

Start your study here

Read Read, Record, Reflect, Respond

Prayerfully	Reflectively	Extensively	Creatively	Intensively	Specifically	Effectively
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Repeated
Alike
Different
Accentuated
Related
Think Context!

Romans 9:14-29

- 14 What shall we say then?
Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!
- 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 depends
not on human will or exertion,
but on God, who has mercy.
- 17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh,
"For this very purpose I have raised you up,
that I might show my power in you,
and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."
- 18 So then
he has mercy on whomever he wills,
and he hardens whomever he wills.
- 19 You will say to me then,
"Why does he still find fault?
For who can resist his will?"
- 20 But who are you, O man, to answer back to God?
Will what is molded say to its molder,
"Why have you made me like this?"
- 21 Has the potter no right over the clay,
to make out of the same lump
one vessel for honorable use
and another for dishonorable use?
- 22 What if God,
desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power,
has endured with much patience
vessels of wrath
prepared for destruction,
- 23 in order to make known the riches of his glory for
vessels of mercy,
which he has prepared beforehand for glory—
- 24 even us whom he has called,
not from the Jews only
but also from the Gentiles?
- 25 As indeed he says in Hosea,
"Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,'
and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.' "
- 26 "And in the very place where it was said to them,
'You are not my people,'
there they will be called 'sons of the living God.' "
- 27 And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel:
"Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea,
only a remnant of them will be saved,
- 28 for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth
fully and without delay."
- 29 And as Isaiah predicted,
"If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring,
we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah." (ESV)

Two key questions: "Is God just/righteous?" And "How can man be held responsible if God is in control?" (question of fatalism)

Romans 9:14-29

Because of the length of this passage—the structural layout will be more compact than normal

Q #1 Justice of God

14 What shall we say then?

Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!

Illustration part 1

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."

Ex 33:19

Not unjust—He did exactly what He said

Real question: Is God fair? How can God be righteous and do what He does?

16 So then it depends

not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy

Rather than looking at the negative, look at the positive—God has mercy on the underserved

Illustration part 2

17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh,

"For this very purpose I have raised you up,

Ex 9:16

Illustration actually makes it more complicated from our vantage point

purpose that I might show my power in you,

and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."

God's purpose in selecting Israel (Paul's purpose 1:5)

18 So then

he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

9:19-23 a unit between two sections that go together. 9:14-19; 24-29—the mercy of God

Q #2 Responsibility of man if God chooses

19 You will say to me then,

"Why does he still find fault?

For who can resist his will?"

Real question: Can fatalism and free will coexist?

20 But who are you, O man, to answer back to God?

Will what is molded say to its molder,

"Why have you made me like this?"

Question not answered—submission required

21 Has the potter no right over the clay,

to make out of the same lump

one vessel for honorable use

and another for dishonorable use?

Q #3 The authority of God

22 What if God,

"willed" "choose" --determines

Effect??

desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power,

9:17

This is what he said to Pharaoh Ex 9:16-17

has endured with much patience

vessels of wrath

prepared for destruction,

The longer He waits (for people to sin) the more obvious His judgment becomes

23 in order to make known the riches of his glory for

Key point—God's patience on those who deserve wrath is for the benefit of those who will receive mercy

Cause???

purpose

vessels of mercy,

which he has prepared beforehand for glory—

Real question: Does God's authority give Him the right to act as He chooses? Who's going to challenge Him?

24 even us whom he has called,

not from the Jews only

but also from the Gentiles?

Evidence of His Mercy: God did not abandon all of Israel, though they were rebellious (Is 1, 43); and He planned on saving Gentiles who were not recipients of the promise/covenant

25 As indeed he says in Hosea,

"Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,'

and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.' "

Point 1: God has always had a plan to save Gentiles

26 "And in the very place where it was said to them,

'You are not my people,'

there they will be called 'sons of the living God.' "

See 9:7-13

27 And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel:

"Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea,

only a remnant of them will be saved,

Point 2: God has always had a plan to save some Israelites

28 for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth

fully and without delay."

No one gets a free pass

29 And as Isaiah predicted,

if the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring,

God has been merciful (Isaiah 1 and 43)

we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah." (ESV)

Working Idea (this is to help you see how the main idea was developed)

God’s sovereignty, or perhaps more specifically, God’s involvement in initiating the salvific process seems to conflict with man’s understanding of justice, fairness and righteousness. It seems too fatalistic to be true, or it seems too fatalistic to be believed.

That is not the God we conceive.

And it is not how we view our participation or significance in the process.

Therefore, Paul has some explaining to do. He must defend his teaching on the sovereign election of God.

His solution in Romans 9:14-29 is to state that God is just and merciful. But the way he demonstrates it will still leave many of us unsatisfied with his answer.

Main idea:

God has the right to do as He pleases yet He is pleased to demonstrate mercy on those who are undeserving (remember 1:18-3:20) both Jew and Gentile in order that He might save some.

Teaching idea/explanation:

These are difficult issues which involve presupposition, pre-understanding and even prejudice. For others, this may be a highly emotional issue due to how it has been taught or due to their life situations—so be sensitive.

And while we do want to be sensitive, it is our responsibility to teach the whole counsel of God. So as we enter into a passage that might raise more questions than it answers—let’s make sure to allow the passage to do most of the speaking.

Please do notice the emphasis on mercy. Don’t let that concept get lost in the discussion of how God’s sovereignty works.

Introduction



If God did choose some to be saved—can we say that God is fair? Is He truly just?

If God chooses some to be saved—how can we believe in a fatalistic system? Does the doctrine of election as Paul seems to be teaching it, lead to fatalism? That is, if God is so completely in control, then there is no such thing as free will. And I know I have free will.

Review

Having taught about the sinfulness of all men, the means of salvation and sanctification for all men, Paul turns to the question about the place of the Israelites, God’s chosen people. Had God set them aside? Paul’s answer, “God is faithful to His word, He has said some will be saved.”

Summary

Using the diatribe method again, Paul tries to anticipate the questions that his readers will have. So he puts questions into the mouth of an unseen interrogator. If God had the right to choose between Jacob and Esau, does that mean God is unjust? And if He has the right to choose arbitrarily, does that mean men are not responsible for their decisions or actions?

Overview

Chapter 9 deals primarily with Israel’s **PAST** (as God’s chosen and privileged people).

Chapter 10 deals primarily with Israel’s **PRESENT** (as a nation which has refused to submit to God’s gospel).

Chapter 11 deals primarily with Israel’s **FUTURE** (a nation which someday will be saved and which will enjoy the fulfillment of the new covenant promises).

Chapter 9

Although Paul’s primary concern is to vindicate God’s righteousness, he prefaces his remarks by expressing his own deep sorrow over Israel’s unrepentant state (9:1-5). Then he details how God has dealt with the nation in the past (9:6-33). In essence, God’s choice was completely sovereign and gracious (9:1-29), as can be seen in Israel’s very history (9:6-13), as well as on the basis of the principle of God’s sovereignty (9:14-29). Further, they have rejected their Messiah by clinging to the Law (9:30-33).¹

Preview

Paul writes this letter as a seasoned teacher. He knows the questions people will have about his teaching and raises them himself in order to head off misunderstandings. He knows his teaching about the sovereignty of God in election will stir questions and objections. Indeed, the questions are easy to anticipate; they are the same ones we ask when confronted with the unconditional election of God: “Isn’t it unfair for God to act this way?” (cf. v. 14); and “How can God hold us responsible if he is the one who determines what happens?” (cf. v. 19). So before he goes on with his teaching about how God has selected only some Jews to be saved along with many Gentiles (vv. 24 – 29), he pauses to deal with them.²

As we move into this passage we must realize that there are issues Paul doesn’t address that we would think are necessary. And there are several times we would like answers and Paul provides none.

