

## Romans

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Romans 9:19-29



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Vss. 19-21

- Throughout the first 18 verses of Ch. 9, Paul has been making the case that because of God's sovereignty and purpose, there has been a process of selection and rejection. God chose Israel, but not Egypt. Thus, in Paul's ongoing debate with his imaginary Jewish objector, the natural question comes then, "How can God possibly condemn the people who have rejected him? Surely the blame is not theirs at all, but God's. It's not Pharaoh's fault that God hardened his heart and rejecting God, nor should it be Israel's fault for rejecting Jesus". From a reasoned point of view from the human side, this seems to be a perfectly strong objection.
- But to understand the Truth, we cannot do what we would naturally want to do, which is to look at the situation from the human side only. Rather, in order to see what the Word of God is saying we must try to look at it from God's side. What Paul wants us to see here are the things pertaining to God's dealing with humanity as opposed to man's role in the relationship.
- So Paul asks, "who are you to answer back to God?". Paul then goes back to Jeremiah 18:1-6, where God is the potter and we are the clay. Paul is reminding us that we are merely the creation. God is the Creator. The Potter/Creator is free to mold and shape as he wishes. Jeremiah 6:4 says that the vessel the potter was making "was spoiled in the hand of the potter, so he remade it into another vessel as it pleased the potter to make".
- In truth, most New Testament scholars wish that Paul had thought of another analogy. We are not mere inanimate objects. We are created in the image of God, created a little higher than the angels. As Stuart Briscoe puts it, "He is not saying that man is a powerless lump of clay that God can mold whichever way He please, for to say that would contradict what he has outlined in the early portions of the Epistle, namely that man is responsible. He is stating the unquestioned sovereignty of God to take a rebellious Egyptian and make him Pharaoh and let Pharaoh live with the consequences of his own arrogance and be a warning not only to his contemporaries but to all posterity. The same applied to Israel. They had the truth and rejected it. They live with the consequences and they can't fault God for making them stick".

Vss. 22-24

- Paul follows up with an amazing "what if..." to show not only the sovereignty of God but His amazing grace and mercy. What if instead of giving Israel the punishment it deserves for their

rejection and murder of the Son of God, God responds with patience and longsuffering, showing His limitless mercy not only on the Jews, but on the Gentiles as well.

- Remember, Paul is writing with a broken heart to his fellow Jews. The long awaited Messiah had come, exactly as the Scriptures had predicted, and they as a nation had missed Him, rejected Him, and killed Him. There was simply no getting around those basic facts. If God had allowed Pharaoh to bear the punishment for his sin, is not God able in His sovereignty to show mercy to Israel for her sin? And then also extend His mercy to the Gentiles as well? Again, as God said to Moses in Exodus 33:19, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion”. God had a purpose in not showing mercy to Pharaoh just as He had a purpose in showing mercy to the Jews and to the us, the Gentiles.

#### Vss. 25-29

- In verses 25-26, Paul quotes Hosea 2:23 and 1:10. Remember that Paul was arguing with an imaginary Jewish objector in order to make his case to the Jews in the church at Rome and everywhere. He knew that the only way his argument would have any teeth was with quotations from their own scriptures. He starts with texts to prove that this rejection of the Jews and acceptance of the Gentiles had actually been foretold in the prophets, such as Hosea. Hosea had said that God would make a people His people, who were not His people (Hosea 2:23). He said that a people who were not God's people would be called the sons of God (Hosea 1:10).
- In verses 27-29 Paul cites Isaiah. In vs. 27-28 it's Isaiah 10:22-23. Here Paul returns to the idea that not **ALL** the Jews rejected Jesus and that the prophets had always maintained that only a “remnant” of the Jews would be saved when the Day of Judgement comes. The idea of this remnant is pervasive, not only in the prophets (Isaiah 37:32), but also in the minds of the Jewish people. In the Holocaust there was a powerful mindset among the Jews that a single life didn't matter, or even 6 million single lives. All that mattered was that a remnant would be saved. For Paul here, he was thinking more like the prophets, that at the Day of Judgement it would be the “righteous remnant” that would be saved and that this righteous remnant were the Jews of the Church of Jesus Christ.
- In verse 29 Paul again quotes Isaiah, this time it is 1:9. Here the greatest of the prophets in his opening remarks, points out that had God not “left to us a posterity”, a seed, a future generation just as God did for the generation of Moses, the entire race would have been doomed. Their sin was such they would have been no different than Sodom or Gomorrah and therefore deserving of the same punishment.
- So God is eternally patient with the Jews, though not all will be saved, and He has included the Gentiles in His salvation because of their faith.