

The Gospel Announced: The Gospel is all about Grace

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[0 : 00] So we're reading from Romans chapter 9 starting at verse 14 and that's on page 1136 in the Red Church Bible.

So starting in verse 14 of Romans chapter 9. What shall we say then? Is God unjust? Not at all. For he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.

It does not therefore depend on man's desire or effort but on God's mercy. For the scripture says to Pharaoh, I raised you up for this very purpose.

That I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.

Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

One of you will say to me, then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will? But who are you, O man, to talk back to God?

[1 : 19] Shall what is formed say to him who formed it? Why did you make me like this? Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purpose and some for common use?

What if God, choosing to show his wrath, made his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath prepared for destruction?

What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory? Even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles.

As he says in Hosea, I will call them my people who are not my people and I will call her my loved one who is not my loved one.

And it will happen that in the very place where it is said of them, you are not my people, they will be called sons of the living God. Isaiah cries out concerning Israel.

[2 : 32] Though the number of the Israelites is like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved. For the Lord will carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality.

It is just as Isaiah said previously, Unless the Lord Almighty had left his descendants, we would have become like Sodom. We would have been like Gomorrah.

Thanks. Thanks very much, Nick. Well, as we continue on in our studies, in our series through Romans, I just want to draw your attention to something in the news sheet again and related to that. It's the section at the bottom on the inside. It has gotherefore.com. Two resources to encourage you to check out. There's a little book.

They're called a little black book series. I have a hard copy here if you want to know what it's like. And it's on the subject of predestination. That's a big, big word. But it's helping us to unpack what it means that God would choose us by his grace or set his grace upon us and deals with the whole subject of our free will and God's work in our lives.

[3 : 53] It's aimed at students. So it's right for me. So I hope you get what I mean by that. So easy to understand for people like me.

And then the other one is Peace with God, which is a little study book as well, which takes you through Romans. So those are just resources that are available that might help you as we go through this section.

And also the previous talks from Romans 1 to 8 are also up online from previous times. Well, let's ask for God's help as we pray.

Amen. Father, your word is good. It is truth to us.

And it is truth that changes our lives, not just now but for all eternity. And we ask that by the power of your spirit, you would help us to grasp your word to us this morning, this afternoon, that it will indeed change us, that it will tune our hearts to your grace and know what it is to live in response to your grace.

[5 : 12] So please help us, Father, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, I want us to imagine for a moment that you're the parent of two children.

It's come to the stage in life where they're grown up and you must sort out the family inheritance. But here's the catch. The law states that only one child can receive the inheritance.

Only one. So who do you choose? Which one will you put on the list? Of course, whichever one you choose, it's going to seem very unfair and very unkind to the other one.

Well, that's the issue that is being raised here. And I know it has been a matter of much talk for a lot of us over this past week. But this is the subject that is being raised.

God, we are told, chooses who receives his salvation. So look back at verse 11 of Romans 9.

[6 : 35] Well, it says this, Yet before the twins were born, this was the twins, Isaac and Jacob, before they were born, or before they had done anything good or bad, in order that God's purpose in election might stand, or in order that God's purpose in choosing might stand, not by works, but by him who calls.

She was told the older will serve the younger. It's making it very clear that God made a choice. He chose one and he rejected the other.

Now, to us, that seems very ungracious, unloving, and unkind. It doesn't seem to fit in with the God that we know who loves to portray himself as the Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in unfailing love and faithfulness.

We're struggling to put these two things together. And in response, what we find in this text are two big questions that are raised.

But as we ask these two big questions, as we answer them, we discover that God is a gracious God. In fact, his grace overflows to more and more people than we could ever expect or imagine.

[8 : 12] So what are these two questions? Well, the first one comes in verse 14. Question one, is God fair? Look at verse 14.

What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Is God fair in choosing one and rejecting another? Well, here's the answer.

Read on. Not at all. And he gives two examples to help us to understand that. Firstly, we see it in God's mercy to Moses.

Look at verse 15. For God says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.

Now, to understand that quote, we need to go back to the story from where it comes from, which is in Exodus chapter 34. So you can keep your finger in Romans 9 and go back to Exodus 34.

[9 : 13] And Exodus, you know, tells us the amazing story of God's rescue of the people of Israel who were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt.

But as soon as God rescued them, as soon as he brought them out of slavery and was bringing them towards the promised land, the people did something terrible.

They all turned their backs on God. And when Moses was up Mount Sinai receiving the law, Aaron, the leader of them, told all the people to take off their gold earrings to do something.

So look at Exodus chapter 32, it is. Sorry, Exodus 32, verse 4. Exodus 32, verse 4. He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool.

Then they said, These are the gods, O Israel, who brought you out of Egypt. How do you think God would respond to that?

[10 : 21] Well, we're told in verse 9. I have seen these people, the Lord said to Moses. And they're stiff-necked people. They're stubborn and hard-hearted. Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them.

