



## World Christian Fellowship

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### Romans 94 Questioning God's Sovereignty Romans 9:19-24

**Romans 9:19-24**, *You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?"* <sup>20</sup> *But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?"* <sup>21</sup> *Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honour and another for dishonour?* <sup>22</sup> *What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,* <sup>23</sup> *and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory,* <sup>24</sup> *even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?*

**Romans 9:6-33**, Paul gives four reasons why Israel's unbelief doesn't violate God's character.

The unbelief of Israel is consistent with

- ✓ God's promise,
- ✓ God's person,

- ✓ God's prophets and
- ✓ God's prerequisite.

**V 6-13**, Israel doesn't believe doesn't mean God has violated His promise.

**V 14-24**, doesn't mean God has violated.

**V 25-29**, doesn't mean God has violated His prophets' word.

**V 30-33**, doesn't mean God has violated His prerequisite.

Because Israel does not believe doesn't mean God has cancelled His promises.

If Israel rejected and was out of the covenant then God's word would be broken, His promises useless, His character untrustworthy because He changed His mind. He had overturned everything He said.

Israel would have been able to say God is not a covenant keeping God, you can't trust Him.

It is important for Paul to deal with this here.

Paul has been presenting justification by grace through faith. He has been presenting the means of salvation.

Having presented that he stops, and he answers the question about where does the Jew fit in.

The question comes up in the mind of Jew is that, **If I can trust Jesus Christ with my life how come He didn't keep His word to the Jews?**

**Romans chapter 9, 10 and 11** Paul develops this whole theology of how the Jew fits in to God's redemptive plan.

Most Jews believe, and believed then, that all Israel is saved by birth.

You are born into the covenant because of Jewishness. You are born as Abraham's seed so you are automatically a part of the kingdom. That is common Jewish belief.

Paul wants to help us to understand how the gospel can be true and at the same time be rejected by the people of the covenant.

**V 1-5**, Paul sort of sets up the chapter by telling us how much he cares for Israel.

**How could Israel reject, and God's promises still be valid?**

**V 6 -13**, the unbelief of Israel is consistent with God's promise.

Now this is a challenging portion of Scripture.

**V 19**, *You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?”*

If God chooses who is going to get mercy and who is going to get hardened, then how can He find fault with me?

If I don't have a choice anyhow, how can He blame me?  
That's the question people still ask today.

First, if you believe in election, then that's not fair.  
Paul says that's fair because God's God. God is in charge.

God does all the choosing.

God gives mercy to whom He will and hardens whom He will,

**How can He find fault with me?**

**If I had nothing to do with it, how can I be held responsible?**

God is a God who makes choices. He has a right to make choices and He makes them according to His own will.

**Joshua 11:16-18**, *Thus Joshua took all this land: the mountain country, all the South, all the land of Goshen, the lowland, and the Jordan plain—the mountains of Israel and its lowlands,<sup>17</sup> from Mount Halak and the ascent to Seir, even as far as Baal Gad in the Valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon. He captured all their kings, and struck them down and killed them.<sup>18</sup> Joshua made war a long time with all those kings.*

### **Why did all those nations fight Israel?**

God hardened their hearts, brought them to battle that He might destroy them.

**Romans 11:6-7**, *And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work. <sup>7</sup>What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded.*

Israel didn't get the salvation by grace.

The election has obtained it and the rest were blinded.

### **Why don't all the Jews believe?**

The elect believe and the rest are blinded.

You can't argue with God.

**1 Thessalonians 5:9**, *For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

But not us.

### **Why are you saved?**

Because God has not appointed you to wrath, but He has appointed you to obtain salvation.

### **Why are you a Christian?**

Because you have been chosen by God before the world began.

I don't know why.

**What right does God have to do that?**

He has the right because He's God.

God is righteous and it's right for Him to do that and He has a right to show mercy to whom He will show mercy and to harden whom He will.

- All of us deserve judgment.
- All of us deserve damnation.
- All of us deserve hell.

**Why would it be unjust if in mercy He chooses to redeem some of us?**

**2 Peter 2:12**, *But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption,*

Amazing!

