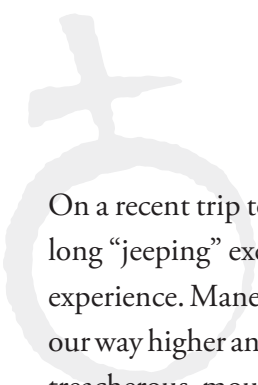


# from Him, through Him, to Him

**NANCY LEIGH DEMOSS**



On a recent trip to Colorado, I joined some adventurous friends on a day-long “jeeping” excursion in the Rocky Mountains. It was an unforgettable experience. Maneuvering around one hairpin curve after another, we made our way higher and higher up (and later back down) the narrow, sometimes treacherous, mountain trails. At times, we found ourselves perilously close to the edge, peering down the side of the mountain, wondering how much further we had to climb to make it to the peak. We got out and hiked at points, our breathing increasingly labored in the thin air, watching our steps ever so carefully, so as not to lose our footing on the steep trails.

When we finally reached the summit, towering over 13,000 feet, our effort was rewarded, as we climbed out of our vehicle and looked down and around at the breathtaking view that surrounded us on every side. We were awestruck by the beauty, the magnificence, the handiwork of God on full display.

That memorable moment comes to mind when I read a passage of Scripture I’d like us to consider together—a passage that I believe is at the heart of the True Woman movement:

*Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” For from him and through him and to Him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. (Romans 11:33–36)*

When the apostle Paul wrote these words to the church in Rome, I believe he was experiencing a sense much like what we felt at the top of that Rocky Mountain pass. Let me give you some context. In the first eleven chapters of Romans, Paul lays out the basic doctrines of our faith—the sinfulness of man, the amazing grace of God, the salvation that is possible for us through Jesus Christ. Then, in the remainder of the book—chapters 12 through 16—Paul makes practical application of everything he has written before. If the first eleven chapters are the “what” of the gospel, the last part of Romans is the “so what”—how are we to live in light of these great truths? And the doxology of Romans 11:33–36 serves as a bridge between the two.

Just prior to these words, in chapters 9–11 (a section of Scripture that’s admittedly difficult to understand and one many are prone to skip over), Paul explores the mysteries of God’s sovereign, electing grace, God’s plan for redeeming both Jews and Gentiles. He talks about Israel’s past, present, and future role in God’s great redemptive story. He explains how in God’s sovereignty, the Jews’ rejection of Christ is actually the means by which Gentiles have come to accept Him as Savior. Then he writes about how in God’s great mercy He will yet fulfill His plan for Israel in spite of their rejection.

I’m oversimplifying to try summarizing such magnificent doctrines in a single paragraph, but even in the space of a few sentences, we clearly see that this divine plan is not the way we would have scripted the story. God has designed history in such a way that even human unbelief and rebellion cannot thwart His final, eternal purposes. And I’m sure as Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, began scratching out these words

and concepts in written form, he—like we—was left to scratch his head and ask the Lord, “How did You come up with this?”

So in a trek not unlike our Jeep ride in the Colorado mountains, in the first eleven chapters of his epistle to the Romans, Paul scales higher and higher through the astounding mysteries of God, weaving his way through one difficult passage after another. At the end of chapter eleven he finally reaches the summit, where he can look back down over the path he has taken. He pauses to take in the awesome view beneath and around him: the sovereignty of God, His electing mercy and grace, His eternal plan for the ages.

And as Paul pauses to contemplate it all, he is suddenly struck speechless. Words fail to explain the view, just as there are no adequate words to capture the snow-streaked, aspen-lined glories of God’s western American mountainscape from thousands of feet above the surface. I can still see it, but I can’t quite describe it. And Paul, sensing all of this and infinitely more, breaks out into a hymn of praise, like crashing cymbals in the finale of a symphonic masterpiece.

*Oh, the depth . . . how unsearchable . . . how inscrutable . . . to Him  
be glory forever.*

## **Deeper Still**

This paragraph in Romans may seem like an odd place to launch into a discussion on true womanhood. At first glance, it may not appear to have much to do with the subject. However, as I have meditated on Paul’s words, I have been reminded that they are foundational to what it means to be a true woman of God and to everything my sisters will address in the chapters that follow.

