

SBC – May 19, 2024  
Romans 9:14-18 (NKJV)  
“Mercy and the Sovereignty of God”

# 40

**Prayer:**

**Slide # 1**  
**Romans**

**Theme:** The Righteousness of God – The Gospel of God

**Outline:**

- **Prologue:** 1:1-17
- **Doctrinal:** 1:18-8:39  
God’s holiness – man’s sinfulness – 1:18-3:20  
Justification by grace through faith – 3:21-5:21  
Sanctification of the believer – 6:1-8:39
- **Dispensational: 9:1-11:36** (The place of Israel and the church)
- **Practical:** 12:1-15:33 (Duties and privileges of the believer)
- **Epilogue:** 16:1-27

As noted, the theme of Romans is The Gospel of God. The Key verse is Romans 1:16.

**Slide # 2**

**Romans 1:16 (NKJV)**

**16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, **for the Jew first and also for the Greek.**

Acts is a history book of the first 30 years of the Church Age. The first 12 chapters chronicle how the gospel went first to Jews and are largely Jewish in orientation. But then, from Acts 13 on, the emphasis is on how the gospel went forth to the Gentiles, and the orientation is largely Gentile in Acts 13-28. This is the story of the Church – first to the Jew and then to the Gentile.

God is sovereign and He has a sovereign plan for the whole of history.

**Slide # 3**

**Psalm 33:11 (NKJV)**

**11** The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart to all generations.

The plans of God run right through Israel. The covenants that regulate God's relationship with people run through Israel. The Messiah comes through Israel.

In Bible College I had a professor who told us that the most important verses in the Bible are Genesis 12:1-3. He said, you might not understand that right now but take my word for it. This is the **Abrahamic covenant** in which God made special promises to Abraham out of which flows the whole of redemptive history. God gave this covenant to Abraham 2000 years before the time of Christ.

The whole of the Old Testament builds on this idea that God is working out His plan for the ages through His chosen people Israel. In Romans 9:1-5 Paul reiterates 8 special blessings that were given to Israel.

#### **Slide # 4**

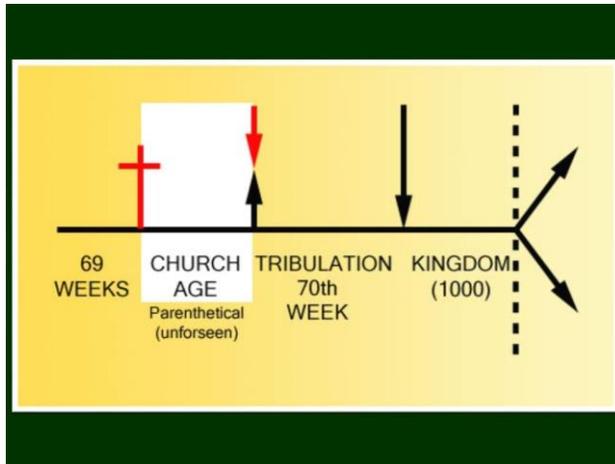
#### **Eight special Blessings/Privileges**

- The adoption
- The glory
- The covenants
- The giving of the law
- The service of God
- The promises
- The fathers
- The Christ

The whole of Israel's history, the whole of OT history builds toward the climactic coming of Israel's Messiah as seen in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth. But alas what happened? Horror of all horrors – Israel rejected her Messiah! And that resulted in God setting Israel aside!

This is what the gift of tongues (languages) in Acts 2 is all about. Speaking foreign languages in Jerusalem signified God's judgment on Israel as so stated by Paul in 1 Cor. 14:20-22. Tongues were a SIGN of judgment on unbelieving Israel. The CHURCH is a parenthesis program not seen in the OT which is WHY Paul found it necessary to show how Israel relates to the Church Age as presented here in Romans 9-11. What in the world is God doing now? He is building a forever Church Family. But how does that relate to Israel? That is the question before us as seen in Rom. 9-11.

#### **Slide # 5**



So, what does this mean for Israel? How does God’s plan for Israel now intersect with His plan for the Church? Has the Word of God – His covenant promises to Israel failed (Rom. 9:6)? The answer is “No, the Word of God has not failed!”

Paul then goes on to explain God’s sovereign elective dealings with Israel as seen in Romans 9:6-13. Here Paul recounts how God chose Isaac and then Jacob to work out His plan according to His own sovereign purpose!

God chose Jacob and rejected Esau even before they were born. God’s choice had nothing to do with anything they did either good or bad, but rather was predicated purely on God’s sovereign choice.

