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Romans

For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all. Romans 11:32

Again, Paul uses his common conjunction "for" in order to explain the previous two "mercy verses" with this concluding thought before he moves on to his stirring doxology. "For God has committed them all to disobedience" refers to the previous disobedience of the gentiles who now have obtained mercy and the currently-disobedient Jews who will obtain that same mercy.

The word for "has committed" is one which gives the thought of imprisonment. A comparable concept would be fish caught up in a net. God has thus bound both categories of men, Jew and Gentile, so "that He might have mercy on all." In essence, He imprisons so that He may set free; He binds so that He may release; He confines so that He may lead to broad spaces.

All who come to Christ were first found to be in Adam; all who are forgiven were first under sin; all who are adopted as sons were once orphans. Because of this, each will understand the freedom and privilege which they have been granted. It is through contrast that we learn to discern the differences.

In this thought of committing all to disobedience, it cannot be inferred that this was actively done by God. Rather, from Adam's free-will choice, all came under condemnation and so all were bound under sin. From that, God had mercy on a select group of people and called them to Himself. Their eventual rejection of

Christ was voluntary. At the same time, the gentiles voluntarily streamed to the gospel. Thus the committing of the Jews to disobedience was a self-inflicted imprisonment while at the same time the voluntary choice of the gentile people brought us to God's mercy.

When an offense is committed, the judge is right in sentencing the criminal, the jailer is right in executing his duties of imprisoning the offender, and the executioner is not guilty when he flips the switch on "Old Sparky" to put those who commit capital crimes to death. In the same manner, God is not to blame when His instructions, which were plain and clear, are violated or ignored.

Moreover, He provides sufficient data for what He expects so that all who are so bound are without excuse when the evidence is presented. One cannot stand before God and use the claim that their sentence is unfair. Not knowing about Jesus doesn't condemn a person. Being a human being, born of Adam condemns a person. Being presented with Jesus and rejecting Jesus only increases condemnation. And being presented with Jesus and accepting Him frees Adam's seed from condemnation. Therefore, all are bound under disobedience that God might (not will) have mercy on all.

Life application: A common question, and what is often used as an indictment against God's fairness, involves those who have never heard the news about Jesus. How can God condemn such a person? Be ready to answer this. Man is "already condemned" according to John 3:18. We need nothing to be separated from God; that already is the case. In His mercy, God sent Jesus. The choice is ours to accept or reject the offer. Ensure they know to choose wisely.

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! Romans 11:33

For the second time in this epistle, Paul enters into an open expression of worship of God. In chapters 1-8, he gave instruction on doctrinal matters and finished that with a praise concerning the relationship which has been established between

God and man because of the work of Christ. In chapters 9-11, Paul has conducted a lesson into dispensational matters - the church age and the relationship between Jews and Gentiles during that age. Showing that God is in complete control of what is happening and what will come about, He finished this section with his "mercy verses."

Now with a resounding note of praise, adoration, and awe he breaks into a doxology which shows finite man's inability to comprehend the magnificence and greatness of God. He begins with an interjection which is the Greek letter "Omega." This translates directly to "O!" It is as if he looked at the previous discussion and was unable to grasp what just flowed from his pen - the immensity of understanding the grafting in of the gentiles, the rejection of the Jews, and yet the return of the Jews to their high position at some point in the future - all of this suddenly dawning on him. "Oh! The depth of the riches..."

He speaks of the riches of God being poured out upon undeserving man. God's treasure trove of goodness is unlimited and eternal. There is no end to the blessings which can come from Him and there is, for those who are the objects of His favor, no end to the blessings that will come from Him. God is pleased to bestow these riches upon His creatures so that they may in turn glorify Him. Because God is eternal, the stream of these riches will proceed ceaselessly and endlessly to those who are His called, chosen, and elect.

Paul then turns to "both the wisdom and the knowledge of God." There is debate on the reading here. Two options are:

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" or

"Oh, the depth of the riches and of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God!"

It is either "depth" describing "riches" and then "riches" describing "the wisdom and the knowledge," or each is an individual tenet. The difference isn't small, and

one should contemplate both options because both fill the mind with a different type of wonder at what Paul is saying.

"The wisdom" of God and the "knowledge" of God are introduced separately because they reflect different characteristics which are too often incorrectly mixed together in our thoughts. "Wisdom" is the proper application of the will in order to meet a good end. In the context of Romans 9-11, it is speaking of that use of God's will which will bring about the "mercy" on all people. This was seen in the preceding verses. The plan of redemption is so wise that it is beyond our ability to fully grasp. We can read the words, understand their meaning, but never come to fully understand how God has or will continue to exercise His will, while at the same time allowing man the free will he has been given.

The knowledge of God is certainly speaking on several levels - His intelligence, which is infinite; and His foreknowledge, which is timeless. Because He knows all things, both immediately and intuitively, God is able to anticipate every possibility that could occur in every part of His creation. There is nothing which could surprise Him and nothing which could break down in what He has constructed. From the minutest atom to the grandest galaxy, all things are working harmoniously because of the intellect which created and sustains these things.

Because of the depth of these tenets of God - the riches, the wisdom, and the knowledge, Paul's pen issues ink into words which are insufficient to relate the concept he is trying to convey, which is in turn insufficient to relate what that thought is trying to grasp. "How unsearchable are His judgments!" Here he uses a term found nowhere else in Scripture, *anexeraunēta*, to describe God's judgments.

The word means to search out or investigate, but it begins with a negative. His judgments cannot be searched out; they are beyond the ability of man to even locate. What He has determined can be studied, contemplated, charted, graphed, argued over, and communicated, and yet none of this is or could be sufficient to fully explain them. In the end, there will always be questions which, even if

answered, will only lead to more questions. The finite mind will never fully search out what has been determined in the execution of His infinite plan.

"And His ways past finding out" brings in another term which begins with a negative, *anexichniastoi*. It is used only one other time in Scripture. Paul, writing to the Ephesians, uses it concerning the work of God in Christ -

"To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ..." Ephesians 3:8

This word, similar to the preceding one, means to "trace out" or to "track." We can search high and low, near and far, and never fully understand the ways of God. Isaiah speaks of this wisdom when quoting the Lord -

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways,' says the Lord.
'For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts.'" Isaiah 55:8, 9

In the end, redeemed man will eternally be in the presence of God, beholding His splendor and marveling at what He has done. We will forever contemplate, but never fully grasp, the magnificence of the glory of God. Eternity itself will reveal that we will need eternity to pursue this glorious Creator.

Life application: What will we do in heaven? How can we live forever without getting bored? Don't worry about that! The infinite glory of God will be ceaselessly revealed to us. There will be no end to the discovery of His majesty. Eternity itself will be needed to search out the depths of our eternal God.