

**Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

## **Is Israel's Unbelief Inconsistent with God's Plan? Part 2**

Scripture: Romans 9:14-18

Code: 45-72

Open your Bible to Romans chapter 9. We embark again upon our study of this tremendous epistle of Romans. And looking at the ninth chapter, tonight I want to read to you verses 14 through 24 and I want to establish it in your mind and then begin to look at these very very important verses.

Romans 9:14, Paul writes, "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then, it is not of him that willeth or of him that runneth but of God that showeth mercy; for the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up that I might show My power in thee and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy and whom He will He hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth He yet find fault for who hath resisted His will? Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor? What if God willing to show His wrath and to make His power known endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy which He hath before prepared unto glory, even us whom He hath called not of the Jews only but also of the Gentiles."

Now this is a challenging, stimulating portion of Scripture. It is undeniably difficult to understand. Its emphasis is clearly on the sovereign righteousness of God. I believe it is one of those things written by Paul of which Peter spoke when he said he writes things hard to be understood. I think it's hard to understand in our finite minds what is said here. But its difficulty to comprehend in no way lessens its importance, in no way lessens its truthfulness and in no way lessens its blessedness. It is important, it is true and it is enriching to know what is here.

Now many people struggle with the idea of the truth that God is absolutely sovereign. That is, that God is free to do whatever He wants, that God is free to determine all things according to His own pleasure. But that is exactly what the Scripture teaches. And rationalizing that away, or reasoning that away is sin. God is God and God does exactly what God wants to do. He is sovereign and that is to say He is the Most High, that is to say He is the absolute King, that is to say He is the ultimate authority doing His will in heaven and in earth, no one can prevent it and no one can argue with it.

Let me just fill in, as it were, from various portions of Scripture some things that might help you to get a broader idea of the sovereignty of God as presented in the Bible. Just listen. Psalm 115 verse 3 says, "But our God is in the heavens, He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased." In Daniel 4:35 we read, "And He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, What doest Thou?"

Now those Scriptures affirm that fact that God is in charge, that God does have control of everything, that God does do what He pleases and that no one can stop Him or question Him. Now granted, that's a difficult thing for us to grasp, that God has a right to govern His universe, that He has a right to do whatever He wants, whenever He wants to whomever He wants, but He does. In 1 Timothy 6:15 it says, "He is the only potentate." In other words, He's the only one in charge.

Now to further help you understand how sovereign God is, we ought to begin by reminding ourselves that God is sovereign in creation. People who want to argue with God being in charge have to ultimately go back to creation and then ask the question, "Well when God created, who was in charge?" I mean, before men were around to tell God what to do, who was in charge? In Revelation 4:11 it says, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power for Thou hast created all things and for Thy pleasure they are and were created." I mean, before there was everything, God created everything that is for His own good pleasure by His own good will. In Proverbs 16:4 it says, "The Lord hath made all things for Himself, yes even the wicked for the day of evil." God has made everything, righteous, wicked, for His own good pleasure.

Out of His own free choice He created angels. Out of His own free choice He created the universe. He created the stars, the planets, the sky, the earth. And on the earth He created the mountains and the sea and the rivers and the deserts and the plains and the lakes and the streams and the sunshine and the rain and the snow and the ice. And He created the insects and the elephants and everything in between. And He created the birds and the fish and every variation of everything and every variation on every variation. And if we say, "Why did You do that?" the only answer is because He wanted to do that because once there was nothing and then all of this and no one gave Him any input at all. And 2 Samuel 10:12 says, "The Lord do that which seemeth to Him good." And Jesus said to the Father, "Father, You do this because it seemed good in Your sight."

So, if you are concerned about whether or not God is sovereign, remember how it was before there was anything and you'll be alarmed perhaps to find out that He was sovereign then and everything that is is because He's sovereignly determined that it should be. But He is sovereign not only in creation but in what we could call administration of that creation. In Job 23:13 it says, "But He is in one mind and who can turn Him and what His soul desireth even that He doeth." He has one mind and He does what He wants and no one can change that. In Psalm 33 we read, "For He spake and it was done, He commanded and it stood fast. The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to naught, He maketh the devices of the people of none effect, the counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the

thoughts of His heart to all generations."

