

Title: O the depth of the riches

Reading: Romans 11

We read at the end of our reading in Romans chapter eleven the following doxology:

Romans Chapter 11 and verses 33 - 36

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen”.

Now this is the first of two such doxologies within the Epistle, the other being in chapter sixteen. It would be helpful here to take a few moments to explain what is a doxology? A doxology is literally a "*word of glory*". Doxologies are therefore short, spontaneous and highly emotional ascription's of praise to our Heavenly Father.

This word "*doxology*" comes from two Greek words, firstly "*doxa*" meaning to praise, worship, magnify, or glorify and secondly from "*logos*", meaning word. It is thought that these various ascription's of praise were either set to music to be sung or were verbal affirmations that would be memorised and repeated during fellowship.

Brethren and sisters can I make a practical suggestion here, maybe you could use this doxology as the basis for one of your daily prayers throughout this next week. For indeed all the extended doxologies contained within the New Testament brethren and sisters are greatly encouraging and uplifting when meditated upon.

The doxology here in Romans eleven brings before us the self-sufficiency of our Heavenly Father with the particular focus upon his wisdom and knowledge. In other words brethren and sisters his omniscience is brought to our attention and for our consideration. In order that our hearts, might be comforted with the riches of the full assurance of faith. Now the Apostle himself breaks into praise as the completeness of what our Heavenly Father has revealed to him regarding the redemption of his brethren Israel strikes home.

The Eternal Spirit through the Apostle Paul presents us with a high view of our Heavenly Father and in this doxology; we are being taught to highly esteem Yahweh our God for his self-sufficiency and omniscience. Now let us take a moment to give a definition of what we mean, when we speak of our Heavenly Father being self-sufficient.

“That Yahweh our God possesses within himself intrinsically and eternally every quality, every perfection in infinite measure”.

So the God that we worship brethren and sisters needs nothing from any external source to accomplish his will and his purposes, He truly is self-sufficient.

In Acts Chapter 17 and at verses 24 – 25

*“God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; **Neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed any thing**, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things”.*

Returning back to Romans and chapter eleven the Eternal Spirit through the Apostle has developed an argument concerning redemption. Primarily the redemption of the nation of Israel, but also including spiritual Israel, of which we form a part brethren and sisters.

Back in chapter 10 and at verse 1 we read

“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved”.

Here then we see the heart of the Apostle Paul towards his brethren, the Jews. We like the Apostle brethren and sisters need to desire the redemption of the nation of Israel, God’s people. We too need to pray for them and for the city of Jerusalem for as we read here in chapter eleven *“that through our mercy they also may obtain mercy”*. We brethren and sisters will in the mercy of our Heavenly Father be part of the means of their national redemption, when the deliverer shall come out of Zion to turn away their ungodliness.

So these things we are considering are not academic and removed from us, but form part of the role of the multitudinous Christ body’s work shortly after the judgement. Now if we are to be instrumental in the deliverance and redemption of the nation, then surely it ought to be evident amongst us now, for our hope is also the hope of Israel. So brethren and sisters we are to desire and pray for their redemption now.

Back in chapter 9 and verses 1 - 3

*“I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, That **I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart**. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh”.*

The Apostle seems to come down heavily from the great crescendo of chapter eight, when he begins to consider the plight of his brethren Israel. Thus with great heaviness and sorrow of heart, he begins this final section of the expositional part of the Epistle to the Roman ecclesia, concerned with the ultimate end of the nation of Israel.

So as we come, now brethren and sisters to the doxology at the end of chapter eleven, we see that the great Apostles sombre mood and heaviness of heart is changed dramatically to one of rejoicing and praise. For what seemed impossible to him the redemption of natural Israel our Heavenly Father will shortly achieve through his Son and his brethren, the saints. Let us **take careful note** that our God specialises in the impossible! Thus verse thirty-three begins *“O the depth of the riches and the wisdom and knowledge of God”!*

In the Greek this exclamation “O” is used to convey very strong emotion. The Apostle is overcome with the grandeur and the majesty of the knowledge and the wisdom of

our Heavenly Father. Like a mountaineer the Apostle has scaled the heights of the Eternal Spirit's argument, as it has been revealed to him in Christ and having reached the summit. He is totally overcome with the mercy, loving kindness and loyalty of Yahweh unto his covenant promises to the fathers of old.

