

The Wisdom of God (Romans 11:33-34)

Please turn in God's Word to Rom 11. We've been studying this book and how it shows us God and His attributes, chapter by chapter, the excellencies and beauties of who God is. We're not studying everything in Romans, but studying every time it brings up a new attribute or truth of God (love, wrath, righteousness, mercy, etc.). Today we come to Paul's first mention of God's wisdom in the end of chapter 11, and he moves from theology to doxology (glorifying God). He's been preaching the gospel, now he praises the God of the gospel. God's attributes should impact our affections. God's wisdom should lead to our worship. Truly seeing God moves to truly singing to God

Rom 11:33 *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!*³⁴ *“For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?”*

The context of v. 25 is not being wise in your own eyes. God's hardening of Israel isn't because us Gentiles are any wiser. Paul says in v. 25-26 Israel is only partially and temporarily hardened until the fullness of Gentile nations come into the church and then in that end time, all Israel will be saved. v. 28 says Israel as a nation is sadly an enemy of the gospel – Israel doesn't mean the elect here, it's Jews who reject – but God isn't through with the Jews. In His wise plan, v. 31 *‘so they too have now been disobedient [Israel] in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy.*³² *For God has consigned all to disobedience [Israel], that he may have mercy on all.* [Israel in v. 26, saving mercy]³² ***Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom***

...

God in His rich mercy has an all-wise plan for nations, for salvation, and He also displays His wisdom in creation and in His orchestration of all things. In the context of 8:28, God's wisdom works all things together for good for those who love Him, and here in 11:36 all things are from Him, through Him, and to Him, to God be glory. That's the context before and after this. The end of the book is *‘to the only wise God be glory forevermore’* (16:27).

Outline:

1. The Depth of God's Wisdom
2. The Definition of God's Wisdom
3. The Display of God's Wisdom
4. Our Discerning God's Wisdom for Life

1st the depth – 11:33 starts *‘Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom ...’*

1st word ‘Oh’ – used in 9:20, *who are you O man to answer back to God?*
 You’re the clay, God is the potter who molds you, He’s infinitely wiser!
 Ch 7 ends ‘O wretched man that I am...’ but now ‘O the wisdom of God!’

I’m convicted how foolish I can be and I need this

O is the word Jesus used to say ‘*O foolish ones...!*’ (Lk 24:25). That’s us, and in Rom 1:22 sinners ‘*claiming to be wise, they became fools.*’ That’s sin’s trajectory, those wise in their own eyes are fools in God’s eyes. But in contrast, ‘*Oh the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!*’

Eph 1 says His riches of grace were lavished on us in all wisdom

Oh – emotion, something to cry out (like Jesus ‘Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem!’). The Psalms do this: ‘*Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD! ... O LORD! Your thoughts are very deep! ... your judgments are like the great deep.*’¹ Like Rom 11:33 ‘*Oh the depths...how unsearchable are his judgments...*’ Like David cries out ‘*O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom...*’

In this context it’s like the “Oh” that comes out when someone first sees the Grand Canyon and the depths of it. Or who’s never seen the ocean before and goes to the coast and sees the depth and breadth and length and says O! Compared to God’s wisdom, my wisdom is a communion cup at the Pacific. Think about the Mariana trench, miles deep, Mt. Everest would vanish in it. Last Tuesday I was at the GCRC study and asked their help with examples:

- Frances talked about the “O” that came out when she saw the Alps
- Mary Lou Carruthers talked about the O of a starry sky (Ps 8:1, 3-4)
- Another mentioned snow in the Nevadas, or seeing a baby born, O!

We read Job 12:12 ‘*Wisdom is found with the elderly, and understanding comes with long life*’ (HCSB). Wisdom comes with age and the aged, and there’s a lot around you. Ask seniors where they’ve seen God’s wisdom in their life and where He’s moved them to say ‘O’ at the depths of who He is.

Think of Simeon and Anna in the temple waiting for Messiah. ‘O Come, O Come Emmanuel’ was the cry of their heart. Old timers today sing ‘O God our help in ages past,’ and from experience ‘O love that will not let me go.’ How sweet it is to see people here in their 80s and 90s sing ‘O how I love Jesus.’ Or maybe closest to Rom 11:33, ‘O the deep, deep love of Jesus.’

