***Human Arrogance, No. 1
Romans 9:1-5
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**Human Arrogance**

And we are turning to Romans 9, beginning a new section, in verses 19-24.

The Jews who lived in the day of the Apostle Paul resented the implications of his Gospel ministry to the Gentiles. Paul's message to the Gentiles indicated that they could become God's people through faith in Jesus Christ, thus implying that they would replace the Jews who had previously held that unique position. This method seemed to imply that the promises to Abraham and the Jewish people were actually cancelled, indicating that God had not kept His Word.

Of course, Paul strongly rejects the idea that God is breaking His Word to the Jewish people. As a matter of fact, Paul made it very clear that the Jews had first choice on salvation. The very beginning of the book of Romans 1:16, Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile."

So that, Paul made it very clear that the message of how to go to heaven through Jesus Christ, which was the only way you could get there, was delivered, first of all, to the Jews. They had first choice. They were first in line for eternal life. So, God has not failed in bringing the Word and the basis for salvation that He had promised. The problem is that a person is not saved simply by being born into the Jewish race. That was a mistake they made. Paul said, "A true Israelite is the Jew who is born-again spiritually as Abraham was, through faith in the payment for one's sins by the payment made by Jesus Christ on the cross. God's mercy is under this sovereign will, Paul has pointed out, to be extended to whom He chooses.

Romans 9 introduces two questions that an objector might raise and did raise. The first one, we have already looked at in Romans 9:14. "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid." Paul asks a question, "Does God act without justice when He doesn't choose everybody to go to heaven?" Paul says, "No, that is not true. It is in the nature of God to be just."

**How Can Anyone Resist the Will of Almighty God?**

Now, a second question comes up, and that begins in verse 19, a second challenge to Paul's teaching about divine election. Here is the question: "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will?" "Thou wilt say." The word "say" is "lego." This is a word which stresses the content of the objector's statement. Paul is zeroing in on a specific of objection to divine election, and Paul is recognizing that anytime in the future, somebody could come up with this challenge.

"Thou wilt say then." The word "then" looks like this; it's the word "oun." It introduces an inference which is drawn from Paul's teaching. So, Paul says, "You are going to make a statement to me now. This statement is going to be based upon an inference that you have drawn from what I have said, and this inference is the second objection presented here to the principle of divine election. And that object is, "Why yet?"

The word "yet" is the Greek word "eti," and it connotes God continuing attitude. Why does God still have this attitude? What kind of an attitude? An attitude of finding fault. The word is "menthomai." "Menthomai" means "to blame, to find fault," or, we would say, "to hold responsible." This is present tense, constant attitude of God. It's in the middle voice. God does this for His own benefit or for His own purpose. It's a statement of fact; it's indicative mood. This word, "menthomai," to blame, or to find fault with," refers back to the action statement in verses 17-18. So, you have to go back to that to see the basis of the objection.

Verse 17 says, "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, 'Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew My power in thee, and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath He [that is, God] mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth.'" Now, that was the statement. As a result of this statement, on the part of God, this objector proposes this question. God says, "I have raised Pharaoh up in this way, because I'm the sovereign God. And I give mercy to whom I give mercy, and I will harden whom I will harden."

Well, this person comes back and says, "If the fact that one believes in Jesus Christ and is saved, and another is impenitent and lost, depending on whether God calls Him or not, how can you blame the unbelieving Jew for his condition? "How can anyone resist the will of Almighty God," is the question.

How can anybody resist the will of God? Well, you can't. He's omnipotent. He's sovereign. Well then, if He is making these choices how can you blame the person who is resisting Him? People object to the doctrine of election on the very ground that God does not choose on the basis of what He sees that someone will decide to do down in the future or how someone will act in life. People do not object to the doctrine of election if it is presented that God looks down through the corridors of time, and He sees who's going to believe the Gospel and that's the person He chooses; oh, that's ok. Or, God looks down and says, "This is going to be a very vile person, a wicked life," and so, He does not choose; and they think that's ok. They wouldn't object to that.

But when, as Paul says, it's got nothing to do with that (it's got nothing to do with what you're going to do or what your attitude is, or how you live) it is only that God, the Creator, makes the sovereign decision. So, to the human mind, it seems legitimate to accuse God of injustice in punishing these rejectors of Jesus Christ. That's what's behind this question in verse 19. "Thou wilt then say unto me, 'Why doth he yet find fault?'" Why is God still criticizing, blaming these people because they are acting in the way that He Himself has elected that they would act?

He goes on to say, ".'For who hath resisted his will?'" The word "resisted" looks like this: "anthistemi." "Anthistemi" means, "to resist." This in the Greek perfect tense, which means, at some place in the past, this person arched his back against God, and then that condition continued to the present. And so, the question here is, "Who has resisted God's will successfully in the past and thus stands in this way today?" That is, who resists His will? Who is in His current condition? Who is actually resisting the will of God? If I cannot resist your will, why are you accusing me, and thus judging me and bringing condemnation upon me?

To resist specifically, it says, the will of God. This is the word "boulema" in the Greek Bible, and the word "boulema" refers to a deliberate design. We call it "the divine decree." He's referring here to the overall plan of God, the decree from eternity past determined by the Godhead of all that would be in the course of events in the human history and in the universe.

The false implication here is that God first makes a person wicked and then He punishes him for being so. That's the thing you want to observe. All of this complaining, all of this accusation begins with that false premise. "You made me wicked, and now you're punishing me for that."

But that is not the case. We are wicked. We are born as evil creatures. We are born with the guilt of Adam's sin upon us. We have a sin nature that completely cuts us off from God and furthermore, earlier in the book of Romans, we have been told that the sin nature with which we have been born not only cuts us off from heaven, but it cuts us off from even caring about it. It cuts us off from even caring about God.

People speak glibly about hell. They pretend it's not too bad a thing. It's going to be a ball. There's going to be a lot of your friends there, and you'll all be there mutually there together, and so you'll all be some kind of a comfort to one another. And people do not realize what is involved in going out with that kind of guilt upon them, and therefore they do not seek God. That's the other terrible thing about the sin nature. It not only cuts you off from God, but you don't even care about it.

So, Paul in Romans 3:10-11, made that awesome statement when he pointed this out. And he said, "As it is written, 'There is none righteous, no, not one: [That's true. We all come into the human race born with the guilt of sin upon us. We are condemned to hell from the moment we take our first breath. God didn't make you that way. That's the result of being born after Adam's kind. It is Adam who caused us to be in a position of condemnation - not God. When Adam was made, when God did HIS work, God finished by saying, "Very, very good indeed." Man was perfect, and what God had created was a perfect creation.

Verse 11 then, says, of Romans 3, "'There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.'" There isn't anybody in the world, Paul says, who can go to heaven. Everybody is born doomed to hell. There is nobody who understands how to solve this problem. There is nobody by natural reasoning who can come up with a solution. Nobody understands this problem. Nobody can work it out. That's why you have all this fool talk that exists in our society about how to get to heaven.

And furthermore, worst of all, nobody who really looks after God. Nobody really cares. Nobody is really seeking. They say, "Oh yeah, there's a bad place, and it's not a good thing to go," but they go on in life as if it didn't exist. They simply do not seek after God.

It takes, indeed, that special conviction of God the Holy Spirit who is doing what? He's executing the election of God. He is executing the choice of God the Father out of this mass of dead human beings headed for hell. He reaches down, and He picks out certain ones. And Father says, "There's Sam; Holy Spirit, I want you to pull him out. There's John; I want you to pull him out. There's Mary; I want you to pull her out. There's Susan; I want you to pull her out." And the Holy Spirit comes in and brings conviction and when that conviction comes, then a person seeks after God. Then a person sees where he is. Then a person reaches out and says, "Now I want to be saved."

Now, isn't it tragic, at that point, to say, "Oh, you do? Fine. Walk down these red carpets we have here and come to the front, and our secretary will give you a card to fill out, and you may become a member." Is that how I become a Christian? Is that how I can enter the salvation to which God is calling me? And how many people spend years out of the Christian life because some fool preacher has told them to come down the aisle to be saved, has given them a raising of the hand in an auditorium as call upon them for some public move or has given him some emotional substitute instead of the simple, Gospel message.

So, the Apostle Paul says, "Unless somebody comes and gives you the information, you're never going to know how to be saved. And you're never going to be interested in that information until God the Holy Spirit suddenly opens your blinded eyes." So, you see, it's not gimmicks. It's not promotion. It's not hype. It's not all the things churches come up with. It is prayer that a person will be brought to an understanding, and it is giving that person the information that he needs.

Yes, God does leave some in their lost condition while He sovereignly calls some to salvation. That is not unfair, because they're all doomed to begin with. It is His sovereign choice to pick some of those out and save them. He is not responsible for the fact that they are going to the lake of fire. That is the consequence of mankind's own doing. It is God who is free as the sovereign God to choose out of that mass of lost humanity.

So, the question seems logical to the human mind: why does God keep finding fault with the fact that I reject Him? Why does God keep finding fault that I, as a Jew, reject Jesus Christ when you say He is the One whose will decides whether I will accept it or not?

**Paul's Response to Those Critiquing God**

So, verse 20, Paul says, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" And you will notice that the Apostle Paul doesn't answer the question. He doesn't really deal with the question that has been put to the individual. Instead, he turns and fixes his eye on the objector, and he says, "Just who do you think you are? Do you understand who you are? Do you have a clear picture of who you are in comparison to the holy, righteous God?"

This is a thing that we Christians frequently forget: who we are when we are dealing with God. So, Paul says, "Nay but." This word, "nay but," is an interesting word. It is one of the ways that the Greek language has a making an emphatic statement. This is actually three words: "men," "oun," and "ge." And they're all tacked together; they're three little Greek particles. And they attach them all together, "menounge," and it makes a very strong negative statement. Like, you'd say, "Holy mackerel," or something like that, which would be a colloquial statement. It indicates a strong, absolute rejection, a negative idea. Paul is saying, "On the contrary," to what he has said in verse 19, "Oh, man."

And he uses the man "anthropos," for "man." This is significant, because "anthropos" is the generic term for mankind. It's human being. It's mankind. And Paul is using this word to stress that you are a created being. "Who are you, oh created being?" So that, he puts immediately in perspective who it is that's smarting off to God. The expression expresses the creatureliness of man. God mad man, so that God is the superior one.

Paul says, "Nay but, O man, who art thou." The word "art" is the Greek word "eimi," the word for, "the status quo." The constant state of the personal condition of this person, on the contrary, "Who on earth are you, O man," is what Paul is saying. And the Greek Bible puts in the word "you," "sú," for emphasis, implying here the arrogance and the presumption, the spirit of disrespect and the lack of reverence for God is what is indicated. "Who are you, O man?" And when Christians, who indeed are going to heaven, become negative toward the Word of God, and how the teachings of scripture are related to all the areas of life, He is also acting in the arrogance of a creature who is making himself superior to the Creator.

"Who are you, O man, that you should reply against God?" The word "reply," "antapokrinomai." This is made up of the word "ante," which is a Greek preposition, which means "again," and the verb, "apokrinomai," which means, "to answer." So, literally, this word means, "to answer against." We would say, "to talk back, to contradict."

We have this word used, for example, in Luke 14:6, "And they could not answer him again to these things." The Lord Jesus Christ dealt with the Pharisees. They brought up a subject of criticism on what the Lord was doing. The Lord gave them an answer, and they could not answer Him again to these things. They could not contradict Him. They could not talk back to Jesus Christ.

So, the idea is here, "to criticize," or, "to talk back." It's present tense. Constant criticism of God. A lost sinner is doing this arguing, and he is doing it against God. "Who are you to be talking back to God?" It's ludicrous! And it is THE God, God the Father. The critic elevating himself to equality with God, is what is taking place. As we Christians sometimes arrogantly elevate ourselves to equality with God in terms of what He says in the Word of God so that we adjust it and we correct it. The ludicrous condition of finite, sinful mentality equating itself with the omniscience of a holy God. This indicates the lack of understanding of the true relationship between the Creator God and His sinful creatures. It implies God is obligated to us. God is not obligated to us! He has no obligation to us, relative to our sinful condition.

So, he says, "On the contrary, O man, who exactly do you think you are talking back to God?" That's what Paul does. Instead of taking up the question, the attack, about why does God find fault when we can't resist His will? He says, "Who are you to talk back to God?" Then he says, "Shall the thing formed say." "The thing formed" is the Greek word, "plasma." This means, "that which is designed." Man is the inferior being since he has been formed by God. Man depends on the divine design of God for His very existence. Man is the thing that has been formed.

