

引言 INTRODUCTION

The more things you know, the more you realize that there are many things you do not know. Among those issues I cannot understand is why God paves the way of my life like it is. Similar to many people of my age, I did summer jobs when I was younger. I could earn some money to buy the things I like or spend it on entertainment. In one particular summer, I worked in a warehouse of a toy factory. The duties for my team were to pack products into boxes and stack them in the storage room. Every now and then, a shipping company would retrieve the boxes and transport them in a trailer. There were two young men about my age doing all the lifting and hauling. I was a Christian already back then. There was a deep gratitude in my heart when I looked at those workers. I thanked God that I had an opportunity to pursue education. I say so not because I look down on people who do menial labor. It is people's choice whether to use their hands or their brains to make a living, as long as they are productive in the society. I was also grateful to the Lord for saving me. From my observation, those two youngsters and none of my colleagues was Christian. In the book of Romans, Paul shares about God's plan for Israel. It is something beyond human comprehension. God saves you because He chose to show His grace to you. God's salvation plan humbles us and glorifies Him.

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 神的奧秘 God's Mystery

Paul describes God's plan for Israel as a mystery. In our everyday language, a mystery is something that may never be made known. We say unidentified flying object is a mystery. Those aircrafts are perhaps alien space-ships or high-tech military weapons. However, the Greek word for "mystery" in the Bible refers to something that has been concealed until God reveals it. Here in Romans chapter 11, the mystery is about salvation of the Jews. Look at **verse 25** again: I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. God has been hardening the hearts of the Jews so that they show no interest to the gospel. But their hardening is not permanent or final. One day, God will remove their stubbornness. Many Jews will repent of their sins and accept Jesus as their Messiah. The fact that eventually some Jews will be saved is not that surprising to anyone. The amazing part is about the timing. This mass salvation of the remnant will not take place until "the full number of the Gentiles has come in." God has a book of life to record believers' names. When the number of Gentile Christians has reached the quota God set, then He will draw the Jews back. Some Bible scholars understand that it will happen closer to the second coming of Jesus. One support is found in **Luke 21:24** – "They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." In the context, Jesus describes the signs of His future return. He uses the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70 as a backdrop to prophesy that there will be some calamities on a global scale to indicate that His second coming is imminent. Those signs will occur when the time of the Gentiles is reached. It may mean the full number of saved Gentile is fulfilled. That will be followed by a large number

of Jews coming to the Lord. Then Jesus will return swiftly to judge the world. Who will be among the remnant that will be saved? Paul continues to say in **verse 26**: And so all Israel will be saved... Theologians have debate whether “all Israel” means every Jew in history. If that is the case, then Paul is suggesting a Jewish version of universalism. In other words, regardless of the Jews’ spiritual condition, they will all be saved. That understanding clearly contradicts what Paul has been explaining all along, that salvation can only be attained by accepting Jesus. Therefore, “all Israel” does not refer to every Israelites. We use a similar terminology in our dialogue too. For example, a famous singer held a concert. It was a huge success because the people in the whole city went to the show. It is a word of speech to say that many fans attended the event. Throughout history, some Jews have come to know the Lord. But that is only a small number. There will be a major awakening. “All Israel” is not restricted to the current inhabitants in the nation of Israel either. I can also think of those people who are born of mixed marriages between a Jew and a parent of a different race. Are they considered Jews? We will let God sort it out. How should be respond to this mystery plan of God? Just like Paul reminds the Romans believers, we as Gentile Christians should not be proud. We are saved only because God softened our hearts. We need to ask God to humble the non-believers too. We do our part to share the gospel with them and we let the Holy Spirit work in their hearts. If our interpretation is correct, then after a full number of Gentiles convert, salvation of all Israel and Jesus’ return will occur one after the other event. Everything will happen in God’s perfect timing. But from a human standpoint, the more diligent we are in the evangelistic effort, the sooner Jesus will come back. On a wider scope, we should always stay alert to God’s intervention into human history. No one could imagine that Jews would rebuild their country in 1948. It was God’s work! The same God that caused the Old Testament Israelites to leave Egypt also gathered them back from exile. If the same God could create the universe in six days out of nothing and brought Jesus back from the dead, then He can call disobedient children back!

