

Living for What is Ultimately Worthy

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Preacher: Gregory Garrison

[0 : 0 0] All right, church.

Turn in your Bibles to Romans 11. I do have the mic on. Can you hear me okay? We good to go? Okay. I didn't have it on during call to worship, so just keep you guys on your toes back there.

We'll be in Romans in just a moment. But you go ahead and put your finger there. Well, church, every generation has a way of revealing what it truly honors.

Some generations honor strength. Others honor progress. Others honor tradition. But I would propose this morning that our generation honors visibility.

All right? We honor what is seen. We honor what is shared. What is celebrated publicly. We honor what trends, what performs, and what draws attention.

[1 : 1 5] And because honor always shapes behavior, what we honor inevitably shapes who we become.

So the question, what do we honor, it's not an abstract question for us this morning. It shows up in how we spend our time, how we speak to one another, how we pray, how we suffer, and how we make decisions when obedience costs us something.

Well, the Bible is very clear. What we honor, we worship. And what we worship, we serve. That is why the Bible speaks so often of glory and of worth, of weightiness, of fear, and of the name of the Lord.

You see, God is not merely interested in being acknowledged. No, no. He is concerned with being honored. So when the introduction of his book, *The Honor of God* by Grant Castleberry, and this is the book for all of you, right?

We made this available to you as a giveaway. If you haven't picked up your copy yet, one per family, there's still some on the back table. And I'm going to be drawing from certain themes from this book, but grounded in Scripture this morning.

[2 : 4 2] So in the introduction of this book, *The Honor of God*, the author begins with a sobering diagnosis. Much of the instability and shallowness in modern Christianity is not due to a lack of activity or sincerity, but a loss of theological gravity or weightiness.

God has become familiar, but not fearsome. comforting, but not commanding. Helpful, but not holy.

And I think I have that. Yeah, I have that. This is not a quote. It's sort of a paraphrase from his introduction. So he makes the point that as God becomes familiar, but not fearsome, right?

As we become comfortable with God, as there's sort of a casualness that we have in relationship to Him, that what the author postulates is that it's due to a lack or a loss of theological gravity or weightiness when it comes to our relationship with the Lord God Almighty.

And think about it. What's the natural consequence of that, right? What happens when God becomes weightless in our view, in our perspective? Worship becomes casual.

- [4 : 09] Obedience becomes selective. Prayer becomes optional. Sin becomes manageable.
- And the gospel becomes therapeutic rather than transformational. You know what I mean by that, by therapeutic? I'm going to the gospel to get a fix. I only go to the gospel like I would a bottle of aspirin or a bottle of Tylenol, right?
- Just to give me a fix, to get rid of the pain, to give me some quick, short, quick assurance that things will be okay. And church, this doesn't happen suddenly.
- And as I'm going through this, there's some of you that may be thinking right now, ooh, I've had a season in my life where you're describing me to a T. Or maybe you have loved ones in the same sort of season where there's a casualness that you see with a dear brother and sister in Christ with their relationship with the Lord.
- Well, it doesn't happen suddenly. It happens slowly and quietly and smoothly. We still sing, right? We still go to church. We still pray. We still gather.
- [5 : 22] But God slowly moves from the center to the margins. He's still present. We make sure of that. But He's no longer preeminent.
- We understand the differentiation for the casual relationship with the Lord. Further, God becomes useful to you rather than remaining ultimate.
- That is, we begin to relate to God primarily in terms of what He can do for me. That's what I mean by God being useful. What can He do for me? Can He fix the situation that I'm currently in?
- Can He relieve this certain worry or anxiety that I have? Can He bless a particular decision that I really, really want to make?
- And over time, without realizing it, we stop asking the most important question of all. Is God being honored in my life?
- [6 : 24] So back to Castleberry's book. He points out in chapter 1 that when God is treated as a means to an end, and even if it's a good end, His honor is quietly displaced.
- And that's one of the many warnings that I'll share with you this morning. When God is treated as a means to an end, you're using God. Even if it's a perceptible good end, His honor is quietly displaced.
- So why does this matter pastorally? Why did I pick this topic to even talk about? Sounds like a downer, Greg. Well, I think I share with many of you and one of the reasons why Jeff and I picked this book, I recently finished reading this book, *The Honor of God*, and studying the supporting scriptures behind it, and living my own life for the honor of God has been top of my mind.
- I've been looking in the mirror a lot. How am I living my life to give God glory and to give Him honor? Is it a casual sort of thing? Is it a convenient sort of thing? Is it sacrificial?
- Is God preeminent in my life? Could others look at my life and say, yeah, God's number one in His life. As a shepherd of this flock, I want to encourage you and gently but firmly remind you, dear brothers and sisters, of the critical importance of living for what is ultimately worthy.
- [7 : 55] And it's the honor of God. That's what your life should be all about, is living for the honor and the glory of God. That's ultimately what you live for. Perhaps the timing and opportunity of today makes it a bit more compelling to share this, right?
- We're turning the corner of an old year and about to start the new year and Thursday, January 1st, right? Many of us, this time of year is a time of both reflecting on 2025 and perhaps considering, shall I say the word, not New Year's resolution, we'll call it a commitment.
- Either a new commitment or a renewed commitment for the new year. See, living for the honor of God is not some abstract theological concern, right?