### **Slide # 6**

#### **Romans 9:11 (NKJV)**

**11** (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the **purpose of God according to election** might stand, not of works but of Him who calls),

God chose Jacob and rejected Esau to the point of using the strong language of “***Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.***” (Rom. 9:13)

And with that Paul portrays an objector coming forward with the challenging charge that this surely cannot be right.

#### **Romans 9:14–18 (NKJV)**

**14** What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? **Certainly not!**

God chooses one and rejects the other – not on any basis whatsoever other than His own sovereign elective purpose. Is that fair? That is the question raised here! Is God’s sovereign choice based purely on His own prerogative alone – is that right? It seems so undemocratic! People like to think they are in charge. They want choices! But here the choice was all God’s and His alone!

So here is the objector's challenging question: “***Is there unrighteousness with God?***” According to human thinking, this SOVEREIGN CHOICE seems unfair and calls God’s righteousness into question.

But we need to come back to the reality of WHO God is. God is God! He can do whatever He wants. And He is the standard of all that is right! God’s ways are not our ways – they are infinitely superior to our ways – infinitely better.

### **Slide # 7**

#### **Genesis 18:25 (NKJV)**

**25** Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! **Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?**”

The obvious answer is “Yes, the Judge of all the earth will do what is right!”

Was God unjust in choosing Isaac over Ishamel, and Jacob over Esau? The Greek language expects the emphatic answer “NO”! The NKJV translates this “***Certainly not!***”

### **Slide # 8**

#### **Deuteronomy 32:4 (NKJV)**

**4** He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He.

I don’t know about you but I start with the presupposition that God is always right. Whatever He says I agree with whether I understand it or not. I don’t worship at the altar of human intellect; rather, I worship at the altar of God’s sovereignty.

One thing I do know is that I don’t want FAIR! If we got fair – if we got what we deserved we would all go to HELL! That would be perfectly FAIR!

God would be justified in sending us all immediately to HELL! NO, I don't want FAIR, rather I want MERCY!

**15 For He says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.”**

The emphasis here is on God's MERCY! Sinners have no claim on God. We have no “rights”. None are deserving! There is no reason or basis that we should receive His mercy – other than He wants to show mercy. We don't deserve it. We can't earn it! We are totally dependent upon God's mercy! We deserve His wrath – but are totally at the mercy of His mercy!

**Mercy** seeks to relieve the afflicted. It is pity expressed to those in misery even though they are undeserving. Mercy withholds punishment that is due.

**Compassion** is very close to mercy. If there is a difference it might be that compassion expresses more of an inward heart disposition that desires to help those in a wretched condition.

Note that God is totally in charge of His mercy! He alone decides on whom He will have mercy. Note “*I will*” is stated 4 times in this verse. This is totally according to the sovereign WILL of God. He cannot be manipulated or have His hand forced in this matter. It's totally His prerogative alone!

The quote here about God's mercy and compassion comes from Exodus 33:19.

### **Slide # 9**

#### **Exodus 33:19 (NKJV)**

**19** Then He said, “I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. **I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.**”

Once again, this quote is found in the context of dealing with Israel as a nation. Israel had just blundered badly. Moses had gone up to meet with God on the mountain where God gave him the 10 commandments. While Moses was on the mountain the children of Israel built a golden calf and worshipped it as their god. What was God's response?

**Slide # 10****Exodus 32:9–10 (NKJV)**

**9** And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it is **a stiff-necked people!**

**10** Now therefore, let Me alone, that **My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them.** And I will make of you a great nation."

Moses then interceded for the children of Israel and begged God not to destroy them and so the LORD relented from the harm He had threatened against them (Ex. 32:14). God then told Moses to lead Israel to the Promised Land. Moses asked that the presence of the LORD go with them and that he be allowed to see God's glory.

It was at this point that God said, "***I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.***" (Ex. 33:19).

The emphasis is that it was not MOSES that controlled whether mercy was in play; rather, this was totally according to God's prerogative—just like God's electing call was totally according to His purpose (9:11).

God is under NO obligation to extend MERCY to anyone. He can show mercy or withhold it to whomever He wants. He owes no one anything!

This statement of God showing MERCY to whom He wants comes after Israel's GREAT sin of idolatry with the golden calf. They were totally undeserving of God's MERCY. The only basis for them to receive it was at God's initiative – purely because of God's sovereign choice!

