

Romans 9:19-24 by Wayne Barber

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God is a God of Purpose-Pt 2

by Dr. Wayne A. Barber

We are learning in Romans 9 that we don't deserve anything from God but hell. We are learning that God is the one who orchestrates salvation. When you find pride in a person, you have found ungratefulness and an individual who hasn't yet understood the grace and the mercy of God.

Paul has already said in the first part of the chapter that Israel is a privileged people, but he quickly shifts and shows that even though they were privileged, that privilege was not in any way to be misconstrued as deserved. That is exactly what happened to them. They took their privilege and turned it into pride. That is what we do so often in our life. So the Apostle Paul says, "Listen, God is a purposeful God."

Now, there are three objections that people come up with. Hearing the examples given in chapter 9 and misunderstanding them, they come up with three objections. They are woven in to the whole chapter as he begins to explain these five examples from Israel's history. The first example that he mentions is in 9:6. That particular objection is that God's word has failed for Israel. Now we know that it has not because God still has Israel on His mind. But it says in verse 6, "But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel." He is explaining something to them there and that is when he uses the examples we have already talked about.

The second objection that comes up in chapter 9 is in verse 14. This is the objection that God is unjust when it comes to Israel.

Now you could think that. You have to think in the Israel setting. You have to understand the way they would understand that. They would say, "God, you are unjust to us. If salvation is by faith in Christ and Him alone, then what about Your promises to us and what about the fact that you said to us in the Old Testament that we are Your chosen people and we are Your firstborn?" You see, they didn't understand what that meant. They didn't understand that it was going to be by faith. Even in the Old Testament Christ was the means of salvation. Paul says, "What shall we say then, there is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be." God is not the problem. Our understanding of what He is doing is the problem.

The third objection is that man is not responsible. He is only a puppet. After you find out that God hardens whom He will harden, shows mercy on whom He will show mercy, and shows pity on whom He will show pity, it makes man look like a puppet on a string. Therefore, man is not responsible. Oh, yes, man is responsible. Paul says in verse 19, "You will say to me then, 'Why does He still find fault? [If He hardens whom He will harden, shows mercy on whom He will show mercy, why does He still find fault?] For who can resist His will?'"

Then Paul proceeds to answer that objection as he continues in the five events of Israel's history. He is trying to show them something. I get the feeling he is saying, "Israel! Israel! Israel! It is right there in front of you. It is right there. Look at it. It is pointing to Christ. It is pointing to faith in Christ. It has always been that way. God's purpose continues to stand."

Let's go back and rehearse one verse because that one verse, I think, sets the pattern for the whole chapter and helps us better understand. It is verse 15. We have looked at it before, but I want us to look at it again just to make sure we are getting this in our mind. It says in verse 15, "For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.'"

This is a quote out of [Exodus 33:19](#). Remember, chapter 33 follows chapter 32, which is when God decided to erase Israel off of His mind, just get rid of them all. Moses came before Him and said, "God, you can't do that! Remember Your covenant to Abraham and to Isaac and to Jacob." Finally Moses says, "Well, God, blot my name out and save Israel if you will." That shows you that Israel doesn't deserve any of this. It is by God's choosing.

Then we come to chapter 33, and Moses cries out and says, "O God, show me Your glory." God said, "I will show you My glory by showing you My goodness. You could never look upon My glory. But get over here, get up in the rock, the cleft of the rock, and I will let My goodness pass before you." In that same verse He says, "I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy and compassion on whom I will show compassion." Don't ever forget that, Moses: "I am God. I do what I purpose to do."

Let's pick up today with Paul's answer to that third objection when he says that man is not responsible, he is just a puppet on a string. He says again in verse 19, "You will say to me then, 'Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?'" Then he begins to explain that. He wants to get this point strongly across, not just to them, but also to us. The first thing he says is that God has every right to do what He does with the clay that He created. Verse 20 says, "On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, 'Why did you make me like this,' will it?" He says, in other words, God has every right over the clay. What is the clay doing questioning the potter?

Verse 21 continues, "Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use, and another for common use?" Let's wade our way through that and see if we can make some sense out of it. First of all, the word "right" is *exousia*. There are four words for power or right or authority or might in scripture and that is one of them. *Dunamis* is a word that means power or ability that God gives you. He strengthens you with it in the power of His Spirit. *Kratos* is the word dominion, in other words, the manifested rule that one has. Then we have the word *ischus*. It is that inherent power.

But this word is *exousia*, which means He has the might. And He certainly has the power. He has the right; however, He may not choose to use that right. Yes, He has the might. But He also has the right. It doesn't mean He is going to use it, but He has it to use if He wants to use it.

