

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
Paul Gunn Pastor

Sermon Title: God's Use of Pharaoh, Romans 9:10-24

Dated Preached: June 3, 2018

For public use: See non-copyright comments at the end of the message

INTRODUCTION: Last week when I preached from Romans chapter 9, I shared with you how the family of faith was expanded from just the children of Israel to all people. And, the scripture said the promise was expanded, the promise that was once meant for one group of people was included to all the children of promise. And, so Gentiles were invited to be part of this great family of faith. And, as Paul wrote his letter to the people in Rome, he kept writing to the persecuted. He was writing to people who were enduring probably some of the worst sufferings their generation had ever known. And, he wrote a letter of encouragement to and he wrote a letter of explanation on why things happen the way they happen. And, he wrote of mysteries we'll never understand on this side of eternity.

SCRIPTURE: Romans 9:10-18 ¹⁰ *Not only that, but Rebekah's children were conceived at the same time by our father Isaac.* ¹¹ *Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand:* ¹² *not by works but by him who calls—she was told, “The older will serve the younger.”* ¹³ *Just as it is written: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”*

¹⁴ *What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all!* 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 *It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy.*

¹⁷ *For 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.”* ¹⁸ *Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.”*

EXPLANATION: No doubt these are some hard verses! Before I get into the heart of the message, I want you to look at verse 13 – “*Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.*” Many times the Bible, God chose people for his own reasons. Such as with the sons of Rebekah, you know the story: Esau traded his birthright for a bowl of soup. Later Jacob’s name was changed to Israel and he became the father of the nation. Esau descendants became the Edomites and Genesis chapter 36 tells us the physical blessings they received.

In God’s foreknowledge—which we cannot understand—he knew Esau would be impulsive and careless and he hated him for it. The Hebrew word for hate used in the Old Testament can also mean turn against; unloved.

In the original Greek the word translated into the English word “hate” has this meaning: *miséō* – properly, to detest on a *comparative* basis, to *denounce*; to *love someone or something less* than someone else, to renounce one choice in favor of another. (Bible Hub, 2018) That sounds like a degree below hate as we know the word hate right? So if God is a God of love how did he hate somebody? Well we’ve got to take it all into context right here. He hated what he did, he hated his actions, he hated his selfishness, but God used him. God told him, he would be the father of a great nation and he was. And, they had lots of blessings they also became a war in people and they ward against Jacobs descendants.

SCRIPTURE: This same word *miséō* is used in Luke 14:26 ²⁶*“If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate (miséō, 'love less' than the Lord) his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple”*

EXPLANATION: People have wondered what in the world does this mean? Well this is the same word Paul used here in Romans. Does God want anybody to hate their mother, their father, their wife, their children, their brothers and sisters? And, does Jesus want anybody to hate their own lives? NO! But, in this context we have to understand what Jesus was saying, your love for Jesus had to be so much greater than love for anybody else, that some might even consider it as hate. But, we are called to love each other and love our own families Jesus was using extreme language here to get his point across. As we look at this scripture we see this

statement: *God has mercy on who he wants to have mercy on and he hardens those he wants to harden.*

We cannot say the Creator is unjust because the standard of what is just comes from the Creator. There is no higher standard, no higher court than God. It is indeed true God can do whatever he wants with us along with anything else he has created.

SCRIPTURE: Romans 9:18 *“¹⁸Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.”*

EXPLANATION: I could take verse eighteen and pontificate about how people have no choices and how God forces people to do things. I could take this verse and stand here and rale out some type of hyper-Calvinist, reformed theology, and make everyone leave here feeling either confident because you are one of the chosen outside of your own choice, or completely condemned to an eternity in hell outside of your own choice. I could rale on those things – which by the way are pretty common in preaching around the country today– but I won’t do that. Because, I want to take another approach.

Does the Bible speak of the sovereignty of God? Yes, definitely! Does the Bible speak of the free will of man? Yes, of course! Romans 8 told us God works all things for the good of those who love him (the sovereignty of God). Romans 10:13 tells us anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (which notes the free will of man).

ILLUSTRATION: Charles Spurgeon was a great preacher in the 1800s. The debate between the sovereignty of God and the free will of man raged back then as well. Here is what he said about it: “DO NOT IMAGINE for an instant that I pretend to be able thoroughly to elucidate the great mysteries of predestination. There are some men who claim to know all about the matter. They twist it round their fingers as easily as if it were an everyday thing; but depend upon it, he who thinks he knows all about this mystery, knows but very little. It is but the shallowness of his mind that permits him to see the bottom of his knowledge; he who dives deep, finds that there is in the lowest depth to which he can attain a deeper depth still.”

The fact is the great questions about man's responsibility, free-will, and predestination, have been fought over, and over, and over again, and have been answered in ten thousand different ways; and the result has been, that we know just as much about the matter as when we first began. The combatants have thrown dust into each other's eyes, and have hindered each other from seeing; and then they have concluded, because they put other people's eyes out, they could therefore see.

APPLACTION: I said all that to say I don't want to wage the war on the old argument other than to declare both the sovereignty of God and the free will of man as non-conflicting doctrines that are too deep for us to understand. Instead, I am going to take a different path here – away from what many would consider the obvious, which would be a debate between these two doctrines.

So today's message has one point!

PHARAOH WAS USED OF GOD TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PLAN

Look at Pharaoh: He held the Hebrew people captive. Moses and Pharaoh went at it several times and the Bible is clear God hardened his heart.

Is it possible Pharaoh was created solely for the purpose of being a jerk so God would be able to prove himself to his people? Yes, it is possible. Do we understand why God would do that to a person? No, not really.

God used Pharaoh to accomplish his will in the life of his people. As you know, the Hebrew people were enslaved and wanted to be free. Moses went to Pharaoh and demanded the he let the people go repeatedly. The Bible says God hardened Pharaoh's heart. God did it. Why did he do it?

SCRIPTURE: Romans 9:17 *For 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."*

ILLUSTRATION: You've heard me say this, but about several years ago I met a whole new set of friends and they happened to be people in influential positions. At the time I didn't know how important they would become in my life. God had a

new work ready for me and he lined up seven people. All seven of our paths converged at a particular time and place. All of them helped me in ways I could never repay and then I found myself on a new path in life, I could have never imagined several months prior.

APPLICATION: But, before I met these new friends I had to deal with a scaled down version of Pharaoh. We have to understand God puts Pharaohs in our lives because he has a divine plan for us. And, God can take someone's heart and he can harden that person's heart to lead you in a whole new direction. And, until we learn those Pharaoh's are out there we will keep facing Pharaoh's as enemies. But, God will use those Pharaohs to accomplish his will and bring glory to Him.

What is your Pharaoh? Who is your Pharaoh? Is there a Pharaoh in your life? If so try to have another perspective from Romans Chapter 9, God raises people up to move us in a different direction; to give us a new hope in a new future. Who is your Pharaoh? What is your Pharaoh? And, if you have not encountered Pharaoh in your life you will. Pharaoh is just around the corner and the Pharaoh may appear as God's enemy but he may be God's instrument.

Chaplain of the Senate, Barry Black, wrote his biography is a book entitled *From the Hood to the Hill*. In it, he talks about his journey from a poor boy with a distant father to become a navy chaplain and eventually chaplain to the US Senate. He said that he can now thank God for the very people who opposed him and made life difficult, because he sees how God used them to accomplish good in his life.

SCRIPTURE: Romans 9:19-24 “¹⁹ One of you will say to me: “Then why does God still blame us? For who is able to resist his will?” ²⁰ 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?’” 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?

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?

²³ 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—²⁴ even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?”

EXPLANATION: As we know from reading the Apostle Paul’s writings, Paul used many literary devices when he wrote and when he preached. In this case he uses the hypothetical “*what if*”. What if God prepared things only to display his wrath and destroy them....Paul uses the hypothetical “*what if*” to make his point. The “*what if*” point is “who are we to tell God what to do with his creation.”

APPLICATION: “*What if*” someday when you die, you meet God and realize all the people you interacted with in your life and all the obstacles you faced were designed by God to grow and mature you in order to accomplish will. And let’s say when you die and meet God all of that is revealed to you at once. Those things that didn’t make sense on earth now made sense. It would be mind-blowing, wouldn’t it? Well, guess what? I fully believe—that’s exactly what this life is. It is preparation for the next life which we only have a glimpse of in the scripture. But, we have to be trained somewhere to accomplish God’s will not only in this life but in the next life whatever it is.

CONCLUSION: Are we open to God’s will? Are we going to fight the Pharaohs in our lives? Are we going to realize if you fight the Pharaoh and win then you might still end up enslaved? But if God uses the Pharaohs to move me to a new place then I will have left the slavery and have become free. Who or what is the Pharaoh in your life? And, while it might not be easy to understand what it all about we can trust God has our best interest in mind. We can trust him because he will never fail us he will never let us down.

To preachers, teachers, students, and anyone else reading or using this message: I have posted this for all to use as you see fit. There is no need to cite me as the source. You are free to delete sections, add your own, or do whatever you want. There is no copyright. My request is that you do not copyright or sell my work. I am sharing my preaching notes in good faith with you because I know the challenges of putting together a lesson, especially when your week gets consumed with other things. Use it and enjoy!

I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

Find me at www.thbc.com. Click on sermons or YouTube channel: Pastor Paul Gunn
Thanks to Aleah Pope for her editing assistance.

Sincerely, Paul Gunn
Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
Nashville, Tennessee
USA