For like the climber who looks at the panorama before him from the summit who looks down and surveys everything beneath him and its natural beauty. So the Apostle Paul is now able to see the fullness of the divine scheme of redemption for Israel and he stands in awe wondering at the glory of the Eternal Spirit's methodology for their salvation.

What about us do we ever like the Apostle here break into personal praise for our Heavenly Father, when some point of truth is comprehended by us from his word. I am sure that there is not a brother in the audience, who regularly speaks that, has not been overcome with the majesty and beauty of our God's ways at some point. Let us next time brethren follow the Apostles example and break forth into unrestrained praise, "*for praise is comely for the upright*".

Yet the language the Apostle continues with in verse 33 seems to be incapable to describe the greatness of our God. For we read "*the depth*" which, brings to mind the oceans, that man is still unable to fully explore and comprehend due to his limitations, yet despite his creative ingenuity?

Now the Greek word for "*depth*" speaks, of things, which are profound and mysterious, as the psalmist declares "*thy thoughts are very deep*". Indeed Daniel concurs, speaking of the Almighty he states "*He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him*". **Notice** the link here between the deep and darkness, thus like the oceans at their lowest level of depth there is a thick darkness, which makes our Heavenly Father and his ways impenetrable to us.

The prophet Isaiah helps us with a partial explanation for this in that he records "*my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Yahweh. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts*".

Again brethren and sisters let us recognise the incredible gulf that is presented by this word picture contrasting the heavens and the earth. Because as we read elsewhere "*the foolishness of God is wiser than, men*". But it is the book of Deuteronomy, which reveals the reason for Yahweh's incomprehensibility in that "*the secret things belong unto Yahweh our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law*".

Now let us not despair that our Heavenly Father has not revealed everything to us, because as we consider the rest of this doxology. We shall see brethren and sisters that our Father in heaven has everything under control and in hand. As the Apostle discovered Yahweh our God, will totally fulfil all his pleasure through that one, we are shortly to remember in these emblems of bread and wine. Here called the "*deliverer*" in verse twenty-six.

We often speak of the purpose of the Almighty and indeed his character, his name and the associated titles. Yet we do not seem to spend much time speaking about the attributes of our God, beyond a few like his love, his righteousness and his holiness. The Apostle Paul now in this passage brings before three of his infinite characteristics, his **riches**, **wisdom** and **knowledge**.

Now the AV reads as if there are only the later two, but the Diaglott has “*and*” in the place of this phrase “*both of*”. Indicating to us that there are three (*rather than two*) characteristics of our God, which are being highlighted for us here to consider.

“*O the depth of the riches and the wisdom and knowledge of God*”. So this descriptive term the Apostle uses speaking of the “*depth*” of God, applies to all three characteristics in this verse and indeed if we were to go and compare our Heavenly Father's other characteristics it would be true of everyone of them.

Thus the **riches** of God are likewise beyond our ability to fully comprehend them. Think about it brethren and sisters, we are dealing with a person who created everything we understand and sustains that creation purely out of himself. That is why the psalmist declares “*The earth is Yahweh's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein*”.

This brings us to the qualities of **wisdom** and **knowledge**. But what is the difference between wisdom and knowledge? Well *knowledge* is awareness of information and the required understanding of that information to the purpose in hand. Whereas *wisdom*, is the awareness of how to use that knowledge skilfully to bring about the purpose devised. Which in this case here in Romans chapters nine to eleven is the salvation of both Jew and Gentile. The riches of his provision in Christ is evident in the emblems, before us for in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

The Apostle is exhorting us brethren and sisters to have the perspective that we are in a safe pair of hands, as it were. For our God **knows** (*has knowledge of*) every event that has ever happened and ever will happen at every level of existence: physical, mental and volitional.

