

THE WISDOM OF GOD

Romans 11:25-36

The different places where the Bible speaks of knowing anything about God you run into the idea that we are dealing with things which ultimately are incomprehensible. I think of that expression in Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3 where he is talking about the love of God and he says that he is praying that the Ephesians would know the love of God which passes knowledge, so that we might be filled with all of the fullness of God. Now only Christians can talk like that and perhaps that is one reason that we sometimes get blamed for not being quite right. Because we speak of knowing things that really can't be known. And yet we understand from that that these passages mean that we can never know them exhaustively, we can never know them finally. We never know these truths of Scripture and especially the truths that relate to God in the sense that you can set them aside and say I have learned that I don't have to come back to that any more. So when we come to the subject of the wisdom of God it's not surprising that the Apostle Paul says how unsearchable are his judgements and his ways past finding out. And in this passage which we read this morning you have some very foundational things said about the wisdom of God. Beside the fact that it is actually beyond our comprehension to be able to understand it fully. We see for example in this passage that God is different from us in His knowledge and wisdom as compared with our knowledge and wisdom in that His wisdom comes solely from Him. No one has ever taught Him, no one has even ever given Him any advice. We learn because others have taught us. We learn by what we read. We learn by what we experience but God has perfect knowledge without acquiring any knowledge and without having to learn anything from experience. The wisdom of God is displayed in His ways, O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgements and his ways past finding out. And the last verse of chapter 11 of Romans gives us what I believe has rightly been referred to as the four great foundational truths of the Christian faith. It may be that the last of the four that are mentioned there has to do with the other three but Paul brings to a climax this section of Romans by saying, of him, that is of God and through God and to God are all things to whom

be glory forever amen. So that God has designed all things and God is accomplishing all things and everything that He has designed and is accomplishing is designed primarily for His glory. So if we are looking at the faith that is ours in the Lord Jesus Christ merely from the standpoint of the benefits that we are going to receive we still haven't gotten the Biblical perspective. God works for His glory first of all. And so that all that He does in the exercise of His wisdom has that primarily in mind. Now if we are to know anything about the wisdom of God we must recognize something of the character of His knowledge. As we have been talking about the different aspects of the attributes of God, rather than taking up every one in detail as we could do if I lived long enough I have been seeking to group some of these together. So when we talk about the wisdom of God we also would include the knowledge of God, the judgements of God, the discretion of God. All of these terms that you find related to the term wisdom when you read your Bible. But when you take just these two words knowledge and wisdom you have words that are companion words, I understand in practically every language that has been written. Every language that people speak on the face of the earth. Now I know that many of you here this morning speak different languages and perhaps you could check this and I say this on the basis of what I have learned. But it seems that languages generally speak of knowledge and they speak of wisdom. And the Bible speaks of knowledge and the Bible speaks of wisdom. What is the relationship between knowledge and wisdom. Well perhaps the simplest distinction that we can make is that knowledge has to do with a persons acquaintance with the truth, with facts of knowledge. Wisdom is a practical word. Wisdom is a word which describes how a person uses the knowledge that he has. So you see that it is possible for a person to possess a great deal of knowledge and yet at the same time be a foolish person. The fact that you have a string of degrees after your name does not mean that you are necessarily wise. It may mean that you are knowledgeable but not necessarily wise. On the other hand you can take some person who may never have had a great deal of formal education and yet they can be extremely wise.

Because they know how to use the knowledge that they have. Now God is perfect in His knowledge and He is also perfect in His wisdom. And we are going to be seeing more about this this morning. One illustration of this is to be found in Daniels prayer in the second chapter of the book that carries his name. I am sure most of you remember the story how Nebucudnezer had a dream and he called his wise men in to interpret the dream but the difficulty was he couldn't remember the dream. And so he told his wise men that if you can't tell me the dream as well as the interpretation that all the wise men of Babylon were going to be put to death and that would include Daniel and his friends because they had been selected from the Jewish captives and had been brought in and made a part of this. So when they were looking for Daniel to kill him and Daniel found out what was going on he asked for some time and they went to the Lord and they asked the Lord to make the dream known and the interpretation to the dream. And God did that. And it was in that dream you remember that Nebucuznezer's image, the vision was revealed to Nebucuznezer of the great Gentile powers that were to come. But the thing that concerns us this morning is Daniels prayer. And he prayed with these words after God had answered his prayer. "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are his. And he changes the times and the seasons, he removeth kings and setteth up kings. He giveth wisdom unto the wise and knowledge to them that know understanding. He revealeth the deep and secret things. He knoweth what is in the darkness and the light dwelleth with him. I thank thee and praise thee O thou God of my fathers who has given me wisdom and might and has made known unto me now what we desired of thee for thou hast now made known unto us the kings matter." So when you look at these passages that have to do with the wisdom of God you find that God is not only wise but He is all wise. He is infinite in His knowledge and omniscient in what He knows. Wisdom is the very essence of what God is. God has never said or done a foolish thing. He has not acquired any of His knowledge of wisdom from anyone outside of Himself. Nor does He learn from experience like we do. He is perfect in His wisdom and in His knowledge.

