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Sermon Notes

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God Displays His Power in and through Pharaoh

Romans 9:17-18

Introduction

In the last one hundred years, mankind has probed and solved some of the greatest mysteries of the universe

- The Wright Brothers probed the mystery of heavier than air flight which had eluded humanity for centuries, and the dreams of the ages became a reality with the airplane
- Guglielmo Marconi probed the mystery of frequencies transmitted through air and discovered wireless transmission, inventing the radio
- Albert Einstein probed the mystery of why starlight bends around the sun and resolved it with his special theory of relativity
- Enrico Fermi probed the mysteries of nucleus of the atom and actually did what the Greeks said could never be done... he split the nucleus and started a chain reaction, discovering the basis of nuclear power and nuclear weapons
- Watson and Crick probed the nucleus of the cell and discovered the key to the mystery of human genetics... the double-helix of the DNA molecule
- Jacques Cousteau invented the scuba apparatus now common for underwater divers, and with it he probed the dark mysteries of the undersea world
- The electron is little by little revealing its secrets to scientists all over the world, giving us computers and cell phones and wireless internet access and the Library of Congress stored on a tiny micro-chip
- It seems there is no mystery so complex that mankind cannot uncover and lay bare its deepest secrets

But there is one realm we will never be able fully to probe, one mystery we cannot comprehend... the way the sovereignty of God extends to the human heart, making certain

God's eternal plan of election while still holding the human heart totally responsible for all its choices and inclinations, its loves and hates, its proclivities and its history

The basic lesson of Romans 9: God is totally sovereign over human salvation... and that means God is totally sovereign over the human heart

We come to one of the deepest themes in the Bible... the hardening of the human heart by the sovereignty of God

Romans 9:17-18 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." ¹⁸ Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

It all comes down to this one mysterious encounter... the God of the Universe confronting a rebellious human emperor with a command:

"Let my people go!"; while at the same time, God hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he would not obey the very command God had given him; yet at the same time as that, the account clearly calls the outcome of this hardening SIN on Pharaoh's part... Pharaoh himself calls it sin, as does Moses

How can we understand this? Before we can even address this issue, we need to get our hearts right before God

I. Understanding and Preparing our Hearts

John Calvin: "Nearly all the wisdom we possess... consists in two parts... knowledge of God and of ourselves"

- A. Understanding our Natural Tendencies: self-rule, reason over faith, pride, love for evil
- B. Understanding our Proper Position Before God: Created from the dust of the earth, finite, sinful, weak, mortal
- C. Understand the Bible's Depictions of God: wide-ranging... from gentle, patient, father of Prodigal Son to wrath-filled dread sovereign who destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah
- D. Humbly Accept What God Reveals: saying "I can't accept this or that" doesn't change a thing!!!

A.W. Tozer quote: "If you have never faced mystery in your study of God, I doubt whether you have ever heard a single word from God at all."

II. Understanding Paul's Context

A. Context in Romans: Has God's word failed?

1. Paul's answer: Unconditional election

Romans 9:6 It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.

- a. One lesson: God has an elect people to whom His promises were directed
 - b. Isaac and Jacob represent the elect; Ishmael and Esau the non-elect
2. God does two things... one in the life of Jacob, another in the life of Esau
3. Immediate question #1: The Justice of God in unconditional mercy to Jacob
- a. Question of God's justice comes up... "How is it just for God to choose His elect unconditionally, before the twins were born or had done anything"?
 - b. Paul's answer: God's absolute sovereignty over election means He has total freedom to show mercy to whomever He chooses
 - c. Thus, salvation does not ultimately depend on human will or human effort but on God, the One who has mercy

Romans 9:16 It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.

4. Immediate question #2: The Justice of God in unconditional hardening to Esau (illustrated by Pharaoh)
- a. But God isn't just showing mercy to the Jacobs in the world
 - b. Romans 9 reveals something far more challenging to our understandings: He also HARDENS the Esaus... He hardens the reprobate, the non-elect
 - c. Everyone in the world gets either mercy or hardening, and all of it is done by God's sovereign freedom as creator and King of the universe

Romans 9:18 Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

5. In order to prove this thesis, and further, in order to explain the deeper question "WHY", Paul reaches for an Old Testament quote

Romans 9:17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."