And He knows how all facts and all events, of every kind, relate to each other and affect each other. When one event happens, He not only sees it, but He sees the eternal chain of effects that flow from it and from all the billions of events that are unleashed by every other event. He knows all this without the slightest difficulty.

Our Heavenly Father is equally **infinitely wise**, so He is able to conceive and carry out his plans making use of all that knowledge to bring to pass what He purposes. He knows how to use all the facts of the universe and to guide all the events of the universe to achieve the best end, namely, the display of the fullness of his glory.

So what we are being told here is that Yahweh our God has an **infinite capacity** to know and an **infinite capacity** to apply the knowledge. Thus the incredible issue for the Apostle it seems is not so much what has not been revealed, those secret things, which belong to God. But rather the thing that causes him to stop and praise in wonder and awe is that, which **has actually been revealed**, even the salvation of his brethren the Jews.

This doxology rises out of the reality that even in looking at what has been revealed in the plan of our Heavenly Father. Paul is absolutely overwhelmed with the mind of our God. The Apostle goes in this 33rd verse to echo the words of the psalmist “*such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it*”. Indeed for our verse continues “*how unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past finding out*”!

The words “*unsearchable*” and the phrase “*past finding out*” are actually two related words in the Greek. The first plainly means what it say’s that our Heavenly Fathers decrees and decisions are inscrutable by finite men. The second word is a much more graphic word indicating that “*his ways*” cannot be traced out by anyone. This is a metaphor from hunting in that it speaks of a hunter trying to follow a prey, but somehow loosing its tracks.

The ways of our Heavenly Father meaning his course, his directions, what we would commonly term his providence, cannot be followed by us brethren and sisters. We have a graphic illustration of this point in the psalms:

Psalm 77 and verses 19 & 20

*“Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and **thy footsteps are not known**. Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron”.*

Indeed brethren and sisters who could have predicted what our Heavenly Father did for his people at the Red Sea? Have you ever tried to follow footprints in the sea? Our Heavenly Father then walks in the sea and so we are left to trust him in faith. We are unable to see where, He is leading us His way is indeed untraceable. For His knowledge is beyond us, His wisdom is infinitely beyond our capacity, His decisions and counsels and plans and purposes are inscrutable to us. We would be completely in the dark without that, which is revealed in the revelation of his word.

Thus the Apostle then praises our Heavenly Father here, not just for what he understands concerning his plan and purpose in salvation, but also because of what he doesn’t know! For our brother Paul, not being able to understand what our God is doing in our lives with regards to the working out our salvation was not a reason to abandon his faith. Instead brethren and sisters it was a reason for such praise. After all a “*god*” that we can fully comprehend would not be much of a “*god*” would he!

Brethren and sisters faced with the magnificence of our Heavenly Father. We therefore have nothing to fear from our not knowing at any point exactly how the various circumstances of our lives in their twists and turns. Lead us forward too that eventual point of our redemption in the Lord Jesus Christ in the mercy of our Father.

So whenever we find ourselves in circumstances that appear to be counter-productive to our spiritual advancement, we must assume that our situation is like that of Israel described in this section through chapters nine to eleven. Indeed that our Heavenly Father is at work in our lives in a way, which we could never have devised to promote his glory and our eternal good. Rather let us learn to trust our God, as the proverbs declares:

Proverbs Chapter 3 and verses 5 & 6

“Trust in Yahweh with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths”.

The Eternal Spirit now seeks to drive home the contrast between our finiteness and our understanding of our Heavenly Father’s self-sufficiency and omniscience in verses 34 and 35 with three rhetorical questions. In fact each of these questions take up the three characteristics mentioned in verse 33, **knowledge**, **wisdom** and **riches** in reverse order.

Verses 34 & 35

“For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?”

These questions brethren and sisters function like the word “*selah*” in the Old Testament, as they cause us to pause and consider. The three questions are meant to humble us before our God and to cut down any pride on our part. In effect these rhetorical questions silence us in peace before the throne of Grace.

Now the questions here are actually two quotations from the scriptures, which the Eternal Spirit through Paul uses to firstly confirm what has been said earlier in verse thirty-three and substantiate what will yet be pointed out in verse thirty-six. The first quotation in verse 34 is from Isaiah’s prophecy:

Isaiah Chapter 40 and verses 11 – 14

*“He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young. Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? **Who hath directed the Spirit of Yahweh, or being his counsellor hath taught him?** With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?”*

Again note the grandeur of the language and of the word pictures here. It’s the phrase “*who hath directed the spirit of Yahweh*”; not one of us is able to fathom the mind of our God. Absurd as it seems, yet we do try don’t, we brethren and sisters. Indeed the second question hits home even harder, this is also taken from that 13th verse in Isaiah forty “*or being his counsellor hath taught him?*”

We are all guilty here brethren and sisters. This word “*counsellor*” speaks of one who is a fellow adviser an equal and none of us would knowingly claim such a position.

Yet how often have each of us in prayer sought to give our Heavenly Father advice about some problem or situation that needed his aid. With our intimate yet finite knowledge of the circumstances we gently make suggestions to our God concerning how He can deliver us from the issue at hand. But as is clear here in Romans and from Isaiah our Heavenly Father, neither needs nor desires such counsel from us.

Rather we ought to be like patriarch Job who having had given counsel without knowledge, and who said, when God confronted him concerning it: *“Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not”*.

Now the third and final question in verse 35 is taken from the book of Job:

Job Chapter 35 and verses 1, 2 & 7

*“Elihu spake moreover, and said, Thinkest thou this to be right, that thou saidst, My righteousness is more than God’s? If thou be righteous, **what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand?**”*

This question asks to whom is our Heavenly Father in debt to for something with regards to carrying out his will and purposes in both the natural creation and with regards to the new creation in the Lord Jesus Christ. Yahweh our God brethren and sisters is not beholden to anyone and we must be very careful not to fall into this line of thinking as Israel did. Indeed again I am convinced from my own life that we have all done so.

Very early in my life in the truth, just after I was baptised I was unemployed and I sought to do everything right. Attending all the meetings I could, doing the readings and many other extra curricular activities. Yet I did them from a completely wrong motive and assumed since I was doing all these things for God, He would duly add to me all the things for which the gentiles seek. For I was supposedly seeking after his righteousness and his kingdom, such indeed is the subtlety of our sin at times.

Thus these three profound questions brethren and sisters cause us to examine our selves in our dealings and our interactions with our Heavenly Father, particularly as we approach the partaking of the emblems once more.

Finally we come then to the great crescendo of praise, which ends this doxology. Where the Eternal Spirit through Paul is teaching us, that our glorious Heavenly Father is the source and the supplier and the owner of all things and therefore He’s worthy of all our praise.

Verse 36

“For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen”.

Now the three prepositions used here; *of, through, and to* indicate that God is the **Source** of all things; the **Sustainer** of all things; and the **Significance** of all things. Firstly, He is the **Source**. *“For of Him... are all things”* that is, they originated from Him. As we read in Revelation *“for Thou hast created all things and for Thy pleasure they are and were created”*.

Secondly, He is the **Sustainer**. *“through Him... are all things”*. As we read in Acts *“for in him we live, and move, and have our being”*. Thirdly, He is the **Significance** of all things. *“To Him are all things”* or as the Diaglott reads *“for him”*. As we read in Corinthians *“and when all things shall be subdued unto him... that God may be all in all”*.

So in the final analysis we are struck then brethren and sisters like the Apostle Paul with the centrality of our Heavenly Father in all things. This is the basis of doxology, Yahweh Himself! He is shown here to be the source of all things, the means of all things, and the goal of all things! In order that all the earth shall be filled with his glory; thus the Apostle concludes, *“To whom be glory for ever. Amen”*.

Now as we come once more to remember our beloved Lord in bread and wine brethren and sisters. Let us learn to rest in Yahweh’s provision in Christ for us and let us wait patiently for our Lord. Endeavouring in our application of the principles in both the bread and the wine that we *“might be filled with the **knowledge** of his will in all **wisdom** and spiritual understanding”*.

I shall leave you with the Apostle Paul’s appeal in the light of the mercy of God revealed. *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your spiritual service of worship”*.

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