

ROMANS 11:30-32

The unbelief of Gentiles and Jews has been the hallmark of humanity throughout history. God's plan of redemption, through Israel, would impact Gentiles and then, through Gentiles, impact Jews. These verses capture the entire purpose of chapters 9 - 11. God's mercy through Jesus is wide and all-encompassing, available to both Gentiles and Jews by grace through faith in Messiah Jesus. Four times "unbelief" is used and four times "mercy" is used in these three verses. In God's economy, the opposite of "unbelief" is not "belief," but "mercy."

30 For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief:

"For as ye..." Paul addresses Gentiles. God always intended Gentiles to be saved.

The Abrahamic Covenant promised salvation for Gentiles.

"And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Genesis 12:3

Three of the four Servant passages in Isaiah promise salvation brought to Gentiles.

"And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." Isaiah 49:6

The result of the death of the Servant (Messiah) will see Gentiles saved.

"For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited." Isaiah 54:3

The restoration of the Jews to Israel will result in Gentiles coming to the Lord.

"O LORD, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit." Jeremiah 16:9

- 14 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be said, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt;
- 15 But, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers.
- 16 Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the LORD, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.

"Then the voice of the prophet is heard in Jeremiah 16:19 with a blessed prophetic declaration: 'The Gentiles shall come unto Thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity and things wherein there is no profit.' It denotes the conversion of the world, which--in prophecy never precedes the restoration of Israel, but always follows that great coming event. (See Romans 11:12; Romans 11:15; Acts 15:14-41)."
Arno Gaebelin's Annotated Bible Jeremiah 16

- 21 Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know mine hand and my might; and they shall know that my name is The LORD.

"Expositors are divided as to whether the Jews or the Gentiles are meant here. Actually, what is said will apply to both; there is no need to exclude either one (cf. Ezekiel 36:23; 37:14)."

Charles L. Feinberg, Jeremiah: A Commentary, page 126

"have not believed God" Gentiles, in the past, have not believed in God. This is their general condition with some exceptions.

apeitheo from *a* = without + *peitho* = persuade) literally describes one who refuses to be persuaded and who disbelieves willfully and perversely. *Apeitheo* in the present context means that these individuals possessed an attitude of unbelief because they deliberately choose to disobey, to consciously resist and rebel against authority and finally manifest an obstinate rejection of the will (truth) of God.

God's plan for the world was focused around the Jewish people from Genesis 12 to Acts 2. With the birth of the church the gospel was available to the entire world with the majority of those believing being Gentiles and Israel being set aside.

"yet have now obtained mercy" Gentiles, even in their rebellious unbelief, now have mercy from God. Mercy is God's offer of grace, not judgment, to the Gentile world who deserved judgment.

"What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith." Romans 9:30

"But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me." Romans 10:20

"I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy." Romans 11:11

"through their unbelief" The mercy God extended to Gentiles is a result of Jewish unbelief.

"Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?" Romans 11:12

"For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" Romans 11:15

31 Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.

Even so have these also now not believed

At the present time Israel doesn't believe. This doesn't mean all Jewish people don't believe. Just as in the time of Gentile unbelief there were a few Gentiles who believed, so today, in the time of Jewish (Israel) unbelief, there are some Jewish people who believe. There has always been a remnant of Jewish believers.

"Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." Romans 11:5

The *election* is that of *grace*, not the *election of individuals*. We have already been told in chapter 9:30-32 that Israel sought salvation by works instead of faith (grace) and in chapter 10:3-8 that salvation is through faith (grace) not works. God *chose* that those coming to Him, whether Jew or Gentile, needed to come by *grace*.

"Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Romans 4:4-5

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Ephesians 2:8

that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.

God desires that Gentile believers, having received mercy, share the gospel with Jewish people in order that they might receive the mercy of God.

"They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation."

