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Living Hope EFC

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God Retreats into to His Sovereignty to Save Israel Rom.9:14-24.

INTRO: "That's not fair!" Have your kids ever said it?

- I didn't understand why my dad didn't want me to drive his brand new Oldsmobile **Tornado**. I finally begged him until he did.
- It had snowed. I ran it into a telephone pole!
- "Other kids get to do it!"
- **We usually don't say it – when something good happens to us.**
- **Dad gives us \$20. "Why Dad, why?" We get a raise...**
- **It's only when something happens we don't understand or like.**

Scripture is full of great life accounts of people asking the question:

- **Job:** Just show up God and answer me! 31:35-37.
- **David:** "Why, O Lord, do my enemies pursue me?"

Whenever our thoughts turn to God's Sovereignty, we tend to express them as Paul's imagined reader in Rom.9:19.

- **If God is really in control of life:** (1) Why all this evil & suffering? (2) It all seems arbitrary & fatalistic, and life is futile.

Question: How can we accept God's sovereignty & not feel it is unfair?

Can we glean something from God's sovereign over the affairs of history on a cosmic level, that help us understand this?

Romans 9-11:

- Here, Paul turns from his discussion of our *personal salvation* to **God's redemptive program for Israel & Gentiles on a cosmic level.**
- **The same God, who sovereignly pledged His love and future salvation for Israel, is the God who sovereignly** promises eternal salvation for believers in 8:28-39.

In Chap.9 Paul points out that God's Word has not failed regarding Israel. Rather, He is, & will fulfill exactly what He promised.

9:1-5. God chose Israel to be in Cov't relationship with Him, that He might bless the world through them, through Jesus Christ.

- Israel's unbelief & disobedience to God, and the rejection of His Son, resulted in their current state of blindness & loss of privilege.

9:6-13. God has preserved His promises to Abraham's heirs.

1. (v.6) ANSWER: God's Word/ promises never fail: **Num.23:19.** Is.44-48

- **Israel's/ man's failures do not negate the faithfulness of God!**
- **To be children of God is not merely a matter of natural descendant, but of promise=supernatural birth, like Isaac.**
- IF God's promises were dependent upon man, none could succeed.

- God's choice/ election is not based on character or conduct but upon grace. Not upon natural birth order, but upon God's will.– Rom.3:23

9:14-18. God's selection is based upon His mercy toward man.

Verses 14-15: Here is a key passage to understanding basis of election.

μ&v: The topic of "election" raises the question of **fairness**, justness, **v.19**.

δε: The perspective of real-life, man's sinfulness & depravity, demonstrates that if God were "just," if He were not *merciful*, all would perish!

- Because God is merciful many believe and receive His salvation.

CONTEXT of Moses statement in 9:15: Exodus 32-33.

- Israel passed through the Red Sea & is now camped at Mt. Sinai.
- God establishes a **National Gov't Relationship** with "Israel," Ex-Num.
- **Israel is now a theocratic state under the rule of God, the Nation through which God will mediate worldwide blessings & salvation.**
- Moses is on Mt. Sinai getting the Law, Israel makes a Calf to worship.
- **Exodus:** 32:1,4,6, 7-10, 11a, 13-14; 32-33. All are doomed!

Newell: "Now who can find fault with that? Unless Jehovah shows mercy, Israel must all righteously perish. There was no resource left in man! God, whose name is Love, must come out to man and come in mercy, or all is over!" –Romans, 366

Darby: "When every Israelite had lost all title to everything God had to give, then God retreated, if I may use the expression, into His own sovereignty, that He might not cut them off.

By this act, Israel had forfeited everything; they had cast off the promises, which they had accepted on the condition of their own obedience (Ex.19:8), and the God who made the promises, and who alone could fulfill them. Could God overlook this sin? ... If God dealt with Israel in righteousness, every one must have been cut off. What could God do, but retreat into His own sovereignty? There He had a resource; for if any of them are to be spared, it must be in this way of mercy. 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.' Man is entirely lost, so now God says, I will act for Myself.

Say now you Jews, (and you, my reader) **will you be willing to be dealt with in righteousness?** No, you would not! ...But if you have such a conviction of sin as stops your mouth about righteousness, and so excludes all boasting, **you will rejoice in the 'mercy' and 'compassion' of God, who retreats into His own sovereignty, that He may know how to spare; because in this sovereignty He can show mercy.**" –Newell, 366-367

POINT: God's sovereignty is not some fatalistic, arbitrary decision of election to appoint people to heaven or hell. **It is His saving ability!**

- God is love, merciful, compassionate, just, holy – "not willing that any should perish but all be saved." Yet "all have sinned!"
- **Rom.3:9-20! This is what God has to work with**
- **This is the context of reality regarding every man, woman & child!**
- **Further: Rom.8:6-8; 1 Cor.2:14; 2 Cor.4:4; Eph.2:1-3!**
- **"Will you be willing to be dealt with in righteousness?" Rom.6:23.**
- God never has to act in order for man to suffer judgment, ALL have sinned by their own personal choice, and the wages = judgment.

- But for some **not** to suffer judgment, God must work salvation.

Vs. 16-18: God does not limit Himself to man's ability or energy or effort to accomplish what He has promised, nor does he eliminate man's choices. **God Himself works His own salvation for man. *Isaiah 59:15-17***

Pharaoh & Moses: Consider – One a Jew, one a Gentile. One a slave, one a ruler. Both were sinners. Both were murderers. Both saw God's wonders. Moses believed in God for his forgiveness & redemption. Pharaoh rejected Him

- *"The same sun that melts ice, hardens the clay!"*

1. God chose Pharaoh to reveal His power & name to all the earth.

- Many heard about the plagues & Red Sea and believed: ***Josh. 2:8-11.***
- Pharaoh's "hardening" is referred to at least 15 times in Exodus.
- Sometimes: "Pharaoh hardened his heart." Others: "God hardened."
- By the miracles & plagues – God gave Pharaoh many opportunities to believe in him. Pharaoh resisted, and hardness grew in his heart.

