

Romans 9:14-33
“What if God...?”

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I. Intro

The 9th chapter of Romans poses several challenges to the Bible student:

- A. First, Paul **didn't set out to write** a paper on the sovereignty of God as it relates to election. He was dealing with gentile conversion and what that has to say to the Jews and the promises God had made to them.
- B. Secondly, *we tend to think of God as nothing more than an enlarged man with human attributes and motives.* We have a problem with anyone having that much authority over another as they often become tyrants. Our response to this is to distrust and fight against anyone that has absolute power over us. Our nation was founded by people who fled nations that had absolute power over them to establish democracy and a constitution to make sure that there was a system of checks and balances to ensure that no one person could have that much power over the affairs of our lives.

In the first 13 verses Paul established three truths with regards to our election to His salvation:

1. **Salvation is never based on natural advantages:** What we are by background or birthright does not enter into whether you are going to be saved or are saved.
2. **Salvation is always based upon a promise from God:** This is why we are always exhorted in the Bible to believe God's promises in His word. Our redemption includes

the necessity to be confronted with God's promises and for us to give a willing voluntary submission and surrender to them.

3. **Salvation never takes notice of whether we are bad or good:** In God's view all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and the degree of how far we have fallen compared to someone else is irrelevant. We are all children born into a fallen race and all equally lost and as such all equally redeemable!

II. Vs. 14-18 It's a matter of choice

Vs. 14 In these verses Paul outlines the basis of His election, and he starts off with the truth that **God's choice is based upon His sovereign right to choose.** Election is always totally a matter of grace because if He elected on the basis of merit or works than no one would ever be saved. All of us deserve judgment not mercy and it is God's mercy and grace that is "unfair"! **If God had to give an account of His actions to someone then the person He would give account to would be His God.** His sovereign rule over us will not destroy us or rob us from something that is really in our best interest. The clearest example of this was in His prohibition in the garden not to partake of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God said that in the day we eat of it would die and satan countered to impugn God's motives and say that what motivated this command was jealousy. His command was not based upon jealousy but rather our continual benefit. The truth is God sovereign power is our only hope. Once a man asked Spurgeon how he reconciled divine sovereignty with human responsibility and he replied, "*No need to reconcile friends*".

Vs. 15-16 **Moses is an example of God's way of choosing**: Israel, with the exception of Moses and Joshua, deserved to be destroyed but God only destroyed 3,000. Moses was chosen in a time when Pharaoh was putting to death all male Hebrew babies and God elects to save him from destruction. Yet he is delivered into the very ones whose commands were given to destroy him. There he was raised in all the benefits of royalty whereby he rediscovers his roots and becomes a murderer, then fugitive and vagabond for another 40 years until God plucks him out of the desert to be the deliverer. What was Moses contribution to this? Nothing! **For 40 years he thought he was someone, the next 40 years he thought he was nothing, the last 40 years he realize that God does something through nothings.** Paul establishes **three things about God's mercy in verse 16:**

1. *him who wills*: It is **not given to us because of what we wish to do**
2. *him who runs*: It is **not given to us because of what we actually do**
3. *But of God*: It is **given simply out of His desire to show mercy**

Vs.17-18 **Pharaoh is an example of God's way of choosing**: In Exodus we are told 10 times that Pharaoh hardened his heart and 10 times that God did so. ***God's hardening was only confirming Pharaoh's decision as Pharaoh's heart was left by God in its natural state, defiant and rebellious against Him.*** In Exodus 5:2 Pharaoh said, "*Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go.*" When a man seeks his own glory it is destructive as he has to put others down to elevate his greatness. But God demonstrates His glory, His greatness, for the welfare and benefit of His creation not to boast in His superiority. **The same sunlight that melts the snow hardens the clay; the difference isn't the sunlight it's what it shines on!** **Pharaoh was raised up that God's power might be displayed ON him; Moses was raised up that He might display His power THROUGH him.**

III. Vs. 19-29 It's just not fair

Vs. 19-29 In verse 19 Paul brings out a hidden accusation against God by saying, “*God uses men to do evil, and then He turns around and blames them for the evil He made them do and punishes them for it.*” “*That’s not fair, that’s not just!*” People are always looking for someone to blame for their condition, so they won’t have to take responsibility for their own choices. **People are not lost because they are hardened; they hardened because they are lost, and they are lost because they are sinners. Paul answers the charge four ways:**