Paul sees the riches of God and sings ‘O the depth!’ Ch 8 said neither height nor depth can separate us from the love of God in Christ. In this text it’s ‘O the depth’ as he thinks of God’s wisdom,’ like Daniel 2:21 says God ‘*gives wisdom to the wise, and knowledge...he reveals deep and hidden things.*’

We need to not stay in the shallow end of the pool. Some churches are kiddie pools, which is ok for kiddies to a point, but we need to go deeper and learn to swim. It's good for us to say 'O' as we realize God's depths! And remember Rom 11:33 is praise, O for a thousand tongues to sing this!

MLJ: '*O the depth* - the fathomless character! ... illimitable depth ... what immensity, what profundity! ... What a privilege it is to be entering into this uncharted ocean, this never-ebbing sea ... God's depth of wisdom.'²

That's #1. the depth of wisdom, now #2. the definition of His wisdom

Look at Rom 11:33, it goes on '*...the wisdom and the knowledge of God...*'

Rom 8 talks about God's foreknowledge, His intimate knowing us before He formed us in the womb. God knows everything about everything and us. He knows the depths of the universe and the stars by name, and also knows the depths of my sin and He loves me the same! That's an amazing God!

He knows the number of hairs on my head and my hopes and fears

Ps 139: *You know when I sit down and when I rise up...And are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue... You know it all...in Your book were all written The days that were ordained for me...Such knowledge is too wonderful for me...know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts...And lead me in the everlasting way (NAS)*

A wise heavenly Father knows what you need before you ask (Mt 6:8)

God's knowledge is very personal, and His wisdom is very practical. His knowledge is all facts, wisdom is how He acts. Knowledge is possibilities and contingencies, wisdom is skillfully and brilliantly working all for good. The OT word wisdom was used of weaving or multi-color embroidery, or skillful workers or strategy. God's infinite genius does that with all things.³ John Frame: 'wisdom involves "knowing how," not just "knowing that.'"⁴

In *Knowing God*,⁵ Packer says 'Wisdom is power to see, and the inclination to choose, the best and highest goal...He alone is naturally and entirely and invariably wise.' If knowledge is information, wisdom is its application. It 'applies His knowledge...in a way which glorifies Him most (Berkhof).⁶ Some people have a lot of knowledge but aren't wise, don't rightly choose or use it, don't know how to apply it. God has all knowledge and wisdom, and that's good news with His other attributes, too (power, goodness, etc.).

He wisely works all together for good for those He foreknew (8:28-29)

That's #2. The Definition, now #3. The Display of God's Wisdom

11:33b *How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!*

God's ways are not man's ways, they're higher like heaven above the earth. What God's wisdom decides and does is beyond us but how is it displayed? 1 inscrutable way in context: Israel. How odd of God to choose the Jews? And they rejected their Messiah, and His cross was foolishness to Gentiles, but we read in 1 Cor 1 how this is God's wisdom and power to save sinners.

And in Rom 11 Israel's rejection spread the gospel to the world

But let's go back in context to Rom 1 and this is fitting for our SS today on creation and evolution (Brian will share more on his creation ministry at the end). **1:19** *For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.*²⁰ *For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature [wisdom is part of it], have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.*

God's power and wisdom are displayed in creation. Jeremiah says 2x God 'made the earth by his power... established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens.'⁷ Pr 8 talks about wisdom in the depths, springs, mountains, hills, skies, seas, and skillful design of earth. Ps 136 calls us to sing 'To Him who by wisdom made the heavens... To Him who made great lights... The sun to rule by day... The moon and stars...'⁸

I sing the **wisdom** that ordained The sun to rule the day;
The moon shines full at His command, And all the stars obey.
Lord, how Thy wonders are displayed Wherever I turn my eye:
If I survey the ground I tread Or gaze upon the sky!⁹

Ps 104 talks about sun and moon, seasons and cycles and how God sustains all creatures at all times in His intelligent design, it talks about beasts, birds, branches, badgers, boundaries of the depths, etc.²⁴ **O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all... Here is the sea, great and wide, which teems with creatures innumerable... both small and great**¹⁰

All things bright and beautiful, All creatures great and small,
All things **wise and wonderful**, The Lord God made them all.
Each little flow'r that opens, Each little bird that sings,
He made their glowing colors, He made their tiny wings...
The purple-headed mountain, The river running by,
The sunset, and the morning That brightens up the sky...
The cold wind in the winter, The pleasant summer sun,
The ripe fruits in the garden, He made them ev'ry one...
He gave us eyes to see them, And lips that we might tell
... All things **wise and wonderful** ... [God] made all things well.¹¹

