

Message Five

God as Our Sovereign Potter Making Us His Vessels, His Containers, to Contain Him

Hymns:

Scripture Reading: Jer. 18:1-10; Isa. 64:8; Rom. 9:15-16, 19-23; Acts 9:15; 2 Cor. 4:6-7

- Jer. 18:1 The word which came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying,
Jer. 18:2 Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear My words.
Jer. 18:3 So I went down to the potter's house, and he was there doing work at his wheel.
Jer. 18:4 But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand; so he reworked it into another vessel, as it seemed good for the potter to make.
Jer. 18:5 And the word of Jehovah came to me, saying,
Jer. 18:6 Am I not able to do with you, O house of Israel, as this potter does? declares Jehovah. Indeed, as the clay is in the hand of the potter, so you are in My hand, O house of Israel.
Jer. 18:7 At the moment that I speak about a nation or about a kingdom, to pluck it up or to break it down or to destroy it,
Jer. 18:8 And if that nation concerning which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will repent of the evil that I intended to do to it.
Jer. 18:9 And at the moment that I speak about a nation or a kingdom, to build it up or to plant it,
Jer. 18:10 And if it does evil in My sight by not listening to My voice, then I will repent of the good with which I said I would benefit it.
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. 9:15 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. 9:16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.
Rom. 9:19 You will say to me then, Why does He still find fault? For who withstands His will?
Rom. 9:20 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. 9:21 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?
Rom. 9:22 And what if God, wishing to demonstrate His wrath and make His power known, endured with much long-suffering vessels of wrath fitted for destruction,
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,
Acts 9:15 But the Lord said to him, Go, for this man is a chosen vessel to Me, to bear My name before both the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;
2 Cor. 4:6 Because the God who said, Out of darkness light shall shine, is the One who shined in our hearts to illuminate the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
2 Cor. 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us.

OUTLINE

I. God as our sovereign Potter has absolute right over us as His pottery; it is

crucial that we see a vision of God's sovereignty—Jer. 18:1-10; Isa. 64:8; Dan. 4:3, 34-35; Rom. 9:19-23:

- Jer. 18:1 The word which came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying,
Jer. 18:2 Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear My words.
Jer. 18:3 So I went down to the potter's house, and he was there doing work at his wheel.
Jer. 18:4 But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand; so he reworked it into another vessel, as it seemed good for the potter to make.
Jer. 18:5 And the word of Jehovah came to me, saying,
Jer. 18:6 Am I not able to do with you, O house of Israel, as this potter does? declares Jehovah. Indeed, as the clay is in the hand of the potter, so you are in My hand, O house of Israel.
Jer. 18:7 At the moment that I speak about a nation or about a kingdom, to pluck it up or to break it down or to destroy it,
Jer. 18:8 And if that nation concerning which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will repent of the evil that I intended to do to it.
Jer. 18:9 And at the moment that I speak about a nation or a kingdom, to build it up or to plant it,
Jer. 18:10 And if it does evil in My sight by not listening to My voice, then I will repent of the good with which I said I would benefit it.
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.
Dan. 4:3 How great are His signs, / And how mighty are His wonders! / His kingdom is an eternal kingdom, / And His dominion is from generation to generation.
Dan. 4:34 And at the end of those days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up my eyes to heaven, and reason returned to me; and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored the ever-living One; For His dominion is an eternal dominion, / And His kingdom is from generation to generation;
Dan. 4:35 And all the inhabitants of earth are considered as nothing, / But He does according to His will in the army of heaven / And among the inhabitants of the earth; / And there is no one who can resist His hand / Or say to Him, What are You doing?
Rom. 9:19 You will say to me then, Why does He still find fault? For who withstands His will?
Rom. 9:20 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. 9:21 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?
Rom. 9:22 And what if God, wishing to demonstrate His wrath and make His power known, endured with much long-suffering vessels of wrath fitted for destruction,
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,

A. Sovereignty refers to God's unlimited authority, power, and position—Rev. 4:11; 5:13:

- Rev. 4:11 You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, for You have created all things, and because of Your will they were, and were created.
Rev. 5:13 And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea and all things in them, I heard saying, To Him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be the blessing and the honor and the glory and the might forever and ever.

