

Two Difficult Passages

1. The object of this lesson is to study “Two Difficult Passages.” (Rom. 11:31, 32; Rom. 12:14-21).
2. Both of these passages have been used to teach false doctrine, and it is important that we have a clear understanding of them.

Passage One Romans 11:31,32

NASB	NIV	NRSV	ASV
ROM 11:31 so these also now have been disobedient, in order that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy. 32 For God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all.	ROM 11:31 so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you.:32 For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.	ROM 11:31 so they have now been disobedient in order that, by the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy. 32 For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all.	³¹ even so have these also now been disobedient, that by the mercy shown to you they also may now obtain mercy. ³² For God hath shut up all unto disobedience , that he might have mercy upon all.
Amp	RSV	NKJV	LVB
31 So they also now are being disobedient [when you are receiving mercy], that they in turn may one day, through the mercy you are enjoying, also receive mercy [that they may share the mercy which has been shown to you—through you as messengers of the Gospel to them]. 32 For God has consigned (penned up) all men to disobedience , only that He may have mercy on them all [alike].	31. so they have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may receive mercy. 32. For God has consigned all men to disobedience , that he may have mercy upon all.	31. even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. 32. For God has committed them all to disobedience , that He might have mercy on all.	31. And now the Jews are the rebels, but some day they, too, will share in God's mercy upon you. 32. For God has given them all up to sin so that he could have mercy upon all alike.

1. Some believe this passage teaches God has made us disobedience that He might save us.
 - a. They say, “God made us disobedient that He might save us.”

- b. A comparable analogy would be this. An excellent swimmer pushes a non-swimmer into a swift current. As the person is about to drown, the excellent swimmer jumps in and saves him that he might become a hero.

2. **Nothing could be further from the truth.**

- a. God has never made a man evil. God does not even tempt man. (Jas. 1:13).
- b. He is not a respecter of persons and He wants all to be saved. (Acts 10:34, 35; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9).
- c. God has, however, created us as free moral agents.
- d. We can choose good or evil.

3. The words “shut up” in the NASB come from the Greek “sugkleio” - “to shut together, i.e. enclose.”

- a. This word can have both a literal and figurative meaning.
- b. The literal meaning of the verb is “close up together,” “hem in,” “enclose.” That meaning is clearly present in Luke 5:6, where a catch of fish is “enclosed” in a net.
- c. The figurative meaning is given as “confine, imprison” and illustrated from Romans 11:32. The word’s possible meanings are then given as follows.

1) He has imprisoned them in disobedience, i.e., put them under compulsion to be disobedient or given them over to disobedience.”

2) The sense of “compulsion” by God is reflected strongly in the renderings of TEV, ASV, NEB.

“has made prisoners to disobedience” - TEV

“has shut up unto disobedience” - ASV

“making all prisoners to disobedience” - NEB

3) The alternative meaning, “given them over,” is reflected in the translation of the Jerusalem Bible.

d. “Sunkleio” is also used in Galatians 3:22, 23.

GAL 3:22 But the Scripture has shut up (sunkleio) all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

GAL 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.

1) The idea of the passage is that all are in the grip of sin.

2) God did not cause this, but man is responsible.

3) Man was unable or unwilling to live by the law, and stood condemned by the law.

3. The Hebrew word “sagar” (deliver up, surrender) was translated by Greek translators with two valid equivalents - “sunkleio” and “paradidomi.”
4. Paul uses “paradidomi” in Romans 1:24, 26, 28.
 - a. In Romans 1:18-23 Paul stressed the pervasiveness and depth of human sin that had its origin in the refusal to acknowledge God as God.
 - b. Paul went on to affirm that God “gave them up” (RSV) to their sinfulness.
 - c. God allowed His creation to sink in the quicksand of its own sinfulness or disobedience.
 - d. He neither forced its obedience, nor forced or determined its disobedience.

Some Choices of God

- He could have created man a robot, but this would bring no glory to Himself.
 - He could let man go his own way. (Acts 14:16).
 - He could save man without repentance, but this would violate His justice and His holiness.
 - He could have utterly destroyed man.
 - He could save those who cover their sins with the blood of Jesus.
4. The idea of the passage is illustrated by LVB “**For God has given them all up to sin**”
 - a. God permitted the Gentiles to go their own way (Acts 14:16). The Gentiles rejected God and chose to live in every kind of abomination. (Rom. 1:18-31).
 - b. God also permitted the Jews to go their own way. He did not force them to accept His Son and permitted them to live in sin.
 - c. God has acted in such a way that the result is their bondage in sin (disobedience).
 - d. It is that bondage which is the object of God’s liberating grace.
 5. God allowing man to choose evil does not mean God wants man to pursue evil, but this freedom is a necessary part of being a free moral agent. •
 6. God stands ready to forgive those who have chosen a life of sin if they will repent and come to Him through His Son.

Some Additional Comments

ROM 11:31 so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you.

- The Jews rejection of the gospel often meant that the Gentiles had opportunity to hear and obey the gospel.

ACT 13:46 And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.

- The conversion of the Gentiles might also lead many of the Jews to accept Christ.
- Some would be converted by Gentiles.
- Some Jews would be led to seek the blessings of the Gentiles as they observed their blessings.

Passage 2

Romans 12:14-21

ROM 12:14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not.

ROM 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

ROM 12:16 Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.

ROM 12:17 Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.

ROM 12:18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

ROM 12:19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

ROM 12:20 "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head."

ROM 12:21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

1. It is clear from this passage that the Christian is to return good for evil.
 - a. The Old Testament taught this. (Prov. 25:21, 22).
 - b. Jesus taught this. (Matt. 5:38-48).

2. Vengeance is the right of God, not man.

ROM 12:19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

3. The words "for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head" have often been the object of discussion.
4. **What is the meaning of this expression?**
 - a. "Coals of fire" is from "anthrakas puros" and has the meaning of "burning or live coals."
 - b. It is a metaphor for great or keen anguish.

c. **It has the idea of extreme guilt.**

5. The purpose of doing good is not to inflict pain on one's enemy, but the purpose is through kindness to lead the person to repentance.

a. The enemy may burn with guilt as he/she beholds the gracious conduct of the Christian. **See words of Jesus.** (Matt. 5:38-48).

b. Hopefully the conduct of the Christian will produce a Godly sorrow in the one doing the evil. (2 Cor. 7:10).

7. Paul does not guarantee that returning good for evil will bring positive results, but it is the way Christ conducted Himself and the way we are to conduct ourselves.

1PE 2:20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.

1PE 2:21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,

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