

# “The Mercy of God – The God of Mercy”

Rev. Hobie Wood

**Series:** *Romans*

**Bible Text:** Romans 11:25-36

**Preached on:** March 08, 2026

## **Christ Presbyterian Church**

Physical Address: 801 Roper Dr. Clarkesville, GA 30523

**Website:** [www.cpcclarkesville.org](http://www.cpcclarkesville.org)

**Online Sermons:** [www.cpcclarkesville.org/sermons](http://www.cpcclarkesville.org/sermons)

If you have a Bible, you can be making your way to Romans chapter 11 and we're in verses 25 through 36. We are finishing one of the more difficult sections of the letter to the Romans today. We're in the end of chapter 11, and if you were here last week, Paul used an incredibly helpful metaphor as we think about the relationship between Gentiles and Jewish people and the kingdom of God. If you recall, he said, Israel is an olive tree. That's Old Testament language. He also said that in this period of time, because of unbelief in Christ the Messiah, some of those branches were broken off of the olive tree and that we're a bunch of wild olive branches that somehow got grafted on, which means that God is making this whole new people, whole new olive tree that's made up of, yeah, believing Jewish people and believing Gentiles, people like us. In today's passage, we started that thought last week. We're going to finish the thought this week, and he's going to tell us more about Israel, Gentiles, mercy, and even worship. So let's read and remember this is God's word.

*25 Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers. A partial hardening has come upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in,  
26 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,  
27 and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.  
28 As regards the gospel, they are enemies of God for your sake, but as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers,  
29 for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.  
30 Just as you were at one time disobedient to God, but now have received mercy because of their disobedience,  
31 so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you, they also may now receive mercy.  
32 For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.  
33 O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways,  
34 for who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor,  
35 or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid,*

*36 for from him and through him and to him are all things, to him be glory forever, amen.*

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Would you pray with me?

*Lord, we want worship like that to flow out of our hearts. Thank you that our emotions are tied to our brains. So as we look now at your word, would you give us right understanding? Would you teach us, Holy Spirit, the truth, help us to understand? And would you let us, O Lord, would you let us worship you? Because of your great mercy to us, because of your great mercy to the nations? We pray that you would help us now as we look at your word in Christ's name, amen.*

Over the course of the past, probably five to ten years, there is a question that I as a pastor get more often, and probably for a variety of reasons. I got it last week from someone who doesn't go to our church, has no idea that we're in the middle of a section on Romans 11. It was just they know I'm a pastor, so they asked, hey, what are we supposed to think about Israel? You may have had that question. What are we supposed to do about Israel? And there's a lot behind that question. I mean, we're in the middle of a, strangely enough, we're in the middle of a week when our country is joined with that current version of nation and are involved in military action. And honestly, Christians can just get really confused as to what are we supposed to think about this. Are we for them? Are we against them? Are they friends? Are they enemies? And, depending on who you ask, you might get any number of answers to that question.

I imagine there are some folks, you could ask that question, and they'll say, let me tell you. And they are going to back the prophecy truck up to your doorstep and unload it. It's this prophecy, it's about this, and this is why we have to have all of these different perspectives and opinions. You get that on one side.

And then on the other side, you might get somebody who professes to be a Christian that would say, Israel, what, what are you even talking about? Why are we even mentioning them and everything in between?

It's an old question, actually. Clearly it has to do not so much with geopolitical movements and politics, but for us, it's a question of how do we interpret the Bible? And it is an old question, as old as the New Testament and really as old as the Old Testament. And to be clear, I'm not going to answer all of your geopolitical questions about how you should think about the nation of Israel today, okay? Tune in to the podcast for that answer. I'm just kidding. I don't have a podcast. I wouldn't know what to do with that. We are going to see Paul answer a question about Israel that actually really helps us go broader than just the geopolitical state of Israel. We're going to ask the question here about, what about ethnic national Jewish people? And what we're going to see is the question about the Jew Gentile distinction transcends the Jew Gentile distinction. This is a question that really has to do with God. It has to do about the mercy of God and the judgment of God. And in this passage, Paul pushes us past just questions about Israel to make it clear that the only hope for an Israelite and the only hope for a Gentile and the only hope for an American in the 21st century even, the only hope for any of us is the mercy of God.

