

O the Depths of His Wisdom and Ways

Romans 11:33, 34

Oh the Depths of God Himself, O the Depths of His eternal glory; O the depths of his sovereignty over all things; O the depths of His knowledge; O the depths of His purposes; and O the depths of his grace (read 35).

We surveyed these six great depths to this Doxology last time.

These were the heights and depths, the breadth and length of His Great Depths.

Today, we want to delve more into the Deep Riches of His Wisdom and His Ways to conclude Romans 11.

By way of introduction, verses 33-35 follow a pattern.

33 begins with wisdom and knowledge. 33 ends with God's judgments and ways.

34 comes back to his mind and counsel. 35 teaches his ways with man again. The intellectual attributes of God are followed by his volitional attributes – purposes, plan, doings, his footsteps.

Here are such depths, such depths of riches, such depths of riches of wisdom, of knowledge, of the mind of the Lord, and such depths of riches of his purposes, his will, his paths.

God is wise through and through. He is light and there is no darkness in him. His wisdom is his choosing the right goal, with the right means, in every circumstance, and acting with diligence and perseverance to come to that goal.

So wisdom is very practical, made up of thought, knowledge, and understanding put into practice.

A person may be smart and intelligent but lacking wisdom, while an uneducated and more simple soul may be full of wisdom in life. Nearly all languages have different words for these concepts.

A person also may know how to put things together and put into practice, but the end is all wrong. That is the wisdom that is below, the craftiness of devils.

But God is all wise in Himself: His knowledge of himself and all things is infinite, exhaustive, complete and perfect.

²⁷ to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.
(Rom 16:27)

¹⁷ Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, *be* honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (1Ti 1:17)

But it is in **redemption** rather than in other realms that the chief riches and depths are found.

In Christ - ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
(Col 2:3)

In the cross - ¹⁸ For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God...the wisdom of God (1Co 1:18)

As Archibald Alexander of Princeton observed:

“As the God-Man Mediator, He is the most wonderful exhibition of the wisdom of God ever made in the universe. The whole plan of redemption is resplendent with wisdom. The contrivance of a way by which God can be just, while he justifies the ungodly, is so replete with wisdom, that the angels contemplate it with profound astonishment.”

Much could be said of saving wisdom here: of God’s wise counsel from eternity past, of how wisdom all abides in the incarnate Son, sent to be the Savior of the World; the Spirit of wisdom applying salvation to those who

repent and believe; and the wise plan of God in history – calling a people, a nation, a flock, a bride, a church, from every tongue, tribe and people.

Oh what a blessing to be a Christian! To know the peace of God that surpasses understanding; to taste the soul comfort of being returned to the chief Shepherd; to find angelic delights that are out of this world! To know God and Jesus Christ – which is to know true life, eternal life, abundant life, heavenly life.

But I would have us briefly consider how well these jewels fit upon the crown of the fallen children of Adam.

These deep riches of light are for our lost, dark and shallow condition. They are so perfectly fitted to bring us out of the darkness and blackness of sin – to address our blind and miserable estate.

Oh, but there's the problem. WE think we are fine; we don't think ourselves shallow or in the darkness or miserable without God. Sinful man boasts in his sin, in his condition, like building a tower of Babel to the gods of technology, science, discovery, communications, advancements, medicine, therapies, laws, politics and culture.

What is man without the God of wisdom? Like the ancient ruler in Daniel, saying: "Is this not Babylon the Great which I myself have built? By my power? For the glory of my majesty?"

But God's wisdom, which is called foolishness by this age; is styled weak by the rich of this world – and have shown themselves lost and foolish!

1 Corinthians says: ²⁰ Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. (1:20-21)

Pride has always been our downfall. And those who make it to the top – what trainwrecks they are! We might find one in a hundred among the rich and powerful and successful who aren't narcissistic, corrupt and cruel.

“Of all tyrannies, a tyranny sincerely exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive... those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end for they do so with the approval of their own conscience.” – C.S. Lewis

If the beginning of wisdom and knowledge is to know and fear God; if all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Jesus the Word of God made flesh; then outside – what can there be but sick, sinful, sorry puddles of humanity wallowing in the mud of the serpent's deceptions?

And such are doomed to dine on the dust like the devil. And if you follow him to the end, you will find that the miseries of this life are only appetizer of an eternal banquet of despair and loss, and where Satan is your host.

