



Romans 11:33-36
The Wisdom of God

33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

34 "For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?"

35 "Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?"

36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

This is the point of a great transition in Paul's letter to the Romans, he is about to move from the indicatives, the doctrinal teaching and theological basis of the letter, to the imperatives, the practical applications. He is about to move from writing about things to be known by Christians, to writing about things to be done by Christians. And indeed all of Paul's letters follow that course of things to be known and things to be done. You can often see that because/therefore structure in the way that he develops his arguments Paul seldom tells Christians to do anything without having first explained why.

For instance, in Ephesians 6:13 Paul doesn't simply say you know you ought to pursue spiritual disciplines, become very familiar with the word of God, make sure of your salvation and so on. If he'd just done that, the response might be, eh, maybe that would be good, maybe not. No first establishes the indicatives, why is doing that stuff so important: "Hey Christian, you are involved **every day of your life** in spiritual warfare, you may have troubles with people, you may be persecuted by individuals but those are just manifestations of the conflict between good and evil, light darkness, the believing and the unbelieving since the fall of man, the primary conflict is spiritual: ***"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."*** and only then he says, "Therefore take up the whole armor of God!"

This teaching methodology makes sense: if I say to you "*put on a bullet proof vest*" you are going to look at me and say "*come on - its bulky, it makes me sweat, its uncomfortable to wear*", you can come up with a hundred excuses for not doing it. But if I first explain to you the danger of the place we are entering into, the weapons that are going to be used against us, the terrible damage they can cause, you're going to say, "*yeah don't just give me the vest, give me a helmet too!*"

In this letter though, in a way that is greater and more complete than in any other letter in the New Testament, Paul has set before Christians the wonder of God's work in salvation. He has explained how men are fallen, how there was no way for them to save themselves, how all men were condemned and how God interposed the precious blood of his own Son Jesus Christ to redeem, and then not just to redeem but to sanctify, and preserve, and glorify those whom He had chosen to be His sheep. And how all of this went so very counter to human wisdom, human methods. And not looking back on it, he

can't help but be AMAZED not at what God has done, but the way He did it. And so he breaks out into this exclamation of wonder an "Isn't God amazing?!" but in, of course, much more dignified Pauline language. I hope that when you consider the sovereignty of God you are similarly amazed. That you also say at the very least "**Wow!**"

I hope that's the case with you, because a lot of people don't react that way. A lot of people confronted with what Paul has said in chapters 9-11 salvation being not according to man's will but God's mercy and about how God chose some sinners for salvation and rejected others according to the counsel of His own will, get very upset. They tend not to like these doctrines, and sometimes will even skip over them entirely to get to subjects they regard as happier. But Paul doesn't do that, he praises God for the wisdom of His way of salvation. In doing that Paul doesn't say these things are easy to understand, as if all you need is to be as smart or sanctified as Paul and it would all be very simple to you. No Paul speaks of God's wisdom and God's ways as being past our finding out.

And this brings me to an important point: **God's wisdom and knowledge is beyond our ability as His creatures to fully comprehend.** And what I mean by comprehend is to completely understand. The finite (that is us) cannot comprehend the infinite (God). Now we can apprehend parts of God's knowledge as he reveals them to us, that is we can know them. We can know the WHAT of God's knowledge, but not necessarily the WHY.

I'll give you an example of that, yesterday we were walking on the river trail and after 2 miles, my youngest daughter goes from being a child to being a 40 pound rucksack, but it's nice because we get a chance to talk. And so because Victor had run over her leg with her bike she was asking is it dangerous to get run over by a bike, and I said well yeah you can break a bone, and she said "but my bone wasn't broken, why was that?" and I said well because God protected you. So she asked "how" and so I explained sometimes directly via his angels, sometimes by ordering things so that the really bad stuff doesn't happen, but regardless he is always watching over you. So then she asked again, but how does he know when to watch over, and I started talking about first God's omnipresence and then how time past, present, and future from God's perspective is always "present" and then suddenly it hit me "**FOUR YEAR OLD**" so I said, "well God makes sure Everything in the World works for the Good of Love Ones Like You." You see I was trying to cram doctrines most 40 year old Christians have difficulty with into the understanding of a 4 year old and the capacity to contain them just wasn't there.

Well Brothers and Sisters, you may not be 4, but there are things that God knows that you will NEVER be able to fully understand. For instance, why **all** of the things that have happened in your life **had** to happen the way the did. God knows but you don't and I seriously doubt we will ever be able to completely grasp of all the permutations and interrelations with other peoples lives and history. We will never fully grasp why God loved us and showed us mercy why he would be willing to send that which was most precious to Him, that is His Son to die for us. Even in his choice of Israel, He never gives a complete explanation to them as to WHY he chose them. In Deut 7:8 the Lord essentially says I loved you because I loved you. You aren't going to be able to figure it out. Just accept it.

But again, there are so many who aren't happy with that, they must have everything about God be fully comprehensible. I have to be able to get my arms around it, or I won't accept it. So we create theologies that limit his sovereignty. "**Oh, I know exactly why he chose me, he looked down the corridors of time and saw that I would choose Him, you see He loves me because I first loved Him.**" That theology ignores all of the clear teaching that says God chooses, God initiates the relationship, that God saves Sinners, not that Sinners save themselves by choosing God. "We love Him because He

first loved us.” (1 John 4:9). But we do it, because we want a system of theology we can full fathom. As Robert Haldane put it: ***“How often does the profane ingenuity of man pretend to fathom, and sometimes even dares to arraign, the inscrutable ways of Jehovah! But what a contrast does the Apostle’s language, in these concluding verses of this chapter, present to the vain and presumptuous speculations of some interpreters of Scripture! Multitudes receive the testimony of God only so far as they can satisfactorily account for all the reasons and grounds of His conduct, when measured according to the petty scale of their limited capacity. How unbecoming in such a creature as man!”***

We are told even angels wonder at and desire to look into the plans of God, even the angels in heaven are amazed at God’s working, and yet we expect to be able to figure, in fact we demand it.

We often stand in a position similar to Job, demanding answers as to why the things that have happened to us, have happened, and maintaining that its not fair, these things shouldn’t have happened and implicitly that God needs to listen to our advice about how to order the way of the universe. We look at the results of elections, or who likes us and doesn’t like us, or who we marry, or were we live, and we say that’s not right.

And so Paul quotes from Isaiah, and exactly the kind of questions that God asked Job, “do you know my mind, have you the ability to be my counselor, did you lend to me, do I owe you anything, am I not the sovereign omnipotent Creator who sustains the entire universe. who has become God’s counselor: Or as it is in Isaiah 40:13 – ***“Isa. 40:13 Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, Or as His counselor has taught Him? 14 With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him, And taught Him in the path of justice? Who taught Him knowledge, And showed Him the way of understanding?”***

God doesn’t give Job answers, because Job wouldn’t have understood them, instead he displays his sovereignty before Job, and that allied with power and goodness is all the answer Job needs. And so he says: ***“Job 42:1 Then Job answered the LORD and said:***

- 2 "I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You.
3 You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.
4 Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, 'I will question you, and you shall answer Me.'
5 "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You.
6 Therefore I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes."***

He doesn’t comprehend, but now he sees, he apprehends, and it is enough. That should be enough for us as well.

And so Paul ends his doxology with a confession that God and His Glory are the all in all of not only our existence, but the entire universe. The unbelieving man tends to think that the entire universe and God Himself is here to serve and glorify him and so he lives trying to accomplish that and wonders why he is so unhappy. This is because the chief end of man is not self-glorification, the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. As Haldane again puts it:

“Here we have the grand truth which lies at the foundation of all religion. All things are of God, for He is the Author of all; His will is the origin of all existence. All things are through Him, for all things are created by Him as the grand agent. All things are likewise to Him for all things tend to his glory as their final end.”

Applications:

1) The Knowledge of God is limitless, and his wisdom has no bounds. We may be experts in some particular field. We may know a lot about something or we may be widely read and seem to know something about almost everything. **God by contrast knows everything about everything.** God is the ultimate expert in all things. Now keep that in mind, and please stick with me here.

Parents you get frustrated with your children because they don't listen to you they don't take your advice, and that despite the fact that they don't have the knowledge, the wisdom, the experience that you do. And so when you tell them and they don't do it and it goes wrong, you end up wanting to say "I told you so!" So even though they don't comprehend why they shouldn't date and or marry the beautiful/handsome and smart unbeliever, they should at least listen to you. It would go better for them.

Older Kids you get frustrated with your younger brothers and sisters because they do things like stick a dead bug in their mouth even when you say don't do that! You know its wrong and its not going to work out but they don't listen to you. If only they'd listen to you even if they don't understand WHY the dead bug shouldn't go in their mouth, it would go better for them!

That's bad right? Alright, Here's the problem, God tells you what to do, and so often the reply we give him is, I know better. You say divorce is wrong, I say its right. You say ear tickling is bad, I say its good, you say ignoring the Lord's day is bad, I say its good. You say lying is always wrong, I say sometimes it isn't. And so on. Everytime you know what you're doing. You're pushing Him away and putting the dead bug in your mouth.

The worst and the most fatal instance of that is when Jesus says to us, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." And we say, no I say there are other ways to be saved apart from repenting and believing in Jesus.

2) Christian You can trust HIM: Mark 10:29 "Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will.

30 "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

31 "Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

Jer. 29:11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.