In Psalm 103 verse 19 says, "The Lord has prepared His throne in the heavens and His Kingdom ruleth over all." In Isaiah 14:27 it says, "For the Lord of host hath purposed and who shall disannul it and His hand is stretched out and who shall turn it back?" In Isaiah 46:9 and 10 we read, "Remember the former things of old for I am God and there is none else, I am God and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times the things that are not yet done saying, My counsel shall stand and I will do all My pleasure." And Hannah in her hymn of praise in 1 Samuel 2 said, "The Lord kills and the Lord makes alive. He brings down to the grave and He brings up. The Lord makes poor and He makes rich. He brings low and He lifts up. He raises up the poor out of the dust and lifts up the beggar from the dung hill to set them among princes and to make them inherit the throne of glory, for the pillars of the earth the Lord's and He hath set the world upon them." In Acts 17 Paul said, "It's in Him we live and move and have our being."

Now I've just given you some samples to remind you and to remind me as well that the Bible presents God as absolutely sovereign in creation and sovereign in the administration of that created universe. Now having said that the Bible clearly indicates God's sovereignty in creation and God's sovereignty in administration, let me go a step further and say though the Bible is clear on those aspects of God's sovereignty, the Bible is most clear on the issue of God's sovereignty in the matter of salvation, the matter of salvation. And this whole section is teaching us that, that God is absolutely sovereign in the matter of salvation. And He chooses according to His own good pleasure.

Now keep in mind that Paul is presenting the doctrine of salvation in Romans. It started in chapter 3, didn't it? And he started talking about justification by grace through faith and he's been talking about it since chapter 3 verse 21 and he's talked about all aspects and all facets and all dimensions of salvation. And he has said this is God's message to the world, a message of salvation, a message of eternal life, a message with peace with Himself. And so in chapter 3 and 4 and 5 and 6 and 7 and 8 was the richness of salvation presented.

Now the final result of salvation was given to us at the end of chapter 8, remember? And if you'll look at verse 35 you'll be reminded of what it says. It says, "What shall separate us from the love of Christ," goes on to say nothing shall. In verse 39, "Nor height nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Now, chapter 8 ends the whole discussion of salvation proper by affirming that salvation is eternal and nothing can ever take it away, nothing can ever separate us from it.

Now remember, Paul having said that he anticipates a question. And the question is going to be, "All right, if you say that when God gives salvation to a person, when God makes that new covenant with someone, He never changes it, there's never a possibility of separation from then on throughout eternity, what about the Jews because they also had a covenant with God, they were His chosen

people and now they are set aside? If God then has changed His relationship to the nation Israel, what guarantee do we have that He won't change His relationship to us?"

Now the Jews were God's people and the Jews had a definitely intimate special relationship to God nationally. And so naturally the question is going to be posed by some Jew and he's going to say, "Look, Paul, if we believe your gospel, if we believe the message that you're giving that God never changes His promise and that if you receive Jesus Christ and the new covenant, justification by grace through faith in Christ, that's an eternal relationship and God will never change that and you'll never be separated from it, then answer us, why is it that God having had a relationship with Israel has now temporarily set them aside?" It's a fair question. Why should we think that we're secure if Israel wasn't. How can this new gospel be true, the Jew is saying, if God's chosen people aren't believing it? And that's the second kind of question they might have asked. How can we believe you when even God's chosen people the Jews reject this?

So in light of such questions about why don't the Jews believe if they're Your people and know You best...if this is really from God why don't the Jews who know God best believe it?...and then that other question, if God set them aside having made a covenant with them, how do we know He won't do the same to us? And so in the light of such questions, he needs to spend some time discussing the unique relationship between God and Israel, and that's what he does in chapter 9, 10 and 11. And in these three chapters he demonstrates God's purpose and plan for Israel. It's a very important section.

