

## Fallen Clay to Vessels of Mercy

### *Romans 9:22-29*

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Welcome: Notes, Fill the Trailer, Perfectly Loved Banquet.

Some people see Romans 1-8 as Gospel, Romans 12-16 as application and 9-11 as a difficult puzzle... its all gospel goodness!

Romans 9-11 teaches us about:

- God's Sovereign **freedom**
- God's **mercy** and **justice**
- God's **surprising** and **saving** grace

9-11 should be read and studied as a whole. Not individual chapters.

- If you only read chapter 9 without 10-11 you will be tempted to think everything is up to God and you have nothing to do. Emphasis God's Sovereignty
- Only read 10 then you'll think everything is up to you. Emphasis man's belief and evangelism. Our accountability.
- 11 – puts these 2 together – Sovereignty and Responsibility –
- Ends with a doxology
  - **11:33** – oh the depth, how unsearchable and untraceable your ways... This is hard stuff! Even for Paul. You think you got this thing figured out... awesome – smarter than Paul... look at what Peter says: Hard to grasp even for Peter **2 Pet. 3:15-16**
  - If studying Romans 9-11 doesn't lead you to worship and awe and evangelism then we missed the mark... we don't understand them.

**Main Idea: The glory of Christ is on full display, to God's elect, by choosing to take us from fallen clay to vessels of mercy according to His sovereign will. This produces a longing in our hearts for people to know the glory of God in Christ.**

We're about to talk about words like "election" and "sovereignty" and "choice" and "calling." However, before we even get there, I want you to see the heart behind it, a heart that says, I want, I long for people to know the glory of God in Christ. Book-ended in this passage is Paul's deep longing for those that need Jesus. Romans 9:1 and 10:1. That is what this chapter is about. We're going to see how this passage provokes in us a death-defying passion to make the gospel known to the ends of the earth. This passage is not an argument for theologians to have. It is an affection for Christians to take to the heart. The goal is for us, not to find ourselves baffled by a theological debate, but to find ourselves in awe of a good and sovereign God and burdened with a passion for those who don't know Christ. So, that's where this is going...

Read **Romans 9:19-21**

#### **1. All people start with the same status: fallen clay.**

I love how Paul brings this up... you think you have issues with all this... so did people in Paul's day.

Question – “how can god find fault... for no one can resist his will. ?”  
Then strong rebuke.

V. 19-21 – Objection (either a real one or a proposed one by Paul) – issue of *fairness*. His answer reveals more about Paul’s stance on God’s Sovereignty. He double downs on God’s sovereign will.

OT Illustration of a potter and his clay. Comes from Jer 18. The potter (molder) gets to decide how the clay is used and how it will be for use.

Same Lump of clay = we miss this when we ask questions like... how is that fair? How can God be loving and make something for dishonorable use? We were taken out of the same lump of clay! FALLEN CLAY.

Paul is setting up the next section with reminding the objectors that everyone comes from the same lump of fallen clay.

Jesus made this argument in describing how the kingdom of God is like in a parable in Matt 20: **parable of the labors** = All deserved a day wage... was God not fair? All were in agreement. God is always fair... he can be more giving to some according to his will.

Paul says it like this, about what we all deserve: **Eph 2: Dead/Alive**  
The reason he is “just” in sinners wrath is because they are following their own will (Eph 2:1-3)  
HE intervened and enabled us to make a move toward God – alive!

We are FALLEN CLAY... WITH NO POWER TO SHAPE ANYTHING OF USE WITHOUT GOD’S SOVEREIGN POWER INTERVENING.

You do make a decision. You do have responsibility - but not until God makes you alive. He chose you!  
Spurgeon once said:

“I believe the doctrine of election, because I am quite sure that if God had not chosen me I should never have chosen him; and I am sure he chose me before I was born, or else he never would have chosen me afterwards; and he must have elected me for reasons unknown to me, for I never could find any reason in myself why he should have looked upon me with special love.”

Now with these truths in place... Paul is going to add an uncomfortable reality that when we take the doctrine of God’s Sovereignty to its final end, theologically, we are left with the question of what about the pieces of Fallen clay that stay fallen...

## **2. God’s glory is made perfect in his Justice and Mercy**

v. 22 – “What if God” – many times Paul will use “if/then” statements to give an example of something... here this isn’t the case. It may on the onset seem like a question... but it is more of an answer to a question than a question.

I think the answer is, no legitimate fault against God can be raised. No legitimate objection to God can be raised. So leave off the, “What,” - “If God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power”

has done all that in order with his purpose, “to make known the riches of his glory for the vessels of mercy which he prepared beforehand for glory,” then there is no unrighteousness with God.

And he’s not wrong to find fault. Because he has acted in his **purposefulness** for the display of the riches of his glory, for WHO? the vessels of mercy, which raises this crucial question. When you look at **Romans 9:18**, “He hardens whom he wills and he has mercy on whom he wills.” It looks like they’re coordinate and parallel, hardening and mercy. Are they? They’re not. Mercy is ultimate, and hardening serves it.

“in order that” - “Mercy is appreciated against the backdrop of wrath.” Piper.

v. 22 in contrast to 23 is this slight voice difference which I think makes a big difference in how we understand God’s passing over some and giving mercy to others.

Verb “prepared” is mentioned twice. Once in relation to vessels of wrath one relation to vessels of mercy.

*Vessels of wrath* – passive with no subject – what is the subject? God? No... he’s not the active agent in putting sin into the life of the vessels of wrath. Rather – the person who is already fallen! He passes over or withholds mercy to those. In other words – he doesn’t do anything... he doesn’t intervene

*Vessels of mercy* – active with God as the subject. He is the active agent. Everyone gets what they deserve UNLESS God intervenes and gives mercy to those whom he chooses.

**Why – so that God’s glory can be made perfect in his justice and mercy. Riches = unmeasurable... unlimited.**

### **3. God’s saving grace is surprising**

v. 25 – Hosea = The gentiles (who were once not a people are now a people).

“sons of the living God”

Hosea to the northern kingdom of Israel – Paul uses it to show that the Gentiles have been grafted in according to God’s sovereign plan.

v. 27 – Isaiah – Remnant of Israel remain – Israel within Israel – Is. 6

v. 29 – Isaiah – Lord of Hosts – gave us an offspring (singular) – Jesus – without we are all doomed.

We were all headed for Sodom and Gomorrah – but God gave us His Son whose work on the cross perfectly satisfied the wrath/justice of God and showed His mercy to those whom he wills. Not just for the chosen people of Israel... but for Gentiles too. Surprising Grace to us – His perfect plan for God!

### **Our Response to Romans 9:19-29**

1. Let us share in Paul’s **burden** – whatever happens in response to this sermon I hope you see Paul’s concern for lost people. **Rom 10:1** – do we grieve over the lost?... those who are separated from Christ. When was the last time you wept over someone who didn’t know Jesus? May God give us a love for those that are lost. We are “vessels” – the usefulness analogy... you were made into a vessel of mercy to share mercy!

2. Let us never doubt God's **faithfulness** – whole text is about God's faithfulness. 9:6...failed? nope... Is 55 –Word doesn't return void... He's got you! You are his people/child! You don't have to fear... he's got you.
3. Let us be a people who embrace the **mystery** – sov. And resp – a lot of people think they have this figured out... me – I prefer a place of mystery. God is totally sov. He is gracious in it. And we are completely accountable... God is Sov and we are resp. I don't feel the need to try and put that together... Jesus was fully God and Fully man... I don't know how to explain that. The trinity – I trust in it.
4. Let us rest in God's **Sovereignty** as we live a life of **faith**
5. Let us be a people who bow down in **worship** – this is where all of this is headed. **11:36**.  
So, lets throw away all of our earthly toys that entertain us and let us behold the one who truly satisfies us. Jesus! **JESUS IS BETTER!** The only one worthy of our devotion and praise. What is the response of Paul... our response to these things, as hard as it is to comprehend...– Worship!
6. Let us never get over the **wonder** of God's saving mercy and grace – this whole chapter should lead us into an awe of his lovingkindness to give us mercy when we didn't deserve it. So let us have gratitude. *ARE YOU A BELIEVER IN JESUS TODAY? ONLY BY HIS LOVINGKINDESS. ARE YOU HERE AND UNSURE OF YOUR STATUS WITH GOD? HIS LOVINGKINDNESS THAT YOU ARE HERE LISTNEING TO THIS GOSPEL TRUTH!*

Lord lead us to sing the words of Robery Murry

Chosen not for good in me,  
Waked from coming wrath to flee,  
Hidden in the Savior's side,  
By the Spirit sanctified—  
Teach me, Lord, on earth to show  
By my love, how much I owe.