

Romans 9:14-24 (NKJV)

14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!

15 For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."

16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

1

17 For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth."

18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?"

20 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?"

2

21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

22 What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,

23 and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory,

24 even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

3

Rom 9:14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!

- Do God's decisions to select one over the other, nationally-speaking, imply that he is unjust or unfair?
- Paul's emphatic answer is: Certainly not!

Rom 9:15 For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." (quoting Exod. 33:19)

4

Exod 33:18 He [Moses] said, "Please, show me Your glory."

19 Then He [God] said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

- When Moses asks to see God's glory, Jehovah describes Himself as gracious (merciful) and compassionate

5

- It is God's prerogative to show mercy on certain ones, and not others, and that's what He does with Moses and the Israelites

Rom 9:16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

- Justice is different than mercy – EVERYONE is entitled to God's justice, for we are all sinful, but NO ONE is entitled to His mercy

6

Zane Hodges, Commentary:

The point Paul is making through the Exodus text is that when it comes to mercy/grace, God asserts His own prerogative to exercise this attribute toward the person, or persons, He Himself selects. But to state this fact is to make the case. No man can lay a legitimate claim on God for His mercy. It is man's need, inadequacy, or failure that calls forth mercy in the first place. To make it a human entitlement is to destroy its gracious character and turn it into a divine obligation.

7

Zane Hodges (cont'd): Thus if God acts in mercy/grace toward Isaac or towards Jacob, there is no unrighteousness in doing so. Neither Ishmael nor Esau was deprived of anything he had a right to claim. The bottom line in this matter of mercy is that mercy does not occur simply because someone wishes it or because someone runs, i.e., strives, for it. Rather it comes from the God who sovereignly bestows mercy on whom He will. Man's "will" and "desire" do not produce mercy, nor do his most strenuous efforts, like those of a "runner" in a race. God, not man, determines who receives His mercy.

8

- Paul then shares the example of Pharaoh
Rom 9:17 For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." (quote from Exod. 9:16)
- 18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.
- Incidentally, this has nothing to with matters of Heaven and Hell, as some like to suggest

9

- Rather, it was God's choice NOT to show mercy on a pagan king who was the avowed enemy of Israel, but rather to harden his heart, so that God might establish the types demonstrated in the Passover and the Exodus, and the parting of the Red Sea
- In so doing, His power and glory were made known to the nations

10

Think of Rahab's testimony:

Josh 2:9 [Rahab] said to the men [spies]: "I know that the LORD has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you.

10 For 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 the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed.

11

- God's power and glory were also known by the Philistines
- The Philistine priests admonished their nation's political leaders:

1 Sam 6:6 Why then do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When He did mighty things among them, did they not let the people go, that they might depart?

12

- God's purpose in Egypt also was to make His power and glory known

Exod 7:3 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.

- In several other passages we learn that Pharaoh hardened his own heart

13

Hodges: It is unmistakable that all that God really does is to confirm and extend a process of hardening that Pharaoh himself had initiated ... The case of Pharaoh is instructive, since Pharaoh hardened his own heart before God hardened it. Paul would no doubt have said the same of Israel. Its hardness to the gospel of Jesus Christ was a process Israel itself began and which God has merely confirmed. This national hardness will continue "until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in" (Rom 11:25). But Paul's development of this theme also shows that God will still have mercy on any individual Israelite who believes.

14

- Paul anticipates another objection in v. 19:

Rom 9:19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?"

- If God chooses not to show mercy to some, but instead, hardens their hearts, then how can God blame them for being hard-hearted?
- Paul thinks this question is impertinent, because we cannot possibly know God's purposes

15

Rom 9:20 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?"

21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

- How can anyone question God?
- It's like the creature complaining to the Creator, "Why did you make me this way?"
- Paul probably got this idea of the potter and the clay from Isaiah

16

Isa 45:9 Woe to him who strives with his Maker! ... Shall the clay say to him who forms it, "What are you making?"

