

35:10

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

God, Israel, Paul, verse, mercy, question, sovereignty, glory, chose, saved, sought, salvation, people, pharaoh, vessels, unjust, Jews, sovereign, fair

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## Introduction

Spurgeon said, "If there is one doctrine in the world which reveals the enmity of the human heart more than another, it is the doctrine of God's sovereignty." **The doctrine of God's sovereignty**. And that is what Paul is addressing in our passage here tonight. If you remember, in chapters 9 through 11, what we're studying through here, Paul is dealing with Israel, he kind of has taken a shift at the end of chapter 8, and now he is dealing with Israel. And his reason for this is because coming out of chapter 8, he says that nothing can separate us from the love of God, right? He ends chapter 8 on this high point. It says nothing can separate us from the love of God.

But he anticipates that his readers are going to ask, Well, what about Israel? Didn't God choose them and love them? Look at them now. It seems like God has forgotten them. And so if God has forgotten Israel, won't God forget about us too? Paul anticipates that question coming from his readers, and specifically his Jewish readers. And so Paul begins to address Israel and God's plan for them in His sovereign plan of redemption.

We saw last week at the end of verse 13, at the end of our lesson in verse 13, that God says, "**JACOB I LOVED BUT ESAU I HATED**" (Rom 9:13). Now, let me just be clear about this verse here. God did not choose Jacob over Esau because He looked down the line of history and saw that Jacob's line would be those who would worship Him, and that Esau's line would be those who would become idolaters. That's how it played out. But that is not the reason why God chose Jacob. It's not what happened.

Although, as we talked about last time, Esau's line, the Edomites, did become idolaters. That had nothing to do with the reason for why God chose Jacob over Esau. That is not how God chooses. It's not how God chooses or why God chooses. He does not choose because of some choice that He sees that we are going to be making in the future. Otherwise, He would not be sovereign. Right? And this universe would then be up to man's choice, all the choices that we're making. Which means that man would be in charge, and that would be a scary place to live. If man was in charge of all of this.

God chooses, by His own will, for His own purposes, and His own glory, apart from anything that you and I do. Which is exactly what Paul says, in Verse 11. "For though *the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, (Rom 9:11-12)* God chooses by His own will, so that His purposes, His plan, according to His choice, would stand. It is all about God. And it's all about His glory. And God will always do everything for His glory. He is a selfish God. He created all things for His own glory. It's all about Him. He's a jealous God, He will not give His glory to another, it is all for His glory.

But as Spurgeon said, people don't like that. Many people will say, well, that's not fair. Some of you might even be thinking that, well, that's not fair. And I'm glad that you have that thought tonight, because it's exactly what Paul knew you would be thinking, and he knew what his readers would be thinking. And so he addresses that here in our passage tonight. And so, we're going to be going through verses 14 through 33. And we're going to break this passage down into three points. And we're going to use Paul's three questions that he asks, in this passage here.

1. And so, we're going to see question number one, is God not fair? Question number one is God not fair?
2. Then we're going to see question number two, how can God find fault? How can God find fault?
3. And then finally, we'll see question number three. Why is Israel faithless? Why is Israel faithless?

So, we'll look at God's fairness, man's fault and Israel's faithlessness.

## **1. Is God not fair?**

So let's look at our first question here in verse 14, is God not fair? Look at what it says there in verse 14, "*What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God is there? May it never be!*" (Rom 9:14) You see, Paul knows that after he quotes *Malachi 1:2*, which says, "*Jacob I loved and Esau I hated.*" He knows that the next question or the next statement that someone is going to bring up is, "that's not fair."

I remember as a kid growing up, that was one of the things that my mom did not like us say. It drove her nuts because she would hear my sisters and I, we would say that's not fair. And her response was, life's not fair. Get over it. Well, Paul could hear his readers whining and saying, well, that's not fair. Doesn't that make God unjust? Because in our finite minds, we would say that it's unjust for God to choose one person over another.

But this is where our finite minds are wrong. Look at Paul's question. "*There is no injustice with God is there? May it never be.*" (Rom 9:14) The Philips translation puts it this way, "*Do we conclude that God is monstrously unfair? Never!*" And the idea is that you need to get rid of that thought. Get rid of that thought. If you think that God is not fair, if you think that God is unjust, get rid of that thought. God is not unjust. That's how he answers. Certainly not! May it never be! 1000 times No! God is always fair and

just. That is one of His attributes. God is perfectly just, and He will always do what is right, always. So, you have no right to bring any kind of accusation against God, and specifically, to declare that God is unjust.

Now remember, Paul is not really arguing with us here. Right? As he's writing this letter. He's not arguing with us here in our western minds. But he's arguing with the Jews, who upon believing what Paul has just said so far, would question God's justice, because they have a wrong view of how they get into heaven. Remember, for the Jews, their whole thought was, we are born Jews, from the line of Abraham, we uphold the law the best that we can, and therefore because God chose us -- we are in. That was their whole thought process. They thought that by simply being a Jew, they were getting then into heaven, that that was their ticket into heaven, just being a Jew. In fact, one Rabbi has even gone so far as to teach that Abraham sits at the front of the gates of hell. And if he sees any Jew walking into the gates, he will stop them and send them to paradise.

So, for Paul to say that only Jews who are chosen are getting in because God chose them. They would say, that's not fair. I mean, he just told them that God chose Isaac over Ishmael, right? And then he chose Jacob over Esau. And so, their response would be what many people would say that's not fair.

But he argues with them. And as he argues with them, Paul doesn't just want to make some random argument with his own words and have them argue with him. But he wants them to be forced to argue with their own Scriptures. So, he quotes from the Old Testament. Look at verse 15. "[For He says to Moses, 'I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION.'](#)" (Rom 9:15) Paul here quotes [Exodus 33:19](#) to show that God is not unjust, but that God can show mercy to whomever God wants to show mercy. It's completely up to God.

Now, what's interesting is here is that you would think that Paul would make an argument from [Genesis 18:25](#), about God's justice, which says, "[Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?](#)" You would think that that's where Paul would go right? And talk about the justice of God. But Paul doesn't do that. Notice what he does here. Instead, he shows God's mercy and compassion. Now, is God fair and just? Yes, He is always fair and just, God always does what is right.

But in all reality, listen, what you and I want personally is not God's justice. We want God's mercy. As RC Sproul said, "*The saved get mercy, and the unsaved get justice.*" But nobody gets injustice. And what we want is mercy, right? If God was simply just without His mercy, all of us would end up in hell, every one of us. Because that's the just thing to do with sinners, right, is to send them to hell. And so it's perfectly just of God, to condemn a person and send them to hell. Perfectly just -- perfectly right. But we want God's mercy and compassion.

Now, what is Mercy? Mercy is not getting what you do deserve. It's not getting hell, although every one of us deserves it. Right? We all deserve hell. But out of God's mercy, He doesn't give it to us who are believers. But who are we to tell God who He can have mercy and compassion on and who He can't? God says He will have mercy and compassion on whom ever He wants to.

Paul continues on in verse 16, “So then it *does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.*” (Rom 9:16) Do you realize that what initiated your salvation was not your will? It wasn't your will. It wasn't anything that you did to initiate your salvation. But it was completely God's will. God was the one who decided to show mercy on you and save you. It had nothing to do with you walking the aisle. It had nothing to do with you saying the prayer. It had nothing to do with you raising your hand. And that's what Paul means there when he says, “*the man who wills or the man who runs*” that is it wasn't dependent upon any human effort of yours. Because in all reality, you were not even seeking after God!