Now as we look at chapter 9 Paul is trying to demonstrate that Israel's unbelief does not violate God's promise in any way. That God hasn't really broken any promise at all. It doesn't impugn His character. It doesn't deny His Word. It doesn't cancel out what He said. It doesn't alter His plan. And later on, by the way, in chapter 11 he'll get more into the issue of security when he talks about the fact that Israel will be saved and eternally so in the future. But as he opens this discussion of the place of Israel in the plan, he does so by first of all talking about the fact that Israel's unbelief does not alter God's character.

Now remember I told you from verse 6 to 33 he points out four things. The unbelief of Israel is not inconsistent with God's promise...that's verses 6 to 13; the unbelief of Israel is not inconsistent with God's person...that's verses 14 to 24; the unbelief of Israel is not inconsistent with God's prophets...that's verses 25 to 29; and the unbelief of Israel is not inconsistent with God's prerequisite...verses 30 to 33. The whole point here is to say God isn't inconsistent. God hasn't violated His Word, He hasn't cancelled His promises, He hasn't lost His credibility, not at all.

Now last time in our study we looked at verses 6 to 13...the unbelief of Israel is not inconsistent with God's promise. And you remember the key to the answer was in verse 6. They are not Israel who are Israel. In other words, God never intended that every physical descendant of Abraham would be

a child of promise. God never promised to redeem every one born of the loins of Abraham. In other words, salvation was never a racial issue. And just because Israel now is in unbelief doesn't mean God has changed His promise because God never promised to redeem all physical Jews, all natural descendants of Abraham. And he uses two to illustrate it. First he says in Abraham only Isaac was called. And Abraham's first son was Ishmael. And God was selective. And that shows that not all those born of Abraham are children of the covenant, not Ishmael but Isaac was chosen.

And then Isaac had two sons and what were their names? Jacob and Esau. And of those two, which did God choose? He chose Jacob. Why? I don't know...no one knows...no, no one knows, not anyone knows. Only thing that we can answer is that God does as God pleases to do and He pleased to choose Isaac and He pleased to choose Jacob. And that tells us that He never from the beginning intended that all the physical seed of Abraham would be the children of promise. So it doesn't violate God's promise at all that many in Israel do not believe.

Now let's come to the second point in this section and I want you to listen very carefully as we do our very best to explain this to you. The unbelief of Israel is not inconsistent with God's person...with God's person. And this is a very close sequel to the passage we've just completed. Verse 14, now here is the question that Paul anticipates. He's just said God is selective, God is selective, verse 11, before they were ever born, before they had ever done good or evil, God according to election chose Jacob. Had nothing to do with Jacob. Had nothing to do with what he did. Nothing to do with what he was going to do, it had only to do with the good pleasure of God and His elective sovereign purpose. So God chose Jacob just like He chose Isaac.

Now somebody is going to say this, "God's not fair...that's not fair...that's not fair." And that's verse 14. "What shall we say then, is there unrighteousness or injustice with God?" Are we going to say God isn't fair because He chose Isaac over Ishmael, He chose Jacob over Esau and He's still doing that? Does the fact that God chooses men mean He's unjust, unfair and unrighteous? That's the question. And you want to know something? That's the same question people ask today. In fact, you can get in a group of preachers and a group of Christians and you can teach the doctrine of election and people will come up and say, "I can't accept that doctrine because that's not fair." I hear that...that's not fair. People still think the doctrine of sovereign election makes God unrighteous or unfair...unrighteous means not doing right, not doing what's right. So the person of God is at issue here. That's why I say this section deals with the person of God, the former one with the promise of God, the next one with the prophets of God. What shall we say then? As the doctrine of election is register on the mind that God chooses people to be saved before they're ever born? That He chose them in Him before the foundation of the world? That He wrote their name in the Lamb's Book of Life before there ever was such a person in existence?

