Oh, the depths! How unsearchable his judgments!

Paul is not saying that he can understand nothing. That is evidently not the case, as he is enabled by God to understand a great deal, very especially in this context concerning what God has done to save a people for himself.

[ 48 : 04 ] God has been enabled, or God has enabled Paul to understand a great deal. And not only for him to understand a great deal, but thank God to share that understanding with us.

And we have the product of that in this letter. And we can read it, and we can learn from it, and we can understand in significant measure all these truths concerning God.

So, Paul is not saying, he's not holding up his hands in despair and say, Well, I can't understand anything. That's not what he's saying. But what he is recognizing, what he is expressing, is that he is overwhelmed by his inability to understand or to fathom the wisdom and knowledge of God.

And as we think of that, it is important to take particular note that this inability that he confesses or expresses in these words concerns that which God has revealed.

He speaks about how unsearchable his judgments. So, there he's speaking about those things that God has revealed about himself, and he says that even those things that he has revealed are unsearchable.

[ 49 : 16 ] They're beyond finding out. I can't fully understand them. What could we say of that which God has chosen not to reveal of himself?

Well, we don't even go down that road. That would be a road. There would be no purpose in going down. We must not imagine that we can fathom God.

We can't imagine that there will be a day when we can say, Well, I get it now. I've really got it. I've got God in a box. It's covered. That day will never come.

That is something we must not do in the light of this great truth that for from him and through him and to him are all things. But there's a second thing we must not do, and that is we must not presume to advise God.

Verse 34, Who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? These are, of course, rhetorical questions that Paul expresses, and the answer is evident.

[ 50 : 20 ] Well, nobody, nobody can presume to counsel God. Nobody can presume to advise God. It's not for us to quibble with God, or protest to God, or presume to advise God concerning his ways.

It's not for us to say, Well, I don't like this part, or I don't think this is very well organized, or I don't like the way he's created the world, or the plan of salvation that he has established.

I'm not too happy with this or that part of it. Who are we to advise God? Who are we to act as his counselor, as if he required counselors?

God has no need of advisors. We know that the presidents and prime ministers of the world, and with good reason, have their advisors. Sometimes they have their special advisors.

Well, God has no advisors, and no special advisors, no advisors of any kind, because they are wholly unneeded. So, that's the second thing we must not do.

[ 51 : 23 ] We must not presume to advise God, but also, we must not be so foolish as to demand of God. Notice what Paul goes on to say there in verse 35.

Who has ever given to God that God should repay him? God owes us nothing. He owes you nothing.

God is no man's debtor. Now, this flows necessarily and overwhelmingly, or is consistent with overwhelmingly, what Paul declares, for from God and through God and to God are all things.

And this reality, this truth that God owes us nothing, that we can demand nothing of God, this applies to matters material, if you wish, and matters spiritual.

Everything you are and possess. Every last one of us here this morning. Everything you are, everything you possess, every talent or ability you exhibit, every exam that you have passed, every degree that you have secured, every penny in your pocket, and every string in your bow, comes from God.

[ 52 : 36 ] It's a gift from God to you. He has chosen graciously to give you these things. None of it is merited. None of it is deserved.

None of it has been earned. And what can we say of our salvation? What can we say of forgiveness of sins? What can we say of being invited and drawn into the family of God, adopted as sons and daughters of God?

What can we say of these things? Well, we can say what Paul says, that from God and through God and to God are all of these things.

All of God. We can do nothing in ourselves to deserve or secure our salvation. We bring nothing to the table but our sin and need.

Even our coming to the proverbial table is of God. He is the one who brings us. He enables us to come. He gives birth to us.

[ 53 : 37 ] We are children of God, born of God. So, as we consider what Paul declares concerning God, that all things are from God and all things are through God and all things are to God in response, we must be careful not to do any of these things.

Imagine that we can fathom God. Imagine or presume to advise God or be so foolish as to demand of God. But then also positively we can notice what we must do in response to this truth.

And Paul gives us the answer to that question in what he immediately goes on to say there in verse 36. For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.

To Him be the glory forever. Amen. What must we positively do? What must you do? Well, give glory to God forever. For that you were created.

This is and must be man's chief end. To give glory to God. And as we declare that to be so, and in doing so simply repeat what is before us in the text of Scripture, the question does arise, and I ask it to you.

[ 54 : 55 ] Are you able to say amen to that? To Him be the glory forever. Amen. It's as if that amen is Paul anticipating the response of his readers. To Him be the glory forever.

