

God's Sovereign Rights in Determining His Strategy for History

📖 Romans 9:14-18

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In Romans 9 the background is that Israel had tremendous advantages over every other nation and yet when their Messiah came very few Israelites received Him relative to Gentiles. What could account for this strange phenomena? Why hadn't Israel's prophesied covenanted kingdom come as they expected? The short answer is their false theology blinded them. First, many Jews believed that simply being a part of the elect nation of Israel was sufficient to be a partaker in the covenanted kingdom. Paul's short answer to this false theology is verse 6, "They are not all Israel who are descended from Israel." The point being that not all Israelites had faith as the man renamed Israel. Paul will return later to the topic of faith as the means of both Jews and Gentiles becoming partakers in the prophesied covenanted kingdom. Second, many Jews believed that simply being a physical descendant of Abraham guaranteed one a share in the prophesied covenanted kingdom. This too was false theology as Paul answers in verse 7, "nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: THROUGH ISAAC YOUR SEED WILL BE NAMED." Verse 8 explains, "That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God," that is, it's not the children who were generated by Abraham's works of the flesh as he tried to acquire an heir, "but the children of the promise are regarded as seed," that is, it is the children who were generated by God supernaturally as Abraham trusted the promise of God to acquire the chosen heir. In verse 9 he quotes the promise, "For this is the word of promise: 'AT THIS TIME I WILL COME AND SARAH WILL HAVE A SON.'" The son had to be provided by God's promise because Sarah was 90 years old and her womb was as good as dead. So the heir was supernaturally provided by God. The heir was named Isaac and it is clear that such a birth would draw great public attention and that this was God's very point. God wanted to draw attention to His chosen heir through whom the Messiah would come. This argument refuted the Jews belief that simply being a physical descendant of Abraham guaranteed one a share in the prophesied covenanted kingdom. That could not be so because there were many physical descendants of Abraham and yet only one was the heir through whom the Messiah would come. Third, many Jews believed that the fathers were chosen because of merit. Paul's answer is in verse 10, "And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, it was said to her, 'THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER.'" Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED." The point

being that God's choice of the patriarch Jacob to be the seed line through whom the Messiah would come was not based on any merit Jacob accomplished or God foresaw, but simply because it was God's purpose. As far as the scriptural record is concerned, Jacob had no merit with God. Jacob was a liar and a deceiver. He deceived his father Isaac into giving him the blessing rather than Esau. He deceived his father-in-law Laban by fleeing secretly. He deceived his brother Esau by assuring him he was coming to visit and then went the other way. Jacob was without merit in every conceivable analysis. Therefore the Jewish belief that God's choice of their nation was based on the merit of the fathers was ridiculously out of accord with the scriptural testimony. *The bottom line is that God had chosen Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to be the seed line of the Messiah through whom blessing comes through faith on the basis of His own purpose.* This was God's strategy for bringing blessing to the world and yet Israel had not understood God's strategy. They thought God's strategy was to choose their nation because of the merit of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and thereby assure every physical descendant a place in the prophesied covenanted kingdom. This was false. What God had done was chosen this nation to be the channel through whom the Messiah would come and all who had faith in Him would be partakers of the prophesied covenanted kingdom.

In 9:14-18 we see two more men added into the equation in order to prove that God's strategy for the nation Israel was not based on merit but on purposes solely within Himself. Here we see that God chooses certain people within the nation Israel and who come in contact with the nation Israel to play a certain role in furthering His strategy. Remember, the Jewish belief at the time of Christ is that God could not do anything apart from merit. If God chose someone for blessing or cursing this must be based on their merit or lack thereof. Paul demolishes this argument in these verses. He cites Moses as one God chose to show mercy and Pharaoh as one God chose to harden. Was the basis of these decisions found in these men and what they did or would do? "The thought of God giving unmerited privilege as he thought best would provoke in them [Jews] the immediate reaction: "Is there then unrighteousness with God?"