2. 神的憐恤 God’s Mercy

God’s mystery has to do with His plan to save a large number of Jews. It will take place after the full number of Gentiles has been redeemed. But overall, as Paul always emphasizes, it is exclusively God’s mercy for a person of any race to become a child of God. In this section, Paul employs a style of parallelism to explain God’s mercy. Let us first analyze the structure of verse 28: as far as the gospel is concerned, the Jews are now God’s enemies; however, with regard to God’s election, they are His beloved people. Due to their disobedience, the Jews are now adversaries of God. Sin triggers God’s wrath and it will lead to His judgment. However, God will not betray the promise He made with Abraham to bless his descendants. The Gentiles have not replaced the Jews to become God’s people. One day God will fulfill His promise. Paul adds in **verse 29**: for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. The Greek word for “irrevocable” means without regret. Sometimes we mourn over a decision we have made. You know that I am a frugal person. Sometimes I feel sorry for buying a cheap product of low quality (remember the story about the dollar-store can-opener I once shared with you?). Then in other instances I found a better deal after I have made a purchase. We as humans express regret for our decisions because we lack a complete knowledge of everything and we cannot foresee the future. We say to ourselves: “I would have chosen differently if I had known earlier.” But God has no regret because He knows everything from eternity past to eternity future. When God decided to bless Abraham’s descendants, He surely knew that the Israelites would disobey Him. The defiance of

the Jews will not frustrate God's plan. That proves God's wisdom and mercy. Paul continues to explain the sequence of how God will show His mercy to the Jews in verses 30-31. In the past, the Gentiles disbelieved. But they received God's mercy because of the disobedience of the Jews. However, although the Jews are currently disobedient, they will become beneficiaries of God's mercy because of the mercy bestowed to the Gentiles. Thus, there is a cause and effect relationship with regard to how God deals with the Gentiles and the Jews. God has a priority in His plan. He is sovereign in all that He does. Paul says in **verse 32**: For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all. The word "bound" means to enclose. Luke uses the word in his gospel to describe that Jesus' disciples caught a lot of fish in a net. God binds everyone in disobedience so that no one can be saved unless God shows mercy to those He had elected. God used the same divine action to harden the heart of Pharaoh and cause blindness to the spiritually lost. A person can only be saved because of God's mercy. The conclusion is that no one can boast that he/she has any merit that appeals to God. Paul testifies in **1 Corinthians 15:9-10** this way: 9 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect... The chapter is about the future resurrection of believers. Jesus only showed Himself to His apostles and over 500 brothers after He rose from the dead. Those people were entrusted with an important duty to testify the resurrection of Christ no matter where they went. Their eye-witness account is a strong evidence to prove that Jesus was God. Paul humbly admits that he is not qualified to be called an apostle because he used to persecute Christians. But by God's grace, Paul was saved and was called to be an evangelist to the Gentiles. Every Christian should echo Paul's testimony of "but by the grace of God I am what I am." God's grace and mercy go hand-in-hand. His grace is like a free gift given to undeserved people. God's mercy causes Him to take action to cancel the impact of sin on us.

3. 神的奇妙 God's Majesty

God disclosed the mystery of calling back the Jews. Whether the Jews or the Gentiles, all God's people are saved because of God's mercy. When Paul ponders on the great wisdom God demonstrated in His work, he cannot help but bursts out in praise for God's majesty. It is a fitting way to conclude Paul's discussion about God's plans for Israel from chapters 9 to 11. In verse 33, Paul mentions God's wisdom, knowledge, judgments and plans. They are all unpredictable and are beyond human understanding. Paul follows up in verses 34-35 by asking three rhetorical questions. Who has known the mind of the Lord? Who has served as His counselor? Who has supplied God information and resources, as if God owed them a favor? The same answer to all three questions is obviously "no." God is fully independent and autonomous. He does not need any help in His decision-making process and work. He is way transcendent than we can imagine. We find praises for God's Majesty in other parts of the Bible. For example, the author of Psalm 139 talks about the intricate nature of the human life and the fact that God knows everything about our actions, speech and thoughts. The psalmist marvels in **verse 6**: Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. But this majestic God builds a personal relationship with His children. The author continues to say in **verses 17-18**: 17 How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! 18 Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you. The psalmist is completely astonished by the wealth of knowledge God has. It is beyond his imagination. Another example I can think of is Job. You may remember that he faced great hardship when he literally lost everything

