

Romans 11:30

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

For as ye in times past have not believed God—hōsper gar hymēis pote ēpeithēsate tō theō (ῶσπερ γὰρ ὑμεῖς ποτε ἡπειθήσατε τῷ θεῷ). Paul addresses Gentiles' past: you were disobedient (ēpeithēsate, ἡπειθήσατε), unbelieving, outside the covenant. **Yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief**—nym de ēleēthēte tē toutōn apeitheia (νῦν δὲ ἡλεηθῆτε τῇ τούτων ἀπειθείᾳ). Gentile salvation came through (tē, instrumental dative) Israel's disobedience, which opened the door (v. 11).

Paul highlights the irony: Gentiles, who were disobedient pagans, now receive mercy (ēleēthēte, ἡλεηθῆτε) via Israel's unbelief. This should produce humility, not pride. If you obtained mercy through someone else's failure, boasting is absurd. The same God who showed you mercy despite your disobedience will show Israel mercy despite theirs. The pattern of divine mercy toward the disobedient applies to both groups.

Historical Context

Gentiles were 'without God in the world' (Ephesians 2:12), idolaters, immoral, outside the covenant. Their disobedience was complete—yet God showed mercy. Paul draws a parallel: if God saved Gentiles (total outsiders), He will save Israel (covenant people). This is an argument from lesser to greater.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does remembering your past disobedience and God's mercy cultivate humility toward Israel?
2. What does this verse teach about God's pattern of showing mercy to the disobedient?
3. How should Gentile believers' reception of mercy 'through Israel's unbelief' shape gratitude and prayer for Israel's salvation?

Interlinear Text

ἄσπερ	γὰρ	καὶ	ὑμεῖς	πότε	ήπειθήσατε	τῷ	θεῷ
as	For	G2532	ye	in times past	have not believed	G3588	God
G5618	G1063		G5210	G4218	G544		G2316
νῦν	δὲ	ήλειθητε	τῇ	τούτων	ἀπειθείᾳ		
now	yet	have	G3588	through	their unbelief		
G3568	G1161	G1653		G5130	G543		

Additional Cross-References

Colossians 3:7 (Parallel theme): In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

Romans 11:31 (Faith): Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.

1 Corinthians 7:25 (Faith): Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.

2 Corinthians 4:1 (Grace): Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;

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