

“Is There Unrighteousness With God?”

Paul anticipates this question based upon earlier remarks he had made (Rom. 9:14). These statements indicated the fact that God choose Isaac over Ishmael and Jacob over Esau. And, as is necessarily implied, he choose some of Israel's seed over others of Israel's seed. Indeed he had said, *“They are not all Israel that are of Israel”* (Rom. 9:6). Paul responds to his own posed question with a resounding *“God forbid.”* In Romans 3:5 Paul wrote, *“Is God unrighteous who visits with wrath?”* Once more is found this expression of horror *“God forbid!”* Who would dare charge God unrighteous, of dealing improperly with his creature, man? Satan would and does! (See the implications of Romans 3:25f).

Issuing his strong protest to his question, *“Is there unrighteousness with God,”* he then declares, *“For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion”* (9:15; Ex. 33:19). Then he remarks, *“So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that hath mercy”* (9:16). These two statements, *“I will have mercy on whom I have mercy”* and *“It is not of him that runeth ... but of God that hath mercy”* are made in view of God's dealing with Moses. Moses certainly had not sought the task which God thrust upon him -- rather than willing, he was very reluctant to accept it, but among people of his time, none had the qualifications and training for the tremendous task of leading Israel from Egypt, leading them in the direction of Canaan. He was God's man and although he felt himself inadequate, unqualified, he had already demonstrated that he was a man of strong character, of faith in God's promises to his ancestor Abraham, and a man willing to pay a great price to stand for his loyalties (Heb. 11:24-26; Acts 7:20-25). God knew His man, so, although Moses had not vied with others for the work God planned for him, he was the recipient of God's compassion; God's mercy. He became the deliverer of God's people. His task brought him trials and heartache but it was a gift and doubtlessly viewed by him just as Paul viewed his apostleship as a *“grace given unto him”* (Eph. 3:8). The leadership Moses received from God was a signal honor.

On the other hand, *“For the scriptures saith unto Pharaoh, for this very purpose did I raise thee up, that I might show in thee my power, and that my name might be published abroad in all the earth. So then he hath mercy on whom he will and whom he will he hardeneth”* (9:12f). Moses and Pharaoh serve as examples of this latter verse: *“So that he hath mercy on whom he will (Moses) and whom he will, he hardeneth (Pharaoh).”*

Just as God knew the character of Moses, He equally knew the character of Pharaoh. Any ruler who would keep in servitude another human to be a vassal to satisfy his own desires and lusts, is a despot. In the Exodus account of the exchange between Moses and Pharaoh, ten times it is written that God hardened Pharaoh's heart and ten times it is written that Pharaoh hardened his heart. Pharaoh was not an unwilling instrument in God's hand. He had the character and nature that, when given a demand that was altogether contrary to his own desires and interests, he rose with indignation and arrogantly refused. God hardened his heart by requiring of him something unpleasant, but right. But his carnal desires were responsible for the consequences of his rebellion. God desired to show the world the power of the God of Israel so that he might be glorified and their own way made easier. He accomplished that through the struggle between Moses and Pharaoh's magicians; through the plagues which Egypt suffered because of Pharaoh's obstinacy. Indeed those mighty deeds were published abroad to all the nations (Joshua 2:9f).

God made choices for both Moses and Pharaoh. Both could have either accepted or rejected. The decisions each made according to their own volition is recorded in Exodus 2-12.

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