So, Paul says, "Shall the thing formed say." The word "say" is the Greek word, "lego," that we've had before, but it also has with it in the Greek the negative, "me." And in the Greek, that tell us that the answer to this question is, "No." The "me" indicates that the answer expected is, "No." "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it?" No, that thing won't say that. "The thing that formed to him who formed it." The word "formed" is "plasso;" this means, "to mold." It is the word that is used in describing what a potter does in making something out of a piece of clay.

"Is the thing formed going to say to the one who formed it [God, who at some point in time has made this creature], 'Why.'" The Greek word, "tis." How the sin nature loves to defend itself with the word, "why." Have your children ever said that, when you tell them they can't do something? "Why?" Have you ever told them that they should do something, like take out the garbage, and they say, "Why?" They must go through a training program where they get that up in their nose. It's very nasal. "Why?" And here, you see, this creature that God has made, and he is guilty of sin, indeed, and he is saying, "Why," implying, "You're at fault," which is what your kids are telling you when they say, "Why." They're expressing a criticism to you.

"Why have you made." "Poieo," refers to "divine creation." Aorist tense, at the point when God created mankind. Active voice; God did the creating. Indicative, a statement of fact, the truth. This is a statement of fact. God created us.

Yes, I saw old smiley, toothy Carl Sagan, that sad imitation of a scientist on the cosmos series this week on television. And he looked into the camera, and he said it in so many words, "Evolution is a fact; it is not a theory." And of course, he emphasized that by beginning the series when he sits there and his droning kind of voice in which he speaks in those little emphatic tones that makes you sit up and listen when he said, "The cosmos is all there is, all there ever has been, and all there ever will be."

**Evolution**

The Bible says, "No. God is what was in the beginning that always was and that always will be." Now, the average American who is not informed in scripture does not understand that when he heard Sagan say that, he should have understood that the man was saying that the cosmos is God, which is what he was saying. Material things are God. It is made itself. Well, evolution says, "No, God did not create man. Man came about as the result of evolving on its own." And you shake your head in disbelief that intelligent, educated men can still be talking about that kind of utter, stupid nonsense.

One of the preachers this morning on television was pointing out the hoax of the Piltdown man that was found in England. And I didn't know it, but he pointed out that he believed that the hoax was perpetrated by Sir Conan Doyle, the writer of the Sherlock Holmes stories. Because Sir Conan Doyle believed in seances, and one scientist had exposed séances as being a fraud, so Conan Doyle apparently got a gorilla's tooth and had it filed down with a friend who knew how to do this so it looked like a human tooth. And certain parts were removed, and a human skull was put there. And you know, and they found this in England.

And I remember sitting in high school, and there were four legs of evolution we were taught. And it was these four kinds of men skeletons that had been found then, and the Piltdown man was one of them. And the research now has discovered that Conan Doyle wanted to embarrass the scientific community, so he put out this huge hoax. Well, some forty years later, they finally discovered it wasn't a human tooth at all. But of course, they were building the whole man out of this.

I remember the shock when for the first time I'd walk into the Field Museum in the city of Chicago, and I'd see these huge displays of the ancient men in these whole surroundings, and I said, "Boy, that is really tough to deal with. They've got all these skeletons!" And then, I had to give a report in biology class on some subject, and I chose evolution. And I discovered in my research that all they had was a little kneecap, a little piece of bone from a skull, and a little this, and a little that. They didn't have a skeleton at all! It's not like the dinosaurs, where you've got the whole thing. And out of these little pieces, they were building these whole gorilla, creature-like characters, you know. And I was impressed with them.

So, when I got up to the class, and boy, I tore into that. "Here's what they got." And I took the Piltdown man down. I didn't realize I was such a scholar, because they hadn't discovered that the thing was a fake. I knew it was a fake, but the scientific world hadn't caught on. But are they going to get me the Nobel Prize? [Laughter.] No, they aren't going to give me a Nobel Prize for science. But, sure enough, it proved to be a fake.