This passage provides a framework and context for our lives as women. It gives us a fixed reference point for our hearts. It tethers us to God’s ultimate, eternal purposes. It gives us a perspective—a grid—for responding to His sovereign choices in our lives, especially those we cannot understand or explain.

And it all starts here: “*Oh, the depth . . .*”

The Greek word translated “depth” in our Bibles is similar to our English word “bath.” The way we sink down into hot water in a bathtub—until we’re submerged from neck to toe—the depths of God’s “riches and wisdom and knowledge” overwhelm us. They rise above us. They roll beneath us. They float all around us. We just want to bathe in them.

*But though we can never reach the bottom of God’s unfathomable ways, we do know what it’s like to reach the bottom of our own strength.*

On January 23, 1960, a U.S. Navy lieutenant and a Swiss scientist took a deep-diving, submersible vessel known as a bathyscaphe down to the deepest spot on earth—the Marianas Trench, a chasm in the Pacific near the island of Guam. Seven miles straight down under the ocean’s surface—35,800 feet—a massive, record-setting human feat. It took them nearly five hours, but they were finally able to locate the bottom of the ocean floor. Once there, you can go no farther.

face—35,800 feet—a massive, record-setting human feat. It took them nearly five hours, but they were finally able to locate the bottom of the ocean floor. Once there, you can go no farther.

This is not the case, however, with the depths of God. Five hours, five years, five whole lifetimes would not be enough to plumb the depths of His riches, wisdom, and knowledge. Try as you might, you can’t get your mind around them. He is inexhaustible, limitless, immeasurable. “*Oh, the depth . . .*”

But though we can never reach the bottom of God’s unfathomable ways, we do know what it’s like to reach the bottom of our own strength. Perhaps you’ve been there—perhaps you *are* there—down where life drags the floor of all human abilities, where everything feels hopeless and pointless and impossible to handle. This is where many women give up and call it quits, or slink away into a pit of bitterness, or turn their frustrations on those nearest them—*anything* to cope with life at the bottom. But the true woman knows that deeper than her own limitations and problems, is the bedrock of God’s riches, wisdom, and knowledge. His unseen yet sovereign, eternal purposes are underneath it all, holding it all together.

It reminds me of the well-known account from Corrie ten Boom's life, when her sister Betsie, wasting away and dying in the Nazi concentration camp at Ravensbruck, urged her to "tell people what we have learned here . . . that there is no pit so deep that He is not deeper still."

This became the theme of Corrie's ministry for the rest of her life. Miraculously released from the horrible conditions that had claimed her sister's life, Corrie traveled the world into her eighties, declaring the depths of the riches and wisdom and knowledge and love of God. "They will listen to us, Corrie," Betsie had told her. "They will listen to us because we have been here."

Your problems may be deeper than ever. Your issues and challenges may never before have reached such depths as you're experiencing now. But no matter how low they've taken you, there is something—Someone—who is deeper still. "The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deuteronomy 33:27).

### ***"Oh, the depth of the riches . . . of God"***

Deep inside the earth are vast riches still waiting to be found. Some estimate that six billion dollars' worth of sunken treasure lies undiscovered, scattered across the darkened ocean depths of the globe.

The world's deepest gold mine, located near Johannesburg, South Africa, extends two full miles into the earth, having produced more than a hundred million ounces—three thousand tons—of pure gold since it began operations in the early 1950s. Once described as the eighth wonder of the world, the Driefontein mine employs nearly 17,000 people who spend all day every day gathering gold from the earth. And still there's more—this one mine is expected to produce at least a million ounces a year, for the next twenty years.<sup>1</sup>

But God's riches go deeper still.

