

All We Can We Do is Stand in Awe!

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

Kids are naturally inquisitive. They keep asking us questions. How many times have they come to you and said, "What are you doing?" You get in the car and they say, "Where are we going?" And how many times have they asked, "Are we there yet?" But the most persistent and hardest question they ask is, "Why?" "Why does it rain?" "Why can't birds speak?" "Why" this and "Why" that. You try to explain it to them patiently, but how many times did you said, "Well, that is the way it is."

But kids are not the only ones who ask why. We adults are just as persistent. And like kids, we often are not satisfied with the answer God gives us. Paul had his questions, too, but he learned a simple lesson. He said, "**...his paths beyond tracing out!**" There is so much about God and his ways that we don't understand, so the best thing we can do is live by faith and simply stand in awe of what God does.

I. We may have a lot of questions, ...

We see God do things and say things and we wonder why. When Job buried all ten of his kids, lost everything except the clothes on his back, and then came down with a terrible disease, he asked God why, why him, why now. Imagine Abraham. When God asked him to sacrifice Isaac, I am sure he wondered why. When the Israelites left Egypt and found themselves between the Red Sea and a vengeful Egyptian army coming to mow them down, they asked why God brought them to this place. Jeremiah asked God why the wicked prosper. The people in the days of Malachi asked the same thing, why do the wicked get all the money and power and happiness, and miserable believers always come in second place?

What questions do we have? Why did God put the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the perfect Eden? Why didn't he stop Satan from tempting them? A few Sundays ago we had the doctrine of election where it says that God chose those who are going to heaven. Ok, fine. But why them? Why not the others? Is it because those who go to heaven are better? God says no. So, then, why? We, too, wonder why the wicked seem to prosper. Why is it we work hard at doing what is right before God, hating and trying to avoid sin, and we don't do as well?

I remember sitting at Darlene's hospital bed a long time ago. Here was a woman who had about every known illness throughout her life. She was in hospice and the pain medication could only do so much. I remember thinking in my heart why her. Couldn't God give her one break at the end? Why is it a young person dies with a whole life ahead of him while so many elderly are begging God to take them home and he doesn't?

Why Covid? It is hurting people and hurting the church; the church isn't doing as much as we did before. Why did God establish the roles of men and women? Why should we submit to our governing authorities when they make it so hard? There are 66 books to the Bible. God inspired and used the human writers so that every word is God's Word and it is without error. From it we learn so much about God and what he thinks and wants in our lives. We thank the Lord for it. But you wonder if God could have added another ten books to it, or left out a few of those genealogies and used the space to give us more answers.

II. ... but the best thing we can do is watch and stand in awe of God.

Why doesn't God answer all of our questions? I am not 100% sure why. One reason is we live in a broken world where things don't go the way they should so birth defects, accidents and diseases happen. Another reason is we couldn't understand if God explained it to us. One of my sons, when he was four or so, watched me shave. He asked why I was shaving. I explained I don't want the hair growing on my face. He asked why mom didn't have to shave. I said she shaves her legs. He asked why I don't shave my legs. I said I don't want to. Why do we grow hair? I asked if he knew anything about hormones. He shook his head no. I knew I couldn't explain it to him so I simply said, "Thank God he made us this way." If God told us why, we probably couldn't grasp it. Another reason would be that God wants us to live by faith. He is training us to trust him. Ultimately I don't know why.

God gives us some answers. When a believer faces hardship, God is very clear. He is not punishing that person for anything he did wrong. Jesus was punished in his place on the cross. Instead, endure it as hardship as God is treating us like his own children. About the elect going to heaven, God is very clear. The elect are not any better and the ones who are not going to heaven are not any worse. And God wants all to believe and be saved and Jesus died for the sins of the entire world, but some reject Christ. Or he simply tells us what happens in the end. It says in Jeremiah 29, the passage our school chose for this year, God has plans for us. He may not explain every step of the way, but in the end we will be in heaven with him. He gives us some answers; for the rest he says, "Trust me." But if we try to guess on something God doesn't tell us, we will get into all sorts of trouble. That happened in our area 100 years ago about the doctrine of election. The pastor or Arlington at that time and a

dozen other pastors discussed it. Some tried to answer why some and not others and started making saying things not in the Bible or that actually contradicts the Bible.

Paul has some advice for us. Instead of asking why, look at what God says and does and stand in awe. ***“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! “Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?” “Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?” For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.”***

We can give IQ tests and ACT tests to measure intelligence. There is not test that goes high enough to measure God’s wisdom. His paths are beyond tracing out. Ever made a picture by “connecting the dots?” It is where each dot has a number and you draw a line starting at one to two then to three and so on, and you end up with a picture. We can’t trace God’s thoughts and patterns. It is like a sheet with a thousand dots and no numbers. Who has given God advice? Sure, he asks our opinion through prayer, but who is wise enough and smart enough to give God advice. I absolutely know nothing about dentistry. Any advice I can give will mean nothing to a dentist who knows what he is doing. No one is capable of giving God advice. Finally, who has given to God that he should repay him? We are indebted to God, but God owes us nothing. He doesn’t even owe us an explanation.

So Paul saves us from a lot of grief when he tells us to marvel at we know about God. What do we know? In our study of Romans these past weeks, we learned a lot of wonderful things. We heard how God used the rejection by some as a way of grafting in Gentiles into his Church, and then use jealousy to draw others in. We learned God turns disobedience into mercy. He promises that every elect will be in heaven. Nothing can separate us from God’s love. God turns disobedience into mercy. He forgives our sins even when we were his enemies and still sinning. God did this by sending his son to reconcile us, that is, Jesus who had no sin became sin for us and was punished in our place.

Who would have ever thought of saving the world that way? If humans were asked to devise a way of saving sinners, every plan would put the burden on our shoulders. Man’s solutions for sin always revolves on telling ourselves to do better or else. Or we might ignore sin altogether, but what good would that do? My house could be on fire. I could ignore the fire and tell the kids it is nothing so keep watching TV. It is a good thing God doesn’t ask our advice on how to save the world. We would save our friends, and throw our enemies into hell. The problem is, our enemies would advice God to throw us into hell and save their friends.

No mind has imagined the loving and ingenious way God devised to save not just some, but all. God so loved the world that he gave up his only Son, so that whoever believes will not perish but have everlasting life. He doesn’t make us climb mountains or do a hundred good works a day. He gives if freely so anyone can be saved. He gives it to us through faith so it doesn’t depend on our intelligence or if we are young or old.

The hymn, *How Great Thou Art*, is a favorite. It simply marvels at God. It marvels at his beautiful creation, the stars he created, even thunder, the woods and forests, the chirping birds, the mountains and rivers. God’s creation should make us realize how awesome God is. Then you get to stanza three and there we have something even more awesome: *And when I think that God his Son not sparing Sent him to die, I scarce can take it in, That on the cross my burden gladly bearing He bled and died to take away my sin. Then sings my soul, my Savior-God, to thee, “How great thou art! How great thou art!”*

You know what, when we get into heaven we will never ask God “why” or “how” or “when” question again. Instead we will stand in awe of God and worship him as we stand around his throne. Don’t wait until then. Remember, all Scripture is God-breathed and makes us wise for salvation. Look at what God does for you in Christ. Instead of asking why, simply, like Paul, stand in awe of God and praise him. Amen.