We are living in a day when people have made salvation so much of man they have forgotten the fact that salvation is all of God. Israel did the same thing. We have done the same thing. We have been privileged. We think we have done something. We think we deserve something. But we are clay and the clay never, ever has a right to say anything back to the potter. The potter is the one who has all the rights over the clay, the humanity He has made. He may not exercise them, but He certainly has the right and He certainly has the might.

Do you realize that God could kill you in the next minute and be absolutely righteous in doing it? Do you believe that? The next time you sin and you quickly say, "Well, I will ask God to forgive me when I enjoy this a little bit longer," just remember something. God has a right to take you out of here. But we don't believe that. We think, "God is a loving God and just wouldn't do that!" Most of the time you are right. Thank God He is long-suffering. But when you understand that one sin condemned the whole human race, one sin, one sin brought sin into the human race, then you understand how serious that is with God. He has the right. He may not exercise it, but He has the right at any time to take you out of here.

My roommate in college told me of a student at another University years ago, who was the most vile human being he had ever been around. One night during a thunderstorm this student went out on the football practice field, got out in the middle of the field and began to curse and shake his fist at God. Every time lightning would strike, he would say, "Come on, God, kill me if you are really out there." God didn't do anything. God certainly had the right to do it. I wonder if student ever woke and realized how far he had pushed a long-suffering God.

How far do you think you can push Him? God has the right over what He has made. Don't ever think for a second that He has to answer for what He does. We are the creation, the clay. He is the potter. That is the first thing Paul is trying to get across. What does God have a right to do? Paul goes on to say, "To make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use, and another for common use." The word translated "honorable" in the New American Standard is the word *time*. It means respect and honor. We are those vessels which can be used to bring respect and honor.

The second word "for common use" is really written in. It is the word *atimia*. It takes the same word for honor and respect and puts the "a" in front of it, which causes it to mean without any respect, without any honor whatsoever. So out of the same lump, in humanity, you look around the world today and you are going to see vessels that bring dishonor to God but you are going to see vessels that will bring honor to God.

The word "makes" means makes them obvious and makes them evident to everyone who is around. Vessels for honorable use and vessels for common use or dishonorable use. I would imagine in churches it is the same way. You can join the church and miss Jesus. You can be a vessel that never brings honor, never brings respect to Him, but you can be on a church roll. There are others who live their lives a different way. In the same lump, there are two kinds of individuals, those who are honorable and those who bring disgrace and dishonor. God has absolute rights over humanity to do whatever He does to make from the lump of humanity vessels of honor and vessels for dishonor.

But he is going to continue to balance this. Once he shows you that God has the right over the clay, Paul shows that God is responsible with His right to do what He does, very responsible. His integrity is impeccable. Let me show you as we work our way through it 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?" That is not easy.

Let's walk through this. The word "if" there is the hypothetical if. In other words, okay, I am going to state my case. I am going to explain something to you here. I want you to see that God has all rights, but I also want you to see that God acts responsibly with the rights that He has. The next little word you don't see in your text is actually written in as "what" in the New American Standard. It is the little word *de*, which means continuation of something. In other words, he is plugging in to what he just said—"I am trying to give you something that is going to give you an explanation." Paul explains his case as to why and how God, out of the same lump of clay, has vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor. He does so very responsibly.

This is an incredible thing to me. It is way over any of our heads. This is an infinite God at work. He goes on to say, "Although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known." Now when you look through Scripture, God has never been unwilling to demonstrate His wrath towards sin and sinners and to demonstrate His power. If you don't believe me, go back and study Genesis. In chapter 7 God destroyed all of humanity and saved one group, Noah and his family, who He covenanted with. But He destroyed the rest. God executed His wrath.

At the same time you saw the power that God had. You keep walking through Scripture and you find the illustration of Pharaoh. That is a great example, how God hardened Pharaoh and how He made him come after him. When they got to the Red Sea, He said, "Moses, lift up your rod. What is in your hand?" He lifted up his rod and the seas parted. God's power. Yet we also see God's wrath when the seas came back together and killed all the Egyptians including Pharaoh.

Another would be Sodom and Gomorrah. Remember, the fire and the brimstone fell and Lot's wife was turned to salt. God showed His wrath and His power. As you continue to walk through Scripture, God has always been willing. In the midst of the sinfulness of humanity, God has been willing to demonstrate His wrath and power.

Keep looking on in the verse: "Although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, He endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction." The word "endured" is the word *phero*. It means He has to bear with them. In other words, He had to put up with them. He had to tolerate them. How did He put up with them?