Such questions are our natural response to the biblical teaching about God’s sovereignty. It is significant that Paul here offers no ‘logical’ explanation for the compatibility of God’s sovereignty with the equally biblical teaching that God is scrupulously fair and that human beings are justifiably blameworthy for their actions. We would do well to follow his approach: to affirm the truth of these great biblical doctrines without eliminating or weakening one or the other through an insistence on an exhaustive explanation. This is a point at which, with Paul (cf. 11:33–36), we should be prepared to recognize a mystery beyond our comprehension.³

Catch Phrase / Key Phrase:

More than a phrase, this passage leaves us with a sense of wonder and frustration.

Outline

I. Doctrine: Justification—The Righteousness of God Revealed 1:18–11:36

God’s Gracious Provision of Righteousness is Acquired by Faith in Jesus Christ

A. The Need of It 1:18–3:20 What a Mess!

The Righteousness of God Revealed in Condemnation: The Universal Need of Righteousness

The Bad News: All condemned for sin—no exceptions

B. What It Is 3:21–5:21

What a God—The Way of Salvation

Justification: The imputation of righteousness to all who believe

C. How It Affects Me 6:1–8:39

Sanctification: The Impartation of Righteousness

The Purpose of Salvation: Conformity to Christ’s Image

1. Believer and Sin 6:1-23
2. Believer and the Law 7:1-25
3. Believer and the Holy Spirit 8:1-39

The believer’s relationship to the Holy Spirit gives assurance of victory in Christian life.⁴

To have victory over sin—you must live in the Spirit.

¹ Daniel B. Wallace, *Romans: Introduction, Argument, and Outline*, bible.org

² Douglas J Moo, *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000). 309.

³D. A. Carson, *New Bible Commentary : 21st Century Edition* (4th ed.; Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994).

⁴ Dr. Harold W. Hoehner’s outline (DTS, Spring 1991, Exegesis of Romans 206, unpublished class notes)

D. Why Israel Rejected It 9:1–11:36

Vindication: Israel's Rejection of God's Righteousness

The fourth major section now turns to an issue which would have been in the back of his readers' minds: If God is so righteous, how could he give Israel so many privileges (including unconditional promises) and then reject his chosen people? Chapters 9–11 deal with this issue (note especially 9:6—"It is not as though God's word has failed"), the vindication of God's righteousness in relationship to Israel.⁵

1. Israel's Rejection Considered 9:1-29
 - a. Paul's Grief 9:1-5
 - b. Present situation: the Rejection of some not inconsistent with God's Promise 9:6-13
 - c. God's relationship with humanity is based on who He is 9:14-23
 - (1) God's character 9:14-18

First problem: Is God just?

 - (a) Answer "may it never be"—not fully stated or intended to be already understood 9:14
 - (b) God is sovereign—He is free to choose 9:15
 - (c) It is God who is merciful 9:15
 - (d) God demonstrates His power, glory and mercy by His choice 9:16-18
 - (2) God's sovereignty 9:19-24

Second Problem: Why does God find fault if it is His Sovereign choice?

 - (a) Question: Why does He find fault: for who withstands His will? 9:19
 - (b) Answer: None is given. Rather Paul deals with the attitude of the one who asks such a question 9:20a
 - i) Vessels of wrath 9:22
 - ii) Vessels of mercy 9:23
 - iii) All for the purpose of showing the riches of His glory 9:23
 - d. Recipients of Mercy 9:24-29
 - (1) God's plan restated 9:24
 - (2) God's plan to save Gentiles 9:25-26
 - (3) God's plan to save some Jews 9:27-29

Exposition / Key Exegetical Issues to be aware of



Think about it

Interactive questions

Restate the questions in 9:14 and 9:19. What are the *real* questions?
 What questions has Paul's teaching in Romans 8 and 9 raised for you?



Talk about it

Is it okay to have questions?

Is it okay to question God?

To question why He does what He does?

Is it okay to have doubts?

Should we always seek absolute certainty? Is absolute certainty possible?

Should we or do we need to know all things with certainty? If we don't know all truth (or most truth or even some truth) is it better to simply remain "agnostic" in relationship to anything that would divide Christians?

How do we deal with uncertainty in areas of doctrine?

Perspective

We cannot know all truth.

We cannot know all truth with absolute certainty.

But this should not cause us to stop searching and studying—it should keep us from arrogance. Our study of God, His Word and what He has revealed about who He is and how He works should lead to greater

⁵ Daniel B. Wallace, *Romans: Introduction, Argument, and Outline*, bible.org

and greater humility. God is infinite and therefore not fully definable, but He is knowable.

Too often in the history of the church, dogma has created division. As we study a difficult passage may we grow in humility and wonder at who God is. And the fact that He has saved us.

sn *Rom 9:1–11:36*. These three chapters are among the most difficult and disputed in Paul's Letter to the Romans. One area of difficulty is the relationship between Israel and the church, especially concerning the nature and extent of Israel's election. Many different models have been constructed to express this relationship. For a representative survey, see M. Barth, *The People of God* (JSNTSup), 22–27. The literary genre of these three chapters has been frequently identified as a diatribe, a philosophical discussion or conversation evolved by the Cynic and Stoic schools of philosophy as a means of popularizing their ideas (E. Käsemann, *Romans*, 261 and 267). But other recent scholars have challenged the idea that Rom 9–11 is characterized by diatribe. Scholars like R. Scroggs and E. E. Ellis have instead identified the material in question as midrash. For a summary and discussion of the rabbinic connections, see W. R. Stegner, "Romans 9.6-29 - A Midrash," *JSNT* 22 (1984): 37-52.⁶

9:14-18

9:14

First question

Is there injustice on God's part?

Or

Is God unfair?

Paul's Answer

By no means!

9:15-18 Answer: Illustrations from the Old Testament

Part 1: What God said to Moses

Exodus 33:19 And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The Lord.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. (ESV)

Exodus 33 context

In Exodus 32 the people made the golden calf idol.

If God had simply acted out of justice, He would have wiped out all those who sinned. But being faithful to His word, that they would be with His people, God has mercy on them.

Explanation

Salvation is not a matter of human effort or will, but of God's mercy.

Notice that the answer Paul gives really does not answer the question of God's justice, but of God's freedom to act—freedom to demonstrate mercy to whomever He chooses.

But the context of the Old Testament quote is related to the failure of Israel, which is really the issue in this section. How should God respond to His own people when they have turned their backs on Him? He has the right to reject them, but instead demonstrates mercy.

Result: positive—the demonstration of God's mercy

What truth can be drawn?

God's actions can only be judged based on what God has revealed about His character.

NTS New Testament Studies (a journal)

⁶The NET Bible First Edition Notes (Biblical Studies Press, 2006). Ro 9:1.

But perhaps this is Paul's point: that God's actions can be 'judged' by nothing beyond his own nature as revealed in Scripture. Paul again states that what follows from God's freedom is that *it* (i.e. God's election to salvation; cf. vs 11–12) does not *depend on man's desire or effort*.⁷

Therefore, it really does not depend on man's conduct (i.e., **not of him who wills, nor of him who runs**), but is solely based on **God who shows mercy**. Hence, one should not view God's choice as being unfair to those who do not receive mercy; instead, one should wonder why God is being merciful to anyone.⁸

Part 2: What God said about Pharaoh

Exodus 9:16 But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth. (ESV)

Context of Exodus 9:16

At the culmination of the 6th plague (boils) with a warning of the escalation of plagues. The section begins (Exodus 7:1-7) with the statement that God would harden Pharaoh for the purpose of showing to Egypt who He is and that it is He who would get credit for redeeming Israel.

Explanation

With this second illustration, Paul seems to actually make the problem worse. Not only did he not answer the question of fairness—but highlighted God's freedom to act according to His character. And with this second illustration, Paul seems to point out that God can use people as He wishes to accomplish His purpose.

he has mercy on whomever he wills,
and he hardens whomever he wills.

“hardening”—σκληρύνω: to cause to be stubborn and obstinate, especially with regard to the truth⁹ refers to being in a state of insensitivity to God, his Word, and his work¹⁰

(For more on “hardening” see Moo pp. 313-314 and 316-319 also included in the appendix)

God seems to be the initiator of both mercy and hardening in this passage.

Result: negative—the demonstration of God's total control

But is that Paul's point? Maybe, but that he includes the last part of the quote may be significant, in that in it God states His purpose.
so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.

God's purpose—the proclamation of His name, or here perhaps of His fame through His powerful deliverance of His people from Egypt.

What truth can be drawn?

Theological tension (antinomy) seems to be inherent.

Neither the bestowal of God's mercy nor his hardening are based on human actions (although it should be remembered that God acts on people who are already lost in sin and that his exclusion of some from salvation is in some sense simply a confirmation of

⁷D. A. Carson, *New Bible Commentary : 21st Century Edition* (4th ed.; Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994).

⁸René A. Lopez, *Romans Unlocked Power to Deliver* (Springfield, Missouri: 21st Century, 2005), 194.

⁹Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament : Based on Semantic Domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.; New York: United Bible societies, 1996, c1989), 1:765.

¹⁰Douglas J Moo, *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000). 311.

the choice they have already made). It should also be remembered that God's decisions on these matters are not disclosed to us and that they are not meant in any way to cause despair. The Scriptures make plain that God will never refuse to accept, or cast away, those who diligently seek him.¹¹

God tells us He will allow those who diligently seek for Him to find Him, but that at times He will not allow Himself to be found.

Proverbs 8:17 I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me. (ESV)

Proverbs 1:28 Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me. (ESV)

Passages that teach God's providential sovereignty:

Isaiah 45:5-7 I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, 6 that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other. 7 I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the Lord, who does all these things. (ESV)

Acts 4:27-28 for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. (ESV)

Romans 8:28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (ESV)

Ephesians 1:11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, (ESV)

Passages that teach man's freedom:

Passages that teach the ability to choose (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:16-17)

Passage that focus on the will (or heart) (2 Chron. 11:16; 12:14; Job 34:14)

People who reject God's plan (Luke 7:30; Acts 2:23)

Summary

Determining right or wrong, what is just or unjust, demands a standard for measurement. That standard is ultimately nothing less than God's own character (see [comments on 3:25 – 26](#)). God, therefore, acts justly when he acts in accordance with his own person and plan. This is precisely the point Paul makes in [9:15 – 18](#).¹²

Application:

At this point in his teaching, rather than having a clear application, we are naturally left with a question.

9:19-23

Interactive questions

From what we have seen so far, is it okay to question God? In these matters where we have trouble reconciling what God reveals about Himself (love and wrath; love and suffering; justice and sovereignty; etc.), is it okay to ask why?

Are we simply faced with mysteries beyond our comprehension?

Should we simply stop trying to understand?

Will trying to understand these truths strengthen or weaken our faith?

How can we seek to understand these difficulties without creating dissension or disunity in the larger church body?

What is the next question you would want to ask Paul?

Since what you are say (still sounds unfair) then how can God hold anyone responsible for what He decides?



Talk about it

¹¹D. A. Carson, *New Bible Commentary : 21st Century Edition* (4th ed.; Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994).

¹² Douglas J Moo, *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000). 310.

9:19-21

9:19

Second question

“Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?” (ESV)

Or

How can man be responsible for rejecting God, if it is God who determines who will choose God?

9:20-21

Paul’s Answer—*he gives no answer*

Paul does not provide or even attempt an answer. Rather than providing an answer to the question, he seems to respond to the motivation for the question. He challenges man’s right to judge God’s motives.

In our contemporary world there actually may be two aspects to this question and reason.

Not only a challenge to the motives of God, but a broader challenge to fatalism.

Fatalism says, that people are powerless, “what will be will be.” And many in our individualistic democratic society have come to value their independence and freedom, their rights above all else. To the point that a God that would in any way limit their freedom is not the “God they believe in.” (Which makes it sound like, if I don’t believe in that kind of God, He can’t be or won’t continue to exist in that way.)

While the problem of God’s active sovereignty or providence is hard to reconcile with how we live every day making decisions and living by the consequences of those decisions. Scripture clearly teaches that God has a plan that He intends to carry out (see Isaiah 45-46 for a particularly pointed defense by God of His sovereignty). But Scripture also clearly teaches that man’s response to God leads generally to either blessing or judgment—except when God wants to demonstrate His mercy (which is part of what we will see in the larger context of Romans 9-11).

We can’t reject the claims of God’s sovereign providence simply because it appears fatalistic.

We can also not reject the teaching on God’s sovereign providence by **questioning God’s motives**. This is the primary point Paul seems to challenge in 9:20-21.¹³

Paul reminds the interrogator (man) that he is created. And that by virtue of his created status he is subordinate to God the Creator.

9:22-23

Paul concludes this section (9:19-23) with an explanation, somewhat in the form of a rhetorical question.

As with the other two questions, the answer will not provide simple satisfaction for the reader.

9:22

Explanation

God’s patience (particularly until the final judgment) will make His punishment of sinners obvious. The longer He waits, the more time they have to condemn themselves for their choices, actions, attitudes and disregard of God.

So God’s judgment will vindicate His righteousness, His justice.

¹³ It is interesting that in the Garden of Eden, when Satan tempted Eve (and Adam) the third element in his temptation—after challenging and then denying God’s word, was to question God’s motives.

tn Or possibly “objects of wrath that have fit themselves for destruction.” The form of the participle could be taken either as a passive or middle (reflexive). *ExSyn* 417–18 argues strongly for the passive sense (which is followed in the translation), stating that “the middle view has little to commend it.” First, *καταρτίζω* (*katartizō*) is nowhere else used in the NT as a direct or reflexive middle (a usage which, in any event, is quite rare in the NT). Second, the lexical force of this verb, coupled with the perfect tense, suggests something of a “done deal” (against some commentaries that see these vessels as *ready* for destruction yet still able to avert disaster). Third, the potter-clay motif seems to have one point: The potter prepares the clay.¹⁴

The perfect participle “prepared” describes past action with a continuing result or state. “Prepared” may be reflexive (“prepared themselves”), but it seems preferable to take it as passive (“were prepared”). The thought is that they have been and are in a state of readiness or ripeness to receive God’s wrath. The objects of God’s wrath are the unsaved (1:18), who will suffer eternal judgment (John 3:36). God has patiently endured their antagonism to Him (cf. Acts 14:16; Rom. 3:25), but their judgment is coming. Those who oppose Him and refuse to turn to Him (Matt. 23:37) are then “prepared” by Him for condemnation. They are “storing up [God’s] wrath” against themselves (Rom. 2:5).¹⁵

9:23

But what ought to encourage and challenge Christians is the counter of the previous truth.

For the believer, the extension of the mercy of God all the way to glory, in contrast to those destined for destruction, is truly a revelation of God’s immense undeserved/unmerited mercy.

On the question of “prepare for destruction” versus “prepared for glory” see the second appendix.