Earlier in the book of Romans, Paul talks about the "riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience" (Romans 2:4), as well as "the riches of his glory" (9:23). In Ephesians he declares God to be "rich in mercy" (Eph-

sians 2:4), extolling the “riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight” (1:7–8). But unlike the riches on the ocean’s floor,

*God will never experience economic collapse or even the slightest wave or bobble of uncertainty.*

which could eventually be collected if a way were available to reach them—unlike the riches of a gold mine, which eventually yields all the precious metal it contains—the gold in God’s mine will never be emptied. Never. It is limitless. It is inexhaustible.

God will never experience economic collapse or even the slightest wave or bobble of uncertainty. When the Scripture addresses our human lacks and shortages, the promise is that “God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). His always-available provision for your needs will neither strain nor drain the budget of the Most High. Rather, it will continue pouring from His hand into your life, utterly free and fathomless, from His bottomless resources.

Whatever your need, whatever your deficit, the riches of God are more than what’s required.

***“Oh, the depth . . . of the wisdom and knowledge of God”***

God knows everything—and everything *about* everything! Everything about the world, everything about history, everything about the future, everything about elections, everything about our economy and where it’s headed. And not only does He know all things from a comprehensive, macro perspective, He also knows everything in miniature, down to the tiniest detail. God has complete wisdom and knowledge; He knows everything about your life.

- He knows everything about your past, your present, and your future.
- He knows the things you’ve done and the things that have been done to you.
- He knows things you’ve never told a single soul.

- He knows all about your family situation.
- He knows all about your financial needs.
- He knows all about your physical challenges.
- He knows all about your motives.
- He knows all about your sins.
- He knows all about your fears and insecurities.

He knows all of mine too. He knows it all. He knows everything.

The wisdom and knowledge of God are infinitely greater than our own. The human mind could never have come up with a way that sinners could be justified and declared righteous before a holy God. No one has wisdom and knowledge like that. But the wisdom of God devised a way—before sin had even entered the world!

And regardless of how complex, convoluted, or impossible your situation may seem or actually be right now, the wisdom of God is much more than adequate to walk you through it. “For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Corinthians 1:25).

*“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!”*

## **Beyond Knowing**

*“How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways.”* I like J. B. Phillips’s paraphrase of this verse: “How could man ever understand his reasons for action, or explain his methods of working?” Or as the King James Version puts it, His ways are “past finding out.” His decrees and decisions are “unsearchable”—they are beyond our human capacity to fathom.

“Inscrutable” is not a word we toss around in everyday conversation. Define.com defines it this way: “incapable of being searched into and understood by inquiry or study; impossible or difficult to be explained or accounted for satisfactorily; incomprehensible; not easily understood; mysterious.”

In other words, no matter how brilliant a person may be, no matter

how hard or long she works at it, she can never completely understand why (or how) God does what He does. It's unknowable, unsearchable, inscrutable. That's how Paul describes God's judgments and His ways.

Try doing a Google search on the "judgments of God," and you'll get 313,000 hits. Search the "ways of God," and you'll discover a million more. But even if you could take the time to investigate every one of these sites and all the various trails they could take you to, you'd barely have skimmed the surface of the depths of His ways. We simply cannot

*"In every situation and circumstance of your life, God is always doing a thousand different things that you cannot see and you do not know."*

know all that He is doing or why He does what He does. Those answers are hidden, locked away in the mind of God, and we have no choice but to leave them there. In fact, rather than demanding answers to our questions, we should trust that He knows what we need to know—as well as what we don't—and that it is His kindness

that withholds from us what would be too grand or painful for us to absorb in our mortal minds.

Years ago, I heard Pastor John Piper make a statement that resonated deeply in my heart. I've shared it with many others since then in various settings. He said, *"In every situation and circumstance of your life, God is always doing a thousand different things that you cannot see and you do not know."* Though at times God reveals some portion of His will clearly to us, enough that we can detect a *few* things He is doing and say, "Oh, that makes sense," the vast majority of His work is behind the scenes, providentially obscured from our view.

I repeated this statement of Pastor Piper's recently while talking with a mom whose daughter has chosen a prodigal lifestyle. She looked back at me through tears, even as her face showed visible signs of relief. She said, "I need that quote hanging in my home where I can look at it all the time." Yes, and all of us need it hanging in our hearts. God is at work. You may

not see it. But you know it's true.