And the objection comes and it's easily expected from the carnal mind, that's not fair...that's unrighteous...that's not right. You see, men are always prone to question God, always prone to

question God's character. Job's wife said, "Curse God and die, He's not fair." They've always been prone to accuse God of not doing right, not being just, not being fair. The only other alternative that you find in the secular world is that God's impotent. You've perhaps seen Rabbi Kushner's(?) book, When Bad Things Happen to Good People, he really doesn't want to accuse God of being unfair so he just says God's impotent, He can't help it. He can't prevent it.

What's Paul's answer, is God unfair? What's his answer? "God forbid." Strongest negative in the Greek language, "No, no, no, no, never, no way, impossible, absolutely absurd, the thought is madness. The thought is folly and instantly and abruptly must be denied and dismissed. It is blasphemy." God is righteous. God is just. God is fair. Genesis 18:25 says, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" He has no capacity for inconsistency, He has no capacity for inequity, He has no capacity for unfairness, He has no capacity for unrighteousness, He has no capacity for sin. Psalm 7:9 He's called the righteous one. In Psalm 116:5 it says, "Gracious is the Lord and righteous." In Psalm 119:137 it says, "Righteous art Thou, O Lord, and upright in all Thy judgments." Psalm 71 and verse 19 says, "The righteousness, O God...Thy righteousness, O God, is very high." "Thy right hand is full of righteousness," says Psalm 48:10. And Psalm 119:142 says, "Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness."

In Jeremiah 9:23 and 24 we read this, "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches, but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth." He's righteous.

So, God could never act inconsistently with who He is and He never changes. "I am the Lord," Malachi 3:6 says, "I change not." He's not changing and He's always been righteous.

So what appears as an unrighteous thing, but what appears as unfair or unjust only appears so to the carnal mind, to the limited biblical knowledge and to weak faith. So when someone comes along and says, "Well, if you believe in election, then God's not fair," that is the expression of a carnal mind, limited biblical knowledge or weak faith...very limited.

So, Paul pounces on such a question and says, "No, no, no, no." You say, "Well, that's not enough to satisfy me, just no. What's the proof?" I love this. Paul takes two proofs out of Scripture, he just quotes Scripture. It's so wonderful, he just quotes Scripture. And this is...this is really amazing. Verse 15, "For He saith to Moses," and now he quotes Exodus 33:19. And then in verse 17, "For the Scripture saith to Pharaoh," and there he quotes Exodus 9:16. You know what he does? He gives two Old Testament quotes. Now here he's dealing with a very very intense philosophical question. If you believe that God elects people to be saved and chooses them before they're ever born, before they've ever done anything right or wrong, chooses them to salvation, boy, that sounds unfair...Paul says it isn't unfair because God is righteous and to prove it here are two Scriptures.

And, you know, most of us in our culture would say, "Hey, I've got to have more than that." We would expect a rational argument, wouldn't we? We would expect some kind of logic. We would expect him to wax eloquent with some philosophical apologetics. We would expect him to go into some deep profound reasoning. He doesn't do it. He ignores the human mind. Why? It's the human mind that got us into the problem to begin with. It's our inability to expand our mind to comprehend God's elective right that made us ask the question, and our human mind isn't going to get the answer for us. So he bypasses all of that and goes immediately to the revelation of God, verse 15, "For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." That's a direct quote out of Exodus 33:19.

Let me give you the picture in that passage. Moses had asked to see a revelation of God. Moses had wanted to see God's glory. He wanted to behold God's glory. Why? Because he wanted his faith strengthened. He really did. You see, he had just been through a very trying experience in chapter 32, can I remind you of it briefly? In chapter 32 Israel was in sin, breaking God's laws. They were apostatizing and worshipping a golden calf. And it says in chapter 32 verse 30 they had sinned a great sin.

You know what God did? Killed 3,000 of them, that's right. He had a right to kill the whole nation for sin but He killed 3,000 of them in immediate judgment. Well, this made everybody who lived a little nervous. And it gave them the idea that God was a God of judgment, a God of wrath, a God of anger against sin. So in chapter 33 as God is calling Moses to a particular place of leadership, Moses says to God in chapter 33 between verses 13 and 16, "Are You going to be gracious to me?"

