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

The Love of God, Part 5
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 90-81

At first glance, a subject like the love of God may seem somewhat simple and easy to grasp, but upon greater reflection, as we have learned, it is profound and far-reaching and inexplicable and inscrutable at some points. We find ourselves at such a point in the discussion in this our last message and I want to draw your attention to the ninth chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans, Romans chapter 9, as we conclude our series on the love of God.

Many people think that because God is love and He is, the Bible says so, and they think that because God loves the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son to be the Savior of the world that therefore God must love every person in the world with the same kind of love and to the same degree and with the same purpose in mind. But that is not the case as Scripture makes very clear.

We have already learned two propositions. One is that God's love to the world is unlimited in extent. That is true, He does love the world. He loves them enough to be good to them. That's common grace. He loves them enough to feel pity and compassion over them. He loves them enough to warn them about sin and its consequences. And He loves them enough that the gospel should be preached to all of them. So in that sense God's love is unlimited in its extent, it does reach the whole world.

But secondly we learned another very important proposition and that is that God's love to the world is limited in degree. He loves them all but not to the degree that He loves His own. It is His own, according to John 13:1, that He loves eistelosin the Greek, unto perfection, or to the max, to the end, to the limit forever. And we learned about that. Yes God loves the world but not like He loves His own to whom because of that love He is merciful and gracious and forgiving, to whom He gives lavishly all good things. His love for His own is that inseparable, unbreakable, unconquerable, unchangeable, unwavering, unfading love that is impervious to all attacks and assaults. It is that kind, sanctifying, purging, purifying love that leads to godliness. It is that limitless love for only and known only by those who belong to Him by faith.

And then there is a third proposition that we began to discuss last time and we'll finish this morning. God's love to the world is unlimited in extent. God's love to the world is limited in degree. And thirdly, God's love to the world is

is qualified by the demands of His glory. It is qualified by the demands of His glory. That is a very important statement. I thought about it a long time before I stated it that way because there is so much at stake. God does not have an unconditional and unqualified love for the world. It is qualified and it is qualified not by the demands of people, not by the demands of human reason but by the demands of God's own personal glory. That is to say, God defines that love consistently with all of His other attributes. And it is precisely at this point that we have to realize that because God loves does not mean that He is obligated to an unqualified love of all people equally. He is not a prisoner of that love. Or worse, He is not a prisoner of man's assumptions about that love or man's wishes about that love or man's desires for that love. Nowhere in Scripture will we find that God is an unqualified lover of all people equally. He is not. God's love is qualified to the world, to all. And it is qualified by the demands placed upon Him for personal integrity. That is to be consistent with His nature. God does not love, God cannot love in a way that makes love unmixed, untouched, unmingled or unaffected by, for example, wrath, judgment, justice, holiness, righteousness.

In other words, God has to love in a way which is reflective of all of His other personal attributes. And that's what we're looking at as we come to Romans chapter 9. Here we have an incredible insight, a thorough and comprehensive insight into God, into the demands of God's glory that involve themselves in the saving enterprise. Obviously if you have read the book of Romans you know that by the time you have completed chapter 8 you have completed the greatest treatise on salvation ever penned. It's all about God loving sinners and saving them through Jesus Christ. It's all about the wonderful realities of justification and sanctification. It's all about repentance and faith. It's about being depraved sinner and dying and rising again in union with Jesus Christ to newness of life. It's all about salvation. And salvation, of course, is all built on the premise of God's love for sinners. So we could say safely that we've been reading for eight chapters about God's saving love.

But when you come to chapter 9 you are introduced to a most important issue with regard to God's saving love. And that is how God's saving love mingles itself with all other of God's attributes which must be considered in line with God's saving purpose. As you go back, for example, into Romans chapter 1 you will remember that Paul says in verse 16, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile." In other words, God's love has sent a gospel message across the earth to every person, Jew and Gentile, that says if you believe, this gospel is the power of God unto salvation. It is then that God's love has extended to all men and provided for them a gospel invitation. We could conclude when we come to the end of chapter 8 that the love of God has sent the gospel to the ends of the earth because God desires all to hear and believe, and that would be true.

But then the immediate question would come up...if God has provided a Savior for the world and a call to believe to the world and God has provided a sufficient sacrifice on the cross for all the sins of all mankind, if it is God's desire that none perish and if God wants the Apostles to proclaim the truth from one end of the globe to the other, why is it that people aren't saved if it's God's will? That really

is the question that leads to Romans 9, 10 and 11. Let's start in Romans 9 with the first five verses.

