

## Recent Prayer Requests

- Sympathy is extended to Charles Robinson and his family in the passing of his wife’s niece last week. Please pray for these families.
- Please continue to remember Dennis Carr, Jana Grimes, Chloe Setzler, Ed Wyatt, Drew Williams grandmother, Drew Willard’s mother, LaKorcha Ross, James Nicholson, Steve Fortner, Shawn Dealy, Nilda Hernandez, Dennis Carr, Lisa Watkins, Charles Robinson, Grayson Seaborn, Sharon Franklin, Tye Ann Spencer, Ron & Ashley Cunningham, Spencer Christian, Paul Mancuso, Jack Montgomery, Kay Lofton, Isaiah Scarlett, Garrett Lyons, Rachel Binkley, Teddy Joe & Amber Wiggington, Bill & Billie Marshall, Bill Huenefeld, Harold Wade, Drew William's brother, Kerri Williams' grandmother, Katie Lanham, and Lila Wood in your prayers.

New Phone #  
 Pearl Morris  
 972-335-3006



Frisco church of Christ  
 8648 Main Street  
 P.O. Box 566  
 Frisco, TX 75034  
[www.friscochurchofchrist.com](http://www.friscochurchofchrist.com)

SERVICES & GATHERINGS	
Sunday Bible Class.....	9 AM
Sunday Worship .....	10 AM & 6 PM
Lodges at Preston Ridge .....	1:15 PM
Wednesday Evening Bible Class.....	7 PM
Elders Office Hours : Every Tuesday .....	7 PM-9 PM
Ladies Bible Class 2 <sup>nd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> Thurs. of the month.....	7 PM
FOR THE RECORD	
Sunday Morning Bible Class	55
Sunday Morning Worship	100
Sunday Evening Worship	58
Wednesday Evening Bible Class	48
Contribution	\$ 2688
Weekly Budget	\$ 3438



## God Hardens Whom He Wills? (Conclusion)

The words that God spoke to Moses, found in Exodus 33:19, were designed to encourage him not to give up on his leadership role. God had brought the nation out of Egypt, despite Pharaoh’s opposition. No one could keep God from doing what He deemed necessary to achieve His plan to bring Christ into the world. God showed the Israelites great compassion and mercy in His **physical** treatment of them through the centuries. But He shows **spiritual** compassion (i.e., He imparts salvation) to **everyone** equally on the same gospel terms, i.e., on the basis of what Christ accomplished on the cross.

The Jews were constantly in a dither (“willing” and “running”—vs. 16) as they asserted their favored status to the exclusion of Gentiles. But God never intended to show gospel mercy on the basis of ethnic linkage to Abraham. His exclusive selection of Abraham was for the singular purpose of bringing Christ into the world that the entire human race might have access to forgiveness of sin. The Jewish nation misinterpreted the coincidental racial aspect of God’s dealings through them. To bring Christ, God **had** to make choices of people to use. But His choices had nothing to do with each individual’s own personal salvation.

Pharaoh provides a good illustration of how God worked in this regard. God purposed to show mercy to the people of Israel that they might leave Egypt, go to the Promised Land, and further advance God’s plan to bring Christ into the world. So God sent Moses to present God’s words to Pharaoh. The demand to release the people, however, only served to “raise up,” i.e., arouse, incite, or stir up Pharaoh (see Thayer, 1901, p. 222; Alford, 1877, 2:409; Vincent, 1890, 3:105; cf. Psalm 80:2). On his own volition, Pharaoh opposed God’s plan. His defiance created conditions under which God’s name was publicized to the world, alluded to in the quotation of Exodus 9:16.

Still, God gave Pharaoh opportunity after opportunity to change his mind—ten separate plagues and multiple visits from Moses (who repeatedly articulated God’s word to him). But this prolonged engagement (the longsuffering of God) resulted in giving Pharaoh more opportunities to be hardened in his rebellion—contrary to God’s will for him. Because God was the initiator and instigator of the circumstance, it may properly be said that He did the hardening. God confronts all people through circumstances and His Word, but each person is responsible for his or her own separate, individual reactions. [For a discussion of the sense in which God hardened Pharaoh’s heart, see Butt and Miller, 2003.]

But if God showed mercy to the Israelites by allowing them to escape Egyptian slavery, and if God destroyed Pharaoh for resisting His will, why then did God find fault with the Jews of Paul’s day? Why would God find fault with anyone whose heart is hardened by His demands? The answer lies in the fact that God has the divine right to use His own methods to bring about salvation for the world without interfering with our choices. Here is a marvelous feature of the sovereignty of God—His ability to work

## Elders

Bill Gressett  
Brian Kidd  
Hubert Lowry  
Will Watkins

## Deacons

Cris Brown  
James Cothran  
Brian Hasz  
Brian Lofton  
Kevin Lowry

## Evangelist

Todd Crayton

## Scripture of the Week

<sup>9</sup>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. <sup>10</sup>But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. <sup>11</sup>Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, <sup>12</sup>Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? <sup>13</sup>Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.  
2 Peter 3:9-13

out His own purposes while simultaneously allowing the human agents involved to exercise their own free will and make their own choices. God can incorporate human beings into His overarching redemptive plans regardless of the personal choices humans make. Consequently, no one can rightfully accuse God of mistreating him or her. In fact, truth be told, human heartaches are often self-generated (cf. 1 Peter 4:15).