So, two points. Let's talk about the global need for the mercy of God. And then let's talk about the global worship of the God of mercy, two points.

So, the global need for the mercy of God.

You might recall Paul speaking to a Gentile crowd here. He said it back in verse 13. He reiterates it here in verse 25. And don't forget what that means. He's speaking to Romans. Yes, they're now Christians, but think of what they were before. Before they were Romans who are polytheists, who live in a culture that is more brutal than any of us could possibly ever imagine. That's what they were before they became Christians. The brothers that he's speaking to in verse 25, now that they're Christians, they might be tempted to be wise in their own conceits, he says. They might forget that they were grafted branches into the olive tree. We saw this last week that they could be prone to pride, and they could forget that they got into this whole thing by grace.

Think about being a Roman citizen. You're part of, at that point, the greatest empire that's ever graced the face of the earth. And they might really think, yeah, God's really lucky to have us on his team. So pride is never far away. And to these Gentiles, he's reminding them, actually, you're in this thing because of the mercy of God. And let me explain a mystery to you. That's what he says in verse 25. I want you to understand a mystery which Paul only knows this mystery because God made it known to him and others. And here's the mystery.

*A partial hardening has come upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.*

So this period of unbelief in Israel, the net result of it is that a whole bunch of Gentiles are going to come into the kingdom of God. He says it similarly in verses 30 and 31, that the Gentiles once in history, Old Testament history specifically, they were disobedient to God. They didn't have any interest in the covenant. They didn't have any interest in coming into the kingdom. They've only received mercy now because Jewish people largely did not receive the Messiah at the coming of Jesus.

Remember, this is how it worked with the apostles. We talked about this last week that Paul would preach to the Jewish people in a synagogue. And at some point along the way, they just kept not just not believing, but trying to kill him so that he finally said, I'm going to the Gentiles. And the net result is that the gospel got pushed out to the nations. Their unbelief caused the gospel to spread to the nations. And Paul's telling, if you're a Gentile, you've received mercy because of their disobedience. You have to understand that.

But the theme behind the past few chapters is that God is also going to extend mercy to ethnic, national Jewish people as well. He has, they're in a partial hardening, but he hasn't rejected them forever. It's a temporary hardening and it's a partial hardening. It's partial because Paul's a Jewish person who's believed the gospel and it's temporary meaning it's not going to last forever.

And a key question here is, is this, what does Paul mean when he says, in this way? Verse 26, all Israel will be saved.

I'm just going to tell you, this is a hard one. There are, in our theological camp, there are three options that are usually held. And I'm going to tell you all three options and you're just going to have to kind of figure it out because I don't even have a leaning, which I normally would just tell you what I think it is. But I'm just going to tell you the three options.

Here's one. One version says, Paul is saying that in the future, before Christ returns, there will be a mass salvation of ethnic national Jewish people before the return of Christ. Not universal, but in as much as they en masse rejected the Messiah, there'll be a period in the future when they en masse except the Messiah by faith. So that's one version. A lot of folks would say that's what he's saying.

Another option is that Paul means all Israel, all elect, Israel, all the people who God is going to save from the ethnic group. It's still most likely a remnant population, not a large end gathering. So that's an option.

The third option is that Paul is using the word Israel like he does in the book of Galatians, the Israel of God, which is all of the people of God for all time and space, including ethnic national Jewish people and Gentile people who are constituted as the new Israel of God by faith in Jesus.

There are merits to each view, and some of them have more merit than others, but there's merits to each view. It's not obvious to me from the text or context. If I had a leaning, I would say it seems like the elect number of Jews or Israel as a whole. That was Calvin's view, and I feel like to go against Calvin is putting me on weird ground. But anyway, scholars are pretty divided on it. I do hope that there's a large end gathering of ethnic national Jewish people before Christ returns. I think that every Christian should hope for that. Why wouldn't we hope for that? What a great thing that would be.

The point remains, regardless of which position you take, God is going to save Gentiles, yes, and he's going to save a bunch of Jewish people too.

That's the point of the Old Testament quote, the Deliverer is Christ, and he's going to come from Zion, he's an Israelite, and he's going to banish ungodliness from Jacob, and he's going to make a covenant where he takes away the sins of people. That's true for Gentiles, and that's true for Jewish people.

Paul acknowledges though in verse 28 that at their moment, ethnic national Jewish people are enemies of God for their sake. Now why would he say that? It's because the charge of persecution is beginning with Jewish people in this particular era and time. They are those who tend to persecute and oppose Christians in the first century, and Paul knew that. He was one of them. He held their coats while they killed Stephen. He knows what he's talking about, and yet what he's saying here is that, yeah, they're enemies against you right now, persecuting you, but

they're not enemies forever. They are beloved for the sake of the forefathers as it regards election. God made promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and he's going to bless the nations through their family, and he's going to save Israelites too.

In either way, Gentiles cannot just discard and cast away Jewish people forever because God doesn't cast away and disregard Jewish people forever. Many will be in the kingdom of God by faith because the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable, as he says in verse 29.

Imagine being told by God Himself, the people who are currently murdering you, a lot of them one day are going to be in the kingdom with you. Imagine having to let that sit for a minute. Whatever the number of Jewish believers in verse 31, it's by the mercy shown to Gentiles that they're going to receive mercy. In other words, the gospel is going to go forward, and many of them are going to believe. Gentiles used to disobey, and Jews receive mercy, and now Jews are disobeying, and Gentiles are receiving mercy, but he's saying that Gentiles receiving mercy is actually going to backfill into Jewish people, and many of them are going to believe as well. All of this is driving toward what Paul says in verse 32. Everybody's been disobedient. Jewish people were disobedient, Gentiles are disobedient.

*God has consigned all to disobedience so that he can show mercy on all.*

Not in a universalist sort of way. He's not saying all people without exception. He's talking about all types of people that after the fall into sin, whether you're Jewish or Roman or American, it doesn't matter. Everybody is disobedient, and your only hope is the mercy of God. And that's still true. Whether you're ethnically Jewish, or you're ethnically white, or you're black, or you're Hispanic, or you're German, or you're Scotts Irish, whether you're a redneck, or some sort of cosmopolitan yuppie, or some sort of sports jersey wearer in public, or non-sports jersey wearer in public, dog person, cat person, person that doesn't like pets, doesn't matter.

Everybody is in need of the exact same thing, and it's to receive the mercy of God.

That's why he says in verse 25 that he doesn't want us to be wise in our own conceits. Because here's the thing that will keep you from the mercy of God. Pride. Arrogance. It keeps us from experiencing the mercy of God.

It's pride that makes us think that I'm better than I actually am, and that other people are actually worse than they are.

It's pride that keeps me from understanding my own disobedience, but we need the mercy of God.

Can you see that about yourself?

Can you see that in your own story?

Did you know that you needed your sins taken away, both the penalty for them and the power of them?

So it's not just pride and whatever fruit it manifests in your life, but it's pride and the fruit and the lure of it and the deception and the lies that I believed and the wrath of God for it. I need all of that taken away and that it's the mercy of God to take it away.

Can you, let me say it this way, can you recognize yourself among the needy of humanity?

Who do you think is the needy?

Are they your people?

Can you see yourself among them?

We have to get there. We don't have a leg up. We need mercy. That's so contrary to our classic Southern American mentality. We love being self-sufficient. We live in a culture with plenty of folks who are on the Hank Williams Jr. side of things. Country boy can survive. I will take care of my needs. I'll take care of myself. And we just hate feeling like we're not strong. And we live in a world that likes to say, here's what you need to believe about yourself. In and of yourself, you are strong, unique, special, and you're enough. That's the message that goes through your ears in some form or another every day. But if the reality of our sin is actually real, we are all actually weak like everyone else, enslaved to sin, and certainly not enough. It's hard to get there.

We can also be a little bit tribal. We might like hearing Paul say of any group, a partial hardening has come upon them so that you and your people can come in. We might like that. We might hear that and say, that sounds about right. I know those people. They had that coming. And it can be not just Jewish people. That can be for anything, any ethnicity, any socioeconomic status, any family. Yeah, that sounds about right. They're probably hardened and we're probably coming in.

Here's the heart test. What if God came to you and said about a group of people that you genuinely do not like and you know who that is, whoever it is. What if he came to you and he said about those people, I'm cutting them off and I'm bringing you in? What would be the response from the heart? Would you think, yeah, they had it coming and I'm not surprised? Would there be a shred of that? That's evidence of what he's calling being wise in our own conceit. And unfortunately, as he said last week, that's an arrogance that leads to hardening that could lead to even us being cut off. Paul says, look at these people who were the chosen people. They had it all. They had every promise. They had all of the covenantal promises. They had the patriarchs. They had everything and they refused to believe and now they're hardened. It can happen to anyone. Don't forget that you need his mercy. Don't forget that you're not strong. Don't forget that you can't handle yourself. Don't forget that you're among the needy of society.

See when we read about God's purposes for Israel and the Gentiles, it has to bring us to humility and gratitude that we belong to a God who is really, really merciful and that we belong to the one person who was strong, unique, special, and enough. And that's Jesus. We're united to him. That will make us generous and compassionate toward the people who are against us.

Shifting gears here. Can you recognize that you have enemies now in regards to the gospel? Can you see them? And is it possible that the people who oppose you the most could be among your brothers and sisters in the end? Do we have that category that Paul gives us here? Maybe we don't think of it in terms of Jew Gentile as much as they would have, but it's still true. There are people who are actively persecuting Christians who may at some point end up becoming Christians themselves. This actually happens on a week-to-week basis, especially in other parts of the world. Our world is full of people who hate Christ and they hate his followers and they want to kill them. And to their great surprise, sometimes through the suffering of another Christian, they find themselves believing the very gospel that they were persecuting.

Do we have a category for that?

How could it change the way you think about your enemies if you knew that they were going to end up your brothers and sisters?

How would it change the way today that you interact with them if tomorrow you were going to be in the same family?

That's a hard question because we have to leave room for the justice of God. He is clear about what he'll do with those who continue to persecute and harm his people. But for us, what would we do today if we knew that tomorrow they will believe and be one of us?

This is the plot of any number of children's movies where the villain that you hate in the beginning is won over to the good side in the end. I think that it's why we've watched the Grinch movie one billion times. This Christmas season alone, and apparently we're still watching it even though it's the month of March. We had to make a rule. We hate the Grinch until he changes and his heart changes because of the mercy of the little girl.

What would you do today if you knew that God was going to show mercy to your enemies tomorrow? The global need for the mercy of God stands. What happens when it's received? What happens when lots of sinful people like us actually believe the gospel, receive the mercy of God? What happens?

Let's talk second here about the global worship of the God of mercy.

Second point, 11 chapters, 11 chapters of some of the hardest, deepest, most robust theology in the entire Bible. If you've been here for the past year and a half or so, you know it. We have not been in the shallow end of the pool in the book of Romans. It's gotten deep. Here Paul, at

the very end of that, bursts forth in praise and adoration. Think about everything he's talked about so far.

He's talked about the intensity of our sinfulness and depravity and that even our brains don't think like they're supposed to because even the way we think is all twisted up because of the fall into sin, the trees rot and your house falls down and your heart produces bad things.

He's talked about depravity and he's pointed to the righteousness from God that comes through Jesus Christ, and that we can be united to Jesus in such a way that we who didn't have a standing with him can have a standing with him and that we who were going to be judged are now accepted.

He's talked about how from that place of union with Christ, we're a new creation fighting off an old nature and that we can actually take the war to indwelling sin and that we have all this reason to persevere and to hope for the glory to come and that there's nothing that can separate you from the love of God in Jesus Christ if you're his. Nothing. Nothing in creation.

And he's told us that this salvation was 100% God's doing and that we are 100% responsible for our relationship to him.

He's told us that God isn't done with Jewish people. Old Testament promises find their fulfillment in Jesus and the promises expand to include Gentiles and God is merciful to all kinds of people.

*Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways.*

If you've been with us, you might get it. The wisdom and knowledge of God is more than we can take in. It's more than we can understand. He has it all. He knows it all. And with everything that he knows, he always does what is right. So he doesn't just know all things. He knows all things perfectly and he does all things rightly because of his knowledge. And his judgments are unsearchable. You can't figure him out. His ways are inscrutable. That's not a word we use often. It means you can't fully interpret him. You can't fully understand what he's doing. There's some mystery and we've said this throughout this study that this book reminds us that God is God and we are not. And we just can't get him fully. And in our creatureliness, we have to get to this place where we bow and we worship. And we call him God and we give him glory. It doesn't mean that we stop trying to learn more about him in his ways. Of course not.

It means that you're coming to a fountain that's not going to run dry. And we've needed one of those.

It means you're coming to a subject of which you will never lose interest. You're coming to a book that you're never going to finish reading and it's a good book. You're listening to a song that is never going to get old, ever.

Paul exalts the knowledge of God and that puts our knowledge in perspective. Look at 34 and 35. *Who's known the mind of the Lord or been his counselor? Who's given a gift to him that he might be repaid?* The answer to those hypothetical questions is no one, no one. Our knowledge is lacking. Our ability is lacking. We don't know the mind of the Lord. We can only know what he reveals and then think about it this way. You can only know what he reveals in his word and even then we have to have the help of God the Spirit to understand what we're reading. And sometimes we wrestle through that.

I just gave you three options of something because I don't know what it means. There's three different good options. Not to mention someone who doesn't have the Spirit, who might read the same passage and have no idea what we're talking about. God knows everything. We know so little.

No one's ever been his counselor, his advisor.

We never tell him something he doesn't know.

He never uses us to gather information so he can make a really educated decision.

He doesn't operate that way. And there's no gift that you could ever give him that would even make a dent in repaying everything that he's given to you.

I remember being a kid and maybe this happened in your family, but I remember being a kid and at some level, it's kind of that moment when consciousness starts happening. Maybe it was last year. I don't know. Maybe I wasn't a kid, but I started to realize, oh, wait a minute, they spend their money on me. They have to feed me and they have to spend money to clothe me. And oh no, everything that I have, I didn't pay for any of it. I don't even have a job and just the realization that, oh, and I think what I did was I came up with this plot to, well, maybe I can start repaying them. And if I ever voice that to them, I'm sure they first laughed and second said something like, that is not how it works. You don't repay your parents.

How could a creature possibly repay the creator for creating him or her, for giving every breath of life, every ray of sunshine, every morsel of food, every thread of clothing. And this doesn't even mention taking the hit so that we could be rescued from hell and justice and death. He knows everything. We know little. He does everything. We do very little.

And that leads to verse 36. All things are from him, meaning God is the source of every single thing that exists in all of the created order. It comes from him and it comes from his mind and he spoke it into existence and through his providence, he gives good gifts to us, everything. He's the source. It comes from him and all things that we receive are through him, through our union with God, the Son himself, the Lord Jesus. All things are to him, which is to say, he gets glory, all of it. He gets all glory.

If you have tasted the mercy of God in your life through the gospel of his Son, the Lord Jesus, this expression of praise becomes the cry of your heart at some level, yes, some days higher than others, right, of course, but because you know. He gets glory and us giving him glory is our great delight because everything that we have is from him, through him, and all glory is to him. This is our eternal vocation.

I remember somebody when I was a kid telling me that what we're going to do for eternity is worship and I thought, oh boy, I don't know about that. Like we're going to sing a lot, is that what we're doing? To worship God is what we will delight to do forever, and whatever else we're doing in the new heavens and the new earth, and there's good reason to think that there's dirt there that needs to be messed with, and there's good work without sin which we can't contemplate for us to do, and we could talk about that, different sermon. Whatever else we're doing, and with all the people of God and the joyousness of being with his people, we're going to worship God and it won't get boring. We're going to worship God and it will never stop being fun, and we won't get tired of doing it, and that's because everything that makes us bored with God or tired of serving him, or wanting to find something else that's more interesting than him, all of those impulses, the little cancerous pockets of our heart will be gone. They'll be dead, and we will be fully alive, which is why it's right for us to look forward to that with great joy. It's right for us to be heavenly minded, because that's what we're headed to.

