

## 06. Exodus 9:13-16

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(2/3/16)

The last time we were in Exodus we were in chapter 9 where we finished looking at the first six plagues God sent against Egypt.

I had planned to finish looking at the last four plagues tonight—but instead I'd like to focus on something else that comes out of the text—something that I feel is very important that we understand from a doctrinal point of view.

We will then finish looking at the ten plagues next time.

### **Exodus 9:13-16 (NKJV)**

**<sup>13</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, "Rise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh, and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD God of the Hebrews: "Let My people go, that they may serve Me, <sup>14</sup> for at this time I will send all My plagues to your very heart, and on your servants and on your people, that you may know that *there is none like Me in all the earth.***

**<sup>15</sup> Now if I had stretched out My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, then you would have been cut off from the earth. <sup>16</sup> But indeed for this *purpose* I have raised you up, that I may show My power *in* you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.**

Now we need to be careful here that we don't misinterpret what God is saying concerning Pharaoh.

There are many who believe what God is saying is basically that the only reason God created Pharaoh was to use him as a "puppet" for God's glory.

In other words they believe that Pharaoh had no choice in refusing to let the people of Israel go free, God hardened his heart and predetermined in eternity past that Pharaoh would be an object of wrath—a pawn in the hands of God—a person that God forced to harden his heart and then sent him to hell for having a hard heart.

We dealt with the issue of Pharaoh's free will last time we met—but let's delve into it in more detail tonight.

This is such an important subject that Paul the apostle, in Romans chapter 9, talks about this very passage out of Exodus and uses Pharaoh as an example of those who harden their hearts toward God—

**Romans 9:6-18 (NKJV)**

<sup>6</sup> But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they *are* not all Israel who *are* of Israel, <sup>7</sup> nor *are they* all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "*In Isaac your seed shall be called.*" <sup>8</sup> That is, those who *are* the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. <sup>9</sup> For this *is* the word of promise: "*At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.*" <sup>10</sup> And not only *this*, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, *even* by our father Isaac <sup>11</sup> (for *the children* not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), <sup>12</sup> it was said to her, "*The older shall serve the younger.*" <sup>13</sup> As it is written, "*Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.*" <sup>14</sup> What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! <sup>15</sup> For He says to Moses, "*I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.*" <sup>16</sup> So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. <sup>17</sup> For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "*For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.*" <sup>18</sup> Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

So as you read this it does seem that God is saying we are nothing more than puppets in His hands and that we have no free will and only do what He forces us to do.

Furthermore it seems from what Paul goes on to say in Romans 9 that God has created some to be vessels of mercy (created for heaven) and the rest He determined would be vessels of wrath (created for hell)—but is that really what Paul is teaching here?

Remember he starts off with the statement—

**Romans 9:14 (NKJV)**

**<sup>14</sup> What shall we say then? *Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!***

The problem is when we come to a difficult passage where it seems as though God is acting unrighteously we must remember that God can't act unrighteously and therefore we need to dig deeper into the passage to fully understand what is going on.

This is one of those passages.

Paul is defending, first of all, God's right to choose who He wants to bless or show mercy to—and he uses Isaac and Jacob as examples.

And secondly, Paul is defending God's right not to bless those who He chooses not to bless using Ishmael and Esau as examples.

Here are two things we've already learned in our study in Genesis—God chose Isaac over Ishmael and He chose Jacob over Esau—in both cases the younger over the older to bless.

To illustrate God's right to show mercy to whomever He chooses Paul is going to use a situation from the life of Moses.

And to illustrate God's right not to show mercy or bless whomever He chooses Paul is going to use Pharaoh as an example.

**Romans 9:15 (NKJV)**

**<sup>15</sup> For He says to Moses, "*I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.*" (Explain background—Exodus 32:1-33:19)**

**Exodus 33:19 (NKJV)**

<sup>19</sup> Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." [Paul quotes this in Romans 9:15]

Notice, that God did not say, "*I will send to hell whom I will send to hell.*"

The issue in God choosing Isaac over Ishmael and Jacob over Esau had nothing to do with salvation but only with God's special blessings upon each man's life while on the earth.

In fact the issue in view in Romans 9:12-15 is the election of God in choosing some for special service and blessing—and isn't that God's prerogative to choose whomever He wants to use and to bless on this earth?