In other words, it's sort of like if I'm going to get in to Your service, Lord, I want to be sure You're going to be gracious to me cause I'm a sinner, too, and I just soon not get killed. He really wants to know that God will be gracious to him. He is personally concerned because he's seen God's wrath just annihilate 3,000 people. And in response to that, in Exodus 33:17 God says to him, "You have found grace in My sight...I'm going to be gracious to you."

Well, Moses says I appreciate that...but could You prove it? Could You...could You show me that? I mean, could You...cause I don't want to live my whole life in fear. Could You just show me that You're going to be gracious? Could I see Your glory?

And in Exodus 33:19 this is what God says, "I will make all My goodness pass before you and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."

That is a formal declaration of the divine prerogative. He says I'll show you My grace, I'll show you My mercy and remember, I reserve the right to be gracious to whom I will be gracious and to be

merciful to whom I will be merciful. In other words, God says I'll show you My sovereign grace, I'll show you My sovereign mercy which I dispense as I will. It is My right as God to judge 3,000 and My right as God to choose to be gracious to you. That's divine prerogative.

And since all of us are sinners and all of us deserve judgment, none of us can claim a right to grace and none of us can claim a right to mercy, then none of us is wronged if mercy and grace are withheld, right? And so it is not unrighteous. God is God, all men deserve judgment. Exodus 33 God says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." And remember that God chooses to be merciful in Himself, not because of something worthy in the sinner. He chooses because of something in Himself.

Now we don't want to split hairs, Paul sort of uses his own terms in referring to Exodus 33:19, he uses the term "mercy" and "compassion." We don't want to split hairs too much on that but I think it would be best to see that in these terms. Mercy is the action, and compassion is the feeling behind the action. When God desires to be compassionate, He acts in mercy. So the Lord then is not unrighteous in electing because the Scripture says He has a right to do that, and that's Paul's answer.

In other words, he never makes an appeal to the human mind. Do you know why? Because your computer can't handle it. There is no rational argument that you could take...as Dick and I were talking about it he said, "Your...your electrical system would blow up...you're not wired sufficiently to comprehend these things." And so there is no rational argument offered to you, only a scriptural one.

And so it follows from Scripture, verse 16, "So then it is not of him that willeth," that has the inner intention, the inner desire for mercy, the inner desire for compassion, "nor of him that runneth," that's the outer effort. It's not because somebody wants it in their heart, it's not because somebody chases it, "But it is of God that shows mercy." Mercy doesn't come because men desire it. Mercy doesn't come because men work for it. It comes because God predetermines to give it. Ishmael desired the blessing, didn't get it. Read Genesis 27. Esau ran for the blessing, didn't get it. It's not of him that willeth and it's not of him that runneth, it's of God. Neither of them received it.

I want you to look at Hebrews 11:16 for a moment. This will illustrate from what we saw last week about Jacob and Esau. Hebrews 11 verse 16, it says there is Isaac, "He that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son of whom it was said in Isaac shall thy seed be called." God clearly identifies that Isaac is the one. Isaac is the one to whom the promise is given. Now when Isaac has two children, Jacob and Esau, it is Jacob. Verse 20, "Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come by faith Jacob when he was dying," and so forth. Jacob becomes the next in the line.

Would you notice a little statement "by faith?" God chose Isaac but by faith Isaac. God chose Jacob but by faith Jacob. I want you to keep this in mind that while God is doing the choosing and the

choosing is predetermined by His elective sovereign majesty, it is nonetheless confirmed by what? Faith. And that always has to be there. The other side of it, tragic side of it is that the Bible says Esau couldn't receive the blessing, the promise, even though he sought it with tears.

So the salvation of any man is not due to his own good desire. It's not due to his own diligent seeking, but solely the pleasure of God...the pleasure of God.

Then he offers a second Scripture, look at verse 17. "For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh," and now he picks another illustration from Exodus 9:16 where God through Moses, here it's called Scripture, when God speaks it is Scripture. God speaking through Moses, Scripture...says, "Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up," this is to Pharaoh, "that I might show My power in thee and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth."

