

(Romans) Romans 9:1-21

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon on Romans 9 emphasizes God's sovereignty, Paul's passion for the lost, and the interplay between divine choice and human free will.

Duration: 47:36

Scripture: John 1:12-13, Romans 8:39 - 9:1, Romans 9:8-13, Romans 9:16-17

Topics: "Gods Sovereignty", "Humility Before God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of recognizing and accepting the sovereignty of God. He compares God to a potter who has complete control over the clay, shaping it into vessels of different value and purpose. The preacher encourages humility and submission to God's will, stating that many of life's problems can be solved by accepting God's sovereignty. He also highlights the consequences of our actions, explaining that while God forgives sins and chooses His children, individuals must bear the consequences of their own actions. The sermon is based on the book of Romans, particularly chapter 9, and emphasizes the need to trust in God's plan and not question His dealings.

Transcript

Let's turn today to Romans chapter 9. We were considering in our previous studies the fact that in Romans the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul has made a presentation of the Gospel more clearly than in any other book in the entire Bible, all the way from scratch to finish, from a zero point where man is shown in his sinful condition what Christ has done for man on the cross, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the wonderful life that God can now lead us into through the Holy Spirit under the New Covenant. That's what we have been considering up to chapter 8. And the thread picks up again in chapter 12. Chapters 9 to 11 of Romans, we could say, are in parentheses, dealing with Israel, but using the example of Israel to teach us certain important truths that we need to know as children of God.

Romans chapter 9 deals with the truth of God's total sovereignty over all people and circumstances. Romans chapter 10 deals with God's righteousness and God's way of righteousness. And Romans chapter 11 deals with the subject of God's faithfulness.

Having said that, let's move into Romans chapter 9. He was speaking about this wonderful Gospel in chapter 8 where nothing can separate us, Romans 8.39, from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. And being a Jew, a part of the family of Israel, Paul suddenly felt a concern, a concern from the Holy Spirit for the people of Israel who first had this Gospel preached to them and who rejected it. And he says in

verse 1, I'm telling the truth in Christ.

I'm not lying. My conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. Now, a lot of people, when they have great sorrow and unceasing grief in their heart today, usually it is caused by some earthly matter that concerns themselves.

Now, Paul did not have a great sorrow concerning any earthly matters. He did not have unceasing grief in his heart concerning anyone who had taken advantage of him or harmed him in any way. His concern was for the Jewish people who were separated from Christ.

He had just spoken about the fact in Romans 8.39 that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. And yet he thinks of these people who are lost and he says, for their sake, verse 3 of Romans 9, I'm willing to be separated. I know nothing can separate me, but I'm even willing to be separated from Christ, Romans 9.3, and be accursed if only they can be saved.

It's amazing the passion that this man had. When a man is filled with the Holy Spirit, he gets the same passion that Jesus our Lord had, who was also filled with the Holy Spirit. The same Holy Spirit that filled our Lord Jesus Christ fills us.

And if it is the same Holy Spirit, it's going to give us the same passion for souls and for the salvation of others that Jesus had. Now, remember, the Jews were persecuting Paul immensely. They were the ones who ordered him to be beaten and we read also in the end of Acts that they were trying to kill him.

But concerning these very people who were chasing him, trying to kill him, we find Paul has a great burden that they might be saved. What an attitude to have towards our enemies and towards the enemies of the gospel, that they might be saved. I mean, Paul's desire for their salvation is so great that he says, I have great sorrow in my heart and unceasing grief.

That means a grief that never ends. See, Paul's mind was so taken up with eternity and eternal realities that he knew that anything that happened on this earth was only for a short period. Any suffering that he went through was for a very short period.

But the eternal realities were there. And he thought of people who were going to be separated from the Lord forever and they were his kinsmen. He had a great concern for those of his kinsmen, according to the flesh, the Israelites, who had so many privileges and who had abused them.

Nowadays there's a lot of emphasis on the fullness of the Holy Spirit and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. But it is sad to see that very often it does not produce this type of passion to reach people for the Lord. Very often it gets spent in emotionalism and excitement which only benefits oneself.

Sometimes it doesn't even benefit oneself but harms one. The real mark of being filled with the Holy Spirit is that one will have the type of passion that Paul had described here in Romans 9.1-3 because Jesus himself said in Acts 1.8 that when the Holy Spirit came upon his disciples they would have power to be his witnesses to people all over the world. So that is the main purpose and that's what we see here in the apostle Paul.