This is exactly the point Paul is emphasizing in Romans 9.

God singled out Isaac and Jacob for special blessing—what was that blessing? → To be in the Messianic line—to be the ones through whom Messiah would eventually come.

Isaac and Jacob still had to choose to believe in God and His promises for salvation just like everyone else.

This applies to Israel being chosen by God as a nation to be the object of special blessing—but everyone in the nation still had to believe in God individually to be saved.

Many Jews in both the Old and New Testaments lived and died as unbelievers and went to hell even though they were the chosen people (which is what the word 'elect' means).

Just because God chose some (elected them) for special blessing didn't mean they were automatically saved any more than it meant those not chosen for special blessing were automatically condemned to hell.

Calvinists like to point out how that when Israel sinned with the Golden Calf in the wilderness that God chose to kill 3000 and the others He spared—they say this was based entirely on His sovereign will.

But if you go to the Exodus passage and read Ex.32:26 it says—

**Exodus 32:26 (NKJV)**

<sup>26</sup> then Moses stood in the entrance of the camp, and said, "Whoever *is* on the LORD'S side--*come* to me." And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him.

They were all given an opportunity to escape judgment based on choosing to follow the Lord or not—just as in salvation.

**Romans 9:16 (NKJV)**

<sup>16</sup> So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

Calvinists interpret this to mean that salvation does not depend on man's will or what he wants—it is something God does totally apart from man—we're not even in the equation—it's whatever God sovereignty determines.

They also like to quote John 1:13—

**John 1:13 (NKJV)**

<sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And again Calvinists interpret this to mean that the new birth (salvation) isn't the result of a person exercising their free will to believe in Jesus—they claim God has sovereignly decided who goes to heaven and who goes to hell—and man has no choice in the matter.

In answer to this John 1:12 makes it clear that the new birth is obtained by all who *believe* and *receive* Christ—not by those whom it is *forced* upon—which means that salvation involves an act of free will—

**John 1:12 (NKJV)**

<sup>12</sup> But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name...

**Romans 9:16 (NKJV)**

<sup>16</sup> So then *it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.*

It's true that only God can be the source of *saving mercy* and grace—Jesus said that no one can come to Him for salvation unless the Father draws him or her.

The Calvinist claims that God only draws the elect to Christ—but Jesus said, “*If I am lifted up from the earth (the cross) I will draw all men and women to Myself.*”

Now listen, just because God draws a person to Jesus (the ministry of the Holy Spirit) doesn't mean they *have* to be saved—they can resist the grace of God (I don't believe in the Calvinist doctrine of Irresistible Grace)—

This is what Jesus meant when He said that “*many are called but few are chosen.*”

God is calling all men and women to be saved—but His grace and mercy to be saved isn't forced on anyone and can be resisted and rejected.

Having said all of that I still see the focus here in Romans 9 as not being on salvation but on God's right to bless the lives of anyone He chooses apart from anything we do to earn it.

And then Paul quotes from our passage in Exodus 9 concerning Pharaoh—

**Romans 9:17 (NKJV)**

***<sup>17</sup> For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth."***

Is this saying that God hardens a person's heart with unbelief and then sends them to hell for having a hard unbelieving heart? (The Calvinist doctrine of reprobation)

There is nowhere in the Bible where it says that God hardens anyone's heart who hasn't first hardened it toward God.

Yes it says repeatedly in Exodus that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, but it's also true that it says that Pharaoh first hardened *his* heart toward God.

In Exodus 9:12 we read—

**Exodus 9:12 (NKJV)**

**<sup>12</sup> But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh; and he did not heed them, just as the LORD had spoken to Moses.**

This is the first time in the book of Exodus that we read—**“the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh”**.

And as we stated last time it's true that back in chapter 4:21 and 7:3 God had said He would harden Pharaoh's heart—and here He makes good on that.

Yet it is said six times before this that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Exodus 7:13, 7:22, 8:15, 8:19, 8:32, 9:7).

We see that God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart was simply Him making firm Pharaoh's own will—God didn't force him to do anything He simply reinforced what Pharaoh wanted.

The Hebrew word for “hardened” is *chazaq* and can be translated, “to strengthen” or “make firm.”

So the idea is that Pharaoh kept hardening his heart and God eventually responded by making it harder.

And based on that Paul says in Romans 9:18—

**Romans 9:18 (NKJV)**

**<sup>18</sup> Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.**

But once again this hardening is based on a person's decision to reject the truth of God, the gospel, for salvation.

**2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, <sup>10</sup> and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. <sup>11</sup> And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, <sup>12</sup> that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.



The hardening of a person's heart by God is only after that person rejects His love and grace and truth.

And so because *they* have rejected these things God will eventually, if they don't repent, solidify them in their position and choice.

As Paul said in Romans 9:14—“*does this mean that God is acting unrighteously?—Certainly not!*”

I believe it would be unrighteous for God to zap a person with a hard heart of unbelief, and then force them to commit all kinds of sins—and then send them to hell for doing those sins and for having that hard heart.

To me that would be unrighteous but I know that God cannot act unrighteously—rather Paul said earlier in Romans—

**Romans 2:5 (NKJV)**

<sup>5</sup> But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

God offers grace to be saved—man hardens his heart by refusing to accept God's grace and every time he does he is storing up judgment for himself on the Day of Judgment—righteous judgment (because he, of his own free will, has chosen to reject God's salvation and not that God has sovereignly chosen to send them to hell).

But realize that God reserves the right to solidify or make firm a person's heart in whatever choices he or she has made.

That's why the Bible admonishes, “*Today is the day of salvation—if you hear His voice don't harden your heart....*” because you may pass the spiritual point of “no return”. (Explain)

Listen, God is looking for soft hearts that He can mold and use for His glory—but He will use a hard heart to get glory through—but like Pharaoh found out that’s a painful way to go—“*woe to the person who strives with (fights against) their Maker.*”

When it comes to God’s grace someone has said, “*The same sun that melts wax hardens clay.*”

The same grace will melt a heart or harden a heart—it all depends on the condition of the heart.

And that all depends on each individual person and how they choose to respond to the grace of God and the light He has given them.

One thing is certain—God isn’t zapping people with hard hearts just so He can send them to hell.

**Revelation 22:17 (NKJV)**

<sup>17</sup> And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

What Paul is teaching here in Romans 9 is that God is going to get glory from our lives one way or another—because of us or in spite of us—God will make even the wrath of man to praise Him.

If you resist God, reject Jesus and harden your heart then God is not opposed to saying,

*“If that’s the course of action you want to take, and if you don’t want to glorify Me willingly—then I’m going to use your hard heart against you and I’m going to glorify My name in spite of you.”*

And that’s exactly what He did with Pharaoh.

Pharaoh didn't want to lose his free labor; there were economic reasons why he hardened his heart to God.

But God didn't just harden his heart against his will and then send him to hell for having a hard heart.

God didn't force Pharaoh to do anything but instead He used his own hard heart against him just as Jesus did with Judas. (Explain)

Knowing that Pharaoh would harden his heart to God, God placed him in his position as king of Egypt to use him to demonstrate God's awesome power on behalf of His people. (Ex. 9:16; Rom. 9:17)

Notice that v.17 doesn't say, "For this purpose I have *created* you." It says, "For this purpose I have *raised* you up."

Pharaoh wasn't a poor pawn in the plan of God created for hell by God who gave him a hard heart—he made his own choices and God used them to accomplish His divine purposes.

**Romans 9:19 (NKJV)**

**<sup>19</sup> You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?"**

Extreme Calvinists interpret this to mean that God's power in salvation is literally *irresistible* regardless of what a person wills.

In response to this Norm Geisler, in his book *Chosen But Free* writes,

"It should be pointed out first that the phrase "*who has resisted His will?*" is not an affirmation by the biblical author but a question posed in the mouth of an objector. Note the introductory phrase, "*You will say to me then...*"

A similar objector is introduced in Romans 3:8: "*Why not say—'let us do evil that good may come?'*" So the idea that one cannot resist God's will may be no more part of Paul's teaching than the view we should do evil so good may come. Furthermore, Paul clearly rejects the objector's stance in the very next verse, saying, "*But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God?'*" His answer implies that the objector can and is resisting God by raising this very question. But more importantly, the direct implication is that if God's will is irresistible, then we should not be blamed."

If we are nothing more than 'puppets' forced to do whatever God wants without any free will on our part—would it be righteous on God's part to hold us accountable for the actions He forced us to do?