And he can hear ringing in his ears as he writes, the believers in Rome and beyond replying, Amen. Amen, Paul. Yes, we also understand and believe that it is so.

To Him be the glory forever. But, how do we do that?

It sounds very grand. And if we have been brought up to know and to hear these things, we're able to give our assent and say, well, yes, that's right.

To give glory to God. That's what it's all about. But what does that look like? How do we do that? Well, Paul goes on immediately to address this very matter in what follows in verse 1 of the following chapter.

[ 55 : 58 ] You see, immediately following this great declaration that for, from God, and through God, and to God, are all things, and so to Him be the glory forever.

He then continues, Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.

This is your spiritual act of worship. This is what we must do. This is what you must do in response to these truths concerning God.

Give glory to God forever. How are you to do so? Where are you to do so in this manner? By offering your bodies, offering your life as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

We can notice very briefly, and so much could be said of this, and our intention this morning is really just to give this overview. But what we could just very quickly notice with regard to the argument and the requirement that Paul uses here, the argument he employs in order to give foundation to the requirement that he presents.

[ 57 : 09 ] What is the argument? Well, there it is. Therefore, in view of God's mercy, in view of everything that you have discovered about God in what has gone before, not only in this great fitting conclusion to this part of the letter, for from him and through him and to him are all things, but everything that has gone before concerning man's condition and God's loving and gracious response in providing a means and a way of salvation in the light of all of these things.

Therefore, in view of God's mercy, of his great love and grace and mercy, in view in the light of these things. This is the foundation. This is the motivation.

This is the reason that I go on to say that you will give glory to God in the measure that you offer your bodies, you offer your lives as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.

This is a requirement. This is what God reasonably requires of us, everything that we are. Note the correspondence to the God from whom everything comes.

We can offer no less than everything that we are. And indeed, that is what Paul goes on to recognize. It is entirely reasonable. He says, this is your spiritual act of worship.

[ 58 : 31 ] Or as in the footnote, the word is alternatively translated, this is your reasonable act of worship. It might seem such a huge ask, but what Paul says, in the light of who God is and in the light of what God has done, in view of God's mercy, it's entirely reasonable that you should offer your lives as living sacrifices.

That is the way that we are able to give glory to God. And so, as we draw things to a close, we simply pose the question, and I pose you the question as I hope I pose it to myself.

Are you giving to God, the God from whom and through whom and to whom all things are, are you giving Him all the glory? Will you offer your life as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God?

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we come to you this morning and we do echo the words of Paul, oh, the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God.

And so, while we readily recognize our inability to fathom you and to understand you, nonetheless, and perhaps especially in the light of that truth, we stand in grateful acknowledgement of that which we have been enabled to understand, of that which we do know because you have opened our eyes and our understanding that we could know and understand and indeed, very wonderfully become part of your family.

[ 60 : 14 ] We do pray that we would recognize the reasonableness of what Paul presents to us as a fitting response to what we discover concerning you and all that you have done.

And pray that you would grant us the motivation and the desire and indeed the capacity to offer our lives as living sacrifices and that they might be ever pleasing to you.

And all of these things we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to close our service this morning by singing again and we're going to sing in Psalm 24.

In Sing Psalms, it's on page 28. We'll sing the whole of the psalm and we'll sing to the tune, Effingham. The world and all in it are gods, all peoples of the earth, but it was founded by the Lord upon the seas beneath.

Who may ascend the hill of God or in his temple stand? The one who shuns false gods and lies, who's pure in heart and hand.

[ 61 : 25 ] Psalm 24, the whole of the psalm, will stand to sing. Amen. The Lord and all in it are gods, the peoples of the earth, for it was founded by the Lord upon the seas beneath.

The Lord and all in it are Albert on theuit that air is not going to be is when we are temple for now. Yet we have three or four of the psalm, the most revenue of life, Lord and all in it are8 he is on sale.

Instead, he is not the one who stands and He allies, the rejoin to our humanity, its in Floyd birds and the love actors and texts. The solutions of God's advice will do in heart and head.

He will find labor from the Lord and from his Savior grace.

The star in the midst of Jacob's heart will truly seek your face.

[ 63 : 12 ] You patient this with up your hands, you don't be open wide.

So may the king of glory come forever to abide.

But who is this that shall take care? What more does he receive?

It is the Lord of strength and light, the Lord of victory.

In ancient gates lift up your heads, your doors be open wide.

[ 64 : 37 ] So may the king of glory come forever to abide.

But who is this that shall take care? Who can this sovereign be?

The Lord of mighty, the king of glory come forever to abide.

Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and always. Amen. Amen.