

THE UNSEARCHABLE WISDOM OF THE CROSS

Matthew 10:28-11:3

I. MY THOUGHTS ARE NOT YOUR THOUGHTS, NEITHER ARE YOUR WAYS MY WAYS (Isaiah 55:8-9; Romans 11:33-36)

- A. In Matthew 10, Jesus is promising to His beloved disciples betrayal, persecution, scourging and even death. Jesus was sending His disciples out as sheep into the midst of wolves. All of this hatred and rejection was happening according to the Sovereign plan of God! (Matthew 10:29-31)
- B. The way of God's salvation was even beyond the ability of the greatest of the OT prophets to fathom (Matthew 11:1-3; cf. 2 Peter 1:10).
- C. There is no greater contrast between man's wisdom and God's wisdom than the cross. There is no greater contrast between man's weakness and God's power than the cross (Matthew 10:38).

II. SOME BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF THE GREATNESS OF GOD AND OUR INABILITY TO FULLY COMPREHEND HIM

- A. The Fall of Adam & Eve (Genesis 1-3)
- B. Joseph's enslavement in Egypt (Genesis 37-50)
 - 1. "Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life" (Genesis 45:5).
 - 2. "God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth." (45:7)
 - 3. "Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God..." (45:8)
 - 4. "God has made me lord of all Egypt." (45:8)
 - 5. "As for you, you meant/planned **evil**

The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God so far manifest themselves in His providence, that it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men; (Rom. 11:32-34, 2 Sam. 24:1, 1 Chron. 21:1, 1 Kings 22:22-23, 1 Chron. 10:4,13-14, 2 Sam. 16:10, Acts 2:23) and that not by a bare permission, (Acts 14:16) but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, (Ps. 76:10, 2 Kings 19:28) and otherwise ordering, and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to His own holy ends; (Gen. 50:20, Isa. 10:6-7,12) yet so, as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin. (James 1:13-14,17, 1 John 2:16, Ps. 50:21) (*Westminster Confession of Faith* Chapter 5 para.4)

against me, but God meant/planned it for **good** in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive (**Genesis 50:20**; see esp. Gen. 37:18 "plotted").

- a. Genesis begins with the "**goodness**" of the Sovereign God's creation (Genesis 1:4,10,12,18,21,25,31).
- b. Genesis 2-3 takes us to the middle of the Garden with the tree of the knowledge of **good** and **evil** (Genesis 2:17)
- c. The good and evil of Joseph's life was a *microcosm* of what God is doing in the *cosmos*.
- d. If God had a design for creation and Joseph's life how much more does He have a plan for the entire world?

"In a certain sense, the fall, sin, and the eternal punishment are included in God's decree and willed by him. But this is true *in a certain sense* only, and not in the same sense as grace and salvation. These are the objects of his delight, but God does not delight in sin, neither has he pleasure in punishment" (H. Bavinck, *The Doctrine of God* [Grand Rapids, 1979] p.390).

A PRIMER ON GOD'S THOUGHTS AND MAN'S FREE WILL

Decree – the eternal purpose & will of God (see Question 7 of the S.C.).

Foreordination/predestination – God's past decision to do something (Psalm 139:16; Isaiah 14:24-27; 46:9-10; Daniel 4:24; Acts 4:28; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:5; see Question 7 of the S.C.).

Sovereignty – God's power and ability to do what He has foreordained (Daniel 4:35; see Question 4 of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*).

Providence – God's present government of *all* things (Matthew 6:25-34; **10:29-31**; see Questions 8,11 of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*).

Free Will – The actions of people based upon their nature and desires (Genesis 2:16-17).

Liberty – The freedom to do as we please (James 1:14).

Ability – The power to make decisions according to our liberty and free will. When Adam sinned, mankind lost the *ability* to please God. However, the fall did not lead to a loss of our “free will” or “liberty” (Genesis 2:16-17; cf. Romans 5:6; 8:7; Ephesians 1:1-5). **NOTE:** Many “Arminians” today say that grace restores to every person the *ability* to make a choice for Christ (this was the view of John Wesley; cf. Titus 2:11-14). This is still problematic because it leaves the door open for man to boast in man's decision and choice; “Look what I did with grace!”

C. Jeremiah/called from his mother's womb to be a prophet (Jeremiah 4:10; **20:7**)

D. Job/righteous and blameless (42:5)

E. Jesus spoke in parables so that the hearts of some would be hardened! (Matthew 13:10-15 with Isaiah 6:9-10).

F. How could Israel, while pursuing a law of righteousness, not arrive at the law? How could the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attain righteousness? Jewish rejection of Jesus (Romans 9:30-31 with 11:33-36)

III. THE GREATEST AND HIGHEST MYSTERY OF ALL: THE CROSS (Matthew 10:38; cf. Acts 2:23,36,37)

- A. Biblically speaking, the “cross” is an image for how we handle life with all of its joys and difficulties.
- B. All the events of your life are in some mysterious and unfathomable way predetermined and foreordained. Are you living your life by taking up your cross and following Jesus?

Acts 2:22-23

22 “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—
23 this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.

QUESTIONS FOR SABBATH DISCUSSION & MEDITATION:

Take what you have learned this morning and make it into a prayer. In what areas of your life are you trying to fit God into a box?

Does God become “bigger”? Why does it seem to us like He does?

In what ways has your thinking about God grown today or in the past year?

Will we have all our questions answered in heaven? Why or why not?

What happens to a Christian who can't rest in God's sovereignty in his or her life? Why are “what if” questions so destructive? (e.g. “What if I had more money?” “What if that person didn't mistreat me?” “What if I married someone else?” “What if I wasn't single?” etc.)

Explain the following quote and its ramifications, “Taking up one's cross refers not to the personal problems or difficulties of life that one must bear, as it is sometimes used in common parlance, but to a radical obedience that entails self-denial and, indeed, a dying to self” (Hagner, Vol. 33A: Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 1-13 p.92).

What is the greatest example of God's unsearchable wisdom?

We know that God is sovereign because we know that God is God. Therefore we must conclude that God foreordained sin. What else can we conclude? We must conclude that God's decision to allow sin to enter the world was a good decision. This is not to say that our sin is really a good thing, but merely that God's allowing us to do sin, which is evil, is a good thing. God's allowing evil is good, but the evil he allows is still evil. God's involvement in all this is perfectly righteous. Our involvement in it is wicked. The fact that God decided to allow us to sin does not absolve us from our responsibility for sin (Sproul, R.C., *Chosen by God*).