**ROMANS 9b**

**NO FAITH – NO GRACE**

**TODAY** – We will look at Pharaoh as a test case of God choosing to harden someone’s heart. In the first part of Romans 9 we read that God hated – rejected – Esau, but that He loved Ishmael.

SO… God either predestined Esau to perish… OR… God, in His Omnipotence knew that Esau would reject Him, ***(AND Esau did…)*** Knowing in advance that Esau would reject Him, God rejected Esau.

Those who reject our opinion believe that God COULD and DOES reject certain men , women, and children – and that there is nothing that they can do about it.

* We reject that theology of course.
* **COULD** GOD choose to redeem some and condemn others? OF COURSE! He can do what ever He wants to BUT, His word tells us that He sent His Son into this world to provide salvation for all who would choose Him.
* Using a sports analogy = God chooses His team in advance because He knows who WILL choose Him. Can just anybody choose Him? We believe, YES!
* Here is a great three minute explanation by Greg Laurie – Enjoy - youtube.com/watch?v=OOZ8Z\_iGeOw

**HERE IS AN EXAMPLE OF SOMEONE WHO REJECTED GOD**

17 For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I HAVE RAISED YOU UP, THAT I MAY SHOW MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MAY BE DECLARED IN ALL THE EARTH." **EXODUS 9:16**

18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. ***SOUNDS LIKE V 15,doesn’t it?***

* We have been reading about this very story in our morning reading this past week. Remember, Moses was sent to the Pharaoh… Moses told him to let the people go, or God would begin to send problems… Problems like:
* Blood in the drinking water
* Frogs
* Lice or gnats
* Flies
* Livestock dying
* Boils
* Hail
* Locust
* Darkness
* Finally - Death of firstborn
* **These plagues in Exodus 7-11 were two things:**
  + 1. Caused by the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart – by God.
  + 2. Caused by God in order to fulfill HIS purpose & will.
* SO… are you OK with God fulfilling His will by adding some grief to the lives of Pharaoh and the Egyptians? YES? Everyone is in?
* WELL THEN… It begs asking: Are you OK with God adding a little grief to YOUR life? NO?
  + WHY WOULD HE DO THAT?
  + In order to fulfill HIS purpose & will.
  + Some of you look disappointed. I am sorry. I always have to make this stuff personal, right?
  + **Before you become a complaining clump of clay, read on….**

**COMPLAINING CLAY CLUMPS**

19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?" **NLT - "Why does God blame people for not responding? Haven't they simply done what He makes them do?"**

**NO!**

**GOD AS THE POTTER**

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?

* There are two really good lessons here in V21: Pride & Lumpiness.
  + Are you willing for God to form you into a servant type of vessel? (Everybody shakes their head yes of course) BUT… If some Sunday, I asked you to please empty the trash in the restrooms… Would you feel insulted? **“The true test of servanthood is how you feel about being asked to serve others.**”
  + The other lesson is **the “lump.”** The doggone lump in the clay… The Potter has the wheel spinning… He has started to form the vessel He wants… He is just about finished when what happens? **The lump!** The lump resists the potter’s hands and gets dragged around the almost finished pottery and messes up what the potter had in mind…. What does the Potter have to do? He pushed to clay back down and starts working His fingers through the clay – looking for something. What is He looking for? THE LUMP. Don’t be a lump in God’s hands Beloved. We used to sing a chorus back in the day… Like this:

**Have Thine own way Lord  
Have Thine own way  
Thou art the potter I am the clay  
Mold me and make me after Thy will  
While I am waiting yielded and still**

22 What if God, wanting to show *His* wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, 24 even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

* **CEV** - God wanted to show his anger and reveal his power against everyone who deserved to be destroyed. **But instead,** he patiently put up with them. 23 He did this by showing how glorious he is when he has pity on the people he has chosen to share in his glory. 24 Whether Jews or Gentiles, we are those chosen ones,
* I am SO glad that God is patient with us… I am amazed and in awe of how merciful He is with us… He forgives and forgets… forgives and forgets… forgives…. And… \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ forgets.
* WHY? Because He loves us. I am SO moved by this unmerited grace… So is the Apostle because he begins to recall the scripture he learned as a Pharisee student, except now he applies it to the GRACE of God instead of the LAW of God… LISTEN…

25 As He says also in Hosea: "I WILL CALL THEM MY PEOPLE, WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, AND HER BELOVED, WHO WAS NOT BELOVED." **HOSEA 2:23**

* God told Hosea to marry a prostitute in order to demonstrate God’s mercy. Hosea accepted the children of her customers as his own. THAT is love and mercy!

26 "AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, 'YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,' THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD." **HOSEA 1:10**

* God is NOT done with Israel… He still has plans for them!

27 Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: "THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL BE AS THE SAND OF THE SEA, THE REMNANT WILL BE SAVED. **ISAIAH 10:22**

28 FOR HE WILL FINISH THE WORK AND CUT IT SHORT IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, BECAUSE THE LORD WILL MAKE A SHORT WORK UPON THE EARTH." **ISAIAH 10:22**

**This is a warning to NOT wait too long to make your decision to serve God.**

29 And as Isaiah said before: "UNLESS THE LORD OF SABAOTH HAD LEFT US A SEED, WE WOULD HAVE BECOME LIKE SODOM, AND WE WOULD HAVE BEEN MADE LIKE GOMORRAH." **ISAIAH 1:9**

**ISRAEL'S UNBELIEF**

30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, **(US!)** who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; ***(Just as was said of Abraham - PTL)*** 31 but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, ***(Instead of grace by faith through Christ)*** has not attained to the law of righteousness.

* **NLT** - But the people of Israel, who tried so hard to get right with God by keeping the law, never succeeded. ***WHY NOT?...***

**NO FAITH – NO GRACE**

32 Why? Because *they did* not *seek it* by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. ***(IE, Jesus!)*** 33 As it is written: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STUMBLING STONE AND ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND WHOEVER BELIEVES ON HIM WILL NOT BE PUT TO SHAME." **ISAIAH 28:16**

Remember **V8:1**? Let’s just close by reminding ourselves…

**T*here is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.**

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