**Slide # 11**

***Mercy:*** The kindness of God in not punishing us according to what we deserve.

***Grace:*** The bestowal of unmerited favor.

Mercy withholds what we do deserve (punishment). Grace bestows what we don't deserve (favor).

"The *grace* of God has been spoken of in this Epistle often before; but not until these chapters is *mercy* named; and until mercy is understood, grace cannot be fully appreciated." – ***William Newell***

**16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.**

All is dependent upon the divine initiative and only God can make this happen. Only God can make His MERCY available. No one has a claim on God's mercy! No one has a right to it and no amount of determination or trying can change that reality! Mercy is purely a God initiative, and His alone! No one can force God's hand in the matter.

MERCY is not of him who wills (that is inward desire), nor of him who runs (that is applies active effort), but of God.

No one can "will" to receive God's mercy and make it happen. MERCY is totally on God's terms! That is the total point here! God has a monopoly on MERCY! It is totally according to His own prerogative. God's MERCY finds its cause in Himself ALONE and not in any activity of man.

Thankfully, God is by His very nature a God of MERCY; otherwise, there would be no hope (cf. Ex. 34:6; Deut. 4:31). That is why often in the Scriptures, we find people appealing to the MERCY of God. They are saying, "**God, I deserve punishment, but because of Who you are, have mercy on me.**" And God being Who He is – is very merciful to that kind of appeal.

**Slide # 12**

**Isaiah 55:7 (NKJV)**

7 Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord, And **He will have mercy** on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

**Psalm 51:1 (NKJV)**

1 **Have mercy upon me**, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions.

Remember we are in the mystery zone here. In this conversation I talk about "missing the forest for the trees". This in my view is one of the most common errors in the discussion of God's sovereignty and human responsibility. People focus in on ONE particular aspect of God's truth and thereby fail to see the BIG FULL PICTURE of the whole counsel of God. Thus, they "miss the forest for the trees".

If the Christian God is truly sovereign, how is Christianity anything other than just a glorified, theological form of mechanistic determinism? God's sovereignty is not a simple mechanical determinism, like the relationship of one end of a seesaw to the other. Strong statements of God's sovereignty are side by side with strong statements describing or assuming significant human choice and effort (Matt. 11:27-28; Acts 2:23; Phil. 2:12-13). These are two giant themes in the Bible. Christians wanting a certain intellectual comfort end up reducing one theme to the other and so domesticating God down to the contours of their minds. God is greater than that.

– **Richard B. Keyes**

### **Slide # 13**

- 1) God is sovereign.
- 2) People are responsible.
- 3) There is mystery here.

Note a couple of things on the “mystery” front here. First, God has mercy on whom decides to have mercy, but note the all-inclusive reality as seen in Romans 11:32.

### **Slide # 14**

#### **Romans 11:32 (NKJV)**

**32** For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.

This would seem to harmonize with the fact that God gave His Son for the whole world. He is the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world (Jn. 1:29).

### **Slide # 15**

#### **Romans 10:12–13 (NKJV)**

**12** For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.

**13** For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.”

There is a wideness in the provision of God’s mercy that extends to all – available to all who call upon the Name of the LORD.

Secondly, while mankind is totally dependent upon God for mercy, yet Paul is very clear that the basis for Israel having not attained is because of their lack of faith. He puts the onus squarely on a lack of faith and not because of a lack of mercy.

### **Slide # 16**

#### **Romans 9:30–32 (NKJV)**

**30** What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, **have attained** to righteousness, even the righteousness of **faith**;

**31** but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has **not attained** to the law of righteousness.

**32** Why? **Because they did not seek it by faith**, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone.

Yes, all are dependent upon God's mercy, but God's mercy has been extended to all, and yet attainment is dependent upon FAITH! Over and over again in the book of Romans Paul comes back to the KEY issue of FAITH in terms of human responsibility. In fact, he begins the book with an emphasis on the obedience of faith (Rom. 1:5).

God's mercy is "***not of him who wills***" (Rom. 9:16), and yet this is not in conflict with "***Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely***" (Rev. 22:17). God's mercy is not "***of him who runs***", and yet this is not in conflict with Jesus' exhortation: "***Strive to enter through the narrow gate***" (Lk. 13:24).

I think it is fascinating that immediately after Paul says God has so worked that He might have mercy on all that He says God's ways are past finding out. I love that about this section. It humbles us! We can't figure it out.

### **Slide # 17**

#### **Romans 11:32–33 (NKJV)**

**32** For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have **mercy on all**.

**33** Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and **His ways past finding out!**

God's plan is BIGGER than the Jews ever conceived as it included God being merciful to the Gentiles. God's plan is BIGGER than the Gentiles may realize as in the future His mercy will complete His program for Israel.

And that brings us to the case study of Pharaoh.

**17 For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.”**

This verse is interesting because of the way (under inspiration) that Paul put this. He says, “***the Scripture says to Pharaoh***”. However, at the time this happened the Scripture being quoted in Exodus 9:16 had not yet been written. Moses actually spoke these words to Pharaoh on behalf of God, but then of course they became a part of the inspired written Word of God.

The point is the Scriptures are the actual Word and message of God. We call the Bible “The Word of God” because it is the literal inspired message from God, although He delivered it through holy men of God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit as Peter says in 2 Peter 1:21. Again, the quote here is from Exodus 9:16.

### **Slide # 18**

#### **Exodus 9:16 (NKJV)**

**16** But indeed for this purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.

Note God points out to Pharaoh that he was NOT a self-made man. God in His sovereignty had raised him up and put him in that position for a specific purpose totally unbeknown to him. He was clueless!

### **Slide # 19**

#### **Daniel 2:21 (NKJV)**

**21** And He changes the times and the seasons; **He removes kings and raises up kings**; He gives wisdom to the wise And knowledge to those who have understanding.

#### **Romans 13:1 (NKJV)**

**1** Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For **there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.**

God had a very specific purpose in raising up Pharaoh—namely, to show His power and declare His name throughout all the earth.

And oh my goodness, how God's power was showcased in relation to Pharaoh! The miracles God performed in the judgments He brought down on Pharaoh and Egypt are the greatest cluster of miracles (outside of Creation week) in the entire 4000 years of OT history.

**Slide # 20**

**Exodus 12:12 (NKJV)**

**12** 'For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and **against all the gods of Egypt** I will execute judgment: I am the LORD.

**Exodus 18:11 (NKJV)**

**11** Now I know that the LORD is **greater than all the gods; for in the very thing in which they behaved proudly, He was above them.**"

And then God said, "***and that My name may be declared in all the earth.***" Right before the quote of Exodus 9:16, where God told Pharaoh why He had raised him up...He said this...

**Slide # 21**

**Exodus 9:13 (NKJV)**

**13** Then the LORD said to Moses, "Rise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh, and say to him, '**Thus says the LORD God of the Hebrews:** "Let My people go, that they may serve Me,

This is WHO God is. This is His Name – YHWH – the God of the Hebrews. In the Exodus God forever linked His name "YHWH" (His covenant Name) with the Hebrew people. In Exodus 7:5 God said He was intervening so that "***the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD***"- that is YHWH – the covenant God of Israel. Over and over, we find this emphasis in Exodus. And not only would the Egyptians know it but through this the Name of YHWH would be made famous throughout the earth!

In the Exodus, God showed that He was the God of Israel, and as the God of Israel, He was the Almighty God Who had power over all the false gods of Egypt! Thus, His fame spread throughout the whole world.

In Exodus 15:14 after coming through the Red Sea the Israelites said, "***The people will hear and be afraid***". Rahab the harlot from Jericho said, "***we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea....[and]... our hearts melted***" (Josh. 2:10-11).

In Joshua 9 the Gibeonites said, “...**because of the name of the LORD your God; for we have heard of His fame, and all that He did in Egypt**” (Josh. 9:9). Five hundred years later in the time of Samuel the Philistines were afraid and said, “**Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all the plagues**”.

Note again the emphasis on the sovereignty of God in relation to Pharaoh.

### **Slide # 22**

**I** raised you up... v. 17

**I** may show...v. 17

**My** power in you...v. 17

**My** name may be declared...v. 17

God was sovereignly at work through all of this to accomplish His sovereign purposes in and through wicked Pharaoh.

Even the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, to which Paul refers to in Romans 9:17-18, is to be subsumed under the activity of God’s mercy and compassion for His broken creation. For its purpose is that God’s name “might be proclaimed in all the earth” (Rom. 9:17). Thus, what from the limited vantage point of our human observation seems “unjust” is in fact only a misunderstanding of the mysterious workings of God’s mercy. – **HARD SAYINGS OF THE BIBLE**, p. 561

### **18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.**

God is sovereign over whom He dispenses MERCY to, and over whom He hardens. Whom He has mercy on corresponds to Moses and the example of Israel in Exodus 33. Whom He hardens corresponds to Pharaoh and the nation of Egypt.