The word was with much patience. The word "patience" is the word that you want to thank God for every day of your life. Thank God that He is so loving towards this lump of creation that was changed and hardened by the sin of Adam. He was so loving and long-suffering, *makrothumia*, towards them. Oh, what a joy it is to know that God is a long-suffering God. He endured. He put up with those vessels that were prepared for destruction.

Now be careful here. I know what you are thinking but now you have to understand something. Here is the responsible character of God. I hope you can see it. There are two things Paul is going to show you here. First of all, you think that He prepared those vessels for destruction by the way it is written. Don't get that thought in your mind. These vessels were not prepared for destruction by God; they were prepared or fitted for destruction by themselves. That is the first thing I want to show you. He was responsible with His right. He knew the hearts of men. You see, God acts out of His attributes. God never destroys a person who hasn't already fitted himself for destruction. That is what I want you to see. Man fits himself for destruction.

I was reading this and something dawned on me in this passage. I don't think you can miss it. God didn't destroy nations and make them evil first. They became evil so God destroyed them. But I want you to see the compassionate heart on a nation who had been evil and was willing to repent towards God, how quickly He is willing to show His mercy. This is what I want you to see about the character of God. If you study Romans 9 and think that God is the one who made these people evil and prepared them for destruction, you are missing the heart of God. No, He prepared out of His responsible character to destroy those who had fitted themselves for destruction.

Look at [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 shall announce My words to you.' Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something on the wheel. But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled." The Hebrew has the idea that something inherent in the vessel caused it to become spoiled, which means ruined or rotten. The potter didn't make it that way. Something was amiss in the clay, and the clay, because of that, became spoiled.

It goes on to say, "So he remade it into another vessel [That is the power of God], as it pleased the potter to make. Then the word of the Lord came to me saying, 'Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does?' declares the Lord. 'Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel.' [In other words, you have become spoiled and ruined in My hand.] At one moment I might speak concerning a nation, or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy it; if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it. Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant it; if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it."

To me, there is your balance. God is looking for that repentant spirit. God shows mercy on whom He will show mercy. He shows pity on whom He will show pity. Man hardens himself. How many times do you have to hear the message about a long-suffering God before God finally decides he does not care and then drops pity instead of mercy on your life? God acts out of His attributes at all times. So we see then that He only destroys those who had fitted themselves for destruction, like Pharaoh who hardened his own heart before God actually completed the sequence. He said, "I hardened Pharaoh's heart."

It is like the man in [Titus 3:10](#) when it says, "Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned." It is not a vessel that God prepared to destroy, but a vessel that had fitted itself for destruction. That is God. That is the responsible character of God in the midst of His right to do whatever He does. He could have destroyed it, but I think here we are seeing a balance.

Secondly, God Himself prepares the vessels of mercy. That is what hit me. He destroys those vessels that fit themselves for destruction, but then He Himself prepares the vessels of mercy. Verse 23 reads, "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." Here again to me is the enigma. Out of Israel or out of humanity, there are those who because of their own rebellion to God, fit themselves to destruction. But then there are those who were prepared beforehand for glory by God Himself. God has the right to do as He pleases.

Can you see what I am trying to get across to you? When we get to heaven one day, we can't walk in and say, "I am so glad I found Jesus. God, aren't you glad to have me here?" We will walk in understanding that before the foundation of this world we were foreknown, we were predestined, we were called, we were justified and we were glorified. Man can never take credit to himself for salvation. We are just vessels that He prepared beforehand. Yes, He purposed to be a certain way, that it would be by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ alone. That is the way to be justified. But God did that.

On the other hand, if you find yourself in hell, you can never for one second shake your fist in God's face and say, "You sent me here." No, you fitted yourself for destruction. God prepared the vessels beforehand for mercy. That is the enigma to me. I know there are a lot of other explanations for it, but I personally believe that man tried to go too far in understanding that. I personally believe that is what He is teaching us here: salvation is overwhelming. Salvation is God's idea, not man's idea. God prepared us as vessels of mercy to express and to reveal the riches of His glory upon us while we are here on this earth.

If you want to know about those riches of glory, go to Ephesians and study it. I think the whole picture has already been told to us in Romans. I don't think he is getting anywhere off track. I think he is just following the flow that he has already had, which is back in chapter 3. He said almost identically the same thing.

Go back and just look at [Romans 3:21-26](#). "But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith [and that is the only way], in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction [between Jew or Gentile for those who will come by faith in Jesus Christ]; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God [Rebellious Gentiles and religious Jews are all standing guilty before God. Every man.], being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus."