Paul, predicting this question, lays it all out in verse 14. **What shall we say then?** Paul is fond of using "this rhetorical question,"¹ it was a "rabbinical method" and "a debater's phrase."² What shall we say, **"There is no injustice with God, is there?** The question uses the interrogative particle *μη* which expects a negative answer. At stake is the very nature of God. Is God unjust for not blessing and cursing based on human merit? The expected answer is negative and the answer is emphatically negative. **May it never be!** This expression is *μη γενοιτο*, one of the strongest possible ways of stating a negative. The verb *γενοιτο* is in the optative mood. The optative mood is extremely rare, used only 70 times in the NT. It was more common in Attic Greek but had been nearly taken over in the Koine by the subjunctive. Paul's use of it shows he was well-educated in classical Greek. The sense of the optative is possibility but not in the sense of a third class condition, which is 50-50. The optative is more like a dying possibility, something very unlikely and when coupled with *μη* it means "nigh unto impossible. It is "a very strong negative equivalent to *ου μη*." Burton in his *Moods and Tenses* says, "In 12 of Paul's

14 uses "it expresses the apostles abhorrence of an inference which he fears may be (falsely) drawn from his argument."

Paul expected Jews to conclude that now as an ex-Pharisee he was teaching false doctrine. However, Paul's answer that God is not unjust is orthodox. God is just by nature, it's one of His attributes; God always does what is right. Paul upheld God's justice but saw that there was more to the equation. Jews simply thought that for God to be just required that He choose to bless those with merit and curse those without merit. Paul recognized that God cursed men and that this was a function of God's justice. However, he also recognized that if God were to exact His justice precisely then all men would be cursed because no one has any merit with God. The fact that all men were not cursed indicated that there was more to the picture. Paul's explanation is that God is not only just but He is also merciful and because He is merciful He does things that often appear unjust but this is part of God's strategy to bring blessing to the world through the Messiah.

9:15 explains an incident of God's mercy when strict justice was not applied. **For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION."** This is a quote from Exod 33:19. It was stated at the cleft in the rock experience, when God's glory passed by Moses. In that context God said, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion." To understand that the only reason God chose to pass by Moses with all His glory was because He wanted to and that Moses had no merit that moved God to do this for him - turn to Exodus 32. This is the event of the golden calf. In verse 1 Moses has been up on Mt Sinai for forty days and so everybody is getting impatient. And "the people assembled about Aaron and said to him, "Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." The people had been redeemed from Egypt but they were still devoted to Egyptian religion. In verses 2, 3 and 4 Aaron says take off all your gold jewelry and bring it to me. They do and he smelts it and forms it into a golden calf and says, "This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt." Violation of which of the Ten Commandments? Violation of the very first commandment, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God..." So they broke the first commandment. They fashioned an idol. In verses 5-6 the next day they worshipped the idol and had a big party. In verse 7 the LORD spoke to Moses and said, "Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves." In verse 8 He cites their violation of the first commandment. And in verse 9 He says they are "an obstinate" or hard hearted people. In verse 10 He threatens to destroy them. Now it's not really our intent to go into this dimension but very briefly, what is God doing? Why is God threatening to destroy them? Why does He say in verse 10, "Now then let Me alone?" when it was He who mentioned it to Moses in the first place? Because God is trying to get Moses to intercede for the people. He's actually prompting him to pray. In verse 11 he does pray and it's a great prayer. The prayer is basically, "Hey God,

these are your people, not my people and you brought them up out of the land of Egypt, I didn't bring them up. So if you just kill them then what are the Egyptians going to say about You? What's this going to do to your reputation in the world? So turn from your anger and change your mind about this." Then he goes back to the Abrahamic covenant, and he says in verse 13, "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself..." to give them the land, the seed and so forth. So He goes back to God's covenant promises. It's a fantastic model prayer. He puts the onus back on God and in verse 14, "The LORD changed His mind" or, technically, He relented "from the harm which He said He would do to His people." The whole point was that for God to relent from destroying the people required that Moses intercede and God prompted Moses to intercede and he did intercede and so we have an alternative situation develop. Now in the situation God was just and so He could have killed how many of them? All of them. There were at least 600,000 men we know from the book of Numbers. But now a new situation so let's see what happens. In verse 15 Moses is coming down Mt Sinai with the two copies of the Law, one for God and one for Israel. Both were written by the very hand of God. And Moses was on the side of Mt Sinai and so Moses meets him on the way down and they both hear the noise and Joshua thinks it's a war but Moses says, no, it's a party.