Note the personal pronoun “**He**” stated four times in this verse, emphasizing that it is “**He**” God Who does this.

We have the four “**I wills**” in verse 15; the four purposeful affirmations of God in verse 17, and the four personal subjective pronouns of verse 18 – all emphasizing God’s sovereign activity over the issues of MERCY and HARDENING. It’s all under the umbrella of God’s sovereignty.

But here is the thing: Paul gives us the bottom line, but he doesn't spell out all that is involved in arriving at this bottom-line deduction. Paul is clearly emphasizing the God-side of things— that is God's sovereignty over who receives mercy and who is hardened. God is totally in charge of both realities.

Paul mentions that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, but does not take time to indicate the other side of the coin – that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. (The Exodus account reveals both.) In truth, God gave Pharaoh opportunity to repent, but Pharaoh resisted God and therefore hardened himself to divine rule. – **R. Kent Hughes**

A careful study of Exodus reveals this pattern. Before all the action of the plagues started God prophetically told Moses that He was going to harden Pharaoh's heart which He ultimately did (cf. Ex. 4:21; 7:3). But that did not happen right away.

The first seven consecutive references to Pharaoh's heart being hardened reveal that Pharaoh FIRST hardened his own heart. In due time God did add His judicial hardening to the process, but it didn't start there.

### **Slide # 23**

#### ***Exodus 7 and 8...***

- 1) And Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed... 7:13
- 2) Pharaoh's heart is hard; he refuses... 7:14
- 3) Neither was his heart moved... 7:22
- 4) ...he hardened his heart... 8:15
- 5) ...Pharaoh's heart grew hard... 8:19
- 6) ...Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also... 8:32
- 7) ... the heart of Pharaoh became hard... 9:7

Only after these 7 references to Pharaoh hardening his own heart, only after the sixth plague, do we then find God judicially hardening his heart as seen in Exodus 9:12.

### **Slide # 24**

#### **Exodus 9:12 (NKJV)**

**12** But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh; and he did not heed them, just as the LORD had spoken to Moses.

**Slide # 25**

Willful hardness is commonly punished with judicial hardness. If men shut their eyes against the light, it is just with God to close their eyes. Let us dread this as the sorest of judgment a man can be under on this side of hell. -**Matthew Henry**

God gives people over to their own evil desires as a form of punishment for their sins. This is how God hardens people's hearts. In Pharaoh's case we see this working out clearly. God was not unjust because He allowed the hardening process to continue.

– **Thomas Constable**

All this shows that God chooses and works sovereignly, but not arbitrarily. ...Pharaoh was [himself] responsible for his actions.

– **The Bible Knowledge Commentary**

Like I say, Paul gives us the conclusion of the matter but he doesn't spell out the process – but there was a process as we note in the book of Exodus.

Neither here nor anywhere else is God said to harden anyone who had not first hardened himself. – **Leon Morris**

God's hardening of Pharaoh was a judicial act of judgment very similar to the process outlined earlier in the book of Romans where God is said to give people over to their own depraved rebellion.

**Slide # 26**

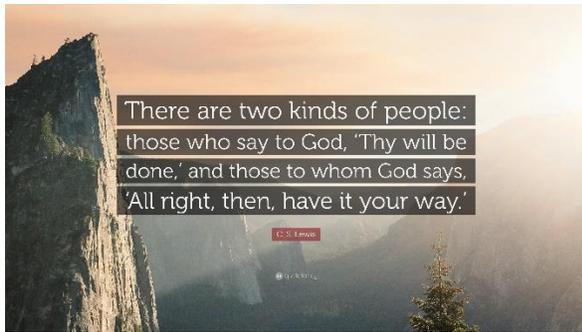
Rom. 1:24... **God also gave them up** to uncleanness...

Rom. 1:26... **God gave them up** to vile passions...

Rom. 1:28... **God gave them over** to a debased mind...

This pattern is seen in Pharaoh as well. He hardened himself repeatedly to where God eventually hardened his heart to the point of no return. And the way God hardens people is by just letting them go and have their own sinful way. For a person to harden all God has to do is let them go.

**Slide # 27**



We also see this pattern in Christ's ministry. The people there also had the tremendous privilege (as did Pharaoh) to see the miraculous workings of God on a very unique level – although the miracle working ministry of Christ was an even greater reality than that observed by Pharaoh.

### **Slide # 28**

#### **John 12:37–40 (NKJV)**

**37** But although He had **done so many signs** before them, they did not believe in Him,

**38** that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled...

**40** "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, Lest they should see with their eyes, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them."