1. As the sovereign One, God is above everything, behind everything, and in everything—1 Kings 22:19.

- 1 Kings 22:19 And Micaiah said, Hear therefore the word of Jehovah, I saw Jehovah sitting upon His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him, on His right hand and on His left.
2. 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.
- Dan. 4:34 And at the end of those days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up my eyes to heaven, and reason returned to me; and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored the ever-living One; For His dominion is an eternal dominion, / And His kingdom is from generation to generation;
- Dan. 4:35 And all the inhabitants of earth are considered as nothing, / But He does according to His will in the army of heaven / And among the inhabitants of the earth; / And there is no one who can resist His hand / Or say to Him, What are You doing?
- Eph. 1:4 Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blemish before Him in love,
- Eph. 1:5 Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,
- Eph. 1:9 Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself,
- Eph. 1:10 Unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him;
- Eph. 1:11 In whom also we were designated as an inheritance, having been predestinated according to the purpose of the One who works all things according to the counsel of His will,

B. Romans 9:19-23 refers to God’s sovereignty:

- Rom. 9:19 You will say to me then, Why does He still find fault? For who withstands His will?
- Rom. 9:20 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. 9:21 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?
- Rom. 9:22 And what if God, wishing to demonstrate His wrath and make His power known, endured with much long-suffering vessels of wrath fitted for destruction,
- 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,

1. “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?”—vv. 19b-20:

- Rom. 9:19 You will say to me then, Why does He still find fault? For who withstands His will?
- Rom. 9:20 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?

a. We need to realize who we are; we are God’s creatures, and He is our Creator—Isa. 42:5.

- Isa. 42:5 Thus says God Jehovah, / Who created the heavens and stretched them out, / Who spread forth the earth and what springs up from it, / Who gives breath to the people upon it / And spirit to those who walk on it:

b. As His creatures, we should not resist His purpose or answer back to Him, the Creator—Rom. 9:20.

- Rom. 9:20 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?

2. “Does not the potter have authority over the clay to make out of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?”—v. 21:

Rom. 9:21 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?

a. God is our Potter, and we are the clay in His hand; God, our Potter, is sovereign—Jer. 18:1-6; Isa. 64:8.

Jer. 18:1 The word which came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying,
Jer. 18:2 Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear My words.
Jer. 18:3 So I went down to the potter's house, and he was there doing work at his wheel.
Jer. 18:4 But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand; so he reworked it into another vessel, as it seemed good for the potter to make.
Jer. 18:5 And the word of Jehovah came to me, saying,
Jer. 18:6 Am I not able to do with you, O house of Israel, as this potter does? declares Jehovah. Indeed, as the clay is in the hand of the potter, so you are in My hand, O house of Israel.
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.

b. As our Potter, God has the absolute right over us; regarding us, He has the right to do whatever He desires; if God wills, He can make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor—Jer. 18:6; Isa. 29:16; 64:8; Rom. 9:21.

Jer. 18:6 Am I not able to do with you, O house of Israel, as this potter does? declares Jehovah. Indeed, as the clay is in the hand of the potter, so you are in My hand, O house of Israel.
Isa. 29:16 You turn things upside down! / Shall the potter be considered to be like the clay, / That what is made should say of him who made it, He did not make me, / Or what is formed should say of him who formed it, He has no understanding?
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. 9:21 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?

C. God's sovereignty is the basis of His selection; His selection depends on His sovereignty—vv. 11, 18; 11:5, 28.

Rom. 9:11 Though the children had not yet been born nor had done anything good or bad (that the purpose of God according to selection might remain, not of works but of Him who calls),
Rom. 9:18 So then He has mercy on whom He wills, and He hardens whom He wills.
Rom. 11:5 In the same way then at the present time also there has come into being a remnant according to the selection of grace.
Rom. 11:28 According to the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but according to the selection they are beloved for the fathers' sake.

II. God as our Potter has sovereignly created us to be His vessels, His containers, to contain Himself according to His predestination—2 Cor. 4:6-7; Eph. 4:6; 3:19b; Phil. 2:13; Heb. 13:20-21; 1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Tim. 2:20-21; Eph. 1:5, 11:

2 Cor. 4:6 Because the God who said, Out of darkness light shall shine, is the One who shined in our hearts to illuminate the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
2 Cor. 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us.

- Eph. 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.
- Eph. 3:19 And to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.
- Phil. 2:13 For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure.
- Heb. 13:20 Now the God of peace, He who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, in the blood of an eternal covenant,
- Heb. 13:21 Perfect you in every good work for the doing of His will, doing in us that which is well pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.
- 1 Tim. 3:16 And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh, / Justified in the Spirit, / Seen by angels, / Preached among the nations, / Believed on in the world, / Taken up in glory.
- 2 Tim. 2:20 But in a great house there are not only gold and silver vessels but also wooden and earthen; and some are unto honor, and some unto dishonor.
- 2 Tim. 2:21 If therefore anyone cleanses himself from these, he will be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, useful to the master, prepared unto every good work.
- Eph. 1:5 Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,
- Eph. 1:11 In whom also we were designated as an inheritance, having been predestinated according to the purpose of the One who works all things according to the counsel of His will,
- A. God's purpose in creating man was to make man His vessel, His earthenware container, to contain and be filled with Christ as life for the building up of the Body of Christ as God's great corporate vessel for His expression—Gen. 2:7; Acts 9:15; Rom. 9:21, 23; 2 Cor. 4:7.
- Gen. 2:7 Jehovah God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.
- Acts 9:15 But the Lord said to him, Go, for this man is a chosen vessel to Me, to bear My name before both the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;
- Rom. 9:21 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?
- 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,
- 2 Cor. 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us.
- B. The basic teaching of the whole Scripture is simply this: God is the very content, and we are the containers made to receive the content; we must contain God and be filled with God so that we can be vessels unto honor, sanctified, useful to the master, prepared unto every good work—2 Tim. 2:20-21.
- 2 Tim. 2:20 But in a great house there are not only gold and silver vessels but also wooden and earthen; and some are unto honor, and some unto dishonor.
- 2 Tim. 2:21 If therefore anyone cleanses himself from these, he will be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, useful to the master, prepared unto every good work.
- C. If we do not contain God and know God as our content, we are a senseless contradiction—Eccl. 1:2-3, 14.
- Eccl. 1:2 Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; / Vanity of vanities; all is vanity.
- Eccl. 1:3 What advantage does a man have in all his work / Which he does under the sun?
- Eccl. 1:14 I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and indeed, all is vanity and a chasing after wind.
- D. All of Paul's fourteen Epistles can be summed up in two words—open vessel:
1. The degree to which God can dispense Himself into us depends on the degree of our

openness; God wants us only to love Him and to keep ourselves open to Him—2 Kings 4:1-7; Matt. 5:3; John 1:16; Isa. 57:15; 66:1-2.

