

August 1, 2021 - David Baumgartner

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[0 : 00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. A very wonderful passage today that we're looking at.

If you have your Bibles, please turn with me to Romans chapter 9. We will be looking at verses 14 to 29. We're in a section in Romans, and I'm talking about from chapters 9 through 11.

Where Paul the Apostle is teaching about the unique place that Israel has in God's plan. You may recall earlier studies in Leviticus, for instance, where the Lord says that I will be your God and you will be my people.

And so last week, when we looked at Romans chapter 9, we saw in verses 4 and 5, Paul pointed out these nine privileges that Israel enjoyed as God's people.

And yet, if you continue to read on, we know that, according to Paul, not all of them enjoyed, nor will they enjoy, that title as God's people.

[1 : 13] In fact, in Paul's very day, most of the Jews did not believe that Jesus was their Messiah. And that still holds true today. I want to ask you, how are we to understand this failure in the light of all of God's promises?

Well, here's the thing, friends. It's not a failure. It's not. God's promises have not failed. It all has to do with this big topic that we can look at. God's sovereignty.

God is sovereign and he answers to nobody. Last week, we saw in Romans that Paul gave some examples from the Old Testament that illustrated God's sovereignty.

You may remember we covered two of those in verses 6 to 10. The story of Ishmael and Isaac. And then we saw this other story.

The story of Ishmael and Jacob. This morning, we're going to be looking at five more examples. And there's going to be a lesson for each one.

[2 : 16] Friends, this is a rather large and complex passage. There are six Old Testament quotes. And so we have some challenges. I think sometimes it's difficult for us to follow Paul's flow of thought.

And that's because it presupposes that his listeners have a working knowledge of the characters and the events that he references.

And no doubt that the original readers in Rome must have had this. But let's go ahead. I believe through God's mercy and his grace, we'll be able to look through this.

Let's read verses 14 to 29. Chapter 9. What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God.

Is there? May it never be. For he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. And I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. So then it does not depend upon the man who wills or the man who runs.

[3 : 20] But on God who has mercy. For the scripture says to Pharaoh, 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.

So then he has mercy on whom he desires. And he hardens whom he desires. You will say to me then, why does he still find fault? For who resists his will?

On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, why did you make me like this? Will it? Or does not the potter have the right over the clay to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?

What if God, although willing to demonstrate his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?

He did so in order that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he prepared beforehand for glory.

[4 : 30] Even us, whom he also called, not from among the Jews only, but also among the Gentiles. For he also says in Hosea, I will call those who were not my people, my people.

And her, who was not beloved, my beloved. And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, you are not my people, there they shall be called sons of the living God.

And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved. For the Lord will execute his word upon the earth thoroughly and quickly.

And just as Isaiah foretold, except the Lord of the Sabbath had left us to a prosperity, we would have become as Sodom and we would have resembled Gomorrah.

Heavenly Father, we are so grateful for these words, Lord, because, Lord, they teach us so much.

And, Lord, may we find what you have for us today through the ministry of your holy word and through the spirit that we would be able to apply these today, Lord.

[5 : 43] Thank you so much that we have the privilege to be together today and to be in your word. We don't take that for granted, Lord. We may not always have that. Other countries don't.

But, Lord, you have granted that privilege to us. So, thank you so much. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Here's our key verse for today, friends.

Look with me. Verse 14. It's in the form of a question. What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? That's from the ESV.

And Paul answers that. By no means. Paul denies this notion here with the strongest negative in the Bible. Meganoito. Meganoito. It's ten times in Romans where he says that.

May it never be. By no means. Friends, God is just. And to answer all of these questions, we need to look at this topic of God's sovereignty.

[6 : 45] Now, we've already covered a lot of that last week. But the Bible teaches God is sovereign. For example, verse 15. He says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.

I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. And so, to prove that point, Paul will quote from Exodus chapter 33. And so, if you look with me on your handout, you can notice this is our first illustration today.

It's when God, when Moses saw God's glory. Here's what happened. In Exodus 33, Moses had just been through a really difficult time.

Right after God had delivered his people from the Egyptians, they constructed and began worshipping this golden calf. And God could have, at that very point, he could have just wiped them all out.

But instead, he only took 3,000, what we would call rebels. But this actually gave Moses some insecurity because he had this nagging question now.

[7 : 53] God, will you leave us? Is it possible that you might abandon us? And so, he asked God to see his glory. And that's because in seeing his glory, Moses would be assured that the Lord would not withdraw his presence from them.

And so, verse 19, we see that God says, as Paul says here, I myself will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you.

And here's the main point here. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious. And I will show compassion on whom I will show compassion. So, here's our first lesson, brothers and sisters.

God extends his mercy and compassion according to as he determines. We cannot induce God to show these. We can't.

And so, Paul adds to that in verse 16. It does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

[9 : 00] You might think of that where he says about the man's will. Well, that might be referring to a person's inner intentions or desires. When he talks about the man who runs, that's referring to a person's efforts.

Their outward, visible efforts on the outside. But here's the thing. Neither of those compels God to act. Rather, he decides if and when mercy, grace, and compassion are given.

Paul says that in verse 18. He has mercy on whomever he desires. This might bring up a question for us. If we go to the Lord with our fists held high and we say, Lord, I demand justice.

What do you think we're going to get? Yeah, you know, we will get what we deserve.

Condemnation. But not with the Lord for his graciousness with us.

Through faith in Christ. Paul goes on here. He says in verse 17. For the scripture says of Pharaoh, for this very purpose I raised you up. Here's our second illustration.

[10:13] It's the account of Pharaoh. You find it in Exodus 9, 16. In this account, God's righteousness is shown in a really dramatic way.

Mercy and judgment are shown in the same event. And not only that, friends. Both of these result in the proclamation of God's name. Here's what we see in Exodus.

Through Moses, God tells Pharaoh. Pharaoh, I raised you up. That's what Paul says here. Actually, the words in Hebrew, it's I've caused you to stand up.

And what that's really referring to is I've caused you, Pharaoh, to be prominent. I've allowed you to prosper. I've given you, if I can paraphrase, I have given you a unique place in life.

Movies are going to be made about you. You're going to be one of the main characters. People will be singing, Pharaoh, Pharaoh. Why will they do this?

[11:17] Well, in verse 17, look what he says. To demonstrate my power in you. You see, all his life, Pharaoh, this is probably Amenhotep II.

He thought he was the greatest. You know, he lived the life of a king. But what we read is just at the right time, he became the means for the greatest display of God's power in the Old Testament.

Israel's, I'm talking about Israel's redemption. And in fact, it's the benchmark in the Old Testament for redemption. It was because of Pharaoh that the exodus occurred.

And God caused the Red Sea to part. And the whole Egyptian army goes in. And we read that they all drowned. God showed mercy to Israel. He showed judgment to Pharaoh.

Not only that, look with me in verse 17. And he says, my name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth. Did you know that that happened? The Lord's name was proclaimed.

[12:27] In Joshua chapter 2, you may remember when we studied this. Joshua sent these spies out onto Jericho. And they met this woman named Rahab. And she said to them, look with me, it's in your handout.

The fear of the Lord has fallen upon us. Just to remind you, this is a woman living in Jericho. And the spies from Israel come in.

And she recognizes them and says, The fear of the Lord is upon us. And all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. Here's why. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt.

And what you also did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan. God showed mercy to Israel by freeing them from Pharaoh's grip.

That's lesson one. God's name was proclaimed throughout the earth. Here's our second lesson. It's about Pharaoh. Verse 18. God hardens whomever he desires.

[13:31] Did you know ten times in the book of Exodus, God says that I will harden Pharaoh's heart? But also we see several other times where we read that Pharaoh hardened his own heart.

You might want to ask, what's going on there? This is the way that God deals with those who are persistently resistant against him. You may recall earlier, twice in chapter 1 in Romans, Paul talks about the way the Lord gives people over to their evil desires.

You remember that? Yeah. When a man worships himself, he's the creature that is. He's the creature. When man worships himself instead of the creator, it says in Romans chapter 1 verse 24, Therefore God gave them over to the lust of their hearts, to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them.

Friends, this is an example here of how God hardens people's hearts. He gives people over, allowing the full measure of the consequences of their sin to have their effect in their lives.

I believe here that the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is an analogy to the hardening of many Israelites in Paul's day. And in fact, we still see that today, don't we?

[14:57] Maybe you've met people who have said something like this to you. I have no use for God. I have no use for his word. I have no use for God's people.

Stay away from me. All these things irritate me. And you may wonder, how can a person say that? Well, it just might be that God has given them over.

And their hearts are now callous. And what is a callous? It's a thick layer of skin covering their hearts from irritations like that. We ought to pause here.

Because all of this leads to another question that Paul has in verse 19. Notice here. If God determines who's saved, in other words, you will say to me then, why does he still find fault with

people?

Who resists his will? Have you ever heard that question before? Why is God holding me accountable? If everything's up to God, how can he hold any of us responsible?

[16:02] Well, here's Paul's answer. And maybe this is the one that we have been waiting for as a church since we've been studying this sovereignty stuff. Look with me, verse 20. Mike, are you looking here, buddy?

On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? Whoa. That's his answer.

On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? I think that this answer from Paul probably will not be sufficient for most people.

He offers no explanation, no logical explanation. Instead, he points out how presumptuous it is for human beings to think that we can sit in judgment of our judge.