Summary

The very question Paul now poses is exactly the one that we are tempted to raise at this point also: how can God blame people for rejecting him if he himself, by choosing some and ‘passing over’ others, in some sense causes that very rejection? Paul’s response reveals that he himself has no logically satisfactory answer to this question. He has earlier in the letter made it plain that people are fully responsible for their rejection of the truth of God (1:20–2:11), and he will make the point again with respect to Israel (9:30–10:21). But Paul does not mention this as a way of avoiding the issue that he now raises. He thereby implies that God’s sovereignty in rejection and man’s responsibility for that rejection are to be maintained as two complementary truths, truths that must not be used to detract from one another. Here Paul simply contests anyone’s right to stand in judgment over the ways of God. He is the potter, who has full right over the vessels that he creates (see Je. 18; Wisdom of Solomon 12:3–22; 15:7).¹⁶

In Romans 9:19–29, which describe God’s sovereign control in the work of salvation, He is likened to a potter, doing as he pleases with clay, in making some vessels for honor and some for destruction. Verses 22–23 support the potter illustration and answer the objections to God’s sovereignty raised in verses 19–20. Cranfield summarizes the meaning of verses 22–23 as follows:

God has endured a Pharaoh, and He now endures rebellious Israel, with much long-suffering for the sake of the manifestation of the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, and also for the sake of the revelation of His wrath...and of His [saving] power...since this twofold revelation is necessary for the achievement of His ultimate purpose of manifesting the riches of His glory.²³

¹⁴ *The NET Bible First Edition Notes*, (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Ro 9:22-23.

¹⁵ John F. Walvoord et al., *The Bible knowledge commentary : an exposition of the scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), 2:478.

¹⁶ D. A. Carson, *New Bible Commentary : 21st Century Edition* (4th ed.; Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), Ro 9:14.

²³ C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, International Critical Commentary, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Clark, 1979), 2:496–97. The simplest understanding of the connection between verses 23 and 24 is to take 24 as a relative clause dependent on “vessels of mercy” in 23.

God has sovereignly chosen the vessels of mercy, and He manifests His mercy and glory by transferring these chosen vessels from the realm of His wrath to the realm of His mercy.^{24 17}

Application

This will be published as one of the devotionals

When we ask “Why?”

Why?

God is . . .

too kind to do anything cruel . . .

too wise to make a mistake . . .

too deep to explain Himself.

From Charles R. Swindoll, *Growing Strong in the Seasons of life*

So, Why?

Is asking “why” wrong?

Why do we need to ask why?

Is asking why an evidence of a lack of faith?

The answer to why, may not always be what we want.

The answer to why, may not remove the pain.

The answer to why, may not come at all.

The depth of pain, despair, lost, uncertainty, or even the feeling of abandonment are real.

The answer to why, may not always be what we want.

The answer to why, may not remove the pain.

The answer to why, may not come at all.

The answer to why, is Who.

Who is God?

Does He truly love me? Is He truly in control? Is He powerful enough to help?

Yes, He loved me with His Son.

Yes, He controls my destiny and sees a much fuller picture.

Yes, He is Almighty.

Would He withhold lesser things?

Would He use me for a greater purpose?

Will I trust Him?

Romans 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! (ESV)

Job 1:21-22 And he said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” 22 In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong. (ESV)

Job 2:10 But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips. (ESV)

Pastor Steve Kilgore

²⁴ Cranfield notes that God’s longsuffering makes sin more serious and shows the wealth of His glory on vessels of mercy (ibid., 497). The identity of the “vessels of wrath” is difficult to determine. As Käsemann has stated, it has primary reference to unbelieving Jews but Gentiles must also be included (Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], 270). In this case what is true of Israel is true of all, that is, all salvation is by God’s sovereign grace. That is what the Jews and Gentiles to whom Paul wrote needed to learn (cf. Rom 11:25–27, where the order is changed, i.e., Gentiles first, then Jews; so also in 9:25–26). One must include Gentiles in the “vessels of wrath” and “vessels of mercy” because of the statement in 9:24.

¹⁷W. Edward Glenny, *The “People of God” in Romans 9:25-26*, (Dallas Theological Seminary, *Bibliotheca Sacra*) Volume 152: 605 p. 47.

9:24-29

Now it turns personal, having discussed these issues more objectively, Paul will speak to his audience, including himself.

Structurally, 9:24 stands as the topic sentence for this paragraph followed by two sections each with two Old Testament quotes.

9:24 Topic sentence

Having reached the point of discussing the application of mercy (9:23) Paul applies that mercy to himself and his readers—both Jew and Gentile.

Since salvation is a matter of God's mercy, and since God has a right to demonstrate mercy to whomever He chooses, it is understandable that God has shown mercy not only to Israel but to Gentiles.

Called

call (ἐκάλεσεν, *ekalesen*, he called) is effective and initiatory in the sense that it creates faith (cf. 8:28–29; 9:12).¹⁸

his effective summons to enter into relationship with himself.¹⁹

Even though verse 24 advances the argument in a new direction, we should not fail to see the connection with what Paul said in the previous paragraph. In verses 22–23 he stressed that God's mercy is appreciated and perceived as mercy when it is displayed against the backdrop of wrath. What verse 24 highlights is the calling of the Gentiles to faith: God "called not only the Jews but also the Gentiles." The inclusion of the Jews in the people of God is not surprising since such is clearly taught in the OT Scriptures. What is astonishing is that Gentiles are also recipients of God's mercy. The inclusion of the Gentiles fits nicely with the theme articulated in verses 22–23. To the Jews of Paul's day Gentiles were particularly deserving of God's wrath. Thus their calling into the church through Paul's ministry highlights God's mercy in a way that the inclusion of the Jews does not.²⁰

9:25-26 God's plan to save Gentiles

Paul shows that his mission to the Gentiles has not been something he invented but was part of God's plan from the beginning. Not only has God intended to show mercy to Gentiles but He speaks about it at times when Israel was rebellious.

Hosea 2:23 and I will sow her for myself in the land. And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, 'You are my people'; and he shall say, 'You are my God.' " (ESV)

The Pauline wording of Hos. 2:25 [number according to the LXX] accords with no known text of Hosea, however; the clauses are reversed so that the declaration that those who are not God's people have now become God's people is moved before the clause that says that those previously unloved are now loved. Perhaps the clauses are moved because the inclusion of the Gentiles into the people of God is thereby highlighted.²¹

Hosea 1:10 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," it shall be said to them, "Children of the living God." (ESV)

Although the promise of inclusion into God's people in Hosea is directed to the northern tribes of Israel, Paul applies it to the Gentiles. By God's gracious call, they have been transferred from the

¹⁸Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 525.

¹⁹Douglas J Moo, *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000). 321.

²⁰Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 525.

²¹Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 527.

status of “not my people” and “not my loved one” to the status of “my people,” “my loved one,” and “sons of the living God.”²²

While this truth—the inclusion of Gentiles as people of God— would be hard for Jews to understand, particularly because of the number of Gentiles being included, the next truth might be even more difficult.

9:27-29 God’s plan to save some Jews

A calling of the remnant of Israel, a demonstration of God’s mercy and faithfulness

9:27-28

Thus the quotations he uses about Israel in [verses 27 – 29](#) focus not on God’s call of Jews per se but on his call of only a minority of Jews. [Isaiah 10:22 – 23](#), quoted in part in [Romans 9:27 – 28](#), is one of the great “remnant” texts in the Old Testament. The remnant conception emerged in the prophets as a message of both judgment and hope — judgment, because the continuing sinfulness of Israel brought God’s judgment on the people as a whole, resulting in the salvation of only some of the people; hope, because despite Israel’s sinfulness, God maintained his commitment to his covenant and pledged to save at least some of the people.²³

Isaiah 10:22-23 For though your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return. Destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness. 23 For the Lord God of hosts will make a full end, as decreed, in the midst of all the earth. (ESV)

See also Hosea 1:10

tn There is a wordplay in Greek (in both the LXX and here) on the phrase translated “completely and quickly” (συντελῶν καὶ συντέμνων, *suntelōn kai suntemnōn*). These participles are translated as adverbs for smoothness; a more literal (and more cumbersome) rendering would be: “The Lord will act by closing the account [or completing the sentence], and by cutting short the time.” The interpretation of this text is notoriously difficult. Cf. BDAG 975 s.v. συντέμνω.²⁴