These people were made for destruction. It's very strong language.

- Moses was a Jew.
- Pharaoh was a Gentile.

Both were sinners.

- Both were murderers.
- Both saw God's wondrous works.
  
- Moses was saved.
- Pharaoh was lost.
  
- God raised up Pharaoh that he might reveal His glory and power.
- He showed mercy on Moses that He might use him to show His glory and power.
  
- Moses received the mercy and compassion of God.
- Pharaoh was hardened.

Both say something very important.

- ✓ God is holy and must punish sin. Pharaoh illustrates that.
- ✓ God is loving and longs to save sinners. Moses illustrates that.
  
- If everyone was saved, we wouldn't understand God's holiness.
- If everyone was lost, we wouldn't understand His love.

So, God gives mercy to whom He will give mercy. Whom He hardens, He hardens.

We understand His holiness and we understand His love.

**Jonah 2:9**, *But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord."*

**1 Corinthians 15:10**, *But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*

**Philippians 2:13**, *for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*

**Acts 13:48**, *Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.*

**Titus 1:1**, *Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness,*

**John 15:16**, *You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit,*

*and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.*

Those are just some samples of the tremendous affirmations of the sovereignty of God in salvation.

**Ephesians 1:3**, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,*

Because we have been predestined to the adoption of sons.

**2 Thessalonians 2:13**, *But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth,*

**2 Timothy 1:9**, *who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began,*

**1 Peter 1:2**, *elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.*

**Romans 8:29**, *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

He called us,  
He justified us and  
He waits to glorify us.

So, the Scripture is very clear on the matter of the sovereignty of God in salvation.

Paul is presenting this classic truth here in our text in Romans 9.

The Lord has not violated His purpose.  
God has not violated His own person.  
There's no loss of integrity here.

Scripture said from the very start He was that kind of God, who sovereignly gives mercy to those whom He desires. In fact, you could make an argument that God is unrighteous if He gives anybody mercy.

**Because what does righteousness require from sinners?**

Death.

If you are going to say that God is unrighteous, speaking of His mercy is not the way to say that.

If you want to talk about God being unfair or unjust, then you had probably been on safer ground if you accused Him of injustice for saving anybody because justice would damn us all.

God cannot be accused of being unfair because God has always been revealed to have been a God of great grace. God of great mercy who shows mercy, compassion, and grace to undeserving sinners, all of whom deserve to be damned.

God has always revealed Himself as one who chooses whom He will redeem.

**If God saves whom He will and hardens whom He will, what's the obvious question?**

*V 19, You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?"*

If God chooses whom He will save and chooses whom He will harden, how can He find fault with me?

If I had nothing to do with it anyway, that's the question.

Again, the carnal mind response.

if we are nothing but victims of a divine choice.

**How can God blame us for anything?**

**If God hardens me, how can He send me to eternal hell when He hardened me?**

**How can He blame me?**

**How can He condemn me?**

If I am the way I am by divine decree.

If God wills that I should be hardened, if God wills that I should be saved, who can resist that?

If it is His will alone that is determinate, and if His will is irresistible, relative to who is saved and who is lost, then how can I be responsible?

**How can God blame the victim of His sovereignty?**

A blasphemous question.

The answer is an appeal to silence.

This is very important, an appeal to silence.

*V 20, But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?"*

**How dare you ask that question?**

O man, answering this way to God.

If this were a false assumption, Paul would have corrected it.

But it is not a false assumption.

God does choose who will be saved, God does choose those to be hardened.

If that were a false assumption, he would have corrected it, but he doesn't correct it.

Paul says, "Shut your mouth, don't ask that question. Don't you impugn the character of God."

It is true that God chooses.

It is undeniable that that is a difficult question.

**How can God send people to an eternal hell when He's the one that chose the saved?**

It's a hard question.

**Do you know what is the answer?**

Shut up.

You don't ask that question.

*V 20, But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?"*

The contrast here is Man/God.

Man with your little infinitesimal, puny, pusillanimous, brain, who are you to stand up and say, "God, this doesn't seem fair."?

Who are you with your little, tiny information against the vastness of an eternal mind as big as the endless universe?