Isn't that what we studied in Romans chapter 3? *No one seeks after God, no, not a single one.* (Rom 3:11-12) None is righteous, no, not one. You never sought after God. God sought after you. And by His mercy, He saved you. By His mercy, He changed you. You are saved, not because of any human effort or anything that you have done. But because God decided to show you mercy, by His grace. And when you heard the gospel, and God changed your heart, then He gave you the gift of repentance and faith. And then you responded in repentance and faith to God's call in your life. But it didn't, it didn't depend upon you. But it depended upon God who has mercy. And He saved you by His sovereign choice.

Do you want another example of God's sovereignty? Well, Paul gives us another example of this in verse 17, verse 15, he gives us this example of Moses where he talks about Moses, and we have an example of God's sovereignty from what we would call the positive perspective in showing mercy. A positive perspective. And usually we're okay with this type of sovereignty of God, right? Very positive. You have mercy on whom He has mercy! Oh I love that! That sounds so kind of Him and so nice of Him. God's sovereignty of being merciful to me. I love that! But now we get an example of God's sovereignty from what we would call the negative perspective. In verse 17. With Pharaoh, look at what it says there in verse 17. *For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH.”* (Rom 9:17) God didn't just choose to show mercy and compassion. But God also raised a pharaoh for a specific purpose. And what was that purpose for? Two reasons.

1. First, to demonstrate My power in you. God wanted to put His power on display.
2. And second, that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth. God's desire was to have His name proclaimed throughout the earth.

And God demonstrated His power in the plagues, right? We read about that in Exodus, the plagues there. And God showed His power through the plagues. But His name has also been proclaimed through the events of the plagues, as God has saved Israel from the Egyptians. His name was then proclaimed as people heard all the things that God did for His people, Israel. So God's purpose was accomplished through Pharaoh.

Now, does this mean that Pharaoh was a robot that God raised up to do whatever God wanted, completely against Pharaoh's will? Was Pharaoh saying, 'God, I want to repent of my sins, and believe in you? And God said, No, you can't do that you must attack my people and go and seek and kill them?' --- No, that's not what happened. In fact, listen to *Exodus 9:12. And the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart,*

and he did not listen to them just as the Lord spoke to Moses. But then Exodus 9:34, a few verses later, but when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned again, and hardened his heart, he and his servants.

- Did God harden Pharaoh's heart? Yes, He did.
- Did Pharaoh harden his own heart? Yes, he did.

And this is the tension between God's sovereignty and man's will.

- Was Pharaoh responsible for hardening his heart? Yes, he was.
- Was God the one hardening his heart to accomplish His purposes? Yes, He was.

How do these two mesh? I don't know. I don't know. And no one can know. But this is what the Bible teaches, and therefore we must believe it.

What's Paul's conclusion of this? Look at verse 18. "So then He has mercy on whom He desires and He hardens whom He desires." (Rom 9:18) That is God does whatever He desires, whatever He wills, it will always come to pass.

## 2. How can God find fault?

But we might ask a question. A logical question to us. Well, if God hardens whom He desires to harden, then how can He find fault in anyone? Glad you asked. Because that's our second point, point number two, which is question number two, how can God find faults? Look at verse 19.

"You will say to me, then why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" (Rom 9:19)

Another way we could say this is how can God blame people for their sin and unbelief when their destiny has already been predetermined? Because God has destined some for mercy and salvation -- and others He has passed over and left them for eternal damnation. But again, this reasoning here, what this does is it attacks God's justice and God's righteousness. Which is what we should never do.

And so, Paul gives the answer in the form of a question in verse 20. He says, "On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?" (Rom 9:20)

MacArthur commenting on the beginning of this verse, "who are you, O man, who answers back to God" says this. *In other words, it is blasphemous to even question, not to mention, deny God's right to hold men accountable when they are captives of His sovereign will.* Blasphemous. We are not to question God's sovereign will, ever. But we are to believe it. And we're to trust in Him. Now, who would be the ones who would ask a question like this and attack God and His justice, and God's righteousness? Who would be the ones that would ask a question like this?