9:29

Isaiah 1:9 If the Lord of hosts had not left us a few survivors, we should have been like Sodom, and become like Gomorrah. (ESV)

What probably drew his attention to [Isaiah 1:9](#) is the word “descendants” (Gk. *sperma*), which is the key word at the beginning of this section (see [comments](#) on [Rom. 9:7 – 8](#)). This word is much more positive, holding out hope to Israel because God is determined to preserve “descendants” for Israel — people who will inherit this promise to Abraham. The verse thus anticipates Paul’s word of hope about Israel in [chapter 11](#).²⁵

It does not seem fitting in the context to say that God’s promise will be fulfilled only to a limited degree (cf. 9:6a), or that the period of his patience will be abbreviated and judgment will begin (cf. Schrenk, *TDNT* 4:210; Wilckens 1980: 207; Moo 1995: 253). Perhaps the intention is to say that the promise is fulfilled with an Israel that is temporarily diminished in number (Dunn 1988b: 573; cf. Delling, *TDNT* 8:64). Cranfield (1979: 502) understands the verse in a general way to depict the thoroughness, effectiveness, and swiftness with which the Lord will accomplish his word (so also E. Johnson 1989: 150). Even though it is difficult to tease out the details, the last option is the most sensible. In the salvation of the remnant God will accomplish his purposes.^{9 26}

²² Douglas J Moo, *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000). 321.

²³ Douglas J Moo, *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000). 321.

LXX Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament, translated between 250-100 BC)

²⁴ *The NET Bible First Edition Notes* (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Ro 9:28.

²⁵ Douglas J Moo, *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000). 322.

⁹ By contrast, Moo (1996: 616) understands it to refer to God’s complete and decisive judgment, and this interpretation is certainly possible.

Application:

God accomplishes His purpose

Implications/Application

Salvation is available to all

God doesn't show favoritism when offering salvation, not even to His chosen people Israel

God always fulfills His plan



Key Point

Lessons on the character of God



What do we learn
About God?

God's actions are just even when we don't understand them.

God doesn't always explain Himself

God doesn't have to explain Himself

God is free to act as He chooses and He has chosen to act in accordance with His character which means He is always faithful to accomplish what He has said and He is merciful in His interaction with mankind.

If you have questions—uncertainties—seek to know more about God's character.



Act on it

How do we respond to a sovereign God Who is free to do as He pleases?

Submit

How do we respond to difficult teaching, perhaps even distasteful truth?

By our submission to the sovereign plan of God and by obedience. Though God has a plan He involves us in the process.

We should continue to study God's Word, not as a means of simply gaining information or knowledge but to encounter God; to truly know who He is, to continually grow in our understanding—in spite of our limitations—of God's character and His plan.

Romans 9:14- 29

14 What shall we say then?

Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!

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 depends

not on human will or exertion,
but on God, who has mercy.

17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh,

"For this very purpose I have raised you up,
that I might show my power in you,
and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."

18 So then

he has mercy on whomever he wills,
and he hardens whomever he wills.

19 You will say to me then,

"Why does he still find fault?
For who can resist his will?"

20 But who are you, O man, to answer back to God?

Will what is molded say to its molder,
"Why have you made me like this?"

21 Has the potter no right over the clay,

to make out of the same lump
one vessel for honorable use
and another for dishonorable use?

22 What if God,

desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power,
has endured with much patience

vessels of wrath
prepared for destruction,

23 in order to make known the riches of his glory for

vessels of mercy,
which he has prepared beforehand for glory—

24 even us whom he has called,
not from the Jews only
but also from the Gentiles?

25 As indeed he says in Hosea,
“Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’
and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’ ”

26 “And in the very place where it was said to them,
‘You are not my people,’
there they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’ ”

27 And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel:
“Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea,
only a remnant of them will be saved,

28 for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth
fully and without delay.”

29 And as Isaiah predicted,
“If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring,
we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah.” (ESV)

Appendix: Election

Calvary Church does not have a full statement as to the Church's position of election. We seek to be biblical rather than seek to defend a system of theology. So we do not define ourselves as "Calvinist" or as "Armenians."

What follows is simply my understanding of these issues.²⁷

Robert Pyne's suggested order of salvation²⁸

Divine Initiative		Human Response
Preparation through the Spirit and the Word	<i>Calling</i>	
	<i>Conversion</i>	Hearing with Faith
Justification, Indwelling (Regeneration, Sanctification, and Sealing)	<i>Consequence</i>	Thanksgiving, Obedience
Providential Guidance with Instruction and Empowerment through the Spirit and the Word	<i>Continuation</i>	Progressive Sanctification
Glorification	<i>Consummation</i>	Christlikeness and Worship

Preliminary Considerations in the Doctrine of Election

I. Introduction

A. What is freedom and who has it?

1. How would you define "freedom?"
2. Can God and man both be free?
 - a. I do not believe that both God and man can be both equally considered to be free.
 - b. Either God is truly free or we are.
 - c. If God is free He can determine what sin is and how salvation will be accomplished.
 - d. If we are free we determine what sin is and how salvation will happen.

B. So, is God reactive or proactive?

C. Can man be proactive in his relationship with God?

The condition of man
 dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 2:13)
 does not seek God (Romans 3:10-11)

Mention election in any average gathering of evangelicals and you immediately have several diverse reactions. "It's too difficult!" "It's divisive!" "If theologians haven't solved it, I won't even touch it!" "It hinders my freedom!" "It makes God look arbitrary!" and so on. It is instructive for us to notice, however, that both Paul and Peter begin epistles with the doctrine (**Rom. 1:6; Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:1**). In fact, without this important work of God, no one would have a share in the death of Christ.¹²⁴

D. Here are some questions that reflect problems that we often have concerning election:

1. What is the basis for election?
2. Is God fair in electing some and not others?
3. What does *foreknowledge* mean?
4. How does foreknowledge relate to other aspects of election?
5. Does election eliminate a genuine Gospel offer?
6. Does election discourage evangelism?¹²⁵

E. Additional Question¹²⁶

²⁷ These notes are from my teaching notes on the doctrine of Soteriology as taught at Philadelphia Biblical University and Lancaster Bible College, but do not necessarily represent the stated positions of those school. They are provide to give exposure to some of the issues, not to solve all the problems that have been raised over hundreds of years.

²⁸ Robert A. Pyne, (Unpublished class notes, 404, Soteriology, DTS, ©1991)

¹²⁴P. S. Karleen, *The Handbook to Bible Study* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

¹²⁵P. S. Karleen, *The Handbook to Bible Study* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

1. If God is sovereign, to what extent are the choices of mankind determined?
 2. If God is sovereign, to what extent is He responsible for evil and even an individual's rejection of the offer of salvation?
 3. What is the relationship between election and foreknowledge?
 4. Does God have to do something prior to an individual's conversion to enable that individual to trust in the gospel?
- F. The Doctrine of Election and its parent doctrine, the Sovereignty of God, should be determined by the exegetical study of the biblical evidence.
For clarification of terms see below.
1. Genesis 15:13-16 — God foretold ("know for certain") the enslavement of Abraham's descendants, but would also judge the nation for subjecting them.
"God promised Abraham that this would surely take place, yet it was accomplished through a complicated web of human choice, even sinful human choices."¹²⁷
 2. **Acts 2:23** this *Man*, **delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you** nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death. (NASB95)
 3. Conclusion based on God's sovereignty
 - a. God does not always seem to have to intervene to accomplish His purpose, which are frequently achieved through the choices of individuals.
 - b. God rules over all these events and always has the power to intervene and redirect the course of history.
 4. Implications
 - a. God is not the author of sin
 - b. We should not regard election as "double," at least not with equal ultimacy
"If God does not initiate every action, but only those which would not take place apart from His intervention, then He should not be thought of as initiating sinful actions or the rejection of the gospel on the part of the lost. He leaves them in their sin and they bear the consequence. He does not intervene."¹²⁸