This affects real lives. It affects your lives. It has real, real consequences. And as one of your pastors, that gives me great sobriety, right?

Concern, right? As Jeff and I pray over this church, we're constantly thinking about your spiritual life, your spiritual health. We see evidences of perhaps maybe some casualness to your relationship, a lack of commitment.

[9 : 14] Perhaps you're going through a season in your life, which is fine. But living for the honor of God is serious business.

And so that's why I wanted to talk about it here today, this morning. So think about it. When God's honor is diminished in one's life. So again, think about your life. If God's honor, if your priority of giving God's honor in your life, if it's diminished, suffering begins to seem pointless.

You know there's purpose in suffering? There's purpose in suffering. But if you're not suffering for the honor of God, if you're just bearing through it, and that becomes a pattern, right?

It could be that you get to the point where you see suffering as it's totally purposeless, and it's pointless. Obedience starts to feel oppressive, right?

We should joyfully obey what the Lord commands. But if you're not living 100% focused on giving God glory and honor in your life, obedience is a burden that starts to feel oppressive.

[10 : 26] Prayer may seem ineffective. Some other symptoms of this? And perhaps your faith even seems fragile. But when God's honor is restored in your life, right?

Suffering gains meaning, obedience becomes joyful, prayer becomes reverent, and faith becomes resilient. So dare I say the strength of your faith is directly tied to the size of your God?

Is that pretty accurate that I can say that? The strength of your faith is directly tied to the size of your God. Small God produces anxious Christians, perhaps.

A manageable God produces selective obedience. A useful God, right, a God that you can use, produces conditional trust at best.

God. But a glorious God, my brothers and sisters, a glorious God produces steadfast saints. And that's what I want. That's what I desire for each of us, to be steadfast saints.

[11 : 32] Because we see a glorious and a majestic and a magnificent God that we're living for each and every day. And so for this morning, we will be anchored back in Romans 11, verses 33 through 36.

Just four short verses to flesh this out a little bit more. In this section of Scripture, we are confronted with a God who cannot be reduced, cannot be managed, and cannot be repurposed at all.

So if you turn to Romans 11, as you're turning there, Romans 11, verses 33 through 36. So, since we haven't been walking through Romans, allow me just a minute, a half a minute, to remind you that Paul has been walking through 11 and a half chapters of rich, rich theology and doctrine.

He's been unpacking the deepest, deepest truths of salvation. Paul addresses humanity's sin in those first 11 and a half verses of Romans.

He talks about God's righteousness, Christ's atoning work, sovereign mercy, the mystery of election, God's faithfulness to His own promises, and much, much more.

[12 : 47] And when Paul finishes those 11 and a half chapters, as we arrive here on our verses for this morning, what does Paul do next? You want to guess what he does next? Does he now say, hey, here's something you can do to improve your life based on all of that information that I just gave you.

All that doctrine, all that theology, we've got a list of application points. Is that what he does? No, that's not what he does. We're going to see in just a moment that Paul stops and worships.

He worships. And that will disclose a key point for us this morning. So if you're taking notes, this would be one that you don't want to miss.

As we look at these verses this morning, I'm sort of giving you the main point here up front. That the ultimate goal of theology, as we read through Romans, as Paul goes through Romans, the ultimate goal of that rich, rich theology is not information or mastery of the content.

That's not the ultimate goal. But it's doxology and adoration. It's worship. It's worship of a glorious king.

[14 : 05] We'll see in Romans 11, 33 through 36 that it's not a footnote. Paul just doesn't add it as sort of appends it to the end of that section of Scripture. It's instead just the opposite.

It's sort of the climax of those first 12 verses. It's Paul stepping back from the entire plan of redemption. Those 11 and a half verses. He sort of steps back and he says, God is greater than I ever imagined.

That's sort of what's happening there as we read these three or four verses. He's so overwhelmed with God's truth and with the gospel and with everything the Lord has done, the Lord Jesus Christ has done.

And as the Lord opens his mind to understand truth, we see how Paul reacts. He steps back. God is bigger than I ever imagined.

He's greater than I ever imagined. In church, that's exactly where our hearts need to be in order to live for what's ultimately worthy, which is God's glory and honor.

[15 : 09] We need to be there. We need to be at the point that as we open up Scripture, as we spend time in prayer, that we will never forget, that it never becomes ritual and rote and boring and routine.

We should never become that way. We should always be in awe and be amazed at a totally fantastic, majestic, big God.

God. So my sermon this morning is not about us making, it's not about making us feel guilty. I'm not up here, I don't want to give a guilt trip.

I'll exhort you and I'll plead with you, but I don't want to make you feel guilty. It's not about emotional manipulation. Now listen, if there's anything I don't like, it's emotional manipulation.

Right? I don't want, I'm not here to manipulate you. I'm even one of those, my, Jeff knows this. Suzanne, I think you know it as well. My wife knows it, right? So have you ever been in a context where, and I don't want to necessarily use a church context, but it's apropos of this example.

[16 : 12] You know how maybe at the end of a worship service the music starts playing and they make sort of an emotional appeal and they're wanting you, they want to bring you along emotionally to have you do something, make a decision or whatever.

