

- I. **It is crucial that we see a vision of God's sovereignty**—Dan. 4:3, 34-35; Rom. 9:18-23:
- A. Sovereignty refers to God's unlimited authority, power, and position—Rev. 4:11; 5:13:
- As the sovereign One, God is above everything, behind everything, and in everything—1 Kings 22:19.
  - God has the full capacity to carry out what He wants according to the desire of His heart and according to His eternal economy—Dan. 4:34-35; Eph. 1:4-5, 9-11.
- B. Romans 9:19-23 refers to God's sovereignty:
- “For who withstands His will? But rather, O man, who are you who answer back to God? Shall the thing molded say to him who molded it, Why did you make me thus?”—Rom. 9:19b-20:
    - We need to realize who we are: we are God's creatures, and He is our Creator—Isa. 42:5.
    - As His creatures, we should not resist His purpose or answer back to Him, the Creator—Rom. 9:20.
  - Does not the potter have authority over the clay to make out of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?”—Rom. 9:21:
    - God is the Potter, and we are the clay in His hand; God, the Potter, is sovereign—Jer. 18:1-6.
    - As the Potter, our God has the absolute right over us; regarding us, He has the right to do whatever He desires—Isa. 29:16; 64:8.
    - If God wills, He can make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor—Rom. 9:21.
  - Romans 9:21-23 reveals that God sovereignly created us to be His containers, according to His predestination—2 Cor. 4:7; 2 Tim. 2:20-21; Eph. 1:5, 11:
    - It is of God's sovereignty that He, the Potter, makes the riches of His glory known by creating vessels of mercy to contain Himself—Rom. 9:23.
    - Being vessels unto honor is not the result of our choice; it originates with God's sovereignty—Rom. 9:21.
    - God's sovereignty is the basis of His selection; His selection depends on His sovereignty—Rom. 9:11, 18; 11:5, 28.
  - “In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory” —Rom. 9:23:
    - In His sovereignty God has the authority to make the ones He has selected and called vessels of mercy to contain Him in order that His glory might be manifested—Rom. 9:11, 18, 23-24.
    - According to His sovereign authority, He has prepared us unto glory—Rom. 9:23.

- II. **“I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy’...So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy”**—Rom. 9:15a, 16:
- A. Mercy is the most far reaching of God’s attributes, going further than His grace and love—Matt. 9:13:
- According to our natural condition, we were far removed from God, totally unworthy of His grace; we were eligible only to receive His mercy—Eph. 2:4.
  - Man’s disobedience affords God’s mercy an opportunity, and God’s mercy brings man to salvation—Rom. 11:32.
- B. Our concept is that the one who wills will gain what he wills to obtain and that the one who runs will gain what he runs after—Rom. 9:16:
- If this were the case, God’s selection would be according to our effort and labor.
  - On the contrary, God’s selection is of God who shows mercy; we do not need to will or to run, for God has mercy on us.
  - If we know God’s mercy, we will neither trust in our effort nor be disappointed by our failures; the hope for our wretched condition is in God’s mercy—Eph. 2:4.
- C. If we would serve God in His New Testament economy, we need to know that it is wholly a matter of God’s sovereign mercy—Rom. 9:15-16; Heb. 4:16:
- If we know God’s sovereignty, we will thank Him for His mercy, realizing that we are under His sovereign mercy—Rom. 9:15:
    - The expression sovereign mercy means that God’s mercy is absolutely a matter of God’s sovereignty.
    - Being a vessel of mercy is not the result of our choice; it originates with God’s sovereignty—Rom. 9:18.
    - God’s mercy to us is in His sovereignty; the only thing we can say to explain God’s mercy to us is that in His sovereignty, He has chosen to be merciful to us—Rom. 9:15-16, 23.
  - In God’s sovereign mercy, our hearts are inclined toward Him; because of His mercy to us, we seek Him day by day—Jer. 29:13; Deut. 4:29; Isa. 55:6.
  - The more we see that everything related to us is a matter of God’s mercy, the more we will bear our responsibility before the Lord; however, even our willingness to bear responsibility is of God’s mercy.
  - Because of God’s mercy, we responded to the gospel when others did not respond, we received a word about Christ as life when others refused to receive it, and we took the way of the Lord’s recovery when others drew back from taking this way.
  - Regarding His recovery, God has mercy on whom He will have mercy.
- D. Romans 9 reveals the principle that everything depends on God’s mercy—Rom. 9:15-16:
- The apostle Paul applied this principle to the Israelites, showing us that everything that happened to them was of God’s mercy—Rom. 9:16, 23.
  - There must be at least one time when we see God’s mercy and definitely touch His mercy—Eph. 2:4; Matt. 9:13:
    - Concerning this matter, our eyes need to be opened at least once; there must be at least one time when we see that everything depends on God’s mercy.
    - Whether we see this all at once, or we realize it through a process, the minute we touch this matter, we touch not a feeling but a fact; this fact is that everything depends on God’s mercy.