Sproul (*Chosen by God*, p. 142-143)— Equal ultimacy (double predestination) is based on a concept of symmetry. "The reformed view teaches that God positively or actively intervenes in the lives of the elect to insure their salvation. The rest of mankind God leaves to themselves."¹²⁹
 - c. God must intervene in some way for individuals to respond to the gospel
Romans 3 teaches that men not only don't come to God, they rebel against Him.
 - d. God's intervention need not violate the free choice of individuals.
"We can go around and around about what is meant by "free will," but all such debates are greatly complicated by the fact that the expression is not found in Scripture. If it is legitimate to compare God's intervention in salvation with His intervention in prophecy or in the inspiration of Scripture, it is apparent that the individual makes their own choices even when operating under divine initiative, but at the same time the Spirit of God oversees the situation in such a way as to produce the divinely intended result."¹³⁰
- See Appendix 2: The Darker Side of Election, Douglas Moo
- G. In actual practice too often the presuppositions of the interpreter determine the doctrinal outcome. What are the questions that should precede the discussion of election?
1. What are the key passages in the Old Testament and New Testament that must be considered?
 2. What are the central issues or the most important concerns of the Bible related to election?
 - a. The Arminian answer: Human freedom—humankind's freedom is the starting point.
 - b. The Calvinist answer: the glory of God—God's glory and freedom are the starting points.
 3. Another question relates to the justice of God. If the doctrine of election is true, Is God just?

¹²⁶Robert A. Pyne, (Unpublished Notes, DTS, Theology 404, Soteriology, © 1991.)

¹²⁷Robert A. Pyne, (Unpublished Notes, DTS, Theology 404, Soteriology, © 1991.)

¹²⁸Robert A. Pyne, (Unpublished Notes, DTS, Theology 404, Soteriology, © 1991.)

¹²⁹Quoted by Robert A. Pyne, (Unpublished Notes, DTS, Theology 404, Soteriology, © 1991.)

¹³⁰Robert A. Pyne, (Unpublished Notes, DTS, Theology 404, Soteriology, © 1991.)

4. What is grace?
 - a. Arminians suggest that grace creates the “opportunity to choose that redemption God offers in Christ.”¹³¹
 - b. The Calvinistic view of grace is that it cannot be viewed as referring to the “autonomous competence to perform that which God will bless with His favor.”¹³²

II. The History of The Debate over Election

A. Early history

1. There was very little development of the doctrine of election until **Augustine** (A.D. 354-430) who viewed Adam (before the fall) as truly free (except for limitations imposed by his human nature, thus there was the possibility of change). Adam sinned and became tainted with sin and inclined toward doing evil and transmitted that same nature to his descendants. As a result his descendants could not refrain from evil and do good. Without divine help he could not chose to do good, obey God, or trust Christ. As a response to Pelagius, he developed his teaching on predestination. Having emphasized the fact that we all participated in Adam’s sin we begin life fully depraved or marred. The freedom not to sin was lost. Therefore, only by the grace of God are we enabled to exercise our will toward God, trust Christ, and thus be freed to chose to do good and resist evil. The grace of God is determined by God’s free choice and is irresistible. God’s choice of some does not depend on God’s prior knowledge of their response or good deeds but depends on His saving grace. If it were not for the grace of God all would be lost.
2. The earliest response to Augustine came from **Pelagius** (b. ca. 370), the British monk who taught in Rome. According to Pelagius the fall of Adam has no direct effect on each individual’s ability to do good and refuse evil since there is no inherited evil or tendency to evil. Pelagius came to the conclusion that it was possible to live in a state of holiness based on Leviticus 19:2. Furthermore, no individual needs the special work of God to turn to Christ. Pelagius’ view was condemned by the Council of Ephesus in 431.
3. In the **Middle Ages** the Roman Catholic Church drifted back toward Pelagianism. Shortly after the death of Augustine and the condemnation of Pelagianism, there arose a new position which was clearly not Augustinian. Though it used Augustine’s terms it really proposed a new position, semi-Pelagianism, that taught the cooperation of the individual with God in the process of salvation. God and the individual accomplish what must be done for salvation. The position rejected absolute predestination and irresistible grace even though it accepted the inability of the individual and the necessity of Divine grace.¹³³
4. Protestant Reformation
 - a. Martin Luther (1483-1546) moved from predestination based on foreknowledge to an Augustinian view. This change can be seen in his *Commentary on Romans* (notes used for his lectures between Nov. 3, 1515 and Sept. 7, 1516). His comments on Romans 8 and 9 present a clearly stated Augustinian view.¹³⁴
 - b. John Calvin (1509-1564) has given his name to the concept of unconditional election. Double predestination (some to eternal life and some to hell) is found in Calvin’s writings and was fully developed by his successor at the University of Geneva, Theodore Beza.
 - c. Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) studied under Beza at Geneva. His view gradually changed to a position of denial of the doctrine of original sin, freedom of the will, and particular election. Humanity is said to be able to make the initial step toward God with no special help from God. “In his understanding of predestination, Arminius had concluded that God’s decree of particular individuals to be saved depended on “the foreknowledge of God, by which he knew from eternity who... would believe, and in consequence of grace afterwards obtained, would persevere.”¹³⁵ “In this conditional understanding of predestination, God’s decree is based on the divine foreknowledge of the contingent acts of the human will. God’s grace is necessary for salvation but is not alone sufficient, apart from the cooperation of the human will. Given equal access to divine grace, the human will becomes the decisive factor that distinguishes those who accept the gospel from those who reject it. If the beginning of life in Christ is contingent upon the human will, and if

¹³¹Robert W. Yarbrough, “Divine Election in the Gospel of John,” in *Still Sovereign: Contemporary Perspectives on Election, Foreknowledge, and Grace*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), p.49.

¹³²Yarbrough, “Divine Election,” p. 50.

¹³³Erickson, *Christian Theology*, p. 911.

¹³⁴Erickson, *Christian Theology*, p. 912.

¹³⁵Cited by John Jefferson Davis, “The Perseverance Of The Saints: A History Of The Doctrine.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 34 (June 1991)2:221.

its continuation is likewise contingent, it seems logically consistent that final perseverance is likewise contingent—and that falling away must be a genuine possibility. This implication of the conditional understanding of predestination, implicit in Arminius, was made explicit in the later Arminian tradition.”¹³⁶

B. **Biblical Illustrations**

1. God’s providential rule (Gen. 15:13-16) [Captivity predicted but accomplished by a series of human decisions.]
2. David’s ascent to the throne (1 Sam. 16:1) (“I have provided for myself a king” is a reference.)