Well, when I got through with that report, the biology teacher got up and said. And she'd get up, you know, and give you an evaluation of everybody's reports. And as she's lifting her pencil to give me my grade, she says, "I am sorry to have heard such a false note sounded in a class of science." [Pop! Laughter.] Just what Sagan is doing:

"Evolution is a fact. It is not a theory." Well, you know, any scientist knows that if you can't put it in a laboratory and reproduce it, you must not say it's a fact. Where does Satan. Sagan. Satan [laughter]. That's a Freudian slip! [laughter] Where does Sagan get the gall to be so scientific if he's supposed to be one of the great scientific geniuses of our time?

**Human Reason Compared to God's Omniscience**

Well, the Bible says, indeed, God created. And this objector here that Paul is referring to accepts that, and he is saying, "Why hath thou made me thus?" And the word "thus" is "houtos," a demonstrative adverb, refers to man's fallen sinful condition so that he's destined for hell. "Why did you make me in this fallen condition?" Blaming God for one's condition in Adam, which, as we've already pointed out, was not God's fault.

Notice John 3, beginning at verse 19, "For this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Why are men condemned? Not because God made them evil, but because they were born into that evil condition as a result of Adam's sin, and that they loved darkness rather than light. "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth light [the word is actually "truth" in the Bible; I think he just misspoke] cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." So that, a person is condemned because he is sinful by nature and he doesn't want the light of the Gospel.

Romans 1:18-19 put it this way, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness [They've got the truth, but they hold it in unrighteousness. They don't want to use it.]; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them."

Yes, God has given truth to everybody from creation onward, so you know enough. You know enough to seek Him, so that your sinful condition is not something for which God is responsible. Man's condition is due to the fallen Adam, and thus we are born with that sin nature.

Now, indeed, there is no explanation in the Bible as to why God permitted Adam to fall into sin. And we may conjecture on that, and that's all it is. It's conjecture. God indeed made man patterned after Himself, and God has volition. God is able to make choices. And if man is going to be made like God, then man would have to have the capacity to make choices. But why that choice was not restricted from being able to sin, the Bible does not tell us.

This is one of the things that we're told are the secret things that belong to God. Moses pointed this out to the people of Israel in Deuteronomy 29:29 when they had questions that were not answerable. Moses says, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." Moses says, "There's a lot of things that you would like to know that I can't answer because God hasn't told us. Those are secret things of God, and he's not going to tell us. But, He's given us a lot of revelation, and it is our business to learn it and to pass it on to our children. Man's sinful blindness, however, you see, presumes to be able to reason about God.

Why is American society today, in every respect, in such a sad condition? For the basic, basic fundamental reasons that human beings, in all areas of our society, think that they can reason about God. They can think through any subject and come to the conclusion that God must approve.

Here's what Job 11:7-8 have to say about that, "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than Sheol; what canst thou know?" And the question to Job had to be answered with, "I can't." It's ridiculous to say that I can think about God, that I can conclude what God thinks, that I can come to judgment and say, "God will do it this way." Human reason does not do it.

Time precludes us this morning. I'm very tempted to do it, but we won't, to read Job 38:1 through Job 40:2. I would strongly commend that you jot that down and you read it. It would make a good Sunday afternoon exercise for you spiritually to come to a deep respect for the fact you that don't know anything about God. Because, Job 38:1 through Job 40:2 goes after one thing after another, putting questions to Job, questioning, "What does he know about this? What does he know about that? Were you here when I did this? Were you here when I did that?"

And when you get through reading that passage, boy, you are squelched. If you're any sensitive human being, you are overwhelmed with realizing how absolutely, totally uninformed we are. We don't know anything. It is only what God chooses to reveal of His secrets to us, and then we know something. And, if our society in general understood Job 38:1 through 40:2, they would not be quite so quick to make pompous declarations about what should be and what shouldn't be in our society and what God wants to do and what God does not what to do, unless they had that based upon scripture.

Paul does not deny the objector's complaint that God decides whom to elect to salvation entirely according to His own will, and then the individual acts accordingly. Paul doesn't deny that. He says, "That is the way that happens." But he does deny the attitude of man to being so superior to God that the creature can talk back to the Creator and come up with some logical arguments that imply that God is unjust in making these choices.

