

Human Objections to God's Sovereignty

Romans 9:14-24

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Introduction: “I just can’t believe in a God who would chose some people to be saved and not others!” “What’s the use of praying for and witnessing to people if everything is already decided?” “Why does God condemn men if they are not chosen?” These are a few of the objections to God’s sovereignty in election and they were being voiced in the first century. Jewish believers were also wondering if God had abandoned Israel because of their unbelief. So Paul begins chapter 9 by explaining that men cannot be saved just because they are Israeli.

Romans 9:6-8 ⁶ But *it is* not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are *descended* from Israel..... it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.

And that promise was Jesus Christ.

Galatians 3:16 ¹⁶ Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as *referring* to many, but *rather* to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ.

The Promise, was not Israel, but God the Son who would come into the world to save Israel and gentiles as well. In Christ....

Galatians 3:28-29 ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

Salvation was always through faith....trust in God and His promises.

^{ESV} **James 2:23** and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"- and he was called a friend of God.

At the end, God will turn the hearts of Israel to Jesus Christ.

Chapter nine at first glance appears to be about Israel and the Gentiles, but it is in fact about God and Christ. Who **they** are and what they are doing. It presents an unashamedly HIGH view of God and His Sovereignty. Secondly it explains how God interacts with humanity....whether Jewish or Gentile. The first 13 verses explain that God by Sovereign choice and NOT MERIT, chose the human ancestral path for His Son to enter the world. Not the first born, Ishmael, but Isaac. Not the older twin Esau but the younger one, Jacob. Not the first born son of Jesse, but the last born, David. Christ's female ancestors were a Canaanite prostitute [Rahab]. A hated Moabitess [Ruth]....and an adulteress [Bathsheba].

So what is going on in chapter 9? God is glorifying Himself as the Sovereign creator, ruler and orchestrator of His universe. A lesser God leave us floundering in this world. At the mercy of circumstances and in fear of the future. When God says... "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED." **Romans 9:13** He is saying that He chose to have mercy on one lying, conniving, sneaking, conspiratorial sinner and leave the other one to do exactly what he wanted to do anyway.

Most humans object to this and many Christians wince when God says it. We are like a woman who said to me years ago...."God is obligated to forgive me for my sin even if I don't repent....right?" This is nonsense perpetrated by the church in our generation. Scripture wants to give you a High and True view of your God. He is obligated to no one and to nothing in creation. No culture, no religion, no ancestor, no race, no rituals and no good deeds. He sets the plan of salvation into motion as He sees fit and He brings it to fruition....AS HE SEES FIT.

The next ten verses deal with two human objections to what God says about Himself. Here they are:

- God is unjust or unfair to choose some but not all.
- God is unjust or unfair to blame us for our sin.

Romans 9:14-24 ¹⁴ What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! 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." ¹⁶ So then it *does not depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH." ¹⁸ So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. ¹⁹ You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" ²⁰ On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? ²¹ Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? ²² What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? ²³ And *He did so* to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴ *even us*, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.

God is unjust or unfair to choose some but not all.

What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! [14]: Most translations put this in the form of a question. "Is there unrighteousness with God," *because God chooses some and not all?* Scripture answers with a very strong negative. The KJV uses an idiom. "God Forbid!" The others, some form of negative that amounts to "No WAY!" or "Impossible!"

The humanist says confidently that “man is the measure of all things,” but God says otherwise. God is righteous so whatever does not conform to him is unrighteous. God is true so whatever does not match His reality is untrue. Jeremiah reported these words from God.....

Jeremiah 9:23-24 ²³ Thus says the LORD, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; ²⁴ but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the LORD.

You need to understand what God says about His plans and purposes and even His motivations. Scripture is going to give us insight into God, but we must be humble enough to accept it and not try to impose our own version of truth or fairness on it. Being God makes Him both true and fair. We need to start with that understanding.

For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION." [15]: This God who is perfectly just, fair and all powerful is merciful as well. Leon Morris makes this observation.

“God’s freedom to show mercy is not limited as though he could show mercy only on certain classes, such as people with works of piety or rights. Paul is saying that God’s freedom is absolute. It is important to be clear...that before God we have no rights. That is why mercy is so important for sinners.” *Leon Morris*.

Mercy and compassion are almost synonyms, but with this nuance. Compassion is the heart and mercy is the action. God actually has compassion for sinners and that is why He shows mercy. BUT...Mercy is not your right! Grace is undeserved favor...right? What is it if it is your right? What if God is obligated to show mercy and give grace? That is where the evangelical church is today. God is a big softy who just can’t bring Himself to act in justice and truth. He lets everyone off when they sin. This is how we get people like Rob Bell saying that there is no Hell or “I just can’t believe in a God that would send someone to hell.” God says to Moses and to us....you better believe it. The showing of mercy is not an obligation. I do it as I chose.

So then it *does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.* [16]: So you can pick any religion, practice any ritual, follow strict morality, trace your genealogy directly to Abraham, but it all depends on God’s mercy. This is how Isaac, Jacob, Rahab, Ruth, David, and Bathsheba were included in the lineage of Jesus Christ. AND.... This is how you became saved dear one. God chose to have mercy on you. He was not obliged to love you, but He did. **Men**...if you could force your wife to love you by telling her [and getting her to believe] that she had no other choice....would that qualify as love? Absolutely not! It is coerced. God is free! What He says here is Glorious... not some horribly embarrassing slip up that believers have to explain away or ignore. God has loved you freely and shown you mercy.

For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP [17a]: God also has His purposes in not showing mercy. The fact that He does so

to some, does not obligate Him to show mercy to everyone. ALSO...It does not mean that He is responsible for the sins of men. They sin freely. In the case of Pharaoh God purposefully raised up an evil and proud man to power in Egypt.

TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, [17b]: God takes full credit for putting him into power at that moment in history.

Proverbs 16:4-5 ⁴ The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, Even the wicked for the day of evil. ⁵ Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; Assuredly, he will not be unpunished.

AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH." [17b]: God put his power on display to embarrass and humiliate the gods of Egypt and its super power army and King. God sent two men from the desert with wooden staffs to bring Egypt to its knees. God says He used Pharaoh to accomplish this. Israel sang about the immediate aftermath from the other side of the Red Sea:

Exodus 15:14-18 ¹⁴ "The peoples have heard, they tremble; Anguish has gripped the inhabitants of Philistia. ¹⁵ "Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed; The leaders of Moab, trembling grips them; All the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. ¹⁶ "Terror and dread fall upon them; By the greatness of Your arm they are motionless as stone; Until Your people pass over, O LORD, Until the people pass over whom You have purchased. ¹⁷ "You will bring them and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, The place, O LORD, which You have made for Your dwelling, The sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established. ¹⁸ "The LORD shall reign forever and ever."

As Israel was about to lay siege to Jericho Rahab testified to two spies sent into the city:

Joshua 2:8-11 ⁸ "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. ¹⁰ "For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, ¹¹ "When we heard *it*, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.

Today...3,500 years later t Jewish homes around the world still remember it:

Exodus 12:11-12 ¹¹ 'Now you shall eat it in this manner: *with* your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste-- it is the LORD'S Passover. ¹² 'For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments-- I am the LORD.

In 1957 Hollywood made an epic film celebrating what God did to Pharaoh. Everyone still knows what happened to the Pharaoh who defied The God of Israel.

So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. [18]: God is free to show mercy or not. "Harden" is literally "to make hard" but metaphorically to "make stubborn and obstinate." This is a judgment from God on

unrepentant men. In some extreme cases God makes sure that the wicked stupidly oppose Him. In the case of Pharaoh it showcased God's glory, His Sovereignty over all gods and kings of the earth and His love and mercy for Israel for over 3 millenniums now.

“Moses was a Jew, whereas Pharaoh was a Gentile: but both of them were sinners. Both were murderers, and both witnessed God's miracles. Yet Moses was redeemed and Pharaoh was not. God raised up Pharaoh in order to reveal His own glory and power and God had mercy on Moses in order to use him to deliver His people Israel. Pharaoh was a ruler, whereas Moses' people were slaves under Pharaoh, But Moses received God's mercy and compassion, because that was God's will. The Lord's work is sovereign, and He acts entirely according to His own will to accomplish His own purposes. The issue was not the presumed rights of either man, but rather the sovereign will of God.” *John MacArthur Jr.*

God cannot justly blame us if He does not choose us.

You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?"

[19]: This is an objection built entirely on a false assumption. One that has been sadly preached in our day. It is the notion that men go to hell because they have not believed in Christ or “received Christ.” This is not true! Men go to hell because they are natural born enemies of God who have also broken His commands. This is true of all men. It is universal. It is a just condemnation.

If a vicious murder says to a judge....”you are unjust to condemn me because you did not find me and stop me from doing it, is this killer exonerated for his murder? Is the judge unjust and unfair for not having stopped this killer? Would any sane person accept this reasoning? NO! But millions will do so when it is applied to God. God is to blame if He does not save. God is unjust if He pronounces just judgment on sinners.

On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? [21]: This is why Paul's response seems abrupt or harsh. It is because it is impertinent for a criminal to lecture a judge this way. To blame someone who has done nothing wrong for not stopping us from doing the wrong we wanted to do is insolent and disrespectful. Furthermore....it is not true that God made us like this. God made us in His own image and Satan and Adam corrupted humanity and defaced God's blessed likeness in us.

Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? [21]: But for the sake of argument Scripture goes on. If a potter takes a chunk of clay and puts it on a wheel does anyone seriously think the clay has a right to talk back to the potter?

These are the arguments of Satan in the mouths of unbelievers. When they say “why does He still find fault?” They do not even believe that they have fault. They don't think that God....if He exists has any right to find fault with them or anybody else. BUT at the same time they blame God saying, “for who resists His will?”

If you really believe that God has a right to find fault with you then you are “this close” to Salvation. Ask God to forgive you for your sins! Give your life to Jesus who came to die in your place. Who took your judgment on the Cross so that you would not be condemned by God for your sin. God will never block your way to Him. Christ is calling you to Himself.

When they say, “Why did you make me like this?” They do not even believe that God made them at all. If they did they would be humble before Him and contrite. Unbelievers like this, treat God with less respect than they would their own boss at work.

Again....if you really think that God is your maker then that means He is your owner...your Lord. HE made you! You are near to the Kingdom. Acknowledge His ownership and accept the gift of eternal life that Christ procured on the Cross for you! Just come to the Savior who is calling.

And for those of you who believe....STOP letting Satan give you his view of God. Satan’s view of God is that of a cosmic killjoy. The one who withholds good and is always displeased and angry. Whenever I hear someone say, “I just can’t believe in a God who..... , I know I am about to hear a very low and unbiblical view of God. This is where people say.... “I just can’t believe in a God who would have allowed Satan to tempt Adam and Adam to sin.” Again it is somehow God’s fault for not stopping Adam from sinning. If He had stopped Him the complaint would go like this....”I just can’t believe in a God who would take away a man’s free will to do what he thought was best for himself and his wife.”

To help us with our perspective Paul is going to try to turn this table. He wants you to quit thinking the thoughts of God’s enemies and consider God’s thoughts instead....

What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known [22a]: Imagine God enduring with much patience all these wicked rulers and humans down through history and in your life....imagine Him doing that for the following reasons...

“Willing to demonstrate” means that He wants to [has determined to] make his wrath and power known to His creation. It is part of who God is and taken as a whole reveals a true picture of the true God. He is not passive in the face of evil, murder, child molestation, hatred and the like. He is mad about that. Paul started this epistle by telling us that....

^{NIV} **Romans 1:18** The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness,

God reveals Himself in creation. This is why it is absolutely essential for unbelievers to renounce and reject creation. It is the primary way God is glorified in the universe.

Romans 1:20 ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

Endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? [22b]: We are being asked to consider this from God's perspective. Unbelievers say God cannot be both good and Sovereign because of evil and sin. If He is good it means that He would like to stop it, but cannot because He is not Sovereign. If He is Sovereign it means that He is not good because He won't stop it. BUT...."What if"....

What if He endures [delays judgement on] these people [called vessels of wrath] so that He can make His wrath and power known to creation. Now humanity says and maybe you are tempted to do this...."we can get along fine without seeing that....thank you very much!" But you would be mistaken and you would miss entirely the most blessed thing about God.