ANTHROPIC PRINCIPLE, CREATURES THAT DEFY EVOLUTION

In Rom 1 men who suppress and reject may profess to be wise but are fools

They exchange the truth of God for a lie, from Darwinism to Marxism to sexual identity, gender fluidity, critical theory, progressive Christianity, etc. But there are youth here wiser than unsaved teachers as Ps 119 says.¹² Ps 19 says God's Word converts the soul and makes wise the simple (v. 7). 2 Tim 3:15: *'from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus'* NKJV

Sin makes us stupid, but Scripture can make us saved and wise in Christ

A Puritan Stephen Charnock said creation is 'the footsteps of his wisdom' but salvation 'is the face of his wisdom.'¹³ Think of the immortal invisible God only wise, He becomes flesh we can see, walks among us, and lives and dies in a way that fulfills justice, so God can be just and the justifier. How unsearchable is the judgment of God poured out on Jesus on the cross! How inscrutable is the way God saves sinners by their sin of crucifying Him

Only His wisdom can take evil (crucifixion) and turn it to good (salvation)

O the depth of wisdom in the depth of sin, rebels against the King rescued to the heights of the kingdom. God became man to save men who hate God? O the depths of riches in glory He gave up to live in poverty and obscurity, His deity taking on humanity, to die for our depravity and bring us to glory!

O loving wisdom of our God! When all was sin and shame,

A second Adam to the fight and to the rescue came. O wisest love!¹⁴

O the depths of wisdom and knowledge that knows the depths of our pain and suffering firsthand as fully man, and He wisely works His perfect plan. Who can grasp your infinite wisdom? Who can fathom the depths of your love, using our foolishness and weakness to show your wisdom and power? Not many believers are wise by worldly standards but you chose the foolish to shame the wise. You could have given a message through wise powerful angels, but you chose to use us weak fearful trembling servants (1 Cor 1-2).

How inscrutable are your ways that seem foolish to the worldly wise

Eph 3:10 says as we preach His unsearchable riches *'through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to'* the angels. Another translation says *'God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to the unseen'* (NLT). The fallen angels were in shock and dismay at the wisdom of God defeating them when Jesus rose. Angels in heaven marvel at the depth of wisdom in saving the church and bringing people together that never would otherwise. They rejoice when one sinner repents and joins the church. Peter says angels long to look into this.

And to fallen angels Jesus proclaimed victory as He died and rose¹⁵

Listen to this thought: 'the theatre of the world is not big enough...[God's wisdom] is like a flawless diamond as big as the earth, with so many facets that not even the angels can take in all the many colors that are reflected from it. Each color shows but a tiny part of the glory of God's wisdom...'¹⁶

That's the display of wisdom, 4thly finally: our discerning wisdom for life
 11:33...*How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!*
³⁴ *For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?*

That's a quote from Isa 40: *Behold your God!... Who... as His counselor has taught Him? With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him... knowledge, And showed Him the way... His understanding is unsearchable!*¹⁷

We don't know God's mind, but renewed minds can discern His wisdom.
 12:2 *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God...*

We can discern His will/wisdom by renewed minds in God's Word

- **3 takeaways. #1. Trust God with what you don't know**

Rom 11:20 says at the end of the verse '*...do not become proud, but fear.*' The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, a deep reverent humility. We need to first discern what we can't discern. God is God and you're not! He doesn't need a counselor! I can't search the unsearchable or scrutinize His inscrutable ways, and He doesn't show us the future. I humbly must trust God knows what He's doing. I need to say often 'I'm out of my depth here, but I'll trust the depths of the wisdom and the knowledge of God.'

What or where do you need to trust God with that you don't know today? v. 34 says '*who has known the mind of the Lord?*' but you're not expected to raise your hand ('I do' or 'I can')! Who is His counselor? Answer isn't you. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not on your own understanding, acknowledge Him (His understanding) in all your ways, and He'll direct your paths. We can't read the mind of the Lord, but we can trust His heart.

Our all-wise Heavenly Father knows best

In the book *The Hiding Place*, it's WWII, many dying, the future unknown, and a little girl's mind feared. Mr. Ten Boom "sat down on the edge of the narrow bed. 'Corrie,' he began gently, 'when you and I go to Amsterdam - when do I give you your ticket?' I sniffed a few times, considering this. 'Why, just before we get on the train.' [Father said] 'Exactly. And our **wise** Father in heaven knows when we're going to need things, too. Don't run out ahead of Him, Corrie. When the time comes that some of us will have to die, you will... find the strength you need just in time.'" Don't worry, trust.

