

Pt 33 Romans 9:14-23, Is God Unfair?

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Romans 9:14-29

We pick back up where we left off last week after examining **Romans 9:13**, which said: *As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*

We looked at several things in that message including **election, God's choosing, God's calling to Salvation, God's perfect will, and God's sovereignty.** We left off with stating the fact that after Paul would state these things the natural thing for his listeners, especially those of Israel would ask the question: If he would love some yet hate others, isn't that unrighteousness? If these things are so, then doesn't that mean God is unfair? That's the title of the message: "**Is God Unfair?**"

So, Paul will need to address those questions, which is exactly what he does in the remainder of this chapter. Starting with verse 14:

14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

There is the question: "**Is there unrighteousness with God?**"

What is unrighteousness? Well, it is the opposite of righteousness. When it comes to the righteousness of God it is speaking of his Holiness, His uprightness, His moral and high holy character, and standards.

In Paul's letter to Timothy, he calls God "**the righteous judge.**" **2 Timothy 4:7-8** *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

God is the only one worthy to judge any man and the world of righteousness.

The Bible has much to say about God's righteousness and man's ability to be righteous. Remember what we studied a few weeks ago in Romans chapter 5: **Romans 5:17-19** *For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) 18 Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. 19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*

This was in reference to how all men are unrighteous due to the first Adam who sinned and brought condemnation to all the human race. But through the second Adam man can be made righteous through the only One who is completely righteous. This is called God's "gift of righteousness," and the "free gift," which is given freely to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for Salvation.

So, in their mind, if God has turned his back on Israel and if he loves some but hates other, doesn't that make God unrighteous?

Paul's simple answer here in our opening text in **Romans 9:14c**... "**God forbid.**" That's the quick and easy answer, but Paul is going to go into detail of why this is so.

15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

Again, just like last time, Paul references back to the Old Testament to shine a light on what he is teaching here in the New Testament. "**For he saith to Moses.**"

This is a direct reference to **Exodus 33:19** *And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.*

He is giving them a stark reminder that this has always been God's Modus Operandi (his M.O.) or standard way of operating. Again, this is God's sovereign will. He will be gracious to whom he will be gracious, and he will shew mercy on whom he will show mercy. It's his prerogative. God did not suddenly change the way he does things; he's always done it the same way.

16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

Here Paul is explaining that Salvation is completely of God – not man. Even though we are saved by faith, it is God who gives us that faith. We didn't just come up with faith all on our own, God initiated it. I meant to say this last time: **once you get it through your head that you have absolutely nothing to do with your salvation, the better you will understand it.**

Without Christ, we are dead men walking. Dead things do not come alive on their own. God is the one that causes dead men to come to life. He causes dead men to have faith. Just as Paul said to the Church at Ephesus: **Ephesians 2:8-9** *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.* So, the **grace is God's**, the **faith** that we have to believe is because **God gave us that faith**, the **gift is God's to give.** Likewise, just as Paul said in our text here in verse 16: **God is the one that sheweth mercy.**

17 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. 18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.

Once again Paul takes them back to the Old Testament: **For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh.** He is referencing **Exodus 9:13-16** **13** *And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me.*

14 *For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. 15 For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth.*

16 *And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.*

God in his sovereignty used Pharaoh for his own glory. He hardened Pharaoh's heart. Pharaoh had no choice in the decision, it was all of God. Listen, God will use anybody, and any means he sees fit to fulfill his will and for his glory. You better believe after the world saw the plagues that came upon Egypt and Pharaoh, the name of the Lord God Jehovah was declared throughout all the earth.

19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?

Naturally, the rebuttal that Paul's listeners will have is, if God chooses and purposes everything that happens, then why does he blame man when he is sinful? Why would he blame those who resist his will if it only brings glory to himself?

It's the same question he was being asked in **Romans 3:7** For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?

And in **Romans 6:1** What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

To each of these questions Paul answers "God forbid!"

20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed *it*, Why hast thou made me thus?

That phrase in the beginning of this verse should be imprinted upon every single person's heart: "O man, who art thou that repliest against God?"

We would say something like "Who in the world do you think you are?"

Or "Who died and made you God?"

Paul isn't condemning someone with honest questions about the doctrine he is teaching, instead he is rebuking those that want to use God's sovereignty as an excuse for them to sin and live in the flesh.

The people in Paul's day had the same problem we have in this day in which we live. Man thinks he is something that he is not. Man believes that he is his own God and is in control of everything.

Around 10-years ago I was on a business trip for the company that I work for. We were in Las Vegas showcasing our products at a large tradeshow called "G2E." There were around 25 of us there including the President of the company. On the last night of the show, he reserved a large room at a very expensive Italian restaurant for everyone to eat dinner together. We were all seated around a row of tables with the President sitting in the very center. As the waiters brought out bottles of wine and began pouring it into our glasses, I held my hand over my glass and said, "**no thank you, I'll have a diet coke.**" The President of our company looked at me like I was the dumbest person on earth. He said, "**do you not like wine?**" Before I could even answer someone said, "**he doesn't believe in drinking alcohol, he's a preacher.**" I'll never forget what our President said: "**I believe everyone has the right to believe in whoever and whatever they choose, and I respect that; however, I am my own God, and no one will tell me what I can or cannot do.**"

That was the first time I had ever heard anyone say such a thing, and that was over 10-years ago. You would be amazed at how many people today believe they are their own God. There has been a surge over the past 10-years of people claiming to be "Atheistic Agnostics." That sounds like a contradiction in terms, but it is someone who doesn't believe in a deity, while holding that a deity's existence is unknowable. These people ultimately claim to be their own God.

21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

22 What if God, willing to shew *his* wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

Paul brings up this reference of the potter and the clay. Of course, this would get their attention because they know what Scripture says about man's righteousness and the comparison of God being the Potter and man the clay.

Listen to what the Bible says in: **Isaiah 64:6-8** But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. 7 And *there is* none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities. 8 But now, O LORD, thou *art* our father; we *are* the clay, and thou our potter; and we all *are* the work of thy hand.

That isn't the only reference to the Potter and the Clay mentioned in Scripture. Listen to what it says in:

Jeremiah 18:1-11

1 The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

2 Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words.

3 Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.

4 And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make *it*.

5 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

6 O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay *is* in the potter's hand, so *are* ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.

7 *At what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy *it*;

8 If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.

9 And *at what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant *it*;

10 If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.

11 Now therefore go to, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.

We should all look at the analogy of the Potter and the Clay because all we are is clay. We like to go around bragging about "free-will" all the time. I think people have taken the meaning of free-will to mean that man has control over every aspect of his own life. That is not how it works friends. Without the sovereignty of God, you could not breath the next breath of air. It is only by God's grace and mercy that our heart continues to beat. He could at any moment think the thought and cause your heart to stop beating. Where is your free-will in that?

Paul asks his readers the simple question: "**Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?**"

The truth is the clay has nothing to say over how it is formed. It cannot jump off the wheel and form itself. The clay is controlled by the Potter and ONLY the Potter. If the Potter decides to take the lump of clay off the wheel and cast it into the fire until it hardens and then bust it into a million pieces, that is His right to do. If he decides to mold it and form it into a beautiful work of art, that is His right to do.

If God chooses one and does not choose another, does that make him unrighteous? No, because He is in total control and who are WE to question him?