***“How unsearchable . . .”***

You will never be able to fully explore what God is doing in your life. You cannot possibly see the end or the outcome . . . not yet anyway. You cannot fathom the means He has devised to fulfill His holy purposes through you. He doesn't owe you an explanation. He is God, and He is working.

***“How inscrutable . . .”***

Our inability to fathom God's ways led Paul from exclamatory statements to three rhetorical questions found in Romans 11 verses 34 and 35, each with the same answer: “For who has known the mind of the Lord?” Answer? *No one*. “Or who has been his counselor?” *No one*. “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” *No one. No one*. A thousand times . . . *no one*.

How many times have you tried to tell God what He should do in a certain situation? How many times have you questioned whether He knows what He's doing? How many times have you felt like He owed you something for all you've invested in trying to live for Him?

Job knew the feeling . . . and got this answer in response, amid several chapters' worth of Leviathan sightings and such: “Who has first given to me, that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine” (Job 41:11).

Oh, dear sister, if we could just lay hold of this in our hearts. God doesn't need to consult with anyone about anything. He never needs input or counsel, needs no guidance or advice—not from me, not from you, not from anyone. He possesses limitless wisdom. He never needs to call a hotline, use a lifeline, or phone directory assistance for information. He is altogether self-sufficient and independent. He never needs assistance from anything or anyone outside of Himself.

How just the opposite we are—utterly, totally, absolutely dependent on Him. He doesn't need us—we need Him! Even the seemingly simple task of drawing a single breath—in and out, just one time—requires lung capacity and involuntary muscle activity that is completely out of our hands,

supported solely by the gracious provision of God. We cannot survive into the next split second if not for His aid and the strength He supplies.

God is everything we are not. He makes no mistakes. He's not indebted to anyone, doesn't owe us anything. Nothing ever just occurs to God. Nothing ever surprises Him. He never has to scramble to come up with a solution. He has no sudden starts or emergency situations. This One who cares for us so completely doesn't have to follow current events—He determines and foresees all events—past, present, and future. He never needs to stop and figure out what His next move will be.

So . . .

Women of God, why would we ever need to get bent out of shape by something that's not going our way? Why would we doubt that God is not only fully capable of providing our need, but that He has seen this challenge coming from far away and has been preparing us for it all along . . . that He is even now accomplishing “a thousand different things” through this very process of events?

Believing this leaves no place for doubt, or fear, or anger, or second-guessing, or disputing God's choices. He is God, and we are not. It's not up to us to understand it all. And why should we? We are covered and cared for by One who is sovereign and all-wise, whose thoughts are unfathomable, the depths of whose ways are impossible to plumb.

***“How unsearchable . . . how inscrutable . . .”***

And yet, we must acknowledge that His ways do not always *seem* right to human reason or sense. At times they can be hard, painful, or confusing (to us, not to Him!). In fact, we stand in a long line of sisters who have stood before the imponderable ways of God and been faced with the option of either demanding an answer or living in submitted trust.

- Sarah, whose husband's wavering faith put her life in jeopardy on at least two occasions
- Ruth, widowed in a strange land, becoming the object of racism and hardship

- Hannah, suffering years of infertility, taunts, and unfulfilled longings for a child
- Mary, facing an unplanned, teenage pregnancy, having her soul pierced as she offered up her Son for the sins of the world

God's ways for you—just as His ways for these women—will not always make sense to your human reasoning. They may mean physical challenges, weakness, weariness, aging, disease. His plan for your life may include financial hardship, family difficulties, infertility, a special-needs child. It may mean a parent with Alzheimer's, unfulfilled longings for a mate, loss of a husband or child, a prodigal son or daughter. The list could go on and on, taking you down paths you never envisioned, drawing a story line you'd never have scripted.

But we stand in this line with the Lord Jesus, for whom the ways of God meant divesting Himself of His rights, experiencing rejection and ridicule on a scale never known by anyone before or since, then ultimately enduring a cruel death on the cross. *"How inscrutable."*

Your circumstances may be difficult. They may be hard to understand—incomprehensible to your feeble sense. It may seem that His plan is not working; you can't imagine how the outcome could be anything but bleak.

