

God's Unquestionable Sovereignty **Romans 9:18-21 (NKJV)**

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?

Paul is dealing with the problem that the Jews, God's chosen people have not as a whole accepted Jesus Christ.

So Paul is telling them that it is not of him that wills nor of him that runs but of God that shows mercy.

Does God have a right to extend mercy to some and not to others? That question we have already answered.

But not we come to the rest. What about those who are not vessels of mercy but vessels of wrath? Does God have a right to condemn the rest since it seems that no one can resist His will?

So let us look at this thing of hardening of the sinner, the hardening of Pharaoh.

- I. Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.
 - A. That there is nothing in his doctrine inconsistent with the divine perfections; since he does not make men wicked, but from the mass of wicked men, he pardons one and punishes another, for the wisest and most benevolent reasons, vers. 22, 23.
Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans; Hodge.
 - B. The objection is founded on ignorance or misapprehension of the true relation between God and his sinful creatures. It supposes that he is under obligation to extend his grace to all. Whereas he is under obligation to none. All are sinners, and have forfeited every claim to his mercy; it is, therefore, the prerogative of God to spare one and not another; to make one vessel to honor, and another to dishonor. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans; Hodge.*
 - C. It is not the showing mercy that most people have trouble with but the hardening.
 - 1. But that is what God did to Pharaoh.
 - 2. Exodus 4:21 (NKJV) 21 And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go.
 - 3. Exodus 7:3 (NKJV) 3 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply My

signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.

4. Exodus 9:12 (NKJV) 12 But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh; and he did not heed them, just as the LORD had spoken to Moses.
5. Exodus 10:1 (NKJV) 1 Now the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh; for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his servants, that I may show these signs of Mine before him,
6. Exodus 10:20 (NKJV) 20 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go.
7. Exodus 10:27 (NKJV) 27 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go.
8. Exodus 11:10 (NKJV) 10 So Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh; and the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go out of his land.
9. Exodus 14:4 (NKJV) 4 Then I will harden Pharaoh's heart, so that he will pursue them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD." And they did so.
10. Exodus 14:17 (NKJV) 17 And I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them. So I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen.
11. God's will prevails. When the Scriptures say that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, it means that God forced Pharaoh to make the decision that was in his heart. God forced him to do the thing he wanted to do. There never will be a person in hell who did not choose to be there, my friend. You are the one who makes your own decision. *J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible Commentary, electronic ed., vol. 4 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 713.*

D. Paul is telling us that this is also what happened to Israel and is why they do not believe.

1. Romans 11:7-10 (NKJV) 7 What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. 8 Just as it is written: "God has given them a spirit of stupor, Eyes that they should not see And ears that they should not hear, To this very day." 9 And David says: "Let their table become a snare and a trap, A stumbling block and a recompense to them. 10 Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, And bow down their back always."
2. Romans 11:25 (NKJV) 25 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the

Gentiles has come in.

3. As even Jesus quoted from the Old Testament.
 - a. John 12:40 (NKJV) 40 "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, Lest they should see with their eyes, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them."

E. This what God had done to the Gentiles in times past.

1. Romans 1:24-32 (NKJV) 24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, 25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. 27 Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, 30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; 32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

F. And finally to both Jews and Gentiles.

1. Romans 2:5 (NKJV) 5 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,

G. **How to illustrate God's dealings with mankind.**

1. It is like the most complicated maze you have ever seen and more. We are each working our way through the maze. If we make good and wise decisions we end up in a better place. If we make foolish and bad decisions we end up in a worse place. We are free to make whatever decision we choose. But if we have found grace in the sight of the Lord, when we would make a foolish decisions God blocks the way. He can do this providentially or He can give us some much needed wisdom. This we call prevenient grace. Eventually He leads us to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and then the Holy Spirit has control.

2. But on the other hand if we are a sinner, which we all are, and God does not extend grace and faith to us we will make the wrong decisions and God will just let us make them. God may put up road blocks in order to bring us to a better place and He may give us wisdom to make better less sinful decisions, but that is up to Him. This is how I see God hardening the sinner. He does not need to do any harm to the sinner, the sinner desires the utmost harm but God hinders the sinner in order for God to work out His greater purpose. Any time God interferes in a sinners life it does the sinner good. If God does not interfere, the sinner will choose the way of sin and rebellion for that is what the sinner desires.
3. In the case of Pharaoh, Pharaoh did not want to do what God told him to do. God brought sign after sign upon the Egyptians. After the first three plagues, God gave the magicians wisdom enough to see that this was truly God at work. But Pharaoh did not want to submit to God so God simply allowed him not too.
4. WARNING: There is a point that men come to in their rebellion against God that no miracles or signs will be able to turn them from their sinful ways.
5. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12 (NKJV) 3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. 5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? 6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, 10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, 12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

"God's sovereignty is the first of all rights, the foundation of all rights, the foundation of all morality. If God is not God, what will He be? The root of the question is this; is God to judge man, or man God? God can do whatsoever He pleases. He is not the object for judgment.
Annotated Bible, The - The Annotated Bible – Volume 7: Romans to Ephesians.

So election is not only just. It is just, and God is right in choosing some and passing by others. But—and here is the important thing—election is the only thing that is just. Election alone starts with all people at the same point and on the same level, all of whom deserve hell. Then it saves some and passes by others, all entirely apart from anything whatever in these elect or reprobate persons. *James Montgomery Boice, Romans: God and History, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991–), 1071.*

What about you this morning. Does this verse apply to you? It is an awesome question.

Pr 29:1 ¶ He who is often rebuked, and hardens his neck, Will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

I have witnessed to many people. One person comes to mind from about 50 years ago. I remember it like it was yesterday. He was a man that lived in deep immorality. I tried to tell him about Jesus. But he would not repent although he did listen. I will never forget him asking me to not stop trying to tell him about Jesus. He knew I was right but he was not ready to repent yet. As far as I know he never did.

Pr 29:1 ¶ He who is often rebuked, and hardens his neck, Will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

How do you know where you are this morning. Well if you can feel the Holy Spirit telling you that you need to repent, it is not too late. You need to repent right now.

But if you do not repent, God is not obliged to continue to with you. He can say enough. That is why you must repent today.