

Title: Lord, Have Mercy!

Text: Romans 9:14-18

“There is no such thing as a great man of God. Only weak, pitiful, faithless men of a great and merciful God.” - Paul Washer

Do his words make you feel defensive and ready to argue the point or, if your going to be honest with yourself, do you recognize them to be true?

Let me read them again...

“There is no such thing as a great man (or woman) of God. Only weak, pitiful, faithless men of a great and merciful God.” - Paul Washer

Paul, gave us two examples in verses 6-13 of his choice of one person over another. The two sons of Abraham, Isaac over Ismael (which each grew into great nations). And the two sons of Isaac, Jacob over Esau (which again grew into two nations).

God had mercy on Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob - the fathers of Judaism and Christianity.

Without God’s great mercy, you and I would have no hope.

But our Heavenly Father is merciful! And Paul makes this abundantly clear.

But to be clear, God’s mercy and compassion is his to give out as he sees fit and you nor I have any say in the matter.

Main Idea: God’s Great Mercy is Especially For His People!

What does this mean?

There are three powerful lessons we must learn from Paul in [Romans 9](#) about Mercy...

1. God’s Great Mercy is Given at His Discretion (vs. 14-16)

Romans 9:14–16 ESV

¹⁴ What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God’s part? By no means! ¹⁵ For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” ¹⁶ So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.

Why would Paul ask a question like this?

“By no means” - again we see this emphatic statement by Paul which means “absolutely not!”
“No way!” “Not a chance!”

Then Paul goes on to prove that God is not only a just God, but He is, in fact, a God of MIND-BLOWING MERCY!

The point? Paul quotes Moses to demonstrate that God has always been about giving out Mercy - especially to His people.

Again, to be clear, God determines where his mercy and compassion goes and how much of it is given. No one else has this privilege.

What is mercy? *“extend help for the consequence of sin, as opposed to sklērúnomai (4645), to be hardened.” WSNTDICT*

What is compassion? *“Pity, acting in kindness”*

“The general meaning is to have compassion or mercy on a person in unhappy circumstances.” WSNTDICT

Paul quotes [Exodus 33:19](#) here.

What is going on in the verse Paul quotes?

This is after the infamous **“golden calf”** incident...

Moses and God are talking, and Moses is begging God to have his presence among Moses and his people.

Exodus 33:16–19 ESV

¹⁶ For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?” ¹⁷ And the LORD said to Moses, “This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name.” ¹⁸ Moses said, “Please show me your glory.” ¹⁹ And he said, “I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The LORD.’ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

Paul’s point is summed up in verse 16...

Romans 9:16 ESV

¹⁶ So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.

God gives His mercy to whomever he desires.

Certainly, Jesus says,

Matthew 5:45 ESV

⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

This is true for the lives of all people - even the unbelieving.

He has mercy on them by withholding their just punishment - giving them every opportunity to repent of their sin and turn to God through Christ.

This is good and representative of the good and gracious nature of our God.

And proving that God is not unjust, but more than just - He is merciful - not just to the unjust, but to HIS PEOPLE!

God distributes His Mercy how he sees fit.

And I will tell you this. God's mercy is given lavishly to Those who are His.

There are two men who both owe a great debt to a man who loaned them money some time ago. As the man was going through his books he looked over the two men's debts. He has every right to hold them to their commitment to pay him back. In his kindness, he decided to grant the forgiveness of one man's debt. Is this man unjust in doing so? Not at all! He can do whatever he wants with his money.

And friends, God can do what he wants with His creation and you can't say one thing about it. He is SOVEREIGN! And He can have mercy on whomever he wants!!

What does SOVEREIGN mean? It means He is KING over His Creation and Paul later in chapter 9 says these potent and startling words...

Romans 9:20 ESV

²⁰ But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?"

Now, let me give you some hope - God has an overflow, a reservoir of mercy for those who are His.

Lamentations 3:22-23 ESV

²² The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; ²³ they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

And He promises his mercy unbridled for those who are his.

Could you, right now in your seat just repent of the heretical notion that you deserve any vestige of God's magnificent mercy? And would you please spend time today, tomorrow, everyday worshiping God for his magnificent, undeserved, unbridled, MERCY?

He's not obligated to give it to you!

Review: God's Great Mercy is For His People

is Given at His Discretion

2. God's Great Mercy is Not Stopped by Evil People (vs. 17)

To continue to prove that there is no injustice found in God, Paul brings in another famous illustration to the Jewish people, a horrible man named Pharaoh.

Take a look at verse 17...

Romans 9:17 ESV

¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."

So, why does Paul bring up this nefarious, wicked leader of Egypt? For several reasons.

