

# MYSTERY, MERCY, AND ME

(Romans 11:25-32)

## I. PRELIMINARIES

- A. Pastoral Prayer
- B. (Further Announcements)
- C. Today's Text:

<sup>25</sup> For I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers, lest you should be wise in your own eyes: A partial hardening has fallen on Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; <sup>26</sup> and in this way all Israel will be saved. Just as it is written: "The Deliverer will come forth from Zion *and* will turn away ungodliness from Jacob. <sup>27</sup> And this will be (is) my covenant with them, when I take away their sins." <sup>28</sup> With respect to the gospel *they are* enemies for your sake; but with respect to *divine* election, *they are* beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God *are* without regret or change. <sup>30</sup> For just as formerly you were disobedient to God, but now have received mercy through their disobedience, <sup>31</sup> so now these also have become disobedient, so that through the mercy shown to you they also may now<sup>15</sup> obtain mercy. <sup>32</sup> For God has shut up (enclosed, imprisoned) all in disobedience, so that he may have mercy on all.

- D. Prayer for the ministry of the Word

## II. INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

- A. Opening Illustration: Mercy and Mac Sledge

- B. Review of Chapters 9-11

1. The Scandal
2. Paul's Four Explanations (Slide)
3. In chapter 11 Paul has introduced and discussed *the mystery of God's plan for Israel and the nations*.
4. A memorable *picture*: God's Olive Tree (S)
5. The foolishness of Gentile pride and condescension:
  - God grafted you in, not you yourself
  - The (Jewish) root supports the (Gentile) branches, not vice-versa
  - One day up ahead the Gentiles may/will be broken off
  - God is well able to graft Israel back in
  - And it is quite natural for him to do so!

## III. (25-27a) THE MYSTERY SUMMARIZED

- A. (25-26a) God's plan revealed and summed up

<sup>25</sup> For I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers, lest you should be wise in your own eyes . . .

- Q: What's a mystery? A: An open secret!
- Some other biblical mysteries (HSL)
- It's good for Gentiles to be aware of this particular mystery, *since it will keep them humble!*

The Summary: A partial hardening has fallen on Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;<sup>26</sup> and in this way (thus) all Israel will be saved.

- Three elements of the mystery:
- Element #1: Israel's current hardening is only *partial*. This is thought-provoking: Relative to what? Relative to the small present remnant, a BIG part is hardened. But relative to the future ingathering, a SMALL part!
- Element #2: Israel's current hardening is only *temporary*: It will be lifted when the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. (HSL)
- Element #3, stated earlier in Romans 11, assumed here: There will be a great latter day ingathering of Israel at large, leading to the Second Coming of Christ and "life from the dead!"

<sup>12</sup> But if their transgression *means* riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fullness mean!

<sup>15</sup> For if their rejection means reconciliation for the world, what will their acceptance be, if not life from the dead?

<sup>23</sup> And they—if they do not continue in unbelief—will also be grafted in, for God is *well* able to graft them in again. <sup>24</sup> For if you were cut out from what by nature is a wild olive tree—and *then*, in a manner contrary to nature, grafted into a cultivated olive tree—how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted *back* in to their own olive tree?

- "And in this way . . . " Question: What does this mean?
- Answer: In accordance with God's sovereign plan, the fullness of the Gentiles TRIGGERS the salvation of latter day Israel at large. This in turn brings about the fullness of the Jews, with the result that . . .
- All Israel is be saved! Question: What does "all Israel" mean. (NIV Study Bible)

Three views of "all Israel": 1) All Jews living at the time of the final ingathering, 2) all elect Jews of all times, 3) all spiritual Israel, comprised of Jews and Gentiles (HSL)

## B. (26b-27a) God's plan predicted in the OT

Just as it is written: "The Deliverer will come forth from Zion *and* will turn away ungodliness from Jacob. <sup>27</sup> And this will be (is) my covenant with them, when I take away their sins."

- Here Paul brings together elements OT texts found in Isaiah 59, 27, Jer. 31
- Question: Paul modifies Isaiah 29, which read, "The Redeemer will come *from* Zion." Why?
- Answer: At his first coming Christ came *to* Zion, but this is a different coming!
- Question: Is it the Lord's Second Coming, as many premillennarians teach?

- Answer: No, for this coming turns away ungodliness (regeneration, repentance, and faith), brings them into the New Covenant, and results in the forgiveness of their sins. (cf. Jer. 31, Heb. 8)
- Question: What then is this Coming? Answer: Salvation by grace, through faith, the preaching of the Gospel by the Church

Application: Don't wait for the Second Coming to do the work God calls the Church to do! The Second Coming does not save, it seals one's destiny for all time: both Jew and Gentile.

#### IV. (27B-32) SOME MOTIVES BEHIND THE MYSTERY

##### A. The Jews are beloved for the sake of the fathers

<sup>28</sup> With respect to the gospel *they are* enemies for your sake; but with respect to *divine* election, *they are* (always) beloved for the sake of the fathers.

