

Hidden Hills Sovereign Grace Baptist Church

Wednesday Sermon

Date: April 21, 2021

Text: Romans 9:15-21

Scripture Reading: Romans 9:1-21

Subject: God will have mercy on whom He will

In verses 10 through 14 of this ninth chapter, we considered these things:

1. That when Rebecca had conceived Jacob and Esau, before they born, God said to her "The elder shall serve the younger," that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works.
2. That we saw that it was written in Malachi as recorded in verse 13 that "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."
3. We considered that hatred toward men was to them as persons and not to their descendants. That is the reason Jacob and Esau are cited as examples.
4. Is there unrighteousness with God who chooses some to salvation and others to perdition? God forbid!
5. We ended the lesson last time with this verse:

Romans 9:14 (KJV) *What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.*

Now, we come to chapter 9, verses 15 through 24.

Romans 9:15 (KJV) *For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.*

This verse answers the question of verse 14 which says: "Is there unrighteousness with God? When did God say these words to Moses? Was it not when Moses asked to see God? Let's read that:

Exodus 33:17-19 (KJV) *And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name. 18 And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. 19 And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.*

Do we see this? What does it mean? It means exactly what it says. God will be gracious to whom he will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom He will shew mercy. What is the basis of this? The words "grace" and "mercy" tell us that these are done at the pure pleasure of the one who bestows them. It is God's will and not the objects of his grace and mercy.

Romans 9:16 (KJV) *So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.*

So then it is not of him that willeth, -- What does this mean? It means there is nothing for men to will or do. They may even sit still and do nothing, but depend on the mercy of God. This is a conclusion which the apostle draws from the previous verses. This shows us from these verses and this one, that election, which is the subject of the context, is "not of him that willeth." While we are about it, let us consider that the new birth is likewise not of him that willeth. It is blessedly true that when God exerts his power on the sinner dead in trespasses and in sins, he makes the person willing, but that is an act of mercy on the part of God. Let's read from John 1:

John 1:10-13 (KJV) *He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not. 12 But as many as*

*received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: **13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.***

Not of him that runneth, -- Runneth? What does this mean? It means that election is in no way because of the will or works of men, to the desires, inclinations, and affections of their minds, or to the actions of their lives; these are not the motives, conditions, or causes of God's election of grace.

But of God that sheweth mercy. -- In a free sovereign way and manner. God is not obliged by anything the creature wills or works; but is at full liberty, notwithstanding whatever person may will or do. God gives his grace and mercy, when, where, and to whom he pleases; and therefore to give it to some, and deny it to others, can never be accounted an act of injustice, since he is not bound to give it to any.

The true sense is, that as election, which is the leading step to salvation cannot be attributed at all to the will of men, but to the good pleasure and will of God; and not at all to the works of men. But the good works that persons do are the fruits and effects of salvation and its root, election to it. Therefore salvation including all things associated with it like redemption, justification, regeneration, calling, conversion, faith, repentance, hope, love, etc. and eternal life, is not to be ascribed at all to the will of men, but entirely and alone to the love, grace, and mercy of God through Christ.

Romans 9:17 (KJV) *For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.*

For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh – let’s read that from Exodus:

Exodus 9:13-19 (KJV) *And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. **14** For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. **15** For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth. **16 And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth. **17** As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go? **18** Behold, to morrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof even until now. **19** Send therefore now, and gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field; for upon every man and beast which shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die.***

God’s purpose in raising up Pharaoh to the throne in Egypt was so that God could shew in Pharaoh his power – and that God’s name may be declared throughout all the earth.

O, beloved, our God raises up kings and puts down kings just as He raised up Pharaoh. The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.

Daniel 2:20-21 (KJV) *Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: **21** And he changeth the times and the seasons: he*

removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding:

Daniel 4:17 (KJV) *[When God was sending Nebuchadnezzar to be like a beast, wet with the dew of heaven] This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know **that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.***

Proverbs 21:1 (KJV) *The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.*

Proverbs 16:1 (KJV) *The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD.*

Proverbs 16:9 (KJV) *A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.*

Proverbs 20:24 (KJV) *Man's goings are of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?*

Psalms 105:23-25 (KJV) *Israel also came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. **24 And he increased his people greatly; and made them stronger than their enemies. 25 He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal subtilly with his servants.***

Daniel 4:35 (KJV) *And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants*

of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

Acts 7:9-10 (KJV) *And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, 10 And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.*

Romans 9:18 (KJV) *Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.*

Therefore – These are the exact words from the 15th verse,

Hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, -- God is merciful to whom he will, to any persons he chooses and is pleased to bestow mercy upon. The whole reason for showing mercy on undone sinners is God's mercy bestowed on whom He chooses.

And whom he will he hardeneth. -- If God could, or he did, without any injustice, raise up Pharaoh, and harden his heart against him and his people, that he might rise up against him and destroy him by his power for his own glory, then he may harden any other person for His own purpose.

