

Series Title: Truth Unashamed, Part 4

Sermon Title: Week 2: God's Mercy and the lump of clay

Date: 01-13-19

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✠ Week 1 Recap: A few important things

- **Jumping right in! Few things to recap**
  - **If you missed last week, catch up!**
  - **Do study guide, read FT, read scripture ahead**
  - **Bring your bible! Group!**
- **BIG topic of Romans 9-11 is the concept- the reality- of God's Sovereignty. This means that GOD IS GOD, and we are not. God is God on HIS terms, and everything he has done, and will do, have been according to his nature, his purpose, his plan, in his time, and as we will see today, according to MERCY.**
- **Paul opens topic with two OT stories...**
- **First story was that of Isaac and Ishmael, where we saw that God's PURPOSE depended upon God's PROMISE, not human PLANS and PERSPECTIVE.**
- **Second story was one generation later, of Jacob and Esau, Isaac's son.**
  - **Clarification- a bit hard on Rebecca, the mom. Yes, she helped Jacob lie, but her motives had at least some sincerity, as God had told her, before her twins were born, that Jacob (younger) would rule over Esau (the elder). This was the opposite of all human convention then, and like Sara and Abram, she concluded that she needed to devise a plan to help God along. Never good plan.**
- **JACOB, on the other hand, had already established himself as a cheat (read Gen 25 & 27), and he is the one who bold face lied and deceived his aged father, although with his moms encouragement.**
- **THE POINT is that after what Jacob did, surely God wouldn't choose HIM to carry out his promise! But that's exactly what God did, demonstrating the second big point, which is that God CALLS people into his plan according to HIS CHOICE, not their QUALIFICATIONS.**
- **This leads to Pauls very honest human perspective question...**

✠ Is God unjust?

**Romans 9:14** <sup>NIV</sup>What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! <sup>NASB</sup>What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!

- **Why would we think God is unjust?**
  - **Biblical stories where God does what we wouldn't**
  - **Injustice in the world. Human suffering.**
  - **One thing we don't immediately think of, but if are being intellectually honest, we would conclude that God's FORGIVENESS of us is unjust!**

**Romans 3:23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

- **If a person sinned against you, and someone came and paid the price for their sentence, would you be happy? Probably not! They hurt me! They deserve to be punished!**
- **We have rebelled against God! (Romans 1-3:20)**

**Ephesians 2:1-3** As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup> in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup> All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

- **This is hard for us to hear, but incredibly important. We hold no rights or entitlements before God- he owes us nothing, and the only thing we deserve is his wrath.**
- **Given this, we would conclude that for God to forgive us would indeed be a violation of His justice. And it would be, except that the reality of God's wrath is superseded by...**

## † The greater reality of God's MERCY

**Romans 9:15-16 NASB.** *For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION."*

- **God- my ability to have mercy is not limited to your perspective of who deserves mercy. If I want to have mercy on the worst of sinners, I will do it. IN CONTEXT of jews rejecting the messiah, Paul is leading to the point that "my own people not believing, I am free to show my mercy to the gentiles**

<sup>16</sup> So then it (**God's plans, His Grace**) does not depend on the man who wills (**what we want in our human perspective**) or the man who runs (**what we can accomplish on our own**) (<sup>NIV</sup> **Mans desire or effort**), but on God who has mercy.

- **And BECAUSE God loves us, and comes to us in His Mercy, we follow R3:23 with 24...**

**Romans 3:24** <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

- **Ephesians 2:3 is followed by...**

<sup>4</sup> But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

- **SO, we need to talk about God's MERCY. It is WAY more than just forgiveness. It is a mystery, and to describe it Paul lays out one of the most "YEAH BUT" verses in the NT. Keeping with OT examples, we turn to Moses and PHAROA**

## † The great mystery of God's mercy

**Romans 9:17-18** *For Scripture says to Pharaoh (Scripture shows How God used Pharaoh- Moses story): "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."*

- **Sounds good! If God said to me "Ethan, I am going to display my power in you, and through you my name will be proclaimed in all the earth", YES!... Except Pharaoh is the BAD GUY, and God will do this by defeating him. Not so good if you are Pharaoh!**
- **EXODUS- epic battle between good and evil, between the human who thought he was God, and God himself- battling for the survival of the Hebrews. Multiple times in the story, we see that Pharaoh 'hardened his heart' against God. ALSO see God say "I have hardened Pharaoh's heart against me so that I can do what I'm going to do" THIS leads to...**

