

Romans 11:32

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all—synekleisen gar ho theos tous pantas eis apeitheian hina tous pantas eleēsē (συνέκλεισεν γὰρ ὁ θεὸς τοὺς πάντας εἰς ἀπείθειαν ἵνα τοὺς πάντας ἐλεήσῃ). The verb synekleisen (συνέκλεισεν, "concluded/shut up together") depicts God imprisoning all (tous pantas, τοὺς πάντας) in disobedience. "All" refers to both Jews and Gentiles collectively, not every individual. Paul's point: God allowed universal human disobedience to manifest.

The purpose (hina, ἵνα): **that he might have mercy upon all**. God's goal in permitting universal disobedience is to show universal mercy—to Jew and Gentile alike, on the same basis (grace alone through faith alone). No one can boast (3:27); all are debtors to mercy. This is the climax of Paul's argument: God's purposes transcend human failure, orchestrating history to maximize mercy's display. Both Israel's unbelief and Gentile salvation serve this end: demonstrating God's mercy to all without distinction.

Historical Context

Paul concludes chapters 9-11 by universalizing the gospel: God's mercy extends to all, and no one—Jew or Gentile—has claim to it apart from grace. This undercuts ethnic pride (Jewish or Gentile) and establishes grace alone as the basis of salvation for all humanity.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What does it mean that God 'shut up all in disobedience'—is this determinism or description?
2. How does universal human disobedience serve God's purpose to show universal mercy?
3. How does this verse's emphasis on 'all' (both judgment and mercy) glorify God's sovereignty and grace?

Interlinear Text

συνέκλεισεν γὰρ ὁ θεὸς τοὺς πάντας εἰς ἀπείθειαν
hath concluded For God G3588 G2316 them all in unbelief G543

ἵνα τοὺς πάντας ἔλεήσῃ
that G3588 them all he might have mercy G2443 G3956 G1653

Additional Cross-References

Galatians 3:22 (Parallel theme): But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

Romans 3:9 (Parallel theme): What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;

Romans 3:22 (References God): Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

John 1:7 (Parallel theme): The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.

John 12:32 (Parallel theme): And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

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