In other words, who are you to question God? It's kind of interesting, that word there for answers back. That word there actually emphasizes a response that's given from an oppositional person.

[17:07] Someone who's antagonistic. But given the topic of God's sovereignty, it's the best answer that we will have. And I think it's difficult for us to understand because many of us mistakenly think that God owes us.

Do you believe that? You know, we're raised and we're steeped in an environment where we are constantly thinking about our merits and what we're doing.

We're trying to do and do and do. And in many religions teach that it's based on what you do. No, it's based on what God does.

God does not owe us anything. You know, we can openly say, God, you owe me an answer here. No. Paul even backs this up with our third illustration.

And this is with the potter and the clay. Look with me, verse 20. He goes on here. Paul asks this question. The thing molded, in other words, that's us.

[18:11] Will it not say to the molder, that's talking about God here, why did you make me like this? Will it?

This quote here actually comes from Isaiah chapter 29. Through Isaiah, the Lord is pointing out how Israel's worship was full of hypocrisy.

They did not worship the Lord as he deserved. In fact, in Isaiah 29, 16, shall the potter be considered as equal with the clay? Yeah, what an assumption there.

So Paul asks this question in verse 21. Does not the potter have a right over the clay to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?

I think it's kind of helpful to know. Did you know in Genesis chapter 2, verse 7, when it says that God formed man from the dust of the ground?

[19:13] Do you know what the Hebrew word for man is? It's Adam. Adam. Adam's name means dirt. And then we see the word ground.

It's Adama. Again, Adam's name means dirt. God made each one of us. But not only does he possess the right to do whatever he chooses, all his decisions have a purpose.

Paul asks a rhetorical question here. Look with me, verse 22. What if God, what if God, although willing to demonstrate his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?

This verses 22 and 23 seems to add another dimension here about vessels of mercy, which are basically like common dishes.

And then you have other vessels of wrath. And these are kept with others. You keep your vessels of wrath with your other dishes until it's time to break them.

[20:18] Yeah, that's what he's saying here. This is true. God is keeping these vessels together until the vessels of wrath become, it's time for them to be broken.

Paul has just described humanity here. Vessels of wrath. Vessels, common vessels. And he allowed Pharaoh, for example, to live, to enjoy the life of a king until what?

Until the right time. And why did he do that? Paul answers this in verse 23. He did so in order that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he prepared beforehand for glory.

Wow. Who do you want to be, friends? A vessel of mercy or a vessel of wrath? He had mercy on Israel.

The main thing here is God orchestrates the lives of saints and sinners to bring about whatever he chooses. He's willing and able to make his power known through vessels of wrath, like he did with Pharaoh.

[21 : 34] But he also shows his mercy to vessels of mercy. So what does this mean for us? Here's our third lesson. When vessels of mercy become aware of the fearsome wrath of God on the disobedient and reflect on the fact that we deserve the same, then in a deeper way, you can write this in, we can appreciate the riches of God's glory and grace all the more.

That is true. We can appreciate him. When we reflect on the fact that we deserve what we deserve the same, it can make us appreciate the riches of God all the more.

And so these accounts here, they're not given to make us question God. No.

We actually read that these accounts that we see from Paul here, they ought to make us thankful.

Earlier in chapter 2, verse 4 in Romans, Paul asks this.

Do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? That's God's mercy.

[22 : 54] His kindness. Designed to woo us. To see how merciful and generous our God is. At this point, maybe we should ask this question.

Who are the recipients of God's mercy? Look with me, verse 24. Even us. Wow, circle that in your Bibles, friends, because that's us.

Even us. He's talking about Paul. He's talking about the believers in Rome, whom he also called, not from the Jews only, but also from among the Gentiles.

God's sovereign choice to show mercy not only applies to the Jewish ancestors like Moses we just read about, but also to believing Gentiles.

You find that wonderful? I hope you do. It's wonderful that undeserving Gentiles can also be recipients of God's mercy and grace.

[23 : 53] And this leads to our fourth illustration. And this is from the prophet Hosea. You're going to love this account. In verse 25, Paul says, And he also says in Hosea, I will call upon those who were not my people, my people.

And her who was not beloved, beloved. What's he talking about here? Well, if you recall earlier in Leviticus 26, God said, I will be your God and you will be my people.

Well, later on, there's problems in Israel. They have severe problems with idolatry. So in Hosea chapter 1, we read that God tells this prophet Hosea to marry a woman who will be unfaithful to him. She will be a prostitute. Why would God do that? It's going to become an illustration of Israel's unfaithfulness to God.

So Hosea marries this woman by the name of Gomer. By the way, her name means to bring to an end. And they have three children. God commanded them to name them.