By the way, chapter 8 ends with the great statement on the love of God, the inseparable love of God which belongs to those who are in Christ. It's right after that...that completion, that great doxological completion of chapter 8 that sums up this massive saving love of God that has been delineated in these eight chapters that Paul says this, "I'm telling the truth in Christ, I'm not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart." Why? "For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh who are Israelites." You know what he's saying? He's saying, "You know, I have this great sorrow, I have this unceasing grief, I would almost wish my own damnation if it could achieve the salvation of the Jews." And that's the question. If God is so loving, if the love of God is so magnanimous, so glorious, so great, so inseparable, so unbreakable, if God has this desire to save, if God wants the gospel preached to Jew and Gentile, if He sent His Son to be the Savior of the world, why aren't the Jews saved? Can't God get what He wants? Is He impotent? Is it that? Is it that He wants it but He can't do it? Or is He indifferent? He said He wants it but He's busy, He's not really thinking about it now so some folks are slipping through. Or maybe there was a time when He felt fairly positive about humanity and He doesn't feel that way anymore. Or thirdly, is He dishonest? He says He loves the world and He says He desires men to be saved but He's really not telling you the truth. Is God impotent? Is God indifferent? Is God dishonest? Because of this grand scheme, this...this incredible design for redemption isn't happening, maybe God has failed and He's failed on the point of impotence, indifference or dishonesty.

And Paul's going to answer that here. And he starts to answer that by simply saying, "Look, I recognize that Israel's not saved. And I recognize it so profoundly and deeply that it causes me great sorrow and unceasing grief and I could even wish myself to be damned forever if they would be saved. That's how much I care." He is expressing really something of the grief of God, isn't he. You remember that God Himself cried tears through the eyes of Jeremiah over the unbelief of Israel. And Jesus Himself cried tears over the lostness of Jerusalem. The heart of God is grieved and sorrowful. And Paul is reflecting that as the messenger of God and an Apostle of Jesus Christ, as he calls himself. He says the thing that makes it so sad is the Israelites are the ones, verse 4, who have the adoption, who have the glory, the covenants, the giving of the Law, the temple, the promises whose are the fathers, the patriarchs and from whom comes the Messiah according to the flesh who is over all, God blessed forever.

In other words, they're the privileged people of all people. So they make the greatest illustration of the point, if God has provided such a massive marvelous scheme for salvation and it's to touch the world and it's far-reaching as an expression of God's great love, then why aren't people saved? And most particularly, why are not Jews saved? After all, they are not just people, they are the chosen people. They were given the adoption as God's sons, they were given the Shekinah glory to lead them. They were given the covenants and the Law and the temple and all the promises and theirs

were the great fathers, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and all the rest, and from whom came Messiah. Has God failed? Has He failed at the point of impotence, indifference, dishonesty?

Well the answer is in verse 6 and this is where we want to pick up the text. "But it is not as though the Word of God has failed." No. The fact that all Jews are not converted does not mean God doesn't tell the truth, or can't keep His Word or is too indifferent to bother about it. It does not mean God's Word has failed. Now it's one thing to say it doesn't mean that but...but...but why, or how? Could you explain it? And he starts in verse 6 right on down through the rest of the chapter to explain it. And here's how he explains it. "You have to understand God's saving power, you have to understand God's saving love, you have to understand God's saving purpose and plan in complete accord with every other attribute He possesses." In other words, His love cannot spell the end of His wrath. His love cannot spell the end of His judgment, justice, vengeance, punishment, anger. Those are part of God as well. Those make up His character and His being so that whatever it is that God does with regard to love is perfectly mingled and in absolute harmony with every other attribute.

And you remember this, beloved, the whole purpose of the redemptive scheme ultimately is for the glory of...whom?...of God before angels and before men. And for God to glorify Himself means to put Himself on display. And so what God is going to do in redemption is put Himself on display. And to put Himself on display means to manifest the fullness of who He is...the fullness of all of His attributes. And that is why I say again that the love of God for the world and for all of us, the world of unbelievers and believers, God's love in general will be qualified by the demands of His own glory because in the end it is the servant of His self-glorification.

