

An Incomprehensible God – Romans 11:28-36

Bible Study ~ 9/21/16
Grace Church of Lockeford

Paul is wrapping up his thoughts on the nation of Israel and his desire for their salvation. He has just said that blindness happened to Israel until the time of the Gentiles is fulfilled. But he wants his readers to understand that this blindness is incomplete and temporary. **As he does this he reveals that our God is...**

1. Incomprehensibly Sovereign vv. 28-32

V. 28. So at this present time they function as enemies because of the Gospel. They stumble over the stumbling stone of Christ crucified. Yet Paul wants to remind his readers that this doesn't mean they have been rejected by God. When it comes to God's choosing, when it comes to election, they are beloved. The idea is that while God has a program for Israel, and while that program predates the coming of Christ and the offer of salvation through Him to the Gentiles, at this present time something unprecedented and somewhat unforeseen is taking place. God has not aborted His plan for Israel. God is going to return to His program in the future. The Church is like a parenthesis in that plan. A pause or time-out so to speak. The reason this is true is given in v. 29. This is the reason why God cannot end His program with Israel. This is why the Church absolutely cannot replace Israel! God's gifts and calling cannot be revoked! "Irrevocable" is the idea of not regretting something. It shows no desire for things to have turned out differently. God's plan has not changed and He has not revoked His calling of Israel as His covenant people! God's gifts and calling cannot be changed. So what is going on with Israel? You'd have to read Romans 9-11 to get the answer. But in a nutshell, God is using His salvation of the Gentiles to inspire jealousy in the Jews that they might be prepared to receive Him at His return! Paul presents the tradeoff that is taking place in vv. 30-31.

Because the Israelite nation rejected Christ, we are now grafted into this whole plan of God. Though we were disobedient we received mercy as the Jews were disobedient. Yet, in the same way, they will obtain mercy, though disobedient, through the same mercy shown to believers. The same mercy that has included us will be extended to Israel. We can be sure God will keep His promises to us because He is going to keep His promises to Israel. That is the point of Rom. 9-11. This idea of God's mercy being extended is stated more clearly in v. 32. All were disobedient. This has already been expressed. Both Jew and Gentile were disobedient and so God will have mercy on both Jew and Gentile. There is coming a day when the Israelite nation will understand who Christ is! "Israel's disobedience is preparing them to be ready and willing to receive mercy when God again turns to them in the Tribulation period that completes Daniel's 70th week prophecy (9:24-27; cf. Rom 9:26). Hence, at the end God levels the playing field, having committed Jew and Gentiles (i.e., them all) to disobedience so that mercy can come equally to all."¹ The sovereignty of God is incomprehensible! His plan included the rejection of Christ by Israel and the grafting in of believers. It also includes the eventual return of Israel to Him! What a blessing it is to know that God knows the end from the beginning and works all these things together according to His will and for His glory! We cannot hope to wrap our minds around our God. And I am thankful for that! **He is...**

2. Incomprehensibly Omniscient vv. 33-36

Paul's contemplation of God's incredible plan inspires him to praise in v. 33. What more is there to say? His wisdom and knowledge are rich in their depth. His judgments are unsearchable; His ways are beyond discovery. Rich – *wealth; abundance*. God's wisdom and knowledge are overwhelmingly abundant. Unsearchable – *unfathomable; marked by being impossible to find or discover the depths or the end of; therefore, incomprehensible*. The scope of all God is and does is beyond our ability to grasp! "Past finding out" is a Greek word only slightly different than unsearchable. The idea is that we cannot

¹ René A. López, "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans," in *The Grace New Testament Commentary*, ed. Robert N. Wilkin (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2010), 686.

even follow or comprehend the ways of the Lord. Ways – *road, path, a course of conduct*. Omniscience means that God knows everything. The superiority and vastness of all that God knows is beyond our ability to grasp. There is so much we don't know that we can't even put a name to it! We cannot even comprehend the magnitude of what we do not know! And so in vv. 34-35, Paul quotes the OT to demonstrate that our inability to comprehend God is not a new phenomenon. These questions have an implied answer. Has anyone ever known the mind of the Lord, counseled Him, been owed something by God? Of course not! God has no need for someone to advise Him! There has never been a person who could grasp His reasoning. God has never asked someone for a loan! He owes no man anything seeing He gives to all life, breath, and all things! This is our God! We cannot wrap our head around Him! And that is fitting because of v. 36.

“Of” is a preposition of source. This means that God is the source of all things. Not only is He the source of all things, all things came “through” Him. This means that He is the means. Everything exists because of Him. So He is the source and means. He did not use pre-existent material, He created everything from nothing. “To” is a preposition of direction. So this deals with purpose. He is the source, means, and purpose of all things! All things were created for His glory! And all things will be to His glory forever! All things were made by Him, all things were made through Him, and all things are designed for Him and His glory! We cannot wrap our minds around Him because He made us and our minds! We are limited, He is not. What a blessing to know that He knows everything.

CHALLENGE: Don't seek to give the Lord council or direction. Instead, walk in obedience.