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The Power and the Glory

Romans 9.22-24

Series: The Pure Gospel

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The Village Church

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I. Introduction

- A. I've had two memorable phone calls after 11 p.m. in my pastoral career
 - 1. I'm sure most other pastors have had many more after hours calls than I've had
 - a. But I've had two that are memorable for all the right reasons
- B. The first one was from the head basketball coach at WVU
 - 1. WVU was playing Syracuse at Syracuse in the Carrier Dome
 - a. WVU and Syracuse were playing in the Big East at the time – arguably the premier college basketball league at the time
 - b. And WVU had never beaten Syracuse at Syracuse
 - 2. But that night, WVU won!
 - a. They beat Jim Boeheim's nationally ranked team in their own place
 - b. I had watched the game; was thrilled with the outcome; but I was headed for bed
 - 3. It was about 11:30 p.m. and the phone rang
 - a. It was Gale Catlett
 - b. The last person I expected to hear from that evening was Gale Catlett – calling from his hotel room in Syracuse
- C. Now Gale and I had been doing what many of you are doing with me in Study with the Pastor
 - 1. For the past year or so, we were reading the Scripture Union Encounter with God devotional
 - 2. My university office was in the WVU Coliseum where Gale's office was
 - a. So once a week when we were both in town he would get out of his office, come down to mine, and we would discuss what God had shown us in His word
 - b. And then we would pray together
 - 3. So on that night – after that remarkable victory – Gale found himself alone in his hotel room, wide awake
 - 4. And so he called me simply to express his appreciation for how we were able to spend time studying the word together
 - 5. He did not claim the victory was because we studied the word!
 - a. But his thoughts that night turned to gratitude to God and he wanted to share that with me

- D. I thought that was really special – that on a night like that, his thoughts went to God and his word
 - 1. And he was moved to pick up the phone and call me!
 - 2. I'll never forget that phone call
- E. The other late night phone call was from another man in our Morgantown, WV church – his name was Edd
 - 1. Edd was a forester
 - a. He worked for a large lumber company for a time, but he also had his own forestry business
 - b. And his work would take him on the road quite a bit – all over the eastern and southern states, managing forests
 - 2. When he called, I had no idea where he was
 - a. Could have been in southern WV, or eastern TN, or who knows where?
 - 3. Now Edd was a student in our Study Center at the Alliance Church in Morgantown
 - a. The Study Center was Bible study for serious students
 - b. Students would take a class on a book of the Bible and do about 5 hours of inductive study each week
 - c. They would come to class and have a discussion on the lesson of the week
 - d. Then I would lecture on the passage
 - e. The whole class was about 2 hours long
- F. At the time Edd called we were studying Romans 9
 - 1. Edd would work during the day, then being alone at night, he would do his Bible study homework in whatever hotel room he found himself
 - 2. And about 11 o'clock, the phone rang
 - 3. I wondered, who would be calling me at a time like this?
 - 4. So, I picked up the phone and said, "Hello?"
- G. And Edd didn't even say who was calling; didn't say, "Hi, it's me – Edd"
 - 1. No! He just said, "I got it!"
- H. Now I knew who it was as soon as he said, "I got it!"
 - 1. He didn't need to introduce himself
 - 2. He just exploded with "I got it!"
- I. So I said, "Ok, what do you mean, you got it?"
 - 1. He said, "I got it! I understand what Romans 9 is all about!"
- J. Well, I thought to myself, lots of people wrestle with Romans 9 without ever figuring out what it's all about
 - 1. So is said, "Ok, do tell! What's it all about (Alfie)?"
- K. He said, "It's about His glory"
 - 1. Turns out Edd was absolutely right
 - a. And the sooner we understand God and His glory, the sooner Romans 9 will make sense to us
- L. The passage that Edd was studying that night that gave him his epiphany was the text we're about to examine this morning

II. Text

A. Romans 9:22–24 (ESV) —

1. 22 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,
2. 23 in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—
3. 24 even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?