Now look at verses 25-26: "Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just [the Just One] and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

At an appointed time Jesus came. At an appointed time He displayed the way of salvation. His purpose was to do that before the foundation of this world. He endured with much long-suffering the sinfulness of the lump that was already fitting itself for destruction. Why? Up until the point that He could bring His Son to this earth and let men see that He was judging sin at the same time He was opening the door for sinners. Now the way is by faith alone in Christ alone. None of us can ever take credit for any of our salvation. He even says in Romans 12 that He gave every man a measure of faith.

What God foreknew, He predestined, He called, He justified and He glorified. His purpose is that salvation be by faith alone in Christ alone. It is not going to happen any other way because His purpose is going to stand. God has a right over the clay. God could have eradicated the whole lump. He has a right to pick out and make vessels that are honorable and make vessels that are dishonorable. But with responsible integrity He chose to destroy those who fitted themselves. But because He foreknew, He prepared the vessels that were to be vessels of mercy. So nobody can do a thing but get on their face before God and say, "God, thank you. Thank you for such an awesome salvation."

Paul goes on and describes these vessels of mercy who are not going to be just Jewish people. They are not going to just be Gentiles. It is going to be both of them who are going to be included in what He is doing. He says in verse 24, "Even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles." He is bringing up the fact that there are Jews and Gentiles now who are the vessels upon which God might make known the riches of His glory and these are the vessels He foreknew and predestined. [Chapter 11](#) says that He foreknew Israel. He knows who of Israel will come in.

There are two more illustrations in the chapter. The fourth illustration is the illustration of their own prophet Hosea. Hosea prophesied exactly what would take place. He prophesied that the Gentiles would be included in the people of God. It is almost like he is saying, "Israel, would you listen to what I am trying to say! It is in your own history."

Verse 25 of [chapter 9](#) says, "As He says also in Hosea, 'I will call those who were not My people, "My people," [Never were the Gentiles called His people] and her who was not beloved, "Beloved." And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, "You are not My people," there they shall be called sons of the living God.'"

Those are quotes right out of the book of Hosea. The Gentiles are going to be allowed in. But he also goes to the prophet Isaiah. That is the last of the five events out of their history that he quotes. The prophet Isaiah prophesied that there is going to be a remnant of Israel that shall be saved. That is a beautiful balance. It is not going to be all Gentiles nor is it going to be all Jews. But there are going to be those out of the Gentile world and there are going to be those out of the Jewish world.

This is the Spiritual Israel that He intended for Israel to be. Now don't jump ahead of me because we haven't gotten to chapter 11. He has not forgotten His nation. Look at what Isaiah says in [Romans 9:27](#) of Romans: "And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, 'Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved; for the Lord will execute His Word upon the earth, thoroughly and quickly.' And just as Isaiah foretold, 'Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left to us a posterity, we would have become as Sodom, and would have resembled Gomorrah....'" Because of the rebelliousness of our hearts. But God has a remnant.

I think what he is saying here is, yes there are Jews coming in. Thank God there are Jews coming in. But there is going to be a remnant of Israel, the nation, that will ultimately be saved one day. They will turn, as Zechariah says, and see Him and say, "O, it is you that we crucified." That will become their day of atonement. Then the Jews and the Gentiles will be made into one new person in Jesus Christ, which was purposed before the foundation of this world, by faith alone in Christ alone. God foreknew, God called, God predestined, God also one day is going to glorify.

Out of the lump of humanity, God could have made whoever He wanted and made whoever He didn't want, but because He is a responsible, loving God, He chose to destroy those who fitted themselves for destruction and prepare those vessels of mercy to where He was going to reveal the riches of His glory upon them.

I think the bottom line of what Paul is saying in chapter 9 is addressed to both the Gentiles and the Jews. He is saying to the

Gentiles, "Don't you be proud," because that comes up in Chapter 10 and 11. He is saying to the Jewish people, "You are already proud. Both of you are missing it."

Salvation is God's business, folks. It is far beyond being a member of a church. It is being a part now of the mysterious body of Christ. That is what it is all about: moment by moment, day by day, living in the sufficiency of what only God can do as He reveals the riches of His glory upon the vessels that He has prepared beforehand. I don't know about you, but it is coming clear to me. He is saying to Israel, "O Israel, you missed it."

I thank God for the people who are over there right now sharing the fact that Christ, Yeshua, is the Messiah. There is a veil over their face when they preach the Law. But that veil drops when they are willing to listen to grace. It is incredible to see what is happening.