[25 : 12] The first child was to be named Jezreel. Okay, that means seed of God. But the second child is Lo-Ruhamah, which means she is not loved.

The third child was to be named Lo-Ami, which means not my people. By the way, if some of you are looking for some baby names, stay away from those names, because I would avoid them.

These names were to be prophetic because they became descriptions of Israel's future. Like I said, because of idolatry, loving other gods.

In 722 BC, the Lord sent the Assyrians to conquer the northern kingdom of Israel and to carry them away and scatter them. And so Israel, the seed of God, becomes scattered.

She also becomes not loved. And that's because she's no longer the people of God. But this would not be permanent because when God brought back the southern kingdom of Judah back to the land, this was in the time of Ezra, a remnant of the northern kingdom of Israel was also included.

[26 : 32] And so, quoting from Hosea 1, verse 10, Paul says, And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, You are not my people, there they shall be called the sons of the living God.

So here's our fourth lesson, friends. God's word will come to pass. It's guaranteed. There's a passage in Isaiah 46.

He says, Remember the former things long past, for I am God. There is no other. I am God. There is no one like me, declaring the end of the beginning and the end from ancient times, the things which have not been done, saying, My purpose will be established.

I will accomplish all my good pleasure. Those are the words of the Lord. He's the same today as he was yesterday. But Paul's not finished.

Because here's our fifth, our last illustration. And this is where God speaks through the prophet Isaiah. Verse 27, Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that shall be saved.

[27 : 49] What this is talking about here is, Out of the millions and millions of Israelites who lived and died, only a small remnant will be saved.

Wow. How does this happen? Well, again, Paul quotes from Isaiah chapter 10, verse 28, For the Lord will execute his word upon the earth thoroughly and quickly.

And this happened. In 701 BC, an angel of the Lord came and destroyed the entire Assyrian army. And then later on, the Assyrians fell to the Babylonians.

But this small remnant of believers started to trust God again. And they returned to the promised land with the southern tribe. So again, friends, we see God's mercy.

Paul quotes from Isaiah 1, 9, verse 29. He says, And just as Isaiah foretold, except the Lord of the Sabbath left us a posterity, we would have become like Sodom.

[28 : 51] We would have resembled Gomorrah. Here's our fifth and last lesson. God is not finished with the nation of Israel. Israel would have been completely destroyed just like Sodom and Gomorrah were it not for God's mercy.

That's the truth. Most, so, five lessons here. I do want to ask you, do you see any Sodomites alive today? Do you see any people from Gomorrah today?

Sodomite, I think, might be a pejorative term. I'm talking about those that lived in Sodom. Were it not for God's mercy, they would have all been destroyed.

If I can invite our musician to come up here. Most likely here, the church at Rome was not founded by any of the apostles, and so there was a great need for doctrinal teaching, and I think it's really probable that this stuff that we just covered was the first time that they would have heard such teaching.

You agree with that? It's really possible, and I think it's good for us to look at this because I'll tell you something. One of the benefits of expository preaching is that we go through the Bible verse by verse.

[30 : 18] We don't pick the topics. No, God has chosen them for us, and so I think this may be a difficult and unpopular topic, but I'll tell you what, that's how God's sovereignty is looked at.

God's sovereignty is a difficult topic with many people. You know why? Because it goes against our fallen nature. You know, we want to be in charge, don't we?

The thought that God would be sovereign, that God chooses everything, it just rubs us the wrong way, but friends, it's not true, not true for the believer.

In our text, we see just these five truths here. We cannot compel God to do anything. Similarly, number two, he hardens whom he desires. He gives people over to their evil desires to accomplish his purposes, and therefore, none of us are wronged when grace and mercy are withheld from people because we deserve it.

But when God treats us as vessels of mercy, we can appreciate his mercy all the more. Fourthly, God's word will come to pass. Even though most of the nation of Israel will not be saved, he did preserve a remnant.

[31 : 44] Otherwise, Israel would have been completely destroyed. Therefore, he's not finished with the nation of Israel. As we'll see, you know, it makes us wonder, what kind of God is this that would do all of this?

He's a God who demonstrates time and time again that he's deserving of all that we can give him, all that we can say, all that we can do. He deserves it all.

Please stand with us as we sing a last song. And I'll go ahead and pray. Heavenly Father, we are so grateful, Lord, for these words from Paul that reflected situations back in the Old Testament, Lord, where you showed your sovereignty.

And yet, Lord, it didn't end there because you also show us your mercy and grace. To vessels of mercy, what a privilege it is to be among those who can be called vessels of mercy.

We thank you so much for that, Lord. May we be changed by your mercy and grace. May we see how your mercy can bring us to repentance and cause us to walk in a deeper relationship with you.

[32 : 59] For we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.