

The Omnirationality of God

Romans 11:33-36 (ESV). These may be the most majestic words in the entire Bible, and perhaps in all of literature:

33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

***34 “For who has known the mind of the Lord,
or who has been his counselor?”***

***35 “Or who has given a gift to him
that he might be repaid?”***

36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

- Paul issues this poetic exclamation after exploring, for the previous 3 chapters in Romans, the mysteries of God’s dealings with His people, the Israelites, and how their disobedience has resulted in the salvation of Gentile believers who call upon God and trust in Jesus for their salvation.
- To Paul, and to his fellow Jews, God’s methods, particularly in the way that He sent their Messiah, Jesus, into the world, blew their Hebrew world views to smithereens.
- Their pre-conceived notions about how the Messiah would enter the scene did not align with the way God actually did it.
- In this chapter alone, Paul asks 8 questions, some of which he partially answers, and others that he simply cannot answer. The questions all relate to the things that God does that are beyond our abilities to fully (or even partially) understand.
- In verses 34 and 35 are three of those questions that he probably extracts from Old Testament sources in the book of Job and Isaiah:

Who has known the mind of the Lord? Who has been his counselor? Who has offered to God anything for which God owes him some kind of compensation?

- The answer: No one! No one has the right to call God out for being unfair, unrighteous, or uncaring. No one can call into question God’s dealings as if God doesn’t know what He’s doing.
- In several other places, like verse 33, Paul doesn’t specifically ask questions. He simply utters majestic proclamations about the inability of our frail human minds to know what God is up to in human history and in our own lives:

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

- I am, at the same time, amused, irritated, and concerned for people who reject God because, in their minds, they have determined He is unfair or uncompassionate, saying “I could never worship a God who allows a child to die from cancer.” or “I read what God commanded in the Old Testament, and I’ve decided He is cruel and unfair.”

- In making these judgments against God, they fail to see that they are setting themselves up as God.
- They have determined their own standards, then they proclaim judgment against God because He doesn't meet their standards (which are typically based on the fleeting whims of our directionless culture).
- As Jesus said "The light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.
- It seems to me that issuing moral commandments and rendering eternal judgments are actions that are best left up to an almighty God. But I digress...
- My goal in this sermon is to invite us all to consider the unsearchableness of God. You might say "Mark, if God is unsearchable, why try? Won't we just end up being frustrated? Well, I hope not.
- Instead, I hope we all leave this place this morning with more of a desire to give our Almighty God the worship He is due. I also hope that our faith is boosted a bit more, so that when we encounter trials and tribulations, we respond in ways that take into account God's sovereignty and infinite wisdom.

Omnirationality

- We have talked before about the attributes of God. Attributes are things that are true about God theologians have identified in scripture and defined.
- Love is an attribute of God. Self-existence is an attribute of God. Holiness is an attribute of God Think of God's attributes as facets of the beautiful diamond that is the Almighty.
- Each attribute isn't just a part of who God is. In other words, God isn't just part loving and part holy. God is 100 percent loving while he's 100 percent holy, and so on. Each attribute blends with all the others in ways that are indistinguishable. We just isolate them to help us strive to understand God a little bit better.
- Three of the attributes we've looked at before start with the prefix omni- (from the Latin word *omnis* which means *all*). They are big words but easy to understand. These attributes are:
 - **Omniscience** – God knows everything. He is all-knowing. There is nothing that God is not aware of.
 - **Omnipotence** – God can do anything that He determines to do. He is all-powerful. His power is unlimited.
 - **Omnipresence** – God is everywhere all at once. He is all-present. He fills the universe.
- As I mentioned, we've discussed these omni- attributes before. The link to that sermon will be in the sermon notes.
- In recent years, another omni- attribute has been proposed and identified, and it relates to our topic today. This attribute has been given the name ***ominrationality***.
- If something is rational, it is based on reason or logic. So, to be omnirational means that God is all-reasonable. He is infinitely logical. His ways make total sense. Mr. Spock on *Star Trek* would be jealous.
- A theologian by the name of Alexander Pruss, who is a philosophy professor at Baylor University, is credited with identifying and defining this description of our loving God.
- Let me state that God hasn't changed. It's just that theologians have identified further truths about God that they have, up until recently, failed to formally identify and articulate.

