

Lesson 58 - THE POTTER AND THE CLAY *Romans 9:21-24*

(9:21) - HATH NOT THE POTTER POWER OVER THE CLAY? - In *Romans 9:20*, Paul asked, **“Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?”** GOD IS THE SOVEREIGN CREATOR, and MAN IS ONLY PART OF THE CREATION. When God formed Adam from the dust of the earth, He made Adam after His image. This refers to the communicable attributes of God, such as knowledge, wisdom, and love. Adam was never made to be God himself or even a god. God gave Adam dominion over the earth (*Gen. 1:26-28*), but not dominion over God. God was (and is) the sovereign Creator and center of creation. God is the sovereign **“POTTER,”** and man is the **“clay.”** God created man for His own glory. God created this whole world (including man) for His own glorious purposes.

God tells us that even before man was created, His sovereign purpose and plan was to glorify Himself in the salvation of sinners by His free and sovereign grace based on the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ (*2 Tim. 1:9-10*). According to God’s sovereign purpose, man would fall into sin and death and lose all creature righteousness, but righteousness would be restored to man, not through human righteousness, but through the righteousness of God in and by Christ (*Rom. 1:16-17; 3:21-26; 2 Cor. 5:21*). God commands sinners to seek and find righteousness by His grace through the Lord Jesus Christ, and God forbids sinners to seek and think they have found it elsewhere. All who obey the Gospel shall be saved, but they will not be able to take credit for their salvation, not even for their receiving Christ (*John 1:11-13; Rom. 9:16*). They will forever proclaim the glory of God in Christ. All who disobey and die in their sins will not be able to blame God as an unfair or unjust despot. God will show forth His justice in punishing sinners, and He will show forth His mercy in saving His people in Christ.

OF THE SAME LUMP - This **“lump”** of clay refers to all of sinful, fallen humanity. Since the whole lump is wicked, and, if left to itself, would be content to remain in unbelief, can we find fault with God to save some by His grace and to punish the rest? God has the right to do what best serves His own glory. **TO MAKE ONE VESSEL UNTO HONOUR, AND ANOTHER UNTO DISHONOUR?** - When a potter works with the various lumps of clay, which he owns, he has the right to make one to be a beautiful flowerpot and another a chamber pot. No one would question his right to do this, and both vessels are useful for their purposes. The vessels **“unto honour”** refer to God’s elect whom He uses for His glory in showing mercy and grace in their salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. The vessels **“unto dishonor”** refer to all who live and die in unbelief and whom God uses for His glory in His justice in the damnation of the wicked. This is described in the following two verses.

(9:22) - WHAT IF GOD, WILLING TO SHEW HIS WRATH, AND TO MAKE HIS POWER KNOWN, ENDURED WITH MUCH LONGSUFFERING THE VESSELS OF WRATH FITTED TO DESTRUCTION: - This verse goes against the natural grain of modern false Christianity that says God does not want to show His wrath upon anyone. They believe God wants to save everyone and that Christ died for everyone. They use verses such as *2 Peter 3:9* to try to prove their point. This verse says, **“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, NOT WILLING THAT ANY SHOULD PERISH, but that all should come to repentance.”** What they fail to see is that the context of this verse proves that Peter was speaking of God’s elect, chosen in Christ before the world began. Peter’s epistle was written to believers (*2 Pet. 1:1-10*). Besides, the verse itself tells

us that the ones whom God is not willing that they should perish is **“US-WARD,”** i.e. His chosen people in Christ.

Does not God have the right to glorify Himself as He sees fit? If God chooses to glorify Himself through letting people go their own way and justly receive His wrath so as to make His power known, who can oppose Him? If God desires to show mercy on some, who can oppose Him? God has determined to make known His wrath against sin and the riches of His grace in the salvation of sinners by the blood of Christ. All who desire to be objects of His grace must flee to Christ and plead His shed blood and imputed righteousness for all salvation. God has **“endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath”** - The fact that God has not destroyed these **“vessels of wrath”** immediately proves this. The nation Israel had so many advantages, but in their unbelief, they proved they did not want to glorify God. They chose to destroy themselves by rejecting God’s Christ and God’s truth. The same holds true with every sinner who perishes in unbelief (**John 3:18**).

“Vessels of wrath fitted to destruction” - The word **“fitted”** means “prepared.” God must display His wrath because it is His glory to reveal Himself in His just wrath against all to whom sin is imputed is part of His glory. The entrance of sin into the world was necessary so that God could manifest His wrath, judgment, holy anger, vengeance, and justice. This is God's nature. This is even true in the salvation of His chosen people as God’s wrath, that they all deserve, falls upon Christ, their Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer because of their sins imputed to Him. This shows us that outside of Christ, there is no love, grace, or mercy for sinners from God. Outside of Christ, there is nothing but God’s just hatred and wrath. All who stand in opposition to God’s Christ and God’s truth are prepared by God for destruction, and God is just in doing so.

(9:23) - AND THAT HE MIGHT MAKE KNOWN THE RICHES OF HIS GLORY ON THE VESSELS OF MERCY, WHICH HE HAD AFORE PREPARED UNTO GLORY - Here is the good news for sinners seeking mercy. God has also prepared **“vessels of mercy”** so that He **“might make known the riches of His glory.”** This glory is certain for all who believe in the glorious Person and finished work of Christ. Every difference between the vessels of wrath and the vessels of mercy is pure mercy and grace with no difference based on personal merit or choice. Who makes the vessels of mercy to differ? God in His sovereign grace makes them to differ. The vessels of mercy have no room to boast. God saves sinners in order to glorify His name, i.e. reveal and honor the perfections of His redemptive character. The vessels of mercy receive His mercy, love, and grace, not because they are better or wiser than others, not because they deserve it, and not even because they believe. Their salvation is because God chose to reveal His grace in them and make them objects of His mercy from eternity.

(9:24) - Who are these vessels of mercy that were before prepared unto glory? EVEN US, WHOM HE HATH CALLED, NOT OF THE JEWS ONLY, BUT ALSO OF THE GENTILES - These are sinners who have been invincibly called by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God in Christ (**Acts 2:39; Rom. 1:16-17; 8:28; 1 Cor. 1:22-24; 2 Thess. 2:13-14**). This calling is not only for the Jews but also for the Gentiles. The Jews were inclined to think that God could not make them anything other than vessels of honor. Paul rejects this view and points out that God does what He wills. No Jew will be saved apart from believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Any Jew or Gentile who dies in unbelief reveals himself to be a vessel of wrath prepared for destruction. Any Jew or Gentile who believes in Christ for salvation reveals himself to be a vessel of mercy prepared unto glory in Christ.