Now with that understanding we can now see the rest of this chapter unfold. And I'm going to show you seven attributes of God that have to work in harmony with His love...seven attributes of God are outlined here as Paul answers this issue. And they work in perfect accord with God's love.

First, He is glorified in His sovereignty...He is glorified in His sovereignty. Verse 6, "It is not as though the Word of God has failed," here's the reasons, "for they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel." What? What is he saying? He is saying there are two Israels, there is a descendant Israel, that's a natural Israel, that is the Jewish race that came out of the loins of Abraham who was the man God used to found the nation. There is that natural physical Israel. But not all of that Israel is the true Israel. In other words, within the natural Israel there is a spiritual Israel. And that is what Paul was talking about in Romans 2:28 and 29 when he said, "It is not the one who is outwardly circumcised who is a Jew, it is the one who is inwardly circumcised who is a true Jew." But here Paul says, "Look, God never intended to save all Israel." That's what he's saying.

God's Word has not failed. It is not that He is impotent, indifferent or dishonest. God never intended all Jews to be saved in the first place...listen to me...because if God had intended all Jews to be saved, all Jews would be saved. That is a hard thing to understand but that is exactly what Scripture

says and that is consistent with the sovereignty of God. Israel's unbelief does not cancel God's Word, it does not somehow detract from the integrity of His character, it does not mean that He is impotent, indifferent or dishonest. God never intended to save all Israel. All natural Israel is not the true Israel. God always purposed within natural Israel to save only some Jews so that the real spiritual Israel was within the nation. The nation...listen carefully...was elected to privilege but individuals were chosen for salvation. The real Israel is the Israel of faith, the elect Israel, elect to salvation.

And that is how Paul answers it. He answers it by saying God is glorified in His sovereignty. That's the first attribute that you see out of the seven here. God is glorified in His sovereignty. It manifests who He is to demonstrate to the whole of creation that He is in control of everything. He makes choices. He is sovereign.

Verse 7 follows up, "Neither are they all children because they are Abraham's descendant." He says the same thing. They're not all spiritual children of God just because they descended from Abraham. Not everybody who is a Jew, not everybody who comes from the loins of Abraham was ever intended to be a child of God. And again he is saying the same thing. And he offers proof. Here's the first illustration. And in verse 7 he quotes out of Genesis 21:12, goes way back to when God was first choosing Abraham and the nation and God said, "Through Isaac your descendants will be named."

Now God made a choice when He chose Abraham, right? By the very virtue of choosing Abraham, He passed over everybody else. But then once He chose Abraham, He gave Abraham a wife by the name of Sarah, He made a promise that He would through the loins of Abraham bless and there would come not only a national Israel through the loins of Abraham but there would come a calling or an election to spiritual salvation among those people. But God was selective because Abraham had two sons...did he not? The first born son of Abraham was named Ishmael, he was not born to Sarah, he was born to Hagar, a hand maiden but nonetheless was the first born of Abraham. But God passed by Ishmael and the second son born to Abraham and Sarah was whom? Isaac. And God chose Isaac. From the very beginning what the Apostle Paul is saying, "Look, not everybody who came out of the loins of Abraham was chosen by God. God passed by Ishmael." And that's illustrative of God's sovereign selective process. He always purposed to choose. Ishmael was excluded, was rejected.

You say, "Well what does that do?" It demonstrates God's sovereignty. It demonstrates that God is the ultimate chooser. He is sovereignly selective. And that shows His majestic control of everything. Verse 8, "That is...furthering this discussion...it is not the children of the flesh...that is the physical children of Abraham or Isaac...who are children of God but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants." In other words, he's just following up with the same idea. God has chosen people to be children of the flesh in the nation Israel, but not all the children of flesh are the children of the promise. The promise relates to spiritual reality, the flesh relates to physical. So again he's simply saying God made a choice. And His choice was, "I'll pick a man, Abraham. Out of the loins of

Abraham he had two sons, I'll pick the second son, Isaac. Out of the loins of Isaac, if you will, there will be children of the flesh and out of the children of the flesh I will choose some to be the children of promise." Isaac really was a child of promise in the covenantal sense. And out of his loins came both children of the flesh and of the promise.

Then verse 9, "For this is a word of promise, at this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son." Now that verse 9 is quoting Genesis 18:10 where God is saying, "I'm going to pick Sarah's son, not Hagar's." Why? Why did God do that? Ishmael was equally Abraham's son and the right of primogenitor was recognized to be through the father and in some ways it didn't really matter who the mother was in patriarchal times, as you well know. Why? Purely because God is sovereign. Purely because God selects because He is in charge. And this demonstrates His absolute uninfluenced sovereignty. It is a strong illustration of unconditional election in its most unequivocal expression. God said I'm going to pass by Ishmael and Sarah's going to have a son and he's going to be the one. God made the choice. Abraham had two sons, several sons, only one was God's choice, Isaac.

It doesn't stop there. Isaac had two sons. Who were they? Jacob and Esau. Look at verse 10, "Not only this, there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac..." Verse 12, skip verse 11, down to verse 12, "It was said to her, The older will serve the younger." Hum...who said that? God, Genesis 25:23. God said I'm picking...I'm picking the younger. And that's not how it was. It should have been Ishmael, by the right of primogenitor, the right of inheritance, the first born. It should have been Esau, remember when the children were born, the twins, Esau came out first and Esau really had the birthright, Esau had the right to the inheritance. But you remember, Esau treated it with disdain and when he was hungry one time swapped it for a meal with his brother Jacob. It should have been Ishmael and it should have been Esau. But it was Isaac and it was Jacob.

Why? Because before they were ever born God said, "I choose them." That's how it is. And what it demonstrates is God's sovereignty. Here you have unconditional choice, unconditional election, if you like that word. And then the principle is articulated in verse 11, "For though the twins were not yet born and hadn't done anything good or bad, in order that God's purpose according to His choice might stand, not because of their works but because of Him who calls it was said to her the older will serve the younger." In other words, God made the choice with no regard for either of those two young men, no regard for their conduct, their life whether they were good, whether they were bad. It had nothing to do with them, but purely and only on the basis of God's purpose according to His choice that He might make very clear early on in redemptive history that He was the one who made the choices. And that being a child of promise, being a child of God, being a true Jew, being really an Israelite in the heart was a divine issue and not a human one. So before the twins were born, as before Isaac was born, God said the older will serve the younger, that's because that's the way I want it in order to demonstrate that My purpose according to My choice will stand.

The point is, what was God putting on display? He was displaying His what? His sovereignty. He was saying you are to worship Me and you are to adore Me and you are to honor Me and respect Me and you are to praise Me and to glorify Me. And in order to do that you have to understand what is true about Me and it starts with recognizing that I'm in charge, I'm sovereign.

God chooses. God determines destinies before men and women are born apart from anything in them. That is uninfluenced sovereignty. God is glorified in such sovereign selection. It shows His control. It shows His rulership. And our God is a sovereign God.

And then you come to verse 13. "Just as it is written," and that's quoting Malachi 1:2 and 3, "Just as it is written, Jacob I

loved but Esau...what?...I hated." What? You mean the love of God is that selective? Yes, because the love of God...the love of God is subject, it is qualified by the demands of His glory. And God is glorified in His sovereign choices.

You say, "But it's awfully strong to say Esau have I hated." But listen, if God didn't hate then we wouldn't understand His love. We wouldn't understand the magnanimity, the amazing magnanimity of sovereign love if there weren't hate. Sacrificial saving love is revealed when God's holy hatred is manifest. And God is going to put Himself on display forever to men and angels and we're going to see, and we've already seen, that God's love means something because God's hate means something. It is amazing to see God's love for unworthy sinners freely originating in His own holy will when He has every reason to hate us. But that's the glory of His sovereign love.

So God is going to be glorified in His sovereignty. He's going to make choices. And those choices are going to involve whom He ultimately and eternally will love. He loves the world in one sense, but as I said, that turns to hate. He loves His own in an unbreakable love that cannot ever turn to anything but more love. So God is glorified then in His sovereignty. And whatever His love is it's going to exist within the framework of the manifestation of His sovereignty which includes loving some and hating others. That proves He's in charge, He makes choices.

Secondly, God is glorified not only in His sovereignty but He is glorified in His judgment, or His justice. Paul anticipates what somebody is going to say here. Verse 14, "What shall we say then? What are we going to say about this? Are we going to say, God's not fair, that's not fair?" That's what he's assuming here, this imaginary objective is a real objection to anybody who thinks this thing through and he imagines and it's sort of an imaginary objector there throwing these questions which he answers all throughout the book of Romans. It's part of his polemic style, part of his dialogue in progressing logically through his presentation. And here he assumes the question...well that's not

fair...it's not fair for God to love Jacob and not Esau, it's not fair before they were born for God to choose the younger over the older...it's not fair for God to choose Isaac and not Ishmael...it's not fair. And it's even more not fair cause they didn't have anything to do with it.