- With respect to the gospel they are (currently) enemies: God has hardened them in their opposition to the Gospel, with the result that the gospel reaches the Gentiles
- With respect to election, they are (always) beloved for the sake of the fathers (HSL)

Application: Let us Gentiles always remember this, and NEVER fall the ugly anti-Semitism that pervades the world today. (Good on ya, President Trump!) (George Gilder: The Israel Test)

##### B. God's gifts and calling are without repentance

For the gifts and the calling of God *are* without regret or change.

<sup>11</sup> "I ask then: Have they stumbled, never to rise again?"<sup>6</sup> God forbid!

##### C. God will demonstrate this in his future dealings with Israel at large

<sup>30</sup> For just as formerly you (Gentiles) were disobedient to God, but now have received mercy through their disobedience, <sup>31</sup> so now these also have become disobedient, so that through the mercy shown to you they also may (now) obtain mercy.

- Question: What's the Big Idea here?
- Answer: Just as God used a remnant of Jews to bring you Gentiles mercy, so now, and especially at the end of the age, God will use Gentiles to bring the Jews mercy! THERE IS A GLORIOUS FUTURE FOR ISRAEL AT LARGE!
- To note carefully: The recurring mention of disobedience and mercy

##### D. God desires to display his sovereign mercy

<sup>32</sup> For God has shut up all in disobedience, so that he may have mercy on all.

- As Paul surveys all Salvation History, he sees two things:

- #1: Something God has done: He has “shut up” (imprisoned) all (not all without exception, but all without distinction: Gentile and Jew) in disobedience

“For God has locked up all in the prison house of disobedience . . . “ – Hendriksen

How? He imprisons the Gentiles in disobedience by means of the Law written in their hearts. He shuts up the Jew by means of the Gospel, which they stubbornly reject.

- #2: The reason he has done it: To show mercy to them all (i.e., not all people without exception, but all people without distinction)

<sup>22</sup> *What* if God, desiring to display *his* wrath and to make his power known, endured with great patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? <sup>23</sup> And *what if* he did this in order to make known the riches of his glory on vessels of mercy that he had prepared beforehand for glory, *even* us <sup>24</sup> whom he also called, not only from among the Jews, but also from among the Gentiles?

– Romans 9

## V. CONCLUSION: MYSTERY, MERCY, AND ME

<sup>5</sup> Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the territory of the Gerasenes. <sup>2</sup> Now as soon as Jesus<sup>1</sup> stepped out of the boat, a man with an unclean spirit came out from the tombs and met him. <sup>3</sup> This man<sup>2</sup> was *now* living among the tombs, and no one could restrain him anymore, not even with a chain <sup>4</sup>(for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but had torn the chains apart and broken the shackles in pieces; and no one was strong enough to subdue him). <sup>5</sup> Moreover, all night and all day—both among the tombs and in the mountains—he would cry out and gash himself with stones. <sup>6</sup> Now when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran up and knelt down before him; <sup>7</sup> and crying out with a loud voice, he said, “Jesus, Son of the Most High God, why have you come?<sup>3</sup> I implore you by God: Don’t torment me!”<sup>8</sup> (For Jesus<sup>4</sup> had been saying to him, “*You* unclean spirit, come out of the man!”)<sup>9</sup> Then Jesus<sup>5</sup> asked him, “What is your name?” So he said to him, “My name *is* Legion; for we are many.” <sup>10</sup> Then the spirit began to beg Jesus over and again<sup>6</sup> that he would not send them out of that territory. <sup>11</sup> Now a large herd of pigs was feeding on a nearby hillside. <sup>12</sup> So the demons<sup>7</sup> pleaded with Jesus, saying, “Send us over to the pigs, so that we can enter them.” <sup>13</sup> Then he gave them permission; and coming out of the man, the unclean spirits entered the pigs, and the herd—about two thousand *in number*—rushed down a steep slope into the sea and drowned.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Then those who were feeding the pigs ran off and spread the news *of these things* in the city and in the neighboring villages; and the people came out to see what had happened. <sup>15</sup> And they came to Jesus and saw the man who had been possessed by demons sitting down, clothed, and in his right mind—the *very* one who had had the legion. And they were filled with fear. <sup>16</sup> Then those who had seen what happened to the demon-possessed man told the people about it, and about the pigs as well. <sup>17</sup> So they *all* began to plead with Jesus<sup>9</sup> that he would leave their territory. <sup>18</sup> Now as Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed by the demons implored him that he might remain with him. <sup>19</sup> But Jesus would not let him; instead, he said to him, “Go home to your people and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how he has shown you mercy.”<sup>10</sup> <sup>20</sup> So the man departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all were amazed.

Application: Mercy: *Cherish* it for yourself, *proclaim* it to the world (while there is still time), *extend* it freely to your brothers and sisters in Christ. (Mt. 5:7, 6:12, 18:23ff; James 2:13)