- Here is Dr. Pruss' technical definition of omnirationality. Don't let it throw you. I just feel obligated to share his definition. After I read it, I'll try to break it down in a way that we mortals can understand:

God is *omnirational*: whenever he does anything, he does it for all and only the unexcluded reasons that favor the action, and he always acts for reasons.

- Here's a more understandable definition: When God does something or allows something, it makes total sense to the infinite level. He doesn't simply act for one reason, and then everything else just happens randomly as a result.
- When God acts, or when God chooses not to act, He has every consequence in mind, and each consequence fulfills His will perfectly. It's like He's involved with a trillion 3 level chess games all at once, and all the players are playing each other while He's directing their moves.
- Maybe that's not a very helpful illustration. Let's offer a human situation, then relate it to God: I look out and I see that the grass is getting long. Even though I have a lot of other things to do, I decide it's best to mow the grass now.
- I might admire how nice it looks afterward, but my main motivation in mowing right now is to keep it from becoming too long. The attractiveness of my yard was a secondary consideration. And it really didn't cross my mind that my neighbors might be happy with my decision because it beautifies the neighborhood, although later, if one of them compliments my yard, I would be happy that my efforts pleased them.
- But maybe, while mowing, the tractor's wheel crushed a ground mole's tunnel. Perhaps the tall grass I mowed put undue strain on the engine and the mower will blow up soon. I might have shot a rock across the street that put a dent in my neighbor's car. Or maybe the exhaust from the engine contributed a little bit more to the melting of the polar ice caps. Perhaps the noise of the mower confused a honeybee on the course it was taking toward a flower in a distant garden.
- None of these things had any bearing on my decision to mow. They are all unintended consequences, positive or negative, that simply didn't cross my mind.
- God is not like this. When He does something or allows something, He knows every consequence, and how His decision affects every person, every creature, and every situation that flows downstream from His decision. Better than that, He ordains all these consequences, and He ordained them before time began. He determined they would come to pass.
- It's like His omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence all come together at once, and we are now identifying that as God's omnirationality.
- And here's the really good part. Because God is love, the consequences of His decisions are completely loving. His actions fulfill His purposes, and we benefit as His children.
- Does this bring a favorite Bible verse to mind? Romans 8:28 says:

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28, ESV)

- I checked the meaning of the Greek word, *panta*, that is rendered *all* in English. It means "all," "any," "every," or "the whole." If we spoke Greek, we would say that God is "Panta-rational!"

- Our pantarational, omnirational God is using everything that exists or that happens in the universe for your good, my good, and for the good of Christ's Bride, the church! What a comforting thought!
- This knowledge should motivate us to worship Him more enthusiastically than ever!
- I'll quote, again, Paul's exclamation from Romans 11:33:

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

- Other Bible translations of this verse use some different words to describe God's judgments and ways: words like mysterious, untraceable, undiscoverable, hard to track, incomprehensible, unexplainable, unfathomable, past finding out, more than we can understand, and more than we can know.
- All of this is good, but it's somewhat abstract.

Here's a true story that, in a tiny way, illustrates the omnirationality of God.

