

"To the Glory of God Alone"

Romans 11:36

As we conclude our series on the 5 Solas of the Reformation, we come to the Glory of God Alone. While the church of Rome would say they sought to do all to God's glory, in practice that wasn't true. Because they taught that your good deeds, prayers and obedience to the sacraments and buying indulgences all contributed toward one's salvation, then it wasn't about God's glory but to your own glory or credit. Luther and the Reformers understood from Scripture that God's holy Word was the lone authority for life and godliness. It alone teaches us how to have a relationship with God. No man-made ruler had any right to declare whether anyone else was right or not right with God. The Word alone reveals God's plan of salvation which He initiated by grace alone (because we didn't deserve salvation). Our response is faith alone in Christ alone (not in our works) who once for all paid the penalty for sin on the cross. That results in God being glorified alone for saving us and as believers in Christ it is now our duty to live for the glory of God alone because as Isaiah 42:8 says,

⁸ *"I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols.*

The Bible is full of verses talking about the glory of God and our need to glorify Him but perhaps none summarizes it better than the doxology Paul writes at the end of Rom. 11

³³ *Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!* ³⁴ *"Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?"* ³⁵ *"Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?"* ³⁶ *For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.*

That little statement "**From Him and through Him and to Him are all things**" says a lot. We're going to use those 3 prepositions [From, through and to] as a springboard from which we'll see why God must be glorified.

The preposition 'from' refers to 'source'. Everything comes from somewhere. When Paul says From Him are all things he gives us one reason why we must glorify God,

Because He is the Source of Everything Good **(11:36a)**

James 1:17 *Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.*

God is the source from whom everything good comes. We can't take credit for anything if we really think about it. Everything good in us and around us comes from God. That includes . . .

The world that we see and don't see (1:20-21; Col. 1:16)

God and Jesus created our world. In Rom. 1 Paul talks about God's invisible qualities are seen through His creation. He says,

²⁰ *For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are*

without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Paul says when you look at creation You see the invisible hand of God written all over it. Our response should be to glorify God – to give Him credit or make His Name known for what is all around us. Notice how glorify and thanks are connected. To thank someone is to humble oneself and acknowledge you have been served. To glorify God is to humbly acknowledge God's sovereignty over you, His blessing to you and His control over your life.

Last week we looked at Col. 1 when studying Jesus alone. Let's look at it again.

¹⁵ The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ 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.

Even what we can't see (at least with the naked eye) but know is there that we 'discover' under a microscope or an x-ray or an ultrasound. But also the spiritual realm. The Holy Spirit, angels, heaven. God and Jesus are the source of everything good and deserve our praise to their glory. We glorify God when we graciously correct our friend who wants to give Mother Nature glory when we give God credit for a beautiful day. To give God the credit amongst ourselves is praise and encouragement. To give God glory in front of our unsaved family and friends is evangelism.

But we have to be careful we love God more than the world He created. Rom. 1 says people exchange God's glory with His creation. The ultimate insult to God is to ignore Him and even reject Him while enjoying (even worshipping in some cases) what He has made. And yet how often do we fail to glorify God in front of others about the world He has made or the way He has made us?

We must glorify God because He made . . .

Our unique selves (Ps. 139:13-16)

Ps. 139:13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. ¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

David knew God by faith and so glorified God because of how unique God made him. Satan is never more successful than when he convinces people (even Christians) they are worthless. One of the best ways we can glorify God is to point out to people how unique they are in God's eyes because He made them – saved and unsaved. Science proves this. We all have unique DNA and finger prints and personalities. That means God thought this through before He made each person. That also means He must have had a reason for why He made us the way we are and therefore that gives each person value and purpose. But do we look at everyone that way? Or do we prejudge the homeless, the tattooed, ear & nose-pierced teen, the native, the turban, etc., and forget that God made them too?

When we see the variety of life – all ages including the unborn – do we glorify God because of how unique everyone is, which tells us how unique He is?

"From Him are all things" comes at the end of Romans 11 which closes a section that began in ch. 9:1. From 9:1-11:32 Paul has been explaining the sovereign plan of God to save both Jews and

Gentiles. Another reason God deserves being glorified because everything comes from Him includes

His mercies that makes salvation possible (9:1-11:32)

The Reformer's emphasised the grace and mercies of God in initiating salvation for us when we don't deserve it. This is how Paul summarizes how God works in both Jew and Gentile here in ch. 11.

²⁸ As far as the gospel is concerned, they [Israel] are enemies for your [Gentiles] sake; but as far as election is concerned, they [Israel] are loved on account of the patriarchs, ²⁹ for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. ³⁰ Just as you [Gentiles] who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, ³¹ 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. ³² For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

God extends mercy to us by not pouring out His wrath on us sinners, but instead extends grace by initiating a relationship with us through faith in Jesus Christ alone. And when Paul switches focus to applying these truths to us on a practical basis in 12:1 how does he begin?

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, 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.

God is the source of this world and worlds beyond. God is the One who made us. God is the One who makes salvation available to us undeserving sinners. That's worth glorifying Him about. But that's just the first part. "For from Him and through Him are all things". God deserves to be glorified because . . .

He Gives us the Means to Serve Him (11:36b)

God didn't stop being involved in the world after He created it. We read in Col. 1:16-17 that Jesus not only created everything but He sustains it. Jesus said in John 5:17 that

"My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working."

So God and Jesus are always working generally in the world but specifically in your life and my life from birth to eternity . More importantly . . .

From start to finish (Phil. 1:6)

⁴ In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Paul was very confident that the work God began at salvation will continue and carry on to completion. If God began a saving work in our lives then God will complete it. Salvation is the work of God that means all things are working through Him. It is His power working through us that enables us to grow and mature and serve Him. Rom. 8:29-30 says

²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Foreknew, predestined, called, justified, glorified. Our sanctification is the ongoing work of God in our life to fulfil His promises to save us and bring us into His presence one day. God is the subject of all these verbs. But we often make our-selves the subject of our salvation. 'Yeah but what if I did this' or 'Yeah but what if such and such happens'. See how we change our salvation to be about our failed works instead of God's completed work? God sees us from start to finish. I don't understand it all, I just believe it to be true and live by it. That word 'yeahbut' does not exist in the Bible even though many Christians quote it as if it does.

How does God work through us from start to finish? What is the means by which He enables us to serve Him?

Through the gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12)

In 1 Cor. 12 Paul explains how at salvation the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us and equip us with spiritual abilities that we were unable to do before we were saved. We read in

⁷ Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸ To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

The Spirit equips us to do all things through Him. He distributes to each one as He determines. Not we are to sign up for a seminar to see how we can get these gifts. That's why they're called "gifts" – something we receive from someone else; here from God's Spirit.

When we read this passage only trying to determine what each gift is and whether we have it or not, we miss something very important.

*^{12:7} Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸ To one . . . to another . . . ⁹ to another . . . to another . . . ¹⁰ to another . . . to another . . . to another . . . to another . . . and to still another . . . ¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to **each one**, just as he determines.*

How else does God do all things through us?

Through the gift of one another - His people

You are the gift through the Spirit with your gifts as He determined to give you for the common good of one another. That's why it's so selfish and ungodly when we purposely choose not to be with God's people when we could have. That's why the author of Hebrews says in 10:25 '*Do not forsake the assembling of one another as some are in the habit of doing but encourage one another all the more as we see the day approaching.*' What day? The day of Jesus' return when He will take us to be with Him and then review our life as to how we served Him. And then He'll reward us accordingly, which is explained in 1 Cor. 3:10-15.

If you have read any of Ann Voskmap's books this is the drum she beats continually. You and I are God's gifts to each other and to a lost world. Be the gift by giving of yourself through His gifts that He means for us to be.

From Him and through Him and to Him are all things. The preposition “to” [or “for” some translations have], speaks of direction. This is all going somewhere and God is the orchestra leader directing us to finish this beautiful symphony He’s already written that will result in His ultimate glory. God must be glorified because . . .

He is the Goal to Which Everything is Heading **(11:36c)**

Everything that comes from God will end up like God – glorified. This includes . . .

The glorification of creation (8:20-21; Rev. 21:1ff)

In Hab. 2:14 God promises

¹⁴ For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

Everything on earth will completely reflect God’s glory one day. That means sin will have to be removed that affects the creation. Paul already pointed this out in Rom. 8:20-21

²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

The creation awaits the removal of and freedom from sin’s effects. That will happen when sin is removed from the children of God’s presence as well. This is a sobering reality as much as it is a long anticipated joy. In Rev. 20:11

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. ¹⁵ Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

We who have our names written in the Book of Life (singular) are not part of this scene. Those who choose to earn their salvation by their deeds are judged by those deeds as recorded in those books (plural) are thrown into the lake of fire. Works don’t save you. Then death and Hades are never to be seen or heard from again. The present earth and heavens have already fled at this point from God’s presence where they will be purged of all sin and ready to receive the New Jerusalem as recorded in 21:1,

Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

So the creation will be glorified as will

God's people (Rom. 8:28-30)

God is sovereignly steering us to glorification even using the difficulties of life.

²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Our sin nature will be gone. Sin won't even enter our mind, which will be so wonderful. And then finally, only we'll be able to see as much as He allows

The fullness of God's glory (Rev. 21:22-24)

²² I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.

No temple. No sun or moon. The glory of God is enough for us. God provides everything for us for all eternity and we will enjoy His glory forever. This is what Jesus wants for us by the way. The night before He died He prayed to God,

John 17:24 "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

Jesus wants us to see His glory which we will see along with God's glory. From Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever.

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!

We are trying to get a grasp of all that God is and does and it's just mind boggling.

³⁴ "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?"

Many try and counsel God. They think they have a better plan than Him but God's plan is solid and glorifies Him, not us.

³⁵ "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?"

No one. God owes nobody anything. His mercy spares us from His wrath. His grace opens the doors to see Him.

³⁶ For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please contact us at oliviet@rideau.net