Thus throughout the context of Romans 9-11, Paul was not discussing personal salvation. Each individual decides salvation by the choices he or she makes. Paul was writing about how God can, and has, made use of people and nations in history to bring to fruition His grand plan of salvation. One Old Testament passage clarifies the concept:

“O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?” says the Lord. “Look, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel! The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, to destroy it, **if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil**, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it. And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, **if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice**, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it. Now therefore, speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Behold, I am fashioning a disaster and devising a plan against you. Return now every one from his evil way, and **make your ways and your doings good.**” ’ ’ And they said, “That is hopeless! So **we will walk according to our own plans, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart**” (Jeremiah 18:6-12, emp. added).

This passage demonstrates that people make their own choices to do evil or good, to obey or disobey God. But God can work over, under, around, or through people—depending upon their personal choices. Either way, God achieves His will while simultaneously allowing each individual to make his or her own decisions and cinch his or her own fate. In **that** sense, and only in that sense, He is a potter with putty in His hands (cf. Isaiah 29:16; 45:9). Each individual decides their own conduct, and God then uses them accordingly.

God must show His wrath against sin and punish sin by His power (Romans 1:18). But He is longsuffering in that He does not want anyone to perish, as illustrated by how long He put up with Pharaoh’s stubborn resistance. Similarly, He tolerated Noah’s generation for many years before bringing the Flood, and He bore with the Israelites throughout their defiant history. They were “prepared for destruction”—in the sense that they chose to so fit themselves, and did everything possible to achieve it. But such was not God’s desire for them:

Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each one according to his deeds (Romans 2:4-6).

## God Hardens Whom He Wills?

Nor is it God’s desire for anyone today:

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.... Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; and account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation (2 Peter 3:9,14-16; cf. 1 Timothy 2:4).

The nation of Israel had a long history of preparing itself for destruction—which finally came in A.D. 70 when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. In the meantime, God endured them with much longsuffering. Why? “That He might make known the riches of His glory.” That is, He was working out His scheme of redemption. He put up with the unbelieving Jews, allowing them to proceed down the pathway of their own self-appointed destruction (Matthew 23:32), until He could bring Christ, and then get the Gospel disseminated to the Gentiles (Acts 18:5-6; Colossians 1:23; 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16). The church of Christ was launched in A.D. 30 in the city of Jerusalem, the heart of Israel, and consisted only of Jews for several years. God could not instigate due punishment upon the Jewish nation at that point without endangering the infant church of Christ. He waited until the Gospel went forth from Jerusalem to “the end of the earth” Acts 1:8), enabling the Gentiles to be introduced to the Gospel (Acts 10). This accounts for the “lag time” between A.D. 30 and A.D. 70.

The book of Romans cannot be used successfully nor legitimately to maintain the doctrine that God can do anything He chooses without regard to human decision-making and free moral agency. Unlike the imaginary deities conjured up in the minds of misguided men, the God of the Bible is shown to be perfect, possessing attributes of excellence to a perfect degree. He is the Supreme Ruler of the Universe.

Dave Miller Ph.D.  
Apologeticspress.org

## REFERENCES

Alford, Henry (1877), *The Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980 reprint).  
Butt, Kyle and Dave Miller (2003), “Who Hardened Pharaoh’s Heart?,” [On-line], URL: <http://www.apologeticspress.org/articles/2259>.  
Miller, Dave (2003), “Things God Cannot Do,” [On-line], URL: <http://www.apologeticspress.org/articles/2292>.  
Thayer, Joseph H. (1901), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1977 reprint).  
Vincent, M.R. (1890), *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1946 reprint).

## IN FOCUS

### PANTRY ITEMS... Shampoo and Conditioner

### THINGS TO KNOW....

- The Fishers of Men class continues today at 3:00.
- Next Sunday will be the monthly pot-luck.
- April 1<sup>st</sup> will be homecoming.
- Our spring gospel meeting will begin April 8<sup>th</sup>.

### ANNIVERSARIES & BIRTHDAYS this week....

- February 5<sup>th</sup>-Larry Ballard
- February 8<sup>th</sup>- Hubert Lowry
- February 10<sup>th</sup>-Ise Connerly
- February 11<sup>th</sup>—Frances Miller