

## Merciful Ruler

Romans 9-11

### Review GT 1-4

Experiencing forgiveness and peace with God is amazing. It inspires us to be humble, thankful people. But we still carry around this fall-affected body, mind and soul. We're prone to being confused about who we really are. God knows this. That is why Jesus promised the Helper. God knows that we need help realizing and living according to our new identity in Christ. In fact, the Holy Spirit has been at work all along...bringing people to conviction about sin and pointing them to Jesus. At belief – God seals us with His Spirit (2 Cor 1:21-22, Eph 1:13-14) as a promise that we will be declared righteous. We are adopted in God's family – co-heirs with Christ. We go from spiritually dead (like a black hole) to having a spirit where the Holy Spirit dwells. So our body is now a temple. Jesus said a time will come where people will not need to go on a pilgrimage to worship in God's presence at the temple in Jerusalem. People will worship in spirit and truth everywhere. Because we are the spiritual house of God...especially when we gather like this. Amen? Does everyone here want more clarity about living for God? Do we want life and peace? Then live by Romans 8:6 –

*the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.*

### **GT #5 Spirit-Led** (Balloon: stages still full)

There's a famous passage in Romans 8, that leads to the next section of Paul's letter to the churches in Rome.

### **Read Romans 8:28**

Called according to God's purpose. God knows who will respond in faith to Him and He helps the process. God works for the good of those who love Him. He has great plans for them...what He has prepared far ahead (Eph 2:10). This moves us into an area of theology called God's Sovereignty. If you have such a mind that likes to put things in categories, we've moved from the theology of sin (trapped) in chapters 1-3, to salvation (rescued) in chapters 4-5, to sanctification (Living for God by His Spirit) in chapters 6-8. In chapters 9-11, Paul will show that the new covenant in Christ's blood is consistent with God's dealings with humanity: God rules with mercy. Yet people question God's rule and mercy. Like, why didn't He just make people obedient? It's heart-breaking when our loved ones refuse God's offer. Or when we attend a funeral for the lost.

What we find in chapter 9 to 11 is a testing of the Gospel. Paul is a Jew,

who aches deeply for His people. He has been facing accusations for 20 years...that God's new covenant leaves most of Israel perishing while favoring their historical enemies. It's seems unjust.

And more personally. Why am I saved, while others (people I love) refuse to believe?

These kinds of questions can haunt us if we let them. Film writers appeal to the masses...questioning God's integrity, justice and mercy. We shouldn't be surprised because the very first trespassers thought they knew better than God. It's the created questioning the Creator.

### **Prayer**

Paul reveals that even the most dedicated follower has sorrow and anguish at a heart level - when it comes to thinking about dear people cut off from Christ. Jesus wept too (Lk 19:41). Paul was willing to be cut off from God if it would save his people.

### **Read Rom 9:4-5.**

How does Paul begin to answer the big WHY?

### **Read 9:6**

Can't blame God's covenant with Israel...they broke their side. Paul holds up Scripture from the Torah, to prove God has been exercising choice to save people (not by works) all along. And it begins with the patriarchs. Did you know that the nation of Israel

began from 3 generations of miracle babies (v7-13)? Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all had barren wives. And to emphasize God's choice in the matter, the second born was chosen by God to carry the line of the Messiah and Israel. That's completely contrary to the human tradition! Is it fair for God not to choose the firstborn?

### **Read 9:14**

No one is righteous by their own merit. God is not obligated to choose anyone for mercy. Yet He does. Paul goes on to remind the Jewish skeptics that they benefited when God chose to harden His enemy, Pharaoh. God's name was proclaimed in all the earth. And the Egyptians were so happy to see the Israelite slaves go, they gave them the silver and gold they asked for (Ex 12:33vv).

Well, if God chooses who will receive His mercy and who will be hardened, why does He still hold us responsible (v19)? Paul sees this question as an insult to God. Like a piece of clay complaining about its purpose to the molder. I was reminded how prone we are to blame other when in trouble. Adam blamed God for the sin because He made the woman. Eve blamed the Serpent. God's cursed the Serpent, cursed all women because of Eve and then cursed the whole earth and all humanity because of Adam. Blaming

God, not good idea. Our existence depends on God's mercy (v17).

Paul gets back to the issue of God saving Gentiles while Jews perish in v23. He holds up as evidence, the prophesy of Hosea (1:10, 2:23) that the Gentiles will be loved and accepted as God's people (v25-26). Then immediately, he quotes Isaiah (1:9, 10:22,23, 13:19) which points out that God only promised to save a remnant of Israel (v27-29).

Paul voices the Jews protest in **v30-31 (Read)**. The Gentiles didn't pursue righteousness like us. How is it fair they are obtaining a right relationship with God in great numbers? Why isn't the nation of Israel finding righteousness?

### **Read 9:32**

Most are stumbling in their pursuit of righteousness. Because they are stubborn to try and earn it by the Law. They won't accept God's mercy. The Israel that are God's people, live to please God by faith. Jesus requires their humble acceptance by faith. He is the stumbling stone for all who fight to earn righteousness. But for us...

### **Read 1 Peter 2:4-5**

This whole issue of whether God is going back on His promise through the law comes to a head in **10:4 (Read)**. So, for Jew and Gentile salvation comes only one way.

### **Read 10:9-13**

And so, church, we come to a question of our responsibility in God's plan. Someone had objected to Paul. How can God hold us responsible when He's imposing His will on us (9:19)? If God did not give us choice and a way to participate in His saving action, this next passage would not be needed.

### **Read 10:14-15**

The Gospel was sent far and wide to the Jewish people. And many heard through Paul, who put his life in peril, preaching in their synagogues. They heard and understood the message (not in parables this time) and most rejected it. And Paul laments with Isaiah, the prophet (65:1-2)., "*All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people*" Rom 10:21

Did God give up (11:1)? Do we?

No. Look at God's choice for a missionary...Saul the Pharisee from the tribe of Benjamin (11:1). Even in the darkest hours, like when Elijah cried out against Israel, "Lord, they have killed your prophets, torn down your alters; I am the only one left." God reserved a remnant. Elijah was only a man. He didn't know seven thousand were living by faith, not bowing to the pressure to worship Baal. And Paul assures there are Jews living by faith in God's grace (11:5-6). The others are hardened by God in their unbelief (11:7-10).

In God's plan, the hardening of Israel is a benefit to the rest of the world.

## **Read 11:11-12**

It seems straight forward. Many people around the world have been gaining the riches of being rescued and adopted by God. This is to make Israel want the same. Paul hints that one day Israel's stumbling over faith in Jesus will end.

Paul turns his attention to the Gentiles with a concern that some of us might be taking our position in Christ for granted or scoff at the Jews. Paul shares that he has not given up on His people...that his efforts among the Gentiles will open some up to being rescued too (11:12).

In verse 16, Paul's Jewish background comes out. We must dig a little to understand.

## **Read 11:16**

God instituted an offering for Israel when they entered the Promise Land. Each year they were to offer the First Fruits of their harvest to show that all the crops belonged to God for God gave them the land (Num 15:17-21). The holy first fruits are the faithful patriarchs who God made the covenant with. The first being Abraham. Paul shifts to the idea of a holy root – but means the same thing. If the root is holy (patriarchs), so are the branches - those who come along later and carry on by pleasing God in faith. As Paul continues with this metaphor, keep in mind that the

branches broken off are those insisting on gaining righteousness by their own merits (hardened). The believing Gentiles are the wild olive tree. And the cultivated olive tree is Israel as a nation.

## **Read 11:17-23**

We are warned not to consider ourselves superior to unbelieving Israel. I don't think we are to consider ourselves superior to anyone. In sharing the Gospel, we're just one beggar telling another beggar where the food is. We know by God's grace. Besides, we are obligated to Israel. Salvation is from the Jews (Jn 4:22). And one day Israel will come to its glory as a nation (Zech 12-13).

## **Read 11:25b-26a**

In Luke 21:24, we find Jesus promised that *Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled*. Paul combines several scriptures in Isaiah and Jeremiah to say salvation for Israel is coming (Is 59:20-21 also Is 60).

## **Read 11:28-31**

After thousands of years of existence, many Gentiles who were enemies of God, have been softened to repent and believe Jesus as Savior. This is the present time. Only a remnant of Israel are believing.

I want to give you a little idea what it's like to be a believing Jew in Jerusalem.

Zvi Kalisher was a Holocaust survivor and lived till 2014.

**Read Israel My Glory Magazine  
Nov/Dec 2017 p42**

In the end, Israel (who has been disobedient for thousands of years) will have a great revival. Which Israel? All descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob living at that time. And it will be through faith in the Redeemer, Jesus. Finally, Paul unveils a principle for God's rule that brings Him glory.

**Read 11:32**

*For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.*

If you haven't read this whole section, please do...it's such a glorious ending.

It is God's sovereign choice, that He gives believers direction and empowers us to obey Him. We don't have this typical slave-master relationship. We don't get jabbed and whipped from behind...forced into service with threats. Our Master leads us with kindness by example. Do you remember what name Jesus gave His disciples on the night He was betrayed? God incarnate called His disciples...friends. Earlier Jesus had called them brothers, sisters and mothers...His true family. And what does God want us to call Him? Abba,

Father (Rom 8:15). Keep trusting God daily...choosing to be led by His Spirit. The world thinks living for Christ is foolishness and narrow-minded. So, if we're true to God...we're going to be considered different, odd, Jesus freak, Bible thumper...whatever.

And that's exactly what the world needs to see. People set apart for God. The suffering we go through because of Christ (and life's troubles) is on display. The world watches: Does she still have hope, truth and love? If we let the world shape our thinking the Gospel becomes an insurance policy...only for when you die. That's a false gospel.

So how do we live for God in private, in public and with fellow believers? The simple answer is...led by His Spirit. And the Spirit works with God's word. There's an old song: 'Read your Bible, pray every day and you'll grow, grow, grow'. It matters what we put into our mind and how we communicate with God.

We're going to get very practical from chapter 12 on. And I'm not going to race through it. Paul is going to lay out for us how to live for God inside and outside the church. And so 'Unpacking the Gospel' moves to 'Living out the Gospel'. And we can trust our merciful Ruler all the way.