

# Epistle of Romans XXI

(Chapter 9:14-33)

## God's Free Moral Agency

Fred R. Coulter—January 11, 1998

**God** is going to *choose*!

**God** is going to *do*!

**God** is going to *determine*!

***As He see fit and according to His will!*** Some of these things, as we look at it from a perspective of human beings, we think:

- that isn't right
- that isn't good
- that's not fair
- that's sin
- How could God do this?
- Why doesn't He do that?

The first time I read the book of Job, I thought that God was wrong. How could God do that to a man who was so good? How could God possibly take someone like Job—he was perfect, doing everything just right—and then take all of that away from him? Well, his wife didn't think it was too good. She said, 'Curse God and die.' And his friends said, 'You've sinned! You've done this; you've done that; you've done the other thing'; and they couldn't explain why God did what He did. ***God did what He did so He could show His power and His glory, and so that Job could be converted!***

With Job being converted, he can be in the Kingdom of God as a spirit being, then the end result and the purpose of that is a great and a magnificent fulfillment of God's purpose. The reason, in going through these things—that people think that God is sinning or God is unrighteous—is because they don't understand the second resurrection. That those people who have been blinded or deceived or used in certain manners for God's purpose, will have a chance at the second resurrection. If there were no second resurrection, then you could, indeed, say that God was not fair.

Romans 9:14: "What then shall we say? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? MAY IT NEVER BE!"

That's what it means in the Greek; it is very emphatic. The *King James* says, 'God forbid'; that is not an accurate translation. It means, *may this never come into existence!*

Verse 15: "For He said to Moses, 'I will show mercy to whomever I show mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I have compassion.'"

Let's go to where this is quoted from. This is right after the incident with the golden calf and where Moses was going to see God:

Exodus 33:19: "And He said, 'I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will have mercy on whom I will have mercy'" (vs 19-20).

God is the One Who's going to decide. He is deciding *who He is going to choose* to do what He's going to *because He is God!* I think if we understand that in relationship to our lives, and our relationship to God.

- How do you receive the mercy of God?
- How do you receive the graciousness of God?

*Since God isn't going to do it willy-nilly to everybody:*

- How is it that we received it and someone else didn't?
- How is it that someone else received it and we didn't? *Because God is God!*

The Apostle Paul understood this. He understood this in relationship to his own life. Remember the one who was there consenting to the death of Stephen, when he was being stoned to death, and Stephen said, 'Lord, lay not this to their charge.' Saul, the one who became Paul, was standing right there holding his coat while he was being stoned! God answered Stephen's prayer, but Stephen never knew it because he died. God called the one who was responsible for killing him. In doing that, God is having '**mercy on whomsoever He will have mercy**' and '**grace on whomsoever He will have grace.**' Paul understood that!

1-Timothy 1:12: "And I thank Jesus Christ our Lord, Who has empowered me, that He counted me faithful, putting *me* into the ministry, who was previously a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent person..." (vs 12-13)

—ravenous to the Church, like a wild boar rooting things up and tearing it apart, with their big tusks hanging out the side of their mouths and just rooting and tearing up—that's what it means in the Greek.

"...but I obtained mercy...

[If you and I were God we wouldn't think of calling him. We'd say, 'No way!']

...because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief" (v 13).

We need to understand something here: Why does God close people up to unbelief? There are two reasons:

- He doesn't want to hold them responsible for salvation at this point, so they're concluded in unbelief.

That's why they're also, as it says that the world is in effect, spiritually dead. If they weren't in unbelief, then God would have to deal with them for salvation. But since God is only working with the few, in the ones He's calling, He concludes them in unbelief. That's so He can have mercy on them at a later time.

- So that when the time comes and they are resurrected in the second resurrection, they will understand the great mercy of God.

So, you have the two aspects of it working here.

Verse 14: "But the grace of our Lord abounded exceedingly with *the* faith and love that *is* in Christ Jesus."

As I read these things, let's just keep in mind that ***Christ died while we were yet sinners!*** While Christ was on the earth, no one loved Him except His mother and maybe the Apostle John. He was in a total hostile environment on every side, and yet, He was faithful to the death of the cross. That's a lot of love, and that's a lot of faith.

Verse 15: "*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of full acceptance: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief....*

[Paul understood from where he was coming]

...But for this reason I was shown mercy in order that in me first Jesus Christ might demonstrate all long-suffering, for an example to those who would afterwards believe on Him unto eternal life" (vs 15-16).

That's quite a verse there! This is to tell us, and he's saying it in so many words and in a very nice way: 'I did all of this ravaging the Church; I am a chief sinner.'