Now God says I raised you up, Pharaoh. You were also elect, not to salvation but to a unique purpose. I raised you up. That's a very interesting word in the Greek, it means to cause to stand up...to cause to be prominent. And the idea here is to bring someone forward on the stage of history. In fact, the same term is used in the Septuagint to refer to the raising up of someone on the scene of history who is a significant person. You'll find it's also used that way in Numbers 24:19, you can check 2 Samuel 12:11, Job 5:11, Habakkuk 1:6 and Zechariah 11:16. In passages like that we see this used to refer to someone who stands up at a crucial point in history becoming a central figure.

So in Exodus 9:16, God through Moses says to Pharaoh, and the Pharaoh was probably Amenhotep II, "I raised you up." In other words, you're the Pharaoh because I determined that you'd be the Pharaoh. "And I raised you up...He says...that I might show My power in you and My name might be declared throughout all the earth." Now that Pharaoh that God put into power because God controls history, that Pharaoh that God put into power was the man who more than any other man became the means of the greatest Old Testament display of God's redeeming power, right? When any Jew goes back to celebrate God's redemption, what is it that he celebrates? The Passover...that's the deliverance from Egypt. That is the Old Testament benchmark of redemption. And that's why the Jews kept the Passover because it was their identification of God as a redeeming God for He redeemed them out of Egypt. And that was symbolic of their soul redemption as well. And so God raises up this Pharaoh, says Exodus 9:16 in the very words of God spoken through Moses, and says, "You are raised up so that I might display My power and My name throughout all the earth." And he did.

It was because Pharaoh oppressed the people of God, it was because Pharaoh wouldn't let them go that God brought the miracles and the plagues, right? It was because of Pharaoh that the Exodus occurred, that the Red Sea parted, that the whole Egyptian army was drowned. In other words, God really put Himself on display because this man stood in the way. He was used by God for God's own display of His glory.

In Exodus chapter 15 there is a marvelous song of redemption that is penned by Moses. It says, "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song to the Lord and spoke saying, I will sing unto the Lord for He hath triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea, the Lord is my strength and song and He is become my salvation. He is my God and I will prepare Him an habitation, my fathers' God and I will exalt Him. The Lord is a man of war, the Lord is His name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath He cast into the sea. His chosen captains were drowned in the Red Sea. The depths have covered them, they sank into the bottom as a stone. Thy right hand, O Lord, has become glorious in power. Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy." And this goes on, on, on all the way down to verse 19. God was on display. God was receiving glory. God was receiving majesty. Verse 17, "O Lord, O Lord," verse 18, "The Lord shall reign forever and ever." That, my friends, is the Hallelujah chorus of the Old Testament. And God got His glory and demonstrated His power and manifested His name throughout all the earth by what He did in delivering the children of Israel out of the bondage of this man and He says in Exodus 9:16, "I raised up that man for that reason...for that reason. Tremendous truth.

Notice again down in verse 17, "That My name might be declared throughout all the earth," and believe me, that is exactly what happened. When God did this, His reputation fast spread throughout all the earth. It says in Exodus 15:14, "The people shall hear and be afraid. Sorrow shall take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia, the chiefs of Edom shall be amazed, the mighty men of Moab trembling shall take hold upon them, all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away." And when the word spread about God delivering the people of Israel, that is exactly what happened.

And you can see it in many other passages in the Old Testament, when, for example, in Joshua chapter 2 it says, "Rahab said to the men, I know that the Lord hath given you the land and that your terror is fallen upon us and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you." Here were the Canaanites and the Jews came in, you remember, and they wanted to check out the city. And Rahab the harlot put them up. And she says, "I know all about you, I know all about you for we have heard...Joshua 2:10...how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og whom you utterly destroyed. And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man because of you, for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and in earth beneath." I mean, they got the message. It went out all over the place...everywhere.