Well, obviously not a person who's trusting in Christ alone for righteousness, right? But a person who is seeking self-righteousness, they're the ones who would ask a question like that. Because they want an

excuse for their sin and unbelief, and they want to pass the blame on to God and then claim that God is unjust. But we as believers, don't question God. Right? We don't question Him. We just rejoice that He's shown mercy when we have deserved nothing but hell, right?

Paul continues on in verse 21 *"Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?" (Rom 9:21)* Using the analogy of a potter creating clay pots, Paul is essentially saying that it is far more arrogant for a person to question the justice of God than (if possible) for a clay bowl to question the potter. Far more arrogant for anyone to question the justice of God.

Although we can't comprehend God's sovereign election and predestination, that gives us no right to question God. It only shows that God is God, and we are not. Right? That His ways are higher than ours. And we cannot comprehend the depths of His knowledge. They are the ones receiving the action. But God is not actively preparing them. God has been patient toward them -- toward these unbelievers. And why is that? To demonstrate His wrath and make His power known.

What Paul is saying here is that God has allowed sin in His creation for two reasons.

1. First, to demonstrate His wrath. Did you know that God is glorified in His wrath? Did you know that? In God's judgment and God's wrath, He is glorified. He gets glory from His wrath. We always like to think of God being glorified through His saving grace and His mercy and His love. But He's also glorified through His wrath. His wrath is one of His perfect divine attributes, and all of His attributes bring Him glory, every one of them.
2. Second, God allowed sin in His creation, to make known His power. To make known His power. God's power will be on display in the end when Christ returns to take out His enemies, and establish His millennial kingdom. And we will marvel at the power of God as He puts it on display, just as He did when He created the entire universe. That same power will be on display.

And so although God's wrath and His power -- displayed through vessels of wrath prepared for destruction -- God did not prepare the unbelieving vessels for destruction. But they are prepared by their own rejection of God. But there's someone that God does prepare. I love this. Look at verse 23. *"And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory," (Rom 9:23)* That word prepared in verse 23, in the Greek is in the active voice, meaning God is doing the action and He is actively prepared them beforehand for glory. God is the one who acts upon those who are vessels of mercy. Those who receive His mercy, you and I who have received His mercy. God is the one who has actively done that in our lives.

**Why** does He do that? To make known the riches of His glory. God is glorified through saving sinners like us, vessels of mercy. And remember, why would this be important in this passage talking about Jews? Because Jews wanted to earn their way to heaven, right? But vessels of mercy don't earn their way. They're saved by God's grace, and by God's mercy, through faith alone.



Paul says those whom God called, He chose to show His mercy to all of those in whom He has chosen to show His mercy to are not Jews only, but also gentiles, which is what he says in verse 25. Look at what he says there,

As He says also in Hosea,  
"I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, 'MY PEOPLE,'  
AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, 'BELOVED.'"  
26 "AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, 'YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,'  
THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD." (Rom 9:25-26)

You see, the gentiles are not a chosen people. The gentiles were not a chosen nation, like Israel was. They were as Hosea says, "not my people." But because the gospel has gone out to them, and the gentiles have put their faith in Christ. They are now my people. You and I as gentiles, we are God's people, because He has put His mercy upon us.

So, what about Israel? All right, God, so you showed your mercy to the gentiles. What about Israel? Are they not God's people, then? If the gentiles are your people, God, what about Israel? Well, Paul answers that, as he quotes from Isaiah in verse 27. Look what he says there. "Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA, IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED; 28 FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD ON THE EARTH, THOROUGHLY AND QUICKLY." (Rom 9:27)

Now, remember back in verse 6, Paul statement there in verse 6. He says, "But it is not as though the word of God has failed. (Rom 9:6) Right? He's making an argument for that. Look, God's Word has not failed concerning Israel. Guess what, here's proof. **Here's proof.** God will save the remnant of Israel when He executes His Word on the earth. And I believe what he's talking about here is the tribulation period. This is the tribulation when the church will be raptured. And God will then focus His attention on the salvation of Israel. God is faithful, to keep His promises.