Only in God's light do we see light.

William Shakespeare wrote in his play, “The fool thinks he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool.”

Which are you? Self-wise, as god? Or coming to Jesus who is the light of the world, the light of salvation, the light of life?

We turn then to how unsearchable and unfathomable are his ways.

Surely his ways are as far above as heaven is to the earth; as his thoughts and wisdom are above us, so his footsteps.

Why are His ways so excellent? Majestic? Praiseworthy? His footsteps are in the sea – His ways are among the stars – as far as the galaxies above to our small planet – so his thoughts, his ways are not our thoughts, our ways.

Consider first that God's ways are so high and different than ours because of who and what He is. His are the ways of a supreme, eternal, almighty, pure and unchangeable Being.

Our ways – our best efforts, works and ways, are by those of dusty creatures! All His “ways are matchless, godlike and divine,” as the hymn-writer put it. His ways are ways of perfect, complete knowledge, understanding and especially wisdom. Wisdom is close to the ways of God, as the practical outworking of all his purposes.

Our actions are so frequently limited, ignorant, unwise! But God knows all things perfectly! And he acts in accord with that mind which knows the pre-ordained end from the beginning! And, He does all things purely, in reference to his own perfect, unchangeable holiness and integrity. There is not so much as a smudge on his character and faithfulness.

His eyes are too pure to behold iniquity. But man – he drinks iniquity like water! God's ways are morally higher infinitely from man's ways. His paths are perfectly high and holy where our feet drag the mud of sin upon the carpet of his world! We are trudging slowly up the slope of sin's mudslide.

Dare not to bring this wise, holy, perfect and glorious God down to your level. His judgments, or better, his decisions, which include his severity in dealing with enemies – these are all out of your depth. Bringing God down to us, thinking that the Almighty is like we are, is at the heart of all idolatry. We want to put God in our little boxes, so we can move him around as we please.

As Machen said on idolatry: “God has not invited us finite creatures to sit at the council table of the universe.” Indeed, Daniel 4 says: all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; he does according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.

His ways are inscrutable – invincible – indestructible – inviolable.

They are also inescapable.

God does not work in some far-off shop away from the earth or men. His invisible attributes are clearly seen. They are understood by the creature man – so that they are without excuse. In Him we live and move and have our being – He is not far from any of us.

Every man, woman and child can say with David – O, where can I go from Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your Presence? In the heavens? In the depths of the sea or the grave? At home or abroad – He is fully present in all places at all times.

He cannot NOT be omnipresent!

He is the independent and transcendent Holy One!

That is the dividing line amongst angels and men.

There are those who love him to be God, to have him as God, who love his presence, love his perfections, seek him supremely, and worship him as is his due, and say from the heart, “As the deer pants for the water brooks – so my soul longs, it pants after you!”

And then there are those who cannot get away from his presence, like the Prodigal Son, leaving the Father’s house, seeking a far off country. See the demons fleeing when Jesus came near: ‘We know who you are, Jesus, thou Son of God! What have we to do with you?’ And see fallen men and women lined up with Adam and Eve, hiding in nature and nature’s night – fast bound in sin.

But the greatest things about God, the depths of His purposes, have to do with the grace of God shown to sinners. O the depths of the riches of God are centered all on the mercy shown in the gospel.

And we exalt His purposes even above his wisdom or knowledge. For what good would it be if He knew how to save condemned sinners, but could not accomplish it! But O how he does bring to pass all his wonderful wisdom of grace!

We face an unsearchable and inescapable Judgment for sin! How can man be just before God? Here then are unfathomable and immeasurable ways of grace in God's Son!

God's knowledge of the sinner is perfect and complete – he sees how worthy of his wrath we are. But in his wisdom God has given us life for death, love for loathing, pity for pain, right for wrong, good for evil, heaven for hell.

That comes out in Paul's quote of the book of Job: "Who then is he that can stand before Me? Who has given to Me that I should repay him?" (41:10-11)

We can never stand before God and offer him something, some good deed, some self-righteousness we produced, and say, "Here – this gets me in, right?"

But that is the very mindset of the great majority of this prodigal planet today!

This is a colossal failure to grasp the obvious goodness and grace of God. Not just grace; but goodness also. Because if we are saying, I am good enough for heaven, we are not only misunderstanding sin and grace, but also godlessness and goodness.