This hardening of men's hearts is in perfect agreement with the justice and holiness of God. Why is that? Because men first harden their own hearts by sinning, as Pharaoh did. God left Pharaoh to the hardness of his own heart, denying him that grace which only can soften the heart. God certainly is not obliged to give grace, and therefore God does a person no injustice in withholding grace from them. God hardened Pharaoh by delivering him up into the hands of Satan, and to his own lusts, which Pharaoh himself

approved of. God gave him up to a judicial blindness and hardness of heart which is a just punishment for his ungodliness.

19 times in the discourse about the judgment of Egypt, we read of the hardening of the heart of Pharaoh and his people. (Ex 4:21; Ex 7:3,13-14,22; Ex 8:15,19,32; Ex 9:7,12,34-35; Ex 10:1,20,27; Ex 11:10; Ex 14:4,8,17)

Romans 9:19 (KJV) *Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?*

Thou wilt say then unto me -- That is, thou wilt object to me; for this is another objection of the adversary, against the doctrine of God's election and reprobation. This is an objection of a mere natural man of one given up to a reprobate mind, of an insolent hardened sinner. In it is certainly the marks of ill nature, surliness, and rudeness, to the last degree.

Why doth he yet find fault? -- Why does God blame men, since their conduct is in accordance with his own purpose, and since he bestows mercy according to his sovereign will? This objection has been made by sinners in all ages. It is the standing objection against the doctrines of grace.

(2.) It *assumes*, what cannot be proved, that the plan or purpose of God must destroy the freedom of man.

(3.) It is said by the unbelieving that if the *plan* of God is accomplished then that which is best to be done is done, and, consequently man cannot be blamed.

These objections are met by the apostle in the following argument.

Who hath resisted his will? -- That is, who has *successfully opposed* his will, or frustrated his plan? This does not mean that no one has offered resistance or opposition to God, but that no one had done it successfully. God accomplished his purposes *in spite* of men's opposition. Therefore, if this is admitted – that God's purpose is done, how can men be held chargeable with crime. Scripture teaches us the truth of this:

"In thine hand *is there not* power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee? [Da 4:35](#),

"He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and *among* the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"

See also the case of Joseph and his brethren, [Ge 1:20](#), "As for you, ye thought evil against me; *but* God meant it unto good."

For who hath resisted his will? – Wicked men do try to resist the will of God, but are totally unable to do so. This speaks of God's will of purpose, his counsels and decrees, which stand firm and sure, and can never be resisted in such a manner that they can be frustrated and made void. Here is the reasoning of finite man: Since God hardens whom he will, and there is no resisting his will, the fault then can never lie in them who are hardened, and who act as such, but in God. Therefore it must be unreasonable in him to be angry with, blame, accuse, and condemn persons for being and doing that which he himself wills them to be and do. The apostle replies to the objection in the next verse.

Romans 9:20 (KJV) *Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?*

Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? –

The apostle seems to speak these words with some heat, as if his spirit and zeal was stirred at the rudeness and insolence of the caviller (one who raises false and frivolous objections). Think of it, beloved. Let's deal with this man and his objection. Do you even consider what thou are? You are but a man, a piece of living clay, a little breathing dust, a contemptible worm in comparison; and do you dare to dispute with God, to argue with your Maker, to question or call him to an account? You may argue matters with your fellow creatures, but not with your Creator.

Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why has

thou made me thus? – Men, mortals, created by God in His image, but greatly fallen into sin are the thing formed, and he is the former; and it does not become us to challenge his wisdom in ordering and disposing of us into this or that shape of figure. The rude and unformed mass of matter hath no right to this or that form, but is shaped at the pleasure of him that formeth it. God's sovereignty over us is fitly illustrated by the power that the potter hath over the clay. God can do with the clay as he wills – and all of us are created from the same lump of dust. Let's read a couple of passages related to this:

Isaiah 29:16 (KJV) *Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?*

Isaiah 45:9 (KJV) *Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?*

Can we imagine a mortal man who lives and moves and has his very being from God replying against God who created him and sustains his life very moment? I cannot!

Romans 9:21 (KJV) *Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?*

The Holy Spirit who is moving Paul to write this moves him to argue from the less to the greater. How so? That if a potter has power over his clay, to form it as he pleases (who would say he has no such power?); then God has much more power over his creatures, to form them or order them as he desires. God's authority over his creature, is greater than that of a potter over his clay. The potter did not make his clay; but both clay and potter are made by God. Watch this. There is no difference in the matter or lump out of which the potter forms diverse vessels, so there is no difference in mankind all of whom compose the lump. All men are alike by nature, and all are in the same corrupt state; both those who are elected, and those who are rejected, that are made vessels of mercy, or vessels of wrath. We see this from what is said, that the potter according to his own purpose makes vessels of honor or dishonor, some for noble and some for vile use out of the same lump; and is not bound to give a reason of his so doing to his vessels which he formed; even so God may choose some, and reject others, and give no account thereof unto his creatures. The potter takes nothing from the clay, of what form soever he makes it; and the Creator does no wrong to the creature, however he doth dispose of it.

Lord willing, we shall proceed from this verse on to the end of chapter 9 at our next message.