But you can be assured that God doesn't make mistakes. He has an eternal purpose in mind—a plan for the display of His glory throughout all the universe. He is working out that plan, and you are a part of it.

You don't have to know what He's doing. Or why.

The fact is, *He* knows. And that's all that really matters.

And if you trust Him, in time, you will thank Him for the treasures that have resulted from those trials. As a friend going through a deeply trying season with young adult children confided to me recently with tears, "If I hadn't been through this, I wouldn't know God the way I do. I wouldn't desire Him the way I do."

## He's Everything

Paul's towering statements of truth can lead to only one conclusion: "*For from him and through him and to him are all things*" (Romans 11:36). Everything finds its true meaning and purpose in *God's* meaning and purpose.

This is why true womanhood results in a God-centered life and perspective, a God-centered worldview, eternally tethered to who God is and His sovereign, inscrutable ways.

If you're not there or are unwilling to go there—if you're resisting the call of God for true womanhood—your life will be set adrift on a sea of shifting emotions and unruly ways of thinking. You are inviting depression and anger. You are tempting bitterness and confusion. You are fueling a mind-set that will stay in constant disarray, with no reference point to provide any kind of stability for your life.

Where you need to be is here: "*From him and through him and to him are all things.*" If you're not *there*, you've missed the whole point of your existence.

***"From him . . . are all things."***

He is the Source and origin of our existence. We have no life apart from Him. All things were created by Him. That means that every circumstance that touches your life and mine, including even severe loss and testing, comes into our lives through the filter of His sovereign hand. It means that the real issue behind any conflict you're facing is not your husband, your kids, your singleness, or your health. In fact, to resist or resent the situation and circumstances in which you find yourself is ultimately to resent and resist God Himself. *From Him* are all things.

***"Through him . . . are all things."***

Not only is He the Source, but He is also the Sustainer, the one who "upholds the universe by the word of his power" (Hebrews 1:3), the one in whom "all things hold together" (Colossians 1:17). If not for His powerful word sustaining the sun, the moon, the stars, and the planets, the entire universe would all fall apart, including (of course) us. So when you feel like you just can't hold things together any longer, guess what? You can't hold

*anything* together—not even for a second. But He can. And He does.

***“To him are all things.”***

He is our supreme purpose. He is our goal. He created all things—including you and me—for Himself and His pleasure. How contrary this is to our natural perspective that says “it’s all about me.” We live as though all things were from *us*, and through *us*, and to *us*, which leaves us depleted, fearful, angry, bitter, confused, and depressed. But God loves us too much to let us continue hurtling toward hopelessness and dissatisfaction. When we oppose His righteous, unsearchable judgments, He lovingly disciplines us as His children until we’re back in line with the way things really are, the way He created all things to operate.

Yes, God is the Source of all things, the sovereign Lord and Director of all things, the Sustainer of all things, and the supreme Goal of all things. That means nothing is beyond His ability to control, to transform, and to use for His glory and your good. In His way and His time, even the sinful choices of human beings—those who have wronged and wounded you, and who perhaps continue to cause you harm even as you attempt to reach out in mercy and forgiveness—even these unholy actions will eventually glorify God and demonstrate the greatness of His wisdom, power, and grace. There is simply no escape for anyone from the cosmic reality that *“from him and through him and to him are all things.”*

And what is our response? *“To him be glory forever. Amen”* (Romans 11:36). The appropriate response to the fathomless depths of God’s wisdom and ways is to step out of the spotlight and turn the spotlight on Him. It is to say, *Amen!*—wholeheartedly affirming our agreement with the Word of God. We believe that our bottomless, unsearchable, all-encompassing Lord is the sum and whole point of everything there is. Therefore, we submit our entire lives to His holy, eternal purposes. *Amen.* Let it be so!

