

JJ¹

It's the bottom of the ninth. Your team is down 3-2 with a man on first. There's two outs and the batter is facing a full count. The other team is just one pitch, one strike away from winning. But then comes the best moment in baseball. The pitcher throws one right down the middle of the plate and the batter takes a mighty swing and blasts the ball out of the park! A walk-off home run!

Do you just sit on the bleacher or on the couch at home and say, "Okay, time to go to bed"? Of course not! You shout out. You jump up and down! You praise the player who just moments beforehand you complained would just strike out.

Maybe baseball isn't your thing, but each one of you can think of things that cause you to shout out spontaneous praise. Maybe it's after an excellent musical or acting performance. Maybe it's after seeing your child or grandchild do something for the first time. But when was the last time you reacted that way after seeing or hearing what God has done?

A huge part of our Christian faith is praise. Now praise doesn't have to look like a bonkers crowd at a ballgame or a standing ovation in a performance hall. Praise can be a shouted, "Amen!" or a smile on the face. Praise can be a hymn sung with gusto, or tears of joy

flowing from the eyes. Praise can even be that speechless moment when all we can manage is a simple "Thank You" in prayer because we're so overwhelmed by God's goodness.

Today we're looking at a hymn of praise from Paul's pen. If you were to open your pew Bibles you would find that the NIV editors gave this section the title *Doxology*. The word "doxology" is just two Greek words smushed together that mean, "a word of praise."

Paul has just considered what he's written to the Christians in Rome over the last three chapters and can't help but praise God. Paul has been writing about God's mind-blowing and completely irrational plan to save the world.

Who would have known that God's plan to fulfill his Promise to Adam & Eve, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would bring judgement on so many of his own chosen people? Remember, it was the Jews who put to death their own long promised Savior!

Who could have ever figured out by looking at history that God would use the Jews' rejection of him to bring his love to the Gentile world? Or even more perplexing, who would have ever guessed that God would use his love shown to the disobedient Gentiles as a way to make some of the Jews jealous

enough to listen to him again and be saved!

That's why Paul writes: "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements (better, "decisions"), and how untraceable his ways!" Then he asks three questions that we all know the answer to: "Who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his advisor? Or who has first given to God that he will be repaid?"

Of course the answer is "No One!" No one knows or understands all of God's plans perfectly. No one can give God advice (even though we all try). No one has ever had God as their debtor. And why? Paul says it's because "from him and through him and to him are all things."

When Paul says that all things are "from him," he's talking about how God has made everything. He is the Creator. Sure, scientists like to claim they have created things. But you know what God says to them, "Hey, make your own matter first! Stop using mine and saying you made it!"

When Paul says that all things are "through him," he's saying God is the one who preserves all that he has made.

Whether it be that annoying cricket chirping in your basement that you just can't find all the way to holding his infinite universe together!

And when Paul says that all things are "to him," he's saying that everything God has made, every decision he makes, every plan he sets in motion, every occurrence of all time works towards his eternal plan.



But here is where we run into problems. Too often we second guess God and his ways. We tend to place ourselves at the center of everything, forgetting that "from him and through him and to him are all things."

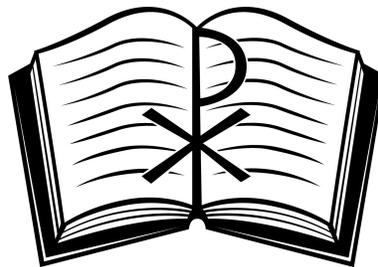
What happened in our first lesson with Moses? (Ex. 5:22ff.) His focus was on himself and not the LORD. He basically said, "God, what are you doing? Why aren't you

helping?" Sound familiar? Have you ever considered that if God showed us his whole plan that maybe we'd try and run away like Jonah did? Have you ever considered that God doesn't let us see our whole path because he loves us and he knows our knowing would be too much for us to handle?

Friends, it's a waste of time to try and understand more about God and his

plans than what he's revealed to us in his Word. It's a waste of breath to try and give advice to the one who created you and already knows everything. It's a waste of effort and only sinful arrogance to think that God owes you one, when he's the one who let his Only Son get killed by his chosen people all so you would be free from selfish living, Satan's claim and eternal prison.

Friends, that which we so often second-guess is actually God's wise plan intended for our eternal benefit. Therefore, let's not question God's wisdom. Instead, let's rejoice and marvel at how deep and rich his wisdom is! **LET'S PRAISE HIM** right here, right now with our hearts and voices! Let's praise our God along with Paul and all Christians, our God who has been so merciful to us! Although we try to know the mind of the Lord, although we have tried to counsel the Lord in our own lives, and although we have thought ourselves to be deserving of his grace, he has given us his grace anyway! "To him be the glory forever! Amen!"



¹ JJ is the acronym for *Jesus Juve*, which is Latin for “Jesus Help”. It is a short prayer used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the beginning of their work.

² SDG is an acronym for *Soli Deo Gloria*, which is Latin for “To God Alone Be The Glory”. This is a statement of humility used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the end of their work to let themselves and others know that it isn’t about getting glory for themselves, but about giving all glory to God.

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