

Romans

Dr. Charles "Buddy" Parrish
February 5, 2025
Romans 9:14-18



Romans 9:14-18

Vs. 14

- In terms of writing, Paul now returns to his conversation with his imaginary Objector. In truth, the Objector is not imaginary. Paul has had this conversation many times before with real objectors. Here he is pulling all those previous conversations together into one stream of thought...even if its sometimes a hard to follow stream.
- In the previous verses Paul recalls the story of Jacob and Esau. His purpose here is to suggest that God is God and you are not, meaning that God is not bound by some human sense of right or wrong. Asking whether God is just or unjust is somewhat beside the point. God acts as God wishes and He and He alone judges.
- Again, I believe the British pastor from the 1940's, Leslie Weatherhead, is correct when he says that in our relationship with God, we are 2-3 year olds, 4 at most. Thus when we God acts or speaks, that is the perspective we see from and in truth, it's even less than that. So God chooses Jacob over Esau and we cannot see a valid reason why. In fact, the twin boys were still in the womb when God told their mother that He was choosing the younger over the first born. How can that be just? But Paul cries out, "There is no injustice with God, is there?" Well of course not. The problem here is not with God, but with our limited perspective. So Weatherhead would say that it's like a 3 year old who is playing in the living room near the kitchen late in the day. The wonderful odors of mom's cooking sneaks into his nose and soon he is aware that he is hungry. He gets up and goes to the pantry to get Oreos. He likes Oreos and he is hungry, so 8 or 10 Oreos should do the trick. But as soon as he pulls the box of cookies off the shelf his mother stops him, takes the Oreos away and puts them out of his reach and sends him out of the kitchen! "CRUELTY!! INJUSTICE!! WHERE IS THE LOVE!! CAN'T YOU SEE THAT I AM STARVING?! I MAY ONLY HAVE MINUTES TO LIVE!! I THOUGHT YOU LOVED ME?! CAN'T YOU SEE MY TEARS AND HEAR THE HEARTBREAK IN MY VOICE?" Yet is the mother truly cruel, unjust, uncaring and without love? No! Of course not! In fact, the most unloving thing the mother could do is let the boy have 8-10 Oreos instead of the wonderful supper she's preparing. So the problem does not lie with the mother, or even with the child exactly. The problem lies in the child's inability to see and know what the mother sees and knows and then draws ultimate conclusions from that very limited perspective and understanding.

Vss. 15-16

- God will be gracious and have compassion and show mercy on whom He chooses (Exodus 33:19). To ask why God would be so selective is pointless because we will never truly get a satisfactory answer this side of heaven. Why? Paul tells is in 1 Corinthians 13:12. "For now we see through the glass darkly..." From what we can see, from our perspective, it will often seemingly make no sense. "For My thoughts are not

your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,' declares the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts," (Isaiah 55:8-9).

- "So it does not depend on the man...but on God who has mercy." Mercy. A gift that springs from love. Where else could Mercy come from, for God is love. Jesus in the Upper Room in John 15:16 reminds the disciples that, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you...". God it seems is always selective. He chose the Jews and not the Egyptians. And He chose the 12, even the one who would betray Him. And when you look closely at the 12, to our minds is this really the group you want to change the world?

Vss. 17-18

- God chose Israel. But for a long time Israel had disconnected themselves from God as they grew rich in Egypt. Then when things turned sour and they cried out to God, the Lord did not rush in to rescue them. And when God did send a rescuer, He sent an 80-year-old man who was wanted for murder. Israel was not immediately inspired. But their initial response was exactly what God wanted. No man was going to save them. God wanted Israel to see the unmatched power of their God. Paul quotes Exodus 9:16, but it is in verse 15 that God tells Pharaoh that if He had wanted, He would have wiped out all of the Egyptian empire, but that He let Pharaoh remain as the object of His power demonstration to show that even the most powerful man in the world was nothing compared to God.
- So here is the paradox. God's absolute sovereignty moves unchallenged and unquestioned, while at the same time granting us free will. In the story of the Rich Young Ruler (Mark 10:17-27), Jesus lovingly invites the man to follow Him, but the man chooses not to pay the price as the other disciples had (remember that Matthew too was rich). In John 5 Jesus encounters a man who had been sick for 38 years and asked, "Do you wish to get well?". The choice was the man's. And justice? That question only drives the paradox deeper. God's forgiveness comes unconditionally. Earlier we quoted Isaiah 55:8-9, but verse 7 tells us, "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return to the Lord. And He will have compassion on him...for He will abundantly pardon". In God's court of justice, **you** do not pay for your crime. Christ has already done that for you. If people are waiting in God's courtroom for justice that causes you to be punished for your crimes, and you have "forsaken your way" and asked Christ for forgiveness, then they will be sorely disappointed.
- For God's predestination is a labyrinth from which man's intellect cannot explain itself in any way – John Calvin