

"IT'S NOT FAIR" — A QUESTION OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS (PART 2)
ROMANS 9:24-26

The story of God's justice is also a story of God's mercy. God certainly is just. He certainly will not let the guilty go unpunished (Ex. 34:7). He will execute His wrath. He must. Because He is holy He cannot overlook sin. He must and He will judge all sin and sinners. There is nothing unfair about God's judgment; whenever and wherever God judges, He is fair (right/righteous).

But in contrast to what many think and believe, God is more than just a God of wrath. He is also a God of mercy and grace. He is a God who withholds His wrath at times and who pours out blessing and riches and kindness at other times. And as we noted last week, God's mercy is seen most brightly when it is placed against the backdrop of His wrath. Now, God's exercise of His wrath and mercy has raised a question...

The question Paul is addressing in Romans 9 is a very real one; it was a significant question in Paul's day and it is a significant question today. Ask around your workplace or your neighborhood or your children's sports teams, and see if people believe that God always acts fairly. If people are honest, you are sure to get multiple responses of "No, God isn't always fair...children die...accidents happen...and natural disasters decimate the poor and needy. Why does God do that?"

This question about God's fairness is actually a subset to a question that Paul began addressing at the beginning of the chapter — "Is God faithful?" That anticipated question arose in Paul's mind because of the declaration he made at the end of chapter eight — if Christ's salvation overwhelmingly conquers, then why hasn't Israel been saved in accord with God's covenant promises? Has God been unfaithful to Israel? And if God has been unfaithful to Israel, will He be unfaithful to us? Can we trust Him for *our* salvation?

Paul's answer is that divine election has chosen some individual Israelites to be saved (vv. 6-13) and His mercy on some and hardening of others has been to proclaim His name in all the earth (vv. 14-18). Because He is greater than a potter, who is sovereign over his pottery, God's sovereign election is just (vv. 19-23). And this morning we will see that His mercy and hardening was also for the purpose of folding Gentiles into His salvation plan (vv. 24-26) — a plan foretold in the OT. The theme of this morning's passage is —

GOD'S ELECTIVE SALVATION IS ALWAYS MERCIFUL — EVEN TO GENTILES.

How is God's elective salvation merciful to us?

1. **God's Election is a Revelation of the RICHES of God's Glory (v. 23)**
2. **God's Election is for ALL Mankind (v. 24)**
3. **God's Election is Despite Man's PRIOR Relationship with God (v. 25)**
4. **God's Election is to a UNIQUE Relationship (v. 26)**