- 2 Kings 4:1 Now a certain woman from among the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, saying, Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared Jehovah. And the creditor has come to take my two children to himself as servants.
- 2 Kings 4:2 And Elisha said to her, What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in your house? And she said, Your servant has nothing at all in the house, except a jar of oil.
- 2 Kings 4:3 And he said, Go and borrow vessels outside, from all your neighbors, empty vessels, and not just a few.
- 2 Kings 4:4 Then go in and shut the door behind you and your sons, and pour out into all those vessels; and each one you fill set aside.
- 2 Kings 4:5 So she went away from him and shut the door behind herself and her sons; and they brought the vessels to her, and she poured out into them.
- 2 Kings 4:6 And when she had filled the vessels, she said to her son, Bring me another vessel. But he said to her, There is no other vessel. And the oil stopped.
- 2 Kings 4:7 And she went and told the man of God. And he said, Go and sell the oil, and pay your debt; and you and your sons can live off the rest.
- Matt. 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.
- John 1:16 For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.
- Isa. 57:15 For thus says the high and exalted One, / Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: / I will dwell in the high and holy place, / And with the contrite and lowly of spirit, / To revive the spirit of the lowly / And to revive the heart of the contrite.
- Isa. 66:1 Thus says Jehovah, / Heaven is My throne, / And the earth the footstool for My feet. / Where then is the house that you will build for Me, / And where is the place of My rest?
- Isa. 66:2 For all these things My hand has made, / And so all these things have come into being, declares Jehovah. / But to this kind of man will I look, to him who is poor / And of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.

2. Decadence starts from self-complacency; progress starts from hunger and thirst—Deut. 4:25; Luke 1:53; Phil. 1:25; Rev. 3:16-18.

- Deut. 4:25 When you have brought forth children and grandchildren and have languished in the land, and you have spoiled yourselves by making an idol, the form of anything, and have done that which is evil in the sight of Jehovah your God so as to anger Him;
- Luke 1:53 The hungry He has filled with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty.
- Phil. 1:25 And being confident of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of the faith,
- Rev. 3:16 So, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am about to spew you out of My mouth.
- Rev. 3:17 Because you say, I am wealthy and have become rich and have need of nothing, and do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,
- Rev. 3:18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire that you may be rich, and white garments that you may be clothed and that the shame of your nakedness may not be manifested, and eyesalve to anoint your eyes that you may see.

III. In His sovereignty God as our Potter has the authority to make the ones whom He has selected and called to be vessels of mercy unto honor and glory—Rom. 9:11, 18, 21-24:

- Rom. 9:11 Though the children had not yet been born nor had done anything good or bad (that the purpose of God according to selection might remain, not of works but of Him who calls),
- Rom. 9:18 So then He has mercy on whom He wills, and He hardens whom He wills.

- Rom. 9:21 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?
- Rom. 9:22 And what if God, wishing to demonstrate His wrath and make His power known, endured with much long-suffering vessels of wrath fitted for destruction,
- 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,
- Rom. 9:24 Even us, whom He has also called, not only from among the Jews but also from among the Gentiles?

A. We were chosen by God according to His sovereign mercy; God's mercy is the most far-reaching of God's attributes, saving us out of our wretched position into a condition that is suitable for His grace and love—Eph. 2:1-4; Heb. 4:16; Matt. 5:7; 7:1; 9:13:

- Eph. 2:1 And you, though dead in your offenses and sins,
- Eph. 2:2 In which you once walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, of the spirit which is now operating in the sons of disobedience;
- Eph. 2:3 Among whom we also all conducted ourselves once in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the thoughts, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest;
- Eph. 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,
- 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.
- Matt. 5:7 Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy.
- Matt. 7:1 Do not judge, that you be not judged.
- 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.

1. 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.

Eph. 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,

2. Man's disobedience affords God's mercy an opportunity, and God's mercy brings man to salvation—Rom. 11:32.

Rom. 11:32 For God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all.

3. We were created to be vessels of mercy to contain Christ as the God of mercy—9:11-13, 16, 20-21, 23; Lam. 3:21-24; Luke 1:78-79.