III. **The Biblical Words Involved in The Doctrine of Election** Error! Bookmark not defined.

A. ***eklegomai* (choose) middle voice verb**

1. Choose; choose out; make choice
 - a. to pick out, choose, to pick or choose out for one’s self (Luke 14:7; Acts 6:5; 13:17);
 - b. choosing one out of many, i.e. Jesus choosing His disciples (Luke 6:13; John 15:16, 19), choosing one for an office
 - c. of God’s choosing, by foreknowledge, whom He would and passing by the remainder of humanity. These He chose to be peculiarly His own and to be attended continually by His gracious oversight; i.e. the Israelites (Acts 13:17).
 - d. of God the Father choosing Christians, as those whom He set apart from the irreligious multitude as dear unto Himself, and whom He has rendered, through faith in Christ, citizens of heaven (James 2:5), so that the ground of the choice lies in Christ and His merits only (1 Cor. 1:27-28; **Eph. 1:4***).
2. Did God leave all mankind to perish in the state of sin and misery?
 - a. God, having out of His good pleasure from all eternity, elected some to **everlasting life** (2 Thess. 2:13, Eph. 1:4), did enter into a covenant of grace to deliver them out of the state of sin and misery, and to bring them into a state of salvation by a **Redeemer**. (Rom. 5:21)¹³⁷
 - b. Luke 6:13; John 13:18; 15:16, 19; Acts 1:2; 13:17; **15:7**; Eph. 1:4

B. ***eklektos*, (elect) adjective**

1. Elect; chosen
2. Picked out, chosen
 - a. chosen by God, (Col. 3:12; 1 Pet. 1:2; 2:4, 6, 9).
 - b. to obtain salvation through Christ; hence Christians are called “chosen or elect” of God
3. The Messiah is called “elect”, as appointed by God to the most exalted office conceivable
4. Choice, select, i.e. the best of its kind or class, excellence; preeminence: applied to certain individual Christians

C. ***ekloge* (election or chosen) feminine noun**

1. **Election; chosen**
2. The act of picking out, choosing; used of the act of God’s free will by which before the foundation of the world He decreed His blessings to certain persons; the decree made from choice by which He determined to bless certain persons, through Christ by grace a thing or person chosen (Rom. 9:11; 11:5, 7, 28; 2 Pet. 1:10).

D. **Summary:**

These first three words can be treated under the heading of election. Election refers to God’s free choice of individuals to salvation. Paul’s use of this word with the middle voice is most instructive. The middle voice indicates the idea of the reflexive, in other words, God chose or elected for Himself or by Himself (1 Cor. 1:27-28; Eph. 1:4). Individual Thessalonians were chosen (2 Thess. 2:13); as many were set previous to their believing in the group of those who would have eternal life did believe (Acts 13:48); Paul was a chosen instrument for salvation and service (Acts 9:15; Gal. 5:15) and some individuals’ names were not written in the Book of life from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8; 17:8); meaning that some were. Election is unconditional and individual.¹³⁸

E. ***prognosis*, feminine noun**

1. **Foreknowledge**
2. forethought, pre-arrangement
3. This word is used of prior or temporal knowledge (Acts 26:5; 2 Peter 3:17); of God’s relationship to Israel (Rom. 11:2); of Christ’s sacrifice (Acts 2:23; 1 Peter 1:20); and of God’s people today (Rom.

¹³⁶Davis, “The Perseverance Of The Saints.” Pp. 221-222.

¹³⁷C.H. Spurgeon, *A Baptist Catechism*

¹³⁸Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, p. 312.

8:29; 1 Peter 1:2).¹³⁹ The question centers around the content of “foreknowledge.” Does it mean that God foresaw who would believe? Is it in the sense of preknowledge? Would that mean that only God foresaw the death of Christ? (Acts 2:23)

- a. People are foreknown, not faith
- b. Election is in accordance with foreknowledge, see 1 Pet. 1:2; Acts 2:23
- c. Since the root word *gnosis* has the meaning of “to know intimately,” the compound has reference to God’s determination to have a relationship with certain people for His own glory and purposes.

Idea is knowing in a relational way

From an examination of the passages where *πρόγνωσις* and *προγινώσκω* are used of divine activity, the Biblical meaning must be forethought, prearrangement, or predetermination. Thus the Biblical meaning of foreknowledge is equivalent to foreordination, both describing the same act, one stressing the element of knowledge and the other that of will. To say that God made a decision based on His prevision would mean that there was a time of indecision. This, of course, would be contrary to the nature of God and to the Biblical fact that the decree is eternal. Thus, God’s decree is from eternity past and the product of His knowledge and will.¹⁴⁰

F. **proorizo, verb**

1. **Predestinate**; determine before; ordain
2. **proorivzw** decide beforehand; to come to a decision beforehand—‘to decide beforehand, to determine ahead of time, to decide upon ahead of time *proorivsa" hJma`" eij" uiJoqesivan dia; Ihsou` Cristou` eij" aujtovn* ‘he had already decided that through Jesus Christ he would bring us to himself as his son? Eph .1.5; ou}” de; *provwrisen, touvtou" kai; ejkavlesen* ‘those whom he decided upon ahead of time, these he called’ Ro 8.30; *e{kasto" kaqw;" prohvr/rhtai th`/ kardiva/* ‘each person (should give) in the way he has decided beforehand in his heart (to do)’ 2 Cor 9.7.¹⁴¹
3. to predetermine, decide beforehand; in the NT of God decreeing from eternity; to foreordain, appoint beforehand
4. To preplan the destiny of someone. The death of Christ was predestined, i.e., it was preplanned (Acts 4:28; Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:5, 11). The wisdom of God (the message of Paul and others) is said to be “predestined” (1 Cor. 2:7).
5. In Acts 4:27f. expression is given to the conviction that Herod, Pontius Pilate, the nations and peoples are only able to do to Jesus that which God has previously established or determined. *prohorizo* is thus here intended to underline that even men’s sinful actions are drawn into the realization of the divine plan of salvation.¹⁴²

IV. **Preliminary Definition: Election is that aspect of the eternal purpose of God whereby He certainly and eternally** determines by means of unconditional and loving choice who will believe on Jesus Christ. This is not merely the intention of God to save all who may believe, but instead *it determines who will believe*. (Matt. 22:14; Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:33; Eph. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13)

A. Clarification of Terms: Sovereignty

1. *Sovereignty*—the right to rule because of Who He is
Based on Sovereignty
2. *Providence*—the fact that God does rule in all the affairs of His creation
“The doctrine of providence tells us that the world and our lives are not ruled by chance or by fate but by God.”¹⁴³

God’s providential rule seems to allow for human initiative within the contrasts of divine permission. He may at any time interrupt the course of events and intervene in order to

¹³⁹Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, p. 313.

¹⁴⁰Edgar C. James, *Is Foreknowledge Equivalent to Foreordination?*, Bibliotheca Sacra., electronic edition. (Dallas, TX: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1998).

¹⁴¹Louw-Nida, electronic version, *BibleWorks for Windows*, 1998.

¹⁴²P. Jacobs and H. Krienke, “*proorzw*.” *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), I, 696.

¹⁴³T.H.L. Parker, “Providence” *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Everett F. Harrison, p. 427.

accomplish His purpose, but He rules over the world in such a way that His purposes are accomplished even when He does not actively intervene.¹⁴⁴

Based on Providence

3. *Divine Decree*—God has a plan for ruling

Building on Divine Decree

4. *Foreordination*—how God’s plan operates

In particular God has ordained beforehand whatever comes to pass

B. Clarification of Terms: Election

1. *Foreknowledge*—God’s knowledge of all things before they occur (causative)

2. *Predestination*—God’s predetermining the eternal destiny of individuals

3. *Election*—God’s choice of some for salvation¹⁴⁵

The difference between predestination, which is mentioned in verse 5, and election (or choosing) which is mentioned in verse 4, is that election refers to God’s freedom in choosing whom he will predestine. Predestination refers to the goal or destiny for which he chose them. Election is God’s choosing whom he will, and predestination is God’s determination that they will become his children.¹⁴⁶

C. Election

1. Election deals with God’s initiating something that would not have taken place apart from His intervention.

2. Therefore, those who do come to Christ are responsible, because God did not force them to reject Him. He simply leaves them in their sin and they bear the consequences.

3. The doctrine of election reassures us concerning the certainty of God’s purposes and it prevents us from becoming boastful about our own salvation. This concept should never cause us to neglect evangelism, nor should it lessen our compassion for the lost.

In the context of Paul’s writing

Romans 9

Main point: God choose because of Who He is, not because of man’s actions, desire, or effort

Ephesians 1

Main point: God is in control of everything

Points of Definition²⁹

God’s providential rule seems to allow for human initiative within the contrasts of divine permission. He may at any time interrupt the course of events and intervene in order to accomplish His purpose, but He rules over the world in such a way that His purposes are accomplished even when He does not actively intervene.

