

Eternity Daily Bible Study

Romans 9-16 The Implications of Salvation

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE MINISTRY OF THE AIBI

Number: 603

Verses: Romans 11:28-36

Topic: The Mercy of God

Date: 14th December 2006

Romans 11:28-36 HCSB *Regarding the gospel, they are enemies for your advantage, but regarding election, they are loved because of their forefathers, (29) since God's gracious gifts and calling are irrevocable. (30) As you once disobeyed God, but now have received mercy through their disobedience, (31) so they too have now disobeyed, resulting in mercy to you, so that they also now may receive mercy. (32) For God has imprisoned all in disobedience, so that He may have mercy on all. (33) Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments and untraceable His ways! (34) **For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counselor? (35) Or who has ever first given to Him, and has to be repaid? (36) For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.***

Mercy can only be shown to someone who needs mercy, that is to sinners, to the disobedient, to the ungrateful and to the rebellious. So for God to be seen as merciful then there must be a "supply of sinners"! Because if there were no sinners, then there could be no mercy! So the Gentiles "once disobeyed God" but now have found mercy, and then it is the turn of the Jews – to disobey God – so God could be merciful to them as well! *For God has imprisoned all in disobedience, so that He may have mercy on all.*

Try and follow the twists and turns here. In an absolutely perfect world full of perfect people who always obeyed all the rules and were always financially prosperous and in good health and so on – in such a world, there would be no justice (because there would be no wrongs to correct), and no forgiveness (because there would be no sins to forgive) and no charity (because there would be no poor and needy to give to) and no sympathy or compassion (because everyone would be happy all the time and not ever need sympathy or compassion) and no uplifting or restoration (because no one would ever fall) and no homecoming for the Prodigal Son (because he would never stray to begin with) and no repentance (because there would be no sin) and no mercy (because there would be no sinners). Such a world would be extremely pleasant and well organized but it would be a moral and spiritual vacuum where no one would be challenged, doubt, struggle or grow.

Taking another angle, if the world was simply what the evolutionists say it is – a jungle, where "survival of the fittest" and good genetics sort out the species - then how can we explain the long-term survival of the weak and of the vulnerable and of the less than optimal? Only the grace of God! For many years I suffered from quite severe epilepsy and in a world of "survival of the fittest" I logically should have been weeded out and cast aside. Only the fact that God has put compassion and love and kindness and mercy in people's hearts – only these divine qualities, as part of the "image of God" in us, kept me from that fate.

Everywhere we look we see weakness and sin and pain and suffering. It seems illogical – but these things are testimony to a world in which mercy is abundant. If we could all survive alone, as rugged tough individuals, without the need of anyone else, making our own way, under our own steam, then there would be no need for love or for nurture or for teamwork or for marriage or for most forms of love apart from some temporary erotic passion.

Jesus said “the poor will always be with you” - the poor are always there to draw compassion, love and justice out of our hearts - just as Lazarus sat at the rich man's gate to test his character each day – and to call him to repentance from selfish luxury.

The imperfections in this world are put there for a reason – to draw out the perfections that are in our heart such as compassion, love, mercy, patience, forgiveness and kindness. Once we have learned these precious spiritual lessons - then we are ready to walk on the golden streets of Heaven – but not before. We will be ready for a world “in which righteousness dwells” once we have learned how to manage graciously in one where sin dwells.

So God has allowed everyone to fall into sin and disobedience, so that He might have mercy on all, and so each of us may learn what it is to be loved unconditionally. That is He wants us to learn what it is to be loved even after we have made a complete mess of things and we cry out “Lord. Remember me when you have come into Your Kingdom” as did the dying thief. God wants us to believe in His total mercy and in His complete unconditional love. So He allows us to make a mess of things so we can be forgiven and restored. He wants to show us that His love does NOT depend on our performance. And that is a lesson He wants both Jew and Gentile to learn together.

God remains true to us when we make a complete and utter and total botch of things: *Regarding the gospel, they are enemies for your advantage, but regarding election, they are loved because of their forefathers, since God's gracious gifts and calling are irrevocable.* No matter how big a mess the Jews may make of things God still loves them because His gracious gifts and calling are irrevocable.

God's love and God's calling on your life – whether it be your calling to salvation, to the ministry, and to the use of certain spiritual gifts are irrevocable (however your “office” and realm of responsibility may be greatly reduced if you fall into moral failure). God will persist in loving you even when you have given up on yourself!

2 Timothy 2:13 HCSB *if we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.*

Now the aim of God is to build a new world based on unconditional love which is poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. Now if we are to learn how to love our love must be tested – and that means the world needs to be imperfect for now. The trials and tests of love, in patient endurance and suffering and faith and hope and believing and in personal sacrifice and generosity and hard labor – these trials need a world that is “bound up in disobedience”, for only a world that has fallen into sin can be redeemed!

So God's logic is not our logic and His ways are not our ways. God has so ordered things

so that after we have sinned and suffered we will end up being far better people than if we had never sinned and suffered at all. At the end of our sin we will know redemption, grace and mercy and at the end of our suffering we will know faith, love, hope and have a loving and perfected character (Romans 5:1-5). Now this is not to say "so let us sin that grace may increase" (Romans 6:1-11) for God has never meant us to continue in sin, but to move beyond it to holy love.

Paul is astonished at God's method of binding all up in disobedience so that He might have mercy on all and writes:

*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments and untraceable His ways! (34) **For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counselor? (35) Or who has ever first given to Him, and has to be repaid?***

This messed up, demon-indwelt, sin-wracked, suffering, fallen and battered world is part of God's plan, part of His unsearchable judgments and untraceable ways. This "present evil age" will come to an end at some point once certain lessons have been learned and evil put away forever and then a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells will take its place. Age after age will go on as God perfects His people and the lesson of this age is holy and redeeming love.

None of us knows the mind of the Lord, or can tell Him how to run the Universe better. It is His, and He will make something wonderful out of it – and out of us. Because after all it is "all His" - *For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.*

Blessings,

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