III. Relentless Sovereignty

A. Romans 9 has been about sovereignty

1. The sovereignty of God
2. In fact, Paul has been pursuing the sovereignty of God in Romans 9 relentlessly

B. He begins by establishing that those who are the people of God are the people of God, not because of human descent, but because of God's promise

1. God's promise as exemplified in Isaac – the son of Abraham and Sarah by promise (Romans 9.8-9)
 - a. Fulfilled miraculously as Sarah gave birth to Isaac when she was well beyond child-bearing age
 - b. All of which was orchestrated and executed by God
2. In contrast to Abraham and Sarah's human scheme to provide an heir through a concubine

C. And then sovereignty is ranked up even more in the election of Jacob over Esau

1. That even though they were twins from the same womb, and before they had done anything good or bad
 - a. God declared that the older would serve the younger
 - b. And that, as Paul quotes, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated" (Romans 9.13)
2. Ouch!
 - a. That kind of sovereignty is tough to swallow
 - b. We say, "That's not fair! That's not just!"
3. But Paul anticipates that objection
 - a. He says, "Is there injustice on God's part?" (Romans 9.14)
 - b. He says, "Absolutely not!"
4. And then he gives the Divine prerogative
 - a. "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." (Romans 9.15; Exodus 33.19)
5. So Paul says it's all about God's mercy
 - a. "So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy." (Romans 9.16)

D. We don't much like that either – it's not really about us; it's about God and His mercy

1. But Paul's not finished – he's relentless
2. "So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills." (**Romans 9.18**)
- E. We feel like we're in a boxing match – taking blow after blow from the champ
 1. (And God is the champ, is He not?)
 2. So we have one final protest
 - a. We say, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" (**Romans 9.19**)
- F. Then, as if you haven't had enough sovereignty thrown at you, here comes the final blow:
 1. "But who are you, O man, to answer back to God?" (**Romans 9.20**)
 2. Then he uses the analogy of the potter and clay to seal the deal
 - a. An analogy we find repeatedly in the OT
- G. So, Paul's approach to the sovereignty of God in salvation is relentless
 1. He takes no prisoners; brooks no opposition

IV. **Glory: What it's really all about**

- A. What, then, is it really all about?
- B. It's all about the glory of God
 1. That's another way of saying, "It's all about God"
 - a. Because it is all about God
- C. **"God is the only Being in the universe for whom self-exaltation is the chief virtue"**
 1. That statement didn't originate with me
 2. The one who expressed it most clearly, for whom I am eternally grateful for the insight, is **John Piper**
 3. But what Piper expressed has been expressed by others
 - a. By Jonathan Edwards most notably
 - b. But also by the Bible
 4. **Isaiah 48:11** (ESV) —
 - a. 11 For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned?
 - b. **My glory I will not give to another.**
 5. God is the only Being in the universe for whom self-exaltation is the chief virtue
 6. Think of it this way
 - a. If God were to place anything and anyone above Himself, He would be an idolater
 - b. So, God is the only Being in the universe for whom self-exaltation is the chief virtue
 7. For us, it's the opposite
 - a. We are beings for whom self-exaltation is the chief vice
 - b. Especially when we are talking about exalting ourselves above God
 - c. Which is what we do every time we disobey Him
- D. Now, what is the glory of God?

1. The glory of God is the manifestation of His nature and character to all His creation
 2. God wants to display who He is – in every dimension of His nature – to His morally responsible creatures
- E. And all the way through Romans 9, God is glorified
- F. Remember Paul's opening concern in Romans 9
1. It's that his Jewish kinsmen, by and large, have not embraced Messiah Jesus
 - a. And he wonders, does that mean God's word, God's promises, have failed?
 2. He says, absolutely not
 - a. Because God's promises were never about promises to physical descendants of Jacob
 - b. God's promises had to do with children of the promise as exemplified in the miraculous birth of Isaac
 - c. And God's promises are always fulfilled through faith in the promises of God – not through human ancestry
 3. So again – it's not about us, and our ancestry or our conduct
 - a. It's about God and His faithfulness
 - b. His faithfulness – His divine attribute
 - c. God wants His faithfulness to be displayed
 - d. He wants His glory to be revealed
- G. And then, there's election
1. God is glorified in election
 - a. Again – it's not about us, and our wisdom, and our intelligence
 - b. It's about God and His choice
 2. "... in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls." (**Romans 9.11**)
 3. God is glorified in His call
- H. And then there's God's mercy and compassion
1. "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." (**Romans 9.15**)
 2. God wants His mercy and His compassion to be on display – that's His glory
 - a. And His sovereignty is His glory as well
 - b. He wants His sovereignty to be displayed in His mercy and compassion
- I. God even wants to display His power
1. **Romans 9:17** (ESV) —
 - a. 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."
 2. God wants to display His power – that's His glory as well
- J. And He makes His intention very explicit
1. "... and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth"

