

Series Title: Truth Unashamed, Part 4

Sermon Title: Week 3: The purpose of God's Mercy

Date: 01-20-19

✠ Created in Mercy

- **Overarching narrative chap 9: God's promise to Israel – Abrahamic covenant- had not failed.**

Genesis 12:1-3 *The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. ² "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.*

³*I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."*

- **If you made this promise to Israel, and if Christ is the fulfillment of this promise, and if Israel has rejected Christ, then did God's promise to Israel fail?**
- **NO- even though Israel, as a nation, rejected the messiah, God/Christ, had not rejected Israel. ALL OF THIS, somehow, is part of God's plan.**
- **This opens the door to the truth that God is SOVEREIGN. In fact, in Gen 15, when God confirms his covenant with Abraham, he begins by saying...**

Genesis 15:1 *"Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield (sovereign), your very great reward."*

- **Then, Paul walks us through the defining reality of God's sovereignty, which is His MERCY, Love.**
- **LAST WEEK- God saying "I am the potter, you are the clay, and it is MINE to create you, form you, according to my goodness, my purposes."**
- **This means that IN CHRIST, God has endowed you, me, with eternal purpose and significance, because you are the creation of GOD.**
- **NOW, in a PROFOUND passage, Paul takes this image of God as the potter, and us as the clay, and he takes it the next necessary step- that as creations of God, we are "vessels"... and the eternally important question is, what are we vessels OF. Because although it is sobering- definitely not politically correct, there are only two choices.. As human beings, created by God, we are either vessels of wrath.... Or mercy.**

✠ Vessels of Wrath

Romans 9:22 *What if God, although choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction?*

- **It is an inescapable Biblical reality that God is a God of justice. Sin, rebellion against God, must be punished. This punishment can be either born by CHRIST, or by ourselves. God WILL express his wrath against sin.**
- **'choosing'='willing'. Willing in strong sense that God 'wills' or purposes to show his wrath and power**
- **YET, even here, we see God's mercy. He is not quick to punish, but slow.... 'bore with great patience..."**

2 Peter 3:8-9 *But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

- **But we know that everyone will not come to repentance, and Paul describes those who will not believe as "objects of his wrath".**

- “Objects”... greek word is for ‘vessel’. Here we see what may be most tragic description of human beings separated from God. “Vessels of wrath”. Eternally, it is God’s wrath they will bear... thus, they are ‘prepared for destruction’...
- “Prepared” is passive verb, clear sense is that we prepared ourselves... God does not prepare us... it is OUR sin that separates us from God.
- But this ISN’T the last word! Even though people who reject God will bear his wrath, Paul goes on to proclaim that God IS PATIENT, because his greater desire, his greater purpose, is MERCY! Rather than his creation being vessels for his wrath, God’s purpose is that we would be....

✠ Vessels of Mercy

Romans 9:23-24 What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy (**vessels**), whom he prepared in advance for glory—²⁴ even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?

- Huge! In first statement, we see the ‘vessels of wrath’ prepared... HERE we see, vessels of Mercy, whom GOD PREPARED... in advance, to receive the GLORY of his mercy, of redemption, life from dead!
- NEED TO POINT OUT... tension throughout this entire passage between God’s sovereign choice regarding our relationship with God, and our FREE WILL to respond to God’s invitation for that relationship. The sense of “God choosing us” vs “Us choosing God”. HERE WE SEE BOTH.
- Verse 22 emphasizes that it is OUR sin, OUR rejection... we ‘prepared ourselves’ for destruction
- Verses 23-24 emphasize GOD’S ACTION.. that HE PREPARED us, in ADVANCE, for Glory.
- SOMEHOW, BOTH are true!
- Paul goes on to emphasize that God’s ability to show us mercy is not bound by our human status- Jew or gentile- male or female, rich or poor...
- ANY PERSON called by God is not only a vessel of mercy, but a **Vessel of God’s GLORY**. THERE IS NO HUMAN DISTINCTION-STATUS- depths of sin that God’s mercy cannot overcome.