1. God's Election is a Revelation of the RICHES of God's Glory (v. 23)

- We noticed last week that God's judgment is a demonstration of God's just purposes (vv. 22-23)
 - ✓ God does not elect or harden sinners haphazardly or randomly. He has purposes in all that He does.
 - ✓ One purpose was *to reveal His power*. He pours out His wrath against sinners as a demonstration that He has the raw power and strength to condemn, but also that He has authority and right to condemn (Rev. 12:10; 18:1).
 - ✓ Another purpose in His wrath is *to reveal His patience*. He has a great reluctance to punish sinners. He is slow to punish. He is not vindictive or capricious. He is patient (Gen. 18:26ff [Sodom]; Ezk. 18:23, 32; Lk. 13:6ff). He was patient in the days of Noah and Jonah. He was patient with Pharaoh and Judas. He was patient with the Jews. He is patient with all men, not condemning them the moment they are born or at their first willful act of sinful rebellion (Ps. 103:8; 1 Tim. 1:13).
 - ✓ A third purpose *is to reveal His glory* (v. 23). God would have us know the richness of His glory.
 - How will we know the glory of God (and the vastness of His glory)?
 - ... We see His glory in His forgiveness of mankind (Ps. 25:7, 11; 79:9; 106:7-8; 109:21).
 - ... We see His glory in His choosing and electing sinners to be His, despite their sin nature and vast amount of sin (which is the point of this verse; cf. Eph. 1:4-6).
 - ... We see His glory when He is unrelenting in His wrath against their rebellion (v. 22; 3:19; 6:23)
 - We can only know the full magnitude of what we have been given when we see it in comparison to what we have been saved from. We have been given a diamond of redemption; but it shines most brightly against the black backdrop of God's wrath. We have riches in our salvation (11:33; Col. 3:1-3). But the magnitude of those riches are seen most fully when compared to the loss of those who suffer eternally for their sin.
 - ✓ Notice also that God puts His *glory* on display by giving His mercy to the *vessels* He *prepared beforehand* to receive that glory. That phrase implies two realities:
 - It was His choice — He prepared the vessels for glory. They did not save themselves, elect themselves, or prepare themselves. It was God's work alone that prepared them.
 - There was no inherent value in the vessels — they were vessels of *mercy* — they were vessels that were dependent on mercy. They were, in fact, vessels of wrath (v. 22). That's the way they were born and that's the way they lived (5:12ff). They were not commendable. They were dependent on God's mercy for anything they received or would become.
 - This is the same truth that we saw in the psalms — God chooses Israel as His people and saves sinners from wrath so that He alone gets glory (1 Cor. 1:30-31).
 - My friend, when we receive this mercy it should produce a continual overflowing of humble praise and gratitude — “why would He redeem and use *me*?” His glory produces worship.

2. God's Election is for ALL Mankind (v. 24)

- Who are the people that God prepared as *vessels of mercy* (v. 23) to know His glory?
 - ✓ It was the nation of Israel. That goes as far back as Gen. 12:1-2; 15:5-6; 2 Sam. 7:8-11, 16; Jer. 31:31-34; Rev. 7:1ff; Rom. 11:2, 26-28.
 - ✓ God chose the nation of Israel of all the nations of the earth to pour out His elective purposes as His chosen people so that He (and not they) would be glorified (Dt. 7:7).
 - ✓ Then in v. 24 Paul adds another phrase that is most astounding — *even us...from among the Gentiles.*
 - Notice that in the same way that God called (chose & elected) Israel, He **also called** us. This is the same truth He has already explained in vv. 7, 11 — by which He gives life to the dead (4:17).
 - The enfolding of Gentiles into God's salvation plan of Israel was always part of His plan (Gen. 12:3; Ps. 22:27-28; 67:4; 96:3, 10; 102:15; Is. 42:6-7; 49:6; 52:10; 66:18-21). It was always part of His plan, but it is astounding, nonetheless.
 - Paul captures the astounding nature of our inclusion into the salvation plan in Ephesians 2:12 —
 - ... We had no Messiah (**without Christ**) — we had no Redeemer
 - ... We had no citizenship (**excluded from the commonwealth**) — we had no citizen privileges
 - ... You had no covenants (**strangers to the covenants**) — we had no promises made to us — no land, no King, no blessing. All we had promised to us was the promise of wrath.
 - ... We had no hope (**having no hope**) — we had no expectation of any kindness from God; we had no confidence (which is what biblical hope is) that God would act for us with grace.
 - ... We had no God (**without God in the world**) — we had no relationship with Him and no desire for Him — and even worse, we were forsaken by Him and abandoned (Rom. 1)
 - ... To those (us!) — God has made the Messiah, citizenship, covenantal blessings, hope, and God available! To **us** He has made available all these riches.
- The great news of the gospel is that people are chosen from every tribe and tongue and people and nation (Rev. 5:9-10). God has chosen people from Israel as vessels of mercy. And He has chosen Gentiles who deserve His wrath and condemnation from all over the world to be elected to salvation. My friend, if that is you, that should fill your heart with humility and joy (and boldness with the gospel).
 - ✓ Israel has been partially hardened so that salvation could come (overflow) to the Gentiles — us.
 - ✓ Salvation is for all mankind — not that all mankind will be saved, but that salvation is made available to all mankind and that all kinds of people (both Jews & Gentiles) will be elect and saved.
 - ✓ This salvation for us (and ultimately fulfilled to the nation of Israel) should overflow with praise (11:33-36).
 - ✓ Another way that God's elective salvation is merciful is given in v. 25 —