Deuteronomy 32:21 (quoted in Romans 10:19)

"He determined to manifest his displeasure towards the Jews, on account of their rejection of the Messiah; but at the same time to shew mercy to them through the instrumentality of the despised Gentiles. To the Gentiles he gave a yet clearer and fuller revelation than that which he had given to the Jews: and he gave it, not for their benefit only, but as a sacred deposit for the Jews, and as a talent to be improved for their especial use. In bestowing the Gospel on the Gentiles, he said, in fact, 'Here is salvation for you: but, remember, you must not confine it to yourselves. You must make use of it for the instruction and salvation of the Jews. From you I withheld the light which I bestowed on the Jews: but I do not intend that the light which I am now bestowing upon you should be withheld from them: on the contrary, I purpose that it shall be imparted to them: and I intend to make you my channel of communication to them. See to it, therefore, that you improve this mercy aright, and that you labour incessantly for their good; for I grant this mercy to you, not for your own benefit only, (though, doubtless, it is for yourselves in the first instance,) but for them also, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.'" Charles Simeon, *Horae Homileticae* Romans 11

Although not elaborated here, the reciprocity:

Gentiles were disobedient = Jews being saved.

Jews being disobedient = Gentiles being saved.

Will result in more Jews and Gentiles being saved if Gentiles follow the divine order:

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Romans 1:16

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved."
Romans 10:1

"Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?"

For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.

For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" Romans 11:12-15

"The significance of Paul continuing to exhort the Gentiles in particular from v. 13 up to v. 32 ought not to be missed. The point is that a wider perspective is necessary concerning God's design for human history. So often we are blinded by a narrow and exclusive frame of reference, v. 18a, that requires divine enlightenment, vs. 24-29."

Bunyan Ministries, Romans 11:1-36 - The Gospel and Israel's Salvation
http://www.bunyanministries.org/expositions/romans/11_rom_israel%27s_election.pdf

The next verse brings us to the "wider perspective." The purpose of Romans 9-11 is not to teach that a few are chosen to be saved and a [greater] few are chosen to be condemned. The purpose is to show that God's plan of salvation, being through the Jewish people, in its "wider perspective," embraces His mercy for both Jew and Gentile with no exclusion.

32 For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

In finishing this section (Romans 9 - 11), it is fitting to re-visit a quote from the first lesson on Romans 9.

"The emphasis - from start to finish - is on God's desire to let people in, not keep them out. It is about the wideness of God's mercy, not its narrowness. Israel doesn't deserve it, the Gentiles don't deserve it, but God nevertheless gives it."

"Far from being a treatise meant to justify God's righteousness in unconditional election, Romans 9-11 is a treatise about the incomprehensible mercy and scandalous faithfulness of God toward his creatures, through the crucified and resurrected Jesus Christ."

Austin Fishcer, Young, Restless, No Longer Reformed, selections from pgs. 100-104

For God hath concluded them all in unbelief

Both Jew and Gentile are in disobedience to God because of rejecting God's plan of salvation.

that he might have mercy upon all

Don't confuse mercy with salvation. William McDonald explains this verse well.

"When we first read this verse, we might get the idea that God arbitrarily condemned both Jews and Gentiles to unbelief, and that there was nothing they could do about it. But that is not the thought. The unbelief was their own doing. What the verse is saying is this: having found both Jews and Gentiles disobedient, God is pictured as imprisoning them both in that condition, so that there would be no way out for them except on His terms. This disobedience provided scope for God to have mercy on all, both Jews and Gentiles. There is no suggestion here of universal salvation. God has shown mercy to the Gentiles and will yet show mercy to the Jews also, but this does not insure the salvation of everyone. Here it is mercy shown along national lines. George Williams says: God having tested both the Hebrew and the Gentile nations, and both having broken down under the test, He shut them up in unbelief so that, being manifestly without merit, and having by demonstration forfeited all claims and all rights to divine favor, He might, in the unsearchable riches of His grace, have mercy upon them all." William McDonald, Believer's Bible Commentary

God's mercy, shown through His love, is expressed in a verse and a song:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16

The Love of God | Frederick M. Lehman, 1917 | verse one and three

The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell;
It goes beyond the highest star,
And reaches to the lowest hell;
The guilty pair, bowed down with care,
God gave His Son to win;
His erring child He reconciled,
And pardoned from his sin.

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.

Hallelujah!
Hallelujah!
Hallelujah!