

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Romans 11: 33-36

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank God, it's time to read the Bible again. Let's continue to read Romans Chapter 11. We will read verses 33-36 today.

Paul was a scholar with quick thinking, just like Ezra in the Old Testament, a ready scribe. No matter what scene he encountered, he could eloquently express the thoughts in his heart. However, when he wrote Romans, there were at least two places where he was "at a loss for words."

The first place is at the end of chapter 8, where he describes God's organic salvation—God's great love helping us walk the path of sanctification, ultimately obtaining glory. Regarding God's love, Paul exhausted his words and writings; finally, he was at a loss for words and could only bring out worship and praises to God.

The second place is at the end of chapter 11. In Romans chapters 9–11, Paul describes God's sovereignty implemented in the election of wisdom and the arrangement in mercy. And he unveils God's mystery—how God shut up all in disobedience, that He might have mercy on all. Describing up to here, Paul was again at a loss for words; his words and writings were insufficient; Paul could only bring out praises and adoration to God.

Here, Paul taught us a secret: when we have received great grace and blessing and do not know how to repay, the only thing we can do is to praise and adore God.

Verse 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!"

The will and plan that God established in His sovereignty are truly far beyond human recognition and understanding. Even Paul could only say, “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God.” Knowledge enables people to recognize the essence of things; wisdom helps people understand why things happen and how they happen. How deep is God’s knowledge and wisdom!

Paul, under the revelation of the Holy Spirit, wrote nearly half of the New Testament. Up to here, he could still only sigh and say, “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God.” Paul never dared to declare that he could see through or master it. Throughout his life, he diligently studied the Bible; even just before his martyrdom, when writing 2 Timothy, he told Timothy to come quickly and to bring the books he left in Troas, and especially those parchments—which were likely the Old Testament scriptures.

At that time, he knew he no longer had time and opportunity to fulfill his ministry of preaching, but he still wanted to further understand God’s word. Paul truly recognized that God’s knowledge and wisdom far exceed what people can measure; and even if people pursue it for a lifetime, they still cannot fully master it. This was Paul’s attitude toward God’s word.

However, some saints always like to exalt the theological framework they admire and regard it as orthodox, insisting on some self-righteous theological views, and often condemning different interpretations as heresy. May God grant us a humble heart and a teachable spirit, so that we can always learn Paul’s exclamation to God: “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments!”

Knowledge and wisdom are the basis of judgment; judgment is the application of knowledge and wisdom. Because knowledge and wisdom can help people discern; after having appropriate discernment, one can make correct choices; discernment and choice bring about judgment. How unsearchable are God’s judgments! Only in God’s omniscience can discernment be clear, choices be fair, and judgments be accurate.

Our recognition of people and things is always partial; our discernment always cannot escape our own preferences, so the final judgment is often biased. Therefore, Jesus taught us in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 7:1–2, “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.”

The Chinese Union Version translates the Greek word here as “judge,” which is the same Greek word as “judgments” in Romans here. Jesus taught us not to judge, because judgment belongs to God. We cannot judge on behalf of God, because His judgments are unsearchable. Not only can we not judge others’ matters, but we should not even judge our own matters. Wise saints will seek God’s judgment. Because at most, we can look ahead three or four steps, while God’s wisdom measures the years of our lives.

Therefore, in the important matters of our lives, we must learn not to judge ourselves but to come and seek God’s judgment. Although God’s judgments are unsearchable, if we are willing to humbly come and seek, God, in His mercy, will gradually make us understand His judgments.

“His ways past finding out.” The word “ways,” in the KJV, is translated as ways, so it can also be translated as “How unsearchable are His paths.” Paths are God’s methods of doing things and the steps of execution.

Here we see Paul’s meticulous thinking, full of logic; he speaks from God’s knowledge and wisdom to God’s choices and judgments, and finally to God’s methods and paths; this is the principle of God’s work.

For every saint who has received grace and salvation, God, toward this one person, first has complete knowledge and wisdom, then through God’s election and judgment, finally predestines him to walk a path of sanctification in one lifetime, ultimately enabling him to obtain glory. Similarly, for the establishment of every church, God also first, in His knowledge and wisdom, knows every saint, then through God’s choice and judgment, gathers these saints together, and finally predestines the building of the church to fulfill the mission and commission God gives to the church.

Paul here tells us: how deep are God's rich knowledge and wisdom; people cannot see through; God's election and judgment, people cannot measure; God's paths and methods, people also cannot find. Therefore, we can only humbly come before Him, step by step following God's leading; this is a blessed person, a blessed church. This verse, Paul reveals to us the principle of God's work; in the next two verses, Paul warns us to guard our proper position and not overstep.

Verse 34: "For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?"

Who has known the mind of the Lord? Here, "mind" in the KJV is translated as mind, so a more accurate translation is, "Who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has become His counselor?" We fundamentally cannot know God's mind; how then can we become God's counselor? However, this is what most saints do every day.

When we first receive grace, every time we pray, we always give God yes-or-no questions; in the things we ask for, we tell God to do this, not to do that. Such prayer is fundamentally not seeking but rather we already have the answer and come to ask God to endorse it. This is us acting as God's counselor, and a lowly counselor at that. Therefore, such prayer is not easily answered by God.

After a while, becoming a bit more seasoned, when we pray, we give God multiple-choice questions; we bring the things we ask for before God, tell God there are several choices, and ask God to help us choose. This is like being a senior counselor to God, seeming to give God some freedom, but God must respond within the choices we list. Generally speaking, God is not easily inclined to hear such prayer. The best prayer is not to act as God's counselor, because we fundamentally do not know the Lord's mind.

We only need to simply bring the matter before God, without any preset solutions. This is giving God an essay question. After telling God the topic, we still need to quietly wait before God, giving God complete freedom to, according to His will, point out the path He wants us to walk; this is the blessed prayer.

Dear brothers and sisters, the next time we pray, let us not act as God's counselor, because we do not know God's mind. We only need to simply believe that what God gives us is the best. We ask God to help us understand God's intention in these matters, so that we can learn to follow God step by step.

Verse 35: "Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?"

"Who has first given to Him?" Our God is all-sufficient, all-complete, all-abundant; He is the sovereign Creator of the universe and all things; who can first give to Him and make Him repay? All that we have is first given to us by God; no one can first give to God and then make God repay. God never owes us anything, and what we offer to God is originally first given to us by God; we take out a portion of it to offer to God. Therefore, no matter how much we offer, there is nothing to boast about; only foolish people boast about how much they have sacrificed.

God is so generous; He first richly bestows upon us; for example, sunlight, air, water—these are necessities for our survival; God freely gives them to us. God also bestows upon us all kinds of raw materials and grants us intelligence and talent to process them into finished products. Whether crops or all kinds of goods, even the most cutting-edge technological products—if separated from God's creation, we can make nothing.

Therefore, only selfish people are unwilling to offer. We only take a small portion from God's various bestowals to offer to God; this is God giving us the opportunity to thank God. Just as Malachi 3:10 says, "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this," says the Lord of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it."

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

Finally, Paul's praise to God ends in a climax: all things are of Him, through Him, and to Him. I especially like the English translation, simple and clear: of Him, through Him, and to Him. With three prepositions, it states the relationship of all things to God—of Him, through Him, and to Him.

This not only states the relationship of all things to God but also states that when we come to serve God, everything must also be of Him, through Him, and to Him. All things start from God, in the process rely on God, and ultimately glory is given to God. Romans chapters 9–11 speak of God's sovereignty. Chapter 9 emphasizes God's election in sovereignty—this is of Him; chapter 10 emphasizes that we confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in our heart that He rose from the dead, and we shall be saved; here it speaks that on the path of salvation, we must rely on Him; and chapter 11 speaks that ultimately Israelites and the church will together bear witness, giving glory to Him.

Here we see that Paul truly has wisdom; he uses three simple words, of Him, through Him, and to Him, to summarize from chapter 9 to 11; these three chapters are quite profound scriptures, speaking of God's sovereignty. Therefore, reading up to here, we can only, like Paul, send forth praise to God: "To whom be glory forever. Amen."

Let us pray together: Dear Lord Jesus Christ, how we thank You! You are the source of all things; all things are created through You; today all things are sustained by You; in the future, all things will be summed up in You. How blessed we are to accept You as our lifelong Savior. You are the source of our life, the supply in our daily living, and You are also our ultimate destination. Apart from You, we truly can do nothing. If connected to You, we also do not need to do anything by ourselves, because You will carry us forward together. Help me to learn in daily living to experience You as my Lord, so that my daily living can please You. This prayer, petition, and thanksgiving is in the holy name of my Lord Jesus Christ!