

Praise amidst Unresolved Circumstances

It's pretty rare when we are not facing some kind of unresolved issue in our lives, right? Whether it is a relationship issue, a medical concern, some kind of financial uncertainty or any number of other issues, most of us have something with which we are struggling. The passage that we are looking at today suggests something very strategic that we can do in the midst of such troubling situations. Paul suggests that in the midst of unresolved circumstance we should give praise to God.

Opening Discussion: What, if any, unresolved issues are you facing right now?

Read Romans 11:33-36

1. Why do you think Paul concluded his discussion about God's plans for Israel (chap. 9-11) with these verses?
2. What aspects of God's nature and ways does Paul highlight?
3. What does it mean to say that all things are from, through and to God (v. 36)?
4. How would you summarize these four verses in your own words?

Steve said:

Notice that Paul actually praises God **because** His judgments are "unsearchable" and His ways are "unfathomable." Paul delights in the fact that God's ways are infinitely higher than our ways. This means that we shouldn't be surprised or troubled when we don't understand what God is doing in a specific situation . . . or why God hasn't answered a prayer the way we expected. It would be troubling if you and I **could** exhaustively understand God and His ways. It's only right that there's mystery in our relationship with God.

5. Do you find it comforting or challenging that you can't figure out all of God's ways?

6. Why is praising God appropriate even when we can't figure out his ways?

Steve said:

Instead of being frustrated (or outraged) because we have questions that God hasn't answered, we need to make peace with our status as "the created." Instead of grumbling about what we **don't** know, we should dive deeper into what we **do** know. I don't want to trivialize legitimate questions about God and His ways; some people wrestle with such issues more than others. But I do think that when our minds are saturated with Scripture, we ask different questions and better questions than we would otherwise. Since the Bible is so God-centered, when we immerse ourselves in Scripture we tend to ask God-centered (instead of self-centered) questions. We tend to look at our unresolved circumstances in light of what Jesus experienced in this world.

7. What do you think about what Steve says here? Have you experienced the truth of what he is saying? If so, explain.

8. When people face unresolved issues in their lives they will often lean towards either passivity (doing nothing) or hyperactivity (controlling). Do you tend to lean in one direction or the other? If so, how might learning to praise God in the midst of the unknown help you?

Steve said:

Is it your habit to praise God (and anticipate the glory that will be His forever) in the midst of confusion and disappointment and unresolved circumstances? Everything we've seen about God in this passage is true independent of our circumstances. The alternative is to say, "God, I will praise you if I feel like it or if my circumstances are good." Since we often don't feel like it, and since our circumstances are often bad, God is robbed of praise and glory. And when we fail to praise God, our perception of Him is skewed.

9. As you reflect on any of the unresolved areas in your life, what might it look like to begin to praise God in the midst of those circumstances?