

## THE EPISTLES TO THE ROMANS

### ROMANS 9:1-11:36, VINDICATION OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

#### INTRODUCTION

##### A. Outline of Romans

1. Introduction (1:1-17)
2. The need for God's righteousness (1:18-3:20)
3. Justification: the position of righteousness from God (3:21-5:21)
4. Sanctification: from position to practice (6:1-8:39)
5. Vindication of God's Righteousness (9:1-11:36)
  - a. Election by God (9:1-18)
  - b. Justice of God (19-33)

##### B. Introductory notes on Romans 9

1. John Witmer, *Since God is the self-existent Being who is the Creator of everything that exists outside Himself, He is sovereign and can therefore use and dispose of His Creation as He wishes.*
2. C. E. B. Cranfield, *With striking emphasis and solemnity Paul declares his own sorrow at his fellow-Jews' unbelief and the strength of his desire for their conversion, thereby introducing the subject with which he will be concerned until the end of chapter 11.*
3. Warren Wiersbe, Paul had argued in Romans 8 that the believer is secure in Jesus Christ and that God's election would stand (Rom. 8:28–30). *But someone might ask, "What about the Jews? They were chosen by God, and yet now you tell us they are set aside and God is building His church. Did God fail to keep His promises to Israel?" In other words, the very character of God was at stake. If God was not faithful to the Jews, how do we know He will be faithful to the church?*

### ROMANS 9:19-33, JUSTICE OF GOD

##### A. God is just in dealing with mankind according to His sovereign will (19-21)

1. Paul proposes a rhetorical question concerning man's case against God's justice (19), ***You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?"***
  - a. It is in response to his declaration in verse 18, *So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.*
    - 1) Paul is addressing an imaginary objector, *You will say to me then.*
    - 2) Thomas Constable, *Is not the basis of judgment really God's will rather than human actions?*
    - 3) That is the premise of Romans 9:19-33.
  - b. Questions addressed by Paul concerning God's sovereignty and man's responsibility.
    - 1) How can God be just if He hardens the heart of one person and shows mercy to another not based on human effort?
    - 2) How can man resist God's sovereign will?
      - a) 2 Chronicles 20:6, *and said, "O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you.*
      - b) Job 9:12, *Behold, he snatches away; who can turn him back? Who will say to him, 'What are you doing?'*
      - c) Daniel 4:35, *all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"*
      - d) C. E. B. Cranfield, *If men's resistance is predetermined by God, it is not really resistance to His will at all, since this predetermination must be assumed to be the expression of His will. Such is the objection.*
      - e) Douglas Moo, *Embodied in these questions is the objection that God's sovereign act of hardening (v. 18b) jeopardizes the clear biblical teaching about the justice of God's judgment on people who resist him (see, in Romans itself, 1:19–23)...Paul is content to hold the truths of God's absolute sovereignty—in both election and in hardening—and of full human responsibility without reconciling them. We would do well to emulate his approach.*

2. Paul answers his question with a response and another question (20-21), ***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?" 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?***

a. What is man that he should argue with God?

- 1) There is a great gulf between Creator and created with creatures unable to understand some things that must be left to the Creator.
- 2) Warren Wiersbe, *God is wiser than we are and we are foolish to question His will or to resist it.*

b. Paul answers his question with a question comparing man to clay and God to a potter.

1) Scriptural references

- a) Isaiah 45:9, *"Woe to him who strives with him who formed him, a pot among earthen pots! Does the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' or 'Your work has no handles'?"*
- b) Isaiah 29:6, *You turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, "He did not make me"; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, "He has no understanding"?*
- c) Jeremiah 18:6, *"O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done? declares the LORD. Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.*

- 2) Warren Wiersbe, *...it is God who determines whether a man will be a Moses or a Pharaoh. Neither Moses, nor Pharaoh, nor anyone else, could choose his parents, his genetic structure, or his time and place of birth. We have to believe that these matters are in the hands of God.*
- 3) William Newell, *... men are not lost because they are hardened; they are hardened because they are lost; they are lost because they are sinners.*
- 4) John Witmer, *The sovereign Creator has the same authority over His creatures, especially in light of man's origin from dust (Gen. 2:7).*

c. Vessels are made for differing functions.

