

**Romans 11:11-21,33-36**

<sup>11</sup> Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. <sup>12</sup> But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring!

<sup>13</sup> I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I take pride in my ministry <sup>14</sup> in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. <sup>15</sup> For if their rejection brought reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? <sup>16</sup> If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.

<sup>17</sup> If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, <sup>18</sup> do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. <sup>19</sup> You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." <sup>20</sup> Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but tremble. <sup>21</sup> For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.

**Doxology**

<sup>33</sup> Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable his judgments,  
and his paths beyond tracing out!

<sup>34</sup> "Who has known the mind of the Lord?

Or who has been his counselor?" <sup>b</sup>

<sup>35</sup> "Who has ever given to God,  
that God should repay them?" <sup>c</sup>

<sup>36</sup> For from him and through him and for him are all things.

To him be the glory forever! Amen.

Dear Redeemed Children of God,

What do you say to yourself or others when you see something that blows your mind? Wow! Amazing! That's awesome! I think of a trip we made a few years ago. Remember what a trip is? Haha. It's been a while since any of us could travel very far. But a couple years ago Patsy and I drove through the US to the Grand Canyon. Along the way there are amazing natural sites to behold.

It starts with just leaving Edmonton and driving through the lush crops growing alongside the QE2 highway. I always love the look of the yellow canola fields. I remember years ago driving through Saskatchewan and seeing several fields of tall and fully blooming yellow sunflowers. I was so enthralled by the view that I forget to take pictures. But now back toward the Grand Canyon we drove through Utah and into Zion National Park. We hiked around and we biked up parts of the mountains there. And, of course, we got to go back down, which is always exhilarating for me and a little more scary for Patsy who holds the brakes more than I do. The mountains were glorious. And so is the human engineering that cuts roads and tunnels through these peaks. It's similar to a drive through some of the canyons in BC. Glorious views.

Standing on the edge of the Grand Canyon was breathtaking! I don't recall the dimensions but it's ginormous! At certain places, you can hardly see the other side. The Colorado River snakes through it, giving life to the trees that grow there. Hiking down to the bottom and back sucked every bit of energy out of us, left our legs aching for days but still left our minds and hearts overjoyed and overwhelmed with the majesty of this part of creation.

And when we got back into Utah, not that many miles east of Zion Park, off a different road, we entered Bryce Canyon National Park. If you've been to the hoodoos in southern Alberta, you've only had a tiny taste of this place. It looked like a sunken city of castles and temples with grand turrets, spirals and bell towers. It is much smaller than the Grand Canyon but much more majestic for me, at least.

Many times on that trip my mouth hung open in awe, a sense of glory filled my heart and words like amazing and awesome flowed from my lips.

So, getting into our reading for today, especially the doxology we read at the end, we are getting Paul's response to the theological trip he's taken us on from Romans 1 to 11. His mouth is hanging open in awe and wonder at God's great and gracious saving work.

Continuing to use some nature imagery, you might say that Paul got us started by driving us past a tornado ravaged forest where every tree you could see was ripped bare if it was still standing and the rest were snapped off like twigs and left scattered all around—in piles, crisscrossed, and all dead from being disconnected from the roots and their lifegiving water. In some areas, everything got so dried out that the hot sun reflecting off a smooth rock or something like that, started a fire that burned huge patches of the dead trees.

That's a picture of sin. People going their own way and reaping pain, sorrow and ultimately death. Paul writes, you might recall, in Romans chapter 3:

*Rom 3:10 "There is no one righteous, not even one;*

*<sup>11</sup> there is no one who understands,  
no one who seeks God.*

*<sup>12</sup> All have turned away,  
they have together become worthless;..*

*<sup>13</sup> "Their throats are open graves;  
their tongues practice deceit."*

*"The poison of vipers is on their lips."*

*<sup>14</sup> "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."*

*<sup>15</sup> "Their feet are swift to shed blood;*

*<sup>16</sup> ruin and misery mark their ways,*

*<sup>17</sup> and the way of peace they do not know."*

*<sup>18</sup> "There is no fear of God before their eyes."*

This is sin-ravaged humanity.

Then Paul drives us farther to see the good news of Jesus' redeeming work that pays the price to restore the broken world. He speaks, first of all, about our spiritual renewal. We are made right with God through faith in Jesus, not through anything we do. We learn of the abundant streams of God's grace that awaken our parched souls. This grace of God not only saves us for eternal life but now already strengthens us with peace and joy and hope as we live in a world that still feels the ravages of sin around us. The creation groans, Paul says, in chapter 8. And we groan due to hardships of various kinds, like the tornado struck forests with their broken trees. However, God in his grace works in us through these trials to build up our character and give us hope for a brighter future, says chapter 6. He's always working to make us more like Jesus; in fact, says Paul in chapter 8, all things work together for our good. God is always redeeming and never forsaking.

I'm just barely touching the riches and the glory of our salvation as Paul describes it from Romans 3 to 11. In the last two chapters we read, he talks about such mysterious parts of God's saving work at election. Truly that doctrine can baffle the minds of a lot of people. But Paul's point is not to help us understand the mind of God. That's impossible. Instead, he wants us to marvel at the saving work of God.

If you think of a forest ravaged by a tornado, followed by a fire that blackens everything, we might drive by that scene and write it off as unredeemable. Lost beyond redemption. But Paul has taken us on a theological journey that shows the power of God's redeeming love for the world.

As much as there remains mystery in God's ways because God is God and his ways in large part are far beyond our ability to comprehend, we bow. We bow in adoration because what we've seen on this journey is already mind-blowing. We see a God who has not given up when humanity seems hell-bent on going our own way and destroying ourselves. He would not give up. He redeems. He redeems.

He redeems! And when I say, “He redeems” I mean HE does it! He sent his own Son to clean up our mess. God himself, in the second person of the Trinity, comes to pay the price for our sin, comes to bring us—Jews and Gentiles—back into fellowship with the Father in heaven.

Looking at the ravaged and burnt forest, God grafts us into those stumps that still have roots going to the ground, still drawing in the waters and the soil’s nutrients and we begin to live and thrive. Chapter 11 is all about not taking that gift for granted. Cherishing it. Continuing to draw near to Jesus and adore him for his completed work on our behalf.

Yes, not only does he save us; he helps us every day. He fills us with the Holy Spirit, says Paul, so that we have the power of Jesus in us to help us overcome our sin and to walk in the paths of righteousness more and more until the day God calls us home and ushers us freely and safely into his glorious presence.

From sin, God has it all covered—justification, sanctification and glorification. In a word, salvation!

What is there left to do? Nothing but hang your mouth open in awe as you behold the transforming work of God. Nothing but praise as you bow before the majesty of the God who saves us fully and freely. That’s the doxology of Romans 11. It’s all we can do as we look at the theological riches and beauty of what God has done. That’s what Paul has done for 11 chapters. And now it’s like he’s breathing out after soaking it all in.

Stand up with me now, dear people. Get on your feet if you can. Lift up your hearts to God. Bow your hearts before him in adoration. And say these words of Paul with me. These words of Scripture. These words of jaw-dropping awe and adoration!

*<sup>33</sup> Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!*

*How unsearchable his judgments,  
and his paths beyond tracing out!*

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*<sup>36</sup> For from him and through him and for him are all things.*

*To him be the glory forever! Amen.*