3. God's Election is Despite Man's PRIOR Relationship with God (v. 25)

- To demonstrate the ability of God to call people to salvation, Paul appeals to two passages in Hosea.
 - ✓ In this verse, Paul quotes from **Hos. 2:23** and in v. 26, he will quote **Hos. 1:10**.
 - ✓ In Hosea, the prophet is commanded to marry the adulteress Gomer as a picture of God's covenantal marriage to wayward Israel. Gomer's children are named "She has not obtained compassion" and "Not my people" (**1:6, 9**) as indicative of the rebellion of the 10 Northern tribes (Israel) against God and His discipline of them by sending them into captivity in Assyria.
 - ✓ Yet later God *will* have compassion on Israel, keeping His covenant with her, and she will be called "My people" (**2:23**). So the names and promises in Hosea refer directly to Israel, but in Romans, Paul applies those truths also to the grafting of the Gentiles into the plan of God.
 - ✓ The question is, how can Paul apply this passage to the Gentiles, since the promise is made expressly to the Israelites?
 - Remember that Paul is answering a question about the faithfulness of God — is God the kind of God who will keep His promises? His answer is unequivocally, "Yes" (**v. 6**). And He can say "Yes," because of God's work to elect and call individuals and nations to salvation.
 - Notice that in Rom. 9:24, Paul is emphasizing God's call of both Israel and the Gentiles (**He also called**). He is not emphasizing Jew and Gentile as much as He is emphasizing God's work to call both Jews and Gentiles to salvation. God is faithful because everyone He calls will be saved.
 - As an example of God's faithfulness to save those whom He calls, He points to the illustration of Hosea. Israel was unfaithful to the point where she should be called "not my people," but God is faithful to His calling promises and despite Israel's rebellion, she will still receive compassion and will still be called "my people" (**Hos. 2:23**).
 - Paul's point is that the God who calls a rebellious people like Israel, "my people" and "beloved" is the kind of faithful God who will also save Gentiles whom He has called.
 - Paul is using the passage in Hosea as an illustration of God's dependable faithfulness.
- This passage is good news for both Israel and for us who are Gentiles.
 - ✓ While Israel was God's chosen people, not all Israel believed and followed God, yet God still chose some from that rebellious nation to be His people, and He will still fulfill His promise to the nation and redeem the nation at the end of the age (11:26-28). The election of Israel was not dependent on their own goodness and righteousness, because they were not good or righteous.
 - ✓ The same is true for us Gentiles. Our election by God is not dependent on what we were prior to salvation, for we were *not* worth saving. But His election and salvation of us demonstrates that the salvation is all of Him. It is His plan that prepares us, it is His love that draws us, and it is His mercy and grace that spares us and imputes His righteousness to us. It's all of grace.

- ✓ We were a people who were not a chosen people. We were a people who were not a loved (or loveable) people. We were “disowned,” unapproved, destined for wrath, under eternal judgment. We didn’t know the mercy of God, we did not seek the mercy of God. In fact, we hated God, His mercy, and everything else about Him.
- ✓ To those kinds of people, God made a faithful promise — I will place my love on you, show you compassion, and make you my people.
- This is such good news. Here is hope for the “outcasts.” Have you ever felt like you were on the outside? Have you felt like you didn’t fit into a group? That you are unworthy and unlovable? In a simple way I felt that way athletically while growing up. I was not coordinated, always somewhere between a little and a lot overweight, and almost always the last person chosen when teams were picked at recess. In contrast, my brother was highly coordinated, always fit, and usually picked first.
- In athletics I felt like an outcast. Maybe you feel that way in church. You are not a Christian — a follower of Christ. You’re here in worship, but you feel like a fake or a fraud; you aren’t a Christian because you feel like you don’t measure up. I have bad news and good news. The bad news is that you are right. You *don’t* measure up. You are an outsider. You won’t ever be good enough for Christ.
- The good news is that the only kind of person God saves is outsiders. Jesus did not come to save self-righteous people; He came to save sinners ([1 Tim. 1:15](#); [Mt. 9:13](#); [Lk. 5:32](#)). If you repent of your sin (confess it and turn away from it) and believe in Jesus (trust that He died for you sin so that you can be freed from sin’s penalty and power), then He will save you.
- God doesn’t elect and save on the basis of any goodness we were before we came to Him. God elects and saves only those who are rebellious and outcasts. And He delights to call them His people.
- In fact, it gets even better than that...