- 1) 2 Timothy 2:20, *Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable.*
- 2) C. E. B. Cranfield, *By thus setting man over against God Paul is certainly putting man in his place. But to assume that his intention is to assert the absolute right of an indeterminate divine will over the creature is to ignore the tenor of the argument of chapters 9 to 11, not to mention the evidence of the rest of the epistle. ...Paul does not mean a capricious demon but the God revealed in Jesus Christ, the God whose will is wholly determined and has once for all been revealed as mercy.*

d. For consideration

- 1) Warren Wiersbe, *Pharaoh had great opportunities to learn about the true God and trust Him, and yet he chose to rebel. Paul did not develop this aspect of truth because his theme was divine sovereignty, not human responsibility. The one does not deny the other, even though our finite minds may not fully grasp them both.*
- 2) Grant Osborne, *God created humanity with full knowledge of the fall and so provided a Savior who would die for the sins of all humankind...What we have yet to decide is the relationship between these three factors—God's foreknowledge, the decisions of individuals, and God's predetermined decision. We will continue to work at this. Did God create some sinners in order to punish them (like Pharaoh)? We will see, and draw conclusions at the end of chapter 10.*

B. Paul declares God just in dealing with mankind based on His being longsuffering and merciful (22-29)

1. Paul responds with a conditional clause which describes God's purpose in His dealings with vessels of wrath and mercy (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,***

a. Paul offers the idea that God chooses to demonstrate His wrath and power in the world.

- 1) He uses a conditional clause which starts with an *if clause* but the *then clause* is not provided.
  - a) It is probably an implied causal clause emphasizing God's sovereign choice.
  - b) I consider verse 23 the key which shows God acting upon His purpose of choosing vessels of mercy for glory.

- 2) He is making a statement he believes to be true, connecting verses 22-24 to verse 21.
  - a) The world is not just about the creatures who inhabit the earth but about God the Creator of the earth.
  - b) God's will is that we know of His power which will be brought against sinners, Romans 9:17, *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."*
  
- 3) *Desiring*
  - a) It can mean to *purpose, to be ready, to resolve.*
  - b) God's desire is not to be wrathful but He is resolved to demonstrate His wrath.
  - c) John Witmer, *Those who oppose Him and refuse to turn to Him (Matt. 23:37) are then "prepared" by Him for condemnation...Some are prepared by God for eternal judgment not because He delights to do so, but because of their sin. In view of their sin, which makes them "ripe" for destruction, God is willing to exhibit His wrath, and He will do so at the proper time.*
  
- b. His means is through patient endurance toward vessels of wrath prepared for destruction.
  - 1) *endured with much patience.*
    - a) *Endured means put up with.*
    - b) God has put up with man's sin with *much patience.*
    - c) His patience is evident as He allows sinners time to repent and believe.
      - 1] Romans 2:3-4, *Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?*
      - 2] 2 Peter 3:9, *The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*
  
  - 2) *Vessels of wrath*
    - a) Some say God causes individuals to be *prepared* for destruction.
      - 1] Proverbs 16:4, *The LORD has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble.*
      - 2] 1 Peter 2:8, *and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.*
  
    - b) Others believe the better understanding does not demand that God is the cause.
      - 1] The word for *prepared* is different than the word for *prepared* in verse 23 which will be examined.
        - a] It is a the middle/passive participle which is reflexive action. It may be translated *prepared himself for destruction.*
        - b] C. E. B. Cranfield, *While it is, of course, true that in the NT a passive often contains the thought of a divine action, it seems probable that Paul wishes here to direct attention simply to the vessels' condition of readiness, ripeness, for destruction and not to any act, whether of God or of themselves, by which the condition was brought about.*
  
      - 2] Warren Wiersbe, *God prepares men for glory (Rom. 9:23), but sinners prepare themselves for judgment. In Moses and Israel God revealed the riches of His mercy; in Pharaoh and Egypt He revealed His power and wrath. Since neither deserved any mercy, God cannot be charged with injustice.*
  
    - c) *Comments*
      - 1] Douglas Moo, *We must remember at this point that God, in strict justice, could have executed his sentence of condemnation on the entire human race immediately after the Fall. It is only because of God's great patience that he has waited to bring down his wrath on a rebellious world so that he can finish his wise and loving plan.*
      - 2] Grant Osborne, *Wrath and mercy are interdependent, for the outpouring of wrath is often the vehicle of divine mercy in bringing his people to their knees so that they return to him.*

2. God calls people to be vessels of mercy not only from the Jews but from the Gentiles, as well (23-24), *in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?*
  - a. *in order that*
    - 1) Verse 23 begins with the statement of God’s primary purpose, to reveal God’s glory.
    - 2) It ties verses 25-29 together as they give illustration of God’s pursuit of His glory.
  - b. God’s glory is revealed.
    - 1) *Vessels of mercy*
      - a) They are identified by Paul as those who have placed trust in Christ alone.
      - b) They are trophies of God’s mercy/
      - b) It includes Jews as well as Gentiles.
        - 1] Romans 1:16, *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*
        - 2] Romans 3:29, *Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also,*
    - 2) *Prepared beforehand*
      - a) *Prepared* is not the same word as was used in verse 22.
      - b) This word is used only of God.
        - 1] It gives stronger emphasis to the thought that *vessels of destruction* were not solely chosen by God but were participants in their condition based on willful sin.
        - 2] Here, vessels of mercy were chosen by God to reveal His glory, not based on work but on God’s mercy.
        - 3] Romans 8:29, *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*
      - c) They are destined to display God’s glory.
        - 1] Romans 8:18, *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*
        - 2] Romans 8:30, *And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*
        - 3] Ephesians 2:10, *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*
        - 4] 1 Corinthians 2:9, *But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”—*
    - 3) Concerning the relationship of the subordinate purposes in verse 22 to the primary purpose of verses 23-24,
      - a) Douglas Moo, *As I have argued above, this verse expresses a third, and climactic, purpose of God’s patient endurance of the vessels of wrath. God has withheld the final judgment that could rightfully fall on his rebellious creatures at any time not only because he wanted to display more gloriously his wrath and power (v. 22a) but also, and especially, because he wanted to “make known his glorious riches to vessels on whom his mercy rests, 100 vessels whom God has prepared beforehand for glory.” God’s ultimate purpose in his decree of hardening is mercy.*
      - b) Grant Osborne, Three purposes are made clear in these verses: (1) God intends “to show his wrath, his righteous anger toward sinful, unbelieving humanity...(2) God also wants to “make his power known”...(3) The first two purposes point to this third one, which culminates the list and constitutes the primary goal, “to make he riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy.”

3. God has chosen to save some Gentiles and to preserve a Jewish remnant according to Old Testament prophecy (25-29)
  - a. Paul alludes to Hosea (25-26), *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.’ ” “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.’ ”*
    - 1) Biblical references
      - a) 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.’ ”*
        - 1] John Witmer, *God directed Hosea to give his children symbolic names—one son Lo-Ammi (not my people) and the daughter Lo-Ruhamah (not ... loved). These represented God’s abandonment of the Northern Kingdom of Israel to the Assyrian Captivity and Exile (Hosea 1:2–9).*
        - 2] Paul was applying these verses to the Gentiles as those called by God along with believing Jews.
      - b) 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.”*
        - 1] Gentiles who were not the people of God will be called *My people* by God.
        - 2] *In the very place* probably refers to Babylon where the nation of Israel was exiled.
        - 3] Believing Jews and Gentiles will be called *sons of the living God*, Romans 8:14, *For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*
    - 2) These verses affirm Paul’s statement in verse 24 that *vessels of mercy* include those called out by God from Gentiles as well as Jews.
      - a) Thomas Constable, *Paul saw an analogy between God’s present calling of Gentiles and His future calling of Israel...Gentiles were not a distinct people as were the Jews but constituted the mass of humanity. Nevertheless by God’s grace believing Gentiles became members of the new people of God, the church.*
      - b) Grant Osborne, *The two citations here are part of God’s promise in Hosea to the faithful remnant that he would indeed remove his judgment on his people and reinstate them as his people and the objects of his love.*
  - b. Paul quotes Isaiah (27-29), *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, for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay.” And as Isaiah predicted, “If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring, we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah.”*
    - 1) Biblical references
      - a) 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. For the Lord GOD of hosts will make a full end, as decreed, in the midst of all the earth.*
        - 1] The context of Isaiah 10 was the judgment by God on the nation through Sennacherib.
          - a] He was an Assyrian king who reigned 704-681 B. C.
          - b] He invaded Judah during Hezekiah’s reign and moved the Assyria capital to Nineveh.
        - 2] Paul quotes Isaiah 10 as a reminder that God always includes a Jewish remnant when judgment is brought on Israel.
          - a] John Witmer, *Those promises (judgment) were fulfilled in the Captivity and Exile of both Israel and Judah and in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and will also be fulfilled in the national end-time deliverance of Israel (Rom. 11:26–27).*
          - b] C. E. B Cranfield, *The burden of the passage quoted is that only a remnant will be saved.*
          - c] Douglas Moo, *...his purpose is to establish the truth that God is calling his “vessels of mercy” from among Jews...the OT itself shows that God chooses only some from among national Israel to be his true spiritual Israel.*

