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**BIBLE STUDY**

**Refuge Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Inc.**

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**GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY**

**Romans 9:18-33**

***Romans 9:18 "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will [have mercy], and whom he will he hardeneth."***

Sometimes it is very difficult to understand why God does a specific thing. All this “hardening” talk doesn’t seem to be helping Paul’s case. After all, if God is doing the hardening, Why then does he still find fault? If God’s will isn’t on the basis of human behavior, why are we blamed? Paul offers two responses. The first is to remind his objector that he’s talking back to God, the very one who formed him like a potter forming a piece of clay. Remember we are His creation and He can do with us whatever He wishes to do. God does not have to explain to us why He chooses to do something. God looks at the overall picture and we just look at the here and now. Even the fact that sometimes God hardens a person's heart; God has a really good purpose in this to prove something in the overall picture. We find that especially in evil people. Pharaoh is a very good example of this. God hardened Pharaoh's heart until God Himself had discredited all the false gods of Egypt.

***Exodus 4:21" And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go."***

We also see this very same thing in

***Joshua 11:20 "For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, [and] that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the LORD commanded Moses."***

We are not to question God's motives. In both of these instances, this taught us that God is even in control of Satan and all his evil forces. God can cause them to destroy themselves.

***Romans 9:19-20***

***19 "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?"***

***20 "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed [it], Why hast thou made me thus?"***

This is the perfect explanation here, for who can withstand God? The answer is simple; NO ONE. Even all the heavenly beings are subject to Him. Everything in heaven, everything in earth, and everything under the earth are under His control. We have no opinion coming, if it differs with God's opinion.

***II Chronicles 20:6 "And said, O LORD God of our fathers, [art] not thou God in heaven? and rulest [not] thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand [is there not] power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?"***

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

We can see in these verses above, that we are not to talk back to God on any matter. We are not even to question the things He has done. Someone said to me a few days ago, if God speaks to you, why does He not speak to me? I don't know. It is really none of our business. God is the boss. It is His decision to do with His creation as He wishes.

***Romans 9:21-22***

***21 "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"***

***22 "[What] if God, willing to shew [his] wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:"***

The Creator has rights over his creation, plain and simple. But Paul’s second response reminds us that our behavior still matters. The example of Pharaoh is still fresh in his mind when Paul mentions objects of wrath and objects of mercy. “Wrath” refers to the present consequences of sin (as we’ve seen earlier in the writing of Paul), not to eternal destiny. And that wrath is tied to rejection or acceptance of the will of God. But whether God is acting in wrath or in mercy, he is accomplishing his plan. The big difference is in how we experience that plan—as willing sons and daughters, or as unwilling slaves. Until we can say, not my will be done but thine O Lord, we are truly not His. One of the first things a Christian must do is let God cut away all the rough edges. We must get on the wheel and let God form us into what He would have us to be. He has a perfect plan for us, if we will just submit and let Him fulfill it.

***Isaiah 64:8 "But now, O LORD, thou [art] our Father; we [are] the clay, and thou our potter; and we all [are] the work of thy hand."***

***II Timothy 2:20-21***

***20 "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.***

***21 "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, [and] prepared unto every good work."***

It is not our job to figure out what we are to do for God. He chooses what position we are to have and we must conform to His wishes.

***II Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."***

You see there is a day of God's wrath coming when men will gnaw their tongue for pain, but God loves His creation and is waiting, hoping some more people will come to Him before that terrible day.

***Ephesians 5:5-6***

***5 "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."***

***6 "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."***

We deserve the wrath of God. Only those who accept full pardon through the shed blood of Jesus Christ will be spared the wrath of God which will surely come.

***Romans 9:23-24***

***23 "And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,"***

***24 "Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?"***

You see, the mercy of God is so great that He holds back His wrath until all who will accept Jesus as Saviour have come into the kingdom.