And in some cases that truly is manipulation. That's one of my hot buttons. Right? I don't want to manipulate you. I'm just going to share truth with you and scripture with you and we'll let you and the Lord work that out.

That's not my purpose up here. And it's not about nostalgia for a different era of the church. Right? I'm not up here thinking, oh, all the churches, you know, 50 years ago, 40 years ago, you know, all the churches were all about just went off with God all the time.

You all know that's not true. I'm not up here being nostalgic. One might say that I'm up here trying to recenter reality perhaps, your reality, trying to recenter you, trying to refocus you on what's ultimately important.

if God is truly from whom all things come, through whom all things exist, and to whom all things belong, and we'll get there in just a minute.

[17 : 26] That's our verses for this morning. Right? If truly is, if truly God is from whom all things come, through whom all things exist, and to whom all things belong, then everything in my life, and everything in your life, brother and sister in Christ, must be reordered around Him.

So this morning, we are not primarily asking how God can help us. You know that, right? We're not here this morning to ask, how can God help me in my situation?

Instead, we're going to ask this morning, how can we honor God? That's the question before us this morning. That's the goal. If we don't walk away this morning, at the end of the hour, without having some sort of sense of how you can honor God this morning, I failed.

That's my goal. How can we honor God in our life? And if we allow Scripture to answer that question honestly and humbly and fully, it will change how you worship and it will change how you obey and it will change how you suffer.

Let me say it in second person, let me say it in third person or first person. It will change how we obey and how we suffer and it will change how we live. All right.

[18 : 48] So with that preface, let me read Romans 11 verses 33. I'll actually bleed over into chapter 12, verse 1. And let's see what the Lord's Word has for us this morning.

Now remember the context, right? Eleven and a half verses of rich, rich theology and doctrine. Paul's head's about to explode here, right? And so, this is what he writes in verse 33.

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God. In my ESV, I've got an exclamation point there, right? This is high-charged emotion.

Good emotion, right? He's pumped. Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways.

For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counselor? Or who has given a gift to Him that He might be repaid? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.

[19 : 54] to Him be glory forever. Amen. Chapter 12, verse 1. Paul follows that up with, 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 church.

What's the next word? Worship. Worship. And that's what Paul writes. in chapter 12, verse 1. In view of everything I've written and including this doxology after that, just that climax of worship, then what's He appeal for us to do?

To worship. To worship. Yeah, He doesn't summarize. Notice He doesn't summarize, you know, hey, let me summarize what I've done, what I've written in the previous 11 chapters, right?

He doesn't summarize it. Like we may do in a sermon, give a list of application points. He doesn't do that. He just worships. It's a doxological response. That's great.

All right, so we're going to walk through each verse step by step a little bit and just get, listen, that's our verses for this morning and I could just wrap up here and pray and we would be done, right?

[21 : 15] But what I want to do is just, and this is the devotional part, right? This is where I could have finished up and all right, we're done. But I want to unpack just a little bit each of those verses just to make sure you're not missing the depth, no pun intended because we're about to talk about depth, right?

The depth of the majesty and the glory of the Lord and how, as Paul says, how the depth of his riches and wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments, how inscrutable his ways.

And that's what we're going to do the rest of the time here. All right, so Paul begins with a single word that carries enormous theological weight and sets the tone for everything that follows and that word is depth.

Now let's see, I may have a slide here on this word. Here we go. All right, so depth. Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God.

Well, the word depth does not merely mean a lot or a whole bunch, right? Something, you know, some sort of level of quantity or whatnot.

[22 : 24] The word translated depth here in the Greek is the word bathos, I think is how you pronounce it. But that word depth, you want to think of it, it refers to an unfathomable depth.

Limitless. Bottomless. All right, that's the sense that the Apostle Paul is trying to convey here. Paul is intentionally choosing this Greek word that communicates unending, right?

Limitless. Paul is saying that God's riches and His wisdom and His knowledge, that they're not just impressive, right? But they're bottomless, right?

We can wade into them, into those riches and God's wisdom and knowledge. We can experience them. We can draw from them our whole life, right? But we will never reach the end of that.

And that's the exclamation point. We'll never reach the end of God's riches and wisdom and knowledge. God's riches refers to the fullness of God's resources and mercy.

[23 : 47] There's a little bit of difference in these three words. God's wisdom refers to the perfection of His purposes and God's knowledge refers to God's exhaustive awareness of all things.

Okay? And I'll slow down just a little bit and we'll go through those one by one. Alright? So God's riches. Alright? So again, God's riches refers to the fullness of His resources and mercy.

Well, earlier in the book of Romans, the same word riches is used in chapter 2 verse 4 and I'll just read that. Or do you presume on the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience?

So in that context there, we see some association with God's kindness and with His mercy and with His grace. And if we turn over to chapter 9 verse 23, Paul writes, in order to make known the riches of His glory for vessels of mercy.

So again, he associates God's riches with His vast amount of resources of mercy and grace. Unending mercy.

[25 : 00] Unending grace. The depth of God's riches means that His mercy cannot be exhausted. His grace cannot be depleted.

