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Soli Deo Gloria

Romans 11.36

Series: The God We Worship

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The Village Church

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I. **Soli Deo Gloria**

- A. Robert and James Haldane were notable Scotsmen, members of the aristocracy, whose lives spanned the end of the 18th Century and the first half of the 19th Century
 - 1. Once they were converted they sold much of their land holdings and committed themselves to the gospel ministry
 - a. James becoming an evangelist and pastor in Edinburgh where he served for half a century
 - b. Robert worked as an evangelist in Europe
 - 2. Robert became one of the greatest commentators on the book of Romans
 - a. Used by pastors even today
- B. One day, in 1815, Robert Haldane was visiting Geneva
 - 1. Now, you might think of Geneva as the hotbed of reformed, protestant Christianity
 - a. The location of Calvin's ministry in the 16th Century
 - b. The launchpad of protestant missions in Europe in the 16th and 17th Century
 - 2. But this was the 19th Century – nearly 250 years after Calvin
 - a. And Geneva had grown cold to the gospel
 - b. Even its theological school had become quite liberal
 - 3. Haldane was in the park one day, minding his own business, reading his Bible
 - a. And he became engaged in conversation with a small group of young men who were theology students at the university
 - b. In their conversation it became apparent to Haldane that these young men really didn't understand the gospel
 - c. Here they were, studying theology, looking forward to becoming pastors, and they weren't saved!
 - d. Can that really happen?
 - e. You bet it can!
 - 4. Well, Haldane invited the young men to come to his room and study the Bible with him twice a week
 - a. They willingly complied
 - b. And in time, all of them were converted

5. And not only were they converted, they became some of the most significant leaders of protestant, reformed Christianity in Europe in the 19th Century
 - a. One was Merle d'Aubigné, who wrote a class text on the *History of the Reformation in the Sixteenth Century*
 - b. Another was Louis Gaussen who wrote an important treatise on the inspiration and authority of the scriptures
 - c. Another was Frédéric Monod, who founded the Free Churches in France
 - d. Another was Francois Bonifas who became the chair of Church History at a European theological school at the age of 29
 - e. And yet another was César Malan, the founder of an independent church and a notable hymn writer whose hymns are still sung in the French churches
6. This was a who's who of Protestant European Christianity in the 19th Century
 - a. All from Robert Haldane's little small group Bible study
7. This eventually came to be known as Haldane's Revival
- C. Aside from the book of Romans, what was it that so captivated these men, and so transformed them?
 1. According to Haldane, who in a letter to a faculty member at the University of Geneva, it was the overwhelming sense of the sovereignty of God as found in the passage we have just been studying: **Romans 11.33-36**
 2. Haldane:
 - a. There was nothing brought under the consideration of the students of divinity who attended me at Geneva which appeared to contribute so effectually to overthrow their false system of religion, founded on philosophy and vain deceit, as the sublime view of the majesty of God presented in the four concluding verses of this part of the epistle: Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things. Here God is described as his own last end in everything that he does.
 - b. Judging of God as such an one as themselves, they were at first startled at the idea that he must love himself supremely, infinitely more than the whole universe, and consequently must prefer his own glory to everything besides. But when they were reminded that God in reality is infinitely more amiable and more valuable than the whole creation and that consequently, if he views things as they really are, he must regard himself as infinitely worthy of being more valued and loved, they saw that this truth was incontrovertible.
 3. In other words, it was the greatness of God, the glory of God and of Him alone, that was responsible for this astonishing transformation
 - a. Hence, **Soli Deo Gloria** – Glory be to God alone
 4. **Isaiah 42:8** (ESV) —

- a. 8 I am the LORD; that is my name;
 - b. my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.
 - 5. And I would venture to say, it will be overriding vision of the majesty of God that will transform you too
 - a. As you allow this text to penetrate into your soul as we bring this section of Romans to a conclusion
- D. **Romans 11:33–36** (ESV) —
 - 1. 33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!
 - 2. 34 “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?”
 - 3. 35 “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?”
 - 4. 36 **For from him and through him and to him are all things.**
 - 5. **To him be glory forever. Amen.**
- E. Note, first, the comprehensiveness and universality of the first part of v. 36
 - 1. “From him and through him and to him are all things”
 - 2. Now, the word “all” is capable of a variety of meanings depending on its context
 - a. Sometimes it’s just an exaggeration, like “all the people are following him” – meaning, lots of people are following him; just seems like everybody is
 - b. Or sometimes it’s just restricted to a category – like “all the Jews” or “all the Pharisees”
 - 3. But in this case, “all things” means “all things”
 - a. That there is not an iota, a smidgen, molecule, not anything that is not subject to God
 - 4. And then, look at what the extent is of God’s superintendency
 - a. “From him and through him and to him” are “all things”

II. **God the Origin**

- A. **“From him”** – God is the origin of all things
 - 1. Nothing exists apart from God
 - 2. It’s actually become something of an amusement to me about how secularists wrestle with such issues as the origin of life, or the origin of the universe
 - a. And a lot of thought is expended, and a lot of ink spilt, arguing over how the universe came into existence
 - b. Or how life came into existence
 - 3. Truth be told, the question is why anything exists!
 - a. Because apart from the divine Being, nothing would exist!
- B. God is the origin of all things
 - 1. All things come from Him
 - a. They must
 - b. Because if they didn’t come from Him, they would have come from nothing

- c. And out of nothing, nothing comes!
2. Nothing cannot be the cause of something!

III. God the Means

- A. But the text doesn't stop there
 1. God is not only the origin of all things
 2. He is the means by which all things exist
- B. "And through him" are all things
 1. He is the means as well as the beginning of all things
- C. God's Son, as we have found in our study of Romans, is the agent in the Triune Godhead who operates the universe
 1. Hebrews 1:3 (ESV) —
 - a. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature,
 - b. and he upholds the universe by the word of his power....
- D. Why is it that we all do not just cease to exist in this very moment?
 1. Why don't we just vaporize into the ether? (Whatever that is!)
 2. Simply because God wills that we exist for this very moment
 - a. And He alone makes sure it happens
 - b. That we continue in our state of being
 3. And we are dependent on Him for every breath that we take
 - a. For every beat of our hearts
 - b. Every electrical impulse to enervates our bodies
- E. God is the origin and the means of existence of all things
 1. But the text doesn't stop there!

IV. God the End

- A. God is not just the origin of all things
 1. He's not just the means by which all things continue to exist
 2. He is also the end, or goal, or purpose of the existence of all things
- B. "To him are all things"
 1. So, "from him, and through him, and to him" are all things
- C. God is the ultimate meaning and purpose of every being, every thing, every person, every animal, every plant – all things find their existence and their ultimate purpose in God alone
 1. That's true with people – with *all* people!
 - a. Even those people who reject God
 - b. Even those people who pretend God doesn't exist
- D. There are a number of texts of scripture that echo these profound truths
 1. 1 Corinthians 8:6 (ESV) —
 - a. 6 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.
 2. Ephesians 4:4–6 (ESV) —

- a. 4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—
 - b. 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism,
 - c. 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.
3. Colossians 1:16 (ESV) —
- a. 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.
- E. There are two areas where we might do well to apply these great truths

V. God and the Creation

- A. God is the origin, the means, and the end of all things that are made, all of the creation
- 1. That is, God is the origin, the means and the end of the entire universe
- B. John Murray:
- 1. God is the source of all things in that they have proceeded from him; he is the Creator. He is the agent through whom all things subsist and are directed to their proper end. And he is the last end to whose glory all things will redound.
- C. Since the universe exists in time, there was a time when it did not exist
- 1. That is one of the seminal discoveries in astrophysics in the last 100 years – that the universe had a beginning
 - 2. Which means, there was a time when God was alone
 - a. That is to say, when He alone existed and nothing else
 - 3. Now, don't worry about God – He wasn't lonely
 - a. In Himself, in His Triune self, He was perfectly glorious, perfectly happy, perfectly satisfied in perfect fellowship with Himself – Father, Son and Holy Spirit
 - b. He eternally existed and eternally exists
 - 4. Boice:
 - a. Before there was a sun, the Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – dwelt in light ineffable. Before there was an earth on which to rest it, the throne of God stood firm. If that great God, dwelling in perfect solitude, chose to create anything at all, whether the universe of which we are a part or any other possible universe, it is clear that the conception of it and plans for it must have come from him, since there was no other from whom they could have come.
- D. But not only was God the origin of the universe, the actual plan and implementation of its existence came from Him as well.
- 1. So God is also the means through which all things exist
 - 2. Boice:
 - a. When God set out to create the heavens and earth, he did not call for help, since there were none to help him. He did not even make

use of existing matter, for matter itself did not exist. God created everything out of nothing.

3. We are creative
 - a. It's part of who we are as made in the image of God
 - b. But our creativity is a derivative creativity
 - c. We create using the material resources God provides
 - d. And we use the gifts and talents that God gives us to do it
 - e. The more proper term for our own creativity is "recreation"
 - f. Recreation is re-creation; we create with stuff God had already created
4. He is the means by which all things exist
 - a. Aristotle's unmoved mover, his uncaused cause
- E. But not only is God the origin of the universe, and the means by which the existence of the universe continues to exist, He is also the end for which it is all made
 1. It was all made for God!
 - a. For His glory
 - b. For His enjoyment!
 2. Boice:
 - a. ... since God is a purposeful God and planned the universe for an altogether wise and noble purpose before any of us existed, even in his own mind, it is clear that he could not have taken as his purpose a creature that did not then exist. And that means that his motive must be entirely in himself.
- F. What a humbling truth!
 1. To think that the existence of everything – every sun, every solar system, every quark, every black hole, every star, every galaxy, every living cell, every mitochondria, every creature, every plant, every bacteria, every fungus, every animal, every human – all are from Him and through Him and for Him!
 2. We are all made for God's glory
 3. Even the most ardent atheist, as he argues and objects and rationalizes – does so with the very intellectual faculties God gives him
 - a. And every time the atheist opens his mouth he cannot help but affirm the existence of the all-wise God
 4. The atheist would be better off if he just, well, shut up!
 - a. Because even with his flawed rationality, he cannot help but give God glory!
 - b. He affirms God even as he tries to deny Him!

VI. God and Salvation

- A. The other area we should examine, especially in light of our study of Romans – the great treatise of the gospel – is how God is the origin, the means, and the end of our salvation
- B. First of all, our salvation is *from* God; God is the origin of our salvation

1. He planned it – for no one else could have planned it
 - a. It was planned, first of all, before the foundation of the world
 - b. In other words, before the creation of the world
 - c. And no one else was around!
 2. But no one could have planned the kind of salvation that God planned
 - a. Where His own justice and righteousness would be upheld
 - b. But at the same time, His mercy and grace would accomplish salvation for all who would trust in Him
 - c. A salvation that depended entirely upon God and not at all upon human merit or human ingenuity
 - d. A salvation that not only accomplished salvation, but in its application made justified sinners grow into the image and likeness of Christ, and become enabled to fulfill the law of God by the Spirit-filled life
 3. No other being could have conjured up the details of such a salvation
 - a. Including the moment in history when the Savior had to come into this world
 - b. The place where He would be born
 - c. How He was identified by John the Baptist
 - d. How He demonstrated His credentials as the God-man, the incarnate Son of God, through His authoritative teaching, His miracles, and His crucifixion and resurrection
 - e. As well as His ascension into heaven
 4. No other being could possibly have dreamed up a salvation like that
 - a. It was all from God
 - b. He planned every detail, from beginning to end
- C. But then, God was the One through whom salvation came
1. He did it through God the Son – Jesus Christ
 2. Jesus paid it all!
 - a. He lived the life you and I couldn't live
 - b. He suffered and died because of our sin
 - c. He died and took upon Himself the just punishment for our sin, experiencing the wrath of God
 - d. And he rose from the dead, confirming His identity as the Son of God, conquering the last enemy of death
 - e. And finally defeating Satan in a way that Satan couldn't have anticipated
- D. But not only that, God and His glory were the end, the goal of our salvation
1. Now, we don't usually think of it like that
 - a. We think we were the goal of God's plan of redemption
 - b. Certainly, we were the objects of God's saving plan
 - c. We are the people for whom Christ died
 2. But ultimately, our salvation was done for His glory
 - a. For it was in God's saving grace that demonstrated His nature and character in ways that He couldn't have otherwise

- b. He demonstrated His holiness and righteousness, for His demands for obedience to His divine character were fulfilled in Christ
 - c. He demonstrated His legitimate anger toward sin and sinners – His wrath – by His Son taking upon Himself our just punishment
 - d. He demonstrated His mercy and grace by giving us our salvation, not based on anything in our character – for we had no righteousness of our own
 - e. He demonstrated His sovereignty by choosing to save some sinners and passing over others
 - f. He demonstrated His power by orchestrating events, from the very birth of Jesus all through to His death and resurrection – using even the evil intentions of human beings to accomplish our redemption
- 3. It's hard to imagine any other plan displaying the glory of God in a greater fashion
 - 4. It's not surprising, then, that when Jesus looks to the completion of the redemptive plan, leading to His crucifixion and resurrection, that He speaks of it as glorifying God
 - 5. **John 17:1-5** (ESV) —
 - a. 1 When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you,
 - b. 2 since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.
 - c. 3 And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.
 - d. 4 I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.
 - e. 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.
- E. So our salvation, from beginning to end, was from God
 - 1. He is the origin of our salvation
 - 2. He is the means by which our salvation was accomplished
 - 3. And He is the end, the goal of our salvation

VII. **To Him Be Glory**

- A. Which is why Paul can do nothing else than conclude this glorious doxology with these words:
 - 1. **Romans 11:36** (ESV) —
 - a. 36 ... **To him be glory forever. Amen.**
- B. To God alone be the glory
 - 1. We end where we began – **Soli Deo Gloria**
- C. So let's put it all together and ask, “So, what does that mean for us?”
 - 1. Well, it all should certainly lead us to humbly bow before Him and worship Him

- a. For all things come from Him, and are accomplished through Him, and are done for His ultimate glory
- D. Think of your salvation
1. Whom do you thank for your salvation?
 - a. Do you thank yourself?
 - b. Do you pat yourself on the back and say what a wonderful person you are that you chose Christ?
 2. Of course, if you are a Christian, you don't
 - a. You cast yourself on Him and on His mercy
 3. You don't think of His choice of you and say, "My, what a wise choice you have made, God, for I am such a worthy person!"
 - a. No! Of course you don't
 - b. You say, "I can't believe why you chose me, a sinner; why you selected an unprofitable servant to be in your family; why you decided to take an enemy and make him your friend"
 4. You don't think of the justice of God and say to God, "You recognized that I'm just and righteous and deserve to be in heaven"
 - a. No! Of course you don't!
 - b. You say,
 - (1) Not the labors of my hands
 - (2) Can fulfill the Law's demands
 - (3) Could my zeal no respite know
 - (4) Could my tears forever flow
 - (5) All for sin could not atone
 - (6) Thou must save, and Thou alone
 - c. You say,
 - (1) Nothing in my hand I bring
 - (2) Simply to the cross I cling
 - (3) Naked, come to Thee for dress
 - (4) Helpless, look to Thee for grace
 - (5) Foul, I to the fountain fly
 - (6) Wash me, Savior, or I die!
 5. You don't thank yourself even for the decision you made to trust in Jesus – for you indeed had to make a decision!
 - a. No, you thank God even for that decision, for He gave you the gift of faith (**Ephesians 2.8**)
 - b. And when you were born again, you credit the Holy Spirit for that, not yourself
 6. So, from beginning to end, you thank God for your salvation
 - a. And now you know why it all took place
 - b. It all took place so the God would receive glory!
 - c. And because it has all been because of His grace, you are all the more eager to give Him all the glory He is due
- E. And in the end, you will join all the saints in heaven, by casting down your crowns that you have acquired through your faithful following of Jesus

1. And you will cast them before the God who has been responsible for your existence and your hope of eternity and you will say with all the saints:
 2. **Revelation 4:11** (ESV) —
 - a. 11 “Worthy are you, our Lord and God,
 - b. to receive glory and honor and power,
 - c. for you created all things,
 - d. and by your will they existed and were created.”
 3. And you will also say:
 4. **Revelation 5:9–10** (ESV) —
 - a. 9 ... “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals,
 - b. for you were slain,
 - c. and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,
 - d. 10 and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”
 5. **Revelation 5:12** (ESV) —
 - a. 12 ... “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,
 - b. to receive power and wealth and wisdom
 - c. and might and honor and glory and blessing!”
- F. Because to Him be glory, forever!
1. Amen!