In verse 19 he sees what's going down, throws the two copies of the Law down shattering them to signify that their hearts were broken and they needed a new heart. They said they would keep this law and they broke it virtually from the start. Man does not keep covenant. And God is totally just to totally destroy them at this point. That's the picture. And we go through this big story with Moses and Aaron about why Aaron let them do this when he knew better and this is when Aaron starts to be a real thorn in Moses' side but that's a consequence of Moses being an idiot earlier and not wanting to go back to Egypt to deliver the people without some help. So he got Aaron and now Aaron becomes more hurt than help. In verse 25 the people were out of control because Aaron let them get out of control and so in verse 26 "Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, "Whoever is for the LORD, come to me!" And all the sons of Levi gathered together to him." The tribe of Levi was Moses' tribe. And so Moses instructs them to go through the camp and kill every man, his brother, his friend and his neighbor. These were people who were close to these Levi's, people they knew and in verse 28 "about three thousand men of the people fell that day." 3,000 out of how many? 600,000. So is that pure justice? If God meted out strict justice how many would He have killed? 600,000. So killing only 3,000 is not justice. What is it? It's mercy. Now Moses is afraid there are going to be more killed the next day and so in verse 29 he calls the people to dedicate themselves to the Lord today, not tomorrow, tomorrow may be too late. And the key to understanding what's going on in Romans 9 are the next verses. Verse 30, "on the next day Moses said to the people, "You yourselves have committed a great sin," I didn't do it, you did it, catch that, "and now I am going up to the LORD, perhaps I can make atonement for your sin." In other words, maybe since I did not sin in this manner my death can substitute for your death. Watch, verse 31, "Then Moses returned to the LORD, and said, "Alas, this people has committed a great sin, and they have made a god of gold for themselves, But now, if You will, forgive their sin—and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!" Moses is saying, kill me instead of killing

them. I'll die for them. Now verse 33, did the Lord accept Moses' offer? "The LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book." So did the LORD accept Moses' offer to die a substitutionary death for them? No. Why couldn't the LORD accept it? Because Moses is a sinner too. He may not have done that sin but he is a sinner by nature. And no one who is a sinner by nature can die for others who are sinners by nature! Now that little incident is the key to Paul's quote from Exod 33:19 but let's continue with the narrative. In verse 34 God says, now you take the people to the land, My angel will go before you and in the day when I visit them I will visit them for their sin. And verse 35 is a report of what happened during the forty years of wilderness wanderings: that entire generation, apart from Joshua and Caleb, were destroyed and you can read it in the book of Numbers, but they did not enter the land and it was a punishment, ultimately that can be traced back to the golden calf incident. In chapter 33 God said go up to the land and I will give you the land that I promised in the Abrahamic Covenant and I will send an angel before you to conquer the land, the land flowing with milk and honey, but in verse 3 he adds, "I will not go up in your midst, because you are an obstinate people, and I might destroy you on the way." So God says, there's no way I'm going with you because it's too dangerous for you. And everybody gets upset and moans and groans. Moses didn't like it so much, he wanted God to go up with them and so there's a little section that details Moses going to the tent and the pillar of cloud descending and God talks to Moses face to face and when Moses would leave the tent Joshua would stay. So Joshua is being introduced into the narrative early on so we get some background on his interest in the things of God before he becomes the leader. In verse 12 you see Moses interceding again, and why? Because God said, I'm not going up with you! The whole point of God saying I'm not going up is so that Moses would pray to God again. So we see this prompting to pray a lot. Now let's read because our quote is going to be in verse 19. Starting in verse 12, "Then Moses said to the LORD, "See, You say to me, 'Bring up this people!' But You Yourself have not let me know whom You will send with me. Moreover, You have said, 'I have known you by name, and you have also found favor in My sight.' The word "favor," by the way, is "grace." "Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your sight. Consider too, that this nation is Your people." ¹⁴And He said, "My presence shall go *with you*, and I will give you rest." "You," by the way, is singular, not plural, "you is Moses, not the nation. I will give *you* Moses rest. Verse 15, "Then he said to Him, "If Your presence does not go *with us*, do not lead us up from here. ¹⁶"For how then can it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we, I and Your people, may be distinguished from all the *other* people who are upon the face of the earth?" Moses really wants God to go up with them all and not just with him. Verse 17, "The LORD said to Moses, "I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight and I have known you by name." Alright, so the Lord is going to go up with them all...in a way...but it's not Moses' way. Verse 18, "Then Moses said, "I pray You, show me Your glory!" ¹⁹And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you;" and here's our quote from Rom 9, "and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion." In other words, on what basis is God going to let all His goodness pass by Moses? Is it on the basis of Moses' merit? Did Moses have any merit? If Moses had merit then