***Ephesians 2:3-5***

***3 "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."***

***4 "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,"***

***5 "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)"***

***Romans 9:25-26***

***25 "As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved."***

***26 "And it shall come to pass, [that] in the place where it was said unto them, Ye [are] not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God."***

Between wrath and mercy, God leans toward mercy, as the example of Hosea reminds us. Even though Israel was subjected to God’s wrath in history, their remnant will return as God’s Beloved and People. God has always kept his promises. We see in all of this that God is speaking of the Gentiles who become spiritual Israelites through faith in Jesus Christ.

***I John 3:1 "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not."***

***Galatians 3:29 "And if ye [be] Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."***

***Romans 9:27 "Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved:"***

God has always saved a remnant. My own personal opinion of this remnant of 7000 is that they have grown to the 144,000 mentioned in Revelation. Many are called but few are chosen.

***Romans 11:4 "But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to [the image of] Baal."***

***Matthew 22:14 "For many are called, but few [are] chosen."***

***Romans 9:28 "For he will finish the work, and cut [It] short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth."***

We read of this in Matthew chapter 24. God is not slack, but is longsuffering not willing that any should perish, but that all would come unto righteousness.

***Psalms 9:8 "And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness."***

***Acts 17:31 "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by [that] man whom he hath ordained; [whereof] he hath given assurance unto all [men], in that he hath raised him from the dead."***

***Romans 9:29 "And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha."***

These 2 evil cities were destroyed by fire and brimstone. We know that God will not always look the other way. Sin of the same nature as that of Sodom and Gomorrah is rampant in the U. S. today. The day of reckoning is coming. America better stop homosexuality, lesbianism, drugs, and all the other related sins of our nation or the wrath of God will fall on the U.S.

***Romans 9:30 "What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith."***

The Gentiles are saved, because they are not depending on their own righteousness to save them, but the blood of Jesus Christ.

***I Corinthians 6:9-11***

***9 "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,"***

***10 "Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."***

***11 "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."***

***Romans 9:31-33***

***31 "But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness."***

***32 "Wherefore? Because [they sought it] not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone;"***

***33 "As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."***

Paul turns a corner as he begins to examine the other side of the equation—our responsibility. From one perspective, it was God’s sovereign will to extend grace to the Gentiles. From another perspective, though, the Gentiles have obtained righteousness because they pursued it the right way, by faith. Israel, on the other hand, failed to achieve the law of righteousness because they did not pursue it by faith. As long as anyone pursues salvation by works, as Israel did, the grace of Jesus will act like a stumbling stone. Jesus is either the stone we trip over in our self-righteousness, or he’s the rock we build our lives upon. We see in all of this that the Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah and He turned to the Gentiles who would accept Him. Faith is what pleases God. By faith the elders received a good report. Abraham's faith was counted unto him as righteousness. Our faith in Jesus is what saves us. We cannot be good enough to be saved and neither could the Jews who had the law. We all need a Saviour, and His name is Jesus Christ the Righteous.

***Matthew 21:42 "Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?"***

***Matthew 21:44 "And whosoever shall fall on this stone hall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."***

***I Peter 2:6-8***

***6 "Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded."***

***7 "Unto you therefore which believe [he is] precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,"***

***8 "And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, [even to them] which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed."***

***I John 2:28 "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."***

There is little to add to this, except to say that our faith in Jesus Christ is our salvation, whether we be Jew or Gentile believers.

**QUESTIONS**

1. God can do what 2 things without explaining to anyone?
2. Why can God do with us whatever He wishes?
3. What lesson can we learn from the 2 instances of God hardening someone's heart?
4. Can our opinion differ from God's opinion?
5. Shall the thing \_\_\_\_\_\_ say to him that \_\_\_\_\_\_ it, Why hast thou made me thus?
6. Woe unto him that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with his maker.
7. In 2 Peter ch.3 v.9, we find that God is not slack, but \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?
8. In Romans 9 v.24 we find that God not only called the Jew but the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ as well.
9. Before we were saved we were by nature children of \_\_\_\_\_\_.
10. Who are truly Abraham's seed?
11. What one word describes the physical house of Israel?
12. What 2 cities were destroyed by God for the sins they committed?
13. All have sinned and deserve death, what saves the Christian?
14. Who is the Cornerstone?
15. Abraham's \_\_\_\_\_ was counted unto him for righteousness.