

What Does God Do With the Disobedient?

✠ **Makes them envious** (vv.13-15)

✠ **Grants them mercy** (vv.28-32)

In the name of Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, our Gentile Savior, dearly redeemed believers:

Here's a question to stump religious people everywhere. **What Does God Do With the Disobedient?** All the world's religions say things like, "God helps those who help themselves." People are sure they can make themselves right with God. So they expect **the Disobedient** to be punished. This is illustrated all over the ancient world in rock piles. Each is called a "tell" where an ancient city once stood. As archeological teams dig down through the *strata*, they find layer after layer of destruction. We can see how man punishes the disobedient. Armies like the ancient Assyrians would try to avoid such destruction by terrorizing conquered cities along the way. They piled the heads of disobedient city elders on both sides of city gates and ripped open pregnant women to convince other enemies to just give up. Otherwise, the conquering army would level the walls and build a city over the rubble. Although God condemns such atrocities, He nevertheless gives earthly governments the responsibility of punishing **the Disobedient**. Come the Judgment Day, God Himself will punish them with unquenchable fire. But what about during this time of grace on earth? **What Does God Do With the Disobedient?** First, He...

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The Lord's most concise and orderly account of His wrath and His grace is in Paul's letter to the Romans. It tells how all mankind fell in Adam's fall. When Adam rebelled against God, we all went down with the ship. Now our movies and sitcoms trumpet our wickedness. Wanting to watch a video instead of reading our Bible or going to church shows our love for created things more than the Creator. The fact that we must be told to love our neighbor as ourself, shows our natural selfishness. We give God every reason to punish us eternally for our sins in thought, word and deed. We are spiritual suicides.

But what none of the world's religions could predict or report, God did. Beyond our imaginations, God sent His own son to carry our sins to the cross and grant us God's righteousness as a free gift of His grace. God knew we could never make ourselves deserving, so He paid the penalty for our sins. He did all this through the Jewish Messiah whom He sent in the Person of His own Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

People often ask, "Pastor, what about the Jews? Why don't they accept Jesus as their Messiah?" Fortunately, some do. Sadly, most don't because their religious leaders covered up Christ's resurrection and because this idea of not punishing the disobedient makes no sense to sinful human hearts. Remember Jewish disciples James and John, how they wanted Jesus to call down fire from heaven on that Samaritan village of Gentiles for not welcoming Jesus? Remember how the Pharisees and Chief Priest got the crowd to shout to Pilate, "**His blood be on us and our children?**" Remember how hateful Paul was until God converted him to Christ, how his fellow Jews persecuted him all over the ancient world? When Paul told how God sent him to the Gentiles, the Jews threw dirt in the air from the temple grounds.

God wants everyone to be saved. But how can He get through to His own chosen people of Israel? Paul writes: "***I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?***" When the Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah, He sent His apostles to the Gentiles with a strategy to win them back. He would **Make His Disobedient envious**. But isn't envy a sin?

About twenty-five years ago, a man, bitter at God because his first wife died of cancer, began dating a Christian woman whose husband had abandoned her and her children. Suddenly, he was seeing God's Son our Savior in their family devotions. Driving home over the mountains, he said to his teenage daughter, "I don't know what that family has, but whatever it is, I want it." Soon he was engaged and enrolled in WELS adult instruction class. In order to finish before his wedding, he asked the pastor to meet twice a week. Since the pastor told him his responsibility as the head of a Christian family, he sweated through reading family devotions in spite of his lack of formal education beyond eighth grade. You see? He was aroused to envy by the peace and joy he saw among Christians. Sanctified envy made him want what they had. To this day he continues to be faithful in his personal Bible reading and worship attendance. That man is my stepfather and one of my most respected Christian men. Rather than punishing **Disobedient** sinners like us, our gracious God first **Makes them envious**, then He ...

✠ Grants them mercy (vv.28-32)

"As far as the gospel is concerned, [Jews] are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable."

Think about all the *gifts* God has poured out over the centuries on Jews and Gentiles alike. When God called Abraham out of the darkness of idolatry, He gave him the *gift* of faith. He promised a miracle baby, a son to old Abraham and Sarah. When Isaac, the son of the promise was born, he was a *gift*, but so was the salvation that would follow in the Descendant to be born as the Seed of Abraham and Savior of all. Each time another child was added to that line of the Savior, and every time another sin-dead soul was granted the *gift* of faith in the coming Savior, God was giving priceless *gifts* to the Jews. But He also had a *Gift* for us Gentiles, promised to Abraham when the LORD said, "**Through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed.**" (Genesis 22:18) God kept piling up His *gifts* to Jews and Gentiles until they climaxed in our Savior Jesus Christ. Now God says He is not sorry, He has no regrets, nor does He intend to take back any of His gifts or the choices He has made of souls to save.

But what does this mean that "**God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all**"? How does that help us to understand **What God Does With the Disobedient**?

Think of it this way. God wanted to level the playing field between Jews and Gentiles. So He brought down His law like a huge road grader to pulverize the rocks of stubborn, rebellious unbelief under His Ten Commandments given to Moses and the Jews at Mount Sinai. But then through the Jewish prophets He promised a "**righteousness from God**" to be received by faith "**apart from law**" (Romans 3:21). This other righteousness God the Father sent down in the person of His Son Jesus Christ whose kindness and love fell like rich topsoil all over that leveled field. He sowed the seeds of the Gospel of His own forgiveness and mercy. He turned on the sprinklers with the water of life to make faith grow like green grass in Word and sacraments. Now there's a beautiful field where Gentiles are enjoying God's grace. When Jews see their joy and peace given by God to once cast off "foreigners," they are aroused to envy and want God's **mercy** for themselves. And whenever Jews return to Jesus, they find in Him their own Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6) ever willing and eternally eager to **Grant them mercy**, all the eternal blessings He promised to the Patriarchs – to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Since God sent us a Savior through the Jewish people, we should always love and respect them for this reason alone. But we should not lie to them if they ask us about Jesus. God needs to level the mountains of pride in their hearts and ours by His holy law. Yet the soft side of God's grace makes Jews want Jesus as their Messiah when they see you Gentile believers living in peace and joy. Let your worship of the one true God who revealed Himself to the ancient Jews be sincere and regular. Let it show in the kindness and love you show your neighbors without regard to their race or ethnicity. And be ready to share the hope you have whenever you are asked. There still is time to show everyone **What God Does With the Disobedient**. First, **He makes them envious** by watching you. Then, **He grants them mercy**. Today is the day of salvation. May the Name of the LORD be praised! Amen.

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