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*“Mercy On All”*

ROMANS 11:25-32

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## AT A GLANCE

All people come to the Father by grace alone through faith alone, according to God’s mercy alone. By mercy, not by merit.

## INTRODUCTION

In July 2022 we began our study of Romans. This is our 66<sup>th</sup> sermon in the series called “Foundation” and we’re coming to the end of the fourth of five major movements in the book. We’re also coming to the end of the doctrinal section, which consumes the first eleven chapters. Chapters 12-16 are filled with Christian ethics. We titled that section “fellowship.”

In the last 21 months we’ve moved from the doctrine of sin to the doctrine of justification to the doctrine of sanctification to the now the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. Today we’re wrapping up the doctrine. Next week we’ll see that doctrine leads to doxology. The doctrines of God reveal the glory of God which leads to the praise of God.

But before we arrive at the final movement in Romans 12-16, before we get to the “therefore live this way” section, and before we get to the doxology of chapter 11, we come to Paul’s final doctrinal assertion: God’s mercy on all.

I love how Paul wraps up his doctrinal thesis. I love the way he draws all eleven chapters to a close in these seven verses. All of God’s saving activity, all the gospel, all the saving work of God that Paul has belabored to explain is summarized in these verses, and truly in the final three words of these verses: mercy on all. My heart is already bursting with praise. Let’s go to our text this morning, shall we?!

## ROMANS 11:25-32

**<sup>25</sup> Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. <sup>26</sup> 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”; <sup>27</sup> “and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.” <sup>28</sup> As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. <sup>29</sup> For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. <sup>30</sup> For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, <sup>31</sup> so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy. <sup>32</sup> For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.**

## THIS MYSTERY

**Verse 25 Lest you be wise in your own sight.** To be wise in your own eyes is a mark of a fool according to Proverbs 12, *“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes...” Proverbs 12:15* Seems the less we know, the more confident we are in what we think we understand.

It’s possible the Gentile believers in Rome, a very young church, only a couple decades old at most at this point, needed education about God’s work in the olive tree and with the branches broken off. Perhaps they were at risk of thinking God broke off Israel and grafted us in, we’re in, they’re out, therefore maybe we’re the ones with all the answers.

Paul is going to educate them on what he called **this mystery**. Paul used this term elsewhere in scripture to denote what was hidden for ages past but is now revealed and made known. He also used it to denote something that is difficult to understand. In Colossians 1, he said the mystery is Christ in you, the hope of glory. In this situation, the mystery is God’s saving work in Israel.

It’s a mystery because it reverses Jewish expectations. I said last week that it would have been a major shock for Jews to imagine Gentiles would have anything to be jealous of. This mystery is that salvation is coming first to the Gentiles, then to the Jews.

The mystery is a **partial hardening has come upon Israel**. Most Jews do not believe the gospel, something that Paul commiserates. But he sees the Lord’s hand in it. The Lord has placed a partial hardening on Israel. Even now some Jews believe the Gospel because the hardening is only partial.

Not only is the hardening partial, it’s also temporary. That is to say **until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in**. Gentiles are anyone other than Jews. Gentiles are those Paul speaks of when he quotes Moses in Deuteronomy 32, *“I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation: with a foolish nation I will make your angry.” Romans 10:19*

## PLENTY

The Greek word translated **fullness** is *pleroma*, the Latin is *plentitude*. The word has to do with plenty, abundance, filled to capacity. When I used to sit down to an evening meal at my grandmother’s house, there was a plenty of food set before me. If I ever walked away from the table filling anything less than full, that was my fault. In most cases I, along with my dad and my grandfather and my siblings sat around the table giving time for our bellies to make more room for dessert. Then we’d fill our desert bellies. We waddled out of Mamar’s house. Pleroma, completely filled. We had enough.

When the Lord has saved plenty of the Gentiles; when the Lord’s cup runneth over; when it is complete, Paul is saying God is going to cease the saving activity among the Gentiles and return His attention to the Jews. So there’s a double temporary promise here. Both the Jew’s hardening and the time of salvation among the Gentiles is limited in time. Both will come to an end.