1. Vs. 20 **The first answer to the accusation that God is unfair is to ask God’s accuser what their credentials are to bring such a charge.** God who is infinite in wisdom and power is being questioned by finite man who has extremely limited understanding and power. We are incapable of judging God who alone is mighty and wise, absolute in power, infinite in knowledge, knowing all things from the beginning to the end? **We know nothing of what God knows yet we are often guilty of judging Him based upon what we don’t know.** Job cried for the right to ask God “*How Come*” and in Chapters 38-41 God says that He would allow this if Job could answered a few questions first. In chapter 38 **God asks Job if he can handle the job of running the universe,** “*Have you commanded the morning since your days began and caused the dawn to know its place?*”. Job wisely replies that he can’t. In the 39th chapter God asks, “*Does the hawk fly by your wisdom?*” **God asks Job what you have done with power and authority.** In the 40th chapter God asks “*Have you an arm like God? Or can you thunder with a voice like His?*” **God asks Job how to have you done with absolute power?** By the 42nd chapter **Job understands that God is out of his league and that even though he can’t understand the why, he can take his rest in Who.** Folk’s, God is not responsible for sin; **He is under no obligation to save anyone, when He saves it is purely and completely an act of mercy and grace!**

2. Vs. 21 **The second answer to the accusation again comes back to the accuser as God says that the potter has rights over the clay.** We might object to being called “*clay*” after all we do have feelings, we are alive. But how about our authority over the plants and animals? Do you ask permission of your lawn when you mow it? Do you ask your pooch what kind of food he would like to have today? Nope, you just exercise authority over that which you are superior. How about your children? Do you ask them if they would like to go to school today? Does your boss ask you if you would like to do your job? **In God’s infinite wisdom and knowledge, He reads with unerring accuracy the operations of the human heart.** The reason people refuse to come to God’s love will be found in their love of sin not in their non-election. The most read verse of Jesus in the Bible is John 3:16 and there we are told specifically that, “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*”
3. Vs. 22-28 **The third argument Paul brings up has to do with what people see as unfairness in God’s election as they impugn His motives.** Paul starts by asking “*What if God?*”. Before we assume the worse about God’s decision we should consider the best. God has purposes and plans that we just can’t see and even if we could not be able to understand them. One of those is to display His power by being patient towards those who practice evil towards Him and their fellow man instead of just zapping that person. And sometimes in His wisdom He displays His power and judgment quickly and decisively. Why the one and not the other? I don’t know but I know that He always does what is right and in this case it has to be right even though it doesn’t appear that way to me now. **The wrath of God is on display right next to the patience of God to draw people of all kinds to Himself.** God does not force people to come to Him, we are drawn to Him and sometimes what draws us is the reality of

judgment and sometimes what draws us is the reality of love and sometimes it is a combination!

4. Vs. 29 **The last argument is aimed again at God's accusers in election by saying that people make the mistake of assuming that everyone is neutral.** The fact is we aren't neutral we are sinners by nature and choice, we are all lost, all are victims of sin and apart from God's intervention the only thing we can do is resist God. That is what Paul already established in chapter 3, that *there is no who does right, none who seeks after God, not one.* God's judgment causes man to wake up and stop resisting His love; apart from this His grace wouldn't make sense. **The amazing aspect of God's election isn't in His choosing some and not others it's that He has chosen any at all.**

IV. Vs. 30-33 Human delusion

Vs. 30-33 This passage specifically deals with the Gentile salvation and the Jewish separation. The problem wasn't that the Jews were pursuing after righteousness but that they thought that their self-efforts they had obtained righteousness. They arrogantly believed like Cain of old that God would have to accept their effort over His Word and character.

The larger application here is: "*How can I tell if someone is chosen or not?*" "*If natural advantages and whether we are good or bad when compared to someone else can't determine this than how can I tell?*" **The simple answer to determine if you are elected by God being drawn by Spirit into salvation or being permitted to remain lost is what you do with Jesus!**

Many in Israel chose to stumble at the ROCK because to stand on it would mean that they weren't good enough on their own works. You can be very religious in your garden working in it every day, spend the rest of your life weeding your garden, planting, and watering but what do you do with the ROCK; that is what will determine where you will spend eternity. **It is a human delusion, fostered by Satan, that salvation is within our natural reach. That any time we want**

*to we can, with minimal effort at the last minute, make up our mind to do a little this or that
and God will be forced to accept what we have offered instead of us accepting what He has
offered, His only begotten Son.*