- Rom. 9:11 Though the children had not yet been born nor had done anything good or bad (that the purpose of God according to selection might remain, not of works but of Him who calls),
- Rom. 9:12 It was said to her, "The greater shall serve the less";
- Rom. 9:13 As it is written, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."
- Rom. 9:16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.
- Rom. 9:20 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. 9:21 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?
- 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,
- Lam. 3:21 This I recall to my heart; / Therefore I have hope.
- Lam. 3:22 It is Jehovah's lovingkindness that we are not consumed, / For His compassions do not fail;

Lam. 3:23 They are new every morning; / Great is Your faithfulness.
 Lam. 3:24 Jehovah is my portion, says my soul; / Therefore I hope in Him.
 Luke 1:78 Because of the merciful compassions of our God, in which the rising sun will visit us from on high,
 Luke 1:79 To shine upon those sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

4. 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—Hymns, #296, stanza 3.

Hymns, #296 And can it be that I should gain
 Stanza 3

He left His Father's throne above, So free, so infinite His grace;
 Emptied Himself of all but love, And bled for Adam's helpless race:
 'Tis mercy all, immense and free; For, O my God, it found out me.
 'Tis mercy all, immense and free; For, O my God, it found out me.

- B. "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:

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. 9:16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

1. Our concept is that the one who wills gains what he wills to obtain and that the one who runs gains what he runs after—v. 16:

Rom. 9:16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

- a. If this were the case, God's selection would be according to our effort and labor.
- b. 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.
- c. 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.

Eph. 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,

2. 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:

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. 9:16 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.

- a. If we know God's sovereignty, we will thank Him for His mercy, realizing that we are under His sovereign mercy—Rom. 9:15.

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."

- b. 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—v. 18.

Rom. 9:18 So then He has mercy on whom He wills, and He hardens whom He wills.

c. 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—vv. 15-16, 23.

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. 9:16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

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,

3. In God's sovereign mercy our hearts are inclined toward Him; because of His mercy to us, we seek Him day by day—Jer. 29:12-13; Deut. 4:29; Isa. 55:6; Psa. 27:8; 105:4; 119:2; Heb. 11:6.

Jer. 29:12 Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you;

Jer. 29:13 And you will seek Me and find Me if you search for Me with all your heart;

Deut. 4:29 And from there you will seek Jehovah your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and with all your soul.

Isa. 55:6 Seek Jehovah while He may be found; / Call upon Him while He is near.

Psa. 27:8 When You say, Seek My face, / To You my heart says, Your face, O Jehovah, will I seek.

Psa. 105:4 Seek Jehovah and His strength; / Seek His face continually.

Psa. 119:2 Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, / Who seek Him with all their heart.

Heb. 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing to Him, for he who comes forward to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

4. 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.

5. Regarding His recovery, God has mercy on whom He will have mercy.

C. Romans 9 reveals the principle that everything depends on God's mercy—vv. 15-16:

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. 9:16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

1. The apostle Paul applies this principle to the Israelites, showing us that everything that happened to them was of God's mercy—vv. 16, 23.

Rom. 9:16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

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,

2. There must be at least one time when we see God's mercy and definitely touch His mercy—Eph. 2:4; Matt. 9:13:

Eph. 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,

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.

a. 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.

- b. 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.
- D. "Let us therefore come forward with boldness to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help"—Heb. 4:16, cf. v. 15; Luke 15:20-24.
- 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.
- Heb. 4:15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all respects like us, yet without sin.
- Luke 15:20 And he rose up and came to his own father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion, and he ran and fell on his neck and kissed him affectionately.
- Luke 15:21 And the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.
- Luke 15:22 But the father said to his slaves, Bring out quickly the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet.
- Luke 15:23 And bring the fattened calf; slaughter it, and let us eat and be merry,
- Luke 15:24 Because this son of mine was dead and lives again; he was lost and has been found. And they began to be merry.
- E. In His sovereignty God the Father has had mercy on us; therefore, we must praise and worship Him for His sovereign mercy:
1. "Father, we enjoy Thy mercy, / Ever fresh and ever new; / Every morning shed upon us, / It refreshes as the dew. / How we taste it! How we taste it! / Giving Thee the praises due"—Hymns, #26, stanza 5.
 2. "Father, Thy mercy with Thy love and grace / Did we obtain; / And in Thy mercy, with Thee face to face, / We'll e'er remain; / And for Thy mercy we would worship Thee / Through all our days and through eternity"—Hymns, #25, stanza 3.
- F. We were created to be vessels of mercy unto honor to contain Christ as the God of honor (2 Tim. 2:20-21; Rom. 9:21) so that we may honor God and men (Judg. 9:9):
- 2 Tim. 2:20 But in a great house there are not only gold and silver vessels but also wooden and earthen; and some are unto honor, and some unto dishonor.
- 2 Tim. 2:21 If therefore anyone cleanses himself from these, he will be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, useful to the master, prepared unto every good work.
- Rom. 9:21 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?
- Judg. 9:9 But the olive tree said to them, Shall I leave my fatness, because of which God and men are honored by me, and go to wave over the trees?
1. Being vessels unto honor is not the result of our choice; it originates with God's sovereignty—Rom. 9:21.

Rom. 9:21 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?
 2. The believers are vessels unto honor with Christ as their treasure through regeneration—2 Cor. 4:6-7.

2 Cor. 4:6 Because the God who said, Out of darkness light shall shine, is the One who shined in our hearts to illuminate the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

- 2 Cor. 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us.
3. The believers are vessels unto honor through their cleansing of themselves from the vessels unto dishonor—2 Tim. 2:20-21.
- 2 Tim. 2:20 But in a great house there are not only gold and silver vessels but also wooden and earthen; and some are unto honor, and some unto dishonor.
- 2 Tim. 2:21 If therefore anyone cleanses himself from these, he will be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, useful to the master, prepared unto every good work.
4. Vessels unto honor are those who honor God by living and walking by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 25) and those who honor men by ministering the Spirit to them (2 Cor. 3:6, 8).
- Gal. 5:16 But I say, Walk by the Spirit and you shall by no means fulfill the lust of the flesh.
- Gal. 5:25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.
- 2 Cor. 3:6 Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.
- 2 Cor. 3:8 How shall the ministry of the Spirit not be more in glory?
- G. We were created to be vessels of mercy unto glory to contain Christ as the God of glory:
1. Glory is God Himself expressed and manifested—Jer. 2:11; Acts 7:2; Eph. 1:17; 1 Cor. 2:8; 1 Pet. 4:14; Col. 2:9; Psa. 24:7-10.
- Jer. 2:11 Has a nation ever exchanged its gods, / Even though they are no gods? / But My people have exchanged their glory / For that which does not benefit them.
- Acts 7:2 And he said, Men, brothers and fathers, listen. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran,
- Eph. 1:17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him,
- 1 Cor. 2:8 Which none of the rulers of this age have known; for if they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;
- 1 Pet. 4:14 If you are reproached in the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.
- Col. 2:9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,
- Psa. 24:7 Lift up your heads, O gates; / And be lifted up, O long enduring doors; / And the King of glory will come in.
- Psa. 24:8 Who is the King of glory? / Jehovah strong and mighty! / Jehovah mighty in battle!
- Psa. 24:9 Lift up your heads, O gates; / And lift up, O long enduring doors; / And the King of glory will come in.
- Psa. 24:10 Who is this King of glory? / Jehovah of hosts—/ He is the King of glory! Selah.
2. The Lord was able to tell the Father, “I have glorified You on earth, finishing the work which You have given Me to do” (John 17:4); this means that while the Lord was living on earth, He manifested and expressed the Father.
- John 17:4 I have glorified You on earth, finishing the work which You have given Me to do.
3. The release of the glory of Christ’s divinity (Luke 12:49-50) was His being glorified by the Father with the divine glory (John 12:23-24) in His resurrection (Acts 3:13) through His death; in Christ’s glorification He, as the last Adam, became the life-giving Spirit for His divine dispensing (John 7:39; Luke 24:26, 46; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:6).
- Luke 12:49 I have come to cast fire on the earth, and how I wish that it were already kindled!
- Luke 12:50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am pressed until it is accomplished!