And God's patience is not fragile. Now, have you had a time in life recently where you needed to camp out on those truths? Have you had a time of frustration?

Have you had a time of, you know, angst with a family member? A health condition? Car breaks down every week? Expenses that you didn't expect?

You've been persecuted? You had a tough Christmas with family? You've got a strange relationship?

I don't know. But these truths are so encouraging, right? God's mercy cannot be exhausted. Oh, the depths of God's riches.

[26 : 00] His mercy can't be exhausted. His grace cannot be depleted. And God's patience is not fragile. Have you ever gotten to a point where you just have a sin that you just can't conquer?

You're in a season of life where you just can't seem to conquer that and you know that you think that God's running out of patience with you? One more time and I just, I can't go back and ask Him to forgive me for that.

I just, I'm a failure. Well, brothers and sisters, Paul writes right here, oh the depth, oh the limit, oh the unfathomableness, the fathomableness of His riches and wisdom and knowledge of God.

It's never ending. We see that God's honor, that His honor shines precisely in the fact that His mercy is not reactive, we sell that in those verses, but His mercy is purposeful and it's abundant.

God is never forced into grace, right? He delights in it. So, Christian, be encouraged. when Paul says, oh the depth of the riches of God, you've got an unlimited supply of grace and mercy and love and His patience for you, right?

[27 : 16] The fullness of God's resources and mercy. Paul then says, oh the depth of the riches and wisdom. So we look at wisdom. So again, wisdom, the perfection of His purposes.

All right, so God's wisdom refers not merely to His intelligence, right, to His smartness, but to His perfect ordering of all things toward His purposes.

So you see the difference between riches and wisdom? Where riches refers to His resources of grace and mercy and love, when it comes to God's wisdom, it's about the ordering and the purposes, the completion of His purposes, the perfection of His purposes, to His perfect ordering of all things toward His purposes.

Wisdom is the ability to bring about the best ends through the best means for the glory of God. I'll repeat that. Wisdom is the ability to bring about the best ends through the best means for the glory of God.

So remember, and I've mentioned this before, right, Paul just explained a whole salvation plan in those first 11 verses, right, if you're familiar with Romans 1-11, right, you know that there's human rebellion, there's divine judgment, there's election, there's hardening of hearts, there's mercy, and then there's a gospel message of a crucified Messiah.

[28 : 48] And so Paul gets to this point and instead of, this is so much, I would do this, right, instead of apologizing for the complexity of God's plan, I would say, you know, God's a lot bigger than I am, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, this is so complex, I know it's hard to get, you know, maybe with enough study and with enough meditation, you know, we'll eventually grasp what that means.

Paul doesn't do that, right? What's Paul do? He praises God's wisdom. Oh, the depths of God's wisdom. Doesn't matter how complicated it is, doesn't matter how endless it is, he praises God's wisdom, he doesn't apologize for it.

So why does that matter? All right, well, let's bring it closer to home. Many believers pridefully assume that if they cannot trace or understand God's wisdom, then God must not be too wise or maybe not too trustworthy.

Anybody want to confess that maybe sometime in your life that you just couldn't figure out what God was up to, so that's on God. That's not on me. I just don't understand. I don't understand what he's doing.

So I don't think he's very trustworthy. Sounds pretty prideful, huh? I mean, who are we? But Scripture teaches the opposite.

[30 : 07] God's wisdom regularly exceeds our limited understanding. I think you all know that. You all know that. God is infinite. We're not. God is God.

You're not. I'm not. So don't rely on your own understanding, on your own pride to figure out what God's up to. He's far wiser.

Far wiser. There's no order of magnitude to even put into words how wise he is. Paul says, oh, the depth of his wisdom. Right?

Oh, the depth of his riches. Oh, the depth of his wisdom. And then thirdly, oh, the depth of God's knowledge. God's exhaustive awareness of all things.

Anybody have an omni word for that, for this? Say it one word. Not omnipotent. That's all powerful. Omniscient. Yeah, yeah. Omniscient would be a great word here.

[31 : 03] God's exhaustive awareness of all things. Totally omniscient. God's knowledge refers to God's complete awareness of all things actual, all things possible, past, present, and future.

Oh, the depth of the knowledge of God. All omniscient. Well, Paul is saying that God never lacks resources.

He never lacks insight. He never lacks information. God's knowledge is, and has always been, exhaustive and eternal and immediate.

Right? God didn't learn throughout the course of His existence. He's always been omniscient. I can't explain it. Right? That's just what Scripture teaches. Right?

God has always, His knowledge has always been exhaustive, eternal, and immediate. So this is why Paul immediately says, if we move on to the second half of verse 33, Paul says, how unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways.

[32 : 15] So we moved on to the second half of verse 33. Again, in doxology, in praise. So he goes on and he says, His ways are unsearchable, right?

How unsearchable are His judgments. So what do we mean? And again, these are not complicated words. There's no secret or super-depth meaning to these.

It's sort of what you think, right? His judgments are unsearchable. Well, what's Paul mean by unsearchable? Just unable to be tracked. Right?

You just, His judgments, again, because He's infinite, there's no algorithm that we can follow to figure out God's judgments.

God is unsearchable, unable to be tracked. You can't follow God's judgments all the way back to their source. You just can't do it. And the ESV says, and how inscrutable are His ways.