## **A True Woman’s Response**

So what does all this have to do with being a “true woman”? How does it apply to where we live? My friend, this passage has everything to do with being

a true woman of God. This is where true women find a refuge for their hearts. In embracing these truths, we discover what true womanhood is all about.

All that we have seen about God and His ways is designed to bring us comfort as well as courage and conviction in our calling as women. There are many implications and applications we could make, but I want to leave you with three simple ones that apply to every Christian woman. I pray that you will grasp them and seek to orient your life around them.

1) ***A true woman lives a God-centered life.*** We live in a self-centered world, but a true woman of God lives a God-centered life. She lives for His glory and pleasure, not her own . . . because it's not about us. It is all, all, all about Him. A God-centered woman embraces the supreme purpose for which she was created. She lives to reflect the beauty and wonder of His ways and to join every created thing in heaven and earth in glorifying and worshiping Him eternally. This is her reason for living. This is what gets her up in the morning and keeps her going through the day. Every day and every moment of every day, she seeks to live with His purposes in view.

Seeing the magnitude of His greatness and fixing our eyes on Him gives a whole new context and perspective for our problems. You may say, "Nancy, you have no idea how big my challenge is. I'm not just imagining it or blowing it out of proportion." Please hear me: I'm not minimizing what you're going through. Compared to what I'm facing right now, your issues may be huge—but not by comparison with the torrent, the river of God's love, mercy, and grace. Our greatest problems, no matter how enormous and unsolvable they may seem, become puny when measured against the vastness of God.

A true woman is more than a good wife and mother, a loyal friend and daughter. More than anything else, she is enthralled with the Lord Jesus Christ—the Pearl of great price, the supreme Treasure of life. He is the center of her universe and her life revolves around Him.

And therefore, a true woman has hope—real, genuine hope—in the midst of a world filled with pain, loss, and uncertainty. A true woman is a God-centered woman.

2) *A true woman trusts God.* We live in a fearful world. We know now that our generation is not immune from the same kind of stock market plunges that make us think of grainy, black-and-white film images from the Great Depression. We read of random shooting sprees that erupt in shopping centers or places of business or church services. We see third-graders hustled into lockdown on reports that a gunman has been spotted nearby. And we experience unexpected and life-altering events a lot closer to home that have our own names written on them.

But the true woman doesn't give in to fear. As Proverbs 31:25 says, she "smiles at the future" (NASB), because she knows He's got the whole world in His hands. She knows of a God whose depths never reach bottom, whose ways are beyond finding out. She knows that the One in charge of "all things" can be trusted to know what He's doing. He has a plan we would not have scripted, a plan we may not understand, but it is His plan, and His plan is good, wise, and can never be thwarted.

*A true woman has hope—  
real, genuine hope—in the  
midst of a world filled with  
pain, loss, and uncertainty.*

So a true woman accepts His plan as good, though it may not be the way *she* defines good. She knows it's *God* who defines good, so she leans on Him. She depends on Him even in times of prosperity, joy, and plenty. But she also maintains her trustful gratitude in times of pain and hardship, of lack and want, of loneliness, uncertainty, and confusion. She is married to Christ—for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer—not like a paid lover, wanting Him only for what He can give her.

I know life is hard to understand. From our limited frame of reference, it sometimes seems that God doesn't know what He's doing. And though many of us would never dare to speak such words aloud or even consciously think them, many of us are practicing atheists at times, living as if there's no God, or at least wondering if He has really messed things up this time.

A true woman, however, trusts God completely, patiently believing that He is faithful, and that in His way and in His time, His promises will be fulfilled.

Perhaps you're thinking, *It's not God who's messed up—it's me. I'm the one who has failed. I can't see how God's plan for my life could ever be fulfilled.* A true woman trusts that her past failures are not beyond the reach of God's redeeming grace. Unredeemable losses and impossibilities do not exist

*The true woman who trusts  
God doesn't have to strive.*

in the inscrutable mind of God. As Martin Luther succinctly captured it, "God can draw a straight line with a crooked stick," even if those "crooked sticks" are your personal failings, even

if they're the sins of a parent, a husband, a child, an employer. Nothing is beyond His plan and repair.