B. Context in Exodus

1. Why Did Paul Choose THIS Quote?
2. Issue is Hardening: could have chosen from SIXTEEN quotes about hardening; but Paul gets to WHY God did it
3. Context: Moses and the Exodus
 - a. God commissions Moses to rescue His people from slavery in Egypt
 - b. God states ahead of time: "I will harden Pharaoh's heart" (Exodus 4:21, 7:2-3)
 - c. God unfolds the ten plagues, with Pharaoh's hardened heart
 - d. Already six plague have occurred: water turned into blood, frogs, gnats, flies, plague on the cattle, boils on man and beast
 - e. There will be four more: hail locusts, three days of thick darkness, all the firstborn of Egypt slain
 - f. In between plague six and seven, God makes this amazing statement to Pharaoh

Exodus 9:13-16 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Get up early in the morning, confront Pharaoh and say to him, 'This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me, ¹⁴ or this time I will send the full force of my plagues against you and against your officials and your people, so you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth. ¹⁵ For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the earth. ¹⁶ But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.

4. John Piper's Question, "The Pleasures of God": "Why didn't God make short work of Pharaoh?"
 - a. God did not lack the power to wipe Pharaoh and his people from the face of the earth
 - b. God could have led the Israelites out lots of different ways... He could have paralyzed the Egyptians so they could not stop Israel; He could have killed them all, and Israel could just march out unmolested
 - c. Why didn't God do it in three plagues, or four? Why all ten?

- d. The text seems to indicate that Pharaoh would have relented if God had not hardened his heart... enlightened self-interest would have kicked in

Before the eighth plague, locusts:

Exodus 10:7 Pharaoh's officials said to him, "How long will this man be a snare to us? Let the people go, so that they may worship the LORD their God. Do you not yet realize that Egypt is ruined?"

- e. But God hardened his heart SO THAT He could do ALL TEN PLAGUES against Egypt
- f. Why? Because God wanted to display the greatness of His power and make a name for Himself by His incredible achievement of bringing Israel out by means of these ten plagues and the Red Sea crossing
- g. Why? So that people all over the face of the earth would call on that name and be saved... more on that later!!

C. The Most Common "Escape": Pharaoh Hardened, THEN God Hardened

1. John Wesley makes much of this

Commenting on Exodus 4:21, in which God says ahead of time that he will harden Pharaoh's heart:

[4:21] I will harden his heart - After he has frequently harden'd it himself, wilfully shutting his eyes against the light, I will at last permit Satan to harden it effectually.

[9:12] Now the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart — Before he had hardened his own heart, and resisted the grace of God, and now God justly gave him up to his own heart's lusts, to strong delusions, permitting Satan to blind and harden him. Wilful hardness is commonly punished with judicial hardness. Let us dread this as the sorest judgment a man can be under on this side hell.

2. In one sense, it is true: God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart did not take him in a direction his nature had not already shown that he wanted to go
3. However: if what Wesley and the others mean is that God is waiting to see what man will do, and that it would be unjust for him not to give man ultimate self-determination in this matter of hardening, this the text does not say
4. Problem #1: Biblical evidence doesn't support this (i.e. that God did not harden Pharaoh's heart until AFTER Pharaoh hardened his own heart)
- a. God first declares what He will do (4:21, 7:2-3)

Still at the Burning Bush:

Exodus 4:21 The LORD said to Moses, "When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.

b. The initial accounts say nothing about who hardened Pharaoh's heart

Wesley and others say that first, Pharaoh hardened his heart, THEN God hardened it... frankly, the first two times Pharaoh's heart was demonstrated as hard, it is UNCLEAR who hardened it... either God or Pharaoh

[After Aaron's staff became a snake] *Exodus 7:11-13*

Exodus 7:13 Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

Hebrew supports no conclusion EITHER WAY about who hardened the heart

c. "As the Lord had said"

i) Key phrase mentioned in 7:13

HOWEVER, notice that the very first time the hardening is mentioned, the texts gives us the key phrase **"As the Lord had said."** **NOTE: The Lord had not said "Pharaoh will harden his own heart" (even though it was true)...** the Lord had said "I will harden Pharaoh's heart"

So every time it says "As the Lord had said" it refers to the statement: "I will harden Pharaoh's heart"

ii) Even after it clearly says that Pharaoh had hardened his heart, it AGAIN adds this key phrase, **"As the Lord had said."**

Exodus 8:15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said.