So therefore, any of us who come afterward, let's not think we have sinned such a sin that God can't forgive. Did you kill those in the Church? Did you haul them off to be arrested? Were you hateful? harmful? injurious? *No, you weren't!* This is a pattern. God is saying that you can look at the life of the Apostle Paul and look at the change from being Saul the destroyer to Paul the apostle; from being the one who was breathing out slaughter, threatening, death and hate *to the one who was preaching the love of God*. That is the pattern He wants us to see.

"...to those who would afterwards believe on Him unto eternal life" (v 16).

Not only that, but we have 14 of his epistles which show us the way to eternal life. That's really something! That's why when Paul wrote what God said to Moses:

Romans 9:15: "...I will show mercy to whomever I show mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I have compassion"

—Paul understood it!

Let's look at some other examples showing that only God can save. Let's go back to Isaiah 41, and this ties in with 'Jacob I loved' (Rom. 9:13). We're going to see some very interesting things.

In speaking of raising up Cyrus to pave the way for the Jews to go back to the Holy Land after the Babylonian captivity, Isaiah, 41:4:

"Who has planned and done *it*, calling forth the generations from the beginning?...."

There's another aspect to predestination, which is a little greater than the explanation that we've had in the past. You've heard me explain a little bit about the covenant in Gen. 15, about the animals being split in two and God walking down between them. Why was it that only God walked down between those? Why didn't He say to Abraham, 'I walked down, now you walk down'?

Normally, when you have that kind of covenant, both parties walk down through between the calves or animals. Why? *Because what He promised Abraham, only God could do!* He said, 'You're going to have a son of your own bowels.' Abraham knew he couldn't do that. All of his walking between the calves wouldn't perform it. God said, 'Now look at the stars of heaven and count them, and if you're able to number them so shall your seed be.' Abraham was going to die, so how could Abraham carry out that oath? *Only God could!* That's why God guaranteed it with His walking between the sacrificial animals of that covenant sacrifice.

Verse 4: "Who has planned and done *it*, calling forth the generations from the beginning? 'I, THE LORD, *AM* THE FIRST AND THE LAST; I *AM* HE.'" (v 4).

He's saying He's going to take care of His plan from the beginning to the ending. Doesn't this sound a little bit like Revelation: 'I am the First, the Last, the Beginning, the Ending, Alpha, Omega'? *Yes, indeed!*

Verse 8: "'But you, Israel, *are* My servant, Jacob...

[This has to do with calling Jacob.]

...whom I have chosen..."

That's why in Rom. 9 it says 'according to His own selection,' that could be according to His own choice. Now we're dealing with *God's* choice. Why did He choose Jacob? *Because He promised Abraham He would! Can God lie? No!* Therefore, He chose him.

"...the seed of Abraham, My friend; whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called you from its uttermost parts. And I said to you, 'You *are* My servant; I have chosen you, and have not cast you away'" (vs 8-9).

As we're reading, I want you to think of two things:

- ***the Church***, because a lot of this applies directly to the Church
- ***physical Israel*** namely being the descendants of Joseph—Ephraim and Manasseh—but more particularly Manasseh, the United States today, where the Gospel is being preached from in the world; *from America*, that's where it's being preached

The gospel of the Protestants, even though it has many incorrect things in it, at least the name of Christ is being preached. As Paul would say, 'Some in contentions, some in sincerity.' Nevertheless, it is being done because God chose Jacob to do it, and He chose Joseph to do it.

Verse 10: "Do not fear; for ***I am with you***..."

[Isn't it amazing? The one's whom God is with, they push Him away! The one's whom God has not chosen, they desire. That's a perplexity of human nature.]

"...be not dismayed...

[discouraged or frustrated]

...for I *am* your God. I will strengthen you; yea, I will help you; yea, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness." (v 10).

Not your own, but Mine!

Verse 11: "Behold, all those who were angered against you shall be ashamed and confounded..."

God is able to take care of the enemies.

- Did that happen?
- Did that happen to Christ?
- Were all the enemies confounded?
- *Yes, especially when He was resurrected!*
- Has that happened with those who truly follow God?
- Are the enemies taken care of?
- *Yes!*

"...**they shall be as nothing....**" (v 11).

This ties in with 'if you love God 'all things work together for good,' and nothing can be against you (Rom. 8).

"...And those who strive against you shall perish" (v 11).

Why? *Because God exercises free moral agency to choose you!*

Verse 12: "You shall seek them, and shall not find them; men warring against you shall be as nothing, and as a thing of naught, for I, the LORD your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, 'Do not fear; I will help you.' Do not fear, you worm Jacob..." (vs 12-14).

