

Romans 9.10-26 Election of Israel, Justice in Election, Sovereignty,
Patience & Glory of God 135-140
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[Romans 9.10-14, Malachi 1.1-3 God's Election of Israel 135]

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Obviously, in the major division of Vindicating God Righteousness, 9 through 11, the focus is God's Past Sovereign Election of Israel. So it is the doctrine of Election and I think the idea of sovereignty runs through the whole passage, so I call it Sovereign Election. This is introduced in the first 5 verses with Paul sorrowful that many of his fellow Jews do not have the salvation that he has described in chapters 1-8.

He reflects on their privileges as the people of God and nowhere does he indicate that they have lost that privilege of being His people. I think they still have it but they are not enjoying the benefits of that privilege because they have rejected Messiah. But it's not as if the word of God has failed, in fact that's the issue that he is going to deal with. So in verses 6-13 he is going to vindicate God's word and he goes all the way back to the nation of Israel in Abraham, Isaac and Ishmael.

But the bottom line is that he begins here distinguishing even within the nation of Israel. He is saying that not all of Israel is really *true* Israel. So we can diagram this as all of Israel represented in the dark blue as ethnic, national Israel, all the descendants of Abraham.



But there is a *true* Israel who are the *true children of God or children of promise*. That is the emphasis of 9.6-9. He is distinguishing here his 1st Century 'brethren' and sees that God has made a distinction. There are some in the Nation who have trusted in the Messiah: the disciples, the early believers that were primarily Jewish, himself and others that have trusted in Christ after the early ones.

And he is *not* talking about the church or gentiles—he doesn't mention them until verse 24 where he will focus on them to explain and to reiterate what God is doing in what we call the church age. But he is dealing throughout with the nation of Israel.

In previous lessons we have already started a list of the aspects of God's election of Israel.

Romans 9.10 And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; 11 for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, 12 it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER."

'God's purpose according to His choice would stand': In the will or broader purpose of God He made sovereign *choices*. In Romans 9 we have a different category from those relating to us in our time: Israel being chosen. There are perhaps 40-50 verses relating to Israel being chosen and in many of them we have the Hebrew word 'bakhár' that is the equivalent to the Greek word we have in the NT.

Israel Chosen

1. Source - Deuteronomy 7.6 "*For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. 7 "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8 but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*

The Lord their God had chosen Abraham to create a nation. So the source is God Himself. His choice was not based on numbers, but love.

2. Intent - Psalm 135.4 *For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His own possession.*

Synonymous parallelism of Hebrew poetry: Jacob = Israel. I think it is corporate. The intent: God desired to work through and keep as His own a particular people, one that would be different from all the other nations.

3. Separation - *Deuteronomy 14.2* “For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.”

In the context there is the idea of *separating*, a distinction: a holy people to the Lord. The Lord has chosen them: *bakhár* again.

4. Discipline - *Amos 3.2* “You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”

Not only a separate, distinct people, but because of that they have a *responsibility* and *accountability* before God. And Amos, writing before the end of their history, before they go into captivity, God announces that He will punish—*discipline*— them. Amos is implying the idolatry and sin of the nation in that time frame.

5. Security - *Isaiah 44.1* “But now listen, O Jacob, My servant, And Israel, whom I have chosen: 2 Thus says the LORD who made you And formed you from the womb, who will help you, ‘Do not fear, O Jacob My servant: And you Jeshurun whom I have chosen.”

But in the midst of their idolatry, God assures them that they have security. This anticipates not only the Babylonian Captivity, but eventually would look forward to the 1st Century where they would be disciplined once again. 70 AD was a national destruction, but there were individuals who had believed in Messiah.

6. Purpose - *Isaiah 43.7* *Everyone who is called by My name, And whom I have created for My glory, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made.*”

7. Corporateness - *1 Kings 3.8* “Your servant is in the midst of Your people which You have chosen, a great people who are too many to be numbered or counted.”

A great people...

8. Not individual salvation - *Romans 9*

He has chosen a people corporately, but in chapter 9 he is making a distinction within the chosen group. The one that he is focusing on are the ones He has set aside, and he is going to show that they are responsible for that, beginning in 9.30, because they

rejected their Messiah. So, he is talking about Israel corporately, but he is making a distinction between Israel nationally-ethnically and *true* Israel that would involve individuals that had trusted in Christ, including himself, in the discussion later on.

So, these several representative passages in different categories speak of Israel in terms of God’s choosing. And the Principles of God’s Election tell us, first of all, that it is not based solely on physical natural descent (9.6-9), and now from 9.11, that it is part of His sovereign *purposes* for the nation of Israel and he specifies that it is *not because of works*.

God’s Election - Romans 9

1. Not based solely on physical natural descent (6-9)
2. Is part of His sovereign purposes (11)
3. Is not dependent on man’s works (11)

9.11 for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, ...not because of works but because of Him who calls,

So it wasn’t based on these individuals, nor on works, but on Him who calls. And the issue is: how many of these Principles are applicable to church age individuals? In Romans 9, he is not dealing with that. But I would say there are other passages elsewhere that would indicate, maybe #2 and #3 would be applicable to individuals in the church age as well, not dependent on works but God’s sovereign choice, the one who ‘calls’. That is the theme throughout chapter 9.

Remember, this is one sentence from verse 10 through 12.

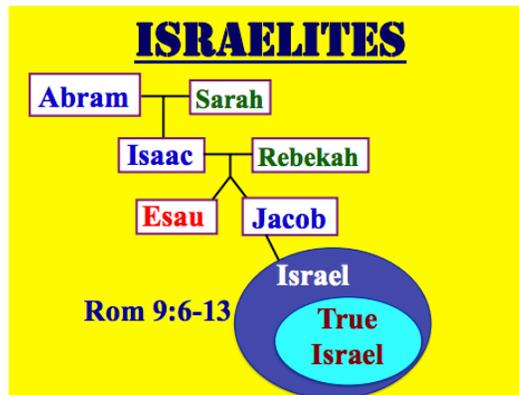
9.10 And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; 11 for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God’s purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, 12 it was said to her, “THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER.”

This is the Biblical basis that Paul uses to bring home this concept of the electing purposes of God and how they stand. The Biblical support is that Genesis 25 passage: *23 The LORD said to her, “Two nations are in your womb; And two peoples will be separated from your body; And one people shall be stronger than the other; And the older shall serve the younger.”* Paul didn’t quote the part that says ‘Two nations are in your womb’ which gives this corporate idea and speaks in terms of Jacob and Esau as representatives of a whole great number of descendants that would be two nations, Israel and the Edomites.

9.12 it was said to her, “THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER.”

The older will serve the younger. It is hard to find in Genesis where Esau actually served Jacob, so I think it is looking ahead. In their history you can find that the Edomites, on many occasions, were servants, or were in subjection to the nation of Israel.

Our chart shows the line going through Isaac, not Ishmael, through Jacob, not Esau.



And in the 1st Century: within ethnic Israel are those that have believed in the Messiah and I think Paul is identifying them as *true* Israel. Those would be members of the body of Christ. That's what is in view in Romans 9.6-13.

Then he concludes the paragraph:

9.13 Just as it is written, “JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED.”

He expands his Biblical support choosing a passage out of the 1st book of the Bible, from the very beginning of the nation and then he quotes out of the *last* book of the Bible. This is from Malachi, kind of encompassing the entire history of Israel, from its beginning in Jacob with Esau being set aside, to Malachi where he is talking about Israel as *nations*. Malachi 1.2-3 “*I have loved you,*” says the LORD. *But you say, “How have You loved us?” “Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?” declares the LORD. “Yet I have loved Jacob; 3 but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness.”*

Meaning

1. Conceived twins...= by 1 act
2. Choice - ἐκλογή (ek-lo-gáy)
3. Genesis 25.23 - Jacob and Esau *The LORD said to her, “Two nations are in your womb; And two peoples will be separated from your body; And one people shall be stronger than the other; And the older shall serve the younger.”*
4. Malachi 1:2-3 - Israel and Edom “*I have loved you,*” says the LORD. *But you say, “How have You loved us?” “Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?” declares the LORD. “Yet I have loved Jacob; 3 but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness.”*

Keep in mind that this is post-exilic Israel that has returned to the land and even in returning Malachi is a prophet that is reprimanding the nation. Here he is introducing both Jacob and Esau, and if you read through Malachi he actually is not talking about the individuals, but the nations Israel and Edom. So these two individuals represent the corporate Israel and Edomites.

Throughout history there has been conflict between them and generally Israel has dominated the Edomites. In God’s *electing purposes* He loves some and treats others as if they are hated, which is an interest concept.

9.13 Just as it is written, “JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED.”

9.13 Just as it is written, “JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED.”

Scholars are divided as to what is in view here; some emphasize that there is a Hebrew idiom where you put the two together and simply contrast, ie, a love for one that is, in comparison to the hate of another. That’s a possible idea here.

Hate Love

1. Hebrew idiom - contrast
2. To love less - Genesis 29.31 *Now the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, and He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.*
This is similar example of the contrast. Here it is the idea of one being loved and the other less, within the family. Jacob worked for Laban for 7 years and was promised Rachel, but then at the last minute Leah, who was less loved, was given to him. There is evidence that he did not *hate* Leah, but she was loved *less*. The word used is the same word ‘hated’.
3. Stronger - Psalm 5.5 *The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes; You hate all who do iniquity.*

Jeremiah 44.4 *Yet I sent you all My servants the prophets, again and again, saying, "Oh, do not do this abominable thing which I hate."*

Acceptance and rejection

There are lots of contexts where this contrast has a stronger idea than simply loving less. In fact even God Himself uses it in this stronger sense in terms of the *wickedness* and those that partake in it. And even within Israel, God hates their *idolatry*. Historically you can see a blessing of Jacob and a rejection of Esau. I am inclined to take that verse in this stronger sense of the rejection of Esau.

This brings us into another Principle of God's Election: it is rooted in His grace and love. Remember that Jacob was kind of a rascal; he was a trickster. He tricked his brother out of the birthright and we see him as a deceiver—in fact his name means 'supplanter', having supplanted his brother. So it's not that Jacob was this godly individual; in fact in the record there is very little in his life that reflects godliness and yet God chose him, not because of anything in *him* but it is rooted in God's grace. And this is a verse that indicates that God loved him.

God's Election - Romans 9

1. Not based solely on physical natural descent (6-9)
2. Is part of His sovereign purposes (11)
3. Is not dependent on man's works (11)
4. Is rooted in His grace and love (13)

God *bestowed* grace and love upon Jacob and *withheld* it from Esau even to the extent that it seemed like he *hated* Esau. That brings us to the end of verse 13 where the Word of God is Vindicated. And that leads to the next argument that Paul is going to bring in verses 14-18.

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| a. Issue of God's Justice | 9.14 |

[Romans 9.14-18, Exodus 32-33 God's Justice in Election 136]

9.14 What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!

He raises the issue of God's justice. What shall we say to all these things that don't sound fair? He answers the question himself: God isn't unjust, is He? He knows what his audience is thinking.

9.14 What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!

He phrases it so that it elicits a negative answer, No, there is no injustice with God.

9.14 What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!

Then he gives the clear answer that we have seen throughout the book of Romans; he will raise an issue and then emphatically answer it: May it never be! In the Greek text the strongest way to make a negative response is μη γενοιτο (may gue-noi-toh). Absolutely not! Impossible!

God's Election - Romans 9

1. Not based solely on physical natural descent (6-9)
2. Is part of His sovereign purposes (11)
3. Is not dependent on man's works (11)
4. Is rooted in His grace and love (13)
5. Does not violate His justice (14-18)

This does give us another point about God's Election: It does not violate His justice. He gives the emphatic answer: Absolutely not! We have studied the the nature of God, and also the depravity of man. God is perfectly just and righteous, not under obligation to depraved man.

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| a. Issue of God's Justice | 9.14 |
| b. Word to Moses | 9.15-16 |

The issue is not why God passed over some; the issue is Why did God save *any*? It is part of His nature: gracious, loving, merciful.

Now a word concerning Moses. We follow the logic of Paul here as he kind of expands the idea of God's word being vindicated, but he is

dealing with a particular aspect of it, His justice. Not arguing philosophically or intellectually, he takes us to an argument from Scripture itself.

There is a good pattern here in trying to deal with the unbeliever. It is good oftentimes to introduce God's word and argue from the perspective, if not overtly the word, at least a principle that God has in His word. That is what Paul is doing in 9.15-16.

9.15 For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION."

He quotes, without introduction; we have to look at the context to see what Paul is saying. The Jew, assuming that he a good reader and knows the Old Testament, would immediately recognize this quotation from Exodus 33. Of course, in order to understand any passage you have to understand the context. These passages will help us to know what Paul is saying—he just 'jumps in'. How does 'I will have mercy...' answer this issue of the justice of God?

This is after the Law had been given. The people had committed to the Mosaic Covenant.

Mercy Exodus 32

> Golden calf - 1-8 ...7 *Then the LORD spoke to Moses, "Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. 8 "They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it and have sacrificed to it and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!'"*

Verses 1-8 is the incident of the people making a golden calf to worship.

> God's wrath - 9 *The LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people. 10 "Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation."*

Verses 9-10 start to give us the background to chapter 33. It gives us insight into God speaking to Moses. He is expressing His anger over sin and in a way is testing Moses to see how well he knows the covenants that God has made and the word that God has already revealed. And He gives him a proposal in which God would

be perfectly just and perfectly righteous to basically wipe out all of the children of Israel, including Moses.

His proposal: '*I will make of you a great nation.*' Now God has already revealed that the nation is going to come through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and it's not going to come through the Levitical line. Moses is from the line of Levi. So God is kind of testing Moses here. The point being, though, that He would be perfectly just and righteous to wipe them all out. Just as with Adam and Eve, He would have been perfectly righteous to wipe *them* out. Likewise with the Genesis flood; but because God saves, He provided a way for Adam and Eve and for Noah and his family with an ark. And now God is proposing another way of fulfilling the Abrahamic Covenant, even though there is an aspect that could not happen. So Moses passes the test because he understands what the word of God reveals, so he speaks in 11-13.

> Moses intercedes - 11 *Then Moses entreated the LORD his God, and said, "O LORD, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? 12 "Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, 'With evil intent He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your burning anger and change Your mind about doing harm to Your people. 13 "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'"*

So Moses reminds God—not that God had forgotten or was unaware. It's God bringing from within Moses the things He has already promised, and Moses is obviously passing the exam: On the basis of God's graciousness and His past covenants and His integrity which is at stake amongst a lost world. So Moses intercedes and then in verse 14 the wrath is lifted.

> God's wrath lifted - 14 *So the LORD changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people.*

This is an anthropomorphism, speaking as though God had certain human characteristics. We have noted the immutability of God and some of these passages suggest that He changes His mind. I think it is written from the perspective of mankind. From Moses' perspective, after God announces wrath and makes it clear that this

is what is righteous and just, but now, on the basis of His grace, is lifting the wrath.

Then we have the Confrontation that Moses gave to Aaron and the children of Israel:

- > Moses' confrontation - 21-29 *21 Then Moses said to Aaron, "What did this people do to you, that you have brought such great sin upon them?" 22 Aaron said, "Do not let the anger of my lord burn; you know the people yourself, that they are prone to evil...."*

The children of Israel deserve the wrath of God. Aaron is giving excuses, but essentially Moses is confronting them because of their great sin and when it comes to God, He is under no obligation. But Moses now makes a request:

- > Moses' request - 30-35 *30 On the next day Moses said to the people, "You yourselves have committed a great sin; and now I am going up to the LORD, perhaps I can make atonement for your sin." 31 Then Moses returned to the LORD, and said, "Alas, this people has committed a great sin, and they have made a god of gold for themselves. 32 "But now, if You will, forgive their sin--and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!" ...*

God could have wiped them out...

33 The LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book. 34 "But go now, lead the people where I told you. Behold, My angel shall go before you; nevertheless in the day when I punish, I will punish them for their sin." 35 Then the LORD smote the people, because of what they did with the calf which Aaron had made.

...but you see elements of grace in the passage in that He is going to continue to work with them. He gives further instruction to Moses and it is in this context that we have 33.18-20, God's glory. So it is in the context of man's depravity, man deserving the wrath of God. In the context of Moses interceding and even offering atonement—even himself—if he could be a substitute, appealing to God.

- > God's glory - 33.18-20 *18 Then Moses said, "I pray You, show me Your glory!" 19 And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will*

show compassion on whom I will show compassion." 20 But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!"

...because man is sinful, is depraved. But he is going to reveal His glory; Moses asks for it. The glory of God is the summary or composite of God's person and attributes, and in this context, His goodness and graciousness. The word translated 'mercy' can also be 'grace'. Even the Septuagint (LXX) uses the words interchangeably. So it is an expression of God's *grace* and Paul uses the Greek word for 'mercy' in this passage.

9.15 For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION."

This is the answer to that question: God is not obligated to have mercy on *any*; in fact He announces that He is going to judge *all* and Moses intercedes, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy,...

9.15 For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION."

... and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' Even Paul uses two Greek words for 'grace' interchangeably as well: χάρις (kháh-rees) and ἔλεος (éh-leh-os).

9.16 So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

A man cannot say, 'Let me change my life, let me change the course I'm on...' It does not depend on the man who *wills*, ie, God is gracious to whom He is gracious; it does not depend on man. God's grace is bestowed freely and sovereignly. This is to answer that question, 'How can you pour out grace and mercy and salvation to the *dogs* [gentiles]? It does not depend on them, not dependent on the will of man—and so we can add to our list:

God's Election - Romans 9

1. Not based solely on physical natural descent (6-9)
2. Is part of His sovereign purposes (11)
3. Is not dependent on man's works (11)
4. Is rooted in His grace and love (13)
5. Does not violate His justice (14-18)
6. Does not violate man's volition (16)
...and is not dependent on it.

9.16 So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

‘Or the man who runs.’ He uses a Greek word that comes from an athletic environment, using it in a spiritual sense. In some contexts it would be used for a runner in olympic games, ie, the output of energy, effort and movement. It does not depend on what man *does*, in a spiritual sense, the way he runs the course or his life, but on God who has mercy. He is totally dependent on the free grace and mercy of God.

9.16 So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

In this context he is talking about God’s choosing Israel and he uses the example from the life of Moses, so we can come up with a 7th principle:

God’s Election - Romans 9

1. Not based solely on physical natural descent (6-9)
2. Is part of His sovereign purposes (11)
3. Is not dependent on man’s works (11)
4. Is rooted in His grace and love (13)
5. Does not violate His justice (14-18)
6. Does not violate man’s volition (16)
7. Is not dependent on anything in man (16)

It’s not dependent on *anything* in man. He has already mentioned, #3, that it is not dependent on man’s *works*, when he was talking about Jacob and Esau, now, the same concept in the time of Moses dealing with the entire nation, not dependent on *anything* in man.

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| c. Word to Pharaoh | 9.17-18 |

Now a *negative* example, one that brings more theological problems. Remember he is vindicating the righteousness of God and showing that God is *sovereign* over His creatures, whether part of His

family like Moses and the children of Israel and/or those outside. He is sovereign and can show mercy, but here we have the alternative: He can also harden those whom He so chooses.

9.17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH.”

This reminds us of the interaction of Moses and Pharaoh in the early chapters of the book of Exodus. The Moses quotation is after they had already left Egypt and are at the foot of Mt Sinai and receiving the 10 Commandments. But the example of Pharaoh goes back to the *early* chapters when the children of Israel were still in Egypt.

9.17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH.”

He is addressing Pharaoh, so this electing plan of God, this big plan that God has for humanity in general, involves the unbeliever as well. And Pharaoh would be the epitome of those that resist God and are antagonistic to the children of God. So He takes the prime leader of Israel and now the other extreme, the great oppressor of the children of Israel, even before they were a nation.

‘For this very purpose..’ An interesting statement. He does not say He created him for this purpose, but *raised him up*, and this word could mean ‘preserved’ him. God is not unjust in how He deals with the unbeliever, nor with the believer, as he can deal with them according to His free grace and sovereign choice.

9.17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH.”

God is working out a specific purpose, and He is revealing what He is doing; He is going to announce ahead of time what He is doing. Basically He is demonstrating His glory, specifically His power—‘in you’, Pharaoh. The Egyptian Empire was the world power of that day. Pharaoh himself was worshipped as a god. The point of this is that God is *greater* than whatever pressures, whatever individuals may be oppressing you or harassing you. As in Egypt, God is using the circumstance to bring glory to Himself and to display His power.

Purpose

1. Display God's power

Over all, the plagues and the Exodus itself, the plan that God had, was to display His power over the Egyptian gods. And they were very specific; he refutes the gods; they are powerless before the sovereign power that was going to deliver the children from the Egyptian Empire. Remember, this was before the exodus.

Each plague is a polemic against the gods behind them. Most of the walls of the monuments in Egypt depict gods. And each one of them can be tied to one of the plagues. For example Osiris was the god of the Nile which they worshipped. So God turned the waters of the Nile into blood, showing that He is more powerful than Osiris. Another is the god of the frogs which he multiplies and then removes them. They worshipped all of these gods, the one of health and well-being, even the hail and atmospheric phenomenon—you can find a tie to each one of these. The darkness: for the sun god Re, etc.

Plagues and Exodus

> Refuted Egyptian gods Crisis, Isis, Anubis

gods

- √ Nile - Osiris
- √ Frogs - Heqt
- √ Insects - Uatchit
- √ Beasts - Ptah
- √ Boils - Sekhmet
- √ Hail - Nut
- √ Dark - Re & Horus

> Showed Omnipotence of YHWH

> Destroyed Economy

> Possibly destroyed Middle Kingdom (1400's BC)

Through it all, it destroyed the economy of the middle kingdom, the time frame in which these incidents take place. In fact, after the exodus it destroyed the entire middle kingdom, not only were their crops and animals destroyed, but the whole *military* apparatus was destroyed as well. God was demonstrating His power. The focus was upon *a* god, the Pharaoh, with whom God was dealing—as well as the entire empire.

9.17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH."

Not only His power, but also that His name might be proclaimed throughout the *world, the whole earth*. God is presenting something that is objective and observable and would be reported throughout the entire world. So this is His second purpose:

Purpose

1. Display God's power

2. Proclaim His Name

Over 40 years later, after the exodus, the world remembered what God did with the children of Israel. Here is just an example, from the book of Joshua. Rahab, the harlot, said that to the spies, and this reflects that even the lowest of that Canaanite culture had heard:

Joshua 2.9 3...Rahab...9 *and said to the men, "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. 10 "For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, ...11 ... "When we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.*

The proclamation of God giving the children of Israel *the land*, this was common knowledge. And the *terror* of them had fallen on the Canaanites, ie 'Our day is over', they had no energy, no motivation because they knew the terror of the Lord.

Then verse 10: They had heard that proclamation that went out to the whole world in the time of Moses, 'For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt...' It couldn't be any more specific. And look at the end of verse 11: 'for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. This is a confession of faith by the prostitute here. You will remember that she is one of Canaanites that would survive the conquest. And we have mention of her later on in the NT indicating that she was a believer in the one true God.

Plagues and Exodus

> Refuted Egyptian gods

> Showed Omnipotence of YHWH

> Destroyed Economy

> Possibly destroyed Middle Kingdom

> Delivered and Enriched Israel

603,550 males + women and children = 2-3.5 million people went through the Exodus.

So the revelation of God, of His power, and the proclamation of what God is doing was evident to the children of Israel in that they saw all of the miracles of the plagues and a demonstration of power in the exodus itself. And they were delivered and enriched as well. God is free to bestow love and mercy in His Sovereignty and Wisdom!

[Romans 9.18-19, 1.18-24 God hardening Pharaoh 137]

This was an example that Paul uses to show that God is perfectly just and righteous in doing whatever He does in mercy with Moses and the children of Israel—and even in this negative idea of hardening someone like a Pharaoh.

9.18 So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

Again, He has mercy on sinners, even though they don't deserve it. And He can bestow grace freely and sovereignly on whomsoever He desires.

9.18 So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

Secondly, there is a difficult problem with what he says, on how God deals with the *unbeliever*. But we have laid a foundation of God not being obligated to any sinner at any point in any time, particularly in the time frame of the beginnings of the nation of Israel during the time of Moses. 'And He hardens...' That's a difficult idea... 'whom He desires.' The idea of God choosing some and even hardening others. We need to trace it back. The word itself 'hardening' in the Hebrew has more different senses than probably any other word that I have ever seen in Scripture.

It may have 20 or 30 different senses besides this hardening idea. Now certainly, I think, it is there, but the Hebrew word also has the idea of 'to stiffen' which is a negative idea as well, and 'to become stubborn'. Also the idea 'to be strong'. It even has the idea 'to repair' something, in a positive sense—which I don't think it is in this context. For example, the Temple was damaged in 2Kings 12.5-8, and it talks about the priests, ... and they shall *repair* the damage of the house; the word is used about four times there, in the idea of repairing something. It is 'khaw-zák', pronounced from deep into your chest.

It occurs 288 times in the OT with a variety of different ways it could be translated, and in fact, in the NAS it is translated in many ways. It has even the positive idea of 'to take courage', or to encourage.

I'm not saying that's the meaning *here*. You have to take a word *in its context* to understand its meaning. With this idea of 'encouraging', God is moving Pharaoh along a certain line even to the point of hardness. I think it is used in that sense throughout this passage.

Also you need to keep in mind that there are *other* words that can be translated 'to be hardened' that are used in the broader context of the book of Exodus when it is talking about Pharaoh; we will look at some of them. So the first thing to note is that the word 'harden' has a variety of senses, and I am fine with the translation, but it is kind of the end product of its negative aspects. It has some softer meanings elsewhere.

Now we talk about the *progression*; on the surface it almost seems like, 'That doesn't seem fair; How can God take an unbeliever like Pharaoh and still hold him responsible? How can God hold mankind responsible if in fact God is using the unbeliever to accomplish, in this case, hardening? We will go back not only to Exodus but also Romans chapter 1. In this series it has been 3 years since we studied Romans 1. So I will remind you of some of the Principles we developed then.

But first of all let's look at these Exodus passages. First, God announces and predicts what He is going to do. And if He does this, it only intensifies the idea of how He can hold the unbeliever responsible for his response.

We are not talking about eternal destinies here. We are talking about Israel as a corporate group and His showing mercy to the children of God to fulfill promises. Remember, Israel, in terms of their national identity, are a *saved* people; they are the children of God and, in the context, God is showing mercy to them—and yet it is in the context of their great sin and their violation of the covenant immediately after it was given.

But what I am leaning at here is that God reveals ahead of time what He is going to do, showing His sovereign control over history. He also reveals Himself to every man. Romans 1: There is none without excuse; all have received a revelation.

Hardening

> Prediction Exodus 4.21 *The LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. 22 "Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, "Israel is My son, My firstborn. 23 "So I said to you, 'Let My son go that he may serve Me'; but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn."'"*

It's announced ahead of time, ie, God is predicting to Moses who is still in Midian, but He announcing very clearly what He was

going to do. This is revelation, and the revelation is even specific in that it is given to Pharaoh himself:

> Revelation - 5.1-3 *And afterward Moses and Aaron came and said to Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Let My people go that they may celebrate a feast to Me in the wilderness.'" 2 But Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and besides, I will not let Israel go."*

3 *Then they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God, otherwise He will fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword."*

He is making the point that Pharaoh is receiving *revelation*. And Romans 1 tells us that God has revealed Himself, and he explains why all of humanity is under wrath. The whole point of that passage is that God has adequately revealed Himself to all mankind. You will see that Pharaoh received lots of revelation from God. This is fundamental to understanding what is happening in terms of 'hardening of hearts'.

Pharaoh has had adequate revelation, adequate opportunity to respond positively or negatively. These verses show God revealing Himself, speaking His word through Moses to Pharaoh. And notice also, very early on, there are very clear passages that give indications of the way that Pharaoh has *responded* to the revelation of God, especially 7.14, the first in the list of 'Pharaoh hardening'.

7.16 *"You shall say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness. But behold, you have not listened until now."*

8.1 *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me....20 Now the LORD said to Moses, "Rise early in the morning and present yourself before Pharaoh, as he comes out to the water, and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me."*

9.1 *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and speak to him, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me....13 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Rise up early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me."*

10.3 *Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, 'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go, that they may serve Me."*

> Pharaoh hardening - 7.14 *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is stubborn; he refuses to let the people go.... So Pharaoh hardens his own heart....and look at verse 22:*

7.22 *But the magicians of Egypt did the same with their secret arts; and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said.*

This is a clear statement that he had *rejected* the revelation that God had given him.

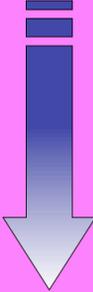
8.15 *But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not listen to them, as the LORD had said....32 But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and he did not let the people go.*

Pharaoh hardened his own heart, just as God had predicted. So both God and Pharaoh are involved. And it is fair because Pharaoh chose and God did not prevent him from choosing. As we have seen throughout the convicting and illuminating, if God does not intervene, ie, He does not show mercy (1.18), depravity is such that it will, every time, reject the revelation.

9.34 *But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned again and hardened his heart, he and his servants.*

Romans 1.18, is where Paul explains that man is under condemnation, in fact he says: man is under wrath. Now he is going to explain: for the wrath of God *is*—present tense. We made a big point of that: *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in*

unrighteousness; He, in this passage, is going to explain the wrath in the present tense. He explains what he means by it, but before that he is going to explain why man is under wrath. Its starts with 'because'; he is giving the reason.

| REVELATION | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------|
|  | Realization - | 19-20 |
| | Responsibility - | 20 |
| | Rejection - | 21 |
| | Rationalization - | 21 |
| | Reprobation - | 22 |
| | Replacement - | 23 |
| | Wrath - | 24-32 |

1.19 *because that which is known about God [revelation] is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and*

divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

Man **realizes** this revelation or understands it, knows it. So mankind is aware of this revelation. Where does that leave man, at the end of verse 20? ‘so that they are without excuse’, ie, man is **responsible** for the revelation he has received from God. What does man do with it?

21 *For even though they knew God, [knew = revelation] they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, [rejecting God’s word, they rationalize and speculate, coming up with futile ideas] and their foolish heart was darkened.* That affects their *heart* and we have the beginning of **reprobation**. verse 22

22 *Professing to be wise, they became fools,* Mankind, in his depravity, rejects God’s revelation which begins the process of hardening. And that is what we have in the Exodus story. Everything gets twisted, everything gets distorted and we don’t have a clear picture of what is reality, we fall for sin, and we lose sight of God and what He has. And what happens after that? Verse 23:

23 *and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.* What was the number 1 characteristic of the Egyptian gods? In fact Pharaoh was one of them; he viewed himself as one of the gods. So we have an ‘image’ **replacement** of the true one.

The book of Exodus doesn’t go through this sequence, but Paul has already laid this out in Romans 1 so that when we get to 9.18, and it says ‘God hardens whom He desires’ you can understand what it says in the book of Exodus: God predicts what is going to happen and He reveals Himself adequately to Pharaoh and the Egyptians; in fact, the plagues were a part of that revelation. But Pharaoh had the very *words* of God’s revelation from Moses. He hardened his own heart and what happens? We have the sequence in Romans 1: it is the **wrath**, 1.24-32, that is poured out in the present tense sense.

24 *Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.*

God ‘gave them over’; you might say that ‘God gave them over to their own choices’ and those choices manifest themselves in further sin—if you read the rest of the passage—ending up in some of the most perverse things. It is one of the passages that deals with homosexuality, but also other sin, other perversity, more hardening. ‘Hardening’ is an expression of wrath in the sense that God lets man go fully into his depravity and in some cases even leading to addictions that we have illustrated in the passage.

Hardening

...

> Passive - 7.13 *Yet Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said. 14 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pharaoh’s heart is stubborn; he refuses to let the people go....22 But the magicians of Egypt did the same with their secret arts; and Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said.*

8.19 *Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.” But Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said.*

9.7 *Pharaoh sent, and behold, there was not even one of the livestock of Israel dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go....35 Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he did not let the sons of Israel go, just as the LORD had spoken through Moses.*

So we have that explanation from Romans and now we have other passages, eg, 7.13-14, 22, that speak of Pharaoh in the *passive* sense, eg, Pharaoh’s heart *was hardened* and it is not clear whether Pharaoh was doing the hardening or something outside of him, almost transitioning to some of these clear passages that refer to God hardening. And I think that this is an example of Romans 1, God abandoning and letting the depravity of man run its course. And you could even view it as God actively involved in the wrath. It is an example of the pouring out of wrath in the case of Pharaoh and the Egyptians such that Pharaoh’s heart was hardened.

I think having a little of that background helps to understand what’s going on in the passage saying that ‘He has mercy on whom He desires’, ie, those that are chosen He will in fact work to convict. And even in Exodus we have sacrifices where God restores the children of Israel showing mercy, grace, compassion and love and ‘He hardens whom He desires’.

It’s not that Pharaoh was created such that God prevented him from responding rightly, but Pharaoh had *already* responded on the basis of his depravity, and God simply *allowed* it to produce hardness within him in such a way that he worked out that depravity illustrated in the book of Exodus.

> God - 4.21 *The LORD said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.*

7.3 *“But I will harden Pharaoh’s heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.”* 4 *“When Pharaoh does not listen to you, then I will lay My hand on Egypt and bring out My hosts, My people the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt by great judgments.”*

9.12 *And the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not listen to them, just as the LORD had spoken to Moses.*

10.1 *Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may perform these signs of Mine among them, ...”* 20 *But the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not let the sons of Israel go....* 27 *But the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he was not willing to let them go.*

11.10 *Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh; yet the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not let the sons of Israel go out of his land.*

14.4 *“Thus I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will chase after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD.”* And they did so. ...8 *The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he chased after the sons of Israel as the sons of Israel were going out boldly....* 17 *“As for Me, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen.”*

I see that in terms of those whom God has chosen in eternity past for church age election, unless God intervenes, depravity is such that it will carry itself through, we will reject that general revelation we have in nature, and we will rationalize it away resulting in progressive hardening within us. The only thing that prevents this is God intervening to convict of sin and to illuminate: that there is no other option except Jesus Christ and what He did on the cross. Then He continues the process of our believing in Him and his justifying us.

In Pharaoh we have one individual that had an impact on a whole kingdom, you might say, that God uses to illustrate this idea of the hardening—and God is involved in it, not that He is blocking or preventing Pharaoh from responding rightly but encouraging and allowing that depravity to run its course making it evident that Pharaoh is under the wrath of God. Pharaoh is not one of the chosen, obviously, and Pablo is using these examples from Israel’s history because he is addressing this Jewish audience in the city of Rome.

Now, as an introduction to 9.19-29, it is also a passage that, on the surface, ‘doesn’t sound fair.’ If it didn’t sound fair beginning in verse 14, it *really* doesn’t sound fair now; it almost seems like ‘How can God hold *anybody* responsible for *any* sin, much less Pharaoh. So he is going to deal with the issue of Human Responsibility beginning in verse 19.

| | |
|---|-----------|
| I. Introduction | 1.1-17 |
| II. Provision of God’s Righteousness | 1.18-8.39 |
| III. Vindication of God’s Righteousness | 9-11 |
| A. Past Sovereign Election of Israel | 9.1-29 |
| 1. Sorrow of Paul Vindicated | 9.1-5 |
| 2. Word of God Vindicated | 9.6-13 |
| 3. Justice of God Vindicated | 9.14-18 |
| 4. Sovereignty of God Vindicated | 9.19-29 |
| a. Human Responsibility Issue | 9.19 |

So beginning in verse 19 in this subdivision, he is going to talk about the sovereignty of God being vindicated. He has vindicated the word of God in that within the Abrahamic Covenant God made selections, chose some over others. So God is perfectly just to do the same in the 1st Century. And this introduces the idea that it doesn’t sound fair or just, so he defends the justice of God and, in a sense, he is going to continue defending that, but he will introduce kind of a related concept, God is perfectly sovereign in anything He does, 19-20.

So he raises another main issue:

Main Issue

1. Gospel going to Gentiles
2. Israel as God’s chosen people
3. Gentiles coming to God apart from the Law
4. If God hardens Pharaoh how can He hold man responsible?

It may have been an issue dealt with in other places and maybe other Jewish believers have raised this to him. And he knows that this is a thought we have when we see it—not seeming right—so he expands on it. He expands on it in an interesting way that is going to take a little time to explain as well.

9.19 You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault?” For who resists His will?”

You may object; you might have a question, ‘Why does He still find fault? How could He hold Pharaoh responsible? What about human responsibility?’ Obvious there is an issue here. Let me give you an

overview of his argument and the way he is going to argue, and then we will come back and look at some of the details.

This first objection centers on human responsibility, 19a. And now we read the last phrase: 'For who resists His will?', 19b. It is another objection from the 'God side': If God is in control and He hardens, then He is working in such a way that doesn't seem right.

There are 6 questions: 2 of them are questions raised as an objection, so in 19 we have the *objection*. Then in verse 20 he begins the *refuting* of the objection with a series of 4 further questions. And the implications of the answers are going to refute this objection.

Questions

- | | | |
|-----------------|------------------------------|----|
| 1. Objection - | responsibility | 19 |
| 2. Objection - | God's control | |
| 3. Refutation - | no right to question | 20 |
| 4. Refutation - | Creator/creation distinction | |
| 5. Refutation - | sovereignty of potter | 21 |
| 6. Refutation - | sovereignty of God | 22 |

He starts with 'Mankind has no *right* to even question *anything* that God does. God is God. 'On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God?' In other words, 'You have no right to even *question* God. He doesn't have to answer it, and he even reinforces that with the idea, 'The thing molded will not say to the molder, Why did you make me this way?' That is, the creation cannot answer back because you are just like dirt—you are part of the creation. There is a distinction between the creator and the creation that leaves the creation with *no rights* to question what the Creator is doing. So he is going to emphasize this sharp distinction between the creator and the creation.

He could have stopped there and said, 'I don't have to give an answer.' But He does give a further refutation, answering it in verse 21 by giving the illustration of the sovereignty of the potter. Thus he creates the idea that God is absolutely sovereign and whatever He does is, by definition, *just* and *right*. Does not the potter have a right over the clay? Or 'authority' which is the word used there, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable, another for common use? God has a perfect right to do whatever He wants with whatever He has created. And if that is not enough, the illustration of the potter is carried over in verse 22 to ask another question:

22 What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?

Wow! That's another very difficult passage that we will have to spend some time on. I am just laying out the argument that is before us: we have two questions phrased in terms of one idea, the human responsibility of man--from man's, then God's perspective, 'Who can resist His will?'

And then we have 4 questions that are actually an answer to the first two, implying the ideas of 'no right to question', an answer relating to creator/creation distinctions, and an answer relating to an illustration of sovereignty of the potter, ie, the sovereignty of God who is absolutely sovereign—even in choosing the sinner, even gentiles, even us 'dogs'.

[Romans 9.18-22, Jeremiah 18.1-10 God's Sovereignty like the Potter 138]

9.19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?"

As we noted, Paul has six questions. He frames the initial issue of human responsibility in the form of 6 questions. This is the first one, concerning the responsibility of man.

6 Questions

- | | | |
|----------------|----------------|----|
| 1. Objection - | responsibility | 19 |
|----------------|----------------|----|

If God hardens, how can He hold man responsible? You have to take into account the whole process of hardening as we have done. I also indicated that the word 'hardening' has many other meanings, including some more positive ones, 'encouraging' and 'strengthening'. But here God is reinforcing what Pharaoh has determined himself, so Pharaoh is fully responsible even though we have the objection concerning that here. He is fully responsible for the choices that he has made and God is simply allowing the outworking of those choices which may be viewed as God involved in the hardening and abandoning Pharaoh to his own choices and the consequences of those in terms of the will of God

9.19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?"

He has a second question: 'For who resists His will?' as if, and here is the problem, just looking at the surface, God has locked him in and is not giving him a chance. But in reality he is going to expand a little on this further on. But I believe God gave mercy to Pharaoh as well, not just to the children of Israel—in that He is long-suffering, ie, He gives plenty of opportunity: there were 10 plagues. After each one

of those, Pharaoh could have changed—actually he does change and then changes back. So it's not like God has locked Pharaoh in where he would have no option and could not resist His will.

So, the question 'For who resists His will', even though it would be natural in our limited human thinking, Paul is going to proceed to answer in verse 20.

6 Questions

1. Objection - responsibility 19
2. Objection - God's control

This is the objection concerning God's control, in fact transitioning into God's sovereignty.

- I. Introduction 1.1-17
- II. Provision of God's Righteousness 1.18-8.39
- III. Vindication of God's Righteousness 9-11
 - A. Past Sovereign Election of Israel 9.1-29
 1. Sorrow of Paul Vindicated 9.1-5
 2. Word of God Vindicated 9.6-13
 3. Justice of God Vindicated 9.14-18
 4. Sovereignty of God Vindicated 9.19-29
 - a. Human Responsibility Issue 9.19
 - b. Sovereignty of Potter 9.20

Now in 20 and 21 he is going to illustrate and teach this concept of the sovereignty by using an illustration that would be very common not only in the first century, but I think we can understand it even today.

9.20 On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?

Paul begins by starting to contrast the question, in fact refuting the first 2 questions, with 'On the contrary', using a series of other questions.

6 Questions

1. Objection - responsibility 19
2. Objection - God's control
3. Refutation - no right to question 20

He states that the clay has no right to even question.

And he is pointing out the difference between the finiteness of mankind and the sovereignty, greatness and glory of God, eventually getting to an answer as he moves through the passage.

6 Questions

1. Objection - responsibility 19
2. Objection - God's control
3. Refutation - no right to question 20
4. Refutation - Creator/creation distinction

9.20 On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?

He starts by taking a great offensive stand, 'who are you, O man'? What rights do you have? You are the creature, simply dirt, the clay. So he contrasts mankind with God—and mankind does not even have the right to question God, much less receive an answer.

He is going to answer the question, but first he has to put man in his proper position.

9.20 On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?

So the question now is, 'who answers back to God? Who are you, the creature who is so far away, so limited, so tiny? Isaiah gives us an image in 40, of all of the nations; they are like a speck of dust in comparison to God. And he continues saying that they are even less than that. How can 'less than nothing' answer back to the Creator of the entire universe? That is basically the idea that Paul is portraying here.

Refutes

1. Attitude of rebellion
2. Right to question God
3. God's obligation to answer

So we have another question that not only refutes man's right to ask a question, but he is refuting an attitude of rebellion in man as sinner who doesn't even dare to ask a question, doesn't even have the *right* to question God because of the vast difference between the creator and the creation. And God has no obligation to man in any way whatsoever.

9.20 On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?

The illustration: ‘The thing molded will not say to the molder, will it?’ This not only answers the first question, but the implication is the thing molded not only has no right but should not even have any capability of answering the one that molds, the creator.

9.20 On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me like this,” will it?

Then ‘why did you make me like this’? He not only refutes a prideful attitude of rebellion, he questions man’s right to even question God and he is also refuting the idea that God has *any* obligation to mankind at all.

Refutes

1. Attitude of rebellion
2. Right to question God
3. God’s obligation to answer
4. Man’s limited knowledge
5. Man’s judgment of God
6. Misunderstanding of Creator/creation distinction

And he is refuting man’s limited knowledge—you don’t know about anything that God has other than what God has been pleased to reveal—for you are finite. In fact the question even implies man judging God by questioning God’s judgment. And it reveals a misunderstanding of a fundamental Biblical concept of the distinction between the Creator and the creation.