overnight. That sent him to a long process of deep thinking to try to make sense of his dreadful experience. He cried out to God for an explanation. Then God used four chapters to respond Job. Instead of giving Job some reasons why he suffered, God recounts His majestic creation – manifestation of His power in nature and the complicated life-forms He created. The point is that if Job could not understand God’s works in the physical world, how could he discern God’s mind and character? Job then admits in **42:2-3** – 2 “I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. 3 You asked, ‘Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?’ Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.” Job was completely speechless. He was humbled by God’s majesty. Then most of us are familiar with **verse 5** of the chapter: “My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.” Job did not need any answer after he experienced God’s presence. God is mighty, wise and sovereign. It was good enough for Job to know that God was there and He had a purpose in everything He did. Job might never comprehend why God allowed him to encounter great hardship. But it was comforting to know that God was with him in his misery and God was in full control. Coming back to Romans. Paul concludes his discussion about God’s plan for Israel in **verse 36** with a doxology: For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen. God is the source of all things. He is the sustainer for all things. He also gives meaning and purpose for all things to exist. Everything is made and everything happens for the sake of His glory. That is the final answer for all things. We may never understand why God does and does not do certain things. We have questions just like Job or Paul did. But our doubts should not be turned into disbelief. God wants us to keep trusting Him. We must admit that there is so much we do not know about God’s plans. We can only see things in limited time and space and from a personal perspective. But God sees everything from start to finish. His will and His power are much greater than ours. He has the masterplan in His hands. In due time, He will fulfill all His promises for us and bring everything into a magnificent finish. He deserves all our praise.

結論 CONCLUSION

God’s salvation plan humbles us and glorifies Him. We can never foresee His work. We may never know why God saves some people but rejects others. Ultimately, we do not even understand why God saves us. There is a beautiful song that the Mandarin group presented in worship before. The title is: “Why Does You Chose Me?”

Stanza 1: Lord, why do You choose me from among thousands to be Your children? You know that I have committed so many transgressions. O Lord! You have forgiven me. You hide Your face from my sins, and sent Your beloved Son Jesus to save me.

Chorus: O Lord! Help me become more like You. Make me determined to obey God’s will. Now I dedicate my life to live for You, and to walk with You on this heavenward journey.

Stanza 2: It is so amazing that the love of the Mighty God came to me. Praise and glory to You, Lord. The grace of the Savior is marvelous. The mercy of the Savior is so great and abundant. It is unfathomable when I ponder on it. (Then repeat chorus.)

Let us use this song to express our praise and thanks to the Lord.

引言 INTRODUCTION

你知道的東西越多，你就越會意識到你還有許多不知道的事情。其中一件我不明白的事情，就是神如何引導我的人生道路。和我同年齡的人一樣，我年輕時會在暑假打工。我可以賺一些錢買我喜歡的東西或花在娛樂上。在某一年的夏天，我在一家玩具工廠的倉庫裡工作。我的團隊的職責是將產品包裝到箱子中並堆放在儲藏室內。每隔一段時間，運輸公司會來把箱子搬到貨車中。有兩個年齡和我差不多的年輕人負責所有搬運的工作。那時我已經是基督徒。當我看著那些工人時，我內心充滿感恩。我感謝神讓我有機會接受教育。我這樣說並不是因為我看不起從事體力勞動的人。一個人只要能在社會中發揮所長，使用勞力或腦力謀生是他的選擇。我也感謝主救了我。根據我的觀察，那兩位年輕人和我的同事中沒有一個是基督徒。保羅在羅馬書中分享了神對以色列的計劃。神的作為是人無法完全理解的。神救了你，是祂的揀選。神的救贖計劃使我們謙卑下來，並使祂得榮耀。