That's pretty weak! A worm is very easily exterminated; you just squash it! It's weak, it has no protection, no armor, no claws, no hooves. It's just a little piece of flesh out there.

"...and men of Israel; I will help you,' says the LORD and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel" (v 14).

So, those are some tremendous promises we can hold onto in looking for the mercy that God is giving. Now we get into *spiritual* Jacob that He is creating, the true Israel:

Isaiah 43:1: "But now, thus says the LORD Who created you, O Jacob, and He Who formed you, O Israel; '**Fear not...**'"

What did we read about earlier? *That we **are created in Christ Jesus!*** So, here it's talking about Jacob, the creation of the Church.

"...for I have redeemed you; I have called *you* by your name; you *are* Mine. When you pass through the waters, I *will be* with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; nor shall the flame kindle on you, for **I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior...**

[look what God did to save Israel in the beginning]:

...I gave Egypt *for* your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you" (vs 1-3).

Destroyed nations! You go back and read and just think about all of the things that took place, all of the plagues and things leading up to the death of the firstborn in taking Israel out of Egypt. Read it from this point of view: **What would it have been like if I were an Egyptian,** and I saw all of these things taking place? Just see all your whole country just wasted and devastated! Well, ***God wants you to know that He'll fight for you!*** That's what

He wants you to understand, but it's by God's choice. God raised up the Egyptians for that very purpose.

Verse 4: "Since you are precious in My sight, you have been honored, and I have loved you; therefore, I will give men for you, and people for your life."

That is amazing! So, when Paul says, 'If God be for you, who can be against you?' *Nothing! Nothing!* Though at times the circumstances may look like everything is against you and nothing is going right, where is God? *He's there someplace! Have to have more trust in Him!*

Verse 5: "'Fear not; for I *am* with you. I will bring your seed from the East..." Could this also be of the resurrection, which is from the East and the West? We've covered having the seed of God within you, and we are of the promised seed of Isaac.

"...and gather you from the West. I will say to the North, "Give up"; and to the South, "Do not keep back"; bring My sons from afar and My daughters from the ends of the earth" (vs 5-6).

Matthew 24:30 talks about the resurrection:

"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming upon the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet; and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to *the* other" (vs 30-31).

I think Isa. 43 sounds a little bit like that—don't you think?

Isaiah 43:8: "Bring out the blind people who have eyes, and the deaf who have ears. Let all the nations be brought together, and let the people be gathered; who among them can declare this and show us the former things? Let them bring out their witnesses, that they may be justified; or let them hear, and say, '*It is Truth*'" (vs 8-9). None can do that, *only God! And only God's Word!*

Verse 10: "'You *are* My witnesses,' says the LORD... [that's what we are to be, that God is this great, and the Word of God is this great] ...'and My servant whom I have chosen; that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I *am* He. Before Me, no God was formed, nor shall there be after Me. I, *even I, am* the LORD; and besides Me there is no savior. I have declared, and have saved, and I have shown, when *there was* no strange *god* among you; therefore, you *are* My witnesses,' says the LORD, 'that I *am* God'" (vs 10-12).



That's why God does these things the way that He does it, and gives 'mercy to whom He gives mercy,' and is 'gracious to whom He will be gracious.'

What if you find yourself as one of those looking around thinking God is not fair? Does God just kick you out? *No!* I think this is quite instructive.

Matthew 15:21: "Then Jesus left there and withdrew into the area of Tyre and Sidon; And, behold, a Canaanite woman who came from those borders..." (vs 21-22).

What was a Canaanite? *They were 'cursed above all people on the face of the earth'* (Gen. 9). God put them out because of what Canaan did; no access to God. As a matter of fact, they were the ones that God sent the children of Israel in to take their land. You can't get any lower than this. You can't get any further down the scale—that God doesn't pay any more attention to you—than this.

"...[she] cried to Him, saying, 'Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is grievously possessed by a demon.' But He did not answer her a word....

[that must have been quite a scene]

...And His disciples came *and* requested of Him, saying, 'Send her away, for she is crying out behind us.'....

[she's irritating us, she's hounding us, she won't shut up]

...But He answered *and* said...

[His answer is an insult if you look at it from a human perspective]

...'I have not been sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'" (vs 22-24).

He virtually said, 'I don't care who you are.'

Notice her response, what did she say? 'You're not fair. How dare you do that.' *NO!*

Verse 25: "Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me!' But He answered *and* said, 'It is not proper to take the children's bread and throw *it* to the dogs'" (vs 25-26).

He in effect called her a dog. Do you see the choice of God? But notice what she did. She didn't say, 'How dare You, that's insulting.' *NO!*

Verse 27: "And she said, 'Yes, Lord, but even the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table.'....

[That's something!]

...Then Jesus answered *and* said to her, 'O woman, great *is* your faith!....'" (vs 27-28).

She didn't try to change God. That's the trouble with all the complainers, whiners, whimpers and criticizers, *they try to change God!* They try to make their will *God's will*. But God is going



to make His will, *His will!* But she said, 'Truth, Lord, that's right.' It took a lot of faith to say, 'Yep, You're right, Lord, we Canaanites are just like dogs.'

"...As you have desired, so be it to you.'...." (v 28).

- Can you change God?
- Can you cause God to choose to give mercy by a right and a proper approach and attitude?
- *Yes, you can!*

So, this woman didn't try and make it so that her will would be superimposed upon God. She came accepting God's will—'yes, that's truth, Lord.' Then she gave back another truth:

"...'Yes, Lord, but even the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table'" (v 27).

That fits right in with 'in you shall all the nations of the earth be blessed'—even to the very lowest.

"...And her daughter was healed from that hour" (v 28).

That's quite a demonstration of the two; that's something! Let's see God's choice, and see how He carried it out:

Romans 9:16: "So then, *it is* not of the one who wills, nor of the one who runs; rather, *it is* of God, Who shows mercy."

All of this is so that God can show mercy. Just think about how great the mercy is going to be at the second resurrection and all these people have a second physical life to come to the knowledge of the *Truth of salvation*. That is such a merciful thing!

Verse 17: "For the Scripture said to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I raised you up...'" Can God raise someone up, like Pharaoh, to take him down? *Yes, He can!* Of course, Pharaoh probably thought his own abilities and all of the gods of Egypt was doing this. But no, God was doing this for a special purpose.

"...in order that I might show in you My power, so that My name may be declared in all the earth" (v 17).

Has that not happened from that day until now, because of Pharaoh? *Yes, indeed!*

Verse 18: "So then, He shows mercy to whom He will..."

That's what Jesus did back in Matt. 15; He *chose* to show mercy! Her attitude was such that He changed His mind. ***God chose!***

"...and He hardens whom He will....

[God can do that]

...Will you then reply to me, 'Why does He yet find fault?....

[Well, He made him for a fault, to show what Truth is.]

...For who has opposed His purpose?" (vs 18-19).

Psalm 85 talks about mercy and Truth, and upon whom He wills He shows mercy. It's not like you go to God and say, 'God, You've got to show me mercy.' *No!* You go to God and say, 'God, I'm a great sinner.' That's what David did. 'If it be Your will, grant me Your mercy, please do so.'

Psalm 85:1: "O LORD, You have shown favor to Your land; You have brought back Jacob from exile. You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people; You have covered all their sins. Selah" (vs 1-2).

God will choose to do so when He brings them out of captivity. This could also be likened unto the Church.

Verse 3: "You have taken away all Your wrath; You have turned from the fierceness of Your anger. Restore us, O God of our salvation, and cause Your anger toward us to cease" (vs 3-4).

Notice how he's approaching God. Maybe for the whole Church this ought to be the prayer right now. Let God's anger be turned away from the Church.

Verse 5: "Will You be angry with us forever? Will You draw out Your anger to all generations? Will You not give us life again, so that Your people may rejoice in You? Show us Your mercy, O LORD, and grant us Your salvation" (vs 5-7).

- notice the plea
- notice the attitude
- notice how he's coming to God

Verse 8: "I will hear what God the LORD will speak; for He will speak peace to His people, and to His saints, but let them not turn again to folly. Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him, so that glory may dwell in our land. **Mercy and Truth have met together**..." (vs 8-10).

There it is! Didn't we just see that? Why did Jesus have mercy on the Canaanite woman? *Because she spoke the truth!* She said, 'Yea, Lord, but even the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from the master's table.'

Verse 10: "Mercy and Truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other....

[may that be with the Church]

...Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good, and our land shall yield its increase. Righteousness shall go before Him and shall set us in the way of His steps" (vs 10-13).

Again, *God is going to do what He's going to do!*

Psalms 69:13—speaking of God's mercy: "But as for me, my prayer is to You, O LORD, in an acceptable time; O God, in the abundance of Your mercy answer me, in the Truth of Your salvation."

You're going to notice that mercy and Truth go hand-in-hand, and the reason that they do is because mercy is granted when the Truth of the understanding of the conviction of your heart and mind is such that you realize your own nature and your own sins, and you're coming to God and asking for His mercy, because you understand in Truth how you need it.

