

TAKE COMFORT, GOD IS IN CONTROL!

JANUARY 7, 2024

WORSHIP

Lord of All Creation, Great Things, At The Cross, What A Beautiful Name, Still

WELCOME

What are some things that you wish you had complete control over? How about those that you are glad you are not in control of?

WORD

ROMANS 9:1-8

(READ THE REST OF THE VERSES UP TO THE END)

I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, ² that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, ⁴ who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, ⁵ whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen. ⁶ But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; ⁷ nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED." ⁸ That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.

We learned of numerous blessings we receive by God's power (**Romans 1-8**) so far. The next section of Romans, **chapters 9-11** is devoted to a discussion of the SOVEREIGNTY of God, focusing mainly on the Jewish people. As we study **chapter 9**, we can **TAKE COMFORT, GOD IS IN CONTROL!** But if God is in control, are we still responsible for anything in our lives? How do you put these two concepts together? Many people go to the extremes -- they say that God's sovereignty means there's nothing else that we need to do. The other extreme is a focus on the self and a denial of God. The Bible defines God's sovereignty (**Isaiah 46:9-10**) it shows that His purpose will be established. **Arthur Pink** states that "**divine sovereignty**" is an "**exercise of One who is infinitely wise and good.**" God is in complete control, but He wants what is best for us.

1. GOD'S SOVEREIGN WILL IS UNCOERCED

Romans 9:1-5 is where Paul talks about his great sorrow for his fellow Jews. He recalls the great fathers of the faith and points out that the Messiah came through the Jewish line. He then gives the question people may have been asking – how come they are not saved?

Romans 9:6-8 clarifies that the Jews are not all "children of promise" – coming from the bloodline doesn't qualify you for the benefit. Abraham had two sons – Ishmael and Isaac, and in God's sovereign will, HE CHOSE ISAAC, and later when Isaac had two sons, HE CHOSE JACOB (**vv. 9-12**) – all because of His purpose. God already chose them even before they were born. This quote from Malachi – "Jacob I love, Esau I hated" -- often bothers people. But it's just a figure of speech that Jesus also used (**Luke 6:26**) to say that our love for HIM should be greater than anything else in the world. **Deuteronomy 7:7** says that God did not choose Israel for any other reason, other than HIS LOVE for them. It is also conditional – it benefits "**those who love God**"; the same people who possess God's purpose too (**Romans 8:28**). Love is a choice, and we usually have reasons for liking and choosing someone. God chose us so that we will be HOLY and BLAMELESS, and it is all "**according to the kind intention of His will**" (**Ephesians 1:4-5**).

2. GOD'S SOVEREIGN WILL IS JUST

Some accuse God as unjust for choosing only the Jews, and not other nations. Paul asserts that God being unjust is **IMPOSSIBLE**. Choosing one over the other (**vv. 14-16**) is not about justice. God is just and He will always be just. In **Exodus 33:18-19** God said that He will be gracious to whom He chooses. There is a big difference between justice and grace. Generosity and grace are different from justice. In God's dealing with Pharaoh (**vv. 17-18**), God may be perceived and accused as unjust, but the first encounter of Pharaoh with God and Moses (**Exodus 5:1**) showed

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that Pharaoh did not choose to respect nor believe in the LORD. Pharaoh's heart got hardened because God did not intervene (**Exodus 8:15,19,22; Romans 1:24,26,28**). God was being fair to him, persuading Pharaoh to obey by the plagues given to Egypt. Some people do not have interest in God because they have chosen to reject Him.

Paul was the opposite of Pharaoh (**1 Corinthians 15:8-10**). Like all of us, he deserved damnation and judgment. But his story was changed! We go to hell because of our sins, but we go to heaven because of God's intervention. Notice Paul's emphasis on the grace of God – this is a very humbling fact. We deserve condemnation and judgment, but God in His mercy, changed the courses of our story. Isn't that comforting that even in our mistakes, God redeems us for a purpose?

3. GOD'S SOVEREIGN WILL AND MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY GO TOGETHER

Romans 9:19-24 presents another question – why would God take offense then? Paul points to the imagery of the **potter and the clay** to tell us who is truly in control. We are clay; He is the potter. He is the owner; He has all the right to do whatever He wants to do. This analogy doesn't mean that we are robots. Paul mentions vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath – and he uses a passage in Hosea and Isaiah to show the principle of sovereign election. God is sovereign and He can do whatever He wants. Human responsibility is still in operation even with this truth! If people listen to God and repent, God will change His planned course of action (**Jeremiah 18:5-11**).

God's sovereign will and human responsibility go together! God has chosen us not because we deserve it, it is only by grace, but we have a part in it. **Romans 14:10-12** present the certainty of human responsibility and accountability!

How do we reconcile God's sovereignty and man's responsibility? **Charles Spurgeon** stated that these two concepts need no reconciliation – they go together. **Romans 9:30-33** gives the final blow to this issue – our part is to trust Him by faith. Israel did not want to do that but pursued salvation by works so they stumble over the “stone of stumbling and rock of offense” – **JESUS CHRIST! Acts 4:11-12** points to Him as the stone rejected by the Israelites, which became he foundational, chief corner stone. If people accuse us of being so narrow, point them to the reality – Jesus Himself claimed to be **THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE**. Death is horrible without Christ! **John 6:44** tells us that God draws people to Him, but in **v.40** of the same chapter, the human will is also accounted for! We attain our comfort in **2 Peter 3:9** – this is the heart of God, for all of us to come to repentance. Today God extends that invitation – **COME TO HIM, TRUST HIM, THANK HIM, and OBEY HIM!**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

1. Self-Check.

How do you feel about God's sovereignty – is it reassuring or constricting? Why do you think so?

2. Setting It Right.

Do you ever feel your heart hardening against God? How do you plan to address this when it happens?

3. Living It Out.

After hearing this message, what is your personal responsibility to God and others?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Pray for those you know who still need to choose to trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Share with them why you chose to believe in Him and share the gospel so that they can have the opportunity to accept Jesus in their lives as well.

WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives.

II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of public servants; repentance and salvation for government leaders and citizens for a Christ-centered Philippines.
- For the Russian invasion of Ukraine to stop; peace and order be restored, lives saved. Russian and Ukrainian soldiers, families, leaders to turn to Christ.

III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples
- Elders, Pastors, Leaders, and Families
- Ministries and Churches worldwide

IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Retreat and Shelter

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God
- Righteous living
- Salvation of family and friends

MEMORY VERSE

ROMANS 9:33

Just as it is written,
“BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION
A STONE OF STUMBLING
AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE,
AND HE WHO BELIEVES
IN HIM WILL NOT BE
DISAPPOINTED.”