



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Discovery 101** – We are excited to hold our next Discovery 101 class on Sunday, February 25 from 3-7 pm. If you are interested in learning more about Southwinds and want to become a member of our church, please sign up on the App or email Rene Snyder at: [rsnyder@southwinds.org](mailto:rsnyder@southwinds.org) with questions. Childcare and a light meal provided.
- **Easter Candy Only Needed** – We need bags of individually-wrapped candy for our Kids Ministry Egg Hunt on Easter morning. No EGGS Needed this year! You can buy candy on Amazon and have it shipped straight to the church -- or bring it by the Kids Min, Worship Center Lobby or the Office. Thank you all for always providing what is needed each year!
- **Local Missions Opportunity (March 9-16)** – Southwinds will be hosting a Missions Team from Texas. Anyone interested in providing meals or serving along-side the Missions Team, please contact Chris Martinez at [cmartinez@southwinds.org](mailto:cmartinez@southwinds.org) or (760) 685-5152.

## MY STORY

**How often do you extend mercy vs. receive mercy?**

### QUICK REVIEW

Looking back at this week's teaching, was there anything that particularly caught your attention, challenged, or confused you?

“So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills. (Romans 9:18, ESV). That statement in Romans 9:18 leads to this question in 9:19... “Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?” That’s what Paul is answering here. If God hardens whom he wills and has mercy on whom he wills, how can he blame anyone, because no one can resist his will?”

– Michael Nolen

**Today in Life Groups we are going to answer the question “Why does he (God) still find fault”?**

**Have a Volunteer Read: Romans 9:19-21**

**Answer #1: God IS GOD.**

“Paul is saying, As Creator, God has the sovereign right to govern the world as he pleases. He says, God designed the world in such a way that some receive mercy and others receive justice. He decided to do it that way Look at the second half of 9:20... Will what is molded, say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?” In other words, is it right for the pot to challenge the potter about how the potter is handling the clay? It's a rhetorical question. The answer is, No, of course not. It's unthinkable. Paul is emphasizing the disparity between humans and God is like that between the clay and the potter. He's not saying humans are junk. Humans are not junk. Humans are made in God's image. We are created beings that will live forever somewhere. Yet we are still created and he is Creator. And just as the clay is subordinate to the will of the potter, so humans are subordinate to the will of God. And any attempt to make this say that human beings are the ultimate decisive factor in salvation is a distortion of the text. You cannot get that out of this passage or this illustration.” – **Michael Nolen**

**Why is our own relationship with God dependent upon our understanding that we are the clay and God is the potter?**

**Why does humility play a role in our walks with God?**

“This is all meant to shock those vessels of honor. Now, the question in Romans 9:20, ‘Why have you made me like this?’ ... zooms in on God's reasons for doing it this way. And Paul, is going to answer this. But it's like he's saying, Look, I'm about to give you a reason. But before I give you that reason, I want us to understand this. We are pots, he is the potter. And just like the pot doesn't know all the reasons why the potter chooses to do what he does, so we don't know all the reasons why God chooses to do what he does. But we have no place to judge God's ways. He sees things that we don't. He knows things that we don't. He is wise in ways that we are not. So we must be very careful to arrogantly challenge God, to question his goodness and wisdom. That's Paul's first argument. There's an infinite qualitative difference between the potter and the clay. And that difference makes it foolish and wrong for the clay to criticize the choices of the all-wise potter. He is free to make vessels of honor and dishonor out of the same undeserving lump because he is sovereign over the clay. 28:10 Let me just press this home before we move on. Do you see how this humbles us in the best way possible? Do you see how this keeps us from treating God casually? Do you see how this wells up within you a newfound appreciation for your salvation and being made right with God?” – **Michael Nolen**

**What are the dangers of taking our relationship with God casually?  
How should God's sovereignty humble us?**

**Have Another Volunteer Read: Romans 9:22-23**

**Answer #2: God displays his sovereign glory THROUGH MERCY or God displays his glory most fully this way.**

“Paul moves in 9:22-23 to highlight the deepest reason why God does things this way. These verses are incredibly deep and among the most important in Paul's writings, because they point us toward why God allows evil and unbelief. This is the deepest argument in the Bible, in my estimation for why it is right for God to unconditionally choose to show mercy to some, while allowing others to persist in their unbelief.” – **Michael Nolen**

“Think about it. Pharaoh rebelled, again and again and again. 10 plagues! God displayed the greatness of his just wrath and the power of his judgment through the delay, through his patience. And doing it this way God was allowed to multiply his wonders. Evil was seen as the evil that it is, and his victory was all the more glorious. God’s patience displays the glory of his wrath and the glory of his just judgments. This is not only what God did with Pharaoh. This is what God is doing all across human history. God is being patient with vessels of destruction, to more fully display the glory of his wrath and just power. That is, in part, why God permits unbelief and evil to temporarily exist. It has a purpose. It exists not because God doesn’t care, or is somehow evil himself.”

– **Michael Nolen**

**Have you ever looked at the stories out of the Bible with the lens of how God uses wrath to display His glory?**

God uses evil so that the fullness of his glory, including his just wrath, might be fully known to his vessels of mercy. Every husband who ever shopped for a diamond ring to ask his wife to marry him knows about this. When you are picking out a diamond, the jeweler always pulls out black velvet and lays the diamonds on it. Why? Because the darkness of the velvet makes the glory of the diamond brighter. Evil exists as a dark backdrop to display God's manifold glories to his vessels of mercy. – **Michael Nolen**

**How easy would it be to miss what God is doing in our lives if we focus only on the wrath?**

#### **APPLICATION**

Questions to bring to God this week.

**If you've repented of your sins, and placed a living trust in Jesus, you are a vessel of mercy, prepared by God. Christ-followers, do you see yourself this way?**

**As a vessel of mercy formed and fashioned from an undeserving lump of clay? When we see ourselves this way, why would we ever doubt God's commitment to us?**

#### **PRAISES**

#### **PRAYER REQUESTS**