He is the source of all truth, all knowledge, all wisdom. He possesses all of these to an infinite degree. But God has revealed in His Word the truth which He wants us to know and the truth which has to do with His redemptive purpose for man. However, as we look at the knowledge that we have in the Scriptures we must remember that He hasn't revealed everything. I remember in class in seminary years ago when Dr. Fineberg was asked a rather stiff question about the Scriptures and there was really no answer to it and he turned to the student and he said, young man you are going to have to be satisfied to let God know some things that He hasn't told you. So He hasn't revealed everything. He knows much that He has not revealed and as I have indicated in my opening remarks it's not possible for us ever to comprehend fully what God has revealed. Therefore if you have known the Lord 50 or 60 years or possibly even longer you can still come to the Scriptures daily to learn, because you will never be able to exhaust the Word of God. In James 1:5 we have a wonderful promise that is related to the subject that we have this morning, a promise regarding the wisdom of God, a promise which most of us know, a promise which I would like to read to you again as the basis for our message this morning. Because I want to raise and answer the question if the Lord enables me to do this, "how do we come to an understanding of the wisdom of God. And James words in James 1:5-6 are these, "If any of you lack wisdom let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not and it shall be given him but let him ask in faith nothing wavering for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed." And in the third chapter of James in the 17th verse you have these words describing divine wisdom. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits without partiality, and without hypocrisy. So when I look at passages like this and I see Daniel's experience given in Daniel 2 the first thing that I need to recognize about the wisdom of God is that it can only be learned from God Himself. Now He may use teachers and He may use pastors and He may use parents and

He may use teachers in Bible schools and seminaries but ultimately the instruction comes from God and unless God uses those teachers and parents and pastors, those who sit under their ministry are not going to be learning. We learn from God Himself and we are taught in the Scriptures that we can expect to learn in answer to prayer. That's the reason when you sit down to read your Bible it's always a good thing to stop even for just a few seconds to ask God's blessing upon your reading. It's a confession that you are dependent upon Him for any blessing or understanding that you are given. But I don't want to leave you with just a vague idea this morning of what it means to seek wisdom from God. Sometimes I think we treat God and the things that He is seeking to teach us as though we lived in Old Testament times. We might pray and ask God to teach us and then look for some handwriting on the wall. Or maybe that God would give us a dream or that we might even have an audible voice where we would learn some of the things that God wants us to know. Now God has done all of these things and many other things in the past but they are not the usual way that He makes His wisdom known to us. God has not left us to grope in the darkness or to hope that somehow we would be able to learn what He wants us to know. Our knowledge of God and the way He commits His knowledge and wisdom to us are learned in certain specific ways but I want to underline this this morning and I trust that the Lord will use this so you will never forget it. Basic to all the knowledge that God has been pleased to give to us is that we are going to find this knowledge in the Word. Now I say this this morning because I want to talk to you not only about the Word, I want to talk to you for just a few minutes about our knowledge of God in creation or how God's wisdom is exercised in creation, I want to talk to you for a few moments about how it is manifested in Christ Himself. How we see it in salvation and how we see it even in God's providential doings with us. But I want you to realize this and I want you to remember this. And I know this is not new to many of you, perhaps most of you. But it is something that I need to be reminded of continually and that is that every way in which God has been pleased to make Himself known that

is through creation or through Christ or through salvation or through His providential dealings all of these truths must be examined in the light of what God has given to us in the Word. Now will you turn for just a few moments this morning to First Corinthians 2. I want you to see a passage here where the Apostle Paul is talking about the Word that He has given to us. And I would like to read the first 10 verses but I am not going to. Let me break into the passage at I Corinthians 2:6, where he says this, "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world that come to naught. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory. Which none of the princes of this world knew for had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Let me stop for a moment and remind you that when the Lord Jesus was on the cross one of the things that He prayed was, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." And Paul refers to that here in the 8th verse and then he continues. "But as it is written eye hath not seen nor ear heard neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Now that is if our knowledge of God, our knowledge of salvation were possible to man on the basis of what he can see with his eyes, what he can hear with his ears, what he can comprehend with his heart or with his mind then it would have been unnecessary for God to do anything beyond that. But since with our eyes we don't have the ability to see such things, with our ears we don't have the ability to hear such things. With our heart we don't have the ability to comprehend such things it was necessary for God to do something so that you and I would be capable of receiving and understanding the knowledge and wisdom which only comes from Him. And that's the reason you never want to read this 9th verse without the 10th verse. Many times we will read the 9th verse and then let our eyes roll back in our heads and look rather ecstatically at each other and say won't it be wonderful when we get to heaven and find out what God has prepared for them that love Him. And of course that might be the idea that you would have if you just take the 9th verse.