iii) In all, the amazing phrase "As the Lord had said" is inserted six times... in conjunction with all three types of account: statements that the Lord had hardened his heart, statements that Pharaoh hardened his heart, and inconclusive statements that do not say either way

iv) Bottom line: the text ascribes the hardness ultimately to the statement (will) of the Lord

d. Frankly, Pharaoh's heart was hard before the entire encounter began

i) The hardening of Pharaoh's heart began years before he ever met Moses

ii) He was trained from infancy to be the mightiest emperor on earth

- iii) He was used to giving commands and having them obeyed
 - iv) He was trained in arrogance, power, control, tyranny
5. Problem #2: It doesn't escape the problem... God still does SOMETHING to human heart
- a. The real problem is the mysterious way in which God SEEMS to act contrary to His own command
 - b. He commands Pharaoh "Let my people go", but then he hardens Pharaoh's heart so that he CANNOT obey God's command
 - c. Even more mysteriously, he calls his hardening of his heart "sin"
 - i) Before the seventh plague, the plague of hail

Exodus 9:12 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart and he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said to Moses.

- ii) BUT THEN, Pharaoh confesses sin about it:

Exodus 9:27 Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron. "This time I have sinned," he said to them. "The LORD is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong.

- iii) And when the next plague is announced, he hardened his own heart and the text calls it sin AND ascribes it AGAIN to the statement of the Lord

Exodus 9:34-35 When Pharaoh saw that the rain and hail and thunder had stopped, he sinned again: He and his officials hardened their hearts. ³⁵ So Pharaoh's heart was hard and he would not let the Israelites go, just as the LORD had said through Moses.

6. Problem #3: The way Paul speaks in Romans 9:18... God freely hardens

Romans 9:18 Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

- a. The simple understanding of the text is that the ultimate matter rests with God and not man
 - b. God consults His own will in the matter of mercy and hardening
 - c. He is free to do either to anyone
7. On the question of "Who hardened Pharaoh's heart, God or Pharaoh?": BOTH ARE TRUE, and the EXACT RELATIONSHIP is mysterious

A.W. Pink: “That Pharaoh DID harden his own heart the Scriptures expressly affirm, but they also declare that the Lord hardened his heart too, and clearly this is not one and the same thing, or the two different expressions would not have been employed. Our duty is to believe *both* statements, but to attempt to show the philosophy of their reconciliation is probably ... to attempt to fathom infinity.” [*Gleanings in Exodus*, p. 54-55]

III. Understanding the Text: Romans 9:17

A. Authority of Scripture: “Scripture says to Pharaoh”

1. Amazing statement! Not “God says to Pharaoh”
2. Scripture had not even been written yet... Moses would write it after the Exodus had occurred
3. Consistent theme: the absolute authority of Scripture
 - a. We are dealing with the deepest and hardest doctrine in Christianity here
 - b. How God deals with the reprobate, the “Esau”, those he has dealt with unconditionally in election, choosing not to save them
 - c. Our views on this topic will come from one of two places
 - i) God’s holy revelation in the word
 - ii) Our own opinions, shaped by other human sources
 - d. On the issue of predestination, unconditional election, will you believe God’s word or not?

My sole purpose here today is to try to explain what Scripture says on Romans 9:17-18

4. “Scripture says to Pharaoh” = “God says to Pharaoh”
 - a. Augustine: “What Scripture says, God says”
 - b. Paul puts it this way to uphold the role
5. Ultimately: Pharaoh represents human authority, power, “sovereignty”, right to choose... SCRIPTURE stands over Pharaoh and dictates terms to him!!

B. God’s Sovereignty Over Pharaoh’s Position: “I Raised You Up”

1. First: God raised Pharaoh up to his position in Egypt
 - a. Pharaoh would not have been ruling Egypt except that God raised him up
 - b. Clearest teaching on this is the Book of Daniel

Dream #1: The Smashing of the Statue

Daniel 2:37-38 You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; ³⁸ in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold.

Dream #2: The Mighty Tree Chopped Down

Daniel 4:17 ... that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men.'

Lesson Clear: God is the Ultimate Kingmaker

Psalm 75:4-7 To the arrogant I say, 'Boast no more,' and to the wicked, 'Do not lift up your horns. ⁵ Do not lift your horns against heaven; do not speak with outstretched neck.'" ⁶ No one from the east or the west or from the desert can exalt a man. ⁷ But it is God who judges: He brings one down, he exalts another.

