

THE POTTER'S HAND

GBC EQUIPPING HOUR | SEPTEMBER 27, 2020



Unaided Predestination - Romans 9:14-18

PURPOSE: To be malleable to how God is masterfully shaping our faith even as we “work it out” (Philippians 2:12-13).

I. What Makes Mercy “Mercy”

A. Backdrop #1: Adam’s Long Shadow

1. *Adam’s Endowment Given.* Perfect mind and body; beautiful wife; great job (ruling all of creation); great title (federal head of all humanity); minimal contractual obligations (avoid a certain tree).
2. *Adam’s Endowment Shrugged.* Hereafter Adam’s decline will become a familiar pattern: (1) shrug your shoulders at God’s Law, (2) wink at sin, (3) and then the ground beneath you starts to slide progressively downhill.
3. *Adam’s Life Ended.* The Lord gives and takes away. Adam’s ability to breathe was by God breathing into his nostrils new life (Genesis 2:7). Adam’s very life was a gift. But if Adam uses his gift to work contrary to the gift-giver, then the gift-giver has every right to take back what he gave (i.e., by way of execution). But God didn’t do this immediately to Adam. Instead he allowed the man to live almost a thousand years! (-“Mercy”, up to the time of Genesis 5:5 opposite Genesis 2:17).

Therefore, just as **sin came into the world through one man**, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—

- Romans 5:12

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B. Backdrop #2: The World's Magnetism to Sin

1. *Common Man's Endowment Given.* People today have a divinely-given sense of right vs. wrong and a rational ability to deduce that there must be a Creator responsible for all the wonders around us.
2. *Common Man's Endowment Shrugged.* Eventually people turn evil into good and good into evil (Isaiah 5:20). Rather than ascending to God, man creates his own god and bows down to it (Isaiah 2:8; Romans 1:22).
3. *Common Man's Life Ended.* The average shelf life of a pagan empire is several centuries (possibly is 250 years). Eventually God brings down a sweeping judgment. All is chaff.

C. Backdrop #3: Religious People's Magnetism to Sin

1. *Religious Man's Endowment Given.* The Law of Moses didn't only say what to do, it revealed exactly what would happen if the Law wasn't adhered to, and in high definition (HD).
2. *Religious Man's Endowment Shrugged.* The Jews didn't fail in general reverence to God's Law; they failed the commandment "to circumcise your heart" (Deuteronomy 10:16; Romans 2:29). With so much neglect of the soul, by the time Jesus came on the scene all was a vain religious show.
3. *Religious Man's Life Ended.* If the Law is not taken as a conduit to Christ and his redemption it will eventually crush the religious man striving to live by it by his own strength. The Law's natural result is that "both Jews and Greeks are under sin" (Romans 3:9). Israel had many chances to prove themselves over time under the rule of patriarchs, judges, kings, and prophets. But they could not.

II. Unaided Predestination: God Truly Doesn't Need Our Help

A. But, What He *Desires* From Us: Our *Dependence* on Him

[God] **desires** all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

- 1 Timothy 2:4

In the verses after 2:4, Jesus Christ is put forward as the means, the “ransom,” by which humanity can be saved (i.e., through *dependence*).

Putting it succinctly: In God's not needing us, he earnestly desires that we comprehend how much we need him.

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

Romans 9:14-18

B. What is “Unaided”

1. *Looking back* (previous to verse 14) to the account of Jacob and Esau, God truly did not need Jacob to single-handedly prove himself faithful nor did God need Esau to prove himself as a faithless man. Any man, left to his own devices, tumbles back into his old self-reliant and carnal ways. Without God's sovereignty weighing into his life, he walks contrary to God's consistent standard of righteousness.

Jacob, by the way, wasn't entirely a "clean" fellow. He deceived his own blind father Isaac, pretending to be Esau to gain the firstborn's blessing (Genesis 27:19-24). Then again, neither was his father Isaac totally in the right since he favored Esau over God's order (which Rebecca knew) to favor Jacob. Messy.

2. *Looking ahead* (past verse 14) to the account of the Exodus and Pharaoh's hardening of his heart, God truly did not need Pharaoh to prove himself to be an immovable, obstinate figure. By now you can see 'not much grease is needed under the tires to make the car slide.' God only has to relax his hand for anyone to become increasingly diabolical (2 Thessalonians 2:7). In other passages (Exodus chapters 7 through 14) it is apparent Pharaoh had a storehouse of stubbornness accumulating in his own heart. Each of the ten plagues was an opportunity for the man to repent. But he did not.

It is interesting to note that in Exodus, concerning God's sovereignty over Pharaoh, the **first** and **last** statement is that **it is God** who will harden the Egyptian king's heart (Exodus 4:21 and 14:8; see also Proverbs 21:1).

The Potter's Hand Course Outline (tentative):

- September 6 - Introduction & Romans 9:1-5
- September 13 - God Establishing True Israel / Rom. 9:6-8
- September 20 - Literal Predestination / Rom. 9:9-13
- September 27 - Unaided Predestination / Rom. 9:14-18
- October 4 - Uncontested Predestination / Rom. 9:19-24
- October 11 - God Can Turn the Tables / Rom. 9:25-29
- October 18 - A God-Saturated Faith / Rom. 9:30-33
- October 25 - Conclusion