- How audacious for clay to question the potter!
- The point is clear: how audacious for mere man to question sovereign God!

17

- Just like the potter decides what he is going to make out of the clay – whether an unblemished fancy vessel to be put on display or a lowly vessel with imperfections that is not going to be used for anything special – so God as Creator can decide how He fashions man

18

- Paul then expounds further on these two types of vessels:

Rom 9:22-24 What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

19

- So what if God wants to show His wrath and make His power known by hardening the heart of Pharaoh? – That is His prerogative!

- Paul's has already warned his readers of God's wrath earlier in the book:

Rom 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

- Pharaoh was a "vessel of wrath prepared for destruction," though God was longsuffering with him

20

- The word *destruction* does not mean Hell; it means "loss or ruin" – it is referring to God's temporal judgment upon man
- In other words, God used pagan Pharaoh's hard-heartedness to accomplish His purposes with respect to Israel, then destroyed him in the Red Sea
- Meanwhile, Israel was shown God's mercy in the Red Sea
- But now the tables are turned

21

- Because Israel has become hard-hearted toward God in unbelief, they have become His vessels of wrath, that His power might be made known
- The first round of destruction (ruin) came when Rome conquered and demolished Jerusalem in AD 70, killing over 1 million Jews
- Further destruction will be forthcoming during the tribulation

22

- When writing to the church at Thessalonica, Paul said of the Jews:

1 Thess 2:15-16 Who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost.

- Judgment begins "at the house of God," with His own people (1 Pet. 4:17)

23

- But with Israel we know that judgment will result in national repentance and restoration when Jesus returns

Zech 12:10-11a I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a first-born. In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem.

- Thus, God's purposes will be fulfilled

24

Zane Hodges:

Paul is affirming that God “wishes” to do two things: (1) manifest “His wrath” and “His power” (v 22); and (2) manifest the wealth of His glory (v 23). The former He does with reference to “the vessels of wrath,” while the latter is done upon the vessels of mercy. These vessels of mercy are identified in v 24 as both Jews and Gentiles ... Paul means by this that God’s mercy has over-leaped the boundaries of Israel itself and has gone out to the Gentile world ... The growing number of Gentile believers proves the wealth of His glory in terms of God’s measureless mercy.

25

Rom 9:23-24 That He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

- To whom is this referring?
- Paul’s answer: *even us whom He called*, that is, faithful saints of the church age

26

Rom 8:29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

- These verses have nothing to do with salvation
- They are talking about God’s calling of sons to glory out from among His children

27

- Sons to glory are those Christians of the church whom Christ deems faithful to serve as His co-rulers
- He is now working to conform them to the image of Christ by calling them, justifying them (i.e., declaring them righteous in a BEHAVIORAL sense)
- When they hear “well done” at the Bema Seat, they will be glorified, which means they will glow with some degree of light as part of their reward

28

- These are the ones Paul refers to in Rom. 9:24 as “us whom He called”
- And so we read with rejoicing that God will one day “make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called” – both Jews and Gentiles!
- This is only for those of the Church of Jesus Christ who qualify

29

What about national Israel?

- When Israel repents and becomes restored to fellowship when Jesus returns, God’s glory will be manifest through the nation as they rule over the nations on Earth
- That is made abundantly clear in the OT prophets
- This has been God’s purpose all along – and what God purposes, He accomplishes!

30

- Paul then backs up this truth with 3 quotations from the OT Scriptures
 - The first is from Hosea 2:23 and 1:10
- Rom 9:25 As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, and her beloved, who was not beloved."
- 26 "And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' there they shall be called sons of the living God."

31

- Remember the context of the book of Hosea:
- The 10 tribes of the north had turned to idolatry
- So God tells Hosea to marry a prostitute, symbolizing God's wife Israel, who had turned to harlotry
- But the good news is that one day God's people will return and repent and be restored to fellowship, causing God to receive them back

32

- Those who are NOT His people (due to idolatry) will again become His people when they repent, and they will be called sons of the living God
- Although this was a prophecy for OT Israel that will one day be fulfilled by Israel, Paul also applies it to the Gentiles, for that is the context of his quote
- v. 24 – even us whom He called [that's Christians – the church of Jesus Christ], not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles

33

- Zane Hodges:
- For Paul's purposes the words of Hosea sufficiently establish the principle that those at one time rejected as the people of God can be received by Him as His people. Since the vessels of mercy are composed of both Jews and Gentiles (vv 23-24), God's loving action in having mercy on them makes the principle exhibited in Hosea applicable to both.
- How marvelous! God has included US as vessels of mercy unto glory

34

- Paul's second quotation is from Isa. 10:22 and 1:9
- Rom 9:27 Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved.
- 28 For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth."
- 29 And as Isaiah said before: "Unless the LORD of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we would have become like Sodom, and we would have been made like Gomorrah."

35

- Whereas Hosea prophesied to Israel; Isaiah prophesied to Judah, warning of coming destruction upon the nation
 - Isa. 10 seems to be referring to the coming tribulation, when millions of Jews will be killed by antichrist
 - Thankfully, God will cut the tribulation short, so that some Jews will survive
- Matt 24:22 Unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.

36

- Isaiah speaks of a remnant being saved; otherwise, Israel would become like Sodom and Gomorrah, which were completely destroyed, leaving no remnant
- Thus, God's saving of a remnant of Israelites is an act of His mercy

37

Zane Hodges:

The chain of quotations has established the fact the God who sovereignly bestows mercy on whom He wishes (9:14-18) is acting now in a way consistent with Biblical revelation. As the Divine Potter, answerable to no one, He both postpones His ultimate judgment on the vessels of wrath while dealing mercifully with the vessels of mercy, both Jewish and Gentile (9:19-24).

38

- Before giving his final OT quote, Paul pauses for some words of summary

Rom 9:30-31 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness.

32 Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone.

39

- Ironically, the Gentiles who were known for their sinful behavior have entered into righteous living, by depending on the provision of Jesus Christ ...
- On the other hand, the Jews, who were known for behaving in accordance to the Mosaic law, have not entered into righteous living
- Why is that? Because they have focused on observing the works of the law (legalism), that is, the rituals of the Mosaic law, which cannot make one righteous

40

- That has happened because "they stumbled at that stumbling stone" – i.e., because they rejected Messiah
- Hodges doesn't like the term stumbling stone
- He says it is too weak to convey the meaning of the original languages
- Instead, he translates it *stone of collision*
- He quotes BDAG's definition, which is: "to cause to strike against something" and "to make contact with something in a bruising or violent way"

41

- The bottom line, according to Hodges: Israel is the object of God's wrath, and the Gentiles of His mercy, because of Israel's rejection of Christ.
- Paul's third quotation, which is from Isa. 28:16, in v. 33

Rom 9:33 As it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone [Hodges: stone of collision] and rock of offense, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

42

- The idea is that Israel collided with Jesus, who was their Messiah, though they didn't realize it
- The result of the collision was Israel's unbelief and Messiah's death
- Notice the last phrase which Paul adds: "whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame"
- The verb *believes* is an active present participle, thus it is literally translated, "whoever is believing on Him will not be put to shame"

43

- Hodges says this is a command, not a statement
- Paul is warning the believing Jews that despite Israel's "collision" with Messiah, the Jewish believers must continue on unashamed of Him
- What an admonition for us all!
- As Christians, followers of our Lord Jesus Christ, we must continue depending on our Lord so we can confess Him before men – Jesus said:

44

Matt 10:32 Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.

33 But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

- This has nothing to do with salvation
- To confess Christ is to speak of Him and defend him in the presence of others, whether they are hostile regarding Christ or not

45

- Those who faithfully confess Him will be rewarded
- Those who cower in fear and refuse to confess Him (which is to deny Him before men), will not be rewarded

Are you regularly confessing Christ?

46