

Rom. 11:33-36 (WCF 2:1-2) "Knowing the Unknowable"

For the Children: You do not know everything there is to know about your mum and dad – you are not capable of knowing all there is to know about that. But you can still say that you “know” your mum and dad. You know much about what they are like, what they do, how they relate to you and others, what they love and hate. Well, the Bible tells us even more about God – what He is like and what He has done, His loves and hates, how He relates to us, and so on. He is a real, personal God – the only One. You will only ever know a small part of what there is to know about Him; but it is enough to say, “I know God!” – if you have faith. **Questions:** How do we get to know God? Why do people often doubt that He is real? What does it mean that we worship God “with the whole person”?

Introduction:

First Point: The Unknowable God

- 1) **Depths and Heights:** The apostle’s consideration of election leads him to realize how little he comprehends God – even of His mercy, a subject dealt with at length in God’s entire Word. God’s “knowledge” – His understanding of reality – and His “wisdom” – how He uses that knowledge to achieve His goals – are infinitely deep and rich. His “judgements” (eternal decrees and executed verdicts and decisions in time and at the end; His commandments, too) are beyond man’s ability to trace. God’s ways are all beyond man’s comprehension. This is true both of God’s secret will and His revealed will. All the attributes of God (defining characteristics) lead us to see how “wholly other” God is – He is not a creature, but the infinite Creator and Ruler
- 2) **Infinite Glory:** Any one of these attributes, and certainly all of them together, show how infinitely glorious God is. He deserves all praise. For all things are from, through and to Him. He is the Originator, Governor and End of all. He knows and determines all things, exhaustively
- 3) **Self-Existence:** It is clear that such a God does not need men to counsel or help Him. See Is. 40:13f. He does not need men to know all He does or why He does it. He is not obligated or in debt to men in any way. See Job 41:11, 35:7. God is completely Self-existent and independent. He acts according to His own good pleasure. This must be accepted in order to accept His electing purposes
- 4) **A Perfect Match:** That is why those of Reformed faith are in the best position to accept these truths about God’s incomprehensibility – to praise Him for the mystery, rather than complaining about the injustice of not electing all, etc

Second Point: The Knowable God

- 1) **An Apostolic Exclamation:** Paul’s exclamation, “Oh, the depth of the riches...” shows that the Unknowable God can be known – though not fully comprehended by man. Paul *knows* enough to make this exclamation
- 2) **All Glory Be:** “To Him be the glory forever” also implies not only that God will be glorified, but that men should glorify Him willingly. To do so, we need to know Truth about Him. We need to know enough to know that all worship, service and obedience is due Him (WCF 2:2)
- 3) **Revealed and Illuminated:** However, men are born dead and blind in sin, not knowing God as they should. We can only know Him because Christ has died for us, leading to God supplying us with His Self-revelation in the Word and His Spirit to give us understanding and belief in the same. Then we will know God – not with full comprehension, as He has; but in a way that creatures can know that which is true as far as it goes, but far from the full picture. Seeing it that way should keep us humble!
- 4) **Knowing Personally:** That knowledge must also involve the whole person – personal commitment and experience. For the Lord deserves all of us, not part. Paul’s “Oh” reflects that personal relationship and experience of the Lord. What the Bible tells us of God’s character, deeds, loves and hates, inter-relationships with others, commands etc should be enough for a personal knowledge of Him – if it is received in faith

Conclusion: