

GRAPPLING WITH GOD'S CHOICE

Romans 9.6-33

When we come to certain truths of Scripture, we have to grapple with realizations about God's plan and purpose for our lives. This is especially true when we come to this section of Romans. In chapters 9, 10 and 11, we come face to face with the sovereignty and purpose of God in election and predestination. It is indeed difficult to fully understand, but when we see God's plan, revealed in Israel, we cannot avoid grappling with this important subject.

“It is not as though God's word had failed.”

Paul has just described his heartbreak over the lost condition of Israel. Now he begins to describe the reasons why they are in the condition of being set aside by God. He does so by answering three questions with which we all grapple. These three questions pertain to the nature, character, and attributes of God.

Did God lie to us?

“It is not as though God's word had failed.” Romans 8.6a

“For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, ‘It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.’ In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring. For this was how the promise was stated: ‘At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son.’” Romans 6.b-9

“Not only that, but Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad – in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls – she was told, ‘The older will serve the younger.’ Just as it is written: ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.’” Romans 9.10-13

“What then shall we say? Is God unjust?”

“What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.’” Romans 9.14-15

“For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: ‘I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.’ Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.” Romans 9.17-18

Is God unfair?

“One of you will say to me: ‘Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?’” Romans 9.19

“But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? 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 –” Romans 9.20-23

“The one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”

“What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works.” Romans 9.30-32a

“They stumbled over the ‘stumbling stone.’ As it is written: See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” Romans 9.32b-33