And you read, for example, Psalm 105, Psalm 106 and Psalm 136 and those Psalms celebrate the fact that the world of men heard about God who parted the sea and delivered His people from Egypt. And so Pharaoh Amenhotep II, if indeed that is the one and we guess that it is, that man was raised up for no other reason than that God should use him to display His power and declare His name. One writer says, "He was the open adversary of God and avowed implacable adversary yet a divine

purpose was fulfilled in his life and that purpose and nothing else is the explanation of his very being."

Therefore, verse 18 says, "Therefore, hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy and whom He will...what?...He hardens." The first part of verse 18 is referring to the illustration of Moses. He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. The second part of that verse is referring to the illustration of Pharaoh whom He will He hardens...skleruno, to make hard. Metaphorically it means to render stubborn or obstinate.

You say, "Why was Pharaoh so stubborn? I won't let them go...I won't let them go...I won't let them go?" I'll tell you why. Exodus 4:21, "God said, I will harden his heart that he shall not let the people go." Why did God do that? Because God wanted to use this occasion to put His glory on display. God hardened Pharaoh's heart. By the way, it says that ten times in those chapters in Exodus...ten times, God hardened his heart, God hardened his heart, God hardened his heart. By the way, it also says several times, less times but several, "Pharaoh hardened his heart." It is not that God alone does it but that man confirms that by his own act and therein lies the irreconcilable tension between the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. It's like Judas. Judas was appointed before he was ever born to betray the Lord Jesus Christ, yet bore the guilt for it himself. And so as Moses emphasizes mercy in the sovereignty of God, Pharaoh emphasizes hardening.

The passage is saying that God will give mercy to whom He will and He will harden whom He will. He is sovereign God. That's a strong statement...strong statement. But what Paul is trying to say is, "Look, don't you come to God with any of this it's not fair, God, it's unrighteous, it's not right that You should choose some to be saved. The answer is it is right because God is a righteous God." And the only answer you'll ever get out of Paul is that the Bible says that God said, "I'll have mercy on whom I'll have mercy, and I'll harden whom I will." And if God says it, that's the end of the discussion, right? And if we try to use our little pea brains to figure it out, we'll blow our fuses long before we get there and we'll wind up accusing God of injustice which is madness and blasphemy.

I mean, even to the disciples in John 15:16 He said, "You have not chosen Me, but...what?...I have chosen you." And Jesus said, "No man comes unto Me except the Father draws him." It's always been that way...never any different.

Now that brings up a second question. Same question today as it was then, look at verse 19, "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will?" You know what you're going to say to me? You're going to say, if God chooses who is going to get mercy and who is going to get hardened, then how can He find fault with me? I mean, if I don't have a choice anyhow, how can He blame me? You understand the question? That's the question people still ask today. First of all they say, "Well, if you believe in election, then that's not fair. Paul says that's fair because God's God and God's in charge and the Bible says that God said, "I'll show mercy to whom I will and

I'll harden whom I will," and that settles it. If that's what the Bible says, that's what God has a right to do. And if you don't understand it, the problem isn't an unjust God, the problem is an ignorant man.

And then somebody's going to say naturally, and I've heard it said many many times, "Well, if God does all the choosing, and God gives mercy to whom He will and hardens whom He will, how can He find fault with me? If I had nothing to do with it, how can I be held responsible?" That's a good question. And we'll answer that question next time.

Listen as we close, very carefully, God is a God who makes choices. Now don't leave me with your thinking, stay right where you are. God is a God who makes choices. He has a right to make choices and He makes them according to His own will. In Joshua 11 verse 18, "Joshua made war a long time with all those kings-- and it names them in verses 16 and 17--There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon; all others they took in battle." Went into the land with Joshua, everybody wanted to fight them. Why? "For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might destroy them utterly and that they might have no favor but that He might destroy them." Pretty strong language, isn't it?

You say, "Why did all those nations fight Israel?" God hardened their hearts. God hardened their hearts, brought them to battle that He might destroy them.

