

# "Mercy Upon All"

Thomas Robinson, *God's Amazing Paths* 7, November 13, 2016

## Romans 11:25-36

<sup>25</sup> I don't want you to be unaware of this mystery, **brothers and sisters**, lest you (Gentiles) become wise beyond yourselves: A hardening in a partial way has come upon **Israel**, until the fullness of the **Gentiles** comes in. <sup>26</sup> And **in this way all Israel will be saved**, as it is written,

*"The Deliverer will come from Zion,  
he will banish ungodliness from Jacob;*

<sup>27</sup> *and this will be my covenant with them* [Isa 59:20-21a]

*when I take away their sins."* [Isa 27:9]

<sup>28</sup> In relation to this in-breaking **good news**, they became enemies **for your sake**. But as regards God's **choice**, they are **beloved** for the sake of the patriarchs. <sup>29</sup> For God has not changed his mind about his **gifts of grace** and **calling**.

<sup>30</sup> For just as **you** were at one time **disobedient** to God but **now** have **received mercy** because of their **disobedience**, <sup>31</sup> in the same way **they** too have now been **disobedient** in order that by the **mercy** shown to you **they** also may now **receive mercy**.

<sup>32</sup> For **God** has closed up **all people in disobedience**, that **he may have mercy on all**.

<sup>33</sup> Oh, the depth of the riches  
and **wisdom** and **knowledge** of God!

How **unsearchable** are his judgments  
and how **untraceable** his paths!

<sup>34</sup> *"For who has known the mind of the Lord,  
or who has been his counselor?"* [Isa 40:13]

<sup>35</sup> *"Or who has given a gift to him  
that he might be repaid?"* [Job 41:11]

<sup>36</sup> For **from him** and **through him** and **into him** are **all things**.

To him be **glory forever**. Amen.

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## Romans 9:2-6

<sup>2</sup> I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart. <sup>3</sup> For I myself would wish to be anathema from the Messiah for the sake of my brothers and sisters, my relatives in flesh and blood. <sup>4</sup> They are Israelites, .... <sup>5</sup> Theirs are the ancestors, and from them, with regard to flesh, came the Messiah, who is God over all people, blessed forever. Amen.

<sup>6</sup> ...Not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, <sup>7</sup> and not all children of Abraham are his "seed"....

## Romans 9:23

<sup>23</sup> [God wishes to] make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, ... <sup>24</sup> even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the nations/Gentiles?

## Isaiah 59:20-21

"And a Deliverer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from ungodliness," declares the LORD.

<sup>21</sup> "And as for me, this is my covenant with them," says the LORD...."

## Jeremiah 31:33-34

<sup>33</sup> For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup> .... For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Isaiah 27:9 LXX

<sup>9</sup> ...The lawlessness of Jacob will be removed. And this is his blessing when I take away his sin ....

Isaiah 40:13 LXX

<sup>13</sup> Who has known the mind of the LORD, and who has been his counselor to instruct him?

Job 41:11

<sup>11</sup> Who has first given to me, that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine.

I Corinthians 8:6

<sup>6</sup> Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and into whom we exist, and one LORD, Jesus Messiah, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

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## **From Grief to Celebration – Following the Paths of God**

Paul began Rom 9-11 with great grief for his Jewish kin – so many were missing out on what they should have delighted in, what was their own story. He ends celebrating what God is doing in this complicated history that reaches back across scripture and into the lives of the believers in Rome. It is challenging and complex! God made human life complex. It's often hard even to understand ourselves, our own rebellious wills, our hopes, our loves.

If the problem were simple, we could have a book of do-it-yourself resolutions. It would not have required the incarnation and death of God, the defeat of death, resurrection life.

Paul sees the drama of Jews and Gentiles, played out in his own life and ministry, as a sign of God's choice of a particular human path leading to his faithfulness and mercy to all people.

## **Jew and Gentile – A Dance of Brokenness and Mercy**

Paul, a Jew, knows the power of Gentile prejudice against Jews and vice versa. God wants both. Gentiles lost knowledge of God and substituted a thousand names for our favorite gods of money, sex, power, self, tribe, etc., etc. God chose to work through one family, Abraham. He gave a Torah/covenant, that brought clarity: Brokenness became transgression; idolatry, the rejection of the one God, creator, sustainer, redeemer. Israel was a paradigm of the sin of all humanity. God's relation with Israel provided the frame for God's own intervention. There the meanings of Messiah, redemption, forgiveness, mercy, judgment etc. were set.

Then came the event of Jesus – God coming in that story in an unexpected, challenging way. Israel's brokenness and Gentile idolatry of power combined to reject and crucify Jesus. Even Jesus' disciples shared in the failure. But God! He conquered death by resurrection life.

All the first disciples were Jews. But Jewish power saw the "Good News" as scandalous and fought it, as Paul knew well. That war drove the Jewish disciples out into the Gentile world. It also drove them to re-read the scriptures, to re-learn the story of Messiah and Suffering Servant, of God as creator of all, to hear what Jesus meant in sending them to the nations.

This was the turmoil of human brokenness, seen in Jesus' crucifixion. Israel wrestling with God. It's God's love finding a way to use each side's failure as a means of Grace to the other. All are dying. All receive life only by the mercy and forgiveness embodied in Jesus, God with us!

## **The All-Encompassing God**

This is not easy. At our best we only see parts of it. God honors our freedom and calls us all to full humanity as true creatures of God, the image of God in his beautiful, complex world.

False paths are often simple attractive formulae. Reality – human, divine – is complicated.

But within it all there is a deep complex unity: God, Father-Son-Spirit. All is from God. God works in all pervasively. All moves toward God. That is our glory and hope and God's glory forever.