You might be here and you read these words from Paul and your heart doesn't leap. The first thing to do is to make sure that you are actually in Christ, in other words, that you are a Christian that you believe. This whole, you're going to worship God for all eternity, won't make any sense to you, and it certainly won't look hopeful if you're not yet a Christian. If you haven't known your need for the mercy of God and received his mercy, you're not going to be awed by him in his glory. If you don't know him as your rescuer in Christ and your father by adoption, worship might actually seem ridiculous or boring or whatever.

And to you, I would say it's a good day to consider the gospel, read the gospel accounts, look at Jesus, look at the only person who was ever perfect, and look at how he went and he experienced an unjust death at the hands of sinful people in place of somebody like you and me. And then read about how God raised him from the dead on the third day and they saw him, they ate fish on the beach with him, they talked to him. Thomas touched the hands, touched the scars, and then they watched him in bodily form ascend back to the Father with the promise that he would come again in the same way that he left and he would bring in new heavens and new earth with him. That's what you should do. Go spend time looking at that gospel message and believe. We'd love to talk to you more about that if you haven't believed.

And you might be here and you are a Christian and you're worried because your heart doesn't leap when you read these verses either. What do you do? Same thing that I told myself this week. Ask the Lord for fresh eyes and a tender heart. Ask Him to help you see what's actually true rather than whatever else is cramming into your brain or into your eyes right now. When worship seems boring or mundane or uninteresting, guess where the problem lies? Not with the one who deserves worship. The problem lies with the worshiper. We're the ones that need the

change. So ask Him to do that. Ask Him to help you understand your need for mercy and His glory.

This is intended to be experiential. We're not brains on a stick. We're intended to know the love of God for us and love Him in return and to feel that at some level. And let me say, there's no cookie cutter template for emotions. Everybody's made differently. Some of you cry every time you hear Sarah McLaughlin on the humane society commercial talking about the dogs and cats that need adopting and you weep openly. I stand in awe. Others of you are twice a year, your eyes start raining and you wonder, what is this salty discharge that I'm experiencing from my eyes right now? What are emotions?

We're whole people. I'm not going to tell you which side of that I'm on. We have an intellect and emotions and both are to be engaged in the worship of God. Ask Him for help and get yourself in front of His word. The brain is tied to the heart. We have to see and hear and think about what's true and trust that the Lord will inflame that in our hearts.

The need for every nation, the need for our globe, our world is to receive the mercy of God. And thankfully we have a God who gives mercy to the nations. He does it. The right response to those who receive the mercy of God is to worship. It's what we'll do forever and you may know this already, but Paul is about to switch gears entirely and start telling us, and here's how to live the Christian life. That's the rest of the book. We'll talk about it over the coming weeks. But before we even get to what we're supposed to do for the Lord, we get to marvel at what the Lord has done for us and we get to rejoice in everything that He's done in the gospel and we get to pause and express glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit now and forever, world without end, amen. Would you pray with me?

*Lord help us bow the knee, keep us from being wise in our own conceits, keep us from disobedience. Help us to rejoice in your mercy to us and the Lord Jesus. Help us to receive your mercy. Help us to be gracious to even those who want to kill us. Help us to trust all justice to you, O Lord. Help us to speak the truth to everyone who will hear it. And would you grant us, O Lord, the ability to marvel at what you've done in the gospel and to worship you and to be glad and to know that one day with whole hearts, whole brains, whole bodies, everything made new, we will spend our days drinking from the fountain that never runs dry. Give us great hope for that day and encourage us and help us persevere as we wait and try to be faithful to you. We ask Jesus in your name, amen.*

\*\*Portion of scripture read before sermon—Isaiah 59:15-21