Go over to chapter 11 of Romans verse 7, compare it with a New Testament passage. He has just talked about the fact that salvation is by grace in verse 6, it's grace. What then? Verse 7 says, "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for." Israel didn't get the salvation by grace. Why? Well, the election hath obtained it and the rest were...what?...blinded. That's what it says. You say, "Well why don't all the Jews believe?" The elect believe, the rest are...what?...blinded. You say, "Does God do that?" Yes He does...He does that, that's what the Bible says. You can't argue with it.

First Thessalonians chapter 5 verse 9 says this, "For God hath no appointed us to wrath but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." Now wait a minute, you mean He has appointed some to wrath? That's right. But not us. Why are you saved? Because God has not appointed you to wrath...but He has appointed you to obtain salvation. You know why you're a Christian, dear friend? Because the world began you were chosen. You say why? I don't know why. You say, "What right does God have to do that?" He has the right because He's God and God is righteous and it's right for Him to do that and He has a right to show mercy to whom He will show mercy and to harden whom He will.

You say, "But how can it be?" Listen, beloved, because all of us deserve judgment. All of us deserve damnation. All of us deserve hell. Why would it be unjust if in mercy He chooses to redeem some of us? I mean, if you want justice out of God, get ready for the heat. Simply stated.

In 2 Peter 2 verse 12, talks about the natural brute beasts and this is talking about most likely false teachers, false prophets, "Made to be taken and destroyed." Amazing! These people were actually made for destruction. It's very strong language. And those are just samples of many such passages.

What does it say to us? Where do we come after this? And this is just half of it, you've got to, folks, if you're hanging on the limb, stay there for a while, where does this take us? I'll tell you where it takes me. It takes me to the place where I am fully thankful to God for my salvation, right? Because before I was born He chose me. And not based on anything He knew I would do or not do. And I deserve to be judged in hell forever. I deserve to pay for my own sin. I deserve to pay for my rebellion against God. But God has chosen to be merciful to whom He will be merciful...and harden whom He will. And I bless His name that He chose me, I don't understand that. I don't understand that.

And there's one other thing that helps me, too, and that is this, that Jesus said, "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise...what?...cast out." And the balance in my own mind with this absolute electing sovereignty of God is that He never refuses an eager hungry sinner who desires to come. Now there's a tension there that can't be resolved in the human mind, can't be. But know this, that everyone that is saved is so because God elects that person. That's what the Bible teaches. And those that are lost by God have they been hardened and blinded. And that's His prerogative. And if you're at the point now where Paul is in the passage and you're saying, "Well then how can you ever hold people responsible for what they do?" you wait till next time, we're going to answer that question. And it must be answered. And it will be answered. And it will pull it all together in a marvelous way. Well, let's bow in prayer.

Moses was a Jew, Pharaoh was a Gentile, both were sinners. In fact, both were murderers. Both saw God's wondrous works. Moses was saved, Pharaoh was lost. God raised up Pharaoh that he might reveal His glory and power. He showed mercy on Moses that He might use him to show His glory and power. Moses received the mercy and compassion of God, Pharaoh was hardened. Both say something very important. God is holy and must punish sin. Pharaoh illustrates that. God is loving and longs to save sinners. Moses illustrates that. I suppose if everyone was saved we wouldn't understand God's holiness. If everyone was lost, we wouldn't understand His love. And so, He gives mercy to whom He will give mercy. And whom He hardens, He hardens. And we understand His holiness and we understand His love.

Father, that's the best we can do and so we live in faith, we just trust that You are too loving to be unnecessarily unkind, too wise to make a mistake, too just to be unfair and too holy to tolerate sin. And we do not reason from our own minds back to You. O God, save us from creating You in our image. Help us to understand that You are the sovereign God who does according to His own good pleasure and yet mysteriously in no way does that violate the volition of a man who can choose life or death, heaven or hell. And how those two seemingly opposite things are harmonized is for You to determine, not us.

As we think about the fact that we can come to Christ whosoever will, we're thankful for that opportunity. And as we think about the fact that we were chosen before the foundation of the world, we're thankful for that sovereignty. Either way, Lord, we offer our praise to you and our thanks for Christ's sake. Amen.

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