

## Sermon on a doxology for an awesome God.

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We find a doxology about an awesome God in Romans 11:33-36:

**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 counsellor?"**

**"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.**

Most people really don't take the time to think a lot about God. Our society is so busy with itself that it seldom takes the time to consider the eternal things.

But we need to take the time to ask the important questions. Who is God? What is He like? How can we attempt to describe Him? What are His attributes? How does He deal with human beings? Does He have a plan for this world? How is He working out that plan? How has He chosen to reveal Himself to us? These are important questions which deserve our attention. It is a shame that we do not give them the attention they deserve.

Yet Paul has been doing just that thus far in the Letter to the Romans. He has been answering these important questions about God. And in doing so, he has been bringing us into an encounter with this God. And when we are brought into an encounter with the living God, we can never go away from that encounter unaffected. There is something about considering the greatness of God that moves us deeply. We can see in this letter that it certainly moved Paul.

He had been moved **from theology to doxology**. He had been moved from pondering the greatness of God, to praising the glory of God. This is what an encounter with God will do for you. Let's look at some of the effects of an encounter with God.

### 1. It inspires God's praise

Encountering God inspires His praise. We see this in Paul's opening declaration. **Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!**

This is his response to a thorough reflection on and contemplation of God. This is what Paul had been doing in the first 11 chapters of Romans. In writing these words to the Christians in Rome, Paul has been attempting to present a comprehensive understanding of God and His plan. But just the consideration of these sublime truths caused Paul to burst forth into a doxology of praise. Simply setting them down on paper caused Paul to make contact with the living God. And the effect of this contact is praise.

Indeed, praise is the normal response to an encounter with God. When we are ushered into the presence of the majesty and greatness of God, we stand in awe. We experience a taste of how wonderful He is. We glimpse His glory, behold His beauty, taste His goodness, feel His love and it takes our breath away. Everything within us longs to burst out into excited and glorifying praise.

In fact, in heaven praising God is the normal state of affairs. We see a glimpse of this in the Book of Revelation. Around the throne of God the angelic creatures are constantly praising the Lord. The twenty-four elders fall down before Him and declare His glorious praise. It is

probably impossible to be in God's presence and fail to praise Him. He must be praised. And we must praise Him. Encountering God inspires His praise.

## **2. It reveals His transcendence**

Encountering God not only inspires His praise. It discloses His transcendence. **How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!**

All too often we think about God in merely human terms. We think that He is somehow like us. Of course, this is not altogether wrong. But it is not so much that God is like us but that we are like Him. He has created us to reflect His image. But to conclude that we are anything but a pale reflection is to make a serious mistake. You see, we are like God in some ways, **but we cannot even begin to be compared with Him.** God is beyond our comprehension. God is by nature incomprehensible to us. We cannot think in adequate categories to explain Him. We are limited in our understanding and experience.

*In one of his books, C. S. Lewis illustrates our limited ability to even talk about God, with the example of a shellfish trying to tell other shellfish what man is like. Since the shellfish is limited by his own experience, he tells the other shellfish that man has no shell, isn't attached to a rock, and does not live in the water. Other learned shellfish expand his statements, trying to help him get his idea across, and finally conclude that man is a "sort of amorphous jelly (he has no shell), existing nowhere in particular (he is not attached to a rock), and never taking nourishment (there is no water to drift it toward him)." So the conclusion seems to be that man is some sort of starving jelly existing in a dark void without measurements.*

**You see, we have the same (jelly-fish) problem when we try to talk about God. He is simply beyond our understanding.**

This is what we mean by God's transcendence. God transcends not only our understanding of Him but our experience of Him. He is beyond us. Isaiah put it well in Isaiah 55:8-9.

**"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.**

It is good for us to understand that we cannot truly understand God. We cannot make God to be like us. We cannot figure out His ways. We can only learn to trust that He knows what He is doing and that He will do what is right. From time to time we may catch a glimpse of His marvellous plan, and we can be thankful. But if we truly encounter God, we will stand in awe of how gloriously different He is than we thought. He is the Transcendent One.

## **3. It is about His sufficiency**

Encountering God inspires His praise and discloses His transcendence.  
Encountering God reveals His sufficiency.

Paul continues by referring to Isaiah and Job. **"Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor?" "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?"** In other words, Paul is emphasizing the fact that God is sufficient in Himself. He needs nothing from us and owes nothing to us.

It is pitiful to think that anyone could be God's teacher. Is there anything that God has not thought of? Can we teach God something new? Sometimes we arrogantly think that we can counsel God. But someone said, to argue with God is to argue with the One who made it possible to argue. The fact is that God does not need our advice. And the reason is because He is sufficient.

God's sufficiency also makes it possible for us to be provided to. You see, God is the source of our supply. God is sufficient in Himself and we are the recipients of that sufficiency. Indeed, as we draw upon His sufficiency, we receive what we need as believers. Christ is our supply. Christ is our source. Christ is what we need and all we need.

#### **4. It declares His centrality**

Encountering God inspires His praise, discloses His transcendence, and reveals His sufficiency.

Encountering God declares His centrality.

This next declaration that Paul made, is both comprehensive and profound. It reveals the fact that God is central to everything. **For from him and through him and to him are all things.** Here we see that God stands in the centre of all of history. In terms of the created order, God is central. In terms of the human experience, God is central. In terms of the continuance of the universe, God is central. In terms of the future of humanity, God is central.

Notice here the prepositions that Paul uses. He says about God that all things are **from, through, and to** Him. In other words, God is the originator, sustainer, and goal of all things. ***He created all, maintains all, and will receive all back to Himself.*** This truth is well stated in Colossians 1:16-17:

**For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.**

The God we serve is an awesome God. Just in His creation alone, He has revealed His awesome power.

This awesome God will receive all that He has created back to Himself one day. And presently He sustains all that it is. Without God this entire universe would fly apart. To encounter God is to understand His centrality in all things.

#### **5. It demands His glory**

Encountering God inspires His praise, discloses His transcendence, reveals His sufficiency, and declares His centrality.

But there is a final element in our text. Encountering God demands His glory. Paul said – **to him be the glory forever! Amen.**

To encounter God is to understand that He is the only One in the universe to whom all glory is due. This universe virtually shouts the glory of God. And all human kind will one day

acknowledge His glory. And when we look at the marvellous plan of salvation focused on Jesus Christ, we see that one day all of the nations will bow before Him in praise and give glory to God.

**Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)**

We have the privilege to give glory to God here and now. He is certainly worthy of that glory. He is worthy of that praise. And we do not have to wait for the day when Jesus returns to do so. One of the highest privileges we have as human beings, is giving glory to our almighty God. When we are in THAT place, we are where God wants us to be.

One important lesson that we see from Paul's doxology of praise is that **we need to spend time considering the greatness of our awesome God.**

We must meditate upon the implications of His existence.

We must consider the wonderful nature of His plan of salvation.

We must ponder His nature, character, and attributes.

We must desire to experience His power and His grace.

We must focus on God, because He should be our focus.

When we do all these things, our theology will turn to doxology and our lives will be lived in praise to God.

*This is the Word of Gd.*

*Thanks be to God.*

*Amen.*