Romans 11:32 For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

 I have to confess that I am very frustrated with our modern day world. One of the greatest of these frustrations comes from the fact that people of the world have decided to live contrary to God’s Word, in other words, they have decided to reject the Bible as God’s Word and thus have decided to reject and deny God. But they are not satisfied with that. They are not satisfied with their own personal rejection of God. Instead, they launch attacks against the Bible and the Christian faith. And they do so in a most odious way. Literally their tack is to attack you and your faith and if you do not accept their sin, if you do not accept what they want and how they want it, then you are the one declared hateful, unloving, judgmental and maybe even racist!

 Yet I think the situation quite simple. You don’t want to believe the Bible is God’s Word, that’s fine, believe that. Then go on your way. We live in a country that allows you to do that, allows you all sorts of sins and destructive behavior in the name of freedom. You can be a gambler, an abortionist, a Neo-nazi, an adulterer, a drug addict, or a person of the LGBTQ persuasion. Our country affords you those lifestyles and yet in this freedom that you have you insist that if someone like me, a Christian, doesn’t agree with, doesn’t accept, doesn’t celebrate your lifestyle, then I am hateful and unloving!

 I am not! For that matter, if you want to be any of those things, you may. I will still care about you and love you, but my love is such that I reserve the right to share with you that your lifestyle is harmful. Harmful to you and to society. Harmful to your soul! As an American, you can live that way, if you want, but I have, as an American, the right to live my way too. I do not have the right to physically hurt you (unless in self-defense). I do not have the right to hinder your life-style nor you to hinder mine. But if you are going to hurt others, then you are to be hindered. Here I am thinking of how the pedophile is going to destroy kids or how the Neo-nazi is going to be physically aggressive and physically attack his or her opponents. Then the law of our land says you must be stopped. So if you are being destructive, if you are being hateful and work at stopping others from what they peacefully choose to do, then you put yourself in the way of harm and against the good of society.

 Do you know what got me to thinking about all of this? That’s right, our text. Our text is the conclusion to that section of God’s Word where Paul has lamented and mourned, in love, the fact that his fellow Jews have rejected the Christ and thus rejected God. Paul wants them to know the truth and wonder of Jesus the Savior. Paul wants them to have the gift of salvation and God’s love. Notice that Paul does not at this point determine to change God’s Word. He does not declare that sin is of no account and that as long as you are happy why God will love you. Paul sticks to what God’s Word says. What does Paul gain from this stance? Persecution, imprisonment, ridicule and eventually death. That’s what all but one of the disciples got for their faith in Jesus.

 Hey, I guess maybe I shouldn’t be frustrated should I? The history of the Church shows the persecution and death of the faithful even at the hands of those false teachers who took over the church in the Middle Ages! Thank goodness then, that we are being picked on….we still have the wonder and truth of Jesus!

 So how did Paul handle all of this ultimately? He stuck to the truth of God. It is a simple truth and the words of our text lay that simple truth out. Our theme for today: **THE MERCY OF GOD!**

 How can we see the mercy of God? By understanding the truth of each and every human being there ever was or ever will be. That truth is laid out in the first part of our verse. It said, **“For God has bound all men over to disobedience.”**

 By the way, this verse in the Evangelical Heritage Version is translated this way: **“For God imprisoned all in disobedience.”** That translation is the better really. It is better because it does indeed show the true nature of the Law of God. That’s what we are speaking of here, the Law of God. You see, God has given his Law, not to show you how to be righteous so you could earn your salvation. God has given his law so that you might grasp the depth and nature of sin. It is deadly! It is a working against God! It is imprisoning! Your disobedience to the Law brings about imprisonment. Here I think we can grasp and understand spiritual imprisonment. It is this imprisonment that caused Paul to lament the unbelief of the Jews, his own race, because Paul knew the consequence of disobedience…imprisonment…eternal imprisonment in hell!

 So who do these words cover? Everyone! Name one person that you know of that does not have sin? Be careful! 1 John gives us this truth to fathom: **“If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sin and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.”**

 Those words tell us that you cannot ignore or deny the truth of sin. The Law has exposed sin. The Law of God has shown that each one of us is disobedient, that we have broken, smashed, reveled in and embraced sin. That is our natural inclination. We are sinful human beings who by nature are enemies of God and by nature reject, deny and ignore God to the detriment of our souls. Make no mistake…every single human being (with the exception of Jesus) is a breaker of the Law and thus a prisoner of sin, death and the devil!