Paul is taking the offensive but is bringing out, by these questions, not only man’s finiteness and misunderstanding, but some of the underlying attitudes that elicit these questions to begin with. Then he will answer the questions.

God’s Election - Romans 9

- ...
8. Does not violate or remove man’s responsibility (19-22)

This is the 8th Principle here in chapter 9 concerning the Election of God. This passage, in answering the issue of man’s responsibility, indicates that God works the whole process, including the hardening, without violating man’s will and without removing man’s responsibility. So man’s volition is not overridden or destroyed or violated in any way. And, because that is the case, so also man is fully responsible for all of

the choices that he has made. And in this context, immediately following the reference to Pharaoh, Pharaoh is the prime example in terms of all humanity that Paul had already developed in chapter 1.

9.21 Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?

‘Or does not the potter have a right over the clay’? Now he is going to answer that, just like a potter has absolute sovereignty or authority to do with the ‘dirt’, the clay, whatsoever he desires, God has the right to make from the same lump, the same depraved humanity, what He desires. Remember, he is speaking to a Jewish audience, so he is using the illustration of a potter to bring out the rights of a potter and ultimately his sovereignty.

6 Questions

- | | |
|--|----|
| 1. Objection - responsibility | 19 |
| 2. Objection - God’s control | |
| 3. Refutation - no right to question | 20 |
| 4. Refutation - Creator/creation distinction | |
| 5. Refutation - sovereignty of potter | 21 |

So now we have a 5th question but it is part of the refutation of the 2 objections that we have in verse 19. We will look at the OT passages which will give us the context again. If you don’t have the context oftentimes you can misuse them and not understand the point that Paul is making. It was crucial to understand the Exodus passage regarding Moses to understand the concept of mercy and compassion, and it was also important to look at the context concerning Pharaoh to understand the meaning and concept of God’s hardening Pharaoh. On the surface it looks unfair, but in the proper context I think you can understand it. Similarly we will see this concept of the potter.

Potter

> Imagery - Isaiah 29.15 *Woe to those who deeply hide their plans from the LORD, And whose deeds are done in a dark place, And they say, “Who sees us?” or “Who knows us?”* 16 *You turn things around! Shall the potter be considered as equal with the clay, That what is made would say to its maker, “He did not make me”; Or what is formed say to him who formed it, “He has no understanding”?*

45.9 *“Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker-- An earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth! Will the clay say to the potter, ‘What are you doing?’ Or the thing you are making say, ‘He has no hands’?”*

Keep in mind the context of these two prophets. Isaiah prophesied before the fall of the northern kingdom but eventually that kingdom falls and finally the southern. So Isaiah 29 is in the context of the disintegration of the nation of Israel.

Jeremiah is later. Parts of his book were written after some of the exile had already taken place, so the destruction of the nation was already in the process and Jeremiah is one of the exiles. But he uses another image.

Jeremiah 18.1 *The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD saying, 2 “Arise and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will announce My words to you.”*

That sets the image of the potter.

3 Then I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was, making something on the wheel. 4 But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter; so he remade it into another vessel, as it pleased the potter to make.

Notice that he is using the same clay to re-shape it. It’s an image of depravity, ie, the clay is spoiled, yet he is going to re-make it, re-shape it, intervene.

5 Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, 6 “Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does?” declares the LORD. “Behold, like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel. 7 “At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy it;

He is talking about Israel and the soon destruction, but notice that even late in their history he is using the illustration of the potter having absolute sovereignty to do whatever he so desires. The context is the nation, so we don’t want to lose sight of that. The context is similar for Paul—he is talking about the nation of Israel, so there is a corporate idea here. He is not dealing with unbelievers here; it’s God’s people. But God is going to judge and discipline them.

8 if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it.

And there is opportunity, even late, if that nation ‘against which I have spoken turns from its evil’. In other words, there is opportunity to change course, exercise volition, to repent, even at this late date in this imagery. And this is an illustration of what he is going to develop later on: the long-suffering of the Lord.

> Authority - sovereignty

So back to the Romans passage. This is the context: I think the imagery from Isaiah and Jeremiah would be familiar to a Jewish audience, and now that we have the context, this passage is bringing out that God has absolute authority just like a potter. And He can work with the clay but, also Paul hints that this clay is damaged, like it says in Jeremiah, ie, it is depraved—he could cast it out if He desired—but He chooses to continue to work and He is going to work with absolute sovereignty. In fact, notice it says the potter has a *right*. That could be translated as the *authority*; he has the *sovereign authority* over the clay. It is normally translated ‘authority’ in other contexts.

9.21 Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?

Then he goes on, ‘to make from the same lump’, the same depraved clay, the same clay that has no hope, no ability to change its condition, totally condemned.

Potter

> Imagery - Isaiah 29.15, 45.9, Jeremiah 18.1-10

> Authority - sovereignty

> Same lump - all depraved

And in this context in Romans he is going to expand from the same lump two categories.

9.21 Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?

In terms of Israel, He will bestow mercy. In fact, out of a vessel the potter could create a work of art, add detail to it and make it stand out to be something, for example, that enhanced the beauty of a flower. That would be an honorable use—out of the same clay he can make something new. That’s what He does with Israel and, I think, He does with every unbeliever, from the same lump He can create whatever He so desires.

9.21 Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?

The alternative is for a potter to make, even for mass production, vessels for a common use. In that day potters would make many ordinary pots and earn a living. But if he so desired, he could take from

that same lump and make a piece of art. So He can take from the same lump of Jew o Gentile and make one a vessel of beauty and another that is for common usage. He is sovereign.

Potter

- > Imagery - Isaiah 29.15, 45.9, Jeremiah 18.1-10
- > Authority - sovereignty
- > Same lump - all depraved
- > Nations in context - Jeremiah 18.6 6 *“Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does?” declares the LORD. “Behold, like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel.* 7 *“At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy it; 8 if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it. 9 “Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant it; 10 if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it.*

The context is Israel as a nation. And we can add to our list: God is absolutely free and sovereign.

God’s Election - Romans 9

- ...
- 8. Does not violate or remove man’s responsibility (19-22)
- 9. Is absolutely free and sovereign (20-21)

Mankind doesn’t even have the *right* to question that sovereignty and that distinction between the creator and the creation. And God does not even have to answer.

- I. Introduction 1.1-17
- II. Provision of God’s Righteousness 1.18-8.39
- III. Vindication of God’s Righteousness 9-11
 - A. Past Sovereign Election of Israel 9.1-29
 - 1. Sorrow of Paul Vindicated 9.1-5
 - 2. Word of God Vindicated 9.6-13
 - 3. Justice of God Vindicated 9.14-18
 - 4. Sovereignty of God Vindicated 9.19-29
 - a. Human Responsibility Issue 9.19
 - b. Sovereignty of Potter 9.20-21
 - c. Sovereignty Displayed 9.22-24

The sovereignty is going to be expanded and you might even say *applied* in the context of what Paul has already developed.

9.22 What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?

That sovereignty is going to be *displayed*. Back to what we have been talking about all along: God has a bigger plan that no one even *knew* before the coming of the Messiah. The church is a *mystery*. This whole new time frame, the age of grace, the age of the church is unknown, a mystery, in the OT. So now he is revealing that it is on display in the way that he is going to deal with the nation of Israel and also in dealing with gentile people.

6 Questions

- 1. Objection - responsibility 19
- 2. Objection - God’s control
- 3. Refutation - no right to question 20
- 4. Refutation - Creator/creation distinction
- 5. Refutation - sovereignty of potter 21
- 6. Refutation - sovereignty of God 22

So he is going to add to the answer by framing one more question, the 6th one. ‘What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction’? And it is framed such that the *implied* answer is that God is sovereign over mankind.

The grammar here is a little difficult; it introduces a condition but never gives the ‘then’ part of the statement. It just gives ‘If God is willing...’ and then it leaves it hanging, so we have a little difficulty. But he gives a second major answer, with the difficult grammar, that will talk about God’s will.

Main Answer

- 1. 2nd answer
- 2. Difficult grammar

And you can add a 10th principle that God’s election is dependent on God’s will and not man. He is re-iterating this concept from a previous passage.

God’s Election - Romans 9

- ...
- 8. Does not violate or remove man’s responsibility (19-22)

9. Is absolutely free and sovereign (20-21)
10. Is dependent on God's will, not man (22)

9.22 What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?

'to make His power known'. This tells us there is a plan; God has purposes. God has established certain things, and I would say that before God even created He had already a plan, with lots of detail, for the entire creation. And in Scripture we have that unfolding of God dealing with the universe in the great plan which I think began even before God created. We have hints of that in other passages.

9.22 What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?

But now what is He doing with this plan? He is making certain things known. He will make His power known, not only in vessels of wrath to reveal His grace, goodness and mercy, but even with vessels of wrath. This reminds us of some of the passages we looked at concerning Pharaoh. So now he is expanding. Remember the discussion concerning what those plagues *displayed* because that was emphasized in the prior paragraph, but he is re-iterating the same concept here.