**Who are you that answered God?**

Just because you can't figure it out and it appears to you to be unfair, who are you to reply against God with such blasphemy to accuse God of being unrighteous and unfair?

Close your mouth and realize that you know very little!

If you don't understand how this is resolved in the mind of our compassionate, merciful, loving, and gracious God, then it isn't that God's character should be mistrusted, it is that you don't have enough information.

If you want to know the truth, the information is beyond your ability to comprehend and that's why you don't get it.

Because there are hopeless antinomies in Scripture that could never be resolved in the human mind.

Instead of that question, let me ask you a question, who are you to ask such a thing of God?

You have limited power to know.

You have great power to forget.

You have limited understanding.

You have limited reason.

### **Do you question God?**

**Genesis 18:25**, *Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"*

We live by faith not by logic, not by reason.

Reason will take us so far and then it stops, and we are out of the game.

God is not answerable to finite, sinful creatures.

To entertain such a question is to establish man as a higher standard than God.

God, you are not living up to my standard.

That's absurd and yet we do that. It's arrogance of the worse kind, it's gross presumption to call God to account.

Paul picks up an Old Testament analogy.

**V 20**, *But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?"*

From the book of Isaiah 64.

**Isaiah 64:6-8**, *But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away. <sup>7</sup>And there is no one who calls on Your name, Who stirs himself up to take hold of You; For You have hidden Your face from us, And have consumed us because of our iniquities. <sup>8</sup>But now, O Lord, You are our Father; We are the clay, and You our potter; And all we are the work of Your hand.*

It's the picture of a potter and the clay.

**Does the clay rise and say, why have You made me thus?**

It's an absurdity.

Clay is as far from comprehending.

Man is as far from comprehending the infinite mind of God as clay is from comprehending the mind of the potter.

- ✓ Be satisfied to let God be God.
- ✓ Be satisfied that God is righteous.
- ✓ Be satisfied that God is holy.
- ✓ Be satisfied that God is just.
- ✓ Be satisfied that God is loving.
- ✓ Be satisfied that God is compassionate.
- ✓ Be satisfied that God is merciful.

Don't bring God to trial at your court and act like the prosecution and the judge.

Realize the limits of your computer. It's beyond you.

So, Paul draws from the analogy of the thing formed and the one who formed it.

**Jeremiah 18:3-6**, *Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something at the wheel. <sup>4</sup>And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make. <sup>5</sup>Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: <sup>6</sup>"O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?" says the Lord. "Look, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel!*

Not an unfamiliar analogy at all.

**V 21**, *Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honour and another for dishonour?*

The analogy is obvious.

A potter makes choices. Clay has no part in it.

Potter has the power to do whatever he wants.

He has the right to do whatever he wants. So, it's a question of right and it's a question of ability. So does God.

God has the right to do whatever He wants.  
God has the ability to do whatever He wants.  
God is like the potter, and we are the clay.

God makes vessels as He chooses.  
A potter could make a beautiful dish or a trash barrel. It would be his choice.

**V 21**, *Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honour and another for dishonour?*

God has not only the power but also the authority, that's the right to do something.

We do not believe that God claims the right to create sinful, damnable creatures in order to punish them.

The Bible does not teach that God creates occupants for hell.

The Bible very clearly says out of the Lord Himself that hell was created for the devil and his angels.

God is not claiming the right to create damnable creatures in order to damn them, but He is claiming His right to deal with creatures who are sinful already as He wills.

He pardons or punishes as He sees fit.

He doesn't make men sinners, but He chooses the disposition of men who are sinners.

God is not responsible that men are sinners.  
Scripture makes that very clear.

**James 1:13**, *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.*

God doesn't create evil.

**Habakkuk 1:13**, *You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness. Why do You look on those who deal treacherously, And hold Your tongue when the wicked devours A person more righteous than he?*

When God made everything looked at it and said it is good. But God reserves the right to do with already sinful creatures that which His own will desires.

Now Paul then concludes with three verses to apply this analogy.

**V 22-24**, *What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,<sup>23</sup> and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He*

*had prepared beforehand for glory,<sup>24</sup> even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?*

So many have misunderstood this.

What if God exercising His divine choice in sovereign authority makes some vessels of mercy while others are made vessels of wrath?

**What right do you have?**

It's an unfinished sentence in the Greek.

**What if?**

It's an open-ended question.

**What if God wanted to make some unto salvation, some unto wrath?**

God's God.

You don't have any right to question God.

**Does God have a right to display His wrath?**

Does God have a right to display His holy justice?

Does that bring Him glory?

**Is God's glory on display when He reacts in anger?**

Yes.

**Is God's glory on display when He reacts in wrath?**

Yes.

**Is God's glory on display when He reacts in holy judgment?**

Yes.

Because that's as much an element of God's character as the other element.

**Is God's glory on display when He demonstrates His mercy?**

Yes.

**When He demonstrates His grace?**

Yes.

**When He demonstrates His compassion?**

Yes.

**Is He any less God on either side?**

No.

If He is fully God.

He will be revealed as God and to be revealed as God there must be some wherein His grace is revealed and some wherein His judgment is revealed.

God has the right to display His gracious mercy and His holy justice.

*V 22, What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,*

God by willing he means, not what we think.

Wishing to do it, wanting strongly to do it, greatly desiring to do it.

God wants to show His wrath.

### **Why?**

Because He wants to reveal Himself and that is part of Himself. The entrance of sin into the world was necessary so that God could manifest His wrath, His judgment, His holy anger, His vengeance, and His justice.

Because that is as much an element of God's nature as any other thing in His nature.

### **Why did God allow sin?**

God allowed sin in order that He might display His holy wrath. No sin then no wrath and no revelation of the fullness of the glory of God.

### **Why God allowed sin?**

Answered in that verse.

### **What if God willing to show His wrath?**

Had there been no sin, He couldn't have displayed His wrath against sin, and we wouldn't have known that element of Him.

God wouldn't have put Himself on display and there would have been a part of God lost to the display.

So, God allowed and endured sin for the purpose of revealing His holy wrath in its judgment and its punishment.

It had to be for God to be God fully revealed as God. God couldn't have attributes that didn't have function.

To make His power known!

### **Why God allowed sin?**

God could show His power.

### **How does God show His power in sin?**

Judging sin.

We see the wrath of God in His judgment on sin.

If you have any question about that, all you need to do is read the closing chapters of the book of Revelation and you will see the power of God.

- You will see the breakup of the world.
- You will see the devastating plagues that He sends on the earth.

- You will see the great fiery judgments that He brings upon men.
- You will see all the curses that sweep their way through that marvellous apocalypse of John.
- You will see Jesus Christ coming on a white horse out of heaven and carrying a sword, blood-splattered garments as He comes to take the earth for His own possession and establishes his eternal and glorious kingdom.
- You will see Him defeat the armies of the world.

God displays His power in judgment.

We see them all collected at the Great White Throne and God has the power to bring them out of the graves and to bring them before His tribunal and send them into the Lake of Fire forever. That is power!

Sin exists in order that God may demonstrate that part of His nature which is holy and against sin, reacts in violent wrath.

God has allowed sin in order that He might demonstrate His tremendous power as well as His vengeance and His power is seen in its ability to conquer all that attempts to conquer Him.

Sin comes into the world attempting to conquer God, God conquers it, and we see His power.

We see His power in no greater way than in His conquering sin in judgment and on the other hand, in salvation.

**Does God conquer sin through salvation?**

Yes.

**On the cross did Jesus win a victory?**

Yes.

**Did He bruise the serpent's head?**

Yes.

**Did He finish the work of redemption?**

Yes.

Sin has provided God a way to be displayed.

His holy wrath is displayed,

His tremendous power is displayed two ways, as He demonstrates His ability to judge evil and His ability to redeem from evil.

So, sin provides a means for God to be glorified.

**V 22**, *What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,*

**What if God endured sin in the world?**

**What if God endured sinners in the world so that He might display His glory?**

**What if?** That's His prerogative, He is God.

What if God chose to let His beautiful universe suffer the stains of the Fall?

What if?

If it gave Him opportunity to display His power, His holiness, what if?

