

Romans – The Crown Jewel of Salvation

45- “But God, that’s Not Fair!”

Romans 9:19-33

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The doctrine of election can be unsettling at first glance, but if you keep gazing at it through the lens of Scripture you’re going to see it’s one of the sweetest, most glorious, and comforting doctrines in all the Bible.

Look at the objection in **v. 19**:

Romans 9:19 “One of you will say to me, ‘Then why does God still blame us? For who can resist His will?’”

In other words, “If God is sovereign, don’t blame me for my choices because I don’t really have any.” But that’s not the biblical doctrine of election – that’s fatalism and the Bible doesn’t teach fatalism.

The Bible teaches the doctrine of ELECTION *and* the doctrine of MAN’S RESPONSIBILITY to make free choices to either reject or embrace this free offer of salvation.

Paul has three arguments that he brings to the table to help us wrestle with this sense of God not being fair.

I. Do You Really Think You’re Qualified to Judge God?

v. 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?’”

- As you get ready to judge and criticize God, what are your credentials?
- Furthermore, what’s your basis for deciding just or unjust? How do you know?
- And most of all, even if you have a basis for that decision how do you know you’re using the right measuring stick?

We keep forgetting there’s a Grand-Canyon-size gulf between us and God, between our wisdom and God’s, between our mercy and God’s, between our ways and God’s, and between our thoughts and God’s.

1. Man is **FINITE** – that means our knowledge, scope, perspective, and our ability to properly assimilate the data we do have is limited. Our ability to draw consistent and accurate conclusions from the data is pathetically limited and skewed.
2. Not only are we finite; we’re also **FRAIL**. That means we have very limited strength. The Bible calls us a vapor. In fact, **Isaiah 40** tells us we’re like the flower that fades and the grass that withers in the summer heat. We’re the epitome of frailty while God is the apex of strength and power.
3. Despite all the clever logic we’re convinced we have, the truth of the matter is that time and again we’ve demonstrated just how incredibly **FOOLISH** we are. It’s mankind, in all of his wisdom and logic, that’s left a trail of atrocious blunders as we stumble from one bad decision to the next like blind men and women falling in and out of ditches.

I Corinthians 1:20, 25 “Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world... because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

In Romans 9, that same kind of person that we've just described is daring to stand up against the God of the universe and tell Him to answer to us for His actions.

Job did a very similar thing! Job wasn't a heathen or a skeptic arguing against God. He was a devout man who loved God deeply and was bewildered as to what God was doing with him and what He was allowing to happen to him.

What was going on in Job's life did not make sense according to what He knew about God!

In desperation, Job cries out and says, "This makes no sense! God, if I could just have 5 minutes to stand before You and plead my case, I'd show you how unfair all this is. And I would be right and You would be wrong!"

That's when God shows up in **Job 38-41**, asking Job questions such as:

- Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?
- Where were you when the morning stars sang together, and I flung the heavens into space?
- Do you know how it all happened? Do you have any idea?

At that point Job adjusts his attitude.

Job 42:3, 6 "... Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know... Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

That's the same argument Paul's using in Romans 9. He's saying, "Who are you, O man, to reply against God? Who do you think you are?"

II. Shouldn't God Be Allowed the Same Sovereignty that We Ourselves Exercise Here in This Life?

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

Some of us think God is OBLIGATED to treat us differently than He would clay.

It's a hard truth that's fallen out of favor in our day of man-centered, self-esteem, God-owes-it-to-us theology, but God is not obligated to treat us any certain way. Paul uses the words 'mercy' or 'compassion' 7x because God's justice and obligation would have us all rightly go to hell, but in His mercy He's purposed to save people from every tribe and tongue and nation.

III. Could It Be That God Has Purposes that We just Don't See or Understand Right Now?

v. 22-26 "What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of His wrath -- prepared for destruction? What if He did this to make the riches of His glory known to the objects of His mercy, whom He prepared in advance for glory -- even us, whom He also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles? As He says in Hosea: 'I will call them 'My people' who are not My people; and I will call her 'My loved one' who is not My loved one,' and, 'It will happen that in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"

Paul is reminding us that God may have purposes that we can't even see and couldn't understand if we saw it!

A lot of our trouble with Romans 9 is evidence that we don't really understand Romans 1,2, and 3! We start by thinking that everybody's looking for God, going hard after Him, and now we're wondering whether God will receive everyone or reject some. But that's not what the Bible teaches at all! Paul's already tried to tell us what's really going on, but it's just so hard for us to believe it.

Romans 3:10-11 "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all gone out of the way; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one!"

God's not some Cosmic Despot that's just randomly racing through the phone book of humanity – laughing and putting a big check mark by the names of all the people He wants to send to hell. No! All of us, by our own choice, have already listed ourselves under "Hell." But God, in His infinite mercy and grace elected a people from A-Z –from every tribe and tongue and nation – to be called out from the bondage of darkness and death!

To summarize what Paul is saying here in this chapter with one simple sentence: **Let God be God.** He's not on trial and we're not going figure it all out. If all of God's ways were small enough for us to figure out, then He wouldn't be big enough to solve our problems, or worthy of our worship because He'd be just like us.

2 Peter 3:9 "God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

Romans 10:9 "That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."