And here's proof that God is faithful to keep His promises and that God is faithful to Israel. Look in verse 29. And just as Isaiah foretold,  
"UNLESS THE LORD OF SABAOth HAD LEFT TO US A POSTERITY,  
WE WOULD HAVE BECOME LIKE SODOM, AND WOULD HAVE RESEMBLED GOMORRAH." (Rom 9:29)

What he's saying here is that Israel would have been completely destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah, if it were not for God's saving a remnant of Israel. If it were left up to them, they're done. But because of God's promise, and God's Word, God will save a remnant of Israel, and how will they be saved? Listen to Zechariah 12:10. "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; (Zachariah 12:10) Who is that? Christ. Israel will look to Christ and they will see that He is their Messiah, He is the Savior of the world and they will believe upon Him. That's God's promise. And God's Word has not failed, and it will not fail.

### 3. Why is Israel faithless?

Well, there's a third question that Paul asks in verse 30. Question number three, why is Israel faithless? Look at verse 30. "[What shall we say then?](#)" (Rom 9:30) Paul has just told us about God's sovereignty in salvation. But now he's going to show us man's responsibility in salvation, and specifically as it pertains to Israel. Because we might think at this point that Israel is just a puppet used in God's hands, and no more. But Paul wants to show that Israel is responsible for their rejection of God.

And so he says in verse 30, look what he says there. [What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is...](#) (how) "by faith" (Rom 9:30) That's how the gentiles came to know God, but look at verse 31. ["but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. \(Rom 9:31\)](#)

Do you want to know why Israel is faithless, and are not saved? Because they pursued righteousness by the works of the law. They thought that they could attain a right standing before God with their own works. Unlike the gentiles who pursued it by faith. And it is those who come to God by faith who are saved. But if you ever try to come to God by the works of the law, you will never arrive. Never. No matter how hard you try, you can never get to God by your own works. It is by faith alone. And Israel missed it.

Paul says in verse 32, ["Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. \(Rom 9:32\)](#) Those Jews were responsible for their unbelief and eternal damnation because they tried to get to God by good works. But it has never -- listen church -- it has never, ever been by good works, ever.

As Paul told us back in verse 4, using the example of Abraham, it's always been by what? By faith, always. But what did Israel do? Well, Paul tells us at the end of verse 32, and in verse 33,

["They stumbled over the stumbling stone, 33 just as it is written, "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." \(Rom 9:32-33\)](#)

Why are the Jews not saved? Because Christ is a stumbling stone to them. They've rejected Him as their Messiah. But if they will just believe in Him, the promise is...they will not be disappointed. They'll receive eternal life.

- Are they responsible for their unbelief? Yes, they are.
- Is God's sovereign in salvation? Yes, He is.

And we can't try to mesh these two together. But we must believe them both. Because that's what the Bible teaches. Let me end with a wonderful quote from Spurgeon. Spurgeon says this, "There is no more humbling doctrine in Scripture than that of election. None more promotive of gratitude, and consequently, none more sanctifying. Believers should not be afraid of it, but adoringly rejoice in it."



**Date:** Wednesday Dec 8, 2021    **Scripture:** Romans 9:14-33

If you're here and you are a believer in Christ, do you rejoice in God's election of you? That should be our response. We shouldn't ever question Him, but we should rejoice that He has chosen to show mercy to sinners like us.

Father, thank You for this glorious, glorious, magnificent truth. Thank You that it is left up to You because on our own, we would not seek after You. We thank You that You have found us, that You have sought after us, that You have changed our hearts, that You have given us Your gospel, that You have called us to be Yours, and that You've given us the free gift of salvation. Father, I pray that we would rejoice tonight as we think about this amazing doctrine, Your sovereignty in our lives. May we not be afraid of it. May we never question You. Help us to trust You and rejoice that You are God and we are not -- and may we live in light of this glorious truth for Your glory we pray in Christ's name. Amen