*Day by day with each passing moment, Strength I find to meet my trials here;
 Trusting in my Father's wise bestowment, I've no cause for worry or for fear.*

- **2nd takeaway: Ask God for wisdom in His Word (trust and obey)**

If any of you lack wisdom, ask God who gives to all generously and without reproach...that's James 1:5, it applies the depth of the riches of His wisdom –He gives generously from those riches if we ask. And He never reproaches 'Not you again, how many times...' No if you lack and ask, He's generous! James says later 'you have not because you ask not,' and also 'be doers of the Word and not hearers only' (hear=knowledge, wisdom applies the word)

Ask for wisdom with an open Bible, ask what to do with what you read

Prov 2: if you receive my words...making your ear attentive to wisdom...if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand...For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge

Solomon knew that experientially as he prayed for wisdom

An example on how to ask God for wisdom in His Word. Ps 90:12: teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom...Let your work be shown to your servants...establish the work of our hands...yes establish...

Watch and pray for wisdom in work and to number your days rightly

Col 1:9 we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God...Pray that for yourself and others. 4:3 'pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word...that I may make it clear...Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time [or 'redeem the time,' pray, obey]

- 3rd takeaway: Praise Jesus for wisdom in Him

*11:34 who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? Jesus is the Wonderful Counselor. Listen to 1 Cor 1-2: 'who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?' But **we have the mind of Christ...you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God... we preach Christ crucified...Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God'***

Sinners, this is what you need. Turn from your foolish sin to Him to save

*Christ is the wisdom of God, when we're in Christ He becomes wisdom to us. Paul praises the Lord in the end of Rom 11 and we can praise the Lord Jesus that **He has known the mind of the Lord** and gives us wisdom from it. When we're in Christ, 1 Cor 2:16 says 'we have the mind of Christ...' The disciples were uneducated fishermen but spoke with wisdom from Jesus. In the gospels Jesus showed wisdom in every situation, study Christ to be wise*

Our foolish thoughts we need to take captive to be obedient to Christ

Remember Proverbs said to seek wisdom like hidden treasure, Col 2:3 says in Jesus are 'hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.' He's better than silver or gold, or riches untold. Seek Christ above all, treasure Christ!

And right before that Paul says we proclaim Christ, ‘*teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.*’ We praise Him for His wisdom and proclaim Him to everyone with wisdom so they’ll grow in Christ. O the depth of the riches of wisdom in Christ. Let’s be in His Word and it in us. Let’s end with Col 3:16 *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing...*

So let’s move from teaching to singing now, in praise to our all-wise God.

Our Father we pray and thank you for these truths that are hidden to the wise of the world and revealed to us. Like Paul prayed in Ephesians, we ask that you would give us the Spirit of wisdom and help us to understand more of the depths and breadth and height and length so we can watch carefully how we live, not as unwise but as wise, and making the very best use of the time because the days are evil. Help us to speak to others in all wisdom and ask church elders or elderly in the church when we have difficult decisions. Help us to proclaim Christ. I pray even for open doors today in His name

¹ Psalm 104:24, 130:1, 92:5, 36:6.

² Add PAGE #

³ This insight from Steve Lawson, “Brilliantly Wise,” in *Show Me Your Glory* (Ligonier, 2020), 149.

⁴ John Frame, *The Doctrine of God* (P&R, 2002), 506.

⁵ J. I. Packer (IVP, 1973), *Knowing God*, 80.

⁶ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Eerdmans, 1968), 69.

⁷ Jeremiah 10:12, 51:15.

⁸ Psalm 136:5-9 NKJV.

⁹ Isaac Watts, “I Sing the Mighty Power of God.”

¹⁰ Psalm 104:24-25.

¹¹ Cecil F. Alexander, “All Things Bright and Beautiful.”

¹² v. 98-100.

¹³ Stephen Charnock, “On the Wisdom of God,” in *Existence and Attributes of God*, vol. 1.

¹⁴ John Henry Newman, “Praise to the Holiest in the Height.”

¹⁵ 1 Peter 1:12, 18-20.

¹⁶ Brian Russell, *I Am: A Devotional Study of the Attributes of God*, 94, 100.

¹⁷ Isaiah 40:9, 13-14, 28 NKJV.