Is God not fair? His answer in verse 14, "There is no injustice with God, is there?" And then he adds in the Greek, megennota(?), the strongest negative in the language...no, no, no, no, no, such a thought is madness. Does the fact that God chose mean that He's unfair? No. Fair sends everybody where? To hell. Justice damns everybody. And furthermore, God would never do anything unfair. He can be accused of being selectively gracious but not unfair. Fair, you don't want fair, my friend. I don't want fair, I don't want justice, I want mercy. God could never be accused of being unjust or unfair though He could be accused and willingly so of being selectively gracious.

Genesis 18:25 says, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" And you say, "Well wait a minute, is He fair if He saves some?" Yes because He has provided a sacrifice for them in the person of Jesus Christ which satisfies His justice. Their sins having been paid for by Christ, justice is freed from its obligation and grace can be granted.

Furthermore, whatever God does is the definition of justice, right? It's not like an earthly judge. We're all poking around in the newspapers and listening to all the dialogue about Judge Ito and everybody is concerned that he does right. That's because we know he's a human being. Like any other human being, he may do right most of the time, he may do right almost all the time but because he's a human being he won't do right every time. And furthermore, there is a standard that has been laid down in the law which defines what right is. That's not how God is. God always does right and whatever God does is what right is. Whatever God does is the definition of justice. And you can be sure of this that for those sinners for whom God is gracious, a sufficient satisfaction of God's justice has been made. And that's what happened on the cross. Psalm 119:137 says, "Righteousness is Yours, O Lord, You are upright in all Your ways." Jeremiah 9:23 and 24 says essentially the same thing.

But we look at God and we say, "It's not fair. It's not just." And we're shouting up there with our puny minds. We don't understand what's fair. We don't understand what's just, except from a fallen perspective. You see, whenever you question the justice of God, it's a display of a carnal mind. It's a display of a limited knowledge. It's a display of pride. And it's perhaps mostly a display of weak faith. God knows exactly what He's doing. You may see the condemnation of the ungodly as unjust and it isn't. God has a holy purpose that is beyond what you could understand.

I read this week an interesting little story about a boy who got up very early in the morning just at daybreak and up before his father expected him to be up and he was sitting on his bed and looking out the back window of his little house somewhere in the midwest. And he saw his father go out into the backyard and he went out to a little place where he had a little puppy. The boy had a little puppy

that he loved and he watched as his father went toward the puppy. And his father then when he reached the puppy took out a gun and killed it. And the little boy was absolutely astounded and appalled at the behavior of his father. And in his pajamas he went running out the back door of the house, across the yard saying, "You killed my puppy, I hate you, I hate you, you killed my puppy."

The story went on to say the father did what he needed to do to comfort the little fellow and to discipline him for inappropriate conduct. But he really was so upset he couldn't understand what was going on. The article said that a little later when he was a young man, rummaging through some of his father's things, he found clippings about a severe epidemic of rabies at that very time in his life. Went to a dictionary and looked up something about rabies and then realized that his father's action was an expression of love for him.

You cannot understand the motives of God from an infantile perspective, but you can learn to trust Him. Is that not true? And if you trust His love then you know what He does is right. And if indeed He is going to provide an eternal place of bliss and glory and happiness for us, there can't be sinners there with deadly bites. That's why it says in Revelation 22 that none of them are going to get into heaven. The Lord knows His own motives. The Lord knows His own purposes. Don't question it. Madness, he says, no, no, no, God is not unfair, God has satisfied His justice and God does what's right.

Number three, God's love is in accord with His sovereignty and His justice and thirdly, God's love is in accord with His mercy. Verse 15, and here's the point, "He says to Moses, I'll have mercy on whom I'll have mercy, I'll have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So it doesn't depend on the man who wills or the man who runs but on God who has mercy."