'enduring with much patience vessels of wrath' explains *further* the hardening of Pharaoh and also expands how God deals with I think the unbeliever in general. We could start with God's justice, and I have been saying this over and over, but God would be perfectly just had He taken the lives of Adam and Eve and basically finished with mankind or start over and re-create a new creation had he so desired. He would have been perfectly just to take their lives, but we learn from Genesis 3 a little bit more about a bigger plan that God has for all humanity and we have grace, the principles of redemption there also. You could say the same thing about the Genesis flood. You can see that concept throughout the OT.

God *enduring*...in fact I will introduce the patience of God.

9.22 What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?

This is a very troubling statement: 'vessels of wrath *prepared for destruction*'. It almost gives you the impression—in fact the ultra Calvinist uses this and other passages to develop the doctrine of double

pre-destination which I don't think is anywhere in Scripture. But this is one of the passages. It is a strong phrase: vessels of wrath prepared for destruction. We will have to take another look at the word 'prepared'. But I think it is preceded by this concept of *patience* that adds to the idea of some of the things that we talked about already concerning Pharaoh, and him as a representative of depraved humanity. So he is introducing a theological difficulty, not just a grammatical one.

Main Answer

1. 2nd answer
2. Difficult grammar
3. Difficult theology

You see throughout Scripture, even in the Millennial Kingdom, little hints of one of the ways God works. And we see the cycles of sin throughout world history, in that of Israel and, by the way, you can see it in the history of the church as well. One of the concepts of depravity is the Cycles of Sin.

Cycles of Sin

1. God's Work of Grace
In every period of time, every dispensation, God works with grace,...
2. Sin begins corrupting effect
but sin begins its corrupting effects (in this passage as well)
3. God patiently endures sin. Sin reaches full corruption.
and God patiently endures sin. He allows sin to reach its full corruption and you see entire *ages* where God is enduring. We are in a different age where God is enduring sin to reach its full corruption. This was also evident in the time of Israel.
4. God intervenes to judge and save
And then God intervenes to judge and to save.
Then the cycle repeats itself. The salvation aspect of God's intervention is by God's grace because He *could* judge and wipe out everyone at every stage.

God is Sovereign in executing all aspects of His eternal plan!

[Romans 9.19-22 God Patiently Enduring Vessels of Wrath 139]

To further develop the concept of the *patience* of God, we look again at 9.22.

9.22 What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?

2nd Law of Thermodynamics

- > Irreversible tendency to unwind - Your car always falls apart; it never fixes itself—you have to add effort and energy to fix it. You can see this irreversible tendency to unwind or fall apart in many levels.
- > Movement from organization to disorganization - It is a movement, everywhere in the universe, from organization to disorganization. Romans, I think ties in Genesis 3 to God's judgment. It is part of what God imposed upon the creation as a result of Adam's sin and from that time on, this movement is in effect. There is also a future when God is going to 'turn the switch off' on this Law, which science cannot discover because it has no way of seeing into the future.
- > Law of decay - We encounter this every day. Things do not self organize, don't clean themselves up. Wrinkles don't go away, on a more personal level. I think this is an illustration of a corresponding law which we might call the 2nd Law of Spiritual Dynamics.
- > Isaiah 51.6 *"Lift up your eyes to the sky, Then look to the earth beneath; For the sky will vanish like smoke, And the earth will wear out like a garment And its inhabitants will die in like manner; But My salvation will be forever, And My righteousness will not wane.*

This is an example of the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics. If you have a smart child, he might say there is no point in cleaning his room because every thing moves from a state of order to disorder and it will return to disorder!

Romans 8.20-22 *For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.*

2nd Law of Spiritual Dynamics

- > Tendency to depart from God - This is what I want to illustrate from this Romans 9 passage where you can see this same principle on a spiritual level. It works out in individuals, in groups, in the culture and, on a big scale, where these radical changes take place as a result of God's intervention.
It is an irreversible tendency by man to depart from God. We can see that and sense it. I have to be continually fed, devote myself, grow and put effort in. If I don't, since nothing stays static spiritually, I will decline. There is a tendency built into the old nature to depart from God.

- > Movement from relationship to religion - There is also always a movement from a relationship to God to Law or religion and the desire to try to do things in order to gain God's favor. You see it in church movements, on an individual basis, etc.
- > Law of spiritual decay - And we might say the tendency to spiritually decay is a 'Law' of spiritual decay. What we need is input from outside of ourselves, the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, the impact of the Word of God, the nurturing and the feeding of our spirits from God Himself to counteract this spiritual tendency to decay.
- > Tendency of cultures to degenerate - It works itself out in cultures, so there is a tendency of cultures to degenerate. And we probably are at the end of an age, in the plan of God, so that we can see this affecting the culture in which we live as well.

I would like to share examples of this on a big scale—which I call Cycles of sin.

Cycles of Sin

1. God's Work of Grace - There seems to be Cycles of Sin where God does a work of Grace. So everything begins with God and you could even include the creation here because God created a 'very good' creation. That's a work of grace. It's grace because God did not have to create; He chose for His purposes to create a universe that has creatures. And He chose to give some creatures something of what He is like—in the image of God. But He had no obligation to do any of that. It's a work of grace. But as the cycles unfold God begins a new era, an era of grace.
2. Sin begins corrupting effect - But once sin entered, it begins its corrupting effects—and that's why I began with that 2nd Law of Spiritual Dynamics where you have the tendency of it working out, to always depart from God, the spiritual tendency of decay.
3. God patiently endures sin. Sin reaches full corruption. Then we have the Romans 8.22 passage is telling us that God, throughout history has 'endured with much patience' this sinful activity, this corrupting effect, 'vessels of wrath'. So God is patiently enduring, until sin reaches its full corruption.

It began with the Fall of man and you see God provide a means of relationship even in Genesis 3 He gives, in 3.15, a promise that He will ultimately deal with sin. *'And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.'*

In fact I see 3.15 as kind of a microcosm of all of world history where God is dealing with this issue of sin. And He will deal with it, in the OT and the NT, working through these cycles where He

allows, in time, sin to have its corrupting effects—and He patiently endures until it reaches its full corruption. Then in Genesis 6 you see the full corruption where man is *totally* corrupt and at that point:

4. God intervenes to judge and save - You see this pattern throughout world history. In fact, you are even going to see it in the Millennial Kingdom when everything is re-made, everything where Christ Himself is reigning; and what do you have at the end in Revelation 20? There is a final *rebellion* where God intervenes in judgment.

But whenever there is *judgment*, when God deals with sin, He also *saves*. The saving aspect is a work of grace. So you see those corrupting effects, from Adam to the flood—and you see the effects beginning right after Adam. What does the 2nd generation do? Sin is blatantly displayed, one of the sons killing his brother. And then that corrupting effect continues until all of humanity is corrupted at the Genesis Flood. God intervenes to judge, but He also saves a family.

We do not have enough detail but you can see the end product of the Cycle leading to the Tower of Babel. You certainly see it with God bringing about the call of Abraham. And you see that Isaac is not the man of faith that Abraham is and Jacob is even less. And you see the corrupting effects in the patriarchal period and God has to intervene and take them out of the Canaanite environment. They end up in Egypt where God allows the full corruption and uses the Exodus to judge the Egyptians and save the children of Israel.

And then you see it in the history of Israel where they rise to the kingdom age and the corrupting effects of sin in the kings and the people. God endured for years and years, sending prophets to bring people back. There is a little revival, a recommitment, but you see the corrupting effects continuing until sin reaches its full idolatry in the case of Israel and God intervenes in the North and brings the Assyrians to destroy them, the northern kingdom. And then God continues to endure sin until it reaches its full corruption in the South. It was full idolatry and God brings the Babylonians to destroy the Southern Kingdom.

Then there is a little restoration until the coming of Messiah and you see the degeneration of Judaism in the 1st Century and it reaches its full corruption in that the Jewish people crucify even their Messiah. But God uses it for the basis of salvation for all time with God judging and putting the sin of mankind on Jesus on the cross and making that the means of saving. God promised that He would build His church and in that building is a work of grace. And we may be at the end of this cycle of sin where God is enduring the full corruption even within the church itself.

I think he is just hinting at that in Romans 9 where he is demonstrating wrath but it doesn't come all at once. By the way,

even in the Abrahamic Covenant God promises that the children of Israel, in Genesis 15, will have to be in Egypt until the full corruption of what are described as the Amorites. That was a Canaanite tribe. When the full corruption of the Canaanites came in time, God intervened with judgment, and the conquest of Canaan was God pouring out judgment on the *Canaanites*. So God endured the unbelieving Canaanites with much patience—those vessels of wrath.