I. **It is crucial that we see a vision of God's sovereignty**

- Sovereignty refers to God's unlimited authority, power, and position. God is above everything, behind everything, and in everything. He has the full capacity to carry out what He wants according to the desire of His heart and according to His eternal economy.  
[Dan. 4:34-35] ...I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored the ever-living One; for His dominion is an eternal dominion...He does according to His will...; and there is no one who can...say to Him, What are You doing?
- Romans 9:19-23 refers to God's sovereignty. We need to realize who we are: we are God's creatures, and He is our Creator, we should not resist His purpose or answer back to Him, the Creator. God as the Potter and we are the clay in His hand, He has the absolute right to do whatever He desires, He can make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor. He sovereignly created us to be His containers according to His predestination. It is of His sovereignty that He makes the riches of His glory known by creating vessels of mercy to contain Himself. Being vessels unto honor originates with God's sovereignty and not of our choice. His sovereignty is the basis of His selection. In His sovereignty God has the authority to select and prepare us unto glory by making us vessels of mercy to contain the riches of His glory that His glory might be manifested.  
[Rom. 9:19b-21] For who withstands His will? But rather, O man, who are you who answer back to God? Shall the thing molded say to him who molded it, Why did you make me thus? Or does not the potter have authority over the clay to make out of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?  
[Isa. 64:8] But now, Jehovah, You are our Father; We are the clay; and You, our Potter; And all of us are the work of Your hand. [Rom. 9:23] In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory,

II. **"I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy'...So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy"**

- Mercy is the most far reaching of God's attributes, going further than His grace and love. We were far removed from God naturally, totally unworthy of His grace; we were eligible only to receive His mercy. Man's disobedience affords God's mercy an opportunity to bring man to salvation. God's selection is not according to our effort and labor to will and to run. Instead, God's selection is of God who shows mercy; we do not need to will or to run, for God has mercy on us. If we know God's mercy, we will neither trust in our effort nor be disappointed by our failures; the hope for our wretched condition is in God's mercy.  
[Matt. 9:13] But go and learn what this means, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice," for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners. [Eph. 2:4] But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, [Rom. 9:16] So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.  
[Heb. 4:16] Let us therefore come forward with boldness to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help.
- If we would serve God in His New Testament economy, we need to know that it is wholly a matter of God's sovereign mercy. We need to thank God that we are under His sovereign mercy for His mercy is absolutely a matter of God's sovereignty. Being a vessel of mercy results not of our choice but originates with God's sovereignty. The only explanation for God's mercy to us is that in His sovereignty, He has chosen to be merciful to us. Because of His mercy to us, we responded to the gospel, received a word about Christ as life and took the way of the Lord's recovery while others refused to do so. Our hearts are inclined toward Him; we seek Him day by day. The more we see that everything related to us is a matter of God's mercy, the more we will bear our responsibility before the Lord; however, even our willingness to bear responsibility is of God's mercy. Regarding His recovery, God has mercy on whom He will have mercy.  
[Rom. 9:15] For to Moses He says, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."  
[Rom. 9:18] So then He has mercy on whom He wills, and He hardens whom He wills.
- Romans 9 reveals the principle that everything depends on God's mercy. The apostle Paul illustrated this principle to us that everything that happened to the Israelites was of God's mercy. Concerning this matter, our eyes need to be opened at least once, or through a process, to see God's mercy and definitely touch His mercy; that everything depends on God's mercy. This is a fact and not a feeling but a fact.  
[Rom. 11:32] For God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all. [Lam. 3:22-23] It is Jehovah's lovingkindness that we are not consumed, For His compassions do not fail; They are new every morning;...

Three kinds of people need God's dealings: those who are strong in their will, those who are strong in their emotion, and those who are strong in their mind. Many people are controlled by these three kinds of conditions. These three things must experience God's breaking. God deals with man's strong points more than He deals with his weak points. Many times, man's strong points hinder him from spiritual progress, more so than his weak points. Unless a man is dealt with in these three areas, he cannot know God's mercy.

*<Excerpts from "Collected Works of Watchman Nee, The (Set 3) Vol. 57, The Resumption of Watchman Nee's Ministry", Chapter 1, "The Mercy of God">*

The way of the church during the past two thousand years is a way of looking to the mercy of God. Only God's mercy can temper us. I have often told the young people that they may have to wait for five years before they will realize that everything is of God's mercy. On the average, a person has one hundred forty thousand hairs. The Bible says that God has numbered every one of our hairs. He knows us more than we know ourselves. When God wants to save us, we are saved. If God does not show mercy on us, no one can be saved. Once D. L. Moody was preaching the gospel, and a lady was about to be saved. Just then an umbrella fell; it caused a distraction, and in the end the lady was not saved. Whether or not a man can be saved is not the responsibility of the preacher. The responsibility of the preacher is simply to present the way to others. Only God's mercy can put a person on the way. It is God's work that puts a person on the way. It is also God Himself who takes men on, on the way.

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