**My Power is in You**

**by Pastor Fee Soliven**

**Romans 9:16-21**

**Wednesday Evening**

**September 25, 2024**

**Romans 9:16-21**

16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. 17 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." 18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?" 20 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?" 21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

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

Saints, we tend to read God’s statement to Moses (which was a response to Moses’ request to see God’s glory) as if it were an expression of God’s withholding mercy rather than a statement of his merciful generosity.

**Mark 10:46-52**

46 Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging. 47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 48 Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

49 So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. Then they called the blind man, saying to him, "Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you." 50 And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus. 51 So Jesus answered and said to him, "What do you want Me to do for you?" The blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, that I may receive my sight." 52 Then Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.

**Hebrews 11:6**

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

In the context of this statement in Exodus, God was not justifying himself, but saying in effect, “I will have mercy on people you would not expect, and I will have compassion in ways that will surprise you, especially when I am compassionate with you!”

No one can know the heart of a person in the way that God knows. No individual, court of law, or group can perfectly assess the righteousness of a person.

So we must leave the choosing and judging to God.

**17 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."**

Saints, for a third illustration of God’s sovereign choices, Paul recalls Pharaoh.

God had purposely placed that particular Pharaoh in that particular position at that particular time in history so God’s great power would be displayed (through the miracles witnessed in Egypt and by the incredible release of the Hebrew slaves), and so God’s fame would be spread throughout the earth.

God put up with Pharaoh’s fickleness and defiance for quite some time, but all for the same purposes.

Pharaoh became mired in his own rebelliousness. In fact, part of God’s judgment on Egypt was the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart.

Eventually, those nations who heard what God had done for his people in Egypt greatly feared the Israelites and their God.

**Joshua 2:10-12**

10 For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed.

11 And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.

**Joshua 9:9**

So they said to him: "From a very far country your servants have come, because of the name of the LORD your God; for we have heard of His fame, and all that He did in Egypt…

**1 Samuel 4:8**

Woe to us! Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness.

**18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.**

Saints, again, someone might ask, “Doesn’t it seem a bit unfair that God would just use somebody to glorify himself?”

But Paul answers the implicit question as before: God has mercy on whomever he chooses; and conversely, he chooses to make some people refuse to listen.

God’s judgment on Pharaoh’s great sinfulness was to “harden” his heart, to confirm his disobedience so that the consequences of his rebellion would be his own punishment.

“Hardening” occurs when a person has a track record of disobedience and rebellion. From the human perspective, it is difficult to know exactly at what point God confirms our own resistance as hardness.

Paul’s implicit warning is to avoid attitudes that lead to hardness of heart.

**1 Corinthians 10:6**

Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.

**Hebrews 3:8**

Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness…

Everything comes from God’s sovereign choices. Israel, as God’s chosen people, had made a grave mistake in acting with superiority over others who were not of God’s “chosen” nation.

It was that pride that made them misunderstand their own Scriptures that said that God would offer salvation beyond Israel, to people from all nations.

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

Saints, Paul probably had countless discussions with fellow Jews about these issues. So he can anticipate their questions.

If God simply chooses those on whom he will have mercy and those whom he will harden, why does God blame people for not listening?

Haven’t they simply done what he made them do? Occasionally these questions are asked by those who are genuinely seeking to understand God and his ways with people.

Usually, however, they are used to excuse certain behavior—

”It’s not my fault, God; it’s your fault!”

In either case, as Paul explains, the answer is the same.

We ourselves are to blame because we are guilty of trying to reject or resist God.

**20 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?"**

Saints, Paul has little patience for such questions, and he supposes that God doesn’t either.

When it comes down to it, a mere human being cannot criticize God. He is absolutely sovereign.

We are extremely privileged to have any relationship with him at all. His dealings with all the world are not to be judged by us.

Quoting from Scripture, Paul illustrates the absurdity of such questions. This passage was taken from Isaiah; in context it expresses God’s response to his rebellious people.

**Isaiah 29:16**

Surely you have things turned around! Shall the potter be esteemed as the clay; For shall the thing made say of him who made it, "He did not make me"? Or shall the thing formed say of him who formed it, "He has no understanding"?

**Isaiah 45:9**

"Woe to him who strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth! Shall the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' Or shall your handiwork say, 'He has no hands'?

Saints, while God welcomes our sincere questions and concerns, John the Baptist and doubting Thomas, patiently answers us, he will not allow sinners to question his sovereignty.

**Matthew 11:1-6**

1 Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities. 2 And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples 3 and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"

4 Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: 5 The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. 6 And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."

**John 20:24-29**

24 Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

26 And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" 27 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."

28 And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

The thing that was created has no right to sit in judgment on the Creator.

**21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?**

Saints, to further illustrate God’s sovereignty, Paul compares God to a potter (a very common and necessary vocation in ancient times, since most cooking and storage was done in various types of clay pots).

The potter has every right to take one large lump of clay and use part of it to make a jar for decoration and another part of it to make a garbage can.

Neither item has any right to complain and ask why the potter did what he did.

The lesson of the potter points to equal worth among lumps of clay, while the artist’s purpose and design may differ.

The proper attitude for clay is to be pliable rather than stiff, receptive rather than rebellious, and grateful for the potter’s touch rather than resentful of the potter’s purpose for us.

**Jeremiah 18:5-10**

5 Then the Lord said: 6 "O Israel, can't I do to you as this potter has done to his clay? As the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand. 7 Whenever I announce that a certain nation or kingdom is to be taken up and destroyed, 8 then if that nation renounces its evil ways, I will not destroy it as I had planned.

9 And if I announce that I will make a certain nation strong and great, 10 but then that nation changes its mind, turns to evil, and refuses to obey me, then I, too, will change my mind and not bless that nation as I had said I would.

Soon and Very soon, Jesus is about to appear, we are almost out of here!

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

**1 Corinthians 15:50-54**

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

**Short Movie Slide>**

**Acts 2:38-39**

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

**Let’s Pray!**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace!**