Verse 14: "Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink; let me be delivered from those who hate me and out of the deep waters. Do not let the flood of waters overflow me, nor let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut its mouth upon me. Answer me, O LORD, for Your steadfast love is good; turn unto me according to the multitude of Your tender mercies. And hide not Your face from Your servant, for I am in trouble; answer me speedily" (vs 14-17).

There's another good case: When you get in trouble, you go to God right away, don't wait. Don't think you're going to get yourself out of trouble and then go to God because you're 'all good now, and, God, I'm coming to You because I got myself out of trouble.' You go to God when you are in trouble so that He can get you out of trouble—it won't work any other way!

Psa. 119—more about the mercies of God and, in this case, talking about 'tender mercies.' What is the difference between *mercies* and *tender mercies*? I couldn't answer you outright or directly, except to say that *maybe those who suffer more appreciate that the mercies of God and are very tender* when they're finally delivered out of their difficulties.

Psalms 119:41: "Let Your mercies come also unto me, O LORD...

[God is the One Who gives mercy. You don't go after it because you can't get it. *God has to give it!* You have to have this attitude that we see here.]

...even according to Your salvation, according to Your Word."

Verse 77: "Let Your tender mercies come to me so that I may live, for Your Law is my delight."

Verse 156: "Great are Your tender mercies, O LORD; according to Your judgments give me life."

Not only do we want His mercies, we want His *tender* mercies, and loving kindness.

Psa. 103—this whole Psalm is talking about the mercies of God, and how God considers us. Let's understand how we're to approach God in this. You go to God with the same attitude that the Canaanite woman had: 'Oh, Lord, of a truth, I'm a sinner.' Not, 'Oh, God, why are You doing this to me?' Entirely different!

Psalm 103:1 "Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His Holy name....

[being wholehearted to God]

...Bless the LORD, O my soul, and **forget not all His benefits**" (vs 1-2).

What happens when you're in trouble? you're in difficulty? you're going through a trial? *You forgot all that God has done for you in the past, you're so focused on that thing right now!* I've done that; very easy to do.

Verse 3: "Who **forgives all your iniquities...**"

Which ones won't He forgive? *The unpardonable!* The very fact that you are here today shows that you have not committed the unpardonable sin. If you did, you would be hardhearted and not care, and you would be long gone. So, how grievous are your sins, whatever they may be?

"[He] **forgives all your iniquities...**"

—whatever they may be!

I think we need to hear that! Not just some of them because you've been a good boy or a good girl. **All of them because you repent!**

Let's see how that is done. Here are part of the conditions, 1-John 1:6:

"If we proclaim that we have fellowship with Him, but we are walking in the darkness, we are lying to ourselves, and we are not practicing the Truth."

(go to the next track)

Verse 7: "However, if we walk in the Light...

[that's what you're trying to do, walk in the light of the commandments of God]

... as He is in the Light, *then* we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His own Son, cleanses us from **all** sin."

What you do when you go around with a guilty conscience, you're saying God doesn't forgive all sin. ***He forgives ALL sin!***

Verse 8: "If we say that we do not have sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the Truth is not in us. If we confess our own sins..." (vs 8-9).

You have to do something about it. You have to recognize them and confess them, not ignore and bury them, because they will only fester more and more. That is leaven that is buried, which will mold and create more sin.

"...He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from **all** unrighteousness" (v 9).

That is part of the *graciousness of God*. That's why you *stand in grace*. You have this relationship with God.

Psalm 103:4: "Who redeems your life from destruction...

[you may have been very close to it]

...Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies."

We've got:

- mercies
- tender mercies
- loving kindness

—all of those coming from God! That's why it is good. That's why God wants to know what's in your heart. That's why God wants you to be tenderhearted to Him. ***So that you may receive His blessings; that you may receive His tender mercies given to you!***

Verse 5: "Who satisfies your desires with good things; your youth is renewed like the eagle's. The LORD executes righteousness and judgment for all who are oppressed. He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel. The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in mercy" (vs 5-8).

That's how God deals with us.

Verse 9: "He will not always chasten..."

In other words, whatever trial you're in it won't always be there. God will lift it sooner or later.

"...nor will He keep His anger forever....

[If you've done something worthy of anger.]

...He has not dealt with us according to our sins...

[the wages of sin is death]

...nor rewarded us according to our iniquities, for as the heavens are high above the earth, so is His mercy toward those who fear Him" (vs 9-11).

That's why when God says, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and compassion on whom I will have compassion,' it comes directly from God.

Verse 12: "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."