Election deals with God’s initiating something that would not have taken place apart from His intervention.

Therefore, those who do to come to Christ are responsible, because God did not force them to reject Him. He simple leaves them in their sin and they bear the consequences.

The doctrine of election reassures us concerning the certainty of God’s purposes and it prevents us from becoming boastful about our own salvation. This concept should never cause us to neglect evangelism, nor should it lessen our compassion for the lost.

¹⁴⁴Robert A. Pyne, (Unpublished class notes, 404, Soteriology, DTS, ©1991)

¹⁴⁵Taken from Thomas L. Constable, “What Prayer will and will not change.” *Essays in Honor of J. Dwight Pentecost*, p. 102.

¹⁴⁶John Piper, Sermon on Ephesians 1, www.desiringgod.org

²⁹Taken from, Robert A. Pyne, (Unpublished class notes, 404, Soteriology, DTS, ©1991)

Appendix 2: The Dark side of Election?

Douglas J. Moo, *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.) pp. 316-319.

THE DARK SIDE of election. I have argued that [Romans 9:6 – 23](#) teaches that individuals become Christians only because God, by a free act of his will, chooses them and predestines them to faith and glory. Our turning to Christ in faith is a real decision we make and is essential if we are to be saved, but we only turn to Christ because God has elected us. Many good exegetes and theologians dispute this conclusion, finding it incompatible with the biblical teaching about the freedom of human beings and the call for all to respond in faith to the gospel. Many laypeople likewise react against the doctrine out of a sometimes vague sense that it is just not fair.

But if the idea of God’s unconditional election to salvation stirs controversy, imagine the level of reaction against the idea that God might also choose to send people to hell on the basis of his own sovereign decision. Yet we cannot avoid considering whether, indeed, Paul teaches this “dark side” of election, for three key texts in [Romans 9:6 – 23](#) seem to suggest this idea:

“Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.” ([9:13](#))

Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden. ([9:18](#))

What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath — prepared for destruction? What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory. ([9:22 – 23](#))

In each of these, Paul seems to suggest that God chooses people to be damned just as he chooses people to be saved. Hence theologians, particularly of a Calvinist persuasion, speak of “double predestination.”

Is the idea really taught in this passage? I cautiously conclude that it is — although in a different form from what many Calvinists hold. As I have argued, the texts cited above all refer to or are applied to God’s work in the lives of individuals. God chooses certain individuals and rejects others on the basis of his own will ([vv. 15, 18](#)) — not on the basis of physical descent ([vv. 8, 10](#)), anything they do or will do ([vv. 12, 16](#)), or what they will ([v. 16](#)). It is “the God who calls” that determines the issue. But if God has unconditionally chosen some to be saved, the parallelism suggests that he also unconditionally destines others to wrath.

To be sure, interpreters argue that Paul disrupts the parallelism in significant ways. They claim that the hardening of [9:18](#), given the background of Exodus, is based on one’s prior self-hardening — a claim we have found to be dubious. More to the point is the difference in [9:22 – 23](#) between “objects of his wrath — prepared for destruction” and “objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory.” The latter text is clear: God himself “prepared in advance” those people who receive his mercy and attain glory. But Paul’s description of the “objects of wrath” is significantly different: He uses a participle that is middle or passive in form (*katertismena*). If middle, it could mean that these people “prepared themselves” for destruction; if passive, that they were “prepared” by their own sins or by God.

Certainty is impossible here, but the change in construction may suggest that Paul views God’s election to salvation and predestination to wrath as different in some way (see below). This consideration is not sufficient, however, to overturn the overall impression that both human salvation and damnation are sovereign acts of God.

But before we conclude that the two acts are completely parallel, one other factor must be considered. Paul teaches that all people are involved in Adam’s sin and are therefore under a sentence of death because of their sin ([Rom. 5:12 – 21](#)). God’s decision to destine some people to wrath comes, we believe, *after* (in a logical sense) that sin. God’s “hardening,” then, does not cause spiritual insensitivity; it maintains people in the state of sin that they have already chosen. When God chooses people to be saved, he acts out of pure grace, granting a blessing to people who in no way deserve it. But when he destines people to wrath, he sentences them to the fate they have already chosen for themselves. It is perhaps for just this reason that we find the shift in construction in [9:22 – 23](#) and that Paul never uses the words “call” or “election” to refer to God’s decision to leave people in their sins and the wrath they deserve. For this same reason, I prefer not to use the expression *double predestination*, as if both God’s acts of predestination are of the same kind.

As we reflect on the contemporary significance of this doctrine, two points must be made. (1) As we noted above, the idea that God destines people to hell sparks strong reaction — and understandably. Most of us instinctively feel there is something unfair about God’s choosing to rescue some from sin and destining others to their fate. But at some point, we must look carefully at that reaction and decide whether it is justified. I was teaching a seminar some years ago in which I brought up this doctrine. As is always the case, the idea met a lot of resistance. One student in particular was very vocal, insisting that “God just couldn’t be like that.”

Now such a response may or may not be justified. If one is saying, in effect, “My years of study of the Bible have led me to a view of God that is simply incompatible with this doctrine,” I can understand and even sympathize. We can then enter into a dialog in which we seek to come to a mutual understanding about the relationship between Paul’s teaching about God in [Romans 9](#) and the broader biblical perspective. The student may have to adjust his or her view in light of [Romans 9](#), or I may have to adjust my interpretation of [Romans 9](#) in light of the teaching of Scripture elsewhere.

But the student in that seminar was not reflecting that kind of objection. Rather, she was saying, in effect, “That doctrine just doesn’t fit my idea of what God must be like.” At that point a critical question must be asked: Where did her idea of God come from? She failed to cite biblical evidence, so I could only conclude that she was reflecting a picture of God drawn from her general culture and perhaps her own church tradition. But surely such ideas should not

be allowed to stand in judgment over Scripture. If our belief in the authority of the Bible means anything, it means that we must submit to what the Bible teaches and bring our own perceptions and ideas into line with Scripture.

(2) This leads to my second point. While I have some of the same problems and questions with this doctrine that most believers have, I also think that it ultimately fits well into the biblical picture of God. *Your God Is Too Small*, the title of the popular book by J. B. Phillips some years ago, is a criticism that might be rightly made to many Christians and many churches. Out of pride in ourselves and our achievements and a culturally influenced belief in ourselves as “masters of our fate,” we have a hard time giving God his due.

Yet the Bible presents God as the one who plants and uproots nations (e.g., [Isa. 40:12 – 31](#); Daniel), whose very word determines the fate of battles. He determines the outcome of every event in human history, from great to small. Particularly relevant to the issue we are considering is God’s sovereignty over even evil events. God, Scripture teaches, sent his Son to be crucified by sinful people ([Acts 2:23](#)); God determined that Judas would sinfully betray Jesus (e.g., [Luke 22:22](#)). Suffusing all of what Paul says in these verses about God’s sovereignty in election, and coming to the surface explicitly in [Romans 9:20 – 21](#), is this biblical view of a God who acts with absolute freedom toward his creatures.

Paul’s emphasis at this point receives a lot of criticism from certain scholars. J. C. O’Neill, for example, calls Paul’s argument here “thoroughly immoral.” We hear in those words the reaction of arrogant humanity, protesting against any encroachment on our “rights” from God or anyone else. The same reaction easily invades the church, rendering our worship less than what it should be because our picture of God is not as high as it should be. Perhaps we can turn what can seem to be a problem into a virtue by allowing Paul’s presentation of the sovereignty of God in election and perdition to stimulate in us a new appreciation for the greatness and incomprehensible purposes of God.