You know what he's saying here, "Look, I'll be merciful to whoever I want and it won't depend on them, it's purely My decision." That's exactly what He's saying. You say, "What was behind that?" Well verse 15 is a quote from Exodus 33:19. Moses went to God, he said, "Show me Your glory, put Yourself on display." Well, you know, God could have put Himself on display in a lot of ways. God could have said, "Okay, puff..." and Moses is gone. God could have burned Him to a crisp, sent him to hell. That would have displayed His glory, wouldn't it? You say, "Why do you say that?" Because just prior to Moses asking that question God had killed 3,000 sinning Israelites...wiped them out. And you know what? He spared all the rest. And all the rest were a lot...a lot. God killed 3,000 and He spared the rest. And then He went to Moses and asked Moses to do this task of leading and Moses says, "I'm not going to do it until You show me Your glory." And then God said to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

What do you mean? Well, God says I have the prerogative to destroy like I did the 3,000. I have the prerogative to spare the rest. You want to see My glory? It just so happens that I choose to show you the glory of My mercy. I was merciful to the rest and I'm going to be merciful to you, Moses. And

it has nothing to do with what you want." Isn't that amazing? Verse 16, "It doesn't depend on the man who wills, it has nothing to do with what you do or achieve but on God who has mercy." Mercy doesn't come because somebody wants it. Esau ran for the blessing, didn't get it. Ishmael desired the blessing, didn't get it. God says I give My mercy to whomever I wish. I demonstrate My saving compassion to whomever I desire. And I desire to give it to you, Moses. You know?

Thank You, amen, hallelujah, oh glory. And that ought to be our attitude all the time, right? God loves but His love is connected to His sovereignty, His justice and His mercy. It is also connected to His power, number five...number four, I'm sorry. It is connected to His power.

Verse 17, His love cannot be manifest apart from His power so in verse 17 going on in this marvelous insight he goes back to the Old Testament and reaches back to Exodus chapter 9, "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh," this is the Lord speaking, "For this very purpose I raised you up to demonstrate My power in you and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth." Wow! So then, He has mercy on whom He desires and He hardens whom He desires.

Do you know what that says? That says God raised up Pharaoh. What do you mean by that? Pharaoh's...God allowed Pharaoh's mother to bear Pharaoh. God allowed Pharaoh to be born into the royal family. God allowed Pharaoh to live long enough to get to the throne. God allowed Pharaoh to get to the throne, develop his power at the throne. And then when God got Pharaoh at the throne, God made sure that Pharaoh's heart was hardened so that he would put up a fight, a fight which when confronted with the power of God would give God the opportunity to display Himself, right? What would have happened if Moses had gone in and said, "Hey, Pharaoh, let my people go?" And Pharaoh said, "Yeah, sure. I mean, we'll grease the wheels, what do we need to do to get you guys out of here, you've been here enough and you've been really great. On your way."

He wouldn't need to have part the Red Sea, would You? Wouldn't need to drown the whole Egyptian army. Certainly wouldn't need the plagues. Wouldn't need frogs and boils and locusts and dead cattle and all the first born dying and wouldn't have the angel of death passing over. No, God hardened Pharaoh's heart because God wanted to put everything on display. God raised him up for that purpose. That's part of God's glory. You see, that's part of who God is. That's part of the character of God. And again I say to you, His love does not exist unmixed. He will love but that's not all, God is love but He's not all love and nothing else. And He is glorified in His power and He wanted to put His power on display and putting this immense power on display, by the way, from a standpoint of the Scripture, it is the greatest single display of power prior to the cross itself. And that's why it became the touchstone of God's redemptive power and that's why Jews to this day still celebrate what great event? Passover. It was the greatest indication of God's power on behalf of His people. I mean, He literally broke the back of the greatest power in the world, Egypt, opening a sea and closing it, immense power. And as a result of that, what it says at the end of verse 17, "Came to pass. His might was proclaimed throughout the whole earth." Everywhere, everybody heard what the God of

Israel did. You remember even in an encounter with the Philistines, the Philistines got worried because they remembered the God of the Israelites who had drown the Egyptian army. If God wants to put His power on display, He'll raise up a man to put His power on display and that man's heart will be hardened. Exodus 4:21, God said, "I will harden his heart."