The way God goes about redeeming this broken world is so very different than the way we would do it. So when we can't understand what He's doing or why He's doing it, it's not our place to challenge or dispute, but rather to humbly bow before His sovereignty, His goodness, His mercy, and His greatness—*"the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God"*—and to align ourselves with His purposes, embracing His will.

The true woman who trusts God doesn't have to strive. She doesn't have to be afraid. She can relinquish control. She doesn't have to manipulate and control the whole wide world (as if we could). She doesn't resent, or resist, or run from the cross. She embraces the cross with faith.

I love the way the eighteenth-century English poet William Cowper expressed the kind of confident trust we see in Romans 11:

God moves in a mysterious way,  
His wonders to perform;  
He plants his footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines  
Of never failing skill,  
He treasures up his bright designs,  
And works his sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust him for his grace;  
Behind a frowning providence,  
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,  
Unfolding ev'ry hour;  
The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flow'r.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,  
And scan his work in vain;  
God is his own interpreter,  
And he will make it plain.

3) *A true woman says, "Yes, Lord."* That's basically what Paul goes on to say in the verse that immediately follows our text: "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, living and holy and acceptable to God" (Romans 12:1).

A true woman recognizes that her life is not her own. She lives instead for the glory of God. His Word, not her world, becomes her compass. She affirms that His purposes are good and wise, and therefore she follows His leading with the "yes" of full obedience and submission.

The true woman accepts the way God made her, embracing her

God-given design and roles in life, being grateful that He has made her a woman, thankful for the privilege of serving and giving and fulfilling His holy purposes.

She lives intentionally, not just drifting from one meaningless activity to the next, letting the circumstances of life pull her along. She's willing to be like a salmon, swimming upstream, living a counter-cultural life in an unholy world for the glory of God. She's willing to make personal sacrifices, not constantly asking, "What will make me happy?" Rather, she wants to know: "What will please *You*, Lord?" "What will further Your kingdom?" "What will display Your glory?" Her heart attitude is, "If it pleases You, it pleases me." The true woman reflects the spirit of Mary of Nazareth when she said in response to God's calling, "I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).

*"Yes, Lord."*

To say, "Yes, Lord," means saying no to a lot of other things:

- "no" to bitterness
- "no" to self-centeredness
- "no" to whining
- "no" to complaining
- "no" to pining
- "no" to resisting, resenting, running from the will of God

But it means saying yes to a lot more:

- "yes" to forgiving those who have sinned against us
- "yes" to receiving God's forgiveness for ourselves
- "yes" to repentance
- "yes" to serving
- "yes" to embracing God's choices for our lives
- "yes" to trusting Him with our circumstances
- "yes" to finding and fulfilling His purposes

Living a God-centered life, trusting Him even when we don't understand, responding to Him with a heart that always says "Yes, Lord"—this is no easy way to travel. The road that winds through this kind of lifestyle can be steep and scary at times. But we walk by faith, not by sight.

And if you will keep pressing on by His grace, I assure you the day will come when you will get to the summit, as Paul did in Romans 11. Then, you'll look back at the trails you have scaled by His grace; you'll look around at the scenery, amazed at the unsearchable depths of God.

The sight will be glorious and you will say, "Ah, I see! It all makes sense now. . . . Why was I so anxious? Why did I fret? Why did I become bitter and angry? Why did I despise my husband for making my life so difficult? I see now that he was an instrument in the hand of God to fulfill God's holy, eternal purposes. . . ."

We will look back on the path we have climbed, with vision and clarity we cannot possibly have now. And our hearts will cry out, "Oh Lord my God, You have done all things well. . . . How great Thou art!"

For sure, there will be those long nights and days when the summit seems hopelessly far away, when all you can see is trouble and danger, when you're not sure why He's put you in such a tight place.

For all those days, I offer you Romans 11:33–36—the depths, the riches, the wisdom, the knowledge of God. His unsearchable judgments. His inscrutable ways. You can fall back into His sovereignty, sure of His love, and proclaim with Paul, even through your tears and troubles, "*To him be glory forever. Amen.*"