1. Pharaoh thought He was a god - the representative of Ra the sun god.
2. Pharaoh was well known the Jews because of how terribly he treated the nation of Israel.
3. Pharaoh was the best example of wickedness Genesis revealed so far.
4. Pharaoh was no match for the one and only true God! The God of the SUN, MOON, and STARS!

But Paul also brings up Pharaoh as an illustration that God can do whatever He wants with His creation in order to show His power so that His name will be proclaimed!

Wait, is God some sort of megalomaniac or supreme narcissist? No! Not at all!

Actually, Pharaoh was!

Tim Mackie from the Bible Project...

"This king...is the epitome of human evil. He embodies the strange and tragic turn the human heart can take when one person or society places their own values and well-being above another person or society. Pharaoh is what happens when an entire nation redefines good and evil apart from God's wisdom. You get an Egypt building its wealth and security on the backs of an abused, oppressed, and enslaved Israel. As the story develops, Pharaoh even places his own reputation and pride above the well-being of his own people. This is a horrific situation, and it's the Bible's diagnosis of the human condition in corporate terms. The Egyptian empire and its Pharaoh is the Babylon of Genesis chapter 11 on steroids. God has to respond. -

"<https://bibleproject.com/blog/pharaohs-heart-grew-harder/>

And respond He does!

Who harden whom first?

The Ten Plagues and Pharaoh's Heart

Blood: Pharaoh's heart "became hard" (7:22)

Frogs: Pharaoh "hardened his own heart" (8:15)

Gnats: Pharaoh's heart "was hard" (8:19)

Flies: "Pharaoh hardened his own heart" (8:32)

Livestock die: Pharaoh's heart "was hard" (9:7)

Boils: "The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart" (9:12)

Hail: Pharaoh "hardened his own heart" (9:34)

Locusts: God announces that he has “hardened Pharaoh’s heart” (10:1,10:20)

Darkness: God “hardened Pharaoh’s heart” (10:27)

Death of the firstborn: God “hardened Pharaoh’s heart” (11:10)

So, you can see, God confirmed Pharaoh hardness of heart by not allowing him to turn away from it.

Pharaoh was one of the most wicked men to ever live. He thought he was a god and he thought he was better than the God of the Israelites. He was an arrogant, proud, ruthless, blood thirsty murderer.

Pharaoh came to a point of no return with God. A point where God confirmed him in his judged state of being.

This is reminiscent of [Romans 1](#)...

Romans 1:18–25 ESV

*¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. ²⁴ **Therefore God gave them up** in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.*

This was Pharaoh. And God gave Him over to his judgement. There were several chances available to Pharaoh before God confirmed and hardened Pharaoh’s heart so he could not repent. There was a point in Pharaoh’s life that he just went too far.

We often want to look at this situation and blame God for hardening Pharaoh’s heart. But the truth of the matter is, Pharaoh hardened his own heart first, rejected God’s offers before God did any hardening.

And so, God is just in confirming Pharaoh or anyone in their sin by hardening them.

He does this for His purposes and for his glory!

Why is He **just** in this? Because...

Romans 3:23 ESV

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Does God owe anything to anyone who has already broken His perfect law - repeatedly in most cases? Does God owe this person anything?

And the answer is **YES!** He does owe them something! He owes them ETERNAL HELL!

He owes everyone eternal Hell because everyone has sinned against Him. And He is right and just and perfectly justified to condemn all of humanity to eternal hell.

WE MUST STOP THIS LUDICROUS IDEA THAT THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT US THAT IS WORTHY OF HEAVEN.

That somehow, we deserve heaven and God is lucky to have a relationship with us.

We may not be as bad as Pharaoh, but we are doomed like Pharaoh, nonetheless.

God gave Pharaoh opportunity after opportunity and Pharaoh rejected God's repeated attempts through Moses, until his hardened heart was, by God's decree hardened beyond hope!

I don't know who needs to hear this this morning, but don't play around with God by thinking you are somehow in charge of your life.

You are not the authority in your life, God is!

Don't mess with God!

Hebrews 10:31 ESV

³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

God graciously offers you the opportunity to change the direction of your life and be saved from the eternal hell you deserve.

You must understand, He doesn't have to do this but because He is merciful and kind and He offers you an opportunity to be redeemed, saved, rescued from your eternal destiny in Hell!

Why did he raise up Pharaoh? Paul answers this in verse 17

God raised up this "*god wannabe*" to prove decisively that Yahweh is the un-defeat-able champion of the world/universe.

This victory of God over the Pharaoh was world making news.

Joshua 2:10-11 ESV

¹⁰ For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. ¹¹ And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.

And because of God's great power on display (and what a display it must have been), God was absolutely famous around the known world.

How many of you know of the president of Ukraine? His name is Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Many, if not all of us are familiar with this man because of his strong stance against Russia. Putin thought he would go in and easily conquer this man and his country in three days.

Russian invasion of Ukraine: February 24, 2022 – present (4 months, 4 weeks and 2 days)

President Zelensky is famous because he has powerfully withstood a foreign invasion for way longer than anyone imagined.

The war between God and the god-wannabe made God even more renowned. It brought him great glory!

For God to stand against Pharaoh, or any evil power is nothing! God was not intimidated by Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, or any foreign power, After all He is the one that puts them the seat of power anyway!

Daniel 2:21 (ESV)

²¹ He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding;

Proverbs 21:1 ESV

¹ The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.

So - there is no chance that God is intimidated by these people in power. He is at work accomplishing his will.

Oh but times are different now, Pastor Mark!

It's really evil now, Pastor Mark!

Nope! Nothing new under the sun folks!

STOP WORRYING ABOUT THE CHALLENGING TIMES WE ARE IN. These are the best of times!

Why? Because God wants to display his power through you so he receives the Glory!!

Ephesians 3:20–21 ESV

*²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to **the power at work within us**, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

Quit fussing and whining about how bad it is out there.

Roll up your sleeves and start loving and serving people in our community.

Share the love of Jesus with all that you can!

And watch God's power be on display through you and this church body!!

Review: God's Great Mercy is For His People

...is Given at His Discretion

...is Not Stopped by Evil People

3. God's Great Mercy is Seen Most Clearly at the Cross (vs. 18)

God did battle with the mighty and wicked Pharaoh and Pharaoh soon found out that He was no match for Israel's Mighty Warrior God!

God eventually and totally hardened Pharaoh to the point of no return.

God has every right to harden Pharaoh for his good purposes.

This brings Him ultimate fame, honor and respect.

He is God and you and I don't get to question why He does what He does.

We get to observe what He does.

We get to analyze what He does.

We even must interpret what He does.

But remember clearly what I am about to tell you, God is not obligated to explain what he does or why he does it beyond what He has already revealed to us in His holy word.

Romans 9:18 ESV

¹⁸ So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

God didn't need to go through the dramatic dance of the 10 plagues on Egypt.

But He did go through this dance, and I look at it as an act of his divine mercy, giving the Pharaoh and the Egyptians ample opportunity to repent and turn to the God of the Jews.

Eventually, Pharaoh past the point of no return and God hardened his heart so that He could be seen as holy, righteous and no one to be trifled with.

This reminds me so much of the New Testament account of Christ.

For three years, God in the flesh walked through His own drama all the while making his very simple and clear appeal.

Mark 1:15 ESV

¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

And some believed and followed Jesus. But many, including the religious establishment of the day, did not.

How could people watch miracle after miracle and still not believe?

I believe God gave a judicial hardening of the leadership's hearts, so they were incapable of belief.

God can do this, and He did!

Why? We've already established that God hardened Pharaoh's heart to display His power and that He would be glorified.

We have also established that God is under no obligation to revive, rescue, or redeem anyone. Any act of God reviving, rescuing, or redeeming anyone is a result of His mercy, by the power of His Grace.

God allowed a judicial hardening, especially on the religious leaders of Jesus day so they would not believe.

Matthew 13:15 ESV

¹⁵ For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.'

This is a quote from Isaiah 6:10

God determined that these people would be hardened...

Why?

...SO THAT THEY WOULD KILL THE CHRIST ON THE CROSS!

God hardened the Jewish leadership, confirming them in their already sinful mind, not allowing them to believe, so that they would send Christ to the cross for the redemption of your sin - so that 2000 years later you might here the message of...

John 3:16-17 ESV

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

John 3:36 ESV

*³⁶ Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the **wrath of God remains on him.***

Do you see that God used the already condemned, sinful leadership in Israel to bring about redemption for Israel and the rest of the world!

MIND BLOWN!

God can and does use the evil in this world to accomplish the good necessary for redemption.

This the summation of Josephs life...

Genesis 50:20 ESV

²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

Is there anything more evil than killing the only innocent person to walk the earth who just so happens to be the creator of the earth and all that lives upon it?

R.C. Sproul...

A god who is all love, all grace, all mercy—but no sovereignty, no justice, no holiness, and no wrath—is an idol!

*The most violent expression of God's wrath and justice is seen in the Cross. If ever a person had room to complain for injustice it was Jesus. **He was the only innocent man ever to be punished by God!***

If we stagger at the wrath of God, then let us stagger at the Cross. Here is where our astonishment should be focused.