4. God’s Election is to a UNIQUE Relationship (v. 26)

- Remember that in Hosea the 10 northern tribes were taken into captivity to Assyria. The history of Israel is a story of captivity —
 - ✓ Jacob and his sons and families (70 people) went to Egypt for food and life and the resulting nation ended up imprisoned there for 400 years. They went for freedom and ended up captive.
 - ✓ The northern tribes were taken into captivity to Assyria.
 - ✓ The southern two tribes some 100 years later were taken captive by Babylon.
 - ✓ The nation, when not in captivity, knew of invader after invader, including Rome in Jesus’ day.
 - ✓ It is that life of captivity to which Paul refers in v. 26 — ***in the place where it was said to them...*** What place was that? It was whatever place where they were being held captive. In every place of captivity, they were considered to be ***not My people***. They were aliens, estranged from God.

- In a stunning reversal, as a result of God's elective, saving plan, in *those* places — the places of captivity and estrangement, it will be said ***they shall be called the sons of the living God.***
 - ✓ They have a new name — their name is not “captive,” but “sons of God.”
 - ✓ Remember again why they were sent into captivity — it was for their rebellion and disobedience.
 - ✓ Despite their rebellion, God made them His sons. He reversed their trajectory and was faithful to His promises. He did not reject them, but He kept them, preserved them, and restored them.
 - ✓ The same is true not only for Israel, but also for the Gentiles who have been enfolded into the promises of God. We also are called “sons of God.”
 - ✓ Those who were His greatest enemies, He adopted and made His sons. It is that adoption that God promised the Spirit would produce in those who believed in Christ for salvation (8:15-17).
 - ✓ Notice also that we are not just sons of God, but sons of ***the living God.*** The God who is eternally alive. The God who never dies, the God who always has been and always will be — that One is the One who adopts us and makes us His children. The One who is life and the source of all life gives us a new life as His children. We were headed to death and He made us alive (5:10, 17; 6:22-23; 8:11). And the life He gave us is *sonship* life.
 - ✓ “The people who were not God's people will be called nothing less than *sons* (with all the rights and privileges that that implies) of One who is none less than *God*, and *living God* at that.” [Morris]

CONCLUSION: What should we say to this passage of *God's Word*?

- ***This passage is for our evangelism.*** If both Jew and Gentile are saved by the same gospel and if both Jew and Gentile need to respond in faith (which we will see in ch. 10), and if both Jew and Gentile are equally under God's wrath for their rejection of Him, then we need to be pursuing conversations that are hopeful for those who are still under that wrath.
- ***This passage is about our love for Israel.*** If God has chosen Israel and will restore Israel, then we should love and pray for and work for the salvation of His people.
- ***This passage is for our unity in the church.*** There is no one who is superior and no one who is inferior. All are equally needy before God. No one can be haughty and no one should be morose. We are all in the same desperate position and if we have been saved it is with the same blood and the same cross.
- ***This passage is for our worship and praise.*** This passage is about God's greatness and glory. And because it is about Him, we should delight in Him, thank Him, and rejoice in Him.

BENEDICTION: Romans 11:33-36