But notice what the 10th verse says, in spite of the fact that my natural eyes my natural ears, my natural ability to understand is inadequate, "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God." Now link that with the text that we read this morning. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God." God hasn't kept many of these things secret. God has revealed them. Paul says we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery and one of the ministeries of Paul and of several of the other Apostles was to be instruments through whom God was given us His revealed wisdom in His Word and the Spirit of God accompanies the Word of God so that we would be able to understand the wisdom of God. But the wisdom of God which you and I could not find in any other way has been revealed to us in this Book which you hold in your hands this morning.

Now turn to a second passage in II Timothy 3:14-17, the last four verses at the end of II Timothy 3. Paul writing to Timothy says in II Timothy 3:14, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and has been assured of knowing of whom thou hast learned them and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Now in other words when I speak about salvation I have to speak about the Word because I don't know anything about salvation apart from the Word. When I speak of Christ the Savior I have to speak from the Word of God because I don't know anything authoritatively about Christ except what I find in the Word. And then Paul concludes in this chapter by saying, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine," now that doctrine simply means that if I want to learn the things that God wants me to know I have got to give attention to the Scriptures, that's where it is. And it's not only profitable for doctrine but "for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." And I could add to this that companion passage in II Peter 1 where the Apostle Peter speaks of the fact that men of God spoke as they were moved upon by the Holy Spirit.

So that this is a very very important truth that needs to be established in our hearts. The God of wisdom has made His wisdom known in the Word and though I can see the evidence of the wisdom of God in creation I can see the evidence of the wisdom of God in Christ, I can see the evidence of the wisdom of God in salvation and in providence yet I have to bring all of these things into the light of the Word of God because there and only there can I see these great truths as God wants me to see them.

Now let's talk about these four things in the time that we have that remains. And I can only just touch on them very briefly. The wisdom of God is made known in creation. Proverbs 3:19-20 we have these words. "The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth, by understanding hath he established the heavens, by his knowledge the depths are broken up and the clouds drop down the dew." Jeremiah the prophet in Jeremiah 10:12 says, "He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens to his disgression." So that I can expect from this when I look at creation to see things in creation that are going to impress me with the knowledge, the tremendous knowledge and the tremendous wisdom and the accompanying power that belong to God and God alone. Whether I look into the outer reaches of space or to the atmosphere itself or to life as it is upon the earth. When I see the order that there is in creation, I see the miraculous things that are taking place I can see the way in which God in His wisdom and His power sustains creation from day to day and from year to year and from generation to generation. And while I certainly am not for wasting our resources yet it amuses me when I hear men talking about the resources that we have in the universe being used up. Because I am sure that some day we are going to find just as our scientist claimed by their investigations that they are making now that we have not even started to find the possible sources of energy, the real sources of energy that God has placed in this universe of ours and therefore when we look at all of these things and we hear

people speaking with a great deal of distress let's remember that they are looking at things from the standpoint of just human observation and they don't realize that an infinitely wise and omniscient God, One Who never has His resources exhausted has brought this universe together so that the universe itself as I look at it not just with my natural eye and my ability to discern what I can but as I look at it and then see the way in which God has spoken of creation in Scripture I am going to understand what the psalmist had in his heart when he said in Psalm 95:6-7, "O come let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our maker for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand." So that if I am seeing creation through the Word it's always going to lead me to prostrate myself in loving adoration and worship in the presence of God.

Secondly let's talk just a few moments about our dear Savior. Most of you remember that in First Corinthians 1:24 the Lord Jesus is called the wisdom of God. That was evident in His teaching wasn't it. In John 7, when some of the unbelieving Jews were standing by listening to the Lord Jesus as He ministered in the temple, they said, "How knoweth this man letters having never learned." He hasn't been to our schools, He hasn't sat under our rabbis, He's not an educated man from our perspective. How is it that He can speak with all this wisdom when nobody has ever taught Him? Later on in that same chapter you find where the Pharisees sent their officers to apprehend the Lord Jesus Christ and a short time later they came back without the Lord Jesus Christ and the officials said, "Why have you come alone," and all these officers could say was this, "Never man spake as this man." It was evident in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world and you know I don't have time to deal with this this morning but when you think that the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world as a man and that here is Christ representing the wisdom of God. And as the God Man in the world, becoming man and yet not ceasing in any sense of the word to be the eternal God here at last is One Who has come on the scene who because

He is God can perfectly satisfy God and because He is man can die as a substitute for sinful men. Nobody but a person exactly like the Lord Jesus Christ could possibly have fulfilled the mission that He came to accomplish. Christ in more ways than I have wisdom to say, Christ is the wisdom of God.