- Acts 3:13 The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him.
- John 12:23 And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.
- John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.
- John 7:39 But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed into Him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.
- Luke 24:26 Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and enter into His glory?
- Luke 24:46 And He said to them, Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise up from the dead on the third day,
- 1 Cor. 15:45 So also it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul"; the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.
- 2 Cor. 3:6 Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.
4. As vessels of mercy unto honor and glory, we have been prepared by God unto glory through glorification—the last step of God’s full salvation—Rom. 8:21, 23, 29-30; Phil. 3:21.
- Rom. 8:21 In hope that the creation itself will also be freed from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.
- Rom. 8:23 And not only so, but we ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan in ourselves, eagerly awaiting sonship, the redemption of our body.
- Rom. 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers;
- Rom. 8:30 And those whom He predestinated, these He also called; and those whom He called, these He also justified; and those whom He justified, these He also glorified.
- Phil. 3:21 Who will transfigure the body of our humiliation to be conformed to the body of His glory, according to His operation by which He is able even to subject all things to Himself.
5. According to His sovereign authority, God created, formed, and even made us for His glory—Isa. 43:7; Rom. 9:23:
- Isa. 43:7 Everyone who is called by My name, / Whom I have created, formed, and even made for My glory.
- 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,
- a. We were predestinated by His sovereignty to be His containers for His glorious expression and manifestation.
- b. This is the climax of our usefulness to God—the goal of God’s selection according to His sovereignty—vv. 11, 18.
- Rom. 9:11 Though the children had not yet been born nor had done anything good or bad (that the purpose of God according to selection might remain, not of works but of Him who calls),
- Rom. 9:18 So then He has mercy on whom He wills, and He hardens whom He wills.
- c. The glorification of God is the purpose of our service—7:6; 11:36.
- Rom. 7:6 But now we have been discharged from the law, having died to that in which we were held, so that we serve in newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter.

Rom. 11:36 Because out from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

d. The highest service that we can render to God is to express Him for His glory—1 Cor. 6:20; 10:31; Rom. 6:4.

1 Cor. 6:20 For you have been bought with a price. So then glorify God in your body.

1 Cor. 10:31 Therefore whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Rom. 6:4 We have been buried therefore with Him through baptism into His death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so also we might walk in newness of life.

e. God's glory is wrought into the church, and He is expressed in the church; hence, to God is the glory in the church; that is, God is glorified in the church—Eph. 3:16, 20-21.

Eph. 3:16 That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man,

Eph. 3:20 But to Him who is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which operates in us,

Eph. 3:21 To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations forever and ever. Amen.

6. We have this treasure, Christ as the God of glory, dwelling within us, the earthen vessels (2 Cor. 4:7); "this treasure" (v. 7) indwelling us is "the face of Jesus Christ" (v. 6), the presence of Christ, "the person of Christ" (2:10).

2 Cor. 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us.

2 Cor. 4:6 Because the God who said, Out of darkness light shall shine, is the One who shined in our hearts to illuminate the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

2 Cor. 2:10 But whom you forgive anything, I also forgive; for also what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, it is for your sake in the person of Christ;

7. When we turn our heart to the Lord, we are beholding the Lord Spirit as the presence of Christ in our spirit, and we are "being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit"—3:16-18; cf. 2 Tim. 4:22.

2 Cor. 3:16 But whenever their heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

2 Cor. 3:17 And the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

2 Cor. 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

2 Tim. 4:22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

8. To behold the glory of the Lord is to see the Lord ourselves; to reflect the glory of the Lord is to enable others to see Him through us—Isa. 60:1, 5.

Isa. 60:1 Arise! Shine! For your light has come, / And the glory of Jehovah has risen upon you.

Isa. 60:5 Then you will see and you will beam, / And your heart will be in awe and will swell with joy, / For the abundance of the sea will be turned to you, / The wealth of the nations will come to you.