And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, [23]: This is an answer to a very pressing question. Why did God allow sin into the world? He did it to reveal Himself in His fullness. In Full Color 3 D and not as a pencil drawing. Without sin and rebellion mankind could know that God is powerful, but they could never know His anger over sin and wickedness. I put it to you. Is it good to know that God is angry about the murders, the stealing, the lying and the injustices. Is it good to **NOT** believe that He just doesn't care about us and what we go through down here. YES...that is a good thing.

Here is something even better to know. Although God is angry about sin and powerful enough to punish it, he is infinitely rich in mercy toward sinners. So much so that He gave His only Son that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. What is that knowledge worth to you? Scripture says that this is the reason God has endured sin and sinful men this long. He is revealing His Grace, Mercy, Compassion and Love.....a side of Him that can never be seen apart from sin and wickedness. God's fullness is seen in Christ's incarnation, sinless and compassionate life, undeserved death and glorious resurrection and ascension. John....speaking of the Son and calling Him the Eternal Word said this.....

John 1:14-18 ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") ¹⁶ And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

Even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles. [24]: This is so amazing. This is the truth that breaks the back of your inner struggle over the problem of sin and your struggles with God's Sovereignty. In eternity past, God planned to reveal the glory of His grace and mercy by saving the likes of sinners like you. He has saved and is pouring out His pent up mercy and grace on Jews and Gentiles. It was always His plan....It was always His purpose.

CONCLUSION: Can you see the tactic of the enemy here? It is to make you entirely miss the spectacle of your heavenly father pouring out the riches of His glory on you.

That you would become obsessed with God's unfairness and not notice the mercy He has lavished on you as a sinner. That you would forget that He has planned since eternity past to share His glory with you in heaven. That HE LOVED YOU!

"You don't want to think about that"...Satan says to millions of believers. "It would be better to accuse God of injustice or if you can't go there then to just refuse to believe or deal with God's revelation of Himself to His creatures....us!" A Christian friend once said to me, "well....I'm not going to refuse to believe in election because I know it's in the Bible," but then proceeded to explain away God's Sovereignty in all things.

This God...Your God!..... is absolutely in control of His creation. This means He has raised up Barrack Obama, John Carri and the Ayatollah for His own purposes. Put your head down on your pillow tonight and rest! Trust God to act like Martin Luther when he was asked how he brought about the reformation. He said.....

"I simply taught, preached, and wrote God's Word; otherwise I did nothing. And while I slept,the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses upon it. I did nothing; the Word did everything"

God does everything and you are His beloved Child.

Rest in Christ! And while you are at it... Rejoice in Him too! Do not fret because of evil doers! That is a low view of God. If you want to glorify God then rest in Him. He has this! He has planned everything and is carrying it out today as surely as He has always done. Let's do what David sang about...

Psalm 103:1-22 *A Psalm of David.* Bless the LORD, O my soul, And all that is within me, *bless* His holy name. ² Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits; ³ Who pardons all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases; ⁴ Who redeems your life from the pit, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion; ⁵ Who satisfies your years with good things, *So that* your youth is renewed like the eagle. ⁶ The LORD performs righteous deeds And judgments for all who are oppressed. ⁷ He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the sons of Israel. ⁸ The LORD is compassionate and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. ⁹ He will not always strive *with us*, Nor will He keep *His anger* forever. ¹⁰ He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. ¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. ¹² As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. ¹³ Just as a father has compassion on *his* children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. ¹⁴ For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are *but* dust. ¹⁵ As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes. ¹⁶ When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, And its place acknowledges it no longer. ¹⁷ But the lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, And His righteousness to children's children, ¹⁸ To those who keep His covenant And remember His precepts to do them. ¹⁹ The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, And His sovereignty rules over all. ²⁰ Bless the LORD, you His angels, Mighty in strength, who perform His word, Obeying the voice of His word! ²¹ Bless the LORD, all you His hosts, You who serve Him, doing His will. ²² Bless the LORD, all you works of His, In all places of His dominion; Bless the LORD, O my soul!