

Introduction

- Worship is the fruit of an understanding of Who God is and what He has done. After Romans 1:1-11:32, Paul leads us in worship of this God Who saves people from all over the world through faith in His Son Jesus, in fulfillment to His ancient promises.
- “True worship does not come from meditation in general, but through meditation on Scripture in particular.”¹

He Is Greater Than Us (11:33)!

11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

Depth

- “The depth of God’s character is so deep that it cannot be calculated, or even accurately estimated. God’s depth is beyond anything created. And when something is beyond anything created it is, by definition, beyond *us*...think about it. Paul is not saying that there are a multitude of things that we can know about God, so we praise Him for those things. We certainly do praise Him for those things, and Scripture gives us myriad examples of such things. But Paul’s point is almost counterintuitive. Paul is praising God for what we do not and *cannot* know!”²
- “Paul...humbly sits down at the brink, and adores the depth” (Matthew Henry).
- This isn’t just Paul’s praise; it’s Paul’s prayer for the people of God: READ Ephesians 3:14-19.
 - The Psalmist expressed this praise in similar language: READ Psalm 36:5,6a.

¹ Timothy Keller, *Romans 8-16 For You* (2015), pg. 98.

² K. Scott Oliphint, *The Majesty of Mystery: Celebrating the Glory of an Incomprehensible God* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), pg. 25.

- The Gospel is simple to understand, our commands from God clear; God has condescended to reveal Himself, His plan, and His purpose for us. We should not think, though, that God in Himself can be fully comprehended by us.

Riches of Wisdom and Knowledge

- “...our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases” (Psalm 115:3; 135:6).
- Paul writes that he works to help the Colossians and Laodiceans grow in their faith in Christ, because in Him “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:1-3). Only in Christ can we truly comprehend creation, human history, the problem of evil, and our own lives.

Incomprehensible

- It is not for us to ask questions that God has not answered in His revelatory Scripture: “Let us, I say, permit the Christian man to open his mind and ears to every utterance of God directed to him, provided it be with such restraint that when the Lord closes His holy lips, he also shall at once close the way to inquiry. The best limit of sobriety for us will be not only to follow God’s lead always in learning but, when He sets an end to teaching, to stop trying to be wise.”³
- We can look at three times in Scripture when God put a limit on what He revealed:
 - Job frequently contains statements of God’s incomprehensibility (5:9; 9:10; 23:8,9; 26:14).
 - READ Deuteronomy 29:29. This verse is at the heart of God’s renewed covenant with His people through Moses at Moab (Deuteronomy 29-30). God tells Israel its future; He tells us their unfaithfulness and punishment and God’s grace and restoration. He doesn’t, however, resolve the mystery

³ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3.21.3.

between God’s sovereignty and human free will/responsibility. They were just meant to rest in His revelation and obey Him. We are, too.

- READ 1 Peter 1:10-12. Both the O.T. prophets and angels longed to know the fullness of God’s saving plan ultimately realized through Jesus Christ, but it wasn’t for them to know. The Prophets point us to Christ (Matthew 5:17; Luke 24:27,44; Acts 3:18; 26:22; 28:23; Romans 1:2; 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:3,4), but the men themselves were not allowed to know the details of how their inspired words would be fulfilled.

The Mind of the Lord (11:34)

11:34 For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor?

- Paul is alluding to Isaiah here: “Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or as His counselor has informed Him?” (40:13).
 - This section of Isaiah was introduced by a proclamation of “good news” (Gospel) that was to be proclaimed to all of God’s people: “Here is your God!” (40:9).
 - We are to worship and serve this God Who is a Shepherd to His people: READ 40:11.
 - We are to worship and serve this God Who is Almighty Creator: READ 40:12.
 - He is intimate and caring Shepherd for His people and the transcendent Maker of all – at the same time. Who can understand Him fully or even dare to advise Him on how to be all He is and do all He does?
- There is an answer to this question, by the way: READ 1 Corinthians 2. In the message of the cross of Christ we

have the mind of God in Christ revealed to us by the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

Learning Job’s Lesson (11:35)

11:35 Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again?

- Paul now takes us to an even deeper place: the Book of Job. “Who has given to Me that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is Mine?” (Job 41:11; see also 35:7).
- Job had assumed God had owed him an answer for all the things that had gone wrong in his life (9:34,35; 13:3,22; 16:18-21; 23:3-7; 31:35). The deep lesson of Job is found after God finally does show up (chapters 38-41). READ Job’s confession (42:2-6). This is the lesson of the book. Compare it with Paul’s assertion in Romans 9:20,21.
- God needs nothing from us; all that we give Him we do because He has not only given to us first, but has also given us the will to give to Him. READ 1 Chronicles 29:14-16.⁴

It’s All About Him (11:36)

11:36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

- Compare with 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 2:10; Revelation 4:11.
- We can sum up these verses in this way: God is the Origin of all, Sustainer of all, and Goal of all. What does this say about your tendency to make everything about you?
- READ Ephesians 1:3-10. What is God’s purpose for everything? What does that mean for your life?

⁴ Also, 2 Corinthians 8-9 describes true Christian giving: God gives the gracious desire to give to His people; when they give, He receives all the glory.