**What if God is patient with sin?**

What if? If that allows Him to display Himself.

Vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.

Vessels of wrath so called because they will receive the anger of holy God.

Vessels of wrath so called because they are objects of God's fiery judgment.

They are prepared for that.

It isn't that God made them sinners. It's that they are sinners. God, to display His holy wrath, fits them for destruction.

**V 23**, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory,

As if God says, "I prepared them beforehand for glory."  
God wants to be the agent in the preparation for glory.

But God didn't make them that way. He left them that way if you will.

### **What if God wanted to display the riches of His glory?**

*He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy,*

### **Why did God save you?**

He saved you because you are special. No.

### **Why did God save me?**

He saved me because He wanted to display His glory.

Part of His glory is His mercy and His grace, because when Moses said to Him in **Exodus 33**, "*Show me Your glory*".

God says, "*I will let My mercy and My grace pass before you.*"

The reason people are saved is so that God may display His glory.

- ✓ His glory seen in His grace,
- ✓ His glory seen in His mercy,
- ✓ His glory seen in His compassion.

The reason that people are damned is that God may display His glory.

- ✓ The glory of His holiness,
- ✓ The glory of His wrath,
- ✓ The glory of His judgment,
- ✓ The glory of His justice, and
- ✓ The glory of His power.

**V 24**, *even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?*

When we learn about the sovereignty of God, we just can't ask questions.

Because we can only go so far and then we are at the point where we start to question God and that is to bring God to our court as if we are the judge and that's a blasphemous thing.

- This doctrine is not given to confuse us.
- This doctrine is not given to make us question God.
- This doctrine is not given to upset us.

### **Why is this doctrine given for?**

To make us thankful.

Do you fall on your face before God and say, "O God of mercy that You should have chosen me, that You should desire through me to display Your glory in mercy and grace rather than in vengeance and wrath."

God has called us.

That is an effectual call, that is an internal saving call as always in Romans and in Paul's epistles.

It comes not only to the Jews but also the Gentiles.

Jew and Gentile He's called.

So, Israel's unbelief doesn't violate God's person.

He has always kept His Word.

He has always chosen some to mercy and some to judgment.

Given mercy to some, and hardened others, it's not anything different.

**What about all the places where Jesus says, You will not come to Me that you might have life?**

**What about all those invitations?**

Having said all this, I believe anybody who wants to any time can come to Jesus Christ and receive Him as Saviour.

### **How does that fit together?**

God is not willing that any should perish.

**2 Peter 3:9**, *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward [us](#), not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*

**Ezekiel 18:23**, *Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" says the Lord God, "and not that he should turn from his ways and live?*

Mysteriously, incomprehensibly, beyond searching out, beyond our understanding, beyond our ability to tap, there is also a truth in the Word of God that says that all of us whose hearts are turned to the Saviour may come and that if we refuse Him the guilt is on us.

### **How God resolves that with these things?**

I will never know until someday I know as I am known, but in the meantime, I will never impugn God.

In the meantime, I will thank Him with every fibre of my being that He has redeemed me and chosen to display His grace and glory through me and not His wrath and glory.

**John 6:37**, *All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.*

So, we conclude with the song of Moses.

**Revelation 15:3-4**, *They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvellous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! <sup>4</sup>Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested."*

**Is the unbelief of Israel a blow against God's promises?**

No.

God never promised to redeem every Jew, always a remnant.

**Is the unbelief of Israel a blow against God's character and person?**

No, He has always been revealed as a God who displays His glory on the one hand through mercy, on the other hand through wrath. Nothing is changed.

**John 3:27**, *John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.*

Our salvation comes from God.

God has chosen to give it to us.

The mystery of it is beyond me.

What is mystery to my intellect is sunshine in my heart.

One is to thank God for your salvation.

If you do not know Jesus Christ, if you have not received His mercy and grace, believed in His death, resurrection, and embraced Him as Lord and Saviour.

For an invitation can be refused. Don't refuse it.

These profound things put us in awe of our God.

Humble us, make us realize that we know so little.

But what we do know of God's revelation should be our greatest pursuit, our happiest privilege.