

*Sermon prepared for Grace Church 10.25.15. Glory Forever. Jonathan Shradar.*

Psalm 145:1-5... “One generation shall commend your works to another.” We communicate God’s majesty to those that follow.

Children innocent and open to awe... Remember places of awe. For me it was Kaufman Stadium (maybe 9 years old). It was huge! I don’t remember the game at all but I remember being awestruck at the magnitude of the place.

It was a time of life when I was really starting to notice my smallness in comparison to created things. Do you remember those experiences? Hoover Dam... The Grand Canyon... The Ocean... Mountains... The Night Sky?

Over time we become familiar with these things and the sense of awe might diminish, but the experience points out something vitally important for us to recognize; its something that actually shapes most of our lives, we were made for awe.

It says something about who we were meant to be, who we are at the core of our being... For many of us it has been the driver of our faith...

In our text this morning we arrive at Paul’s place of awe. As we hear it and think about it we should realize that:

**The sovereignty of God incites wonder and worship in those that believe in Jesus.**

**Romans 11:33-36** “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

34 “For who has known the mind of the Lord,  
or who has been his counselor?”

35 “Or who has given a gift to him  
that he might be repaid?”

36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”

For the last month we have been studying Romans 9, 10, and 11 in our Sovereignty series, God’s Purpose, God’s Plan. In these three chapters we have encountered how God

works out his mercy by election while requiring human response - all in relation to Israel, God's people, and whether the promise to them is void as they remain in disobedience against the gospel of Jesus.

We also get the great hope of chapter 11 that there is still a place for Israel even with newly grafted in branches, and that Israel, the remnant, a future generation, or spiritually, will be saved.

Much of it leaves us thinking hard... to wrap our minds around the way God works. At times these chapters have led to debate and great tensions among those claiming faith in Christ. The end result of Romans 9-11 is not academic dissection or theological argument, but worship. Analysis and argument must give way to adoration and awe.

Paul gives us both great truth and an example for responding to the truth in our text.

This is the end of the doctrinal portion of the letter to the Roman church. Think of the larger context of Romans so far. We have from the beginning heard of a glorious message of good news that is the power of salvation for all who believe. A gift of righteousness, not earned but granted to us by another. We looked in the mirror of Romans and realized humanity's general pursuit of awe in all the wrong places and our need of a savior. And the mind blowing gift of a second Adam who lived obediently in our place and died in our place to justify us before God. And by faith it is made ours.

This justification leads to liberty and those that believe are freed from the control of sin and what's more, empowered by the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit who gives us the ability to cry "Father" as adopted Children of God. These glories roll into the weighty discourse of these chapters on sovereignty and then comes how to live in light of the gospel.

Before Paul goes on to outline the practical implications of the gospel, he falls down before God and worships!

This is what we shall then do as well. This morning let's allow the proper source of awe fill us with it and keep us coming back for more.

**The sovereignty of God incites wonder and worship in those that believe in Jesus.**

## 1) Wonder

“Our study of God and his ways among us should turn our hearts to music... [this text] identifies the proper response of our hearts to God’s sovereign working. Any person who truly appropriates something of Paul’s response in these verses will experience a marked increase in joy.” Hughes

That is exactly what is happening for Paul.

**Romans 11:30-32** “For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, [31] so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy. [32] For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.”

Only the disobedience receive mercy...

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that he might be repaid?”

At the recounting of the providential work of God to save people, the people least likely, Paul can’t help but exclaim the glory of God. If I had been the writer of Romans this text would probably instead be “Wow, Wow, Wow!”

But Paul, inspired by the Spirit, is more articulate than I am, and he uses truth as his worship.

God’s mind (what he thinks) and his activity (what he does) are altogether beyond us! We know this, we see it all over Scripture. God’s ways and thoughts are higher than ours...

Here this truth is zoomed in on salvation and how God works his plan. The news of Jesus living in our place, substituting himself for the rebels, the self-righteous, the broken and needy. And at faith in him the ragamuffin is made royalty, with adoption and union with the reigning king, our savior.

Elsewhere we read that this is seen as folly to many... as foolishness. Because it just doesn't jive with expectations and notions of who God would save. And that God would still hold his hand out to the disobedient... that he would still be claiming Israel for himself... "Right," comes the response... but for Paul it is "Oh..."

Salvation is a gift from God's riches and it immensely enriches those to whom it is given. It is a breathtaking reality that is meant to leave us standing in mouth-gaping awe.

And we won't fully connect the dots... his justice is beyond nailing down... his ways are Inscrutable - impossible to interpret or understand.

When many have abandoned ship and departed from God, Paul says, yes! Hallelujah! I don't know all the ways God is working, the whys and hows, but I know he is pouring out his riches and I can't help but declare his "otherness" in wonder.

It is hard to convey wonder isn't it? Have you ever tried? Having a significant sense of awe... in your gut... you try to describe it but it is just not the same... you have to bring the person before the source of awe for them to get it.

God's methods of operation do not conform to man's preconceptions. And Paul has no more words to describe the working out of salvation he just brings you to the source and says look! The depths of riches of his wisdom and knowledge...

Going back to Psalm 145 and commending God's works to another generation, this is exactly what we do. Bring each other to the source of awe. Proclaim the goodness of God in Christ, all that is done for those that believe in him and let it all sink in and do its work generating wonder, wonder that creates a desire for more of the source, more of him.

And as we do this, we come to many places where we don't have words... we don't know answers. This is the unsearchable and inscrutable parts of God's ways.