## ALL ISRAEL WILL BE SAVED

And if the hardening is temporary, it implies that when the time is up, there will be a full inclusion of the Jews, as Paul suggests in verse 12. Now he outright says as much in **verses 26 and 27, 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”;** <sup>27</sup> **“and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.”**

Paul clearly sees a future in which **all Israel will be saved**. That is to say, every ethnic Jew who is alive at that time. This is contrary to the view that Jews throughout the ages will be saved. We believe *Hebrews 9:27, “And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.”* Those who die apart from Christ will stand on their own merit before God and pay for their own sin.

Furthermore, Paul has been speaking about ethnic Israel for the last three chapters; ethnic Israel as opposed to ethnic Gentiles. Contrary to John Calvin, Paul is not speaking of the Church as metaphorical Israel. It would be totally confusing for Paul to spend three chapters contrasting ethnic Israel to the Gentile only to come to the summary text and switch the meaning of Israel.

This also speaks to ethnic Israel as opposed to a geopolitical Israel. There are certainly non-Jews living in what is now the state of Israel. There are also Jews living scattered throughout the world. It will be ethnic Israel that is saved.

Everything Paul has said about the fate of Israel up to this point is summarized in the statement, **in this way all Israel will be saved**, which is expounded in what follows.

### GOD HIMSELF WILL DO IT

Paul bases his confidence about the future salvation of Israel not in Israel's faithfulness, but God's. Paul quotes Isaiah 59:20 and then 27:9 when he says, **The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish all ungodliness from Jacob. This will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.**

How does Paul know, how does God know that Israel will be saved? Because it is God's sovereign will that will effect it. The prophecy is not that Israel will come to their senses and regret what they've done. Israel will not be the primary actor, the Lord God will be.

Paul says **the Deliverer will come from Zion**. The actual verse in Isaiah says, "to Zion." Paul changes it because he understands that the Deliverer not only will come to, but He came from Zion, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, crucified in Jerusalem and returning to the Mount of Olives on that great day. Not only is He going to return to Zion, but Zion is the place from which His salvation was bought for us. Redemption will return to Zion just as it flowed from Zion.

The deliverer **will banish all ungodliness from Jacob**. The **deliverer**, not the Pharisees. The Deliverer, not the Scribes or the priests. The religious leaders were impotent to banish ungodliness. The political leaders were impotent to banish ungodliness. The only power to banish ungodliness comes from the Deliverer. God, Himself, will do it.

Furthermore, the Lord promised in Isaiah 27, **This will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins**. For a thousand years or so, men atoned for their own sin through the sacrificial system. They brought their lamb, their turtledoves, the priests brought the bulls and the rams, and these animals were slaughtered year after year for the remission of sin. Yet, they were symbolic, pointing forward to *the* sacrificial lamb, "*the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*" *John 1:29*

How is sin taken away? The price of sin is death, Paul told us in Romans 6:23. Unless there is shed blood, there is no remission of sin. For that reason, Christ shed His blood; Christ died for us to take away our sin. What Jesus did for us, He did for anyone who receives it. Unfortunately, most Jews reject it.

### BELOVED ENEMIES

**Verse 28 As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers.** They reject the gospel, they persecute the Church. They are enemies of Christ.

But they are enemies **for your sake**, or on your account. This usually implies it's being used on our behalf; it is to our benefit. When the Jews rejected the Gospel, the Gospel went to the Gentiles. We have salvation because they rejected it.

**But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers.** In the grand scheme of things, God is not done with Israel. God has not abandoned them, nor had He forgotten their forefathers. Right now, because of their unbelief, they are at enmity with God. Yet, God's covenantal faithfulness to Abraham and the patriarchs guarantees that God is not finished with them, not on the basis of the merits of their fathers, but on the merits of God's faithfulness.