<sup>18</sup> Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

**WHOA... just doesn't seem right!**

- **Important what Scripture is saying and NOT saying.**
- **NOT saying that God takes people who would otherwise believe him, follow him, and turn them against him. NO. God is not arbitrary.**
- **Pharaoh had declared God's people, and God himself, to be his enemy, and he had already hardened his heart against God. For Pharaoh, his hardened heart resulted from the fact that he had already rejected God. PRINCIPLE.. when we reject what is right, we are hardened in what is wrong.**
- **BUT, EVEN SO, GOD was at work in Pharaohs life. SOMEHOW, because God is sovereign, even the sins of those who oppose God will be part of how God's plan works out.**
- **You could say... To those who receive God's gift of mercy, God pours out his mercy.... To those who reject God, even fight against him, they too are part of His plan.**
- **One more thought - if a persons heart is hardened, there is nothing here to say that their hearts cannot be softened.... More on this in coming weeks...**

- **BUT EVEN WITH this explanation, we still say GOD! If you are Sovereign, and you choose how you work in peoples lives, then why are we to blame for what has gone wrong. ON EVEN MORE BASIC LEVEL... GOD, I see things around me, maybe my life, that I don't think are FAIR! THIS DOESN'T MAKE SENSE...**

✠ The answer we must hear!

**Romans 9:19-20** One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who is able to resist his will?" <sup>20</sup> But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'"

- **When we demand an answer to why things don't happen the way we think they should, God's answer is that HE IS GOD and WE ARE NOT. Quoting Isaiah- Isaiah 29:16** You turn things upside down, as if the potter were thought to be like the clay! Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, "You did not make me"? Can the pot say to the potter, "You know nothing"?
- **Oh, this is hard for some of us. We want answers! If we think something isn't fair, not the way we think it should be, we want to know why. AND GOD DOESN'T TELL US. With great compassion, he reminds us that HE IS GOD, he is the creator, and we are his creation... we are the CLAY. Meaning, he can, and does, mold us, form us, according to his plan and his purposes. AND his P&P are GOOD.**
- **BUT WE DON'T LIKE BEING CLAY. Resounding chorus in our culture today, "we can be anything we want to be"... In many ways good... but HEAR... true joy, peace, contentment... comes NOT from me making myself who I want to be (or honestly, who society says I should be), but me accepting who GOD HAS MADE ME TO BE.**

✠ We are the clay, and why that is a good thing

**Romans 9:21** Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?

- **Someone here is thinking- God, why did you make me (or person I love) like this! Why are my circumstances the way they are? I mean, look at that person over there- happy, successful, good job, good marriage, healthy... WHAT ABOUT ME? Why are other people special, and I am so COMMON!**
- **God's reply... dear child, I owe you nothing. But I have given you everything, for... MYSELF... your life has infinite value, meaning, goodness, not because of how compare to those around you, or your own understanding, but because I HAVE MADE YOU.**
- **DOESN'T MEAN that God causes us to sin. DOESN'T mean God micromanages our lives, and we have no responsibility for our choices and circumstances. DOESN'T mean that when bad things happen, that God necessarily caused these. (Romans 8:28)**
- **This DOES MEAN that IN CHRIST, we have received the indescribable GIFT of being WHOLE, it being WELL WITH OUR SOUL, right where we are, NOW.**
- **YES, we allow God to grow us, free us from our flesh, YES it is our choice to trust, to follow, to obey, BUT YOU, lump of clay, are the work of the fathers hand, AND YOUR LIFE is precious and filled with meaning, purpose, and hope.**
- **SOMEWHERE IN INDIA.. single man/poor/illiterate disabled.. lowest class. LOVES JESUS. Very simple understanding, but he serves his church by cleaning... mentoring boys in his village. THIS MAN, in Christ, IS AS VALUABLE and significant as Andy Stanley, Rick Warren, Louie Giglio... because he is work of his fathers hand, fathers purpose**

**Isaiah 64:8** Yet you, LORD, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand