

NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL

— A Study of Romans —

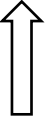
Lesson Nineteen

Romans 9:14-33

*So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.
Romans 9:16*

Day 1

Pray:



Father, help me to see you as you really are. Give me understanding and insight into what you are saying in your word and who you are showing yourself to be. Help me to see and embrace the beauty of your ways and to trust you when I don't understand.

Read: Romans 9:14-33. Read it again in another translation such as NLT.

Observe:

- Write key words and themes, repeated words, or phrases. Circle on your Scripture pages any transition words (therefore, but, because, if/then etc.)
- Are there any commands to be obeyed, or truths to be trusted?
- What questions do you have about the text?

Day 2: Romans 9:14-18

In the first part of Chapter 9 we learned that election is based solely on God's free will in his sovereign choice—not on anything anyone has done good or bad. As he always does, Paul now anticipates questions that will arise from this truth. Paul's arguments here take some thought. At first it's hard to see his reasoning, but with prayer and pondering they become clear.

Please don't get discouraged or upset, instead be prayerful throughout this lesson as you read and study. Let God's word inform your thoughts—not the other way around. There are depths of riches waiting for us if we will submit to God, trust him and let him teach us the goodness and beauty of his ways as he has revealed in his word.

1. Paul has just told us that God chose Jacob over Esau not based on anything they had done or would do—both men would turn out to be scoundrels—but based on his own free will. What is the first question that Paul addresses in verse 14?

- a. What is the answer?

2. What is God's prerogative as God, according to verse 15?

For Discussion

Why does Paul answer the *fairness* question with the *mercy* answer? What do mercy and justice/fairness have to do with each other?

Picture and Ponder

"We must be careful if we demand "fairness" from God. To ask for fairness is to ask for what we deserve. And what we deserve is judgment."¹

Digging Deeper

In verse 15 Paul quotes Exodus 33:19. In the following verses, what do you learn from the context in which God made this proclamation about himself?

Exodus 33:18-19 Moses said, "Please show me your glory." And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

3. Look back to Romans 3:11-12 to see the reality of every human being's situation. What does everyone deserve because of this reality?
 - a. Remember, mercy is *undeserved* favor. God does not owe mercy to anyone. Since everyone deserves condemnation and yet God gives mercy to some, what does this say about God?

Picture and Ponder

"As an example, consider a rich person who decides to choose twenty inner-city kids and guarantee their full college tuition. There are literally thousands of equally worthy recipients. And this rich woman could help a lot more than twenty children. But can anyone say that since she has helped some, she is being unfair to everyone else? No. She has no particular obligation to help any of the children. Since all she has given is sheer mercy, there can be no talk about being 'unfair.'"²

4. What reason do we find in verse 16 for God's freedom to show mercy to anyone he chooses?

Scholar's Note: Verse 16- Human will = what we choose. Human exertion = what we do.

5. Paul moves from the example of Moses to Pharaoh. What was the reason God preserved and appointed Pharaoh according to verse 17?
 - a. What do we learn from this reason?

For Discussion

How does knowing that God raised Pharaoh up for the purpose of his glory throughout the earth, help us to think about people in positions of power in our world today, whether they follow God or not? (Prov.21:1)

Picture and Ponder

The fact that God raised up Pharaoh specifically so that God could show his glory to the world might not sit right with us. When we want to exalt ourselves, we are considered prideful and self-interested, and that is accurate. Why is it good that God glorifies himself? John Piper helps us understand:

“God’s self-exaltation is utterly different from all human self-exaltation. When humans exalt themselves, they call attention to something that can never satisfy the people they want to impress: themselves. No mere human, no matter how exalted, can be the all-satisfying treasure of another human. Nor is such satisfaction of others even a typical human motive for self-exaltation. For humans, self-exaltation is typically a way of getting, not giving—using people, not serving them. But it is otherwise with God.

In exalting himself—that is, in upholding and communicating his glory—God aims to *give* enjoyment to all who will have him as their supreme treasure...God is the one being in the universe for whom self-exaltation is a form of love. For he is the only being whose worth and beauty can satisfy the human soul fully and forever. When God makes his praise the goal of his providence, he is pursuing our full and lasting pleasure. That is love.”³

Digging Deeper

Verse 18 says that God also can harden whoever he chooses. This is a hard statement, but we mustn't think that God takes a soft heart and hardens it or causes anyone to sin.

- a. What do the verses below in Exodus tell us about Pharaoh?

Exodus 8:15,32, 9:34 *But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart and would not listen to them, as the LORD had said...But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and did not let the people go...But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet again and hardened his heart, he and his servants.*

- b. How do the verses below in Romans 1 explain what God was doing with Pharaoh?

Romans 1:24, 26, 28 *Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts...For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions...And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind...*



Our problem is that we don't have a realistic view of God or ourselves. If we saw clearly, the holiness and majesty of God, and the depth of humanity's sin, we would be shocked that God poured out his grace and mercy on anyone. But God, being under no obligation at all, intervenes in the lives of some, calling us out of darkness into his marvelous light and giving grace and mercy. To the others, who go the way they want to go, he gives justice. But no one gets injustice.

- ◆ Why is it good that God's mercy doesn't depend on what we choose or what we do (v.16)?



Oh Father, help me to trust in the goodness and wisdom of your ways. "May your name and your renown be the desire of my heart" (Is. 26:8).

Day 3: Romans 9:19-23

1. What is the next 2-part question Paul addresses in verse 19?
 - a. Paul's answer in verse 20 is a three-part question:
 - Who are you, O man...
 - ...to answer back to God
 - Why have you made me like this?

One commentator reframes the questions for us seen below. How do we answer in the old way of the flesh? How should we answer these?

1. "Are we aware of who we are?"
2. What kind of relationship do we think exists between us and God?
3. What attitude toward God do we consider appropriate to this relationship?"⁴

Digging Deeper

The gulf between God and humans is even wider than that of a potter and clay. Paul takes his illustration from two passages in Isaiah. What kind of disposition or attitude toward God do you see in the verses below that Paul is talking about?

Isaiah 29:16 *You turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, 'He did not make me'; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, "He has no understanding?"*

Isaiah 45:9 *"What sorrow awaits those who argue with their Creator. Does a clay pot argue with its maker? Does the clay dispute with the one who shapes it, saying, 'Stop, you're doing it wrong!' Does the pot exclaim, 'How clumsy can you be?' (NLT)*

For Discussion

In Job 40:4 Job says, *"I am nothing—how could I ever find the answers? I will cover my mouth with my hand (NLT).* We know God commended Job in the end, but God never gave Job the answers he had asked for. God isn't against us asking him questions, but what do we need to keep in mind as we ask?

2. In letting some people go their own way to destruction, what two things does God want to reveal about himself according to verse 22a?

Digging Deeper

Verse 22 tells us that *God has endured with much patience vessels of wrath...* What is the reason for God's patience according to the verses below?

2 Peter 3:9 *The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*

Romans 2:4 *Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?*

3. What does God want to reveal about himself in pouring out his mercy according to verse 23?



In his dealings with sinful human beings, God is revealing who he is. He is revealing “his patience and wrath in judgment and above all, his glory and mercy in salvation.”⁵ Like bright stars in an inky black sky, God’s mercy and grace stand out so much more brilliantly against the backdrop of his wrath and power in judgment. This plan is what gives him the most glory.

- ◆ We are not usually upset that God shows his mercy to some, we are upset that he doesn’t show his mercy to everyone, or at least to everyone we think he should. How do the truths in chapter 9 help you wrestle through this kind of thinking?

- ◆ 2 Samuel 24:14 says, *I am in great distress. Let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for his mercy is great...* When we don’t understand God’s plan or we are so sorrowful over the unbelief of those we love, we can fall into the hand of God and pray for mercy. Spend some time in prayer now for those loved ones.

Day 4: Romans 9:24-29

1. In verses 24-29 Paul comes back to the question of Jewish unbelief. Who else has God also called, which might be surprising to the Jews?

2. The quotes from Hosea in verses 25-26 show the surprising way God has always worked to make and keep promises. What wonderful surprises do we see in verses 25-26?

[Digging Deeper](#)

Read the verses below. How does the prophecy in Hosea apply to Gentiles (non-Jewish)?

Ephesians 2:11-13 ¹¹ Don't forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders. You were called "uncircumcised heathens" by the Jews, who were proud of their circumcision, even though it affected only their bodies and not their hearts. ¹² In those days you were living apart from Christ. You were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel, and you did not know the covenant promises God had made to them. You lived in this world without God and without hope. ¹³ But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ. (NLT)



Matthew 3:9 says, *And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.* God kept his promise to give Abraham descendants as numerous as the stars and to bless the nations through him—he raised up descendants for Abraham from the stony hearts of Gentiles. We who believe, are the children of Abraham. God kept his promise in a very unexpected way, and we are the beneficiaries. (And for the people of Israel God saved a remnant—the true Israel.)

- ◆ Write your own prayer of praise and thanksgiving for the gift of grace you have been given.

3. What reversal do we see with Israel according to verse 27?

Day 5: Romans 9:30-33

1. How does Paul summarize the surprising reversals in Jewish and Gentile history in verses 30-31?

2. What was wrong about the way Israel pursued the law according to verse 32?

For Discussion

Why is it hard for “religious” or “good” people to accept the gospel?

Digging Deeper

Read the verses below. What is the stumbling stone the Jews have stumbled over in their pursuit of the law?

1 Corinthians 1:22-24 *For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*



Paul attributes Jewish unbelief to their pride. They rejected the righteousness of Jesus that comes by grace through faith, for their own self-righteousness. Human beings are accountable for their sinful choices. Somehow that is compatible with election—God’s complete sovereignty in salvation. It is a mystery how both of those things are true, but we see them represented throughout the Bible. We should not be surprised or frustrated by this mystery. God wouldn’t be God if we could understand all his ways. The secret things belong to God (Deut. 29:29), we are simply to trust him; and *whoever believes in him will not be put to shame* (v.33)

- ◆ Spend some time in prayer talking to God about what he is saying in this passage. Use the acronym PRAY: praise, repent, ask, yield.

Picture and Ponder

“I don’t think the Bible makes plain how both of these truths – God’s sovereignty and man’s accountability – are in perfect compatibility. But the whole Bible testifies to both truths. They are compatible. The Bible teaches the truth of both. And they are profoundly important to embrace for the good of our souls, and for the integrity of God’s word, and for the health of the church, and for the advancement of God’s mission, and for the glory of God’s grace.”⁶

One Thing:

What is one thing from this week's study that God has impressed on your heart, or convicted you about; is there something new that you learned or is there a verse you want to ponder and meditate on?

Praise God for this and thank him for the work he is doing in your life. Ask him to help you remember this and live it out for his glory.

¹ Kruger, Michael. <https://cdn.rts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Sermon-Notes-Romans-L26.pdf>

² Keller, Timothy. Romans 8-16 For You: For reading, for feeding, for leading (God's Word For You - Romans Series Book 2) (p. 66). The Good Book Company. Kindle Edition.

³ Piper, John, Providence p. 55 Crossway, 2020

⁴ Stott, John R.W. The Message of Romans. P. 225 Intervarsity Press USA

⁵ Stott, John, R.W. The Message of Romans. P. 273 Intervarsity Press USA

Piper, John Ask Pastor John

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