

The Mystery of God's Mercy
Romans 9:14-18

During our study of Romans 9, we have unearthed some deep theological truths concerning the mind of God. The bottom line is that **We cannot understand the mind of God. (Romans 11:34)** "*Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?*" (quotation from Isaiah 40:13)

God has revealed **some things to us. Other things, He alone knows.**

(Deuteronomy 29:29) "*The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.*"

TODAY, we will learn about the things God wants us to know concerning the way He chooses. This study will bring us to the *INTERSECTION of theology and living.*

- I. **Let's start with a reminder of the outline of Romans 9-11!!!!** (Romans 9-11, God's Righteousness as it relates to Israel's rejection)
 - A. The CONTEXT of Romans 9 is the fact that ***Israel is not saved! 9:1-5***
 - B. Three QUESTIONS in Romans 9 form the basis of the outline for this chapter. It would be a good idea to underline these questions in your Bible, allowing yourself to follow Paul's argument.
 1. Has God's Word failed? 9:6-13
 2. **Is God Unjust? 9:14-18**
 3. Am I trapped by God's Sovereignty? 9:19-29
(The second question is our subject for this message.)
 - C. Romans ten emphasizes Man's responsibility to respond to the message and to proclaim the message once they believe and understand.
 - D. Romans 11 deals once again with Israel, describing her final restoration and obedience.
 - E. Finally, the section concludes with Praise for God's Wisdom and Knowledge. 11:33-36

- II. **Here is the question under consideration today. Is God Unjust? 9:14-18**

Specifically, when considering the fact that God chooses some, does that mean that he is unjust by allowing others to perish?

 - A. **First, WHO Does God Choose? 9:14** *The answer to that is that God chooses who He chooses!* We do not have a say in the matter. This is in the mind of God. We have no right to object because we do not understand the things of God, nor are we capable to interact with him on the moral level.

1. This is Illustrated through MOSES. The quotation is from **Ex 33:15-19**
2. The situation was that Israel had sinned against God. Moses begged for God to **forgive the people** for their sin (**32:32**).
3. Moses begged God to **give him direction**. (**33:12**).
4. Moses begged God to **reveal His glory**. (**33:18**)
 - a. God revealed His glory to Moses in a limited manner (33:20)
 - b. *God's favors were not because Moses requested them, but because it pleased the Lord to do it. 33:19. This is the emphasis of the context of Romans 9:14-18.*

B. HOW does God choose? Rom 9:16

1. NOT because of man's **desire**. **9:16**
 - a. We are not saved because of **our own decision**. (**John 1:13**)
"children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."
2. NOT because of **our own effort**.
 - a. (**Ephesians 2:8-9**) *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."*
 - b. (**1 Corinthians 1:28-30**) *"He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. - It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption."*

C. WHY does God choose? Rom 9:17

1. God Chooses to **Demonstrate His GLORY**. He choose Pharaoh for his glory. Pharaoh had the opportunity to obey God's message, let the people go and be used for God's glory through his obedience. Instead, Pharaoh hardened his heart (Exodus 8:15, 32; 9:34). One might object saying Pharaoh was doomed to harden his heart because this was God's will, but Scripture does not present this. Pharaoh acted on his own. He had a choice and choose to disobey the voice of God. In the end, he was still used for God's glory as his wickedness demonstrated the power of God over the false gods of Egypt, and God's people were delivered with "a strong arm and a mighty hand" (Exodus 13:9)
2. Pharaoh is the illustration in our passage.
3. (**Exodus 9:15-16**) Moses is to tell Pharaoh..... *"For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the earth. But I have raised*

you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."

4. **(Exodus 14:3-4)** *"Pharaoh will think, 'The Israelites are wandering around the land in confusion, hemmed in by the desert.' And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them. But I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord." So the Israelites did this."*
5. Everyone is created for God's glory. Whether we receive him or not, he will be glorified. (Isaiah 43:7) *"everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."*
6. Nebuchadnezzar sought his OWN GLORY, and his choice brought God's severe judgment because God will not allow anyone to rob him of his glory. In Daniel 4:30 *"he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?"* The ramifications of Nebuchadnezzar's words were severe - God cursed him with madness. This great king wandered in the dessert like an animal, eating grass like a wild beast. The Lord certainly brought him down to size!

III. Our Intellectual Dilemma. We are faced with the following question. If God chooses, then

- A. Are some lost **because they were not chosen?**
- B. **Is God responsible** for their punishment?
- C. **Do I have any choice?**
- D. Am I **just a robot**, fulfilling God's decrees?
- E. What's the point of **witnessing?**
- F. What's the point of **praying?**
- G. The two extremes of Christian theological answers are exemplified by 2 Reformation figures
 1. John Calvin, 1509-1564. He was the father of the Swiss reformation. His teaching brought many good things, but there are two extremes in his theology.
 - a. God predestines people to hell
 - b. only the elect can be saved
 2. Calvin's extremes were countered by Dutch theology professor Jacob Arminius, 1560-1609. Where Calvin emphasized God's sovereignty, Arminius emphasized human sovereignty. Arminius' extremes were even more severe than Calvin's. Arminius and his followers taught:

- a. That salvation is in the hands of man, not God
- b. That there is no way to sure you are saved. You can lose your salvation if you don't live up to the expectations of the Bible.

(For further information, read or listen to the PM sermon from 11/30/2008)

- H. These truths have been fought over for centuries, but these truths we cannot be reconciled with human logic. The truth of the matter is that God is sovereign, and we are responsible.
- I. I like to explain it this way. I'm a DAYTIME Arminian, meaning that during the day, I pray and witness like everything depends on me.
- J. But I'm a NIGHT TIME Calvinist, meaning that when I rest my head at night, I rest knowing God is in control. I worship him for saving me!
- K. Don't allow the truth of God's sovereignty to keep you from obeying His commands! It's AMAZING how God seems to SOVEREIGNLY SAVE people when we **pray for the lost and witness!**

IV. The Intersection of DOCTRINE and LIVING

- A. **Ray Pritchard** said the following in his sermon, "God's Freedom"
- B. **God's Sovereignty means:**
 - 1. He is absolutely free to do whatever He wants to do
 - 2. He has the right to deal with us any way he chooses
 - 3. He doesn't have to treat me the way he treats my next-door neighbor
 - 4. He doesn't have to treat me today the way he treated me yesterday.
 - 5. He can answer my prayers any way he chooses.
 - 6. He will not tolerate any rivals to his throne.
 - 7. He is not obligated to live up to my expectations or to explain himself to me.
- C. Do we accept that He is God and can do whatever serves the interest of His glory?
- D. SOME are **not happy with God's choices**
 - 1. Your **physical appearance**
 - 2. **Abilities/ talents**
 - 3. **Intelligence**
 - 4. **Personality**
 - 5. **Social status**
 - 6. **Friends**
 - 7. **Unanswered prayers**
 - 8. **The painful things others have done to me**
- E. SOME of us have said **GOD, I DON'T ACCEPT WHAT YOU HAVE**

DONE!

1. We live in **SELF PITY** (God, why did you make me this way?)
2. We live in the **PAST** (God, why did you let me get old?)
3. We live in **BITTERNESS** (God, why didn't you stop this bad things from happening?)
4. We live in **JEALOUSY** (God, why did you bless them and not me?)
5. We live in **ANGER** (God, you didn't give me what I wanted)

F. You will never move beyond the point of your rebellion against God!

G. You will never recover from your disagreement with the Almighty!

H. Know that GOD is SOVERIEGN will free you from

1. **FEAR** - God is in control
2. **BITTERNESS** - God is the final judge
3. **SELF PITY** (depression) He created you the way He wanted to
4. **LUST** - God has a plan to satisfy my desires
5. **GREED** - God can provide my needs

I. Let God be God!

1. You will find freedom
2. His ways are **JUST**. We may not understand them all, but then we didn't create the universe in 6 days!