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 神的奧秘 God's Mystery

保羅描述神對以色列的計劃為一個奧秘。在我們的日常用語，奧秘是指一些人永遠不可能知道的事情。我們說飛碟是個奧秘。那些物件也許是外星人的飛船或是高科技的軍事武器。但是，聖經中希臘文的「奧秘」是指一直被隱藏的東西，直到神把謎揭開。羅馬書第 11 章講的奧秘是關於猶太人的得救。再看第 25 節：**弟兄們，我不願意你們不知道這奧秘（恐怕你們自以為聰明），就是以色列人有幾分是硬心的，等到外邦人的數目添滿了。**神讓猶太人的心剛硬，使他們對福音毫無興趣。但是他們的固執不是永久的或不變的。有一天，神會挪去他們的頑梗。許多猶太人會認罪悔改，並接受耶穌為他們的彌賽亞。最終會有一些猶太人得救並不是希奇的事。令人驚訝的是事情發生的次序安排。大批餘民的得救是要「等到外邦人的數目添滿了」才會展開。神有一本生命冊記錄了信徒的名字。當外邦基督徒的人數達到神設定的限額時，祂就會吸引猶太人回來。一些聖經學者認為，這將在耶穌第二次降臨前發生。他們從路加福音 21:24 中找到了支持：**「他們要倒在刀下，又被擄到各國去。耶路撒冷要被外邦人踐踏，直到外邦人的日期滿了。」**在上下文中，耶穌描述了再來之前的跡象。祂以公元 70 年耶路撒冷和聖殿的被毀為背景，預言在全球將發生的一些災難，表明祂回來的時候快到了。這些跡象將發生在外邦人的日期滿了的時候。意思可能是指外邦人得救的數目已經足夠。然後便有大量的猶太人歸向主。接著耶穌將迅速返回審判世界。誰會是那些將來得救的餘民？保羅在第 26

節繼續說：於是以色列全家都要得救…。神學家爭論「以色列全家」是否指歷史上的每一個猶太人。如果是這樣的話，那麼保羅在提倡一種猶太人的普救論。換句話說，無論他們的屬靈狀況如何，每一個猶太人最終都會得救。這種理解顯然與保羅一直以來的解釋相矛盾，因為只有通過接受耶穌才能獲得救恩。因此，「以色列全家」並不是指每一個以色列人。我們在日常生活中也使用類似的用語。例如，一位著名歌手舉辦了一場音樂會。這是一場很成功的演出，因為整個城市的人都去看。這句話的意思是有很多歌迷去觀看表演。在整個歷史中，一些猶太人認識主。但這只是一個很小的數目。將會有重大的覺醒。「以色列全家」也不僅限於住在以色列國的居民。我也想到那些猶太人和外族通婚所生的後代。他們也算是猶太人嗎？神自然有祂的答案。我們應該如何回應神的這個奧秘？就像保羅提醒羅馬信徒一樣，我們作為外邦基督徒不應該感到驕傲。我們得救只是因為神軟化了我們的心。我們也需要神使非信徒謙卑。我們盡力地向他們傳福音，然後讓聖靈在他們心中工作。如果我們的解釋是正確的話，那麼在外邦人悔改的數目滿足之後，以色列人餘民的得救和耶穌的再來都會一一實現。一切都會在神的完美時機發生。但是從人的角度來看，我們的佈道工作做得越起勁，耶穌就會越早回來。從廣義來說，我們必須提高警醒，留意神在歷史中的作為。沒有人能想像猶太人會在 1948 年重建自己的國家。這是神的作為！同一位神使舊約的以色列人離開埃及，也使他們從被擄中歸回。如果神能在六天之內從無變有創造宇宙，並使耶穌從死裡復活，那麼祂也可以把悖逆的兒女召回來！