2. God wants to proclaim His name – Yahweh, LORD
 - a. “I am who I am”
 - b. His name speaks of His self-existence, His independence
 - c. His sovereignty
3. And He wants everyone to know who He is in His fullness
- K. He even wants everyone to know of His wrath
 1. “So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills” (**Romans 9.18**)
 2. Whom does He harden?
 - a. Pharaoh
 - b. Why?
 - c. Because Pharaoh is a sinner, an idolater
 - d. So God engages in a judicial act of reprobation, of judgment
 - e. And He hardens Pharaoh by letting Pharaoh keep sinning
 3. Why does God want everyone to know His wrath?
 - a. Because the wrath of God is His just aversion to that which is inherently evil
 - b. And if God were not averse to evil, He would not be a good God
 - c. Without wrath, there would be no goodness of God
 - d. For God hates that which is opposed to holiness
- L. So God wants to display His glory
 1. In every dimension of sovereignty – He displays His glory
 2. And now we get to our text
- M. **Romans 9:22–24** (ESV) —
 1. 22 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and
 2. to make known his power,
 3. has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,
 4. 23 in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy,
 5. which he has prepared beforehand for glory—
 6. 24 even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?
- N. God wants to show Himself in every dimension of His character
 1. Now we’ve already seen some of this
 - a. We’ve just seen His desire to show His wrath
 - b. And we’ve seen His desire to show His power
 - c. And we’ve seen His desire to show His mercy
 2. But there’s something new in these verses that He wants to show, that we haven’t seen up to this point
- V. **The Patience of God**
 - A. It’s the patience of God
 1. “What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, had endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction...”
 - B. Here he builds on his analogy of the potter and the clay

1. But those who are unalterably opposed to God, He endures
2. “He endures!”
 - a. He puts up with them
 - b. With their antagonism
 - c. With their hatred
 - d. With their disobedience
 - e. With their truth suppression
 - f. With their dismissive ignorance
 - g. With their pathological indifference
 - h. With their rampant idolatry
3. He puts up with that stuff!
 - a. He puts up with them
- C. How does He put up with them?
 1. “With much patience”
- D. Again, it’s all about the glory
 1. He does it so the world would know of the patience of God
- E. Remember the fruit of the Spirit
 1. Love, joy, peace – patience
 2. Where do we get the fruit?
 - a. We get the fruit from the Spirit of God
 - b. We get the fruit from God
 3. And God is patient
 4. And He wants the world to know
 - a. And how will the world know of the patience of God?
 5. The world knows the patience of God because He endures those who are unalterably opposed to Him

VI. Peter’s Explanation

- A. Maybe another voice will help us
 1. Another perspective
 2. Let’s leave Paul for a moment and ask people to weigh in
- B. In 2nd Peter 3, Peter is addressing those who are scoffing that Jesus has not yet returned
 1. **2 Peter 3:4** (ESV) —
 - a. 4 They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.”
- C. Peter answers these scoffers in three ways
 1. **2 Peter 3:5–7** (ESV) —
 - a. 5 For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God,
 - b. 6 and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.

- c. 7 But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.
- 2. He reminds these scoffers – and reminds us all – that God has already judged the world once, through the flood
- 3. **2 Peter 3:8** (ESV) —
 - a. 8 But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.
- 4. So then he reminds us that God looks at time very differently than we do
 - a. God is not slow; He's always right on time
 - b. It's our clocks that are out of whack
- 5. **2 Peter 3:9** (ESV) —
 - a. 9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.
- 6. While the unbelieving scoff at God's time-table, God's patience is giving everyone an opportunity to repent!
 - a. He says later: **2 Peter 3:15** (ESV) — 15 And count the patience of our Lord as salvation,
 - b. just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him...
- 7. So, this is Peter interpreting Paul!
 - a. He says, "This is what Paul means"
 - b. God will judge the world – that's part of His glory
 - c. God is over time; in fact He is time-less; we're the ones who are always looking at our watches!
 - d. And God is giving you a chance – an opportunity to be repent and be saved
- 8. And now watch what Peter says
- 9. **2 Peter 3:15–16** (ESV) —
 - a. 15 And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him,
 - b. 16 as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters.
 - c. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.
- 10. Really? Paul, teaches some things that are hard to understand?
 - a. I can't help but think that Peter has in mind Romans 9!

VII. **Paul's Testimony**

- A. So we've seen Paul's teaching in Romans 9
 - 1. And we've seen how Peter explains the patience of God for us
 - 2. Now let's see how Paul applies it to himself!