2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV

²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Galatians 3:13 ESV

¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—

Philippians 2:8 ESV

⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

1 Peter 2:24 ESV

²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

1 Peter 3:18 ESV

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,

God in his amazing providential hand orchestrated the death of the Christ on the cross by the hands of already condemned people to bring about the opportunity for your redemption.

Let this sink in.

So, can you see what Paul is saying in...

Romans 9:18 ESV

¹⁸ So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

He can do this, and He did do this. Not capriciously, but He did this so that His Power might be displayed for His glory and His Honor for ever and ever, AMEN!

Pharaoh, the most wicked man on the planet at the time got what he deserved.
God was just and good in the execution of His judgment against him.

Jesus Christ GOT WHAT YOU DESERVED!

But check this out! Listen to the words of the Apostle Peter in Solomon's Portico after healing a lame man...

Acts 3:11–21 ESV

*¹¹ While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's. ¹² And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? ¹³ The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. ¹⁴ **But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵ and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.** ¹⁶ And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all. ¹⁷ "And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸ But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. ¹⁹ Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, ²⁰ that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, ²¹ whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.*

Such an amazing and ironic statement - *"and you killed the Author of life..."*

And even after the judicial hardening God placed on the leadership in order to kill Jesus, Peter is now appealing to them that they might follow the Christ they killed and be saved from eternal condemnation!

Acts 6:7 ESV

*⁷ And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and **a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.***

The very ones God used to kill the Christ since then have come to faith in Christ!

The point? He had mercy on them!!!

There is no greater act of mercy than at the cross of Christ

It is at the cross of Christ where God's justice and mercy meet!

God's justice was satisfied by slaughtering the lamb of God - Jesus.

God's mercy was displayed by killing the author of Life instead of judging you eternally.

Romans 9:18 ESV

¹⁸ So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

Often times we get lost in the theological challenge of God hardening Pharaoh and we yet again utter naïve words, *“God is not fair.”*

If you were here last week, you’ll remember what I said about the fairness of God.

YOU DO NOT WANT GOD TO BE FAIR!

YOU WANT HIM TO BE MERCIFUL!

Pharaoh got what he deserved.

Many of the priests and religious leaders who *“killed the author of life”* did not get what they deserved. Instead, they received mercy!

What do you deserve?

What have you received?

Don’t spend time worrying about if God has hardened you or not.

If you are worried about being like Pharaoh, the fact that you are concerned about it is a great sign that you are not like Pharaoh.

Instead praise God for his mercy!

His mercy is most clearly seen at the cross.

You and I were enemies of God.

Left to our own devices, we would have the spirit of Pharaoh. We too would have killed the Christ.

But God inserted Himself into our drama. He lived a life we could never live - a perfect and sinless life. And He died a death that you and I richly deserve thus withholding God’s punishment from landing on us (Mercy) and instead falling on Christ (Grace)

God’s compassion is SO AMAZING!!!

So, for those of you who continue to wait to turn your life over to Christ - why would you wait? Why would you play around with something so important as your salvation from eternal condemnation?

Don’t be a fool and say, *“I’ll live in the spirit of Pharaoh now and then at the end, I’ll repent and turn to Christ.”* That didn’t work out for Pharaoh.

And remember, that didn’t work out so well for Esau either...

Hebrews 12:17 ESV

¹⁷ For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.

I beg of you - die to your sinful pride right now and turn to Christ! Confess your sins to Him! Entrust your soul to Him! He is your only hope!

Hebrews 3:12–13 ESV

¹² Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³ But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Keep the faith!

Hebrews 3:14 ESV

¹⁴ For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

Are you born again? Do you understand your need for Christ?

No Christ, no eternal home with Christ in the New Heavens and the New Earth.

Remember the message of Jesus?

Mark 1:15 ESV

¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Now if the Kingdom of God was at hand then, how about 2000 years later?

He is returning - not as the Lamb of God but the Lion of Judah!

If you are his - Aren't you thankful that his mercies are new every morning.

Why do you suppose he lavishes His mercy on us?

So, we can serve him more and more.

Review: God's Great Mercy is For His People

is Given at His Discretion

is Not Stopped by Evil People

is Seen Most Clearly at the Cross

Conclusion

So, after walking through these verses, what do you think of Paul Washer's words?

"There is no such thing as a great man of God. Only weak, pitiful, faithless men of a great and merciful God." - Paul Washer

Action: Do you need to be saved? Throw yourself on His mercy!

Do you need to start walking with the Lord again? Throw yourself on His mercy!

Do you need to stop a particular sin in your life? Throw yourself on His mercy!

His Mercy is More (verse 1)

*What love could remember
No wrongs we have done
Omniscient, all-knowing
He counts not their sum
Thrown into a sea
Without bottom or shore
Our sins they are many
His mercy is more*

Connection Group Reflection Questions