

God Needs Nothing!
Romans 11:36

This morning we have come to the end of this fascinating first section of Romans that is so doctrinally dense. And we have been labouring to get out of this final paragraph where Paul breaks out in doxology - praise to God for his greatness in salvation. We said that Paul praises God for three attributes that are perfections in God, and that is his riches, wisdom and knowledge. And then asks three questions about those attributes but compares God to us, and we realize that none is like God. He is in a category all on his own. And one of the great deficiencies of modern day Christianity is that we just do not think high enough thoughts about God. We think of him basically more like us, so to fall down because you are overwhelmed with his grandeur seems so out of place. And yet the descriptions that God gives us in his word of who He is says that he is the high God of heaven, and that he is in a category all on his own. Every attribute that we can say that we share with God, God is completely other in that attribute. He is altogether perfect. And we need to recognize that God is not like us.

Think of it: what was God doing before he created the universe, and created man in his image? Do you think he was lonely or bored and really needed a hole to fill in his life and that is why he made the world and even you and I? And that answer for why God created the world is taught and believed by many Christians. But I am going to say something to you that might stun or hurt you but needs to be said: God does not need you and I. He doesn't need anyone or anything, in fact he does not need Creation itself. God is not a needy God. To say that he is needy of anything that we could give him would make him dependant on us. It is not that he had some love void or was in some way depressed so he created humanity to fill that emptiness. God is not dependant upon anything for his existence, but he is also not dependent on anything for his happiness. He not only possesses life in himself but possesses the fullness of life in himself.

This doctrine is many times called God's aseity, which comes from the Latin meaning "from himself." He has life in himself, and all comes from him. It is the fundamental difference between God and us. He is totally independent. It really speaks of the Creator and creation distinction because we are needy. He is not. God is infinite in his Being. The difference is beyond measure or illustration. God is more different in his perfections and being to us than the sun to a candle, or the ocean to a rain drop, or the difference between the arctic cap and a snowflake, or the difference between the universe and a rock.

And again, the revelation of God by God in the Bible is meant to take our breath away, our give us a sense of wonder, our cause the hairs on the back of our heads to stand up in holy awe of him who is so beyond us and that does not need us, but at the same time so mindful of us. And the secret again to that holy life of delight in Christ is recognizing and rejoicing in our God. The often quoted Henry Scougal wrote in 1677 these words, "**The worth and excellency of a soul is to be measured by the object of its love.**" Scougal is challenging us with what we love most. If you could be anywhere right now or doing anything, what would it be? That is the worth of your soul. Can you think of anything or anyone more valuable than God? There is so much

substantial and lasting and deep joy that is ours in God. Trivial thoughts of God were never meant to hold us. And I want us to be held by the one who holds all things. So behold our God this morning. Glory in who he is. I want us to I see two things about our God this morning. One is who he is, and the second is the appropriate response to this God as believers.

1. We must see the God who is the source of life. V. 36a.

It is amazing to look at this verse because we see that all of life comes from God. Paul says something similar in a couple of other places in the New Testament. In 1Cor. 8:6, Paul says, **“yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.”** God is Creator and sustainer and all life comes from him. Also we read in Col. 1:16, **“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.”** And these are massive statements. And they are massive statements about God. All life is found in him and has its origin in him.

Now look at what Paul says in the verse before us, **“For from him and through him and to him are all things.”** Now notice the first word there, “for.” It connects it with what Paul has just said who has given a gift that it might be repaid, and Paul is explaining why that cannot come to pass, but I think it is more than that, and answering all three questions, also why no one has known the mind of the Lord, or why no one has been his counsellor. And it is because God is the independent and all sufficient God who does not need anything, but through whom all of life proceeds.

And think of what Paul is saying here in this passage. He is teaching us a number of things about God. First, **“For from him . . .are all things.”** In other words he is the source. All of life comes from him. Now think of what this means. It means that no one brought God into being. If all life and all things are from him, and all means all, then he is eternal, self-existent God. He is the I AM. He is not derived from anything and does not need anything. Only this kind of God can create ex-nihilo or out of nothing. He is the uncaused God who causes all. Paul proclaimed this to the men of Athens in Acts 17:24-25, **“The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.”** God does not need anything from mankind, but man is totally dependent on him for all of life. Life comes from him. He is the source.

But not only is he is the source but, secondly, he is the sustainer of all of life, **“and through him . . .are all things.”** All things are held together, keep functioning because of our mighty God. The sun rises every day, the moon keeps causing the tides, the plants keep absorbing carbon dioxide and producing oxygen that we might breathe, gravity still functions, and more personally our hearts beat at this very moment because God is the God who holds all things together by the power of his will. I mean how great is God! How grand and powerful and wise and knowledgeable is He? You can start to understand something of the praise of Paul to God.

And then lastly he says, **“and to him are all things.”** Ultimately all things are done for him, and the magnification of his name. Isaiah 43:7 says, **“everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”** All are made for a purpose, and that is to reflect the greatness and the glory of God. Listen to what Albert Barnes writes about this, **“The reason or end for which all things were formed ... is to promote his honor and glory... It is not to promote his happiness, for he was eternally happy; not to add anything to him, for he is infinite; but that he might act as God, and have the honor and praise that is due to God.”** And this verse, in and of itself, should humble us but should cause to grow so much in our estimation and in our thoughts of who God is. We are not the centre of the universe. Life does not come through us but through God. We act as everyone should do our will and please us and live for our glory and when they don't they should be punished.

But the main application of verse 36 is that of our salvation, or of our eternal life, because everything that we have said about physical life is true of eternal life that is granted by God through Jesus Christ. It is first of all, salvation is from him, and all of it is from him. And what that means again is that he is the source. He is the one who planned salvation, but he is the one who sent Christ, and in Christ is life. And only the God who has life in himself can provide salvation. If God were not life then he could not give life. Think of the texts over in Isaiah 40 and 44 where we learn that God is not like the pagan gods. They take a piece of wood and fashion it, and then bow down and worship it, and ask it to deliver them. The same wood they use for warming and cooking is the same wood they bow down to as if it could move or walk or function. But God has life in himself, and therefore is able to deliver, is able to give eternal life through Jesus Christ. We read in John 1:4 of Jesus, **“In him was life, and the life was the light of men.”** Life comes from Christ - the God-man. He is the source.

But not only that but secondly, he is the sustainer of that life. We call that the perseverance of the saints or the preservation of those who are truly his. Philipians 1:6, **“And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”** Jesus will bring us to his completion. Or listen to Jude 1, **“Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ.”** We are kept for Jesus Christ by God the Father. And lastly, our salvation magnifies the grace and glory of God. It is all about him. Our salvation does not magnify or show our worth but his worth. Listen to Rev. 5:12 and what all of heaven sings out, **“saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!’”**

Arn't you glad that God is independent, that he does not need anything or anyone? It is the primary reason why he can and does save. Life comes from him. It should overwhelm us with the bigness and the goodness of our God.

2. This should lead to us delightfully glorifying him. V. 36b.

This is a summons for all of us to meditate on these truths and to give God the glory to his name. The statement is basically indicating that we realize who he is and what he has done and end off in worshiping him, lauding him, and rejoicing in him for God being God and for what he has done for us. It is a fitting end to this first 11

chapters of the Book of Romans, because what comes next is command after command in how we should live in this fallenness reality. We have been discussing these last several years in the book of Romans - indicatives or truths about God and salvation. Now we move to imperatives or commands. But you cannot understand the need of the command unless you understand the truth and the glory and worth of the God of that truth that undergirds it. Look at 12:1 that we will look at next time together, **“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.”** Notice the word “therefore” and the appeal is based on the “mercies of God.” And notice that how we live is spiritual worship. It is giving God the glory. It is serving and delighting in him. And the only way we should do that is if that last statement is true.

And notice what our verse says, **“To him be glory forever. Amen.”** The focus is on God. It is to him that is the direction of our thoughts, aspirations, loyalties, joys and all of our lives. And we are to live lives as 12:1 says living sacrifices - all of life is to be lived for God. And how long? Forever! He is the God of infinite worth who has provided infinite salvation. And the “Amen,” at the end puts a stamp on this whole statement and way of life. Paul brings out the intensity of this praise and desire for his life and all believers to live and function for the glory of God. Many start well and then falter. Others go in spurts but all of life is about his glory and not me.

Now let me state it again - God does not need us. He didn't create everything because he needed more glory or there was not enough glory or he just was not self-satisfied in himself. Remember, although God is one in being he is three in Persons. Listen to John 17:5, **“And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.”** This verse indicates that there was a sharing of glory before there was anything. There was love and communion and glory before the creation of the world. And this communion between the members of the Trinity have always been more sweet, delightful and satisfying than any communion that he could ever have with finite humanity. There was certainly no loneliness here, but pure joy and fellowship in God.

Now here is the question that we need to grapple with then. All of life comes from God. God is the un-needy God, who does not need anything from us. God does not need our praise, service or even for us glorifying his name. He does not need our service. He is not made more complete because I believed in him or I preached this sermon. Does God's absolute independency and self sufficiency mean that our lives and existence are meaningless? Now that is a great question because in light of his glory and majesty and otherness, we could easily come to that conclusion. But the reason why we have meaning and significance is because God created us and has determined that we would be meaningful to him. Listen to why God made us and saved us in Eph. 1:11-12 and listen to the significance and meaning at the end, **“In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.”** We hope in Christ and that enters into praise to his glory. That is meaning.

And listen to the delight that God's people will be to him in the end in Isaiah 62:3-5 and realize that we have meaning before God because of God. This is when

God restores all things and there is a restoration of God's people, **"You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you."** Listen to what Wayne Grudem writes about this, **"God does not need us for anything, yet it is the amazing fact of our existence that he chooses to delight in us and to allow us to bring joy to his heart. This is the basis for personal significance in the lives of all God's people: to be significant to God is to be significant in the most ultimate sense. No greater personal significance can be imagined."**

So think of it then - we can serve him, praise Him, preach him, and he will be glorified and honoured and magnified through our efforts. But in all those efforts and obedience and dedication to God, we have to remember who we are. We are creation, everything comes from God. So although we are giving to God, we are giving what he first has given us. We are so often like young children. One of their siblings will come into the bedroom that they occupy and they will say - get out of my room! Now what is wrong with that statement? The thing that is wrong is that it is not his or her room. They do not own it. It is the parent's property, and ultimately it is not the parent's property but God's. He owns everything. He owns all of life. He owns our salvation. And he gives that we might give back, in other words, all of life is a stewardship that he has given for his own glory. He didn't need to, but he has given us. Not one breath, one minute or one dollar is truly ours. This is what gives life its significance. Listen to the verse, **"For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen."** There is the value and there is the glory.

Now let me ask you as we close this morning: is this the way you look at God? Or do you see him as needy either for your service or some emotional void in his life? God never derives life from you. You derive life from him in both the physical sphere and the spiritual sphere. If that is true it makes all of life a response to the God of life, the God of our salvation. And our cry should be - **"To him be glory forever. Amen!"** And next week we will begin to see what that life looks like that is lived for his eternal glory.