why didn't God accept his offer to die a substitutionary death on the people's behalf after the golden calf incident? The point is Moses had no merit and God is making very clear that the only reason He is going to show Moses His glory is because He is a gracious and compassionate God. It has nothing to do with who Moses is. God was not required to do anything for Moses. It was purely of God's mercy. And so He does pass before Him in the cleft of the rock and Moses sees only His back and not His face for no man can see God's face and live and when Moses goes down the Mount his face is shining and this is how God went up among them, in the shining face of Moses, but this shining faded and he had to go back time and time to the tent of meeting and have it reenergized, but this is how God answered the prayer to go up with them.

So turn back to Romans 9:15 and having seen the whole story now you understand verse 16. Verse 16 starts with a double connective **so then** which is literally translated, "So then, as a result." The double connective shows that this is the emphatic conclusion Paul has been arguing for all along. What then is Paul's conclusion? ...**it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.** Why did God let His glory pass by Moses? Why did He shower on Moses that blessing? Was it because of the will of Moses? No. **It does not depend on the man who wills.** Was it because of the "expended effort" of Moses? The word **runs** means "to expend effort." Did it depend upon the "expended effort" of Moses? No. **It does not depend on...the man who** "expend effort." What then does it depend on? Why did God bless Moses with the tremendous blessing of seeing His glory pass by? Because **God...has mercy.** That is the only reason! It had nothing to do with Moses. It had to do with God's strategy in history to show mercy to who He desires to show mercy.

Now the reason Paul is arguing this way is because it refuted 1st century rabbinic Judaism. In their view God did everything because of human merit and He could do no-thing apart from human merit. So for Paul to proclaim that God did something only because of His own sovereign right was to totally contradict that common Jewish notion! But is there any denying from the scriptural record that this was so? We just read the text of Exod 32-33. Is there any way one could conclude that God passed before Moses because of Moses' merit. No. He did it only because of one ultimate thing! He had mercy and He wanted to reveal Himself to Moses.

Now ultimately where this is going is to the concept that God's ultimate purpose in history is to reveal Himself and when He passed by Moses in the cleft of the rock He declared His name He was revealing His glory. One's name is one's glory and His name had originally been revealed in the burning bush to Moses in Exodus 3. Remember that incident? Moses was being commissioned to go back to Egypt to set the people free and Moses said, "What is your name that I may tell them who it is who sent Me." And God said, "I AM WHO I AM." In this name is the concept that God is existence, the root and ground of all being, an autonomous, self-contained, independent entity. At the cleft in the rock He is filling in more meaning in His name and we learn that He is merciful and compassionate. So the name of God is being developed so that a full orb picture of God is being revealed into history so that men can know Him. That is God's strategy in history and that is what this is all about, it is the great purpose of history, what dispensationalism calls "the glory of God." The concept of the glory of

God is that God is revealing His essence in every aspect in history so that men come to know Him. That is what He was doing with Moses. It had nothing to do with Moses. It had to do with the God who chose Moses to be the vehicle through whom He would reveal His own glory. And when Moses went back to the camp with his face shining it was a revelation of God's glory to all Israel.