A great passion to reach other people with the gospel and even being willing to not only lay down his life on earth that itself would have been a great thing but to be separated from Christ for eternity. See this is what Jesus suffered on the cross. The Father forsook him for three hours when he experienced the

agonies of being forsaken by God or hell on the cross for three hours.

He took our punishment separation from the Father and was willing to pay that in order to save us and that is the spirit that has filled Paul. So if you go by this guideline you'll never be mistaken concerning the power of the Holy Spirit. And he says concerning these Israelites think of what all benefits they had.

They were given adoption as sons. They had the first privilege of hearing the gospel and they could have become the sons of God first before all the Gentiles in the world. Jesus came to them first.

The apostles went to them first. Paul went to them first. But they rejected all of them.

To them belong the glory the covenants the giving of the law the temple service the promises whose are the fathers from Abraham onwards and from whom Jesus himself was born according to the flesh. Christ who is over all God blessed forever. If anyone has any doubt concerning the deity of Christ it's so clear here in Romans 9.5 Christ is the eternal God blessed forever.

And then he says and think of all these promises that these Israelites had these blessings these advantages and they missed out. But he says it doesn't mean that the word of God has failed. No.

Because when you come to think of it he says not all who claim to be Israel are descended from Israel. And not all children because they are Abraham's descendants. He takes the Old Testament example and says Abraham's descendants could include those who were born through Ishmael those who were born through Esau and we read in Genesis 25 that through Keturah Abraham had many more sons.

And all those descendants are multitudes of others who are not Israelis at all. So it's not all of Abraham's descendants who are part of Israel but Romans 9.7 says through Isaac your descendants will be called. It's only through Isaac and then again not through Esau but through Jacob through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

So he uses that Old Testament example to say that it's not the children who are of the flesh who are the children of God but the children of promise. Now even though he uses this Old Testament example of physical lineage through Isaac and Jacob he is applying it in a spiritual way saying who were Abraham's descendants? Those whom God promised would be his descendants. Because God gave a promise.

The important thing is the promise. Through Isaac your descendants will be called. And again God gave a promise in verse 9 At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.

And then he again says about Rebecca the next generation had twins in her womb. And even though the twins were not yet born verse 11 and had not done anything good or bad in order that God's purpose according to his choice might stand not because of works but because of him who calls it was said to her the older will serve the younger. Just as it is written Jacob I loved but Esau I hated.

So we see here that we are given here a revelation into the sovereign choice of God of his children. Now this is way beyond the capacity of our small minds to completely grasp or comprehend. And through the ages men have tried to grapple with this truth of God's sovereign choice and have always come short.

It's difficult to grasp the fullness of the meaning of this because our mind is like a little cup and God's wisdom is like an ocean. And the cup can only get a little bit of the ocean. And when people imagine that their cup contains the whole ocean they get into all types of dogmatic positions and you find in

Christendom groups holding opposite views on this reason because they think they can explain God's wisdom with their little cup.

But the fact remains here that God chose Jacob even before they were born, before they had done anything good or bad. It was God's sovereign choice. And he said the older will serve the younger.

It was a question of ministry here. God's not talking here about eternal salvation. He's not talking about predestining people to go to heaven or to hell.

God doesn't predestine anybody to go to hell. That's for certain. He predestines and chooses us to become like Jesus.

And in his foreknowledge he knows who all will respond to the call of the gospel through the centuries and the millenniums. So it's according to his foreknowledge we read in 1 Peter 1 that God chose us and even in the previous chapter in Romans 8, 29 and 30 we saw whom he foreknew he predestined. And predestination was to become like Jesus Christ.

Now we shouldn't forget that when we come to this passage. But the fact is that God sovereignly chooses. It's got nothing to do with my choice.

And it's good for us when we're saved to remember that that it is God who sovereignly chose us. I'm spiritually a descendant of Abraham because God sovereignly chose me just like he sovereignly chose Isaac and Jacob out of all of Abraham's descendants. This is a tremendous comfort to us that we are made God's children because of his sovereign choice of us.

Let's turn today to Romans and chapter 9. In our last study we were considering how Paul speaks inspired by the Holy Spirit about the sovereign choice of God. It says in Ephesians in chapter 1 that we were chosen before the foundation of the world. Ephesians 1, 4. That is before we were born.

Before Adam was created. Before the heavens and the earth were created. God who could see the future.

Who could see millions and millions of years into the future. Saw us and knew us by name. Now once you understand this it brings a tremendous security.

This is not a revelation found in the Old Testament. There is no such verse in the Old Testament that teaches about God's sovereign choice from long eternity past. But the New Testament emphasizes this more than once.

That it is not we who chose Christ but Christ who chose us. When Jesus spoke to His disciples He said to them in John chapter 15 He told them very clearly that you did not choose me but I chose you. And once we realize this that it is Jesus who chose us.

John 15 verse 16 He chose us first and we responded to His call. Very often we can think one day I heard the gospel and I responded to it. No, it wasn't there.

Long before you were born. Long before Adam was created. Long before the worlds were created.

Long before the angels were created. When there were no angels, no devil, nothing. When only Father, Son and Holy Spirit existed from all eternity.

In the mind of God was your name. If you are a child of God today your name was there. My name was there.

And that brings tremendous security to me. I am not an accident on this earth. My name was in the mind of God way back in eternity past.

In God's mind He knew me. He knew you. And He chose us according to His foreknowledge.

Why didn't He choose others? That we will know in eternity. We cannot explain these things fully. To use an illustration.

It is like all humanity walking down a road on the way to destruction and suddenly on the left side of the road you see a gate with these words written on it. Whoever wills may enter and have his sins forgiven and drink of the water of life freely. And you respond to that invitation and go in through the gate while the multitudes of others continue on the road to destruction.

And as you enter through the gate and enter into the city you look back over the gate through which you just entered and over the gate on the inner side you see these words chosen by God before the foundation of the world. You didn't realize that till you got in. Outside all you saw was whoever wills may come in.

But when you got inside you saw that it was God who chose you. He chose us first. It's He who deserves the credit for our salvation.

It's not by our works. It's not even by our choice. Now once we realize this we have absolutely no ground to boast.

And that's the point here in Romans chapter 9 and verse 8 to 13 speaking about the sovereign choice of God according to promise. In John chapter 1 when he speaks about salvation he says here that those who received him John 1.12 He gave the right God gave the right to become His children who were born verse 13 of John 1 not of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but the will of God. So our spiritual birth we're told in John 1.13 was not the result of our fleshly determination is not the result of any man's work on us it is 100% the will and choice of God.

It's God who grants us repentance. I wonder if you know that. It's God who gives us the gift of repentance.

Acts chapter 11 verse 18 it says very clearly God has granted to the Gentiles repentance. Do you know that even the repentance that you have the desire to turn towards God is put there by God? We read in Philippians chapter 2 that God works inside us verse 13 to desire to choose His will to will His good pleasure means to choose His will and then to actually do it. So even the desire to respond to the gospel was the result of God working in you.

Now this doesn't mean that God doesn't work in other people. It says in 2 Peter chapter 3 that God wants all men to come to repentance. It says in 1 Timothy 2 that God wants all men to be saved everywhere.

God is not partial. But this is a great mystery. The sovereign choice of God and my free will.

We cannot explain it with our minds. They run like two parallel lines like two railway lines that never meet. In our thinking, parallel lines never meet.

But the definition of parallel lines is that they meet in infinity. And so these two parallel lines of the sovereignty of God and our free will meet in the infinite mind of God. They cannot be explained in our finite mind.

But it is a fact that God chose us sovereignly. Words like Romans 9.13 where it says Jacob I loved but Esau I hated. What does that mean? How does that fit in with John 3.16 which says God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

Is there anybody God hates? We need to understand these things in the context of other verses. If you take one verse all by itself you can get a wrong doctrine. All scripture put together gives us the truth of God.

God hates nobody. But yet when a person turns his back on God he suffers the consequences of God's laws. Because God has made certain laws in the world.

A man reaps what he sows. And in that sense everybody in the world suffers the consequences of his own actions. And God in His sovereignty forgives our sins and makes us His children, chooses us.

But no one else who is suffering the consequences of his own actions can ever blame God because he sowed himself what he is reaping. And finally we will see ultimately at the judging seat of God when people are punished to go into hell for eternity it will be made clear to the whole universe in the final day of judgment that everyone who went to hell deserved to go there. And not a single person was predestined to go to hell.

They chose it themselves. They had the opportunity to turn to God and they did not. They had a conscience within them that told them to turn from their sin and they didn't.

And that is what finally sent them into an eternity in hell. They reaped the consequences of their own actions. So the question that comes into our mind is the very question that Paul is trying to answer here in Romans chapter 9 verse 14.

Is there injustice with God? What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? He says impossible. May it never be. How can a just God be unjust? The question is completely out of the question.

But it's still true that God says as He says to Moses in Romans chapter 9 verse 15 I will have mercy on whom I have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. God has created all men. The point of Romans chapter 9 is the sovereignty of God over all of His creation.

He is not talking here primarily about the freedom we have to choose. He explains that very clearly in many other passages of Scripture. But this is another truth that goes side by side with the fact of our free choice.

See, even our freedom of choice we must remember is limited. I have no freedom, for example, to go and live on the sun. My freedom is limited.

I'm limited by many, many factors. I can't fly, for example. I can't leave this many circumstances I'm in.

And God has limited us in many ways. And even though God has given us a free will, that free will is within a certain boundary. And within that, God gives me complete freedom.

And within that boundary, I have freedom to find God, to grow up and find Him. We read in Acts chapter 17 that God has determined the boundaries of our life. And the whole purpose of God putting these boundaries around us in Acts chapter 17 and verse 26 and 27, He speaks about boundaries in verse 26.

And He says the purpose is that within those boundaries, verse 27, I might seek for God and find Him. And He's not far from us. So the wonderful message of the gospel is that within the limitations God has put around us as human beings, He's still given us total freedom to sin if we like.

But at the same time, we can find God if we want to. And God has given us ample opportunities to find Him. Especially the conscience that He's put within us reminds us that we can find Him.

So we see here, God says, I will have mercy on whom I'll have mercy. When God has created something, He's got every right to do whatever He likes with it. In another passage, He says, Can a potter say to the clay, verse 21, Why are you making me like this? Verse 20 and 21 of the same chapter.

No. God is sovereign. And if He decides to have mercy on somebody, nobody can question that.

If He decides to have compassion on someone, no one can question that. His ultimate conclusion, therefore, is in verse 16, So then it does not depend on the man who wills, nor the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. The whole purpose of this chapter is to humble man's pride.

The sovereignty of God and His free sovereign choice of us humbles our pride like anything. God is sovereign. And He determines whether we are to be saved or not.

And when we respond, He saves us. But none of us can lift our head and say, Therefore, I am a child of God because I chose myself. No.

It was God's sovereign choice that made us His children. Let's turn now to Romans chapter 9 and verse 17. The scripture says to Pharaoh, For this very purpose I raised you up to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth.

So then He has mercy on whom He desires and He hardens whom He desires. We continue on the theme of the sovereignty of God over His creation. In the time of Moses, there was a Pharaoh who hated the Israelites and who persecuted them and enslaved them and made life very difficult for them.

He was one of God's creation, Pharaoh. There was also Moses who was God's creation. And the interesting thing is God used both of them to demonstrate His power.

And God used both of them to proclaim His name throughout the whole earth. Everybody knows about Moses and everybody knows what happened to Pharaoh in that time and even today after more than 3,000 years. The point here is this.

Moses responded to God's call. Pharaoh rebelled against God's call. But it doesn't make a difference to God whether you respond or rebel.

No, God will still accomplish His purpose to glorify His name through the one who responds and through the one who rebels. When we read a verse like we read in Romans 9.17, For this very purpose I raised you up to demonstrate My power in you that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth. One would think that God is speaking to one of His servants.

That God raised up such a servant just like He told Jeremiah I chose you from the mother's womb. And God raised up a servant to demonstrate His power through that servant and to proclaim the name of the Lord throughout the whole earth. But the interesting thing here is that it is spoken to Pharaoh.

The one who constantly rebelled against God and disobeyed Him in spite of all the plagues that he saw. What did God finally do? He destroyed Pharaoh's power, delivered the Israelites and buried the Egyptian army under the Red Sea. And through that action God demonstrated His mighty power throughout the whole world.