- B. 1 Timothy 1:15–16 (ESV) —
1. 15 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.
 2. 16 But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.
- C. Paul's testimony is that God endured his persecution of the church, his antagonism against believers in Jesus, his attacks on God's people
1. And God suffered with Paul's transgression and his self-righteousness
 2. In order that He might have mercy on Paul and demonstrate His patience
 - a. Leading him to trust in Jesus
 3. So that the contrast between Paul's prior rejection of God and the salvation of God for the foremost of sinners might blast the announcement of the grace of God to all humanity!
- D. Paul understood the patience of God

VIII. Everyone's Testimony

- A. That was Paul's testimony
1. Is it yours as well?
- B. Because, honestly friends, that patience of God explodes from the pages of scripture from beginning to end
- C. Just think of God's patience
1. With Adam and Eve
 - a. Who violated the simplest of commands whereupon God could have wiped them off the face of the earth
 - b. Instead He promised a redeemer
 - c. Allowed Adam and Eve to have offspring
 - d. Whose line would eventually provide redemption for the entire sinful human race
 2. How about Abraham
 - a. He was a 75 year old idolater when God called him
 - b. Many years he lived in Ur of the Chaldees worshipping idols, false gods
 - c. And God had mercy on Abraham
 3. And then there's Sarah
 - a. When God promised a child to Sarah in her old age, she scoffed!
 - b. She laughed and then denied she laughed!
 - c. And yet God did indeed visit her with the blessing of Isaac
 4. And then there's Moses
 - a. Who was an impatient man himself when he murdered the Egyptian
 - b. And Moses escaped for 40 years to Midian
 - c. And then when God called him, he resisted, used all kinds of excuses to avoid God's call
 - d. And God used him anyway

5. And what about the nation of Israel?
 - a. Year after year of disobedience; decade after decade
 - b. Indeed, centuries of disobedience before God finally executed judgment, first on Israel, then finally upon Judah
 - c. What patience!
 6. And then the NT!
 - a. The thief on the cross – a criminal, a murderer, deserving of not only execution, but of eternal damnation
 - b. And yet, he was saved
 - c. Even as his criminal compatriot remained intransigent
 - d. What a contrast between grace and judgment!
 7. And what about Peter himself?
 - a. Boasting about his faithfulness when he was destined to fail in his human efforts
 - b. And yet restored by grace by Jesus to become a preaching powerhouse all through the Roman world
- D. Is God patient?
1. How was He patient with you?
 - a. How much did He endure your selfishness and indifference to the things of God before He brought you to Himself?
 - b. How much did He endure your willful ignorance of the things of God before the Hound of Heaven capture your affections?
 - c. For how long did you hear His clarion call before you submitted your will to His?
 2. Was it days?
 - a. Was it weeks?
 - b. Was it months?
 - c. How about years?
 3. What if Jesus had come back before your day of redemption?
 - a. Where would you be then?
 4. The patience of God – does it mean anything to you?
- E. What about you who have not yet bowed the knee to God?
1. Do you not see how His patience is giving you every opportunity to repent and turn to Jesus in faith?
 2. Why do you presume on the grace of God and resist His tender invitation?
 3. The patience of God is beckoning you – don't delay!
- F. Believer, listen again to what Paul says
1. **Romans 9:22–24** (ESV) —
 - a. 22 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,
 - b. 23 in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—
 - c. 24 even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?

2. God will judge those who are unalterably opposed to Him
 - a. And yet He did it to “make know the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy”
 3. “Even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles”
- G. You see, my friend Edd was absolutely right – it’s all about His glory
1. God wants you, believer, to know His glory
 2. And He does it against the backdrop of His judgment of those who resist Him
 3. So that you won’t miss it
- H. It’s like putting a diamond on a black velvet cloth
1. So the contrast will fully display its brilliance
- I. It’s all about the dazzling display of the glory of God

IX. **Lessons of Patience**

- A. **God is patient for a reason**
1. Two possible reasons
 2. One is for those who are unalterably opposed to God
 - a. His patience gives them opportunity to pile up their sins for judgment
 3. But the other is for you to turn in faith and repentance to Jesus and be saved
- B. **God will not be patient forever**
1. Peter reminds us that He had judged the world once
 - a. There will be an ultimate judgment for those who are unrepentant
- C. **Since God is patient, we must be patient**
1. Patient with our friends and acquaintances who have not yet come to faith
 2. Patient with our family members who are adrift, wandering, some even lost
 3. Patient with ourselves when our sanctification doesn’t happen as fast as we wish
- D. It’s all about God
1. It’s all about His glory
 2. Do you see His glory more clearly now?