

Study in Romans

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God's Sovereign Plan of Wrath and Mercy
Romans 9:19-29

In verse 18, Paul ends the prior section with this punch, "God has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires." This doctrine that God has the right to choose whom He wants to be saved is offensive and Paul knows it. His first century audience was no different from us today and each generation of readers in between. This issue of God's sovereignty in electing some for mercy and the rest for wrath has been and continues to be hotly debated right down to our time. But the Holy Spirit through Paul's writing here in this chapter could not be any clearer on the matter: God is sovereign and has had to undertake to save some otherwise no one would come to Him through the redemptive work of Christ (3: 9-18).

This section starts with yet another question that Paul anticipates from his audience to set the tone for addressing the inevitable question of why God chooses some for mercy and others for wrath. The tone of Paul's response indicates that he is not rebuking honest questions asked in humility, but prideful questions asked as a defense for sin, shifting the blame from the sinner to God. After he reminds the questioner of his place before God, Paul gives us some insight into why God has allowed sin into the world. It is not comprehensive, but does provide some important insight into what God's purpose in election is.

1. Paul's rebuke to human pride (vv. 19-21)
 - a. The question: Why am I blamed for my sin if this is God's will?
 - b. The answer: We are the clay, God is the Potter (cf., Is. 29:16, 45:9, 64:6-8; Jer. 18:3-16)
2. Paul's insight to God's purpose for sin, wrath and mercy (vv. 22-23)
 - a. To make His wrath known
 - b. To make His power known
 - c. To make His mercy known
3. God does the unexpected by calling some from both the Jews and the Gentiles to receive His mercy (vv. 24-29)