 We don’t like that. We don’t like that so much that many of today’s mainline churches are involved in the complete denial of sin. Some of them only deny certain sins…maybe adultery or greed or homosexuality or drunkenness. Yet in denying some, they in essence deny all. You just can’t pick and choose! We don’t have the right to edit or amend the Bible to suit our needs and desires. Either God is God or there is no God at all. I say that because God makes it clear in his Word that the Law is his and He will hold us to the very demands and standards of the Law.

 So we are all potential prisoners. Here’s how that works. Should we deny sin, should we embrace wickedness as the new good then you are a prisoner of sin. There are only two ways it can be. You reject the Law and God and you are a prisoner. Or you believe in Jesus and you are not! That’s the second part of our verse.

 Our second part says, **“so that he may have mercy on them all.”** Do you know how God has had mercy? This is important! God sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for sin, the sin of all the world! And God raised this Jesus from the dead to make the clear and precise point that in Jesus and Jesus alone, there is forgiveness and eternal life. Let’s try and put this into perspective.

 You have sin. It’s all around you. Everywhere there is evidence and the fact of sin in your life. But you have heard of God’s mercy. You have heard how God sent His Son to live the perfect life you could not and then how Jesus went to the cross to pay the complete punishment for sin. That’s right, you have heard how Jesus suffered the wrath of the Father for all sin and that Jesus took upon himself your eternal damnation! Don’t ask me how that is possible for I can only answer: God can do the impossible and has in Jesus! So Jesus died for my sins (yours too!) and then the Lord was raised from the dead that we might grasp absolutely that everything pertaining to Jesus is totally and completely true! Thus Jesus, has declared that he is our Savior and that in Him and through Him you have the forgiveness of sins and with that the gift of eternal life! That is the straight forward message of Christianity.

 Understand please, that you are still a sinner. Understand that God has called you to faith in Jesus, has given you His Holy Spirit and with that Holy Spirit has caused something unique and wonderful in your life. You don’t like sin. You are appalled by your sin. You wrestle against it and try not to give into temptation. You falter, stumble and sin all the time but your faith in Jesus always leads you to Him, to confess to Him, to grasp that in Him you have God’s mercy and are clothed with the righteousness of Jesus. Being a Christian is not a matter of living right since we can’t. It is not a matter of being so filled with God’s love that we don’t have sin or that we declare ourselves so godly that God can’t but give us eternal life. It is a matter of grasping that everything is about Jesus. Jesus is the key to this all. Jesus is the Savior from sin. Jesus is the display of God’s love. Jesus is the righteousness that we so desperately need. Jesus is the one who is the cause of God’s mercy. Jesus is the point!

 If you know Jesus there is no imprisonment! If you deny sin, God’s Word makes it clear you deny Jesus. As a sin denier, why would you care about Jesus? If there is no sin, there are no wrongs. If we are just the high point of evolution, then the whole history of Jesus is a lie! He stupidly got himself hung on the cross. He died and was buried and then his idiot disciples in total depression came up with the idea to declare him living and alive. They spoke of forgiveness and eternal life and they died for that message. But it is a big lie….if there is no sin.

 If you don’t think you have sin for Jesus to forgive, that’s the same thing. What, you don’t need God’s mercy? On a scale of one to ten you think Jesus the ten and you are a 9.9999! Wrong! Jesus is the 10 and all of us are total zeroes! We need Jesus. We need his salvation and mercy of God. We need this gospel of Jesus, this message that God in Jesus has poured out his mercy on us! Yes, yes He has!

 We are sinners forgiven in Jesus. We are recipients of God’s love and mercy because God has taken every step necessary to bring us to him. No wonder we are reminded in this section of election: our calling as the children of God in Jesus. God’s calling and gift of faith are sure and certain. God grants this to us because of his grace and mercy, because Jesus is our Savior. Never stop looking to Jesus. Never stop believing the wonder and marvel that Jesus brings to us simply of God’s mercy. Thank you Lord! Thank you for our calling. Please continue to call and grant your salvation in this world. Amen.