What good are you offering to God that is not first his? How can you look upon what is His and offer it to him as though it were yours? What benefit do you think you have, what value in you, that you are going to offer to God as yours, which will tip the scales to make heaven your right, as something owed to you?

"Who has first given to him that it might be paid back to him again?"

There is none who does good – Rom. 3.

There is none good, but God – Jesus in Mark 10

"God's goodness is one with his absolute perfection. He does not need to become anything for whatever he is, he is eternally. He does not have a purpose outside of himself, but is sufficient, all-sufficient, self-sufficient. HE RECEIVES NOTHING; HE ONLY GIVES. Everything is dependent on him, he is dependent on nothing. He does everything with a view to himself, because

he cannot rest in anything less than himself. As he is himself the absolutely good, the perfect one, he cannot and may not love anything except with a view to himself. He cannot and may not be satisfied with anything less than absolute perfection.” Herman Bavinck

Oh how great the depths of him who made heaven and earth! O the rich variety that shows forth his handiwork, his skill and his ways! Go sit down in nature’s cathedral in Ps. 104 and drink in its vaulted ceilings and watery depths!

It is this great God’s purpose, this all-good God’s deeply rich way, to enter into a life with you – into a bond, a covenant, a friendship, that is, like God, great and good and gracious.

He doesn’t owe you anything – and yet as Paul said in Romans 8 – He will give you everything, truly good and great, like himself.

He will turn your mourning into dance, give a garment of praise for your faint spirit, beauty for ashes, wipe every tear away and bathe your feet in butter.

“You anoint my head with oil – my cup runs over!”

Geoff Thomas has written a book: “You Could Have It All”

His chapter titles in this short paperback are:

You could know God. You could know yourself. You could have all your sins forgiven. You could become a child of God. You could experience all things working together for your good. You could learn contentment in every circumstance of life. You could become an incomparably stronger and wiser person. You could know the purpose of life. You could belong to the best and happiest people on earth. You could have the assurance that the living God will welcome you when you die.

Does any of this appeal to you? How can it not?

Well, maybe you say – sounds great, but it isn’t for me – I am too bad, I am too far gone.

This is the point of Isaiah 55. When God says his thoughts and ways are so much higher than our thoughts and ways, he is speaking especially about grace, about saving unworthy sinners like me.

⁷ Let the wicked man forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the LORD, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. ⁸ "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. (Isa 55:7-8)

Come you who have no money, come buy and eat without price, without anything! He spreads the feast and makes the sure mercies of His David, his Christ, yours in full!

What are the so great depths of riches of his ways? That He Himself becomes your way to Him. Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life... Jesus is the New and Living Way! He does not merely give you eternal and abundant life; he must become Life to you – He who is the resurrection and the life!

“Come unto Me, all you who are weary and heavy laden – I will give rest to your souls! I give unto them eternal life and no man can snatch them from my hand!” I give myself to you!

God did not send an angel from heaven – no great creature – and said, ‘there, bring my beloved ones to me’; he did not say to the church, to her ministers, to some pope somewhere – ‘there, you spoon out my grace to whom you see fit’.

He sent his own beloved Son – and in him – in him alone – you are complete; by faith in receiving him, he gives you all things.

What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who or what can be against us? He who spared not his....

How is the life brought to me? He himself comes into my heart, my life, my soul: Jesus in us, the hope of glory!

God is not saying fill your life with morality, with spirituality, with religiosity, with do-goodism, with activism, with family values, with churchianity, with escapism from the world. Behold, Christ stands at the door and knocks; if any man hears his voice and opens the door, He will come in to him, to sup with him, and you with him!

The new life, the new relationship, filled with the love of God, the pardon of all of yours sins, adopted and set apart for the Lord – is nothing less, nothing short of God Himself living in you forever, if you are to live with him forever!

By His Spirit, the Spirit of grace, the Spirit of Jesus risen and ascended as Savior and King!

Come and trust in Him today! He welcomes you! Richly!

Oh the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable your judgments – how unfathomable your ways indeed!

Pray: May all of our feet be in this way, O Lord. May we run the straight race of God's grace – to lift up dim eyes and seek you face – life with its way before each lies – Christ, you're our path, you're our prize. Made the wisdom of God to us and the Way of God to us. You are the door – we enter in. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart; lean not...