2. 神的憐恤 God's Mercy

神的奧秘是關乎大批猶太人的得救。那是發生在外邦人的數目添滿之後。但是總個來說，正如保羅一直強調的，任何種族的人成為神的兒女，完全是神的憐恤。在這個段落中，保羅採用了平行體的方式來解釋神的憐恤。讓我們首先分析第 28 節的結構：就福音而言，猶太人目前是神的敵人。但是，就神的揀選來說，他們是神所愛的子民。由於猶太人的不順服，他們現在是神的敵人。罪引起神的憤怒，導致祂的審判。然而，神不會廢棄祂與亞伯拉罕所作的承諾，祝福他的後代。外邦人並沒有取代猶太人成為神的子民。有一天神會實現祂的應許。保羅在第 29 節中補充說：因為神的恩賜和選召是沒有後悔的。希臘文「後悔」這個字的意思是遺憾。有時，我們後悔自己所作的決定。你們知道我是個小器鬼。有時候，我後悔買了便宜貨（還記得我曾經與你分享過我在一元商店買開罐器的故事嗎？）。然後在其他情況下，我買了東西後發現了更省錢的機會。作為人，我們對自己的決定表示遺憾，因為我們不可能全面了解一切事物，也無法預知未來。我們後悔地說：「早知今日，何必當初？」但是神是不會後悔的，因為祂知道從永恆到永恆的一切。當神決定祝福亞伯拉罕的後裔時，祂當然知道以色列人會背叛祂。但是猶太人的不順服不會否定神的計劃。那證明了神的智慧和憐恤。保羅繼續在 30-31 節中解釋神將如何向猶太人表示憐恤的順序。過去，外邦人不相信神。但是由於猶太人的不順服，外

邦人得到了神的憐恤。但是，儘管猶太人目前不順服，但由於神賜予外邦人的憐恤，他們將成為神憐恤的受益者。因此，神對待外邦人和猶太人，存在因果關係。神在祂的計劃中有優先次序。神在一切的事上都具有主權。保羅在第 32 節說：**因為神將眾人都圈在不順服之中，特意要憐恤眾人。**「圈」這個字是指困住。路加在他的福音書中用這個字來形容耶穌的門徒網了很多魚。神將每個人圈起來，使他們不順服。因此除非神憐恤祂所揀選的人，否則沒有人能得救。神採取了同樣的行動，使法老的心剛硬，祂也使靈性上迷失的人眼瞎。一個人只能因神的憐恤而得救。結論是，沒有人能誇口它具有吸引神的任何優點。保羅在哥林多前書 15:9-10 中作見證：**9 我原是使徒中最小的，不配稱為使徒，因為我從前逼迫神的教會。10 然而，我今日成了何等人，是蒙神的恩才成的，並且他所賜我的恩不是徒然的…。**這一章是談到信徒將來的復活。耶穌從死裡復活之後，祂向使徒們和 500 多個弟兄顯現。那些人無論到哪裡，都負起重要的責任，證明基督的復活。他們的見證是有力的證據，證明耶穌是神。保羅謙卑地承認他沒有資格被稱為使徒，因為他曾經迫害基督徒。但是保羅藉著神的恩典得救了，並且被神呼召成為外邦人的宣教士。每個基督徒都應該有像保羅同樣的見證：「我今日成了何等人，是蒙神的恩才成的。」神的恩典與憐恤是相輔相成的。祂的恩典就像送給不配的人的免費禮物。神的憐恤使祂採取行動，消除了罪對我們的影響。