**The Superiority of God Over Man**

We close with a series of verses this morning that I will take the time to read, because I think they are critical. The superiority of God over man should sober every one of us, and the Bible repeatedly cautions us, therefore, to walk in a humility which is compatible with the realization that we don't know it all. God knows it, and Paul does not answer the question that is posed in verse 19. He comes back at the person and says, "Who do you think you are - limited, finite, fallen, sinful man - that you stand up against God and that you would even dare say that that's not fair, for God to choose some for salvation and not others.

Romans 12:3 says, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." Don't be so arrogant in your own confidence of your own intelligence and reasoning powers, but be confidence in the measure of faith, the measure of doctrinal instruction that God has given you. That's what you can take confidence in.

1 Corinthians 10:12, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Does that not bring many mental images of human beings you have known, from our own congregation and from your own circle of friends, who were obviously confident that they stood spiritually, that they were in a position of great understanding and of great authority and who have fallen flat on their faces now?

Galatians 6:3, "For if a man thinketh himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." You're a creature. God's made you. You think you're something? That's what Paul is saying. Just who do you think you are? You're nothing! God can take with a flick of His finger and cause you to come up with such absolute nonsense in your reasoning, twist you off from your reality like you wouldn't believe. Who do you think you are? You think you're something. You're kidding yourself. As Paul says, "I am what I am by the grace of God. And if you and I are something, it is because God's grace has made us that, and it is because God has informed us through His Word."

James 4:6, "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." To those who recognize their limitations, God gives the grace of information.

1 Peter 5:5-6, "In like manner, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth [super] grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." Not this arrogant pride of standing up to God. God says, "I'll give you super grace blessing if you'll take the position of humility that is befitting a creature of God who cannot possibly know it all and who has to have God's information and God's guidance, so that you won't be standing up and complaining and criticizing God for the circumstances of your life.

Luke 9:46-48, "Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest [this is among the disciples]. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by Him, And said unto them, 'Whosoever shall receive this child in My name receiveth Me: and whosoever shall receive Me receiveth Him that sent Me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.'" It isn't arrogantly pushing yourself out front. Children, generally, are not pushy. They're not calling for recognition.

Luke 22, beginning at verse 24. This was another occasion when the disciples are in the same frack about who's going to be number one among them. "And there was also strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And He said unto them, 'The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For which is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as He that serveth.'"

That's an amazing statement. Who is the great one? The one who serve. It is the people who have exhausted themselves in genuine, divine good production for which we have been the beneficiaries. Those are the people that we should respect. That's why these people who had the servant's heart among us and demonstrated in the ministries they have performed are the people that should have our highest esteem, and should we should not forget them. Not the periodic prima donna that rises up and has the power base from which to be pushy and says, "I'm am God's voice." No, you're not. Who do you think you are?

Ephesians 4:2-3, "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." One of the greatest sins a Christian can commit is to bring disunity with the local church assembly. You play a very dangerous game when you do that. "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering [letting God run the show], forbearing one another in love [tolerating each other's foolishness]; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The unity of the Spirit is already there. We keep it in peace and don't disrupt it.

Colossians 3, beginning at verse 12, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, tender mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness."

Many times, you'll have Christians that you'll need to forgive. They don't even know that they need to have your forgiveness. They don't even know that they're in a position where they have done something that needs forgiving, but the Bible says, "You forgive them, and you keep the unity of peace. And you let God deal with that person."

Philippians 2:3, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Boy, does that oil the relationships in the local church. If you can just a keep a local church from having its prima donnas, great things can be accomplished for God.

James 4:10, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up." That is a tremendous promise. Take the humble road, and you'll find that God will exalt you.

Acts 17:28, and with this we conclude, "For in Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, "For we are also His offspring.'" Paul, in speaking to the intellectual philosophers of Athens, put it all on the line. In Him - this real and true and living God - we live and move and have our being. Outside of Him, we got nothing.

So, who are you, O man, to stand up, and to criticize and to complain to God because of your circumstances in life, many of which you brought upon yourself, and God really had nothing to do with the matter? But whatever the circumstances are, you are not in a position to be critical of the Almighty, omniscient, wise God who is in total sovereign control and who Himself is the essence of justice. He is a God whom we can trust. Our problem is to control our natural, sinful arrogance and to blame Him and to blame others for the consequences of our own acts.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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