So we have Moses as an example of God blessing one man apart from any human merit and now we come to another man, Pharaoh, in verse 17 and He is an example of how God curses one man in order to propagate His strategy through the nation Israel. It should be noted that there is nothing here about the eternal destiny of Moses and Pharaoh. As one author points out, "Moses was "converted" years before" the episode of the cleft in the rock "and any attempt to strain Paul's text to make it mean that Moses was eternally predestined to heaven and Pharaoh to hell is totally unwarranted. The question at issue is not the eternal destiny of anyone, but "God's strategy for the nation Israel as the chosen nation." God does something here to Pharaoh that bothers a lot of people. The text says, **For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH."** For those fairly familiar with the Exodus event this is a quote from fairly deep within the event. Eight of the 10 plagues had already transpired. We could go through the hardening process of Pharaoh's heart and the three different words used but Paul centers in on one section deep in the Exodus plagues. Where does the quote come from? It's a loose quote from Exod 9:16. It's not from the LXX. In the original it says, "For this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth." And goes on to say, "Still you [Pharaoh] you exalt yourself..." So the main difference is that Paul says, **FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP** signifying that God elevated Pharaoh to the highest position in all Egypt whereas the OT text says "For this reason I have allowed you to remain" signifying that God had allowed Pharaoh to remain on the throne despite his resistance to let His people go. While it's a difference, theologically it makes no difference that I can see. In both cases God had done it to accomplish His purpose in history which was to make His power known and that His name would be proclaimed throughout the whole world. But there is something important to know about the Pharaoh that comes from our study of Egyptian reliefs. Egyptians were polytheistic, they worshipped many gods, each of the 10 plagues were actually designed to judge the gods that Egyptians associated with various parts of their world. For example, Osiris was the god of the Nile, Isis was the goddess of the Nile and Khnum was the god who guarded the Nile and so the judgment on the Nile was a judgment on those gods and that goddess. Heqet was the frog goddess of fertility and so the multiplication of frogs was a judgment on that goddess. Each of the plagues is a judgment on the gods that the Egyptians associated with those aspects of the world. The last plague is the plague on the firstborn. Pharaoh himself was born a god and Pharaoh's firstborn son was born a god. So Pharaoh and his firstborn son were among the gods. We see this depicted in this relief where Pharaoh is placed among and even on a higher level than other gods. So what does this all mean for our text? It means that Pharaoh was viewed in Egyptian culture as one among many gods and that what is happening in each of the plagues is the true God is showing that He alone is God. It's a contest between polytheism and

monotheism and in that contest the ultimate display is the last plague, the death of the firstborn, because in that plague the true God is saying, the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who is thought to be born a god, is killed along with all other firstborn sons in Egypt by the one true God. Pharaoh is not a god, the firstborn son is not a god, there is but one God, the God of the Hebrew people who set them free with a mighty arm. So Paul's quote of Exod 9:16 in Rom 9:17, **"FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH."** It's a quote to show what? That God's purpose in raising up Pharaoh to that highly elevated status of a god or of Him allowing him to remain Pharaoh as long as he did, either way, was for two purposes; first, "to show" or **demonstrate by you My power**, that is, that you are not a god and that I am God and second, as a consequence, **that My name might be proclaimed in all the earth**, that is, that the name of the one true God would be proclaimed throughout the world. So men might come to know God.