✠ Vessels of Glory

- TO MAKE THIS POINT.. Paul turns to one of the most radical examples of God’s patience in OT... Hosea.
- Highly simplified Background... In time of the Prophet Hosea, Israel, specifically the northern kingdom ‘Israel’, had repeatedly and exceedingly rebelled against God. When God comes to Hosea, he is ready to say that HE has had enough...
- Tells Hosea to marry a prostitute- Gomer - what Israel had become, adultery against God to idols
- Gomer bears Hosea children,
 - A daughter named Lo-Ruhama (not loved)
 - A son named Lo-Ammi (not my people)
- God is saying... because of how far you have fallen, the extent of your sin... it is as if you are no longer loved, and no longer my people.
- NOW- for the jews reading Paul’s letter, this would have immediately brought TWO THOUGHTS
 - First, that their people- Israel- were like their ancestors who had rejected God. The gentiles, for that matter, had never been God’s people. All in the same boat, separated from God.

- **SECOND, they would have been overcome with HOPE. Because Paul goes on to quote the greater message of Hosea, which is not condemnation, but reconciliation and redemption**

Romans 9:25-26 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," ²⁶ and, "In the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called 'children of the living God.'"

- **Do we see! Even to those who had fallen so far that they would be compared to children of a prostitute- in that time especially, children with NO LOVE, NO FAMILY, NO HOPE, because their lives were defined by sin and shame... TO THEM GOD SAYS... You were NOT LOVED, but I SAY THAT YOU ARE LOVED... you were NOT my people, but NOW, I say that you are the CHILDREN OF THE LIVING GOD. Where they HAD BEEN vessels of wrath, they have become vessels of God's GLORY.**
- **Paul makes his case one more time, turning from Hosea the prophet to Isaiah... once more, gives a ...**

† A solemn reminder

Romans 9:27-29 Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved. ²⁸ For the Lord will carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality." 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 been like Gomorrah."

- **Okay, let me 'sum up'. Remember, Paul is responding to the objection that God's promise had failed because Israel had rejected Christ, the messiah. He refutes this using their own scripture, pointing out that throughout Israel's history, there were times when only a small remnant of the people actually stayed faithful to God.**
- **In Isaiah, the prophet 'Cries out' – great emotion- that God's wrath is coming, and coming soon, only a small remnant of believers will be saved. GOD'S WRATH UPON THE SIN OF MANKIND WILL COME.**
- **Isaiah recalls destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, which were totally destroyed because of their sin.**
- **AND YET, Paul points out to the Jews AND gentiles in the church that they were NOT like Sodom and Gomorrah, because God HAS saved a remnant, a people through which he would continue his covenant to Abraham. That remnant was THEM, everyone who would hear, believe, and receive the hope of Christ.**

† In conclusion... for now

Romans 9:30-33 What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; **(theme of all of Romans)** ³¹ but the people of Israel, who pursued the law as the way of righteousness, have not attained their goal. ³² Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works **(their own performance)**. They stumbled over the stumbling stone.

- **What is the stone? It is CHRIST. The image, drawn again from Isaiah, is that of God bringing hope and salvation, but of people MISSING IT, stumbling over it, because they did not see with eyes of FAITH.**
- **SAME IS TRUE OF US TODAY! We HEAR this truth of God's sovereignty, and to many, it is offensive. It turns them away... If I am not in control, then I don't want to hear...**
- **AND YET, to those who BELIEVE, who HEAR and SEE the truth of the gospel with FAITH, this stone- Christ- becomes the very foundation of life...**

³³ As it is written: "See, I lay in Zion (Jerusalem) a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame."

- *So many things in life that bring shame. In Isaiah 28:16, the phrase is 'NOT stricken with panic'..*
- *THE MESSAGE TO the jews and gentiles of Rome.. God's promise to Israel has not failed. His promise rather has come to EVERYONE. THAT PROMISE, given by a sovereign God, who acts in EVERYTHING out of his Love and Mercy, is that IN CHRIST, we may receive forgiveness, redemption, a new life, the very life of God himself, given in Jesus Christ.*
- *NEXT WEEK- clearest passage in NT of believing...*