2. God chose Moses to deliver Israel out of Pharaoh's hand.

- Clearly, Moses was a work of mercy! –Ex.3-4; 4:24.
- **God is sovereign in His acts and purposes. He works according to His will, but never arbitrarily. Pharaoh & Moses chose their paths.**

9:19-24. Man attempts to malign God because He is Sovereign, but God is beyond man's abilities to judge.

Verse 19-20. Does man think he can actually judge God? What pride.

ILLUS: Imagine someone who's never even been in the military, trying to advise a seasoned general in Afghanistan or Iraq!

- **Do you, a mere man** - sinful, finite, fallen, living 30-80 years, limited in knowledge, biased in your own favor, filled with lust, greed & bitterness, who can't even speak his own language eloquently or understand the heart of his mate or neighbor; **DO YOU** presume to know more than God? Holy, infinite in wisdom & knowledge, selfless, loving, compassionate, long suffering, by nature – good & generous, eternal in perspective, unbiased toward any, filled with peace, graciousness, & goodness – knowing the thoughts of every heart in every person intimately, Who created in the womb & is able to access the deepest needs & meet them fully? *Do you judge God?*
- **Man is not even on the same playing field as God!**
- **Man has no authority in the realm of judging God's motives or acts.**

Verse 21-24. Does not God have authority over His creation?

"It is not the quality of the clay, but the will of the potter, that decides to what use each part of the lump is to be put."

Vs.22: All that God does is an extension of His being & reveals His glory.

Vs.23-24: How can we not be humbled & filled with bliss at His grace?

TWO IMPORTANT VERBS:

(1) **Vs.22. Καταρτιζω:** (perf. midd or pass.) To make ready, prepare, create, put in order. "Prepared for destruction."

- **Arndt & Gingrich** suggest it is a middle voice = "**Having prepared themselves for ruin.**" These people have made themselves ready/ ripe for ruin by their natural choices of disobedience.
- This is not suggesting that God predestined them to destruction. "*Men are not lost because they are hardened but hardened because lost*"

(2) **Vs.23. Προετοιμαζω:** (3sr, sing, aor, act, ind) "To prepare before."

- "Whom He prepared beforehand for glory, even us."
- Used only twice in the NT: here and Eph.2:10.
- **Q: How does God prepare us for glory?**
- **A: Rom.** 3:22-25; 5:1-2,9-10, 20-21; 6:23; 8:11, 17-18; 28-30. Grace!
- What is impossible for man, is possible with God: 4:17,

SUMMARY: So what do we learn about God's Sovereignty?
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1- God's sovereignty guarantees His Word will not fail?

- **Israel has failed** in their response to God. **All men have failed** to live up to God's standard of glory. **BUT God's Word does not fail.**

2- God does not work arbitrarily, but according to His wise counsel.

- **God's sovereignty is His ability to save those He created!**

3- Every now & then God allows us to see "why" things happen.

Most of the time we don't have enough history.

- We are asked to live by faith.

James Gray, former president of MBI. **Sickness prevented him from voyage. All were killed!** Dr. James Gray, former president of Moody Bible Institute, was recovering from a severe illness. His doctor, thinking a change of scenery might do him good, advised him to take an ocean voyage.

But just when the cruise was to begin, Dr. Gray experienced an unexpected relapse. He was greatly disappointed and began to wonder why God had allowed this new illness to come.

About a week later, he picked up a newspaper that carried on the front page the tragic story of a steamer that had sunk after striking a reef in St. John's harbor. There were no survivors. When Dr. Gray read further, he realized it was the very ship he would have been on. He realized how perfectly the Lord had directed his way. His temporary sickness had delivered him from certain death.

- Green, 171,72

Paul could look back and see God's sovereign, faithful hand all through Israel's history (Jacob & Esau: the promise, the fulfillment).

4- When we don't have enough history, we must walk of FAITH.

ILLUS: TAPESTRY

There was a Museum guide who would take his tour group to a darkened room, shine a light on a mass of string, color, and apparent chaos and ask the group, "What do you think this is?" "I don't know," was the reply.

He then led them to the other side of the room and said, "Stand here and watch." Once in position he would turn on the spotlight. It was instantly apparent that the mass of jumbled colored string seen just a moment earlier was in fact an enormous tapestry – from the backside. The real work had to be seen from a different perspective to understand what the artist was creating.

So it is with God and his ways. We often look at them and ask "WHY?"

Our problem is that we are on the wrong side of eternity to be able to have a clear perspective to see God's pattern and work. –Green, 173

ILLUS: I recently received an email, a friend with colon cancer.

My wife and I both realize:

1. that God is in charge, and we are not. I have checked out Heb. 13:8 a couple of times, and it's still in there.
 2. that God knew about this long before creation, but is just now revealing it to us, at the right time.
 3. that everything is happening on His time schedule, and not ours.
 4. that God is a good God and everything He does is good, and is for our good, because He loves us.
 5. that I completely agree with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."
 6. that God has my permission to do whatever He chooses with me at any time He chooses.
 7. that the most important event in our lives has nothing to do with cancer, but was the forgiveness of our sin and having our names written in the Lamb's Book of Life.
- We have this hanging on the fridge where we can refer to it daily.
 - In spite of that, we are just fine. How about you? -
 - I'm not justifying sinful actions, bad choices, man's cruelty, human suffering. **I'm saying that God is in control, even when things appear to be out of control, and we can trust him.**