

## Who Can Fully Declare God's Praise?

‡ Unsearchable judgments (vv.33f)

‡ Priceless gifts (vv.35f)

*“O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.”* (Psalm 51:15 NIV84)

“Shark Week,” Discovery Channel – can you bear to watch? I’m guessing it would be really hard if you’d ever been lost at sea and discovered first hand how sharks swarm at the first sign of blood.

Religious charlatans, theological sharks, smell blood in the water if an apostle like Paul admits there are things he does not understand: “Maybe Paul doesn’t get it, but I do!” 1500 B.C. the LORD’s prophet Moses said, *“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.”* (Deuteronomy 29:29 NIV84)

We’re talking here about people who believe God exists. But can He or did He give His Word clearly enough to be understood? Has He preserved His Word for us, or has truth been lost in translation? People have bought Satan’s lie that no one can know what the real Bible says because there are so many translations. They seriously ask, “Which do you believe?” This is one main reason I wanted to be a Wisconsin Synod pastor so I could translate Old Testament Hebrew and New Testament Greek. I’m convinced that God is much more loving and powerful than any of us realize. Yet God keeps revealing His loving kindness and tender mercy to children of all ages. **Who Can Fully Declare God’s Praise?**

‡ Unsearchable judgments (vv.33f)

Last week we climaxed the Great Victory Chapter, Romans 8, as Paul proclaimed, *“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”* (8:37 NIV84) So why do you give up so easily? Is the Bible God’s Word? Yes! Is it true in every part? Yes! Then why don’t you read it, listen to it and meditate on it day and night? Why are you so much like Martha trying to work for God instead of like her sister Mary to sit at Jesus’ feet and listen. Who can compare one hour of Bible study with fellow Christians to hundreds of hours of volunteer work? “But Pastor, I don’t understand the Bible?” But friend, what do you do when you can’t understand your car or house of medical problem? You find someone who can. Don’t you believe God loves you this much if you ask?

Paul knew how his fellow Jews kept trying so hard to work for God instead of accepting God’s work for them in Jesus the Messiah. He finally was convinced of God’s one-sided new covenant of pure grace that simply says, *“This is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.”* (11:27) He noted how *“God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.”* (11:32) Even with the Holy Spirit’s inspiration, that’s as far as Paul’s sanctified mind could go.

What can anyone do except praise God with Paul in his Doxology? *“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!”* The human mind cannot fathom the depths of God’s wisdom. We cannot discover or fully describe how high and long and wide God’s love and knowledge truly reach. We can only bend the knee in humble adoration of God’s goodness to undeserving sinners like us.

In Jesus’ Revelation to John our Lord warns Christians about *“Satan’s so-called deep secrets.”* He says, *“Hold on to what you have until I come.”* (Revelation 2:24f NIV84) These *“deep secrets”* remain a real threat for Christians today. People often despise the plain and simple teachings of the gospel and seek “deeper” insights into the Christian faith. They try to look behind the words of the gospel for codes

and messages not found in the simple text. They trumpet their “discoveries” as great scholarship far beyond the “shallow” thinking of “ordinary” Christians. But John correctly labels these as “*Satan’s so-called deep secrets*” with roots, not in the word of God, but in hell itself. “So our Savior encourages us to hold fast to the simple promises of the gospel until he comes again at the end of the world.”

Dr. Becker illustrated this with a story about a guest preacher who wondered why no one said anything about his sermon and why he was not invited back. He asked the president of the congregation, “Was it something I said?” Kindly the congregation president replied, “Don’t you remember? You told us you have discovered in your studies that there really is no such place as hell. If you’re lying, we don’t want you. If you’re telling the truth, we don’t need you.”<sup>1</sup>

Scholars mock God’s **Unsearchable judgments**. Worldly sharks never swim the “*depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God.*” They smell blood and water, yet miss the sacraments of Baptism and Lord’s Supper. They ignore what God has revealed about “*the mind of the Lord*” because they want to be “*his counselor.*” Yet who can explain the Trinity, the virgin birth, the two natures of Christ? Who can fully comprehend the one-sided wonder of predestination to salvation, but not to damnation? Who can fully fathom God’s mercy that keeps working to bring Jews and Gentiles to repentance? Who can grasp God’s almighty power fully coordinated with His infinite love? Our minds falter and fail. We can only bend the knee in humble adoration as God gives us...

### ✠ Priceless gifts (vv.35f)

Sometimes life is like two young women enjoying a beautiful day of kayaking. Suddenly out of the depths a shark tosses one woman and bites the other kayak. Terrified, but the shark disappears.

How do we keep from questioning God if the family falters, marriage hurts, health fails, or prayers seem to go unanswered? **Priceless gifts** – lying in a hospital bed with the shades drawn on your heart?

First, God humbles us with Paul’s question: “*Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?*” What does God owe any of us except eternal wrath and punishment for our sins? Anything less is pure mercy and magnificent grace. We need to remember that faith is not good feelings. Faith is not even thanks for blessings from God. “*Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*” (Hebrews 11:1 NIV84) You can hear a fine sermon on this by Pastor Don Patterson (9-14-14) at [www.areasonforhope.net](http://www.areasonforhope.net). God sets times where we cannot see His promises coming true to teach us trust in God. Times of crisis show faith what human eyes cannot perceive through tears of loss and frustration. Not “blind faith,” but faith in God’s promises of forgiveness – that is saving faith by the Word of Christ.

No one would have thought that God’s own Son should ransom a world of sinners. But God not only thought of it, His eternal Son Jesus volunteered to suffer, die and rise again for us. Together the Triune God guided earth’s history as His-story of salvation for all who believe. The cross stands as proof that cannot be argued away. God’s love truly is boundless. His wisdom truly transcends our ability to comprehend. His kindness will never allow life to overcome us as long as we exercise and strengthen our faith in Word and sacrament. “*For from him*” – God the Father gives every good and perfect gift from above. “*And through him*” – The entire world was created *through* Jesus the eternal Word and *through* Christ alone we can come to the Father. “*And to him are all things*” – because the Holy Spirit still brings us *to* God in order to shower us with God’s **Priceless gifts**. Here you don’t even need to say, “Thy will be done,” because God already said it is His will. God loves to give **Priceless gifts**. “*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness [and] self-control.*” (Galatians 5:22f) Let your lips be filled with praise and your life overflow with joy. Amen!

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<sup>1</sup> Becker, Siegbert W. *REVELATION The Distant Triumph Song*. Milwaukee, WI: NPH, 1985, p. 59. Lectures on Revelation. For the study behind this sermon or for copies email [m.cordes@comast.net](mailto:m.cordes@comast.net). New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church  
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