

“Future Mercy”

Romans 11:28-32

We are coming toward the close of the doctrinal section of Romans and approach the great Doxology – which stands like the “lonely mountain” in the Hobbit. But that is a mountain above all mountains as we will see.

What is Paul saying here?

Well he is speaking still about Jews and Gentiles.

In verses 30-31, the Gentiles to whom Paul writes are the once disobedient and not obedient ones, and the Jews are disobedient and they are hoped to be shown mercy in the future. And in verse 28, Paul is speaking of Jews presently and Jews future.

The last verse – verse 32, ties it all together. God has shut or closed up all peoples in disobedience. Paul speaks of all Jewish people as a people, and all Gentile people, ethnically. The word “bound” is a good rendering here, for Paul speaks of all being put in a prison as God speaks to all the nations.

It is “mercy” that shines as the star of this passage. These five verses are the five fingers of God’s hand reaching out to us all.

Two points then: The God of mercy in 28-29; and the mercy of God the last three verses.

Point One: The God of mercy says, **The Best Days for Israel are ahead and not behind** – 28-29.

1. Israel’s best days are certainly not in the OT. Reread Romans 9.
2. Israel’s condition as THE covenant people of God are over when they are cast out of the kingdom at the first coming of Christ.
3. Israel does not deserve a great future. But because of mercy from God, their future is glorious for they are beloved in the future. Presently they

are enemies; being so means the Gentiles come into the gospel. But they shall not always be so.

What a picture!

God chose Israel, chose Jerusalem. The nations of the world were to come to there to Kingdom Central! But when the Deliverer arrived, they cast themselves out when they cast him out! And the gospel now carries the kingdom outward from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria, to all the world. The Jerusalem below – ethnic Israel – wherever they are scattered or located – is an enemy to God, and God is presently their enemy.

But God has a purpose for them beyond the present trickle and remnant brought in during these new covenant days. God's choice by mercy has a great number of Jews yet to be saved. The best days for them as a people are before us. If their stumbling is reconciliation to the Gentiles by mercy, their fulfillment, their acceptance will be life from the dead! What a glorious turn around from the grave of unbelief and self-righteousness – reversed in gospel faith and exalting their most glorious family member – Jesus!

Three things then:

1. While presently, as a people, they are gospel-despisers, that is to change. They are beloved in God's election and purpose corporately.
2. Their whole career – in unbelief and in their return – is filled with the blessedness of God, being loved of God. Their being gospel enemies and broken off brings Gentiles in. This is what Paul means by enemies of the gospel because of you, on account of you, for the nations are brought in. But that will change:
 - a. Because of, or for the sake of the fathers. The promise to Abraham to be a father of a great host from everyone except his own natural family? That seems off. Seems impossible!
 - b. Then the gifts of God are irreversible, not repented of. What are those gifts? Paul outlined them back in 9:4-5. These items are their heritage

as the natural branch broken off. There will always be Jewish converts to the cross who will remind them of their heritage. And they are a sign of a coming great day for the Jews coming to Jesus.

- c. Then the calling of God is steadfast. He has not withdrawn his call of gospel grace to them. Recall the words of the last verse in chapter 10 (read). “ALL DAY LONG!” The Lord’s longsuffering and patience is to be marveled at in fleshly Israel when they are made part of the church in great numbers. Imagine – the Jews to be called a Christian people! How? Not by might, not by the sword or persecution, not by manipulation or the wisdom or cleverness of men – but by my Spirit, says the Lord.

A couple quick lessons before moving on:

1. Make no mistake – to be a rejecter of the gospel equals being God’s enemy, no matter what. God does not cut you a break based on your DNA. What matters your skin color if God is your enemy? What does anything matter really?
2. The gospel is about becoming friends with God. That is what Abraham was called!
"Did You not, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel and give it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever? (2 Chronicles 20:7) And “But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, descendant of Abraham My friend... (Isaiah 41:8); and one more: “and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God. (James 2:23)
3. All of God’s people – though beloved from before the world was made – are truly enemies of God personally before they are converted and forgiven of their sins. The sins of the elect are no different than those of the reprobate. Abraham was an idolater before he became God’s friend.

Now we come to point number two: **How Israel is blessed by the mercy of God** – vv 30-32

The Gentiles are not mere spectators. They are intimately connected to this all, as before. How so?

1. First, we know what it is like to go from being disobedient to God – blind to our awful condition, and then for God to show mercy. You have a vantage point the Jewish people do not have.
2. Second, you have your mercy in part because they became disobedient. You are able to see their defection for what it is. You are grafted in where they were broken off! Now you are welcomed into Abraham's family, his arms, his bosom!
3. Third, you have an obligation to the Jews in 31. The Jews were called to evangelize the world. But now you have been shown mercy. Notice, it does not say in verse 30, that as you once had been disobedient you have now become obedient – no; you have been shown mercy. So, if you have been shown mercy as a disobedient people, you are to show mercy to the Jewish people. You are to show them the gospel.

Paul puts an exclamation mark, or a great bow on these gifts, in 32.

All peoples, Jews and Gentiles, have been disobedient, enemies of God; *all* have sinned and fallen short; *all* the world has become guilty; in Adam, *all* die. As God put all the world on lockdown; it is God alone who has mercy on *all* the nations, especially the Jews. God's hand, not ours!

God's shutting us up in disobedience is part of his merciful plan. He does not say, *shut out* by disobedience, but *shut up* in disobedience. It is the Bible's best effort to bring you face to face with your disobedience. Often it is when the iron door is closed, the cold bars staring you in the face, that the Lord uses that to wake you up!

This brings us at the last to the star word here – “MERCY”. This word is seen four times, but really signaled back in the gospel and the election of mercy in 28; and the gifts and the calling of mercy, 29.

Mercy was an offensive idea in Rome. It was not a virtue but a weakness. Courage? Yes. Justice? Yes. Discipline? Power? Glory? YYY. But mercy? One philosopher called it a *disease* of the soul!

Thank God for the Bible influencing western culture more than Roman ideology which looked more like a Nazi regime than a civilized kingdom.

Mercy, like Grace, is central not only to the gospel, but to God himself. Grace gives us what we don’t deserve, what we cannot deserve. Mercy rescues us from what we do deserve, what we certainly deserve.

Several Greek words are so translated – which have the ideas of compassion, gentleness to the needy, and of deep pity bubbling up for the lost. But the most usual word is stronger than emotion and is emotion turned into action. It is compassion with arms, which turns the noun into a verb. Eleos – mercy, not only feels the needs of others, but feels their needs with one’s wallet or purse!

We saw this term in Romans 9:15, 16, and 18 – great mercy, elective mercy, powerful mercy. Calvin said ‘when we come to election, we see nothing but mercy on every side.’

2 Corinthians 1 says God is the God of all comfort in all our distress and afflictions, because he is the Father of mercy.

Mercy to the poor, mercy to the sick, mercy to the dying, mercy to the trapped, mercy to the imprisoned, mercy to the enslaved, mercy to the depressed, mercy to the discouraged, and mercy to the despairing.

“All the compassions of all the tender fathers in the world compared with the tender mercies of our God would be but a candle to the sun or a drop to the ocean.” Matthew Henry

But the greatest mercy is that of the gospel's salvation, freeing us from our prison, bringing us to heaven. When Paul paints the black picture of man's spiritual condition in Ephesians 2, his answer to its dark, demonic disobedience is, "But God, who is rich in Mercy!"

There is mercy upon mercy in the Lord! Of all things in God of which we can say, O the depths, it is this – mercy! Mercy is an ocean, says Manton, that is ever full and every flowing. There is no diminishing of it, no end to it. And Sibbes adds, "The depths of our misery can never fall below the depths of his mercy."

But it is his freeness in mercy that matches and rivals this fullness. God is merciful because God is truly merciful – you don't have to drag mercy out of him, like you do money from a miser.

The question, then, as we close is: Do you know this mercy? Do you know this God of mercy?

Oh that should be the stamp on each of our lives; it should be the banner over our heads; it should be written on our grave stone for all to see and witness.

When the great missionary, William Carey was suffering from a serious illness, the question was asked: "If this sickness should prove fatal, what passage would you select as the text for your funeral sermon?" He said, "Oh, I feel that such a poor sinful creature as I is unworthy to have anything said about him. But if a funeral sermon must be preached, let it be from these words, 'Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions.'

His tombstone read:

WILLIAM CAREY, BORN AUGUST 17th, 1761: DIED JUNE 9, 1834

"A wretched, poor, and helpless worm
On Thy kind arms I fall."

God give us such humility by his mercy. Amen.