

God exercises sovereign goodness in the bestowal of mercy and justice for the display of His glory.

1) Is God unjust for choosing some for salvation and rejecting others?

- a) **9:14**—"Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!"—Paul's **Thesis**: God is not unjust for exercising His purpose of election.
- i) **9:15**—"For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.'"—Paul's **first argument from Scripture** (Exod. 33:19): God revealed to Moses the principle of His freedom to bestow mercy on whomever He wills. **Two implications** from God's self-revelation in Exodus 33:19:
- (1) All people stand in need of mercy because of sin against God. Justice is required. Mercy is not.
 - (2) God alone can extend mercy as the offended party.
- (3) **9:16**—"So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy."—Paul's **initial conclusion**: God maintains His freedom to show mercy to whomever He chooses to display His saving grace.
- ii) **9:17**—"For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed in all the earth.'"—Paul's **second argument from Scripture** (Exod. 9:16): God raised Pharaoh up to reveal His saving power in Israel to all nations. **Two implications** from God's word in Exodus 9:16:
- (1) God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exod. 4:21).
 - (2) God's saving power was displayed and His name made known in all the earth through Pharaoh's hardness/resistance to God's command.
- (3) **Paul's second conclusion**: God maintains His freedom to harden whomever He chooses in order to display His saving power.
- b) **9:18**—"So then He has mercy on whomever He wills, and He hardens whomever He wills."—Paul's **Summary Conclusion**: God maintains His freedom to show mercy or justice to whomever He wills, therefore He is not unjust for exercising His purpose of election.
- c) **Application**:
- i) Reasoning from Scripture
 - ii) Beware of unscriptural first principles
 - iii) Salvation does not depend on you (v. 16).

2) How can God hold anyone morally accountable if they have no freedom to choose God for themselves?

- a) **9:19**—"You will say to me then, 'Why does He still find fault? For who can resist His will?'"—Paul **anticipates this objection** to His teaching on God's sovereignty: I can only be held morally accountable for something that I have the ability/will to effect.
- i) "His will"=decretive will of God
 - ii) Popularly, "will of God" is often used to refer to the revealed commandments of God.
- b) **9:20-24**—Paul's **Thesis**: As the Creator, God has the authority to dispose of His creatures for His holy, self-revealing purposes.
- i) **9:21**—"Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?"—Paul **illustrates** the Creator's prerogative in the Creator-creature relationship. God is the potter. Humanity is the clay.
 - ii) **9:22**—"What if God, desiring to show His wrath and to make known His power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction . . ."—Paul's **rhetorical**

question draws on the biblical theme that God reveals His majesty in justice in the judgment of the wicked (E.g., Pharaoh).

iii) **9:23**—“. . . in order to make known the riches of His glory for vessels of mercy, which He has prepared beforehand for glory . . .”—Paul’s **rhetorical question** continues to draw on the biblical them of God’s self-revelation through human history, but now with regard to the display of His grace in the salvation of the elect.

(1) Vessels of Mercy: Always remember that if you are in Christ it is because of God’s mercy, not because of you are better clay than someone else.

(2) Prepared beforehand for glory: Predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, and thus to display the glory of Christ for eternity

iv) **9:24**—“. . . even us whom He has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?”—Individual election, not corporate or national election

v) The “lump” seems to be fallen humanity, since the operative word in verses 14-18 is “mercy.” Although, Paul’s theodicy focuses not on weighing God’s actions in human courts of justice, but on God’s absolute freedom to do all His holy will.

(1) *Infralapsarian*: God made vessels of mercy and wrath out of the lump of *fallen* humanity.

(2) *Supralapsarian*: God made vessels of mercy and wrath out of the lump of *created* humanity.

(3) The present text explains election along the lines of the *infralapsarian* order of decrees. But predestination, broadly considered, includes God’s willing that mankind should fall. This is part of the “all things” that God purposed “according to the counsel of His will . . . to the praise of His glory” (Eph. 1:11-12).

c) **9:20**—“But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, ‘Why have you made me like this?’”—Paul’s “**argument**” is less philosophical and more religious. God is God. You are not. (Isa. 45:9; Deut. 29:29).

d) **Application:**

i) Reverence God as holy, good, just, gracious and loving.

ii) Cover your mouth when tempted to accuse God.

3) **Summary of Romans 9:1-24:**

a) Only a remnant of Jews in Paul’s day was saved by grace through faith in Christ.

b) This does not mean that God has been unfaithful to His covenant promises.

c) God revealed in the Old Testament that He chose certain individuals for salvation and rejected others, even within the covenant community.

d) God’s sovereign election and reprobation are consistent with His self-revelation both to and through Moses and Pharaoh.

e) God’s sovereignty does not diminish human responsibility, but rather establishes it.

f) **Application:**

i) *Compatibilism*: God’s sovereignty and human responsibility are compatible (WCF III.1).

ii) God is merciful to some sinners. God is just to some sinners. God is never unjust to any.

iii) Why election? The maximum display of God’s glory for the enjoyment of His people.

iv) How do I know that I am elect? 1 Thessalonians 1:4-10

(1) Receiving the Word/gospel with persevering faith and joy (vv. 4-6)

(2) Marked repentance (vv. 7-9)

(3) Service to the living God (v. 9)

(4) Hope in the coming of Christ (v. 10)

Doxology: “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways!”—Romans 9:33