And the name of the God of Israel began to be feared and revered at that time throughout the whole world. We read that when the Israelites went into the wilderness at different places their enemies would say we have heard about this God who buried the Egyptian army under the Red Sea. So we see that here we see a demonstration of the fact that even somebody like Pharaoh who was the leader of the world's greatest superpower at that time.

We hear of superpowers these days. There was only one superpower in the world in the days that we read of in Exodus. And that was Egypt.

And Pharaoh was the ruler of the one superpower in the world. And Pharaoh was destroyed by God. So this is a great comfort for us.

You know Christians face a lot of persecution and Paul was writing to these Romans. These Roman Christians were facing a lot of persecution. The emperor in Rome was Nero at that time.

And he troubled the Christians tremendously. And Paul is comforting these people saying don't worry about Nero. Don't worry about anybody in the world.

Think back to Pharaoh who was more powerful than Nero. And God said about him that God could use him to demonstrate his power to break his power and thereby demonstrate God's power over Pharaoh. So Pharaoh's heart was hardened it says in the Old Testament and the Book of Exodus a number of times.

And we can wonder does God harden people's hearts? It says in Romans 9.18 So then God has mercy on whom he desires and he hardens those whom he desires. What does that mean? If God hardens a man to go to hell how can you blame him for going to hell? But that's not exactly the meaning. It's very difficult for us to explain this with our human logic and understanding and reasoning.

As I said earlier our mind is only like the size of a cup compared to the ocean of God's wisdom. But we could explain it like this. The same sun that shines upon the butter that's kept out into the open and melts it.

The same sun hardens the clay that's kept out in the sun and makes it into hard bricks. Do you see that? You keep butter out in the open sun on a hot day it melts and runs as liquid. And you keep clay out in the same sun next to the butter and the clay becomes hard.

We could say God melted the butter. We could say God hardened the clay. That's right.

It's God's sun S-U-N that melted the butter and hardened the clay. But it's also true that it depended on the type of material that exposed itself to the sun. So if our heart is like butter we can say God melts it.

If our heart is like clay God hardens it. But that's not because God is partial. It's because of the way we respond to the Gospel message.

What is it that hardens that clay? Isn't it the sun? We can say the sun hardened the clay and made it into brick. What is it that melts the butter? We can say the sun melted the butter. It's in exactly the same way it says here.

God hardens. Hardened Pharaoh's heart. It's not because God decided even before Pharaoh was born that he was to go to hell.

Anybody can repent. We read in the Old Testament of that great man Nebuchadnezzar the leader of another superpower in the world called Babylon. And you read about his repentance in Daniel chapter 4. How he humbled himself and repented before God.

Very unusual. Very different from Pharaoh's reaction. So the sovereignty of God is not something that is absolute in the sense that it predetermines anybody to go to heaven or to hell or to be a child of God or not.

But yet all that I have said so far does not cover the whole subject. It's only as much as your cup and my cup our mind can understand. There is a whole ocean of truth in this area of God's sovereignty that we will never understand till we get into eternity.

But if we can recognize one thing and that is this. And this is the most important point that you need to understand. My dear friend, if your heart is not hardened today don't take the credit for it.

It's God's mercy that has softened you. And that's the important thing. Don't ever take the credit for your salvation.

This wonderful salvation that we've considered in chapter 3 to chapter 8 of Romans. In Romans chapter 9 what Paul is trying to say is you cannot take the credit for it at all. It's 100% God's work and let's give the glory completely to God for this salvation.

That is the theme of Romans chapter 9. God's sovereign choice of us and God determining that we are to be His children. Whether I can explain it or not I say God chose me. I'm chosen by God before the foundation of the world.

I was chosen because of nothing good in me. It was God's choice. It's God who gave me repentance.

It's God who gave me the desire to live for Him. It's God who gave me the longing to turn from sin and to receive Christ. It's God who opened my eyes to see that Christ died on the cross for my sins.

God's willing to do that for you as you hear this gospel. If you hear it right now God desires that you should be saved and you can be part of God's eternal choice too. See, the other question people can ask is this.

Romans chapter 9 and verse 19. You will say to me then why does He still find fault? For who resists His will? You see, this is the other question that human logic can ask. And it's only a proud man who can ask such a question.

Who can resist God's will? Why does God still find fault with me for sinning if it's His choice? What's the answer to that? Paul doesn't go into a reasoned explanation. He doesn't even try to explain it the way I've

tried to explain it. No.

The answer to all such questions is simply this. Who are you, O man? Romans 9.20 To answer back to God. The thing that is molded cannot say to the molder why did you make me like this, will it? What a humbling answer.

You see, man is so proud that he expects to be given a reasonable answer. And though I, as a human being, may have given you a sort of a reasonable answer, as far as God is concerned, I just want to assure you that God doesn't want to give us reasonable answers. He wants us to trust Him with our hearts, even in the areas where we cannot explain His sovereign choice.

The only thing He says is, O man, who are you to answer back to God like that? We have no right to question God's sovereign choice. Doesn't the potter, verse 21, have a right over the clay to make the same lump, one vessel, and for honorable use and another for common use? You go into a potter's house and you find that a potter uses the clay to make all types of vessels. Some vessels are so expensive because he's put in a lot of labor on them and some of them are so cheap, very cheap, just to contain water.

So, can you go into the potter's house and say, why are you doing it like this? It's his clay. In the same way, we must recognize the world is God's. He's got every right to do what He likes with it.

We cannot question God. This is another great truth that comes through in Romans chapter 9. Don't question God's dealings. Just humble yourself.

You know, that can solve many of our problems. If only we will accept the sovereignty of God, many, many problems in our life can be solved. We will continue our study next week.

Let's turn today to Romans 9.20. We were considering in our last three studies this amazing truth, the wonderful truth of the sovereignty of God. This is not something to frighten us. It's something that gives us tremendous security and tremendous comfort, the sovereign control and rule of Almighty God over all people and over all circumstances.

It's God who chose us. It's not we who chose Him first. He chose us first, and in response we chose Him, as we've seen in John 15.16. But man whose mind has reasonings and questions can ask a question like we read here in Romans 9.20. Why does God do this? Verse 19.

And the answer to that is, Who are you to answer back to God? Verse 20. Who are you to answer back to God? And this is something that all of us will do well to ask ourselves. Do you have any complaint against God about the way He has done something or not done something? Do you have a question as to why He has not answered some prayer of yours perhaps? For a long time He has not answered a prayer.

Maybe something that you have needed very badly and perhaps years have gone by and God has not answered. Here is a verse that can humble us. Who are you to question God? Who are you to question God? So many believers question God about this, that and the other thing.

They have not given room for God in His sovereignty to decide exactly how He deals with His creation and with His children. Once we settle this matter, many, many problems in our life are solved. Do you wonder why God does not deal with your enemies who are harassing you, troubling you? Why God does not deal with so many people who persecute Christians in different lands today? Kill them and yet God seems to

spare them.

Do you have a question why? Do you look around at so much of poverty and innocent people dying in earthquakes, innocent babies being thrown into garbage bins and all the suffering that goes on in the world and do you have a question why? Every believer who has that question has not understood the truth of Romans chapter 9. An unbeliever having such a question, we can fully understand because unbelievers do not know God. Naturally they have many, many questions. But the amazing thing is even many believers have questions.

And I want to tell you something if you have such a question in your heart, it is because you have not submitted to God's sovereignty. It is because you have not humbled yourself to acknowledge that your little mind can grasp only a fraction of the infinite wisdom of God. Even a dog cannot grasp all the truths that a man understands.

A dog cannot even understand 1% of what we understand as human beings. A dog's intellectual capacity is far inferior to man's. And so if a dog questions, for example, why men wear clothes or why they get married or why they go for an education or why they build houses, none of these things which a dog does, a dog would be foolish.

There are very good reasons why we get an education, why we build houses, why we get married, why we wear clothes, which a dog may not be able to understand. A dog may do none of these things. But we know very well why we do these things.

And it's very difficult and impossible to explain it to a dog. And a humble dog will admit, well, man is above me, has got greater understanding than me, so there must be very good reason which I can't understand. Now, I use that as an example.

It's only a proud dog that will say, well, if I can't explain it, then there must be no reason. Man is stupid to get an education, man is stupid to build houses, man is stupid to wear clothes, etc. But you know that's just a proud dog.

There are very good reasons for this. Now apply this at a higher level. The difference of intellect and reasoning between dog and man is far less than the difference between man and God.

Dog and men, dogs and men are all created beings. But God is the uncreated, eternally existent creator. What are we? If we were to say the difference between a dog and a man is about one millimeter, the difference between God and man, the difference between a dog and man, if it were one millimeter, the difference between man and God is millions of miles.

That's the difference. So what would a humble man say? A humble man would say there must be some very good reason why God has allowed so many things. I can't explain them.

Who is the man then who questions God? Only one who is proud. And there you see something in your heart, my dear friend. When you question God, you're proud.

You think you have a right to know. And you think that your small little intelligence is capable of knowing all of God's truth. In both areas we need to humble ourselves.

First of all, we need to humble ourselves and acknowledge that our intelligence is incapable of understanding the truth of God just like a dog cannot understand a man's actions. We cannot explain God's actions. Why God doesn't do something, why God does something, we can't understand.

Just like a dog cannot explain why a man does something and why a man doesn't do something. The other thing is that we have no right to question. Who are you, O man? Romans 9.20 To answer back to God.

Who are you to question? The creator of this universe. You're only a molded being. Can you imagine a vessel of clay, an inanimate vessel of clay, questioning the potter? What's the difference between a potter and mud? I use the example of a man and a dog, but the example Paul uses here is of a man and a piece of clay.

What a tremendous difference there is between the potter and the clay. The clay cannot question. And from the same lump of clay, he says in verse 21, a potter has got every right to make one vessel for honorable use and another for common use.

Why do you question why God has given another ministry to somebody else? Do you ever question why God has blessed another believer with gifts that you don't have? Do you ever question why God has given another believer good looks perhaps or intelligence or money which you don't have, a better job than you, a better house than you? How many believers there are who have all these questions that cause jealousy, competition? You know that all jealousy and competition will be eliminated once you understand the truth described here in Romans chapter 9 that it's the sovereignty of God that has determined the circumstances of your life. It's the sovereignty of God that has determined your financial boundary, how much salary you must earn every month, your upbringing, your culture, where you were to be born, your parents. Everything was determined by the sovereignty of God.

He took a lump of clay and made it in a particular shape, drew certain boundaries around it, gave you a certain amount of intelligence. You'd never have any more question. You wouldn't have a question against God about not being tall enough or fair enough or good looking enough or intelligent enough or rich enough or any of these things that a lot of believers have complaints about.

Come back to this verse in Romans 9.20. Who are you? Can the thing molded say, Why did you make me like this? I want to ask any of you listening to me here today. Do you have a question? Why did God make me like this? Why has God allowed me to have this sickness? Why hasn't God healed me of my lameness or this particular problem I have in my family? You know that problem will be solved when you submit to God and say, Lord, I will stop questioning you. I will submit to your sovereignty and I will accept your will in my life.

Paul had a thorn in the flesh. He prayed. God never removed it.

Finally, he submitted to God's grace and he found that he became an overcomer. God's grace was sufficient for him. I want to invite you to submit to the potter who's got every right to decide how much you should get and how much another believer should get.

What gifts you should have in the body of Christ and what gifts another believer should have in the body of Christ. That's his choice, not ours. And he goes on to say in verse 22, What if God, although willing to demonstrate his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath

prepared for destruction? And he did so in order that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy which he prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom he also called not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.

You have an opportunity to be a vessel of mercy. God wants to show his mercy to you. He's already shown his mercy if you're a child of God.

Why not rejoice in that fact? Why question? Many, many believers make their own lives miserable because they're always questioning things which in any case they will never be able to explain this side of eternity. You'll never be able to explain many things, my dear friend, till you stand in God's presence. Paul himself says in 1 Corinthians 13, he says, There are many things, he says, which I don't know.

I see only dimly through a dark glass. I know only partly. One day I'll know fully.

Why not humble ourselves and admit that there are many, many, many things in life on this earth for which we don't have the full answer. But one thing we know, God is sovereign. God is the one who's determined every little detail of our life as completely as a potter takes a lump of clay and determines exactly the shape that that vessel is to become.

To me it's a tremendous truth that brings great security in our lives. He will deal with your enemies in His own time, in His own way. He will solve the problems of the world, the problems of poverty and war and earthquakes in His own will, in His own time, in His own way.

Our duty is to submit and accept His will. May God help us to do that.

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