- Tell the story of Beatrice, Dad's springer spaniel.
 - August 2015. Dad driving to dentist appt. Hits a dog on Highway 204 at 50 mph.
 - Dad called me and asked if I would drive out to help him find the dog so we could give it a proper burial.
 - I drove out and found Dad in the driveway of an old farmhouse near where he hit the dog. He was looking at the damage on his car.
 - Dad said he couldn't find the dog he hit anywhere.
 - So we knocked on the door of the farmhouse to give a description of the dog. A teenage girl answered and said Dad's description sounded like their dog.
 - She led us out back and there was the dog laying in a hollowed-out area in the dirt by an old shed. It was a female springer spaniel!! Mom and Dad had owned consecutive springer spaniels since the late 1960's. Their current springer was named Sarah.
 - The girl said this dog's name was Beatrice, BeBe for short. The family had agreed to take her when an acquaintance had to move to a place where dogs weren't permitted.
 - She was in terrible shape. Skinny, fur loaded with burrs, cut above her eye. Her "elbows" were skinned up. Still alive, breathing heavy.
 - We carefully checked her over – no broken bones. But in a state of shock...pitiful.
 - At dad's request I drove out to check on her over the next few days.
 - We found out she was probably about a year and a half old and had weaned a litter of puppies earlier that summer.
 - Since I kept coming out to check on her, the owners asked if we wanted to adopt her. Our family talked it over and decided that, yes, we would take her home.
 - She quickly recovered, and she even knew how to fetch balls!
 - Because Mom and Dad owned another springer, BeBe stayed at our house. Our dog, Lippy, seemed to welcome her company.

- Less than a week later, Sarah came down with an unknown infection and, after less than 2 days, passed away. Donna and I were away on an extended weekend trip. My son, Phil, dug the hole and Steve, who came over to comfort Mom and Dad, said a prayer.
- BeBe moved in with Mom and Dad and immediately felt happy in her new home.
- What are the odds?
 - Springers, especially purebreds like Beatrice, are fairly rare. Of all possible breeds or mutts, a springer runs out in front of Dad!
 - She lived through a brutal impact, rolled under Dad's low-sitting car, doing \$1200 of damage.
 - BeBe immediately fit in with our family. She is a delight.
 - Who knew Sarah would die so suddenly?
 - Provided companionship to Mom and Dad. Mom passed away 3 years later, and Beatrice has been an absolute godsend for Dad. They are inseparable.
 - I'm sure she feels our family is a godsend for her. She may think that she died and went to heaven when Dad hit her.
- Consider God's omnirationality in this situation.
 - The original owners acquired Beatrice not knowing they wouldn't be able to keep her.
 - Even though the new owners at the farmhouse graciously took her in, they didn't take very good care of her.
 - And even though BeBe was so young with her first litter, she did get to experience motherhood, and her puppies probably made the families who adopted them very happy. Who knows all the stories that could be told?
 - The timing of BeBe running out into the highway, and the physics of the impact had to be perfect in order for everything to happen as it did.
 - No one, besides God, knew that Mom and Dad's current dog, Sarah, would become sick and die the very next week.
 - Mom got to know her before she passed, and now BeBe is the perfect dog companion for Dad.
 - God rewarded Dad for his faithfulness in taking care of his family.
- I'll read Romans 11:33 one more time:

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

- We can take comfort in the fact that our heavenly Father is omnirational. His omnipotence, His omniscience, and His omnipresence, His sovereignty, and His love weave together like a tapestry.
- When things happen that trouble us, or that we don't understand, it would help us to recall that God causes ALL things to work together for our good. He is omnirational, and we are not.
- Our tendency to grumble or to become afraid or frustrated when problems appear reveals our weak faith. Jesus reminds us in Luke 12:6-7:

Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows. (Luke 12:6-7, ESV)

- God doesn't count sparrows and hairs for trivia's sake. He does it so that He can perfectly orchestrate creation for the sake of His people. His judgments are unsearchable, and His ways are inscrutable! To Him be the glory forever!

Close with prayer.

Benediction:

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:20-21)

Other resources:

- "Omnirationality and Divine Providence," a blog post by Daniel M. Johnson
<https://mereorthodoxy.com/omnirationality-and-divine-providence/>
- "Sovereign," a prayerful meditation based on Romans 11:33-35 by Susan Lafferty
<https://susanlafferty.com/2022/01/09/sovereign/>
- "God's Omni-Love for Me," a sermon by Mark Thogmartin
<http://millersportcc.com/sermons/gods-omni-love-for-me/>