2. Second: "I raised you up" = "I shaped and molded you just as you are"
 - a. The later teaching on the potter and the clay makes this clear
 - b. There are forceful leaders, and there are weak leaders

King Edward II of England: The Quintessential Weak King, 1307-1327

His idea of a good time was living as a rustic on his own play farm while the government of the kingdom was left to less than honest favorites.

Even clearer, Pontius Pilate: vacillated back and forth between setting Jesus free and crucifying Him; three times he declared, "I find no fault in him", yet he scourged him!!

At one point, when Jesus refused to speak to Pilate, Pilate exploded:

John 19:10 "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?"

John MacArthur: "and the courage to do NEITHER ONE!"

That is a weak leader

- c. God raised Pharaoh up from infancy to be in this position, and years before he faced this challenge from Moses, he was being trained in strong character traits: pride, tyranny, domination, arrogance, cruelty, subtlety, vacillation, fear, trickery... all the equipment of his heart was set in place

by the time Moses first stood in front of Pharaoh and said **“Thus says the Lord, ‘Let my people go!’”**

Pharaoh’s prideful answer was the product of his already hardened heart:

Exodus 5:2 Pharaoh said, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go.”

3. Third: “I raised you up” = kept you alive and didn’t slaughter you
 - a. God says “By now I could have struck you with a plague that would have wiped you from the face of the earth”
 - b. “I raised you up” means “I kept you alive”
 - c. Remember what Paul said to the pagans in Athens:

Acts 17:28 For in him we live and move and have our being.’

- d. God could have killed Pharaoh for his insolence and his rebellion simply by pulling the plug on his existence
4. Fourth: “I raised you up” = I made you arrogant to think you could stand against me... I gave you the strength of heart to try to take me on, despite the fact that you are a mere mortal and I am the God of the universe... “I hardened your heart” so that you would get this far... and I intend to go the rest of the way

C. God a Purposeful Being: “For this Very Purpose”

1. God raised Pharaoh up for a purpose
2. Everything God does is for a purpose

Ephesians 1:11 the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,

3. The sparrow doesn’t fall to the ground apart from the will of God
4. Neither does any man become the ruler of any land apart from God’s purpose
5. Neither does a specific man like Pharaoh get shaped and molded and prepared and put in position, then hardened to challenged God unless God has a purpose

D. God’s Purpose #1: “That I May Display My Power in You”

1. The terrifying power of God is on display to bring terror to those who would rebel against Him

2. God can control the fresh water of the Nile, turning it into blood, then turning it clear again
3. God can control the living creatures... whether flies, gnats, locusts, frogs, or cattle... He can make them swarm and He can make them disappear again
4. God can control sickness... cattle disease and boils, and God can heal again
5. God can control sunlight and darkness, thunder and hail
6. God can make a pathway through a sea with the water walling up on the right and the left; then God can trap a whole army like a deer caught in a snare, and crush them with millions of tons of cascading water
7. AND God can control a sinful human heart, making it turn whatever way He wants

Proverbs 21:1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.

8. All of this is to display the negative power of God to destroy... to terrify sinners of every generation to stop rebelling against the Lord, to throw down our weapons of rebellion and be reconciled to God
9. Ultimately, though, God wants to display His greater power to save... so that sinners will trust in that power for their salvation

Romans 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

10. The Dreadful Tenth plague = one of the clearest displays of the power of the gospel in the Old Testament
 - a. Angel of death to move throughout Egypt and slaughter all the firstborn
 - b. Israel commanded to slaughter a Passover Lamb to take the place of their firstborn
 - c. The blood was to be painted on the doorposts
 - d. All firstborn sinners not “under the blood of the Lamb” would justly perish for their sins
 - e. CLEAR PICTURE OF CHRIST!!!!

John the Baptist pointed to Jesus Christ, the Son of God: “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

- f. Today, by trusting in Christ's blood, we can be delivered from the powerful wrath of God, so clearly put on display in Egypt
- g. Had God not hardened Pharaoh's heart, we would never have had the Passover picture of Christ

E. God's Purpose #2: "And That My Name May Be Proclaimed in All the Earth"

1. By God's mighty power and His outstretched arm, all nations on earth will hear and tremble
2. God will make a name for Himself and gain glory for Himself by the full array of plagues He did and by hardening Pharaoh's heart to chase them to the Red Sea

Exodus 14:4 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them. But I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD."

Nehemiah 9:10-11 You sent miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh, against all his officials and all the people of his land, for you knew how arrogantly the Egyptians treated them. You made a name for yourself, which remains to this day. ¹¹ You divided the sea before them, so that they passed through it on dry ground, but you hurled their pursuers into the depths, like a stone into mighty waters.

3. That name, that reputation spread through the ancient world, and Rahab the Harlot heard and believed... the power God displayed in Egypt saved Rahab's soul!!!

Joshua 2:10-12 We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. ¹¹ When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below. ¹² Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you.

4. God made a name for Himself and His reputation still spreads to the ends of the earth
5. When People hear that mighty name, that awesome reputation, they "call on that name" for salvation

Romans 10:13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

IV. Understanding the Doctrine: Romans 9:18

Romans 9:18 Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

A. God Has Ultimate Power Over Human Hearts

1. The focus here is absolutely on God's will, not on man's will
2. Literally: "God has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills"
3. God has power over human hearts and power to do with them as He wills

B. God Has Absolute Freedom in Salvation

C. God Hardens Sinners Against the Gospel

1. Difficult to swallow, yet clearly taught
2. This is precisely why Paul is talking about Pharaoh here
3. The issue is no longer "Let my people go!"
4. The issue is now "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved!"
5. And just as it is difficult to understand how God can give Pharaoh a command that would save Egypt from destruction ("Let my people go") and then harden Pharaoh's heart so that he does not obey, so it is difficult to understand how God sends evangelists and missionaries to preach the good news of forgiveness of sins in Christ, then harden hearts of people so they will not repent
6. How precisely God hardens hearts is mysterious... it is a mysterious work of God, and it goes on in the simplest of manners
 - a. Pharaoh saw that his magicians could perform the same snake trick as Moses, so he hardened his heart
 - b. Pharaoh sometimes received good counsel from his officials, sometimes bad
 - c. The complexities of the human heart are infinite

D. Yet God Never Tempts Anyone to Sin (James 1) and Each is Responsible for their Own Sin

***James 1:13-14* When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴ but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.**

E. Key Parallel Text: John 12:37-41 (Compared with Exodus 11:10)

1. John's gospel totally corroborates Romans 9
2. Parallel passages: Exodus 11:10 and John 12:37-41

***Exodus 11:10* Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh, but the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let the Israelites go out of his country.**

***John 12:37-41* Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. ³⁸ This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet: "Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" ³⁹ For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere: ⁴⁰ "He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn-- and I would heal them." ⁴¹ Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him.**

3. Both summaries of hardened responses to miraculous displays
4. The second dealt with the astonishing Jewish rejection of Christ
5. John (like Isaiah) ultimately ascribes it to God hardening their hearts

V. Application

A. God's Total Sovereignty over the Human Heart Means HOPE IN PRAYER for the most impossible of cases

1. Pray fervently for the lost in your family... lost sons and daughters, lost mothers and fathers
2. MOTHER'S DAY: the prayers of a broken-hearted mother crying day and night for her lost children are mighty and powerful
3. God will never say, "There's nothing I can do... they've hardened their hearts and I cannot enter the sacred sanctuary of a human heart":
4. NO! The weeping mother's broken-hearted prayer for her lost children ascends to the throne of power, and God's will will be done!
5. So also the seemingly fruitless missionary in a Muslim country or a pastor in apathetic America... God is MIGHTY over the human heart!

- B. God's Conquest of the Pharaohs of the world displays His glory amazingly...
1. the fact that God hardened Pharaoh meant that Rahab would be saved
 2. The fact that the Roman Empire slaughtered many Christians meant that many Romans became Christians
 3. Church history is a stunning tapestry of glory and suffering... of astonishing challenges overcome for the glory of God and the salvation of seemingly hopeless people
 4. In our day, it is ISLAM... and God is conquering the hardened hearts of Muslims by the actions of other wicked people who will never believe
- C. Learn to bow humbly in God's presence and give Him all the glory for your election and your salvation
- D. Learn to trust God totally in all the trials God brings your way
1. Don't say God merely "Permitted" the trials
 2. No... God sovereignly brought them for His own glory
 3. Humble yourself under His mighty hand... deal directly with God and God alone over the greatest pains of your life
 4. God is not a sympathetic grandfather who clucks and says, "Oh how I wish I could help you, but Satan brought this great suffering to you and there's nothing I can do"
 5. That is NOT the God of the Bible
- E. Pray CONFIDENTLY
- F. TRUST IN CHRIST TODAY!!! God is able to forgive sins through simple faith in Christ... He is calling you RIGHT NOW!!