[33 : 10] Inscrutable, similar meaning, right? You're unable to fully trace God's ways. You know, God may leave footprints and fingerprints, not literally, right?

But He may provide indications, He may disclose some insights into what He's doing and why, but He doesn't leave us a full map to follow. Just doesn't.

I mean, if He did, how could we possibly understand and follow even if He did, right? Now, Paul's not suggesting chaos or randomness here.

When he says that God's unsearchable and inscrutable, right, let's just make sure I want to clear something up in case anybody might be sitting thinking, wait a minute, is Paul thinking that God can't be found, He can't be understood, you know, there's a chaos, randomness.

Hopefully no one's thinking that Paul is saying that God's irrational. A better word, a more accurate, more biblical word, unsearchable and inscrutable, Paul is using words to illustrate God's transcendence.

[34 : 15] That's probably a good word here. He's transcendent. Paul is saying, you know, you can observe God's actions, but you can't reverse engineer his mind.

I read that in a commentary. Being an engineer, I like that, right? You can observe God's actions. I'm good at reversing engineering certain things, but in this case, Paul, you can observe his actions, but you can't reverse engineer God's mind, right?

God's judgments are always righteous, but they're not always transparent. Does your experience bear that out? God's judgments are always righteous, but they're not always transparent.

God's ways are always purposeful. We mentioned a minute ago, right, there's purpose in suffering. God's ways are always purposeful, but not always visible.

That's what it means, unsearchable, inscrutable. As we go through the struggles and trials of life, we can rest assured that we can the Scripture teaches us that God is righteous and He's purposeful, but we're owed no explanation.

[35 : 29] We're not. He's unsearchable. He's inscrutable, according to Paul. This is not meant to frustrate us, and what I mean by that is in the frustration of the moment, you have a sick kid who's been sick forever.

A job. You've been fired from jobs week after week after week after week. You're dealing with a health condition that has no end. And so, in a moment of frustration, why, Lord?

Why me? Why my child? Why my spouse? Why my parent? Why my husband? Well, Paul's words are not meant to frustrate us, but can I gently say that it is meant to humble us?

It's to remind us to whom we should put our trust. And sometimes that's hard. That's hard. But we can rest on that truth.

How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways. So, at this point, we must move forward to verses 34 and 35.

[36 : 56] And Paul does this. He quotes the Old Testament. Verse 34, he says, For who has known, and these are sort of rhetorical questions, and the context is perfect?

Because there might be a level of frustration and lack of understanding and perhaps you're at the end of your rope and life is not matching up with exactly what we're reading here.

So, Paul quotes Isaiah, I think, in verse 34. For who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been His counselor? Now, this is drawn from Isaiah 40, verse 13.

In the context of that passage, in Isaiah 40, it was a passage that emphasizes God's absolute sovereignty in creation and redemption. Isaiah's original context is that God is correcting Israel's tendency to reduce Him, to reduce God to an idol-sized deity.

And this is where Psalm 115, when we read for call to worship, just fit in perfectly, right? Because it talked about idols. Israel's tendency to reduce God to an idol-sized deity.

[38 : 11] That's the context of verse 34. For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counselor? It's sort of Job-like, right? Right?

A good, humble reminder of who we are and who God is. Well, here in Romans 11, Paul applies this same correction to the church by basically saying that no one has ever informed God.

No one has corrected God. No one has improved on God's plan. How could we?

Who are we? Who are we, the creation, to instruct the Creator what to do and how to do it? These verses dismantle every form of spiritual pride.

That's what was meant earlier by these verses humble us as we know and we look at who God is. God's honor is bound up with His independence as we consider God's sovereignty and His control and His providence over all creation and all things.

[39 : 35] God's honor, let's go back to God's honor because again, that's our question. How do we honor God in our lives? Well, His honor is bound up with His independence. There's a fancy theological term for that aseity.

Right? Theological term aseity and that simply means that God exists independently and does not rely and I think I have this one. Not yet. Sorry. God exists independently and does not rely on anything outside of Himself for His being or existence or to accomplish His divine purposes.

Right? God is fully independent. He relies on no one. He's God. That's the theological term aseity. And God's honor is bound up in that independence.

So, here's the first of many warnings that you're going to see on the screen. When we lose sight, so as we think about how to live a life honoring God, warning number one, when we lose sight of God's independence, of His sovereign control over all things, prayer subtly becomes advice.

Right? In our prayers, right, we sort of slip into giving God some advice. You know, God, if you could do this for me, then that would allow me to, you know, evangelize for you.

[40 : 59] Or this would allow me to serve others. You know, making a deal with the Lord. Right? If we lose sight of God being fully independent, right, be warned that our prayer could subtly become advice and obedience become negotiation.

Could be. Maybe not. So, as we consider about how to live a life honoring God and bringing Him glory, let's keep in mind God is fully independent. He does not depend on us.

Okay? Okay? How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways. For who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been His counselor or who has given a gift to Him that He might be repaid?

Rhetorical questions. Verses 34 and 35. So, verse 35, right? What's the implied answer? Who has given a gift to Him that He might be repaid?