Now did this happen? Was the name of Israel's God proclaimed throughout the earth as a result of the Exodus event? Turn to Josh 2:10. This is at Jericho when the spies came to the home of Rahab the harlot and she hides them on the roof and look what she says in in verse 8, "Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, and said to the men, "I know that YHWH [the one true God] has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you." Well how did they all know that? Verse 10, "For we have heard how YHWH [the one true God] dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. When we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for" and watch this, "for YHWH your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath." That is to say He is the God of the universe and that is exactly what the Exodus plagues were meant to show. So had God's name been proclaimed throughout the earth? Absolutely. Here's a harlot and I'm sure she had lots of customers from out of town and she got the word, everyone apparently got the word and it struck psychological fear in the peoples living in the land. God was preparing for Israel's conquest well in advance by striking fear in these people who dwelled in Israel's land. They were already psychologically defeated. That's one report we find. Turn to Josh 9:9 for another report. If God's purpose with Pharaoh was to raise Him up to the position of Pharaoh or allow him to remain Pharaoh until that time, for the purpose of demonstrating His power and having his name proclaimed throughout the earth, surely there ought to be more evidence of this. And what do we find in Joshua 9? The men of Gibeon coming to Joshua to make a covenant. The men of Gibeon were Hivites, they lived within the land but they came under a cloak of deception saying they were from outside of the land. That was an important difference because war strategy for those within the land differed from those outside the land. In verse 7 they want to make a covenant and the law said thou shalt not make a covenant with those from inside the land but rather you shall utterly destroy them. So Joshua is trying to find out if they are from inside the land or outside. Verse 8, "They said to Joshua, We are your servants." Okay, well, that's irrelevant information to Joshua. Who cares? What matters is "Who are you and

where do you come from? Verse 9, "They said to him, "Your servants have come from a very far country," it was a lie but they wanted to be in a covenant with them. Why? "For we have heard the report of Him and all that He did in Egypt..." That's enough, we could go on but the point is clear. What is the Exodus all about? Why did God raise Pharaoh up or let Him remain as Pharaoh? In order to put Himself and His name on display before the world, to proclaim the name of the one true God so that people might see that there is a God in Israel who is the God of heaven and earth and that through His people Israel comes blessing, so you better be in good relations with Israel because that's the pipeline baby, all blessing comes through Israel and in particular through Israel's Messiah, the seed.

And so we come to the conclusion then in 9:18. This is another double connective, *apa ouv*, meaning "so then, as a result" and it's another huge point Paul has been arguing for. What is it? **So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.** It's God's choice how He wants to implement His strategy of revealing Himself to the world. With Moses He showed **mercy** when He passed by him in the cleft of the rock. Why did He do that? To make known by the proclaiming of His name that He was merciful and compassionate. God didn't have to do that and He didn't do it the way Moses wanted Him to do it. He did it His own way according to His own strategy so that Moses' face shined among the Israelites. With Pharaoh He hardened him by allowing him to remain as one who claimed to be a god. Why? To make known His power and to proclaim His name throughout the whole earth over and against Pharaoh so that people would come to know Him, which we saw, they did. So the point is not that God chooses one to be saved and another to go to hell. The point is that God has a self-determined purpose and a strategy in history to reveal Himself that no one can manipulate. The Jews believed God's purpose was always determined by human effort. Nonsense. It's a God-determined strategy, the purposes and reasons found entirely within Himself and relate to His own glory. Sometimes the tendency is to think that if the purposes and reasons are found only within Himself then they are arbitrary but they are not because they are based on His perfect character. So we don't always understand His strategy; Moses didn't understand His strategy, "Why won't you go up among us?" We don't always understand why He does what He does. Most of the time we only get a glimpse and for the most part we fumble around wondering why He is directing history in the direction it is going. But one thing is for sure, and what we are to learn here, is that just as surely as history was not decided by what Moses willed or by how Pharaoh ran, so it is not decided by our will or how we run, but by God's plan shaping history as He knows best. This is His means of revealing Himself to the world so that men come to know Him through faith.

¹ Cf Rom 4:1; 6:1; 7:7; 8:31; 9:14, 30. A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures of the New Testament*, Rom 4:1.

² A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures of the New Testament*, Rom 6:1.