They became so hard that they came to the point of blaspheming the Spirit, which was ascribing to Satan the miracles that Christ did in the power of the Spirit, which was unforgivable (see Matt. 12:31-32). But this involved a process.

After the Rapture of the Church God will have two special witnesses on the scene who for 3 and ½ years will do all kinds of incredible miracles very much similar to that which Elijah and Moses performed.

### **Slide # 29**

#### **Revelation 11:3–6 (NKJV)**

**3** And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will **prophecy** one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." ....

**5** And if anyone wants to harm them, **fire proceeds from their mouth** and devours their enemies. ....

**6** These have power to **shut heaven, so that no rain** falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power **over waters to turn them to blood**, and to **strike the earth with all plagues**, as often as they desire.

I mean, these two witnesses are a two-man “wrecking ball,” and one dare not get in their way. Their witness and fame will be worldwide – so much so that when the Antichrist kills them at the half-way point of the Tribulation Period the whole world will celebrate with a “happy dead witnesses day” and send presents to one another (cf. Rev. 11:7-10).

But here is the point I want to make. Even though God will give strong supernatural witness to the truth for these 3 and ½ years through these two special witnesses – yet MANY will not respond to the truth they proclaim.

### **Slide # 30**

#### **2 Thessalonians 2:9–12 (NKJV)**

**9** The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with **all power, signs, and lying wonders**,

**10** and with **all unrighteous deception** among those who perish, **because they did not receive the love of the truth**, that they might be saved.

**11** And **for this reason God will send them strong delusion**, that they should believe the lie,

**12** that they all may be condemned **who did not believe the truth** but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

God’s pattern is to give forth powerful witness to the truth – in the case of Pharaoh first-hand miracles – as also in the case of Christ’s earthly ministry – and also in the case of the two special witnesses of the Tribulation Period. When people reject this level of light there comes a point where God gives them over to HARDNESS. Really, what God does is just let them harden in their own depraved rebellion. God just gives them over to it – He just lets them go!

You see, apart from God’s Merciful intervention, we would all go there! On our own there is none who seeks after God (Rom. 3:11). That is why the Bible warns, “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts...” (Heb. 3:7-8). It is a most serious matter to spurn the mysterious moving of the Spirit (cf. John 3:8).

People say, “Oh I have plenty of time!” Don’t play games with God’s mercy! He says, “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” (2 Cor. 6:2). We are not promised tomorrow!

#### **Proverbs 29:1 (NKJV)**

1 He who is often rebuked, and hardens his neck, Will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

I once talked to a young man of about twenty-two... He said he believed in God and in Christ intellectually and believed that the Bible was true and someday planned to accept Christ as his Savior. But first, he said, "***I've got a lot of living to do.***"

I remonstrated with him for some time but finally when I saw that I could not persuade him, I let him go, reminding him that the Bible says that he who, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be cut off and that without remedy. [cf. Prov. 29:1]

A week later I heard that he was driving down the highway about seventy miles an hour when a truck stopped in front of him with a tailgate down. He was instantly decapitated.

I remembered the words that I had spoken to him. "He that hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be cut off and that without remedy."

**-James Kennedy**, Evangelism Explosion, p. 97

God's action is not arbitrary. When Pharaoh (or anyone else) chooses to reject the right, he will be hardened in the wrong, whether we think of God or of Pharaoh at work. It is true that God used Pharaoh, but the monarch was not a mere puppet. He did what he willed to do.

**- Leon Morris**

If therefore anybody is lost, the blame is theirs, but if anybody is saved, the credit is God's. This antinomy contains a mystery which our present knowledge cannot solve; but it is consistent with Scripture... - **John Stott**

### **Slide # 31**



Those who see the truth of God's sovereign providential workings worship and praise Him for the great God that He is. The rest are oblivious to the obvious reality all around them and just sit around and eat blackberries.

**Slide # 32**

**1 Timothy 1:15–16 (NKJV)**

**15** This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

**16** However, for this reason **I obtained mercy**, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as **a pattern** to those who are going to **believe on Him for everlasting life**.

Paul as the self-proclaimed “chief (worst) of sinners” obtained mercy and is the PATTERN for all who will believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for everlasting life.

Have you believed on the Lord Jesus Christ?

The same sun that melts the butter hardens the clay. The same God who shows mercy to the humbled also hardens those who refuse to repent. Mercy spurned is mercy denied! And mercy denied results in hardening!

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved!