

- I. What about the Jews? Why are they not all safe in the love of God?
  - A. Romans 9:14-18, Paul . . . What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! [15] For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." [16] So then it (*mercy, compassion*) does not depend on the man who wills (*wants mercy*) or the man who runs (*works for mercy*), but on God who has mercy. [17] 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." [18] So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.
  - B. Prayer
  
- II. Review
  - A. Romans 9 is dealing with the fact that Paul says nothing can separate us from the love of God, while from chapter 2 onward, Paul has been saying that many Jews are separated from God's love, even though they believe God has to justify them because of their birth heritage and religious heritage. And to be separated from God's love is to be unjustified and without the gift of eternal life.
  - B. In Romans 9:6-13, Paul is dealing with those who claim that if any of God's chosen people are for some reason separated from God's love, then it means God's covenants and promises have failed to do what they were supposed to do.
    - 1. And Paul answers this assertion by explaining that God is not in any way indebted to the Jews so as to owe them justification and eternal life, in spite of their birth and religious heritage. In other words, the Jews possess nothing that in any way obligates God to justify them.
    - 2. Paul goes on to show that God chooses, independently and sovereignly, who He justifies and to whom He gives eternal life, just as He did in choosing Isaac over Ishmael, and Jacob over Esau.
    - 3. To our benefit, Paul affirms this truth in the summary statements of chapters 9-11 when he says in Romans 11:35, "Who has first given to [God] that it might be paid back to him again?"

- C. In Romans 9:14-18, Paul is dealing with the skeptics who claim that God cannot be just if His choosing one and not another is based on something other than a man's deeds.
1. In other words, if there is nothing in the way we live, that is, in what we do or don't do to put God in our debt – so as to guarantee He chooses us, then God's choice of some but not us cannot be fair or just.
  2. Or to say it another way, if grace is always a free gift and there is nothing we can do to earn it so that God must give us eternal life, then choosing to give grace to this one and not that one is unfair.
- D. However, in spite of the logic and reasoning of the skeptics, Paul proclaims God to be perfectly and completely just, which means God's choice of some and not all is further proof of His perfect and complete justice.
1. Paul then supports this truth with two quotes from the OT. We looked at the first quote last Sunday, and that quote comes at the end of the story of Moses on the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments, Aaron building the golden calf, the Israelites worshiping the idol as if it were Jehovah, and Moses acting as a mediator between Israel and God.
  2. As you recall, God's immediate response to Israel's sin of idol worship was to destroy them and start over with Moses. Moses mediated, and God then said He would not destroy the current generation of Israelites immediately, but He would still punish them.
    - a. And because God was not going to destroy them immediately, He told Moses to continue leading them to the Promised Land, with the aid of one of God's angels.
    - b. This resulted in Moses discussing with God about wanting God and not an angel to go with them – and God said He would go with them.
    - c. Upon securing the presence of God for the journey, Moses then asked God to show him God's ways so he could continue living in a manner that would find favor with God. Again, God said yes to Moses' request.
    - d. Moses then made one more request. Show me Your glory, he said to God. Again, God answered in the affirmative. However, it was in His answer to this request that God said, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion" (Exodus 33:17-19).
  3. Now I believe it is important to our understanding of Romans 9, to point out that in all this talk between God and Moses, Moses believed he had good standing or goodwill with God because God said He knew

Moses intimately (*by name*) and Moses had found favor in God's sight. And not to put the Jews of Paul's day on the same spiritual level as Moses, but they too believed they had good standing with God because of their birth heritage, religious heritage, and religious zeal.

4. Therefore, the point Paul is making in Romans 9:14-18, is the same point God was making to Moses, which was, in spite of who Moses was and what he had done, it would be God, not Moses, who decides to whom God will be gracious, and to whom He will show compassion.
  - a. Moses can surely ask for mercy and grace, both for himself and for the people. But it is God who decides what He will do, and His decision of who should and who should not be justified and given eternal life is totally free and totally according to His sovereign will.
  - b. Now the reason this is important to our study today is because, like the Jews who believed their family and religious heritage, and religious zeal put them in a standing with God whereby God HAD to justify them and give them eternal life – regardless of how they lived – we too can assume that having prayed the salvation prayer, or having achieved a certain level of religious zeal guarantees our justification – as if God owes us eternal life for having prayed the prayer, or as if justice demands He give eternal life to all who are as religiously zealous as us.
5. But let me assure you that if God wanted Moses to know that his standing with God was not enough to force God's hand, God wants us to know the same thing. Our attitude ought never to be that God must give us anything based on what we have done, but rather that what God gives is a gift of grace, for we are sinners deserving death, and therefore indebted to God, while He has never been and never will be indebted to us. Which brings us to Paul's second quote.

### III. God not only chooses whom He will, He hardens whom He will

- A. Romans 9:17-18 . . . 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." [18] So then [God] has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.
  1. There are several truths in the passage that when taken into account help us understand the point Paul is making in this context.
  2. First, God raised up this particular Pharaoh. Does God raise up every ruler? We don't know, but we do know God protected and strengthened this Pharaoh, and gave him a strong, powerful nation to rule.

- a. Now in spite of all we don't know about what God does, we know what God did for this Pharaoh and Egypt was not unique, for God did the same thing with the Babylonians and the Medes and Persians, just to name two additional nations.
  - b. And just as God had a purpose for raising up this Pharaoh, He had a purpose for raising up the Babylonians, and then the Medes and Persians – and that purpose was to discipline Israel.
  - c. God used the Babylonians first, but they were so cruel when they conquered Israel that God raised up the Medes and Persians to punish the Babylonians and continue God's discipline of Israel. Plus, God also used the Medes and Persians to eventually send His people back to Israel and rebuild Jerusalem.
3. The second truth to notice is that God had a purpose in raising up this Pharaoh, and that purpose was to demonstrate God's power in him, and that power included the power to put him in the position of Pharaoh, make him successful, and finally punish him for his failure to use God's gifts for good.
- a. A second purpose God had was to show the world His glory by what He did for, with, and to Pharaoh. In other words, God was using Pharaoh to show the world that Jehovah is the only living God, and therefore the only God with the power to accomplish all the things He said He had done, was doing, and would do.
  - b. Beyond these two purposes, God was going to use this Pharaoh to free the Israelites from bondage in Egypt and send them out of Egypt with as much wealth as they could plunder from the Egyptians. Again, this is not unique, for God used a previous Pharaoh to provide food for Israel during a large-scale famine.
4. The third truth (*which is filled in by OT history*) is that this Pharaoh, unlike a prior Pharaoh who showed kindness to Joseph and his family, was cruel to the Jews, forcing them into slavery and killing their sons to prevent them from gaining sufficient power to be a threat to the security of his kingdom.
- a. But remember, this Pharaoh's power and the security of his position had come from God, which means he was using the gifts and power God had given him to mistreat the Israelites.
  - b. And as I just pointed out, when the Babylonians did the same thing to God's people, God punished them by raising up the Medes and Persians who then conquered the Babylonians.
  - c. The point is that this Pharaoh had been blessed by God, yet had used God's blessings to harm God's people.

5. The fourth truth which is vital to Paul's reason for using the quote about God having mercy on whom He desires, and hardening whom He desires, is a two-part truth.
  - a. First, God did not arbitrarily choose Pharaoh for hardening, as if there was nothing Pharaoh had done to deserve such treatment from God.
    - (1) As I already pointed out, God first blessed Pharaoh for the purpose of using Pharaoh to set Israel free from Egypt and send them to the Promised Land. This means Pharaoh had the opportunity, power, and means to make different choices. He could have chosen to treat the Israelites as free citizens rather than enslaving them. He could have allowed them to amass sufficient wealth to make their way back to the Promised Land. And he could have allowed their newborn sons to live rather than putting them to death.
    - (2) But Pharaoh acted as if his position and power were of his own doing. In other words, he acted as if he did not have to answer to God.
    - (3) Therefore, when God hardened Pharaoh's heart, He was hardening the heart of a man who had already taken the path of pride and rebellion against God. And so God was not arbitrarily hardening Pharaoh's heart, rather God was making it harder for Pharaoh to come to his senses, repent, and behave in a manner that would honor God and use the gifts God had given for good.
    - (4) But since Pharaoh was not willing to honor God through his use of God's gifts, God was maneuvering Pharaoh into a position where God's punishment would have its fullest effect on Pharaoh, and produce the greatest glory for God as the story of how God had punished the Egyptians spread throughout the surrounding nations.
  - b. Second, there is no indication from the story in Exodus or the portion in Romans 9 that God hardened Pharaoh's heart to the point of or for the purpose of damning him to eternal destruction. Rather, the inference of the Exodus story is that God hardened Pharaoh's heart to punish him for his pride and his rebellion, for his intentional mistreatment of the Israelites, and to assure that Israel would be compensated by the Egyptians with sufficient wealth to get a good start in the Promised Land. At any point, Pharaoh could have repented and done what was right.

B. At this point I want to take a few minutes and look at some of the other scriptures dealing with God hardening hearts or making it harder for an individual or a particular group to come to their senses, repent, and do what is right.

1. In Exodus 14:16-18, we see that God not only hardened Pharaoh's heart, He also hardened the hearts of the Egyptian army so that they would follow the Israelites into the dry bed of the Red Sea. And God did this so all of Egypt would know that Jehovah is God, for who else could destroy the mighty Egyptian army?
2. Matthew 13:10-15 . . . And the disciples came and said to [Jesus], "Why do You speak to them in parables?" [11] Jesus answered them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. [12] For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. [13] Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. [14] In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive; [15] for the heart of this people has become dull, with their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes, [if they were looking and listening] they would see with their eyes, hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and return, and I would heal them."
3. Romans 11:7-11 . . . What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; [8] just as it is written, "GOD gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes to see not and ears to hear not, down to this very day." [9] And David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap, and a stumbling block and a retribution to them. [10] Let their eyes be darkened to see not, and bend their backs forever." [11] I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they [they can still repent]? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. (Note: 2 Corinthians 3:14-18)
4. The point I am making is that these scriptures show God's hardening of people's heart as punitive, or as a form of milder punishment than the punishment of eternal damnation. In other words, one of the ways God punishes rebellious, deliberate, practicing sinner's in this life is to make it harder for them to come to repentance and conversion.

- a. Of course, this is not the only way God punishes the deliberate practice of sin. He has built into the world an almost natural set of consequences for living a rebellious, sinful life.
  - b. For example, sin brings about its own consequences, such as a duller conscience, foolish choices, irrational thinking – such as living in denial or an increase in selfish thinking, self-destructive behavior, sickness, disease, social troubles, legal troubles, and the damaging or destruction of relationships.
  - c. In other words, sin brings its own set of consequences on all sinners, while God brings specific and additional consequences on some sinners, such as a sinful Pharaoh, or a sinful nation like Israel.
5. Paul speaks of this additional punishment for certain people or specific situations in Romans 1:20-25, where he makes it clear that since the creation of the world, God's invisible attributes, eternal power, and divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. Therefore, even though mankind knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.
  6. Does God punish sinners in t his life in a manner that makes certain they will be eternally damned? There is no indication of that in the scriptures. However, as temporal punishment for determined, ongoing sinfulness, God will make it harder for some hardened sinners or hardened people groups to come to their senses, repent, and be saved.

#### IV. Conclusion

- A. The point in all of what we have considered from Romans 9 so far is that God is completely and perfectly just when He shows mercy to whom He will, and hardens whom He will. From a more complete examination of scripture, we see that His choice is NEITHER arbitrary NOR for the purpose of damning anyone to eternal hell. His choice is independent and the result of His sovereign will. Therefore, may we humble ourselves before God and submit to His sovereign will – knowing we are indebted to Him, but He has never been nor ever will be indebted to us.