But Moses prayed for the people in verse 11. He prayed and he pleaded with God. And as we read on the story, we discover this is what happened.

Instead of everyone being punished, the story goes on to tell us that only 3,000 people were punished. Now that's actually quite a small number compared to the thousands upon thousands of people who were released from slavery.

And so we read in Exodus 32, verse 14. Then the Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.

So rather than be troubled about the fact that God punished 3,000 people, we should be standing back in amazement that he actually had mercy on any of them.

[11:31] And it's in this context that God says, look at Exodus 33, verse 19. Exodus 33, verse 19 we read, And the Lord said, I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence.

And here's the quote, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. This is the God we're dealing with.

So go back to Romans chapter 9. Chapter 9, verse 16. It does not, therefore, salvation does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.

You see, everything Israel did and desired to do, their turning away from God, their rebellious heart, deserved God's judgment, but God responded with amazing mercy.

So he gives us the example of his mercy to Moses and the people of Israel. But then he gives us another example, God's justice to Pharaoh.

[12:53] So, chapter 9 of Romans, verse 17, he continues, For the scripture says to Pharaoh, I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.

Again, we need to go back and remember this story back in Exodus 4 of Pharaoh. Remember who Pharaoh was. God had ordered Pharaoh, the leader of the Egyptians, who had been so brutal to the Israelites, enslaving them and making them work with little or nothing.

He told Pharaoh, you are to let the people go, but he wouldn't let them go. And this is what we read in Exodus chapter 4 and verse 21.

Exodus 4, verse 21. The Lord said to Moses, When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do.

But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. God says, I'll harden your heart.

[14:11] Pharaoh, who was already hard-hearted, who was a brutal dictator, causing trouble to all of these people. And God says, I will harden your heart.

Make his hard heart even harder. So rather than be troubled with the fact that God is hardening Pharaoh's heart, we should see that God's justice was being done.

Pharaoh was only getting what he actually deserved. So go back to Romans 9 and verse 18.

Therefore, God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

You see, when we begin to start challenging God and claiming that God is being unfair, we must remember that this is trying to tell us that all of us are just like the rebellious people of Israel.

We're just like stubborn Pharaoh. In each situation, both Israel and Pharaoh, both of them deserved to be punished.

[15:26] They both deserved God's justice. But incredibly, God chose to be merciful to a whole bunch of people who deserved the opposite.

So the question we should be asking here is not why does God choose one and not the other, but why does God bother to choose somebody like you or me?

Remember the opening illustration that we had this morning about the two parents who must choose which child gets the inheritance. Well, let me add a little bit more to that illustration.

Suppose both of the children were very abusive and angry towards their parents. What if they never cared for their mum or dad, never rang them up to see how they were, never visited them?

What if they were constantly borrowing money and taking and taking and taking and never paying back? The point is, while the parents must still choose, neither of them deserve the inheritance.

[16:37] In fact, they deserve nothing. But in their grace, they will give it to one. Well, that's how it is with us.

We don't deserve God's mercy. In fact, that he does show mercy to us is an act of incredible grace. So that's the answer to question one. Is God fair? Well, God is gracious. The second question is another great question.

Why does God blame us? Verse 19. One of you will say, he predicts, doesn't he? And I know I would be asking the same question and you're probably asking this question too.

Verse 19. One of you will say to me, then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will? If God makes the choice, then why does God still blame us if we don't follow him?

[17 : 35] And if God made Pharaoh's heart hard, then is it not unfair to blame Pharaoh for being hard-hearted? It's a great question, but look at the answer.

Verse 20. But who are you, O man or woman, to talk back to God? He's saying to us, let's get some perspective here.

God he's the creator, he's the sustainer of the entire universe in which we live. He's existed from before time began. He holds everything together in his hands, bringing about the stars and the moon and the sun and the tides and everything he controls.

And he's going to rule for all eternity. We're not dealing with some kind of small person here. We, on the other hand, are just a tiny part of his creation.

We live at most for about 80 years and then we die. So he says in verse 20, so who are you to be talking back to God?

[18 : 50] Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, why did you make me like this? Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?

Who are we? Who am I and who are you to tell God how he should rule the universe? Who are we to decide who God has mercy on?

Who are we to decide who we shouldn't have mercy on? You see, to be challenging God and questioning God like this is basically an attempt on our part to push God off his throne and say you don't know how to work this world I know better than you.

But that's not the full answer. You see, while God doesn't answer every single question we have, he wants us to see in the midst of all of our questions how gracious he is.

And we see this in two ways. First, God is slow to anger. Look at verse 22. Follow carefully verse 22.

[20 : 06] What if God, choosing to show his wrath, his anger and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath prepared for destruction?

God has a right to bring to bring his justice and judgment. But the fact is, and the point is here, that God delays his justice.

Look at what it says in verse 22. He bore with great patience. God is slow to bring his judgment so that he might demonstrate his kindness and his grace.

grace. He wants to make his saving power known to the nations and to all people. That is why he is bearing with great patience.