What about our salvation. And you take into account the sinfulness of man, his utter and complete depravity, his alienation from God, his rebellion against God. What an overwhelming need there was for someone who could so work in the hearts of men that they would desire that salvation which they needed and when you see the circumstances surrounding man and his need you see how infinitely wise God was in providing the kind of salvation that He provided. This is why He had to choose us. This is why He had to exercise His grace. This is why the Spirit of God is a part of this in convicting us of sin, righteousness and judgement. This is the reason why faith must be a gift from God Himself. This is the reason why salvation had to provide redemption for sin. This is the reason we had to be in some way declared righteous in the sight of God. This is why that sanctifying work of the Spirit of God had to be a part of that salvation in preparing us for that day when we would share the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ because we are justified and we are sanctified and we are glorified in this wonderful salvation that we have and all of this designed by an infinitely wise God for hopelessly lost sinners who didn't want to have anything to do with God and salvation so that in the providence of God, God always has on the earth a people redeemed, worshipping Him, anticipating the glory that is to come but all because of the wisdom of God in designing a salvation that is exactly suited to those of us who otherwise would be hopelessly lost in our sin. Our salvation is entirely consistent with the way in which a holy God would provide and had to provide for the salvation of sinful men. I wish I had more time to talk about that because the more I study the truth of salvation the more I am amazed at the greatness and the wisdom of God Himself.

But let me say this finally, and this comes down to where we are living today. And that has to do with His providential dealings in our lives. Will you believe that Romans 11:36 applies to you at this very moment, facing the circumstances that you might be facing just now. "Of him, through him and to him are all things to whom be glory forever, amen." Can you look back upon your life as a Christian and perhaps as the Apostle Paul did even before you were saved and see the evidence that God's hand was upon you and in all of those circumstances of your life as you look back you can see that, "Of him and through him and to him were all things to whom be glory forever." and can you and I stand this morning where we are facing the problems that we face and sometimes these are overwhelming problems. I was with a family this week and as I talked to them I realized that the only things that could keep them from absolute despair was the fact that God was sustaining them. And there was that assurance in their hearts that somehow though they couldn't see it at all, "Of him, through him and to him were all things." There isn't any circumstance in our lives where God takes His hands off of us and leaves us alone and leaves us at the mercy of the circumstances that we are going through. God always works in accordance with His counsels in the past and in the light of what He has planned for us for the future. Isaiah has a great deal to say about this. He says, "O Lord thou art my God, I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name for thou hast done wonderful things, thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth." Paul certainly is worshipping God when he says in Ephesians 1 that, "He has abounded toward us in all wisdom, having made known unto us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ both which are in heaven and which are in earth even in him in whom also we have obtained an inheritance being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will that we should be to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ." Now you see if once we understand that the plan and purpose of God and His work in

our hearts and lives and the exercise of His wisdom as it relates to our own lives that this is an all encompassing promise and it includes all of those sometimes very tragic circumstances that you and I go through. If we can once see that through all of this "God is working all things together for good to them that love God to them who are the called according to his purpose." And I will tell you very frankly that sometimes when I am with people who are going through depths of distress that I have never known I am very very hesitant to talk to them about Romans 8:28 and the only reason that I ever do is because God does. And the assurance that I have that out of all of that heartache and tragedy and sorrow sometimes and bewilderment that God is going to bring good is because that is exactly what it says in the Word of God. And if you and I are to have peace in Him then our hearts are to be steadied and held steadfast by these wonderful truths. Let me close by reading you a hymn. I can understand what Eleanor was talking about this morning because some of my great blessings are just browsing through the hymnbook, I love to do it. Back in the 1600's a man by Paul Gearhart wrote the words I want to read to you. They are #368 in our hymnal if you want to follow me and according to the heading that you see at the top of this hymn John Wesley translated these words into English about 100 years later. I want you to listen to them and I want you to think of how they apply to God's wisdom made known to us in His providential dealings with us, notice the words.

Give to wind thy fears, hope and be undismayed
 God hears thy sighs and counts thy tears,
 God shall lift up thy head.
 Through waves and clouds and storms,
 He gently clears the way.
 Wait thou His time, soon shall the night soon end in joyous day.
 Still heavy is thy heart, still sink thy spirits down
 Cast off the weight, let fear depart and every care be gone.
 He everywhere hath sway and all things serve His mind
 His every act pure blessing is, his path unsullied light.
 Far, far above thy thought His counsel shall appear
 When fully He the work hath wrought that caused thy needless fear
 Leave to His sovereign will to chuse and to command
 With wonder full thou then shall own how wise, how strong His hand

Will you take that and the words of the Apostle Paul this morning, "For of him and through him and to him are all things to whom be glory forever, and we

could add ~~and~~^{for} ever and ever and ever amen.