Who has given something to the Lord because the Lord needed it and now the Lord owes me something? Who has done that? It's a rhetorical question, right?

[42 : 06] No one, right? No one. God is never in our debt. Do sometimes we get, do sometimes we get sort of, we slip into that God owes me?

For those of you who said we're ready to get rid of 2025, right? Horrible year for some people. Is there a sense of, you know, God owes me. He owes me a better 2026.

That's why I asked earlier. Yeah. I slip into that. I've had bad years where I'm like, God, it can't get worse. You know, it's sort of like you're getting really close to, God, you owe me, right?

Right? The odds are, right? What are the odds? Right? This is God's, there is no odds, right? It's God in His plan. We can get into negotiation with the Lord when we forget that God is totally independent.

Yeah. And that God is never in our debt. The language here on verse 35, and do I have that up? Let's see. No, you have to look at your Bibles. I don't have that one. So, verse 35, right?

[43 : 13] Or, who has given a gift to Him that He might be repaid, right? This language here assumes a commercial type of transaction, right? Someone giving first so that repayment is owed.

Like, I'm going to commercially give a transaction alone to Mark because then Mark is going to owe me. That's sort of the verbiage here. Well, Paul says that that never happens with God.

It's a rhetorical question. But doesn't this strike at the heart of works-based thinking? You know what I mean by works-based thinking? Right? We do not obey.

Let's say, we do not obey to put God in our debt. We do not serve to leverage blessing. We do not worship to earn favor. What do I mean by that?

Right? We, let me read the opposite of those statements. Right? Do we obey so that we can have God in our debt? No, we don't do that. That's works-based.

[44 : 13] Right? Do we serve so that then someone owes us a blessing? Hey, I'm going to watch your kids because then you're going to owe me, you're going to be able to bless me sometime as well.

Right? Is that the motivation? It's works-based thinking. Right? I'm going to worship. I'm going to go to prayer night tomorrow night because I want I want God to, you know, owe me a favor or others in the church.

Well, that's not, that really does strike at the heart of works-based thinking when we think about God being in debt to us. No, God's honor means that He gives freely.

Do I have this up there? Yeah. God's honor means that He gives freely. Not under compulsion. Not reactively. And isn't that the definition of grace?

Unmerited. Right? Under no compulsion. Grace. God just gives because of His good kindness and pleasure. Not because you earned it and He owes you one. All right.

[45 : 19] I got another warning here for you. So look at the bottom of the screen. So one of the most subtle threats to God's honor is the belief, often unconscious, that God exists in a relationship of mutual obligation with humanity.

That's basically just restating what I've said. Right? That there's some sort of ownership. I'll do something for God, then God owes me. All right. Be careful. These are things that on the surface we're sitting here on a Sunday morning and it's like, Greg, this is ridiculous.

I would never think about this. Wait till pressure hits your life. And you've got to be careful. These things happen subtly. All right.

Don't get to the point where you think God owes you anything. That's the warning. Because that's a threat to you living a life honoring to the Lord.

Right? Well, the implications of these truths we've talked about so far, and we're about to move on to verse 36, but we just sort of wrap up verses 33, 34, and 35.

[46 : 28] The implications of these truths found in these verses, they do correct two opposite errors at once. And I don't have a slide for this, but again, if we keep in mind these truths, it will correct pride, which we've talked about.

Pride which assumes that God should answer to us for something. Right? Keeping these truths in mind will keep us from being prideful. And on the other extreme, it will also keep us out of despair.

Right? Because you may assume that God is arbitrary or cruel because you don't understand His ways. And if you just camp out on that truth that God is independent and He's sovereign and He has purpose in what you're going through, nothing's an accident, nothing's a coincidence.

We can keep away from getting into a season of pride or despair. God is holy, wise, and free. And that's a reason why He is worthy of honor.

And yet, so as we transition to verse 36, right, this infinitely deep God, you would think, okay, so He's so big, He's unfathomable, He's limitless, so He's a big God, so He's like not even close to my day-to-day, right?

[47 : 55] He's removed from my day-to-day life. That's how big He is, right? It's too big. But no, right? The God who cannot be fully searched, who can't be fully tracked, He's also the very God who governs everything that exists in your life, every moment of every day.

And so we see Paul moves from God's depth in verses 33, 34, and 35. Now Paul, in verse 36, is going to move over to God's dominion, His work in our lives.

So let me read verse 36, and I'll read the first part of it. And you can follow along. Again, these are quick, easy verses. These are good verses to memorize, by the way, but that's another day.

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.

I'll save the rest in just a moment. One Bible commentator noted that this verse is one of the most compressed theological statements in all of Scripture.

[49 : 08] Each preposition is deliberate, and together they form one of the most comprehensive God-centered statements in Scripture. That's what one of the Bible commentators said that I consulted.

In Greek, and I'm not going to go through the Greek, but I will just as reference, in Greek, the structure is empathetic and it's rhythmic, but it's very precise. These just aren't close enough words.

We would expect no less, it being God's Word. But in Greek, the readers would have seen not empathetic, it's emphatic, it's emphatic, and it's rhythmic, and it's precise.

And you can hear it, right? And from Him, and through Him, and to Him. Right? Repeat after me. And from Him, and through Him, and to Him. Right?