And so, God is going to display His power. And in order to display His power against resistance, there's going to be resistance. And so God's going to design resistance. It's not apart from the will of Pharaoh for Pharaoh hardened his own heart, it says as well. God doesn't overpower the human will. The human will is responsible. And that's why judgment is just, as we'll see in a moment. Moses was a Jew, Pharaoh was a Gentile, both were sinners. Both were murderers. Did you know that? Both of them were murderers. Yet Moses was saved and Pharaoh was lost. God raised up Pharaoh for the purpose of revealing His glory through His judgment power and He raised up Moses to reveal His glory through His grace and mercy and deliverance. God raised up Moses so that He could show His delivering power. He raised up Pharaoh so He could show His destructive power. Pharaoh was a ruler. Moses was a slave. Yet Moses got mercy and compassion because God willed it that way.

God is sovereign and God is holy and must punish sin. God is loving and must save sinners. But if everybody was saved it would deny His holiness. If everybody was lost it would deny His love. And so He's glorified through all His character.

Number five, He's glorified in His judgment, verse 19. Somebody is going to say right now, "Wait a minute. You're telling me He hardened Pharaoh's heart, you're telling me Ishmael was rejected and Esau was rejected and Isaac and Jacob were chosen. You're telling me God has mercy on whom He wants and compassion on whom He wants and hardens whom He wants. Now let me ask you a question. How in the world can He find fault with me then because I don't have anything to do with this? If this is all predetermined, sovereign destiny, if this is all something that's going on up there in heaven, if God is the one responsible for the hardening of the sinner, how does He hold the sinner responsible? If it's all determined by God, how can the sinner be punished? How can we be blamed?"

Verse 19, "You will say to me then...Paul says...why does He still find fault?" In other words, how can He find fault with us then? I mean, if He's doing it how can He hold us responsible? For who resists His will? I mean, if He's determined it all, how could You hold us responsible? I love the answer. "On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God?" Don't you dare accuse God of holding you responsible for something you're not responsible for. That's the implication. That twentieth verse really comes out of Isaiah 45:9, "Is man to question God? Him and reason must submit." Man is a sinner, he loves his sin, he chooses his sin, he rejects God, he rejects Christ, he rejects salvation and he dies in his sins because of his own rejection. And yet at the same time it is God's sovereign will. But because it is God's sovereign will, listen carefully, it is no less the responsibility of the sinner. That's why every gospel invitation is given to the sinner to repent. Jesus

is not in heaven begging God to add a few more names. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit begging men to repent. The responsibility is here.

When people are sent to hell it is because they believe not, it is because they repent not, it is because they love their sin. The fact that it's been established by God demonstrates the glory of His nature but does not dispossess man from his responsibility. And I know that is a very

difficult thing to resolve. In fact it's so difficult to resolve I can't resolve it and neither can you, but God can. I'll tell you one thing, I'm not going to question Him. And that's the issue of verse 20. "Who in the world are you answering back to God?" I mean, you poor depraved person with a feeble mind, just because it doesn't seem to make sense to you, you're going to answer back to God?"

Verse 20, "The thing molded will not say to the molder, why did you make me like this, will it?" And he's borrowing from Jeremiah 18, the picture of a potter. Verse 21, "Doesn't the potter have a right over the clay to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?" God has His own purposes. God is the potter. He makes the pots whatever way He wants. You can't argue with God. You can't question God. Because there's a purpose behind everything He does. He makes one pot for honorable use and another for common use, that's His choice.

Listen, the purpose behind what God does is not to satisfy the curiosities of human reason. The purpose behind what God does is not to satisfy the desires of depraved intellects. The purpose behind what God does is to glorify Himself. And if He chooses to be glorified in judgment by making a vessel that is not honorable, that's His choice. He is glorified in His own judgment and we have no right to answer back and say, "Well how can You judge us and hold us responsible when You're the one making the decision?" His judgment manifests His glory. It is a just judgment. You are truly a sinner, truly a Christ-rejecter, a God-rejecter, a God-hater, a lover of iniquity and that's why you go into punishment. God can harmonize that perfectly with His sovereignty, even if we can't.

God is glorified then in His sovereignty, His justice, His mercy, His power, His judgment, number six, His wrath. Verse 22, "What if God though willing to demonstrate His wrath and make His power known endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?" Now there's a lot in that verse, let me just grab the last phrase. What if God wanted to demonstrate His wrath by producing vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? So what, it's not for you to question. It's not for you.

You see, if you have God's perspective on this it's simply that God is glorified through His wrath. David in the imprecatory Psalms, God kill the unrighteous, God kill those ungodly, kill those people that are persecuting me, kill those people that are blaspheming Your name. O God, destroy them. And we read that and we say, "Oh, he was a righteous man and he loved holiness." That's cause we don't know anybody he was praying about. Right? If I come into the pulpit on a Sunday morning in

my prayer and I say, "O God, all the unrighteous that detract from Your name, just kill them all right now," you're going to go, "Ahh," you know, be aghast because you're somehow emotionally involved with that group.

You get in to the book of Revelation and we've been reading for weeks and weeks about the destruction of masses of humanity, masses of humanity. And we went with those saints under the altar in chapter 6 and they're saying, "O Lord, how long...how long before You kill all these ungodly?" And we're saying, "Amen, Lord, oh amen, get rid of them." We don't know any of those folks. And when we get dispossessed emotionally from this thing we look with a little more objectivity.

Let me give you another illustration. There are millions of angels, ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands and just an innumerable number of angels. Well a third of them fell with Satan, right? A third of them fell, they rebelled with Satan, they were thrown out of heaven and they will spend forever in the lake of fire in torment. And they are creatures, they're beings with the ability to feel and to experience reality, spiritual reality. I don't think I've ever had anybody come to me and say, "Oh, it's so unfair that God didn't have a plan of salvation for demons." I don't think anybody has ever asked me that. "How can God not save all the demons?" I don't think anybody has ever said that. They don't really give a hoot about the demons, you just as soon have them in the lake of fire, right? None of them are friends of yours.

What I'm pointing up is, we don't get so exercised over this issue of vessels of wrath unless we get emotionally involved in it. And the issue here is that God has sent angels, once those angels fell there was no redemptive plan, there was no recovery, there was no salvation, there was no forgiveness, no mercy, no grace, it is...God does not display grace to angels. Holy angels don't need grace cause they're holy, right? Holy angels don't need mercy cause there's nothing about them that's pitiable. And fallen angels don't get any. So if God is to manifest what is true of His nature and grace and mercy and pity are true of His nature, then He's going to have to have a creature that He does redeem that needs to be redeemed that needs mercy, grace and pity and that's why we came along so He could put Himself on display in that realm. But the only way that's going to make any sense is to put His wrath on display by contrast so you understand what His mercy and His pity and His grace mean. Just because God is gracious to some we can't assume in our own minds that therefore somehow He has to be gracious to everybody else. That's not how it is.

God acts in His wrath. He prepares vessels of wrath beforehand because His wrath is going to be a way to manifest His glory. He's glorified in His wrath.

Lastly, He's glorified in His salvation. Verse 23, "All this He did in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy which He prepared beforehand for glory even us." He's glorified in salvation. He displays His glory in His sovereignty. He displays His glory in His justice, His mercy, His power, His judgment. He displays His glory in His wrath and He displays His glory in

making vessels of mercy which He saves. What a marvelous thing.

So, God will be glorified all across the spectrum of His attributes. Don't be concerned, beloved, now and I'll close, don't be concerned with the mysteries of God's determination. Don't be concerned with trying to solve all of the mysteries of the nature of God. Be concerned with your own condition. Don't be concerned with what God is doing in planning all of this, be concerned with what awaits you in eternal hell. Don't be concerned with trying to unscrew the unscrutable, be concerned with repentance and remember that Jesus said, "Him that comes unto Me I'll in no wise...what?...cast out." Remember that Jesus said, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

The responsibility for repentance and faith is on you. That's all that should concern you. The issue of election doesn't become an issue until conversion then we know you're elect. "Whosoever will let him come and take of the water of life freely." "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I'll give you rest." These are the invitations the Bible extends.

The issue of the sovereignty of God and the glory of God and the manifestation of His character is one issue, but what issue concerns me about you is the issue of whether or not you will come to Christ to take the pardon that He offers. And that should be the consideration of your own heart. Let's pray.

Father, I think of the preacher as one who enters the prison house of humanity with a great handful of royal pardons and the preacher is instructed by the king to give them to all who believe and apply for mercy. And the preacher can say, "Let every sinner come with the assurance that none will ever be refused." O Father, may the prisoners upon the first sight and hearing run to take the pardon, pardon for sin and salvation in Christ. Father, I pray that You will cause us to be grateful for Your love, overwhelming love, undeserved, unearned and eternal. Thank You for what You've done for those who believe in You. In Christ's name. Amen.

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