But we are not puppets, we can resist the will of God—

**Acts 7:51**

"You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.

And yet Calvinists insist that Paul's remarks in Romans 9:19-21 are saying that very thing—that a person can't resist God's will—

**Romans 9:19-21 (NKJV)**

**<sup>19</sup> You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?"**

**<sup>20</sup> But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" <sup>21</sup> Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?**

This verse seems to create the impression that we as individuals have no power of choice and are simply overpowered and molded by God like helpless clay in the potter's hands—some He makes for heaven (vessels of honor) and some He creates for hell (vessels of dishonor).

But who is Paul addressing Romans 9-11 to primarily? → The Jews—Israel.

And being a Jew and a Rabbi Paul seems to be drawing on an illustration that would have been very familiar to his Jewish readers in talking about the potter and the clay—

**Jeremiah 18:1-6 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying: <sup>2</sup> "Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause you to hear My words." <sup>3</sup> Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something at the wheel. <sup>4</sup> And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make. <sup>5</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying: <sup>6</sup> "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?" says the LORD. "Look, as the clay *is* in the potter's hand, so *are* you in My hand, O house of Israel!

Now I want you to notice very carefully what is being said here—why did the potter have to remake the vessel into something else (an object of wrath instead of an object of blessing)—because it was marred in the hands of the potter.

You have only one of two choices here—either God purposely marred it (forced Israel to sin against Him) or God had planned to use and bless Israel but those plans had to be changed (judgment) because they chose to sin against God.

And I believe it was the latter—Israel turned away from God and got into idolatry and immorality and God had to judge them remaking them into an object of His wrath instead of His original desire to use them as an instrument of blessing.

But be very clear it was because they freely chose to disobey Him—not because they were helpless clay in His hands forced to do what He wanted without any choice on their part—the passage goes on to make this clear—

**Jeremiah 18:7-12 (NKJV)**

<sup>7</sup> The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy *it*, <sup>8</sup> if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it. <sup>9</sup> And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant *it*, <sup>10</sup> if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it.

<sup>11</sup> "Now therefore, speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "Behold, I am fashioning a disaster and devising a plan against you. Return now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good." ' ' <sup>12</sup> And they said, "That is hopeless! So we will walk according to our own plans, and we will every one obey the dictates of his evil heart."

Here again we see that the issue is not the predetermined, irresistible will of God, but the free will of man.

However a person, whether they are Jew or Gentile, however they respond to God's grace will determine whether they will be a vessel of honor or dishonor—whether they will experience God's mercy or wrath now and forever.

This is brought out by Paul and emphasized in Romans 9:22—

**Romans 9:22 (NKJV)**

<sup>22</sup> ***What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,***

The word “**prepared**” in Romans 9:22 does not suggest that *God* made Pharaoh a “*vessel of wrath.*”

The verb is in the middle voice in the Greek making it a reflexive action.

So, it should read: “*the vessels of wrath prepared themselves for destruction.*”

God prepares men for glory (Rom. 9:23), but sinners prepare themselves for judgment.

Here again the passage implies that the “vessels of wrath” are objects of wrath because they refuse to repent—they did not willingly bring honor to God, so they became objects of God’s wrath.

They are “**prepared for destruction**” by their own sin, disobedience, and rebellion, and not by some arbitrary decree of God.

This is evident from the fact that they are “*endured*” by God with “*much longsuffering.*”

This suggests that God was patiently waiting for them to repent so that they could go from “*vessels of wrath*” to “*vessels of mercy*” (Rom. 9:22-23)—no one can say God never gave them a chance to be saved.

**2 Peter 3:9 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

With regard to this Norm Geisler says,

*“There is absolutely no reason to believe, as extreme Calvinists do, either here or anywhere else in Scripture, that God predestines certain persons to eternal hell apart from their own free choice.”*

Back in Exodus 9 by the time God was ready to bring the seventh plague as one author said—

*“Pharaoh’s heart had become harder, so God’s disciplines had to become more severe. Moses reminded the king of the Lord’s mercy: “For if by now I had put forth My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, you would then have been cut off from the earth” (v. 15, NASB). Simply by speaking the word, God could have wiped out the entire Egyptian nation, but God in His mercy doesn’t give sinners all that they deserve. How grateful Pharaoh should have been, and yet he continued to resist the Lord.”*