Even in English, you can sort of follow along with how that goes. All right, so let's look at those real quick. I'll move these pretty fast. And again, these concepts are pretty straightforward, right?

[50 : 07] What would you think it means when Paul writes for from Him? Origin. Right? Where things start. So, remember, it ends, for from Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things.

So, let's don't forget that. Are all things. So, from Him are all things. God is the source of everything. History, creation, redemption, all things.

We can see it all day. We can talk about all things. All things. God is the source. It starts with God. Nothing is self-caused. Nothing is autonomous. Nothing ultimately originates in human will.

Well, that's a pretty bold statement. What's the implications of that? Do things happen for accident? Do things just sort of coincidentally happen?

No. Right. Because, for from Him are all things. Look in your Bible. Does anybody have some things? I have all things.

[51 : 16] There may be some other words that are synonymous to all, but I don't think you're going to read. I'm pretty confident you're not going to read some things. For from Him, through Him, and to Him, or some things are all things.

And I don't want to gloss over that. I mean, we shouldn't get into a habit as we properly interpret Scripture. Right? All means all. Right? It doesn't mean sometimes here and other times there.

Right? Or all things. So I read that straightforward little interpretation for from Him are all things. All right.

Warning time. Oh, I'm going to hit them all first? Okay, let me go through them all first. For from Him is origin. Through Him, again, what do you think that would mean?

Right? Through Him. He sustains. Right? It's the means to the end. All right? So from Him, origin. Through Him, He's a sustainer.

[52 : 17] All right? He sustains all things. That's all it means. And then to Him, if you're going to somewhere, where you're going, you're going to a destination. All right? You all got this.

You all got this. You can be up here preaching just with a few minutes of reading. Right? From Him, through Him, and to Him are all things. Now, let's break those down real quick.

From Him. Here's my warning. Right? Is this true? Modern culture treats autonomy as dignity. Do-it-yourselfers.

I got this. I don't need any help. I got this. I'm autonomous. Right? I'm self-sufficient.

I need no help. Right? And doesn't culture treat that as dignified? That's something that I think culture... Like, yeah. You got your stuff, man.

[53 : 14] You're on. You're at the top of the list. You got this all on your own. Right? Modern culture treats autonomy as dignity. But what does Scripture say about autonomy?

We know this. If you've been in your Bibles at any amount of time, Scripture teaches dependence on God. That's what's glorified. Our dependence on Him.

Our trust on Him. Submission to Him. Obedience to Him. That's what's glorified. And as a follower of Jesus Christ, that's how you bring glory to God.

Right? By living in total dependence on Him. Culture doesn't like it. Culture doesn't like it. They could tease you. Right? They call you young men, manby-pamby boys.

Yeah. Yeah, you can't do it yourself. You need help. Girly girl. Right? Right? Culture will tease you. They will mess you.

[54 : 16] They'll mess with you. They'll make you feel shame. Right? It'll happen. It'll make you feel shame. Don't let them do that. You stand confident in the Word of God.

You trust and depend on your Lord Jesus Christ. Alright? Don't let modern culture mess with you on that one. Through Him. We just talked about that.

It speaks of a means or a sustenance as you go through. God does not merely initiate reality. He actively upholds reality. And God's not a distant creator.

Right? But He's an active sustainer. That's a little rhymey thing. Right? God's not a distant creator. He's an active sustainer. He actively sustains. Creation continues because God sustains it.

Redemption progresses because God applies it. History unfolds because God governs it. Anybody know Hebrews 1-3? Anybody memorize Hebrews 1-3?

[55 : 20] Christ upholds all things by the power of... by the Word of His power. Right? Hebrews 1-3. Christ upholds all things by the Word of His power.

Nothing continues apart from God's sustaining will. This means that our lives are not held together by luck. They're not held together by effort.

And they're not held together by circumstance. Right? Our lives are held together by God's sustaining. By divine faithfulness. That has to be encouraging.

That's got to be encouraging. Next one. Let's go. From Him, through Him, and to Him are all things.

Hey, it's on the screen. It's on the screen. Alright. So to Him, God is the goal and the destination. Warning. My beloved church, when God is no longer the goal of your life and the circumstances of your life and the tasks that are occurring in your life, we will substitute smaller ends such as comfort, recognition, control, pleasure, some escape.

[56 : 42] right? We'll substitute those and those are idols. Those are the idols that we read about in Psalm 115. Right? If we don't keep in mind that to Him is all things.

Well, if you lose in your mind and you forget or you're not, you're no longer living life knowing that all things are for Him and to Him, what are you living life for?

Right? Then you go after pleasure. You go after control. I want to control things. I want some authority. Those will become idols.

Don't do that, church. That's one way to prevent getting lost in idols. Keep in mind this verse 36, right?

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. All right. I got to move on. I'm about out of time. What else do I got? Do I have another warning? Ah!

[57 : 46] Let's finish it up. Let's finish 36. See, I told you the devotional will end up being a sermon. All right? Only about the whole hour. So, let's finish verse 36. For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.

And then Paul, he's, I don't even know what Paul is like. I can only imagine he's just about to burst. Right? Have you ever listened to a song? Have you been here worshiping?

And you just want to yell out amen but you're too embarrassed. Right? At the end of the song. So, Paul, this is a doxological, a doxology, a response of praise and worship.

He says, to Him be glory forever. Amen. To Him be glory. And we've come full circle. What's glory?

Doxa. Where we get doxological, right? A doxological life. Weightiness. It's a good weightiness. Right? God is not light and fluffy. Right?

[58 : 43] When we think about, we're in awe with Almighty God. It's a weighty thing. It's, He's worthy of that. He's full of splendor.

Right? And Paul is saying, listen, to Him be all of this. Your life should be for Him. It should be weighty. You should be awestruck. We use the word awesome a lot.

This would be actually a good place where God is awesome. That's what Paul is saying. Warning. Sorry. I've doused the water in the fire here.

Brothers and sisters, when worship becomes casual, here we go again. It's always a fight, isn't it? We're in the flesh. Right? And we get tired and life gets busy and we get distracted.

When worship becomes casual, it is likely, very much likely, a theological issue because God has become common in our minds, in your mind, in my mind.

[59 : 49] If you find yourself, and I'm not talking about necessarily Sunday morning. I mean, when you're worshiping in the privacy of your home or in your car or wherever you are, when you're taking a walk through the neighborhood or in the woods or wherever, on the water, right?

If you're out on the water, wherever you're worshiping, if it becomes casual, Jesus is my homeboy, yeah, Jesus is your friend.

Scripture does say He's your friend. But again, don't take that lightly. That's the weightiness that it was referring to earlier. All right? It's because God has become common in our minds.

And that really is the emphasis that I've tried to bring you this morning is that if you're finding God common in your minds, then you've got a theological issue.

It's not an emotional issue. It's not a... It's not... You just... You've got a wrong understanding of who God is. And what do you do? Go back and read Romans 11, 34 through 36.

[60 : 52] Just be reminded of some of these verses. Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways.

For who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been His counselor or who has been given a gift to Him that He might be repaid? Verse 36. For from Him and through Him and to Him are all, all, all, all things.

To Him be glory forever. Amen. If worship has become casual to you, then you get in the Word. Go back to my announcement time.

Start Bible reading plan. Right? Start memorizing some Scripture. Right? Hide God's Word in your heart so that you can know Him and that God is just not some other thing that you just worship.

How many of y'all worship coffee in the morning? Fess up. I know, I know, I know I'm starting to get a little personal. Right? Who worships, who wakes up in the morning?

[62 : 00] Nathan. And the first thing out of your mouth is coffee. Like coffee, don't you? You like coffee. You know, sort of a silly example but maybe it's not so silly.

What's the first thing on your mind when you wake up? I don't know. I don't know. But the point is, right, if you find yourself and worship is casual, it's sort of not preeminent, then think about what is your understanding of the Lord?

The awesome, majestic Lord. Alright, y'all, we're out of time. I've got a few more things. Let me finish up with just the next verse. Chapter 12, verse 1 because this is how sort of Paul, it makes sense now, right, since we spent this time looking at verses 33 through 36, then what does Paul do?

Transitions into chapter 12. There's no chapters when he was writing this but in our Bibles there's chapters. So then Paul says, hey, I appeal to you therefore brothers, I appeal to you by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice.

Okay, I get it now. Yeah, I can do this. I can present God, my body, as a living sacrifice because he is the only one that's worthy, right? As a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.

[63 : 20] And what is all that activity? It's your spiritual worship. It's your spiritual adoration. Right? It's your spiritual, this is how I bring glory and honor to God by doing these things.

We rejoice, but we don't rejoice lightly. We approach God boldly, not casually. Scripture calls us to rejoice with trembling, but Christian joy is not casual cheerfulness, it's awe-filled delight.

A God-centered life will always clash with a self-centered world. Faithfulness will often look unimpressive, but it's deeply honoring to God.

Faithfulness. Faithfulness. When God's honor is ultimate, and I'll conclude with these thoughts, when God's honor is ultimate in your life, success does not inflate you, failure does not define you or destroy you, and suffering does not have the final word.

Right? Because in suffering from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. Suffering doesn't have the final word.

[64 : 44] God has the final word. Your life is anchored beyond circumstance We have a right view of God, and we are living for His glory. And it is, as that final point says, it's doxological.

It's in response, in glorious response, and in praise to our mighty King. Let me pray. Father, thank you for your word. Thank you, Father, that just in your sovereignty, Lord, that you had Paul pen these words, and we have insights, Lord, not into only theological things and doctrinal topics and deep, deep truths, but we also see Paul, his human response to the mighty truths of you, Lord.

And so, would it be this day, this rest of this year and next year and the years to come for our church family, for each one here and for our church family who's not here today for whatever reason, may it be true of them, Lord, that we would live lives that are faithful.

and why, Father, not that we would receive glory, not that we would receive attention, but that it would be a fragrant aroma of worship as we demonstrate our trust in you, our faith in you, our surrender to you.

May we be like Paul, Lord. May we just surrender to your vastness and your majesty and your beauty, Lord, through your depth in so many ways, Father. May our lives show that we want to live and bring you glory and honor.

[66 : 24] In Christ's name, Amen. All right.