

22. ROMANS SERIES: God's Plan of Salvation - Part 2

Romans 9:14-33

In our previous study (9:1-13) we saw the anguished heart of the apostle Paul as he grieved over the deplorable state of his fellow countrymen who had rejected God and His salvation, thereby despising the many advantages and privileges they had received. Trusting in their physical descent from Abraham and their perceived merit through keeping the law, the Jews had in fact rejected the salvation of God.

Though Israel had in large part rejected the gospel, the promises of God to Israel had not been thwarted. In fact, the promises were still just as certain and established, for they have reference to the Israel of God, that being those according to election and not those of physical descent or human effort. This Paul demonstrated through the examples of Isaac and Ishmael, and Jacob and Esau.

Please Read Romans 9:14-33

NOTE: INDIVIDUAL DISCOVERY QUESTION HERE: Why does God still judge and condemn when all is according to His purpose? Does this mean that God is unjust?

Verse 14: Paul in this verse anticipates an objection to the doctrine of election by grace, and therefore he asks *'is there any unrighteousness with God?'* Is God unjust or unfair because He acts according to His own purpose in choosing one and rejecting the other? Clearly Paul is speaking of a divine selection by God unto salvation, for why would Paul otherwise ask this question in anticipation of that objection? Paul's answer is certainly not, for God is not unjust in His purpose (Gen 18:25; Is 45:19)!

Verse 15: The word *'for'* indicates a further explanation as to why God is not unrighteous in election. The reason given by Paul is simply that God has the right to exercise mercy and compassion toward whomever He pleases. The quotation of Exodus 33:19 at this point is to prove by Scripture that God Himself declares and exercises His right to sovereignty in this matter. The ultimate reason as to why someone is saved is that of God's mercy, through the exercise of choice on God's part. It is not a question of fairness

but mercy, for none would be saved without the exercise of mercy by God.

Mercy and compassion have the idea of heartfelt concern for those in need, for those who have no ability to answer that need in themselves, and then moving to answer that need. God exercises mercy and compassion on whomever He chooses, moving toward those who have no ability or natural right to salvation.

Verse 16: The ground of election and the exercise of mercy then, is not to be found in the will or effort of man. Salvation does not ultimately occur because someone has decided to believe or make some sort of effort to move toward God. Rather, the ground is to be found in the sovereign purpose of God, who chooses to exercise mercy. If God did not do this, then all would justly perish in Hell. The real question is not that of justice, but that of mercy.

NOTE: INDIVIDUAL DISCOVERY QUESTION HERE: What does the example of Pharaoh show about God's purpose in election?

Verse 17: Again the word *'for'* indicates a further answer to the objection raised in verse 14. The example given of Exodus 9:16, shows God's sovereign election from the other side, that of the one rejected by God. This example further proves that God does indeed exercise His sovereign right in election, for God preserved Pharaoh in spite of His wickedness, in order to fulfil His sovereign purpose. In fact, God brought Pharaoh into existence in order to fulfil His purpose, according to His plan. God did not immediately remove Pharaoh, but allowed his wickedness to continue on in spite of the judgments already poured out upon Egypt. His purpose in this case was to glorify Himself, declaring His power to the world (Ex 15:14ff; Josh 2:10ff; 9:9; 1 Sam 4:8; Rom 9:22) through the hardening of Pharaoh that He might display His justice upon him, by withholding His mercy.

Verse 18: This verse is Paul's concluding argument to the objection raised in verse 14, *'is there unrighteousness with God?'* The answer simply put is that God is sovereign in the area of election and does indeed exercise that right.

Note in this verse that it was God who hardened Pharaoh's heart (Ex 4:21), yet Pharaoh is said to have hardened his own heart. In the case of Pharaoh this hardening of the heart was unto everlasting destruction.

Verse 19: In this verse, Paul anticipates another objection to the doctrine of election, 'if being a child of God is determined according to God's sovereign purpose of election, how can men be held responsible for their wicked state? What can man do in opposition to the will of God? Surely Pharaoh cannot be blamed for His state if he lives according to the purpose of God (cf Lk 22:22)? Surely man cannot be held responsible for their continuing state if God is pleased to leave them in that state without any aid to get out of it?'

Verse 20: Paul in his answer to this objection is first turned toward the arrogance of man in questioning God as to what He does. God has a right of sovereignty in exercising election. He is not answerable to man whom He has made about anything that He does. Indeed, who are we to question the sovereign God? The question exposes the questioner as one who has a poor understanding of who God is as revealed in Scripture. The questioner is working from faulty logic and not Scriptural logic.

Verse 21: A potter has all the lawful authority and right (Mt 21:23; 1 Cor 8:9) to do with a mass of clay as he sees fit. He can make a vessel or jar for an honored place and he may also make another from the same mass for a lesser place. This right of the potter also applies to God. The Creator has a sovereign right to do with His creatures as He chooses (Jer 18:3-6). God has every right as the sovereign Creator God to save some sinners out of their sinful and Hell bent ways, while passing over the rest of mankind whom He leaves to suffer justly the eternal punishment of Hell. God does no wrong in exercising mercy where He is not required to do anything but punish sin.

Verse 22: This verse continues Paul's answer to the objection raised in verse 19. What can be said of the sovereign God if He chooses to work according to His purpose of election in salvation? Is it not that He simply exercises what is His sovereign right?

In His sovereignty God chooses to manifest His holy displeasure against sin by determining to punish those who commit it. In this, the evil of sinners brings about the manifestation of the true character of God. Yet even in His determination to punish the sinner, God still displays longsuffering (2:4; Gen 6:3; 18:26-32; Ex 34:6; 1 Kin 21:29; Neh 9:17; Ps 86:15; 145:8,9; Is 5:1-4; Ezek 18:23,32; 33:11; Lk 13:6-9; Rev 2:21). These are they who will receive wrath for their sin, their wickedness leading them to destruction. These are they whom God has passed over in His election of some to salvation, being determined to punish them for their sin.

Verse 23: The other side of God's sovereign election is His purpose to make known the greatness of His majesty in the area of mercy (Ps 85:10; 145:8,9; Rom 11:33; Eph 1:6-8; 2:4,5,7; 3:8), especially toward those whom He has chosen to be merciful to. These He is preparing for glory, through His sovereign grace and mercy. He is following a rescue plan that He drew up in eternity, especially fitted to bring sinners from a place of wrath to that of conformity to Jesus.

Verse 24: These vessels of mercy are those whom God has effectually called through faith in the gospel (1:7; 8:28-30), from both the Jewish and Gentile nations. God sovereignly elects out of fallen humanity whomever He wishes to exercise mercy upon. By doing this He leaves those He has not chosen to perish justly because of their own sin.

Verse 25: In this verse Paul is concerned to prove that Gentiles are also part of the true Israel of God, according to God's eternal plan of salvation. This he does by quoting Hosea 2:23. Although Hosea is speaking of the Israel of his day, Paul uses the passage to confirm the inclusion of the elect Gentiles within the Israel of God (1 Pet 2:10). This

applies to both groups, for the context of both uses is toward those who are outside of the true Israel of God, as being aliens to it because of sin. Those who were outside of the Israel of God shall become part of it, because they were objects of God's electing love and purpose.

Verse 26: Paul also quotes Hosea 1:10 to further prove his point that Gentiles are also included within the Israel of God. In the place where they were regarded as not being part of the Israel of God, they will yet be recognized as being the true sons of God. These verses show the sovereign mercy of God exercised toward those who have no right to consider themselves the people of God, that they might become the true Israel of God.

Verses 27,28: In these verses Paul quotes Isaiah 10:22,23 to further prove that only the remnant of physical Israel are included in the spiritual Israel of God. Even though there were many Jews, only a small number would be saved, thereby proving that physical descent is no grounds for inclusion among God's people. For the majority of Jews, only a righteous judgment awaits them, a judgement that God will quickly bring to pass upon them.

Verse 29: In this verse Paul quotes Isaiah 1:9, to again confirm his doctrine that physical descent does not guarantee membership of the true Israel of God. Indeed, without mercy none would be saved, for all would suffer the righteous judgment of God. It was only by God's sovereign purpose in election that any had been saved throughout Jewish history, for all deserved God's righteous judgment.

Verse 30: Paul concludes his argument in chapter nine with a question, '*what shall we say then?*'

The correct conclusion to draw is that Gentiles, who had shown no interest in seeking after righteousness unto life, have in fact been accepted as righteous in the sight of God (3:21,22). This is so because they have been justified on the basis of imputed righteousness received by faith, according to God's sovereign electing purpose.

Verse 31: The nation of Israel however, who had in fact sought after a right standing before God by the Mosaic Law, have failed to gain that right standing, for they have failed to live by the law.

Verse 32: The Jews failed to gain a right standing before God because they didn't receive the imputed righteousness of Christ by faith, for they sought that standing by their own merit. They didn't seek righteousness by God's approved means, having taken offence at it, unwilling to accept a righteousness through the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1:23).

Verse 33: In this verse Paul quotes a combination of Isaiah 28:16 and Isaiah 8:14, in order to prove from Scripture what he has said. The Lord's approved method of gaining a right standing with God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, would prove to be a stumbling block to many who were unwilling to accept salvation as coming through

Christ (Ps 118:22; Mt 21:42; Mk 12:10; Lk 20:17; Acts 4:11; 1 Cor 3:11; Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:6-8).

Those who do rest in the Rock of God and who do not stumble at this Refuge, who take His righteousness as their own by faith, will not be ashamed before God, but these will gain a right standing before Him.

INDIVIDUAL DISCOVERY

How will a believer not be put to shame (10:11)?

What is the usual avenue for a person to become a Christian? What is mentioned in this chapter?

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