Most often we do one of two things in these instances; we avoid them altogether... (we don't preach Romans 9 on election because it is hard to understand or worse yet, we disagree with it)

Or secondly, we attempt to strip the wonder out of it all by forcing God into manageable and neat boxes we fully understand. We intellectualize and translate Biblical realities into mere information. We attempt to do exactly what Paul says cannot be done. Fully

know the mind of God and maybe even give him some wise counsel. We act as if we are giving God a gift by constraining him to theological categories that make us comfortable.

Theology is meant to be fuel for wonder, not a dividing wedge or badge of self-righteousness. The doctrinal truths, however hard to wrap our minds around are not meant to confuse or be stripped of mystery. They are meant to be music in our worship of this amazing God who so loved the world that he sent his son.

We by no means discard study and pursuit of theological understanding but we don't pursue it for its own sake, we pursue it for our sake, that we will be made to wonder and worship in light of what is revealed of God.

The worship of God is evoked, informed and inspired by the vision of God presented in his Word. Worship without theology is bound to degenerate into idolatry... It is the Word of God which calls forth the worship of God.

“...there should be no theology without doxology. There is something fundamentally flawed about a purely academic interest in God. God is not an appropriate object for cool, critical, detached, scientific observation and evaluation. No, the true knowledge of God will always lead us to worship, as it did Paul. Our place is on our faces before him in adoration.” Stott

Like Paul, we wonder at the depth of wisdom and knowledge of God, and we worship in that wonder. And our whole lives become worship as we depend on him and his providence.

## **2) Dependence as Doxology**

Sovereignty...

**Romans 11:36** “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”

This is the sovereignty of God. Yes it is revealed in the calling and saving of people. This is the fullness and wonder of his sovereignty. “For from him and through him and to him are all things.”

Do we get how big the “all things” is here?

“Imagine a perfectly smooth glass pavement on which the finest speck can be seen. Then shrink our sun from 865,000 miles in diameter to only two feet... and place the ball on the pavement to represent the sun. Step off 83 paces (two feet per pace) and to represent proportionately the first planet, Mercury, put down a tiny mustard seed. Take 60 steps more and for Venus, put an ordinary BB. Mark 78 more steps... put down a green pea representing Earth. Step off 108 paces from there, and for Mars put down a pinhead. Sprinkle some fine dust around for the asteroids, the take 788 steps more. For Jupiter, place an orange on the glass. After 934 more steps, put down a golf ball for Saturn. Now it starts to get crazy... Mark out 2,086 steps and for Uranus put down a marble. Another 2,322 steps away you have Neptune, we'll use a cherry for it. That will take 2 ½ miles, and we haven't mentioned Pluto! Step back from all of that and we have a smooth glass surface five miles in diameter, yet just a fraction of the sky... On this five mile surface we have only a seed, a BB, pea, pinhead, some dust, an orange, golf ball, marble and a cherry. Guess how far we would have to go on the same scale before we could put down another two-foot ball to represent the nearest star. Come on, guess. 800 paces? 4000 paces?.. We'd have to go 6,270 miles before we could arrive at that star. Just the first closest star among millions in one galaxy among an unknown number in the whole of the universe... all of it in perpetual motion, perfectly synchronized, the most accurate timepiece known to man.”

All of that from the hand of Almighty God. That is the enormity of God's sovereignty... but it is also detailed so intricately he has directed the breath that just filled your lungs.

**Acts 17:24-28** “The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, [25] nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. [26] And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, [27] that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, [28] for “In him we live and move and have our being’;”

**Colossians 1:16-17** “For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. [17] And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

In this sovereignty, to him be glory forever.

God is the source (from him), sustainer (through him) and goal (to him) of everything.

If it is all of God - we know who we can rely on, who we can depend on, who we can we desperate before... and by doing so we are worshiping.

**Romans 12:1** “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”

To turn ourselves over to the wonder, to the awe of the mercy of God, of his sovereignty, is adding to his forever glory and that is a good place to be.

What might this look like?

If right now we find ourselves attempting to experience wonder or awe in other things, the things of God have become so familiar to us in our cataloging and categorizing that we have moved on to momentary, earthbound hopes and dreams. Because we have done that we get disappointed, angry, envious all too quickly.

When we lose our wonder, we strain under the weight of anxiety, fear of man leaves us paralyzed, and instead of a “Whoa” at the greatness of God, we mutter “whoa is me...”

But, when we fight familiarity, when we dive deeper and look upon Christ with open, expectant eyes, worship becomes our priority. We surrender to God’s will and ways in life and instead of anxiety we experience trust. We find contentment in the gifts God has given us. We are gracious. We can not be shaken. There is none for us but Jesus.

I want that.. I hope you do too.

This is why Paul takes a break here... to wonder; to worship.

**Response:**

**The sovereignty of God incites wonder and worship in those that believe in Jesus.**

The fact is, that none of this is reason to worship and be in awe, apart from Christ. Yes, God's sovereignty is working - so that we may seek him - but apart from Christ this only means being lost in our disobedience and disregard of God. But in Christ, all of the riches... the glorious goodness, is ours.

**Come:** Look upon the glory of God with us, believe in Jesus. Turn from seeking wonder and awe in other places and invite God to wow you with his work for you.

**Resolve to have wonder:** Position yourself for wonder. Read, find community and plead for eyes to see and a heart that remembers, and run to the grace of Christ.

**Live Doxologically:** Surrender and live dependent on the One that runs all things. That had mercy on you and worked to make you his own by the work of Jesus for you. The life of wonder and worship is a life of adventure!

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Reading Romans is like ascending the escalator at the K... All of Scripture is like this... it is standing on the edge of the volcano... watching a sunset over the ocean...

Let's go after wonder together... are you in?