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Class Notes

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The Doxology (Review)

Romans 11:33-36

Romans 11:33-35 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! ³⁴ "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" ³⁵ "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?"

Paul is celebrating the astonishing depth of God's salvation plan as he's unfolded in these eleven chapters!

"Oh!": A word of awe, wonder, and amazement

"Depth", "unsearchable", "beyond tracing out": all imply that we humans can never fully comprehend the plans and works of God... they are infinitely high and infinitely deep; we are limited creatures with limited minds. For this reason we will spend all eternity studying the works of God:

Psalms 111:2-4 Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them. ³ Glorious and majestic are his deeds, and his righteousness endures forever. ⁴ He has caused his wonders to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and compassionate.

"riches, wisdom, knowledge": there is an unfathomable intelligence to God's plans and works in redemptive history; those plans reveal a mind infinitely beyond anything we can grasp or connect with.

"unsearchable judgments": judgments = the decisions God made before the foundation of the world, his decrees

"paths beyond tracing out" or "inscrutable": can't put 2 and 2 together; much of what God does in redemptive history seems to make no sense to our limited minds

"Who has known the mind of the Lord?": Similar concepts; can any creature standing outside of God claim to understand his thought process on all things? Such a one would have to be omniscient as he is!

"Who has been his counselor?": can any creature give God insight, or suggest an idea that he didn't know? God is omniscient, and we are finite in our perspective and knowledge. There is no idea we can possibly have that God didn't already know it completely.

“Who has ever given to God that God should repay him?”: Everything we “possess” is really God’s anyway; and when we give something to God, he doesn’t owe us anything in return. This is why justification cannot be by works, because then God would owe it to him. Anything we give to God is his. We should say, “We have only done our duty.” (Lk. 17:7-10)

“For from him and through him and to him are all things”: Everything in the universe came from God originally, exists by God’s power and will continually, and will return back to God ultimately.

God Has Been Merciful! How Then Shall We Live?

Romans 12:1-8

Romans 12:1-8 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship. ² Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will.

³ *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. ⁴ Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If one's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. ⁷ If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; ⁸ if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.*

I. Main Questions:

1. What does this section of Romans teach us about living a life well-pleasing to God?
2. How is personal holiness a vital part of our lives as Christians according to this passage?
3. What does this passage teach us about the importance of the mind in a healthy Christian life?
4. What does it teach about steps toward discerning the will of God for our lives?
5. What is the significance of the fact that Paul talks extensively about spiritual gifts and the specialization of Christians as a central part of the fruitful Christian life?

II. Verse by Verse Questions:

1. How does Paul connect this section of scripture with everything that preceded? He begins verse 1 with the word “Therefore” and then says “by (i.e. on the basis of) God’s mercies” (Greek is plural). What does Paul mean by that phrase—“by God’s mercies”? What mercies does he have in mind? (1)

2. How does the gospel display various aspects of the mercies of God? (1)
3. How do the mercies of God given to us in Christ compel us to live a certain kind of life? How is it a basis of faithful Christian action? (1)
4. What command does Paul give us in verse 1? The word “present” is the same Jesus uses in Matthew 26:53: *Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?* What does it mean to put your body at God’s disposal? This same word is also used by Paul in Romans 6:13: *Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.* How does Romans 12:1 relate to Romans 6:13? (1)
5. What does it mean to present your body as a “living sacrifice”? What is a sacrifice? What is a living sacrifice? How do we “present” our bodies in this way? What does it mean practically? (1)
6. What does verse 1 teach us about the importance of the body in the Christian life? Christianity is the only religion in the world that properly embraces the significance of the physical body for spiritual purposes. How does this verse show a healthy view of the body? (1)
7. Paul adds the terms “holy and pleasing to God”. What do these terms mean when it relates to our bodies? (1)
8. Paul says that the offering of the body to God in this way is our “spiritual” or “reasonable” worship to God. How is this the offering the centerpiece of worship? How is it “reasonable” to do this? (1)
9. What is the central concern of verse 2? What is Paul focusing on in the Christian life in verse 2? What is the connection between verse 1 and verse 2? (1-2)
10. One translation of verse 2 is “Do not allow the world to squeeze you into its mold”. What does this mean? What does the verse mean by “the world”? How does this verse relate to 1 John 2:15-16? To James 1:27? (2)
11. What alternative does Paul give to being conformed to the world in verse 2? What command does he give after the prohibition? (2)
12. How do you relate the transformation of verse 2 to God ultimate purpose in Romans 8:28? What does God wants us to be conformed to in that verse? (2)
13. What is the “renewing of the mind” in verse 2? How does that happen? (2)
14. According to Paul, what is the outcome of the steps he’s listed in verses 1-2? What does it mean to “test and approve” God’s will for our lives? (1-2)
15. Why is it important to be able not only to “test” (i.e. identify) but also to “approve” (i.e. give our hearty assent to) God’s will? (2)
16. What other words does Paul use to describe God’s will in verse 2? How would meditating on these words help us to embrace God’s will more readily? (2)
17. What is the connection between verses 1-2 and verse 3-8? (1-8)
18. What do verses 3-8 mostly have to do with? What is the main topic being addressed there? (3-8)
19. What does Paul mean “For, by the grace given to me...”? What is this “grace given to Paul”? How does it relate to Ephesians 4:7 and 1 Peter 4:10? (3)
20. What prohibition does Paul give in verse 3? What command does Paul give? Why are each of these vital to finding your proper place in the body of Christ? (3)
21. What does it mean to “think about yourself with sober judgment”? (3)
22. What is the topic of verse 4-5? What other passage of Scripture addresses this same issue with the same image? (4-5)

23. What does it mean “each member belongs to all the others”? What is the significance of the fact that someone’s gift of teaching, for example, does not belong to him alone but really to the whole body? (5)
24. How does verse 6 clinch the point Paul is illustrating in verses 4-5? Why do you think God gives to different Christians different gifts? (6)
25. What are the gifts that Paul lists in verse 6-8? What is his general command concerning each of these gifts? What does Paul want people to do with their gifts? (6-8)
26. Paul also addresses HOW people should use their gifts. What are some of the phrases he uses to describe HOW? (6-8)
27. Verse 6 says that someone with the gift of prophecy should use it literally “by the analogy of faith” or “in proper connection with the faith”. What does this mean? (6)
28. What adverbs does Paul use in verse 8 that describe how those gifts should be used? (8)
29. Why does it matter HOW we use our gift? (8)

III. Summary:

Having laid out eleven chapters of magnificent doctrine clearly unfolding the gospel of Jesus Christ, Paul now turns to application: how we should live our lives in the body based on these truths. He begins with the central act of obedience: the presentation of the whole body to God as a living sacrifice. Along with that is the renewing of the mind so that we can test and approve God’s will for our lives. Then Paul describes the specialization of individual Christians within the general body of Christ, and urges Christians to use their gifts to the glory of God.