3. 神的奇妙 God's Majesty

神顯明了祂打算召回猶太人的奧秘。無論是猶太人還是外邦人，所有神的子民都是因為神的憐恤而得救的。當保羅思考神在祂的作為中表現出無限的智慧時，他由衷地讚美神的奇妙。保羅以頌讚來結束第 9 章到第 11 章的討論是很合宜的。在第 33 節中，保羅提到了神的智慧、知識、判斷和計劃。這一切都是無法預測的，也超出了人的理解。保羅在第 34-35 節中提出了三個反問的問題。誰知道主的心意？誰擔任過祂的顧問？誰向神提供信息和資料，好像神欠了他們一個人情？這三個問題的答案顯然都是「沒有」。神是完全獨立和自主的。祂在決策過程和工作中不需要任何幫助。祂超乎我們的想像。在聖經的其他部分，我們都找到對神的奇妙的讚美。例如，詩篇 139 的作者談到了人體的複雜構造，以及神完全了解我們的行為、言語和思想。詩人在第 6 節發出驚嘆：**這樣的知識奇妙，是我不能測的，至高，是我不能及的。**但是這位奇妙的神願意與祂的兒女建立個人關係。作者繼續在第 17-18 節中說：**17 神啊，你的意念向我何等寶貴！其數何等眾多！18 我若數點，比海沙更多；我睡醒的時候，仍和你同在。**詩人驚嘆神所擁有的豐富知識。這超出了他的想像。我能想到的另一個例子是約伯。你可能還記得，他面臨巨大的苦難，一夜之間失去所有。這使他陷入了漫長的深層思考過程，試圖明白這些痛苦經歷的起因。他向神呼求，希望能得到答案。然後神用四章的經文來回應約伯。神並沒有解釋約伯遭遇苦難的原因。祂卻講述了創造的奇妙 – 祂在自然界中的能力並祂創造了複雜的生命。重點是，如果約伯不了解神在物質世界中的作為，他如何能明白神的心意和

品格？約伯在 42:2-3 中承認說：2「我知道，你萬事都能做；你的旨意不能攔阻。3 誰用無知的言語使你的旨意隱藏呢？我所說的是我不明白的；這些事太奇妙，是我不知道的。」約伯無言以對。他因神的奇妙而謙卑下來。然後我們大多數人都熟悉本章的第 5 節：「我從前風聞有你，現在親眼看見你。」約伯經歷了神的同在之後，他不再需要任何答案。神充滿能力、智慧和主權。約伯知道神在那裡，並且祂所做的一切都有目的，那就足夠了。約伯可能永遠無法理解為什麼神允許他經歷巨大的磨難。但令他欣慰的是，神與他共渡苦難，並且神完全掌權。回到羅馬書。保羅在第 36 節結束了關於神對以色列的計劃的討論，他發出頌讚：因為萬有都是本於他，倚靠他，歸於他。願榮耀歸給他，直到永遠。阿們！神是萬物的源頭。祂是萬物的維繫者。祂也賦予萬物存在的意義和目的。一切的被造和事情的發生，都是為了神的榮耀。那是所有事物的終極答案。我們可能永遠無法理解為什麼神會使某些事情發生，或是攔阻其他事情。就像約伯或保羅一樣，我們的心中也有問題。但是不要讓我們的疑問變成不信。神希望我們繼續相信祂。我們必須承認，關於神的計劃，我們還有許多並不了解。從人的角度來看，我們只能在有限的時間和空間內觀察事情。但是神從頭到尾都看到了一切。祂的旨意和能力遠超過我們。祂掌握了整體的計劃。在適當的時候，祂會實現祂對我們的所有應許，並使一切達到完美的結局。祂配得到我們所有的讚美。

結論 CONCLUSION

神的救贖計劃使我們謙卑下來，並使祂得榮耀。我們永遠無法預料神的作為。我們也可能永遠不知道為什麼神拯救了某些人，卻拒絕其他人。最終，我們甚至不明白為什麼神拯救了我們。國語組團契曾經在主日崇拜中獻唱過一首優美的詩歌。標題是：《祢為何揀選我》

主，祢為何從萬人中揀選我做祢兒女？祢知我過犯那麼多。
喔主！祢赦免了我，掩面不看我罪過，賜下愛子耶穌拯救我。

喔主！幫助我成為祢的樣式，順服祢旨意永不渝。
如今獻生命，為主而生活，與主一同行到永遠。

何等奇妙！至大真神之愛竟然臨到我。歌頌讚美主，榮耀祢！
救主恩典多稀奇，救主憐憫大又多，使我細思量難明瞭。

喔主！幫助我成為祢的樣式，順服祢旨意永不渝。
如今獻生命，為主而生活，與主一同行到永遠。

讓我們一同唱這首歌，表達對主的讚美和感謝。