b) 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.*

1] God will leave a remnant from Israel's destruction based on His mercy.

2] That is unlike Sodom and Gomorrah which was annihilated.

3] The key word in verse 29 is *offspring* which is the word for *seed*. It links verse 29 with Romans 9:7-9, *and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. For this is what the promise said: "About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son."*

2) God's glory is revealed in His mercy and judgment.

a) Grant Osborne, *The nation of Isaiah's day is being reenacted in the Israel of Paul's day. The majority of the Jewish people have turned from God, and he has thus rejected them, but there is still hope, for God has once more saved for himself a remnant through whom his covenant promises are still in effect. The message for us is that God is always faithful to his promises...As we experience God's hand at work in our lives, it will not always be pleasant, but it will always be fair and best for us.*

b) Warren Wiersbe, *So far, Paul had defended the character of God by showing His faithfulness, His righteousness, and His justice. Israel's rejection had not canceled God's election; it had only proved that He was true to His character and His purposes.*

C. God was just in only choosing a remnant from Israel since most pursued righteousness by works but stumbled over God's grace provided by the Messiah (30-33)

1. Paul asks another question concerning God's dealing with Israel (30-31), ***What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law.***

a. Why did Gentiles achieve righteousness without pursuing it but Jews did not achieve it by pursuing the law?

1) Romans 10:20, *Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, "I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me."*

2) The difference is faith is superior to the law.

a) The purpose of the law is to show the need for faith.

b) Romans 3:21-22, *But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:*

c) Galatians 2:16, *yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.*

d) Philippians 3:9, *and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—*

e) Romans 11:7, *What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened,*

b. Comments

1) Thomas Constable, *Israel as a whole hoped to gain justification by doing good works, but believing Gentiles obtained the prize by believing the gospel.*

2) Everett Harrison, *Hardly a passage in the New Testament is stronger than this one in its exposure of the futility of works as a means of justification.*

3) John Stott, *Thus the acceptance of the Gentiles is attributed to the sovereign mercy of God, and the rejection of Israel to their own rebellion.*

2. Paul asks and answers the question (32-33), *Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, as it is written, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."*
  - a. The reason Jews did not attain righteousness was because they pursued it by works and not by faith.
    - 1) Douglas Moo, *Israel has failed to achieve a law that could confer righteousness because she could not produce those works that would be necessary to meet the law's demands and so secure the righteousness it promises.*
    - 2) Warren Wiersbe, *We need to decide what kind of righteousness we are seeking, whether we are depending on good works and character, or trusting Christ alone for salvation.*
  - b. Paul uses Old Testament passages to show that the Jews lacked faith in Christ.
    - 1) Isaiah 8:14, *And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.*
    - 2) Isaiah 28:16, *therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: 'Whoever believes will not be in haste.'*
    - 3) Psalm 118:22, *The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.*
    - 4) Grant Osborne, *For those Jews who have rejected their Messiah and refused to believe, he has become "a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall."*

<b>CONCLUSION</b>
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Douglas Moo, *This paragraph bears an importance out of proportion to its length. It announces the themes that Paul will develop in the rest of chap. 10, and its interpretation will therefore set the direction for our understanding of many of the debated points in that chapter—especially the nature of Israel's failure with respect to the law.*

Warren Wiersbe, *No one will deny that there are many mysteries connected with divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Nowhere does God ask us to choose between these two truths, because they both come from God and are a part of God's plan. They do not compete; they cooperate. The fact that we cannot fully understand how they work together does not deny the fact that they do. When a man asked Charles Spurgeon how he reconciled divine sovereignty and human responsibility, Spurgeon replied: "I never try to reconcile friends!"*