

I Will Have Mercy on Whom I Have Mercy

Romans 9:14-18

April 14, 2021

Review and Context

Theme of Romans: The gospel of God (1:16-17)

Chs 9-11 The gospel and Israel

- In 9:1-5, the apostle in a very personal way introduced the problem (from the human standpoint) of Israel's unbelief (rejection of the Messiah)
- *Thesis:* 9:6a "But it is not as though the word of God has failed."
 - The OT's numerous promises to the nation of Israel, of spiritual salvation through the Messiah
 - Examples include Deut 30:6; Eze 36:24-28; Jer 31:31-36; **Zech 12:10-13:1**
- The apostle proves that the word of God has not failed, using several arguments that center on the following:
 1. God's sovereign election of some individuals and not others (9:6b-29)
 2. Israel's reliance on works rather than faith (9:30-10:21)
 3. The remnant of believers within Israel (11:1-10)
 4. God's temporary rejection of Israel (11:11-24)
 5. Israel's future salvation (11:25-32)

Is sovereign unconditional election unjust? (14)

The case of Jacob and Esau (10-13) shows that God's determination of the beneficiaries of His mercy is not based on any human distinctives that a person may claim by birth or by what he has done (9:10-12).¹

The apostle anticipates the objection that this would make God unjust

By nature, God is perfectly just.

- **Gen. 18:25** "Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?"

Paul strongly denies that his teaching on election makes God unjust.

¹ John Piper, *The Justification of God: An Exegetical & Theological Study of Romans 9:1-23*, page 93.

“I will have mercy on whom I have mercy” (15-16)

verse 15

Context of Exodus 33:19

- 33:3-5
- 33:12-17
- 33:18
 - Moses is seeking assurance that God will have mercy on Israel (34:9)

Exodus 33:19

1. Here, God’s glory (18) and His name (19) are fairly synonymous
2. God gives a brief revelation of His glory/name in the second sentence in verse 19
3. The Lord will proclaim His grace and mercy again in 34:5-8
4. God’s glory and nature include:
 - a. A delight to be gracious and show mercy
 - b. The absolute freedom to give such grace and mercy to whomever He pleases, apart from any constraints originating outside His will

The apostle quotes Exodus 33:19b in order to show that, far from sovereign election being unrighteous, it is at the very heart of God’s nature

verse 16

1. Refers to God’s bestowal of mercy on individuals (context in Romans 9)
2. “exertion” is translated more literally, **NASB** “the man who runs”
3. **Psa. 119:32a** "I will **run** in the way of your commandments"
4. God’s bestowal of mercy is not dependent on man making a decision, or doing anything. Rather, it springs from God’s sovereign will.

“For this purpose I have raised you up, that my name might be proclaimed” (17-18)

Having mercy on whomever God wills refers to verse 15, and hardening whomever God wills refers to verse 17.

Question: What were the circumstances in which the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart?

Question: Why does God have mercy on some, and harden others?

Context of Exodus 9:16

- 4:21-23
- 5:1-2 (result of the Lord hardening his heart)
- 7:1-5
- 7:8-9, 13 (The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart as he foretold)
- 8:15
 - Pharaoh's hardening of his own heart went hand-in-hand with what the Lord had said He would do to Pharaoh
 - The Lord handed Pharaoh over to his own evil inclinations
- 9:13-17
 - God had a purpose in raising Pharaoh to power and hardening his heart—the proclamation of God's name in all the earth
- 10:1-2
- 11:9-10
- 14:1-4
- 14:30-31
- 15:14-16
- Joshua 2:8-11

The question Paul raised, "Is there injustice on God's part?" refers to setting aside Esau and blessing Jacob, loving Jacob but hating Esau. In quoting Exodus 9:16, the Lord links His rejection of Esau with His hardening of Pharaoh.

Paul quotes Exodus 9:16 in order to show that God exercised His sovereign freedom to harden sinful Pharaoh in order to fulfill God's righteous purpose of making His name known in all the earth.

God's election of some and not others is not based on some whim. Rather, He has done so in order to display His glorious name.

verse 18

1. No sinner has a right to mercy
2. Every one of us deserves to be hardened in rebellion and unbelief
3. Hardening is an act of judgment

Conclusion

God does not treat all people equally

1. He has mercy on some
2. He hardens others

Unequal treatment does not mean injustice

The standard of justice is not how others are treated, but the standard revealed in God's law

The truth that God hardens some sinners, and has mercy on others, according to His sovereign choice, is a perfection of God

God is free to do as He pleases in bestowing His mercy

In salvation, it is by God's sovereign mercy and grace that He draws the elect to Christ

- **John 6:44** "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day."
- **John 6:65** "'This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.'"
- **John 6:37** "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out."

We are to proclaim the gospel to all people indiscriminately, with confidence that the Holy Spirit works through the proclaimed gospel to bring the elect to Christ