Go back to Romans chapter 2 and verse 4. Romans chapter 2 verse 4. He's already raised this same issue. Romans chapter 2 and verse 4.

[21 : 18] Talking about God's delay in his patience and the purpose for it. He says, do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realising that God's kindness leads you towards repentance?

repentance. You see, God doesn't delight in the death of anyone. He's not willing that anybody should perish.

In other words, judgment doesn't come naturally to God. He seeks to put it off. He wants it to be the last thing that he has to do.

On the other hand, God in the meantime is longing to save and he wants us to grasp how gracious he is. Romans 9 verse 23. What if he did this?

What if he was so patient? What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy whom he prepared in advance for glory?

[22 : 25] God delays his judgment so that he might display his salvation. salvation. It's like God places his two hands before us and in one hand is written the words justice and on the other hand is written the word riches.

And God has opened up the hand of riches to us and he has invited us to come and see his grace and his compassion. He wants us to taste and see how good he is and on the other hand he keeps his hand of justice closed.

But a day is going to come when the riches, the hand of his riches will be closed up and the hand of judgment will be opened.

He is slow to anger. God delays his judgment with great patience so that he might display his grace and his salvation to the nations.

God is slow to anger. And second, God is rich in love. God's riches in his patience and in his grace have been made known.

[23 : 51] Look at verse 24. He's saying there, not just to the Jews, not just to those who had a privileged upbringing, but also to the Gentiles, to people from other nations who never even heard of God.

Look at verse 25. As he says in Hosea, I will call them my people who are not my people. I will call her my loved one who is not my loved one.

Do you see how far his grace is reaching out? These are people and nations who didn't have the same privileges as the people of Israel. They were considered outsiders, nobodies, enemies of God.

You turned your back on them, but yet God in his grace and because of his riches, he says to them, verse 25, I will call these people, these outsiders, these nobodies, these enemies, these people, my people.

I will call them my loved one. my grace is so great that I will welcome them in, I will include them, I will draw them in so that they can experience the wonder of my love.

[25 : 08] You all know Rocky Bay, and you know the stream in Rocky Bay. Well, when our kids were younger, we used to try and block up that dam, or block up that stream, try and hold the water back, but the inevitable was always going to happen.

At some point, somewhere on that man-made dam, it would break, and as you try to shovel sand and try to block it back up, then it would break somewhere else, and eventually the whole dam would collapse, and a big stream of water would come flowing through.

Well, that's like the riches of God's love. love, it overflows to more and more people. You cannot hold back the grace of God, and God is telling us through this that while people like Pharaoh may not have known God's mercy, many of his descendants will.

While Esau, tracking back in Romans 9, may not know God's compassion, many of his descendants will. While Ishmael may not know God's love, many of his descendants will.

That's the point of verse 26. It will happen that in that very place where it was said to them, you are not my people, they will be called sons of the living God.

[26 : 40] God's God's mercy and compassion flows to more and more people than we could ever think or imagine.

We may find many things about God very difficult and very hard, but one thing is certain, God is incredibly gracious.

You see, if it were not for God's grace to us, none of us would experience his salvation. Look at verse 29, the same point is being made in verses 27 and 28.

Let's read just verse 29. It is just as Isaiah said previously, unless the Lord Almighty had left us descendants, we would have become like Sodom, we would have become like Gomorrah.

You remember those two great big cities in the Old Testament? Cities that had experienced God's just and fair judgment because of their rebellion and their behaviour?

[27 : 53] And what happened to the people of those cities is what should have happened to the people of Israel. However, because of God's intervention, because of God's grace, it didn't happen, verse 29, unless the Lord Almighty had left us descendants.

If it wasn't for him intervening into our lives, then we would have been like the rest of them. It's only because of God's grace that any of them were saved at all.

I know that Romans 9 has raised lots of questions. I know I've had conversations with some of you. I have the same questions going on in my own mind.

But when we question God's fairness, when we start to blame God as if he's got it wrong, what we actually discover is that God is actually being incredibly fair.

We don't deserve what we get. We deserve to be judged and yet he doesn't do that for us. What is amazing is that God not only shows grace and mercy to some people, God shows grace and mercy to people like you and me.

[29 : 15] He shows it to people like you and me. And as we'll discover as we read on, he gives us that grace so that we might begin to share that same grace with other people who have not yet heard the amazing wonder of God's love.

It's only by grace that we are who we are. God is good and God is gracious. Let's pray.
let's just reflect on what we've just been thinking through.

If God was fair then we would be judged. God but yet in his kindness his grace and compassion he has shown us his love his mercy and his kindness.

thank you father that you do not treat us as our sins deserve. Thank you that your grace overflows to people like us.

[30 : 50] We thank you for what you have done and we praise you in Jesus name. Amen. we're going to sing a couple of songs in response.

The first one is only by grace can we enter only by grace can we stand. It celebrates God's amazing grace to us.

in the next one that we'll sing, Amen. that's next Bill create Vine to Mary, Amen.