

## Romans 9:14-29 (ESV)

What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!

<sup>15</sup> For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." <sup>16</sup> So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.

<sup>17</sup> 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."

<sup>18</sup> So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

<sup>19</sup> You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?"

<sup>20</sup> 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?"

<sup>21</sup> 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?

<sup>22</sup> 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, <sup>23</sup> in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— <sup>24</sup> even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?

<sup>25</sup> 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.'"

<sup>26</sup> "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.'"

<sup>27</sup> 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, <sup>28</sup> for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay."

<sup>29</sup> And as Isaiah predicted, "If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring, we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah."

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This is our second week in Romans 9. Last week we focused on the Sovereignty of God in Salvation. This week we'll see the Justice of God in Judgment. (not an easy passage)

Romans chapters 9-11 are interpreted very differently, depending on your theological tradition.

It's certainly not my desire to set up a straw man argument to belittle anyone who is not Reformed.

My goal in preaching through these chapters is to sharpen your amazement of God's grace; that your view of God would grander than it was before.

I'm not interested in winning theological debates; but I do want to heighten your awareness of:

- the wonder of your salvation;
- the glory of the gospel;
- and the majesty of our God.

I want us to marvel at being chosen by God and being found in His favor, even though we didn't earn it, we don't deserve it, we didn't contribute to it or do anything at all to be found worthy of it.

We love Him because He first loved us. The Gospel is not just good news, it's glorious news.

Let's begin with what pretty much all Bible believing evangelicals agree on.

Apart from God's grace we are **lost**; not just misplaced or misunderstood, but lost. What does that mean?

It means that **spiritually** speaking, we are **dead** to the things of God. Not sick or diseased, but dead.

Romans 8 says that without the Spirit, we are **hostile** to God. Not estranged or on bad terms, but hostile.

If you really want to spell it out, apart from God's grace, we are hypocritical, deceitful, self-righteous idol worshipers.

In other words apart from Christ, we are **reprobates, totally depraved sinners who are hell bound and well deserving of eternal damnation.**

Believe it or not, that's our common ground as evangelicals. As we like to say, anybody who believes in total depravity can't be all bad.

The debatable issues could be listed in questions like this:

- **If you're a believer, did you come to faith because you choose Jesus, or because Jesus choose you?**
- **Do unbelievers face damnation because they didn't choose Jesus; or because Jesus didn't choose them?**
- **Does God's sovereignty mean that He is free to do anything He want to in my life, *as long as I give Him my permission?* Or does God's will trump my will?**

As you may know, the Reformed tradition leans heavily on the Sovereignty of God. Other traditions lean heavily on the responsibility of man.

One side says that God must regenerate your heart before you can respond to the Gospel.

The other side says that there is enough common grace that anyone can respond, but not all do.

Through the centuries many God fearing, Bible believing, born again people have wrestled with those questions.

Our goal is not to marginalize one side, but to draw deeper from the well of salvation so that we conclude as Paul did with doxology and amazement.

**Romans 11:33 (NIV)**

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!

You may not have thought much at all about the Sovereignty of God in election or about the justice of God in judgment.

That's not the point of this message. The real issue here is this: **does your theology lead you to doxology?**

Do you view the Gospel as something **you've** got to do in order to be right with God (and avoid going to hell)?

Or is the Gospel something God has done for you because His love for you is beyond measure and beyond human understanding?

**Is your view of God high, exalted and majestic? Or is the Gospel more like a business transaction; "if I do my part, God will do His"?**

Far too many professing Christians without realizing it, have a very low view of God.

This has nothing to do on whether they go to a traditional church like this one, or a high powered contemporary church.

They will praise the name of the Lord, and then go off and live anyway they please. It's not just sin that causes people to live that way, its bad theology.

If you limit God to do only what you give him permission to do, then He's no longer sovereign. At best He is a co-sovereign with you.

If you put the "self" on par with the only true God, you can't really worship the LORD without exalting yourself.

The God of the Bible will not share His glory with anyone. True worshippers must worship in Spirit and in truth.

But to come to that point, we cannot avoid the daunting issue of not only God's sovereign election; but also of the Justice of God's Judgment.

**Is God just in judging sinners to eternal damnation?**

If that question is offensive to you, then it's going to be difficult for you to get beyond a superficial, sentimental understanding of the Christian faith.

The subtitle to the message is taken from verse 22, it kind of sounds like the title of a Jonathan Edwards sermon:

THE OBJECTS OF GOD'S WRATH PREPARED  
FOR DESTRUCTION.

I thought about putting that on our outside marquee to help attract visitors.

The idea that God would create a person knowing full well that they would be damned is not an easy concept to deal with.

So we'll look at the JUSTICE of God, the JUDGMENT of God and then the OBJECTS OF WRATH.

The Justice of God must be understood in light of:

**1. His Character**

## **2. His Heart**

## **3. His Righteousness**

The character or nature of God is the essence of who He is. Those who reject the God of the Bible saying that He's cruel or capricious don't know His character.

When Isaiah saw the seraphs hovering around the throne of grace, those heavenly beings could only repeat one word over and over again, "holy, holy, holy." That describes His character.

The Greeks invented deities that were exalted men. Eastern religions blend the creation with the creator. New age philosophies make god to be in our image.

The God of the Bible is transcendent. He is above and over creation, yet not absent from it.

His character is completely pure, untainted holiness. The names and metaphors that we use to describe God only begin to describe His perfections:

He is Elohim, Yahweh, Adonia. He is the Lord of Lords and King of Kings. He is the Light, the Most High, and the exalted One.

He is all knowing, all powerful, and everywhere present. But his power and his knowledge alone can't describe His character.

You must look at His heart. He is loving, compassionate, and exceedingly kind.

He is tender hearted with the weak and moved by the broken and contrite heart of His people. He is attentive toward the cause of the disadvantaged, the widow and the orphan.

Yet He is grieved by the sinfulness of man. It pains Him to see injustice, oppression and cruelty. **The Justice of God and the heart of God are never absent from each other.**

The Justice of God is motivated and controlled by His righteousness.

The Lord isn't limited by our standard of right and wrong, but by His standard of rightness. He doesn't do what is fair but what is right.

The righteousness of God is not just outward conformity to a standard, but an inward love of virtue and justice.

That's why Jesus is the personification of Justice. You look at Christ and you see the character, heart and righteousness of God.

### **Colossians 1:15-17 (ESV)**

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup> And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Justice is what holds any society together. Where there is justice, there must be **Judgment**. There are three things to say about God's judgment.

1. It is necessary
2. It is right
3. It is final

God must judge the wicked. His judgments are always just. And they are the final word.

In the Scriptures we read about God's judgment:

- on Adam and Eve,

- on the world during the time of Noah,
- and on the nation of Israel.
- God judged David for His sin with Bathsheba.
- He judged King Saul for his pride.
- He judge Uzzah for his carelessness with the ark of the covenant.
- And God's judgment came upon Ananias and Sapphira in the book of Acts for lying to the Holy Spirit.

Paul mentions here the judgment of God that came upon Sodom and Gomorrah for their wickedness.

Some would wonder why God's judgment has not come upon our nation. John MacArthur:

When abortion, sexual sin, vulgar entertainment, corruption, and anti-Christian hostility come to dominate a nation, you have to wonder when God's judgment will start. God sometimes judges a nation by abandoning it to its sins, letting sin run its deadly course. Sin isn't merely something He punishes-sometimes sin *is* the punishment.

Last week we read several passages relating to God's character especially as it relates to His judgments.

He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, and He is patient with us, not wanting anyone to perish, but come to repentance.

The patience of God is great, but it has its limits. Are you testing His patience? Are you presuming upon the grace and mercy of God instead of allowing that grace and mercy to lead you to repentance?



The Judgment of God is necessary; it is right; and it is final. There are no second chances. There are no loopholes or appeals.

There is appointed for every man once to die and then comes judgment. You do not want to face that judgment still in your sin.

For if you do, you will be an **Object of God's Wrath**.

1. Pharaoh & his heart

2. The Potter and the Clay

3. Israel & Christ

### **Romans 9:17-18 (ESV)**

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."<sup>18</sup> So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

When you read the story of the Exodus, Pharaoh comes across as either extremely stubborn or extremely stupid. It wouldn't take me ten plagues to figure out that the Hebrews had to go.

Did God harden his heart so that he couldn't let the Hebrews leave Egypt? Or did God harden Pharaoh's heart in the sense that his sinful nature did what comes naturally?

In the previous chapter Paul says that our sinful nature is hostile to God. It doesn't want to obey God, it doesn't want to submit to God's rule, because by nature it can't.

Pharaoh's heart was hard because that's the nature of anyone who doesn't submit to their Creator and Redeemer.

Is God to blame for that? No, as moral beings we are responsible for the condition of our hearts. But then why does God still blame us if that's our nature?

**Q. But doesn't God do us an injustice by requiring in his law what we are unable to do?**

No, God created humans with the ability to keep the law. They, however, tempted by the devil, in reckless disobedience, robbed themselves and all their descendants of these gifts.

**Romans 9:19-22 (ESV)**

You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?”<sup>20</sup> 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?”<sup>21</sup> 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?<sup>22</sup> 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,

This is where our faith simply has to accept that the Lord is God and we are not.

He raised Pharaoh up to bring glory to His name. He has raised up even the most harden God hating atheist for the same reason.

God is the potter, we are the clay. God will be glorified in your life, one way or another; either by your salvation or by God’s judgment in wrath.

We conclude with Israel and Christ. God was glorified in calling Israel to be His chosen people. He was also glorified in judging Israel.

**Jesus is Israel personified.** Everything He did glorified God. His perfect obedience was the point of God calling a new people out of this sinful world to bring glory to Himself.

Jesus also glorified God when He became an object of his wrath on the cross. He who knew no sin became sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God.

What Adam & Eve failed to do, what Israel could not do, Jesus did in His life and on the cross. Through our faith in Him, we become the new creation that brings glory to God.

Close: A pastor tells the story of his little daughter who gave him the scare of his life.

He and his wife were loading up their car when their three year old thought it would be fun to run away from them in the parking lot.

He called out to her to stop, but she thought it was a game, so she just ran faster.

He went after her with all of his might and grabbed her just before she reached the busy street. He saved her.

His calling out to her was like our preaching the Gospel. Stop. Repent. Don't go any further or you're going to die!

Salvation comes when God grabs us and pulls us to Himself; safe and in His arms. Why does He save some and not others? That's not for us to know.

We are here to point out to anyone who will take heed, that Jesus is the way to be saved.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, your just judgment and wrath comes where

- Your glory is not honored.
- Your holiness is not revered.
- Your greatness is not admired.
- Your power of is not praised.
- Your truth is not sought.
- Your wisdom is not esteemed.
- Your beauty is not treasured.
- Your goodness is not savored.

- Your faithfulness is not trusted.
- Your promises are not relied upon.
- Your commandments are not obeyed.
- Your justice is not respected.
- Your wrath is not feared.
- Your grace is not cherished.
- Your presence is not prized & loved.