**Verse 29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.** Because God's election is a result of His sovereign grace, it cannot be revoked. It cannot be rejected. The calling of God originates not in man, but in God. And it originated before the foundations of the earth were laid. *"even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will," Ephesians 1:4-5*

As we saw in Romans 8:29-30, the call of God ends with the glorification of the saints, always. What originated in eternity past will be fulfilled in the future. Not even Israel's rejection of the Christ today will thwart what God is going to do among those Jews whom He called from eternity past.

The proof of this is that you and I, sin-hardened Gentiles, have been saved. If God can save a Gentile, He can definitely save the Jews. And how will the Jews on that day be saved? The same way you were saved.

## IN THE SAME BOAT

**Verses 30-32 For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience,<sup>31</sup> so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy.<sup>32</sup> For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.**

You were disobedient before Christ. But you've received mercy because of their disobedience, because of their rejection of the Christ. You've been saved because they crucified Jesus.

I know that some people do not like the term sinner. I don't think you're supposed to like the term. I don't think you're supposed to feel comfortable with the truth of who you were before Christ. But I don't think sinner is the most offensive way to refer to our pre-Christian lives, either.

It says here in verse 32 that **God consigned all to disobedience.** That's another way of saying what he said in *Romans 3:23*, *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..."* But when you dig into this word **consigned**, it gets even more sobering. You might think of a consignment shop, but that's not the sense Paul is using here. The truer meaning of the word is "confined, bound, or imprisoned." And the word **disobedience** I think also lightens the blow a little. The Greek word is *apeitheia* and it means being unpersuadable, obstinate, stubborn, and rebellious.

Here is the absolute truth about sinners: they are imprisoned in rebellion & stubborn obstinance. And God's Word says right here that God consigned all to disobedience, whether you're Jew or Gentile. I say this because I believe Jesus when He says you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. When you come face to face with the truth of your nature apart from Christ, that you were bound, then you will be set free.

I think it's in our fallen nature to rebuff at the idea that apart from Christ we're sinners, imprisoned to disobedience. I think it's a mark of carnality to try to minimize the depth of our depravity and magnify whatever virtue we may think we have.

Paul says <sup>30</sup>**For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience,<sup>31</sup> so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy.** Paul's point is this: you and the unbelieving Jew were in the same boat. You were obstinate. They are obstinate. You were rebellious.

They are rebellious. You were imprisoned in disobedience. They are imprisoned. And if what was true about us is now true about Israel, then what is true about us, will be true about Israel. God's mercy.

### BY MERCY, NOT BY MERIT

All people come to the Father by grace alone through faith alone, according to God's mercy alone. By mercy, not by merit. This is Paul's final major doctrinal assertion in this letter. The final point of Paul's doctrine in Romans is that God has mercy on all.

Now we need to be clear, Paul is not teaching universalism. He's clearly told us that there will be people who reap the due penalty of their corrupt lives. God has mercy on whom He wills. Paul is saying here that God has mercy on all without *distinction*, not all without *exception*. There will be plenty of people who receive the Lord's justice. But those He draws in, whether Jew or Gentile, He draws in as an act of mercy. All come to salvation by God's mercy and nothing else.

Perhaps the idea of being called a sinner rubs you the wrong way. I suggest you explore why that is. I hate that I was a sinner, but I do not deny it. Neither do I deny that I still have to fight my sinful flesh. But I embrace who I was before Christ because it highlights what God did for me. I don't try to minimize my helpless and hopeless estate apart from Christ. I magnify it because it magnifies for all to see that what has happened to me is the result of one thing: God's mercy. I am who I am today because God is who He is. The deliverer came from Zion and He banished ungodliness from me. And one day He's going to do the same for all Israel and we'll rejoice over what He's done forever.

From sin to justification to sanctification to God's sovereignty, in these eleven chapters Paul has laid out the doctrine of God's salvation of sinners. The heart of every born-again believer is swelling with praise and gratitude because we know this isn't just doctrine, we know it's our story. We know this is more than what God has done for "the world." It's what God has done for us. And he's left us looking forward to the day when Israel will taste of the mercy of God, just like we have. Amen.

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