

- Who Art Thou That Repliest Against God? (Rom 9:13-20, Eph 1:4)

#1. The Potter and the Clay (Jer 18:1-10)

- Of the Same Lump (Rom 9:21, Rom 5:12)

#2. Vessels of Wrath (Rom 9:22, Matt 20:15, Isa 30:12-14)

- Thou Shalt Dash Them in Pieces (Psalm 2:9, 5:5, 7:11, 11:5, Prov 6:16)

#3. Vessels of Mercy (Rom 9:23, II Tim 2:19-21)

- Even Us (Rom 9:24)
- Praising our Great God (Prov 3:19, Isa 55:9)

Please open your Bibles to the Epistle to the Romans, chapter 9:20 (2X). The title of the sermon today is: "**The Lord Knoweth Them That Are His**" (2X). As you perhaps know, this is the 5th sermon on Romans 9. Last week we ended with Romans 9:20. Today we will pick up at verse 20.

- **Who Art Thou That Repliest Against God?** (Rom 9:13-20, Eph 1:4)

Romans 9:20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed *it*, "Why hast thou made me thus?"

Who is this that dares to criticize God? Allow me to review what we have learned so far. To the superficially informed unbelievers the first objectionable statement is found in verses 6 and 8 where God says, "They are not all Israel which are (blood descendants) of Israel", and "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed". Who then are the children of the promise? This leads us to the second objectionable statement, found in verse 13, where God says,

Romans 9:13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

The reason most people find this objectionable is, because God said this of Jacob and Esau when "the children were not yet born, neither having done any good or evil". Why did God state this in such a manner that it sounds to our ears as cold, and as without feeling, and as without love? Why? God gave the reason why He did that. God said: "In order that the purpose of God according to election might stand". In other words, "Here is an example of what election is: God decides whom He is going to love and save to be in heaven for all eternity, and God decides whom He is going to hate and condemn to Hell for all eternity. God does that for all the people in the world. And God decided that before they could have done any good or evil, and God decided that a long time before they are born. God decided that before the foundation of the world, according to Eph 1:4, which says, "According as He hath chosen us in Him (in Christ) before the foundation of the world". This is what election is. This is what God says. If any preacher or Bible teacher gives you another explanation of what election is, then you will know that his message is a false gospel, because God gave in Jacob and Esau a perfect example of what election is. This was the purpose of God in stating it this way in Rom 9:13. And when people object to this, we should read to them the following verses in Rom 9:14-18,

Romans 9:14 ¶ What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

Romans 9:15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

Rom 9:16 So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

Rom 9:17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.

Romans 9:18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and whom he will he hardeneth.

Here again, those who are the elect, all the Jacobs in the world, will find that God has mercy on

them, according to verses 15 and 16. On the other hand, those who are the reprobate, all the Esaus in the world, will find that certain portions of the Bible are unacceptable to them. Their minds remain in unbelief. Their hearts have been hardened, according to verse 18. Who hardened their hearts? God did, according to verse 19. Do people object to this concept of God? Absolutely! They say in V19
Romans 9:19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?
Romans 9:20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed *it*, "Why hast thou made me thus?"

In other words, they say, "Why does God find fault with me? If God has hardened my heart, and if God has foreordained all that I do, and if I cannot resist His will, then why does God find fault with me? Then God would be unjust to cast me into Hell, because all I do is only His work." How do people dare to contend with God? They make God guilty, instead of themselves. God answers them here. Paraphrased God says: "How dare you criticize what I am doing? You are a man; a speck of dust; you should repent in dust and ashes, like Job. Why do you contend with Almighty God about things which you are not able to understand? Shall the thing formed say to his maker: Why have you made me this way? Who are you to reply against God? Realize Who you are talking to". When we criticize God's Word, we must realize that we are taking on Almighty God. Like I said last week, "Our God is irreprehensible". It means God cannot be blamed for anything He is doing, since He is just and righteous in all that He does. Please put a sticker here in Rom 9 and turn about 560 pages to your left (→) to the Prophecy of Jeremiah, chapter 18:1 (2X). We have here the historical parable of:

#1. The Potter and the Clay (Jer 18:1-10)

The nation of Judah was under the rule of king Zedekiah, who was a wicked king. It was under his reign that "the chief of the priests and the people transgressed very much after the abominations of the heathen, and polluted the house of the Lord in Jerusalem" (II Chron 6:14). God sent Jeremiah to this wicked nation with the message that we read now in chapter 18:1,

Jeremiah 18:1 ¶ The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

Jer 18:2 Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words.

Jer 18:3 Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.

Jeremiah 18:4 And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make *it*.

This was the primary object lesson to Jeremiah and to the nation of Judah. God is portrayed here as the sovereign Potter and the nation of Judah is portrayed here as the clay in the hands of God. God molds the clay, as He will, into whatever shape He designed it to be. Here we see the hands of God are portrayed as the providence of God; a very fitting metaphor. What was God going to do with the nation of Judah at this point, and what was God's message to the nation of Judah? The first message was that God is the sovereign creator of everything. The second message was that God demands to

be worshipped by humans, and therefore God demanded that the nation of Judah repent of their idolatries and false worship practices. We read in Jer 18:5,

Jeremiah 18:5 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

Jeremiah 18:6 O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay *is* in the potter's hand, so *are* ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.

Jeremiah 18:7 *At what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy *it*;

Jeremiah 18:8 If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.

Jeremiah 18:9 And *at what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant *it*;

Jeremiah 18:10 If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.

In other words, God said that He would not destroy the nation of Judah if they would repent of their evil ways and return to Jehovah their God. We know the outcome of this story. They would not repent, and God destroyed that nation. God sent the Babylonian armies, which destroyed Judah and Jerusalem. Just like Pharaoh, king of Egypt, did not repent because God hardened his heart, so God hardened the hearts of the people in Jerusalem and Judah. Sure, there were a few exceptions, but the nation as a whole did not repent, and God destroyed them because they would not hear.

God worked through the sins of the people to accomplish His purposes. How can it be that people accuse God of unjustly casting them into Hell? God's will is wrongly confused with His precept (2X). While God accomplishes through the wicked what He has decreed by His secret judgment, they are not excusable, as if they had obeyed His precept, which out of their own lust they deliberately break. For example, the betrayal of Judas Iscariot will not be right because God Himself both willed that His Son be delivered up to death. We cannot ascribe the guilt of this crime to God, just as we cannot transfer the credit for redemption to Judas. Therefore, who does not tremble at these judgments, where God works even in evil men's hearts whatever He wills, and yet God leaves them over to their own desires? God also puts some reprobate in the church. Every church has them. We, in this congregation, should tremble if we are under the hearing of the Word of God and yet we do not do what God commands us. It means that we do not believe God. When we pick and choose which of God's commands we will obey and which we will let slide, then we are just like the congregation of Judah who picked and chose what they desired to obey. Let us not imagine that we shall escape God's judgment. O yes, that judgment may not come immediately. In fact, it may come so slowly that we are not even aware that God is no longer among us, or that God is no longer in our family. Let us pray that we may wake up when we see our children slide into apostasy.

Please turn again 560 pages to your right (←) to the Epistle to the Romans, chapter 9:21 (2X).

- **Of the Same Lump** (Rom 9:21, Rom 5:12)

You may have noticed from this study in Romans that we are developing a concept of God, which we have not seen before. But Romans 9 is just as much the Word of God as the statement that "God is love". It is true that God is love, but it is equally true that God hates the reprobate. Let us look here at the hands of God, or the providence of God. Here is the 5th example of "Who are the children of the promise, and who are not?" We read in Rom 9:21,

Romans 9:21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

God as the sovereign Potter has authority over the clay. He is the Potter and we are the clay. As long as God is speaking only about the elect we are at ease. God has nothing but good to say about His elect, whom He will draw irresistibly into His holy heaven. Those are the vessels unto honor. But that is only half of the information in this verse. God also makes vessels unto dishonor. What are those? These are the reprobate whom God is not going to save. Are there many reprobate? Those in Jerusalem and Judah at the time of Jeremiah were mostly reprobate, and in the surrounding nations the fraction of elect was much smaller. God did that. God has absolute power over the clay.

But why did God add the words, "Of the same lump"? This is a reference to Adam. Adam was made from a lump of clay. Eve was made out of Adam. The entire human race comes out of Adam and Eve. Therefore the lump that is called Adam is the lump that God is referring to here in Rom 9:21. Out of that same lump God is able to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor. For example, of the first two sons of Adam and Eve Cain was a reprobate and Abel was an elect child of God. This does not mean that all the elect automatically are going to heaven. God purposely chose "the same lump" in reference to Rom 5:12. Please turn about 6 pages to your left (→) to Rom 5:12 (2X). There in the passage of verses 12 through 21 God introduces us to the representative principle. Today we will use only one verse from this passage. We read in Rom 5:12,

Romans 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

Adam sinned when he ate from the "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil". Symbolically and literally the entire human race was in the loins of Adam when he sinned. Therefore the entire human race was represented in Adam. Every one of us inherited a sinful body and soul from Adam. Adam was our first representative, and he remains our representative after the flesh. To those who become saved, God gave Christ to be our representative after the Spirit. Christ became our second representative when we became Born Again. Just like we were initially "in Adam" when Adam sinned, and thus we all were subject to judgment by being co-contributors to Adam's sin, so likewise we were "in Christ" when Christ was crucified, and thus we endured the judgment of the equivalent of an eternity in Hell with

Christ and in Christ when He suffered for the guilt of all our sins. For that reason God cannot send us to Hell again, because we have already endured Hell for our sins in Christ as our representative. This is how all mankind came under God's judgment for their original sin, but some enjoyed salvation when they heard and believed that they endured God's judgment for all their sins.

Now we continue in Rom 9:22 (2X) where God speaks about the:

#2. Vessels of Wrath (Rom 9:22, Matt 20:15, Isa 30:12-14)

Romans 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:

All people either conceived or born into this world are conceived or born in a state of sin, which leaves them in a state of condemnation before God. If God would send the entire human race to Hell, God would be absolutely righteous. If God then desires to bestow His favor upon some, who can fault God for doing so. To the human race God will say, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" (Matt 20:15). Here in Rom 9:22 we read that God is willing to show His wrath; therefore He shows His wrath on the reprobate. What an awesome and sovereign God we have. He sovereignly makes the choice whether to save someone from eternal damnation, or whether to pass him by. And if God passes by someone, this action of God will most certainly send this person to eternal condemnation in Hell, which this person so justly deserves. Here are the reprobate, who are called "vessels unto dishonor", and they are also called "vessels of wrath". To each one of these vessels of wrath God shall say: "Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth". God says that these are vessels fitted to destruction. In the eternal counsels of God before the foundation of the world God decided to create them for His own purposes, knowing full well that these would be sinners, and God condemns them for their own sins. God is not the author of their sins. Can we understand this? Absolutely not! But God declares this in His Word, the Bible, and we humbly submit to God's infinite wisdom. The counsel of God is incomprehensible, and yet God's unblameable justice shines forth in the condemnation of the reprobate, as well as in the salvation of the elect. God does not give a reason of His choice of Divine election, or for Divine reprobation of people, because it is not fitting that the things contained in the secret counsel of God should be subjected to judgment by men. Men should simply believe God and glorify Him in whatever He does.

And then we read that: "God endures with much longsuffering". What is longsuffering? Is that patience? What is the difference between longsuffering and patience? God is "longsuffering" toward the vessels of wrath as well as toward the vessels of mercy. Longsuffering means self-restraint in the face of provocation. God does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish, because longsuffering is associated with mercy. Therefore longsuffering is an attribute of God. On the other hand, "patience" means that it does not surrender to circumstances or collapse in the face of trial. Patience is the

opposite of despondency, and patience is associated with hope. Therefore, patience is not used of God, but it is an attribute of man. Please turn in your Bibles about 640 pages to your left (→) to the Prophecy of Isaiah, chapter 30:12 (2X). The historical background for the people referred to in Isa 30 is about the same as for the unbelievers in Rom 9, who voice objections when they hear the whole counsel of God spoken from His Word. God says to them, "This is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD". And now we read in Isa 30:12,

Isaiah 30:12 Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon:

Isaiah 30:13 Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant.

Isaiah 30:14 And He shall break it as the breaking of the potters' vessel that is broken in pieces; He shall not spare: so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water *withal* out of the pit.

In verse 12, paraphrased, God says, "If you do not do what God says, then you do not believe God's Word, which means that you despise His Word. Therefore, you have put your trust in Egypt, which is the house of bondage leading you to oppression and perverseness, whereas you should have trusted in the Lord to deliver you from evil". Then in verse 13 God compares the wicked to a wall wherein is a crack, and the wall is ready to break and fall. In verse 14 God will help them in the fall. God shall break this wall like the breaking of a potter's vessel that is broken completely in pieces. That vessel represents the nation of Judah, which is also pictured in that fashion in Jer 18. God shall not pity anyone, so that there shall not be found a fraction of the nation, or a fraction of the potter's vessel that can be used for taking fire from the fireplace, or taking a little water from the well. Historically the nation of Judah was totally destroyed. How does that apply to us? If we despise God's Word, this will be our end. In other words, it is not possible that someone criticizes the Word of God and is saved at the same time. God's judgment shall come upon that person. But God has more to say about the potter's vessel. Please turn in your Bibles about 200 pages to your left (→) to Psalm 2:9 (2X). God's judgment is expressed in Scripture in many ways. In Psalm 2 the Father says to the Son:

- **Thou Shalt Dash Them in Pieces** (Psalm 2:9, 5:5, 7:11, 11:5, Prov 6:16)

We read in Psalm 5, "Thou hatest all workers of iniquity". We read in Psalm 7, "God is angry with the wicked every day". We read in Psalm 11, "The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth". We read in Prov 6, "These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto Him". Here in Psalm 2 we read in verse 9,

Ps 2:9, Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Here again, the picture is of God as the heavenly Potter, who has made vessels unto honor and vessels unto dishonor. The vessels unto dishonor are vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. Christ will

be their Judge. In this picture the Lord Jesus Christ expresses the wrath of God on these vessels of wrath by breaking them in pieces like a human potter breaks rejected earthen vessels in his potter's field. But this destruction of the vessels does not mean annihilation, but Hell forever, the 2nd death.

Please turn about 850 pages to your right (←) again to Rom 9:23 (2X). Now we turn to the:

#3. Vessels of Mercy (Rom 9:23, II Tim 2:19-21)

In Rom 9:22 we have read that God is willing to show His wrath; therefore He shows His wrath on the reprobate. Now we read in Rom 9:23,

Romans 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,

God is willing to show His mercy; therefore He shows His mercy on His elect. What an awesome God we have. He sovereignly makes the choice on whom He will shower His love and His mercy. And look at whom the Lord is using as instruments of His mercy. God calls us vessels of mercy, because that is how we are used by the Lord to spread the true Gospel to all those whom the Lord shall call unto salvation. This is our mandate. There are no secret Christians. And look at whom the Lord is using as instruments of His wrath. The peddlers of false gospels are the vessels of wrath that are used by the Lord to spread His wrath to all those who remain in darkness, all the reprobate.

Please turn about 100 pages to your right (←) to the Second Epistle to Timothy 2:19 (2X). Remember the title of our sermon today is: "**The Lord Knoweth Them That Are His**". This brings us great comfort. Like God is immutable, so God's promises are also immutable, which means that they cannot be changed. I printed this word on the board, so that you may print it in your memory.

2 Timothy 2:19 ¶ Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

2 Timothy 2:20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.

2 Timothy 2:21 If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, *and* prepared unto every good work.

Verse 20 tells us that in the church of the living God there are both elect and reprobate. God keeps the wheat and the tares growing together until Judgment Day. Both vessels unto honor and unto dishonor are present in the best of churches. But if the reprobate are vessels unto dishonor, they have that dishonor confined to themselves. They do not bring disgrace upon the house by their presence. But verse 21 tells us that we must separate ourselves from those whom we perceive are polluting our mind, or our morals. It is from them that we must purge ourselves. But we have no power or ability of our own to do that because we are drawn to sin. We must pray to the Lord to cleanse us, instead of vainly trying to do it on our own strength.

Please turn again about 100 pages to your left (→) to the Epistle to the Romans 9:24.

Who are these vessels unto honor, or vessels of mercy? Not the Jews only, but:

- **Even Us** (Rom 9:24). We read in Rom 9:24,

Romans 9:24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

After the cross there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles. Equal treatment for all nations.