Which ones? *All of them!* So many people have been under the administration of fear, to where then they are always held in suspense: 'if you don't do this' and 'if you don't do that' and 'if you don't do the other thing' God is going to come and do something evil to you. *No!* He's removed them!

Verse 13: "As a father has compassion upon his children, so the LORD has compassion upon those who fear Him, for He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes, for the wind passes over it, and it is gone; and its place shall know it no more" (vs 13-16).

I can't help but think the other night I was watching on Discovery Channel about the Kalahari Desert. Parts of it are just desolate. In some parts it doesn't rain but once in ten years. Amazing! But when it gets the rain, all of a sudden here are these flowers that bloom, all the insects come to pollinate—they come out at the same time—everything is perfectly timed; once in ten or how many ever years. It shows just a vast horizon of beautiful blue and marvelous yellow and red flowers. But the Kalahari is hot and in about ten days they're all gone; all shriveled up! The hot wind off the desert comes in and they're gone! So God remembers that we're just like that.

Verse 17: "But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting..."

- Will God ever run out of mercy? *No!*
- Will God ever run out of grace? *No!*
- Will God ever run out of truth? *Never!*

"...upon those who fear Him...

[love Him]

...and His righteousness is unto children's children, to those who keep His covenant, and to those who remember His precepts to do them" (vs 17-18).

So, 'I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy, and I will harden whom I will harden.' That's what God says. And if God made Pharaoh for that purpose, God designed Him for that purpose and used him for that purpose, *that's all the will of God*. Looking at it from a human perspective, without understanding God's plan, we can think, 'My, that's pretty nasty.'

But it's not over till it's over. I wonder what Pharaoh's going to think in the second resurrection? Sometimes you leap ahead to try and catch the rest of the story, and that will help you understand a little bit more.

Romans 9:18: "So then, He shows mercy to whom He will, and He hardens whom He will."

That's exactly what God is going to do with the Beast Power. Precisely, absolutely the same thing He did with Pharaoh.

Verse 19: "Will you then reply to me, 'Why does He yet find fault?' ....  
[he shows and defines the difference between right and wrong, truth and error.]  
...For who has opposed His purpose?"

Can there be anyone who opposes the will of God? Opposes the purpose of God? Can there be anybody? *Not even Satan can do that!* The whole lesson of Satan is it doesn't matter who you are, how strong you are, what position you have, if you oppose the will of God you're not going to change a thing, but maybe delay it for a while so God can prove a point or two. It's going to be done!

Verse 20: "Yes, indeed, O man, who are you to answer against God?....  
[complain against God; talk against God]  
...Shall the thing that is formed say to the one who formed *it*, 'Why did you make me this way?'"

These are some pretty strong words. This is cut and dry! There is no in between. God is going to do what He's going to do.

Verse 21: "Or doesn't the potter have authority over the clay to make from the same lump of clay one vessel unto honor, and another vessel unto dishonor?"  
Even in that *God has choice!*



Let's see how God does this in the world; this is where Paul was writing this from.

Jeremiah 18:1 "The Word, which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 'Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause you to hear My words.' Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he was working at his wheel" (vs 1-3).

You've seen pictures of these where they have the big wheel, the clay and the water, and they spin by their feet. They're making whatever they want to. You can make the clay real nice and soft and you can make it into almost anything. If you make it too hard it lumps up and breaks up. In the middle, while he's making something, if he doesn't like what he's making, he just squashes it down with his hands and starts again. Gets a little more water and sprinkles it on there and gets it the right texture and begins making another vessel. That's what he was doing.

Verse 4: "And the vessel that he made of clay was ruined in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make *it*."

The potter has full choice over it. This is what God is telling us.

Verse 5: "Then the Word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'O house of Israel, can I not do with you *even* as this potter?' says the LORD...." (vs 5-6).

We might ask this other church: O, Church of God, can God do with you as this potter does? Are you not willing to be molded and yielded to God? To do what God wants?

"...'Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hands, *so are* you in My hand, O house of Israel. If at any time I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck it up and to pull it down, and to destroy *it*'" (vs 6-7).

God is saying there are times when He looks down and He sees the sins of different nations and He has to make a decision, just like with Sodom and Gomorrah. What did He say? *I'm coming down to see if the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is as bad as I hear it coming up to Me!* The angels went down to find out, and it was as bad! He also said in another place that the children of Israel couldn't go into the land, yet. He told Abraham, 'because the sin of the Amorites has not yet come to the full.' He's talking about nations. When God looks down on nations on the earth—I don't know how He does it, but here He's showing that He does it—and many of the things that we see on the news in the way of things that God is in control of.

- Is God in control of the weather? *Yes!*
- Does He send weather for correction? *Yes!*
- Does He use it to bring people down, to humble them? *Yes!*
- Does He use it to get their attention: 'will they return to Me or not?' *Yes!*

It's the same way here:

Verse 7: "If at any time I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck it up and to pull it down, and to destroy *it*; if that nation, against whom I have spoken, will turn from their evil..." (vs 7-8).

God always gives a chance to turn from the evil. God never does anything that He does not give information, knowledge and a chance of repentance.

"...I will repent of the evil that I thought to do to them" (v 8).

Classic case in Nineveh with Jonah going to the Assyrians.

Jonah came preaching that God was going to destroy that whole nation in 120 days. Jonah got upset. He was telling God, 'If I went there and said so, they would do just like I said. Why did you have me come here and do it.' He complained to God. God showed him a thing or two.

After he got done preaching he sat down in the heat and a gourd grew up and gave him a little shade, but he still didn't learn the lesson. God sent a worm to cut it down. He said, 'O God, what did You take down the gourd for?' Jonah as always was talking against God.

What happened after Jonah preached and told them to repent? *They all repented!* Lo and behold, the king said, 'I'm declaring a fast. Everybody fast, sackcloth and ashes, don't eat, don't drink, and none of the animals. Maybe God will lift His hand—a three-day fast.' God told Jonah, 'Look, they repented.' *I told You they would!* 'Yeah, but you had to go preach.' They had 120 years before they came down.

Remember what happened when it came to Josiah and he heard the words of the curse that were written in the Book. The temple of the Lord was so absolutely deserted and destroyed that they didn't even have a Bible. The priests were in there cleaning it out, trying to get it ready to do something and, lo and behold, they came across the Book of the Covenant. Hilkiah the priest—who was the great-grandfather of Ezra—came running and read the words in the ears of the King Josiah and Josiah repented. He said, 'Oh, this is terrible. Send Huldah the prophetess—only a woman left and she was there in the wardrobe—and find out what the Word of the Lord is. She said, 'You go back and tell the man that sent you, King Josiah, because your heart is tender, God will not bring any of these things in your day.' They had the great reform and the Passover (2-Chron. 35).

What happened after God showed mercy to Josiah? *He didn't remember it!* Sixteen years later there was a battle against the Egyptians and he was told not to go up. 'I'm going to go up anyway.' So, the vanity got the best of him. He said, 'I'll go up in a disguise.' What happened? *An arrow found him and he died!* That's when Jeremiah started his lamentations, because he knew that was it; no more deferring the anger of God.

Verse 9: "And if at any time I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build it and to plant *it*; if it does evil in My sight...

[Now it's on the other hand]

...that it not obey My voice, then I will repent of the good with which I said I would do them good" (vs 9-10).

Then God used this as a demonstration of what He was going to do to all of Judah. All of this is to show '***I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.***'

Romans 9:22: "And *who dares to question His purpose* if God, willing to show *His* wrath and to make known His power, chose in much long-suffering to put up with *the* vessels of wrath, which were created for destruction."

That's quite a statement! God raised Pharaoh up for destruction! For what purpose?

Verse 23: "In order that He might make known the riches of His glory unto *the* vessels of mercy...

[that He may show His mercy to those who have been oppressed]

...which He prepared before for glory, those of us whom He also called, not from among *the* Jews only, but also from among *the* Gentiles?" (vs 23-24).

So, he's showing how this all gets down to the calling that God has. God had a specific purpose in calling every one of us. If we really understand that and fully grasp it then it will just be marvelous, indeed! Then he's showing that God, because of man viewing God from the wrong perspective, will do the opposite of what man thinks God ought to do. Those people who have the name of God put upon them—Israel—in rejecting God can no longer claim of God: *I'm Your people!* He'll turn and choose those who were not His people and say to them, 'You are My people.'

Verse 25: "Accordingly, He also said in Hosea, 'I will call those who *are* not My people, "My people" ...

[referring to the Church]

...and those who *were* not beloved, "Beloved."....

[You need to understand that ***God loves you!***]

... And it shall be, in the place where it was said to them, "You *are* not My people," there they shall be called *the* sons of *the* living God" (vs 25-26).

The things that are not, the things that are nothing, "***...they shall be called the sons of the living God.***"

Verse 27: "But Isaiah cried out concerning Israel, 'Although the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea...  
[even though there are great numbers of the children of Israel]  
...a remnant shall be saved!'"

A small number! So therefore, even Israel cannot gloat in the physical things that God has given, because out of that just a few. If you take away the people who have the Spirit of God in the United States out of Israel, compared to the rest of Israel, it's just a remnant. I mean, all we have to do is just look at us. We're not the many; we're the few.

Verse 28 (KJV)—this one has been so misused and misunderstood.

"For He will finish the work, and cut *it* short in righteousness; because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth."

It has been explained this way: 'Brethren, you better hurry up and get right with God because the time is short and He could cut it short at any time.' That's not what that means.

(FV): "For *He* is accomplishing and limiting *the* matter in righteousness; because *the* Lord will limit *the* matter *He* is doing upon the earth.'

Let's go to Matthew 24, where that has also been used in the same way; then we'll get the true meaning of it. I know that when I was translated this, I was very surprised at this. I did a lot of double-checking to make sure that the way I translated it was correct.

Matthew 24:21: "for then shall there be great tribulation, such as has not been from *the* beginning of *the* world until this time, nor ever shall be *again*. And if those days were not limited, there would no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be limited [shortened, KJV]" (vs 21-22).

'Shortened' gives the implication that there is a certain length of time, but God is going to shorten that length of time. That is not what it means. He gave a limited number of days or time in which this would happen, which was *three and a half years*! He limited the time! He's not going to 'cut it short.' It's going to be 3-1/2 years. He's not going to cut it short at one or one and a half. It's been completely misunderstood. It doesn't mean to shorten in the sense that you're going to cut it off from its original intended length.

Romans 9:28: "'For *He* is accomplishing and limiting *the* matter in righteousness; because *the* Lord will limit *the* matter *He* is doing upon the earth.'"

How does that tie in with the *remnant*? *God has a set time for this age of the Church*! He is limiting the number that He is calling. That's what it means. It doesn't mean He's going to cut the time shorter than supposed, but He has limited the matter. It's not a universal thing; it's limited.

Verse 29: "Accordingly, Isaiah also said before, 'Unless *the* Lord of hosts had left us a seed, we would have become as Sodom, and we would have been made like Gomorrah.' What then shall we say? That *the* Gentiles, who did not follow after righteousness, have attained righteousness, even *the* righteousness that *is* by faith. But Israel, although they followed after a law of righteousness, did not attain to a law of righteousness. Why? Because *they did not seek it* by faith, but by works of law: for they stumbled at the Stone of Stumbling, exactly as it is written: 'Behold, I place in Sion a Stone of Stumbling and a Rock of offense, but everyone who believes in Him shall not be ashamed'" (vs 29-33).

Why did the Jews or Israel not attain to a law of righteousness? Because in both cases: The Jews on the one hand, with their traditions, *made their own laws*. Leaving the Law of God, they created *their own traditions*, which rejected it, so they did not attain the purpose of the righteousness of the Law, which God intended.

Neither Israel, on the other hand, being of the other ten tribes, of whom we have in the world today the greater proportion of Protestants. They have a righteousness of law with *their own Protestant religion*. They did not attain to the righteousness of God, because they were not following the righteousness that God intended.

What do I mean, in both cases? Let me define it this way: A woman was trying to explain to her husband why Christians should keep the commandments. He said, 'That is legalism.' The answer is *that is not legalism*. Commandment-keeping is commandment-keeping. Legalism is *making your own law separate from God* and declaring it righteous instead of God's Law. So, the Jews did that on one hand with *their traditions, rejecting God!* The Protestants and Catholics have done it on the other hand *by declaring Sunday*, because it is a legal premise, legalism that they have done outside the laws of God.

If anyone comes to you and says to you that you, as commandment-keepers, are legalists. *No!* It's the other way around. ***Legalism has to do with setting up your own righteousness apart from the righteousness of God!***

So, in both cases, the Jews on one hand never attained it, and the Protestants of Israel, on the other hand, never attained it—though both of them had the opportunity.

Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version*

Scriptural References:

- Romans 9:14-15
- Exodus 33:19-20
- 1 Timothy 1:12-16
- Romans 9:15
- Isaiah 41:4, 8-14
- Isaiah 43:1-6
- Matthew 24:30-31
- Isaiah 43:8-12
- Matthew 15:21-28, 27-28
- Romans 9:16-19
- Psalm 85:1-13
- Psalm 69:13-17
- Psalm 119:41, 77, 156
- Psalm 103:1-3
- 1 John 1:6-9
- Psalm 103:4-18
- Romans 9:18-21
- Jeremiah 18:1-10
- Romans 9:22-28
- Matthew 24:21-22
- Romans 9:28-33

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Romans 9:13
- Genesis 15
- Romans 8
- Genesis 9
- 2 Chronicles 35

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