

Pentecost 13 / August 23, 2026

Romans 11:33

"Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgements and how inscrutable His ways."

The Riches and Wisdom and Knowledge of God

St. Paul's doxology, giving glory to God for His wisdom, knowledge and judgements marks a transition in the letter to the Romans. Paul has given glory to God for many things up to this point. His foreknowledge. His holiness and most importantly His grace. He has glorified God for His holiness expressed in His righteous law, written first on the tablet of the human heart and later on tablets of stone in the Ten Commandments. He has glorified God for His righteous judgement on a sinful humanity, which highlights His mercy in Christ Jesus. In Romans 11:32, he wrote, *"God has consigned all to sin that He might have mercy on all."* God has mercy on all for the sake of Jesus, His righteous blood shed to pay the debt of sin of the whole world. Most of all Paul glorifies God for His mercy in Christ Jesus. The riches and wisdom and knowledge of God are expressed fully in Jesus, Son of God from eternity, born in time to be our Saviour.

God consigned all humanity to sin, because of the disobedience of the first Adam. He has had mercy on all human beings in Jesus, the obedient second Adam, who bore our sins on the cross and made atonement for every human soul. Paul glorifies God for His law, a reflection of His holiness and also a mirror by which we see our sins and sinfulness. In chapter three he wrote, *"For by works of the law no human being will be justified in His sight, since through law comes knowledge of sin."* God's law shows us our sin and sinfulness so we would see our need for His salvation and receive it in forgiveness for the sake of Jesus. Paul glorifies God for His mercy, the gospel of forgiveness offered to all in Christ Jesus, given freely and fully to all who believe. God consigned humanity to sin, so that He might show His mercy in forgiveness for the sake of Christ Jesus. The riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God reach their pinnacle in Jesus, His eternal Son, our great God and Saviour.

The letter to the Romans is a masterpiece of theology as Paul shows God's plan of salvation and the revelation of the mystery of His love. through the scriptures of the Old Testament and from Israel's history. Human beings inherently operate according to works of the law; however, they conceive the law. No matter how they

envision God every religion of the world seeks to approach God on the basis of human actions, good works, no matter what they consider good works to be. For countless ages people all over the world considered human sacrifice a work pleasing to their gods and thought they were fulfilling the laws of the gods by practicing it. God gave Israel laws with the expectation they would walk according to them in the desire that they would produce a harvest of good works. But as Paul points out in this letter, Israel's relationship with God began not with their works, but with God's love. Israel's relationship with God was based upon the initiative of His love.

The human relationship with God begins with the initiative of His love and is based on His grace, specifically His grace for the sake of Christ Jesus. God approaches us with love and we respond, first in faith, then in faithfulness. Our relationship with God is based on the initiative of His love in Christ Jesus. Even when our faithfulness falters as it will because of our inherent sinfulness, God remains faithful to His love, expressed most gloriously in forgiveness for the sake of the faithfulness of Christ's life and the sacrifice of His death. God's love is so faithful and His power to accomplish His saving purpose in our lives is so great that Paul can say with assurance that nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. He is able to work all things to the good of those who love Him and who are called according to His purpose in Christ Jesus. No wonder Paul declares, *"Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgements and inscrutable His ways...To Him be glory forever. Amen."*

We cannot approach God fully according to His knowledge. Our finite minds are unable to grasp His infinity. Human knowledge cannot compare with or come close to attaining the knowledge God possesses as Creator. We cannot understand His eternity. God is the source who has no source. We perceive and experience life as a succession of being through the passing of time; one generation produces the next. God is without generation. God stands above time. It's impossible for us to wrap our minds around God's eternity. God knows all things from eternity to eternity and through eternity. There are no surprises for God. God knew from eternity and before eternity everything that would ever happen throughout eternity, including the human fall into sin. Paul writes that God planned human redemption from eternity and determined that He would make His salvation effective in the lives of the elect. God is the source of human salvation in Christ Jesus. He died for the sins of the world. God is the source of salvation in those who

cling to Christ in faith unto its fulfillment in eternal life. Faith is both the gift of God and the human response to God. Faith comes through the Holy Spirit working through the word of God. God wants us to approach Him through faith in His words, inspired by the Spirit, which lead us to Jesus.

Because He is both infinite and eternal, God knows who will receive His grace in faith and who will cast it away. He knows who will continue in His grace to eternal life and who will turn away. God is the author of the salvation of those who continue in faith, but He is not the cause of the condemnation of those who will not believe, do not believe and those who stop believing. He is the author and perfecter of our faith. He has determined who will be saved, but He has not determined or caused the condemnation of those who are not saved. Salvation is on God in Christ Jesus. Condemnation is on us if we are not saved. How God can be the author of salvation in those who believe while not also being the author of the condemnation of those who are not saved is beyond our comprehension. What Paul calls predestination is not meant answer the question of why some are saved and others are not saved. Predestination highlights the grace and working God in those who are saved. Predestination gives those who believe the assurance of salvation, because faith is the gift of God and the working of the Holy Spirit. Because it depends on God we have the assurance that nothing will be able to separate us from His love in Christ Jesus.

We are His workmanship in Christ Jesus. The work of God is our salvation in Christ Jesus. Jesus assures us that no one will be able to snatch us from His hand. Our knowledge of God is limited by the capacity of our minds. God wants us to approach Him on the basis of His love revealed to us in Christ Jesus. Paul told the Ephesian Jailer, *"Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved."* Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, who would have imagined such a thing? No one, that's why Paul calls it a mystery. He exclaims, *"Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgements and how inscrutable His ways."* Salvation is such a simple thing that many people disregard it for its simplicity. Also, because it goes against the law of works that is imprinted on our conscience. Paul speaks in this letter about his fellow Israelites with whom God made covenant at Mount Sinai and to whom He revealed Himself through Moses and the prophets. They were the people singled out of all nations to whom God first made Himself known according to the mystery of His love. Nevertheless, most of Israel turned away from the knowledge of God revealed in the scriptures and either worshiped false gods or approached God on the basis of their obedience to

the law and not on His mercy and love. This was illustrated most vividly in Israel's rejection of Jesus.

But despite Israel's disobedience, lack of understanding and rejection of Jesus, God still accomplished His purpose through Israel of making Himself known in the world and fulfilling His plan of bringing salvation to all people. Despite Israel's constant unfaithfulness, God always preserved a faithful remnant of the true Israel of faith within the mass of unbelieving Israel. God sent His Son as a son of Israel. Jesus called disciples from among the house of Israel. The church of Jesus founded on His blood and righteousness, began among the faithful in Israel. As Paul said, God has not rejected Israel according to the flesh, but in his day and in every age has called His elect out of Israel to be part of the Israel of faith, that lives with Him through faith in Christ Jesus. God's grace in Christ Jesus goes out into all the world through the voice of the church, calling the nations to faith, nourishing the faith of believers through the gospel that faith may be brought to fulfilment in eternal life in those who by the grace and power of God believe in Jesus as Saviour and worship Him as Lord. With Paul we exclaim, *"Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgements and how inscrutable His ways...to Him be glory forever. Amen."* May God be glorified in our hearts and in our minds in Christ Jesus in time and for eternity. In His Name. Amen.