Let me summarize what is God teaching us here in Rom 9:20-24? God tells us that we should not question God, or question His Word. It is our job to be submissive to God and to His Word, the Bible. This is God's way, and God's way is the best way. When God called us, God also made known to us who He is, and what He does, and how great His love is for us, and how great His plan of salvation is. For example: How can we understand what rich means, unless we also have the poor in the world? How can we know what salvation is if there would not exist at the same time damnation? How can God's grace be known without the existence of God's wrath? How can we see if we are in the Kingdom of God, unless we were blind to begin with? How can the elect be identified, unless the non-elect, the reprobate, are also present? How can the love of God be known if the hatred of God is not also made known? How can the righteous be identified if the wicked are not also present? How can goodness on the earth exist without evil also being present? How can we admire the wisdom of God if we have not at the same time the "wisdom" of men? And I could go on and on adding to this list. We need to understand that God, in His wisdom, created the reprobate, because God loved the elect so much that He was willing to do for them what God has no pleasure in. When God says, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked", that is an absolutely true statement, but it does not mean that God will not put the wicked to death. When God says that He "hates all workers of iniquity", that is an absolutely true statement, but it does not mean that God derives pleasure in putting to death all workers of iniquity. When God says, "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him", which refers to putting Christ on the cross, it does not mean that God derives great pleasure in afflicting His only begotten Son with the equivalent of an eternity in Hell. There are certain things that God must do to preserve His integrity as an absolutely righteous Judge; things, which we cannot understand because we are not righteous to begin with. But is it not wonderful that God's righteousness can be absolutely depended on? Is it not wonderful to know that God's promise to impute the righteousness of Christ to everyone who believes can be absolutely depended on? Therefore we should be:

- **Praising our Great God** (Prov 3:19, Isa 55:9)

How great is our God? Allow me to give you an example of how great our God is, from the realms of astronomy. You know that the sun is at a great distance from the earth. In fact, it is such a great distance that if something happens on the surface of the sun, it takes about 8 minutes for us to see the change that has taken place. That is how great a distance the sun is from us. But let me now take a step into outer space, and suppose that I could stand on the farthest planet of our solar system, which is the planet called Pluto. It takes the light from the sun about 5½ hours to reach the planet Pluto. If I

would stand on Pluto and look at the sun, the sun would appear in the distance as a small dot, like a bright star. That is an incredibly great distance. And yet the force of gravity from the sun would be enough to keep this planet Pluto in its orbit around the sun. Now I am taking another step into outer space ten times the distance of Pluto from the sun. Where would I be? I would be in empty outer space with nothing around me. Only God would be with me. The sun would appear in the distance just like another star. Since there is no matter around me, let me take another step into outer space, 100 times the distance of the sun to Pluto. Where would I be? I would still be in empty outer space with nothing near me, except God. Now I am getting desperate. Now I take another step into outer space 1000 times the distance of the sun to Pluto. Where would I be? I would still be in empty outer space with nothing near me, except God. This is incredible. I have move out into outer space a distance of 1000 times the distance of the farthest planet in our solar system, and I am still in empty outer space and I am still closer to the sun than I am to the nearest star. This shows you how empty outer space is. Now let me take a last step, which is about 7000 times the distance from the sun to Pluto, now I have arrived at the nearest star Alpha Centauri. Well, that was one giant step. Can the force of gravity from the sun be felt there, at such a great distance away from the sun? Does the position of Alpha Centauri depend on the gravity force from the sun? The answer is yes. There are billions of stars out there, which are held together by their mutual gravitational forces, and together they form one giant galaxy, the Milky Way. But the Milky Way is only one galaxy. There are billions of galaxies in outer space, which are separated from each other at much greater distances than the distance of Alpha Centauri to the sun. And think of it now, our God made all that. The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens (Prov 3:19). Can we get some appreciation of how great and how wise God really is? Our God is greater than this universe, and our God's wisdom is infinite. How can we, mortal creatures, which are less than nothing speak up to God and criticize Him for what He is saying in the Bible? God says in Isa 55:9, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts". Is this God that we have, who created us for His good pleasure, entitled to make His own decisions? Can we criticize God when He informs us of His decisions? Absolutely not! We are to praise Him and to thank Him for not casting us into Hell, which we so justly deserve. We must plead with God that He would save us and mold us after His will. We should sing with the choruses of the p.

- Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Thou art the Potter, I am the clay.
Mold me and make me after Thy will, while I am waiting, yielded and still.
- Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Search me and try me, Master, today.
Open mine eyes, my sin show me now, as in Thy presence humbly I bow.
- Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Wounded and weary, help me, I pray.
Power, all power, surely is Thine; touch me and heal me, Savior divine.

- Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Hold o'er my being absolute sway.
Fill with Thy Spirit; then all shall see Christ only, always, living in me.

That is the Hymn we are going to sing, # 452.

Amen.

Let us turn to the Lord in prayer.