

Good morning,

Welcome again to High School Sunday.

If this is your first time to BCF, I hope that you have picked up that it is not like this every Sunday. I invite you to return next week for a more representative service.

I speak for all the high school adult leaders that we count it a privilege to be a part of God's work here at BCF. I thank you for your encouragement, prayer, and donations that make this ministry possible. We mix fun, small group relationships, music, food, and the truth of God's word to build friendship among teens and encourage them in their faith. All high schoolers are welcome to join us each week in Sunday School or 217 on Sunday evenings.



The farm in the picture behind me was a big part of my life as a teen. Our nearest neighbor was $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile away and there were far more cows than people in the part of the county where I grew up. When I was a teen, my dad owned 40-50 beef cows and their calves.

Calving time was in the spring, so by the fall these calves were large enough to be weaned or removed their mother's milk. On a Saturday morning in the fall, calves would be separated from their mother and moved to one end of the farm and the cows to a field on the other end of the farm. For the next two to three nights there was a constant cow communication – mother calling for calf and calf calling for mother.

If someone happened to be spending the night with us we would warn them that they may not get a lot of sleep because of the noise.

If some of these cows were interviewed by the local media, you might hear phrases like “If I ran this farm, things would be different.” --- “Whoever runs this farm doesn't know what they are doing” ...or “I don't understand” or “I demand my rights”... or “I'm really angry at Mr. Kelley”...

The reality was, this painful separation for the cows was in their best interest, but more importantly, was according to the plan and purposes of my Dad, their owner. Their life, especially at this time, would make no sense until they understood who was in control and His plan and purposes.

This story sometimes illustrates our own thoughts about God's ways with us. We may come to God crying or angry, questioning His purposes, and even possibly doubting his love for us. Life has taken a strange turn and we don't understand. However different from my story about the cows, God can communicate His purposes with you and with me.

I would like to look at this morning at a passage at the end of Romans chapter 11...

Romans 11:33-36

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

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

“Who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has been his counselor?”
“Who has ever given to God,
that God should repay him?”
For from him and through him and to him are all things.
To him be the glory forever! Amen.

The book of Romans in the beginning chapters covers our great need for righteousness, right-ness with God, for cleansing – then God’s provision of righteousness in Christ. Romans 9 to 11 then explains God’s sovereign ways with the Jews, His chosen people and the salvation of the Gentiles. Then, at the end of Chapter 11, Paul, like a mountain climber that has reached the summit; pauses and offers a crescendo of praise to God – for His wisdom that is so deep it is unfathomable, impossible for us to comprehend ... and that God owes no one anything... He is the ultimate giver, the source and supplier of everything.

Ending in verse 36 - For from Him and and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

For the next few minutes I would like to consider these truths.

The first - For from Him are all things...
All things, everything, has its beginning in God. Our ability to sit here this morning and discuss this comes from God.

When God revealed Himself to Job, He began with this truth.
Where were you when I made the earth?
Were you there when I formed the heavens?
Who do you think created the vast array of animals, with all of their distinct ways?
Who brings out the stars every evening and designed the laws of the heavens?

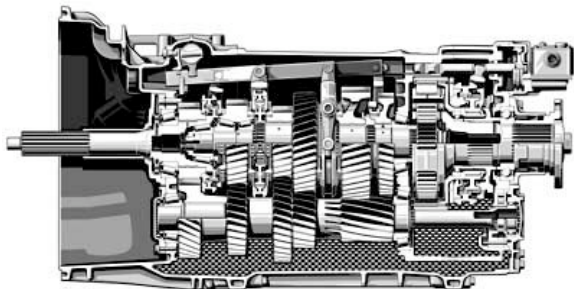
In the last 100 years we’ve learned much about this creation. The best minds of today tell us that that the universe actually came from nothing – just as Hebrews 11:3 stated hundreds of years before;

Physicists today tell us that time had a beginning – just as God inspired Paul to write in the first century in II Timothy 1:9 and Titus 1:2,

As Edwin Hubble discovered 90 years ago the, heavens are stretching out or expanding much like a balloon stretching out. So, in the Old Testament there are 11 references that talk about the God stretching out the heavens.

The laws of the heavens that God ask Job about we now know are so perfectly and finely tuned ... that scientists explain it in terms of throwing a dart across the width of the universe and hitting a bulls eye... truly the heavens do declare His glory.

As my wife can tell you, I come from a long family line of treasure collectors – treasured commodities such as old carburetors, antique engines, and tools of all types filled the large shop of my grandfather when I was a boy. It was in this big play yard that I spent many hours as a youngster. I could explore and take apart things to my heart’s content... and one of the inventions that intrigued me the most was a manual transmission, with all its gears and design. I wondered ... how could someone be so smart and able to invent something so complicated... I intuitively knew this complicated machine had a designer.



Some of you sitting here this morning are spending your life understanding the intricate and complicated machinery of life, of nano-size motors, of molecular transport systems, of electrical and chemical communication systems inside our bodies, and of gigantic blueprints of information stored within each cell, or living brain cells that perform calculations like supercomputers.

(The complete article is available at: <http://med.stanford.edu/ism/2010/november/neuron-imaging.html> .)

A study at Stanford University made an amazing discovery just months ago in the ability to actually observe brain synapses in a living brain. These connections are so densely packed that there are 125 trillion of them just on the thin outside layer of our brain.

To quote one of the authors of the study, “The brain’s overall complexity is almost beyond belief. One synapse, by itself, is more like a microprocessor – with both memory-storage and information-processing elements – than a mere on/off switch. In fact, one synapse may contain on the order of 1,000 molecular-scale switches. A single human brain has more switches than all the computers and Internet connections on Earth.”

As a boy I intuitively knew that a car transmission had to be invented by very smart people... so, when we look at the complexity and wonder of the created world should we not also come to the same conclusion.

Everything thing is from God – not just the beauty and complexity of the living world – but also the laws and principles of how we should live. Justice, ethics, authority, relationships – what is right and wrong, how we are to relate to each other has its definition in God design.

If your marriage doesn’t seem to be working, - maybe you should seriously seek out the blueprint of God’s design for your relationship.

If you notice your moral compass is beginning to drift, that is, you are not sure anymore what is right and what is wrong, then the One who created it all can tell you. This is especially relevant into today’s sex-crazed culture.

Your mind, your job, your gifts and abilities, your car, your home, your money – it does not belong to you, it is all on loan from God.

If your life is a disaster this morning... you don’t like where you are heading... and you can’t stand the guilt of looking back at where you’ve been... there is One who is waiting for you to look up and ask for His help – even right now.

For God is also the Creator and Source of all Life... of new life, a life where your eyes are opened for the first time to His reality. He is ready to create a total new YOU; a new YOU washed from guilt and sin, a life of real meaning and real hope.

From Him... From Him... are all things. Why do we search so many other places for answers in life when we can go to the source, the One who made it all?

There is no thought He does not know, for he made us; there is no decision we ever need to make alone, for He created every circumstance that comes into our life.

The next phrase in verse 36 is “Through Him ... are all things... “
Through Him... other meanings of the original word used here include “by means of” or “on account of”, in other words, He is in control.

Through this passage and others we uncover the truth that the God of the Bible is the God is the supreme and permanent authority, the sovereign One - completely in control.

This is one of the deepest mysteries we read in the Bible. How can all things be controlled by God, yet we have freedom to choose and be held responsible for our choices?

The Bible says God determined the times set for men and the exact places they should live – He wrote all the days of my life in a book before I was born – and He planned good works for me to do before I do them.

He choose the Jews, He choose the prophets and patriarchs of old, he chooses earthly authorities and, in His mercy, he chooses men and women as His children.

As someone has said – “If you don’t believe God is the Sovereign One determining who is being saved, you must believe it is your job.” It is a great mystery, but yet this is what the Bible teaches.

We must hold these truths in one hand and in the other hand also hold promises like Romans 10:13 which says “Everyone who calls on the Lord will be saved.”

Donald Grey Barnhouse used an illustration where he would ask people to imagine a cross like the one on which Jesus died, only so large that it had a door in it. Over the door were these words from Revelation: “Whosoever will may come.” These words represent God’s free offer of the gospel. By God’s grace, the message of salvation is for everyone. Anyone who will come to the cross is invited to enter.

On the other side of the door a happy surprise awaits the one who believes and enters. From the inside, anyone glancing back can see these words from Ephesians written above the door: “Chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.”

But there is also another aspect to the truth that God is in control ... and that is that nothing comes into our life apart from the plan of God.

Not a sparrow falls to the ground apart from the will of the Father.

Not a cell in your body nor the orbit of a planet is out of His control.

There is great comfort in the assurance that every detail of your life has come through God’s hand –

God does not make mistakes and every trial comes with a divine purpose.

The purpose may be to grow in obedience, or humility and dependence. If the Bible says that Christ learned obedience from what He suffered, how much more do we need to learn obedience too.

Psalm 131 talks about a child that does not understand the purposes of its mother, yet humbly and quietly trusts in her love.

Reading from Psalm 131 -

My heart is not proud, O Lord, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have stilled and quieted by soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me.

So we can know the heart of God for us in the middle of a trial – our soul can be comforted as we humbly trust in our loving heavenly Father’s purposes.

And finally, from verse 36 – all things are to God.

Heaven’s worship song is “worthy is the Lamb” as all created beings bow before God declaring His worth.

God has chosen us as His treasured possession... but we are really incidental to His real purpose. Our salvation is primarily for the honor of the Son.

When we become a believer, a change will start occurring in our thinking... our life that was before all about me, now realizes our life and it’s direction should be all about God. Our eyes are opened to the reality of the truths in Romans 11:36. We see the futility and emptiness, the insanity of our previous life in darkness.

A very powerful ruler once learned these same truths, but learned them in a much different way... and the Bible records this story of a king named Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel chapter 4.

Daniel 4:30-33

As the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, "This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you. You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes." Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled.

And we know that he went insane for seven years.

God gives us this story as if to say anyone who thinks he or she is the center of the universe is spiritually insane. A person who thinks like this is out of his or her mind.

Pride is just another form of this spiritual insanity. Pride is behaving as if we were God, denying our due dependence on God, and pretending that all things depend on us.

It is because all things are from, through, and to God that the glory must be His alone.

So as we comprehend to truths of God's word here, my our cry also be "To Him be the glory... forever... Amen."

Thank you.