9.22 What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?

In this case, he is talking about part of Israel and I think in a broad sense alluding back to Pharaoh: 'vessels of wrath prepared for destruction'. This whole concept introduces not just grammatical problems, but also theological problems. This idea of God preparing for destruction, almost seems like it is fatalistic, God working in such a way that people are 'locked out', you might say, God preventing people from coming. But if you go through those historical examples you find, in every one of those ages, there is always opportunity—in fact God is enduring for the purpose of giving people *time* to turn to Him on an individual basis at least, and in some cases even *repentance* amongst a nation like Israel. So we have a difficult theological problem that I think we have to look at in a little more detail.

Main Answer

1. 2nd answer
2. Difficult grammar
3. Difficult theology

Terms

1. To prepare, repair - 13 times
καταρτίζω (kah-tahr-téed-zo) may be reflexive or passive
2. Destruction - temporal

The word is used to prepare or repair something in a good sense. And in this context it may be reflexive, ie, preparing *themselves*. The unbeliever is in the process of hardening himself and that hardening of himself could be reflexive or even passive—not necessarily with God as the subject here. I think that hardening process we looked at, when it talks about this preparation, does not necessarily go back to the hand of God, in terms of doing the preparing, although He is involved in the hardening process, by abandoning like in Romans 1.

Then we have this idea of 'destruction'. And in fact there are very few contexts where the Greek word is used. In a few passages, it does refer to *eternal* destruction or hell or the Lake of Fire. But in most of the contexts it is temporal. In fact, most of the usages in the OT have a temporal sense.

And what may be in view in this passage is this judging idea as we get further into in chapter 9. I think he is alluding to the nation of Israel, (remember this is written at the end of the 3rd missionary journey, early 60's AD, before 70 AD) and he is warning that Israel is under the wrath of God and that God can intervene. This is part of his explanation of why they are set aside during this time frame.

And this is a warning that there is destruction coming. And in the OT it could be as a result of war or calamity. The same Greek word in the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek translation of Hebrew OT, translates many Hebrew words that have this temporal component and many of them don't have anything to do with eternity. I think that's the context of this whole passage in Romans 9 as well. So we have destruction as well.

Let me expand a little bit of this *glory* that God is displaying. I use this from a study I do in apologetics on trying to take this concept of Why does God even allowed evil to begin with? Why did God design a universe that has evil in it? If He is sovereign, Creator, He could have designed a universe that did not have evil in it. (There is a long explanation as to why He did not, but there isn't time to include it). But God has designed this universe in such a way that He has *permitted* evil. He is *never the author of evil* or sin, but He has permitted it in the universe that he has created. I think there is a bigger purpose for it, and one of the bigger purposes is that it displays something of His glory.

You can think about this: How will we know anything about God's justice and His judgment unless there were, in some way, a display of justice, wrath and judgment. So He has created the universe and permitted—never the author of—evil—to use evil in order to display something of who He is. There are a lot of examples in Scripture. I'll give you a few of them. One is the blind man in John 9:

Glory Displayed

1. Blind man - The disciples ask Jesus, 'Who sinned that he be born blind? There has to be evil/sin behind it.' Part of the answer is that we live in a fallen world where these things happen, but it's not necessarily ultimately tied to the sin of the parents or of the children. Jesus answered that it was neither that this man sinned nor did his parents, but it was so that the works of *God* might be displayed in *him*. Jesus then heals the man and explains how the

healing ultimately is God displaying His omnipotent power and His ability to intervene and change things on a finite level.

2. Lazarus - John 11.4. The women are reprimanding Jesus, 'If You had come earlier you could have healed him. He's dead.' Jesus said, 'This illness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.' So God is turning around even the evil effects, even death itself, to bring glory to Himself.
3. Unbelievers - In Romans 9 we have seen this.
4. Pharaoh -
5. Job - Job didn't have a picture of chapters 1 and 2, but we see what God is doing: He is actually displaying something of who He is to the angelic realm. Job went through *extreme* suffering—suffering that none of us will ever experience and yet God is using that to display something of Himself.
6. Death of Christ - The ultimate injustice in all of the universe, past and future, is the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, and yet God transforms that into good so that it is the means by which He saves all.
7. Display to Angels - And He is displaying these things to the angelic realm itself. There are lots of passages where we have little hints like 1Corinthians 11.10 which is about head coverings and authority. Then he just throws in a little comment: Women ought to have a symbol of authority on their head, *because of the angels*, ie, God is demonstrating things amongst us humans beyond the realm which we can touch, see and feel, the realm in which we live. There are passages where even more overtly he talks about God displaying certain things.

The point is that this is an example in Romans 8 of God displaying His glory which brings us to a principle that can summarize some of this. God's election provides for the display of His glory through, not just the believers, but, in this case, *unbelievers* as well. We saw a little of that in verse 17 and I think it is made more explicit in verse 22.

God's Election - Romans 9

- ...
8. Does not violate or remove man's responsibility (19-22)
 9. Is absolutely free and sovereign (20-21)
 10. Is dependent on God's will, not man (22)
 11. Provides for display of His glory through unbelievers (17,22)

He is going to take it back to the overall context. Why has he gone through these 22 verses to explain the situation with the nation of Israel? Now he brings it back:

9.23 And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

‘...the riches of His glory upon vessels of *mercy*.’ So not only vessels of wrath to show who He is, but especially vessels of mercy which He prepared [a different word there] beforehand for glory. Here the subject of the preparation is clearly ‘He’, ie, God Himself. He’s demonstrating His glory even through the evil of man. He can take that, like a potter, He can take a lump and He can make and mold out of it vessels that He wants to beauty, and He can take the same lump, the same depravity, like a Pharaoh or any unbeliever and He still is glorified in that He is shown to be a God of justice.

And He will display justice and wrath and mercy. In fact we would not know of mercy and grace if there were not examples of God displaying wrath and justice and judgment upon the unbeliever and without allowing and permitting evil to exist, those are some attributes of God that may never understand or know.

So I think our little study here is full of deep insight into why God permitted evil overall and more specifically why in the 1st Century he is going to pass over Israel, and why, in talking about vessels of mercy, he is talking about gentiles, about how God allows and permits the ‘dogs’, what the Jews called the gentiles, to enter into forgiveness of sin and salvation and the promises that God had made to Israel but now is extending to the gentiles.

God in His choosing, part of that, the negative aspect of passing over some, provides for the display of His glory through the unbeliever or vessels prepared for destruction.

[Romans 9.22-26, Hosea 1-2 God Displaying Glory in Vessels of Mercy 140]

9.23 And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

Main Answer

1. 2nd answer
2. Difficult grammar
3. Difficult theology
4. Bigger purpose God shows His glory through vessels of mercy; He displays justice, wrath and mercy.

9.23 And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

We would not know anything about God apart of Him revealing Himself

When we looked at the concept of His glory, the composite of all His attributes—when Moses asked, in Exodus 32-33, God said that Moses couldn’t stand to see the full glory. He could only see a part of Him, and *we* have only a part of the glory of God and He unfolds that as we see aspects of who He is, and as He deals with humanity we see aspects of His glory.

I have taught on the Biblical concept of the *incomprehensibility* of God which means that God cannot be known by finite, sinful man. We cannot discover God through scientific investigation or reason our way to understand who He is, cannot use logic, nor philosophy nor experiment; there is nothing available to mankind that can give us insight as to who God is.

We say He is incomprehensible, but He *is knowable* because He has built us to be able to have relationship with Him and to know Him. So God is *knowable*, but only to the extent that He reveals Himself, thus we are utterly dependent on the Scriptures to understand and get a clear and accurate picture of who God is. He has made known the riches of His glory on vessels of mercy. We might say that we will never exhaust, never know God in His totality. We would need to be omniscient to be able to know every aspect and perfection of God. There may even be perfections of God that in all eternity we will never exhaust because He is beyond our finiteness.

He will reveal more in the Millennial Kingdom and I think in eternity. We will spend eternity discovering more and more of the riches of His glory. And in this context, in contrast to vessels of wrath, God reveals something of His grace, His mercy, patience, goodness, all of the positive aspects as He pours out mercy upon vessels of mercy.

9.23 And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

And notice: ‘which He prepared beforehand for glory’ to experience some aspects of that glory. We are created in His image, ie, He has conveyed to us *something* of who He is, something of His glory, but after sin that image has been damaged, marred. The process of salvation and sanctification is God restoring that image of Himself. And it will take a whole lifetime to even come close to completing that process—which won’t be completed until God instantaneously transforms us with a resurrection body when He comes for His own at the rapture.

But notice ‘which He prepared beforehand for glory’. The word ‘prepared’ here is a different word from the one we saw in verse 22. They are radically different words with different meanings. In fact the other one is a more general word; this one is a more specific term. The

NAS uses two words to convey the idea of the one Greek word which has the idea of preparing something *beforehand*. It doesn't specify the time frame but, in conjunction with other passages, perhaps in eternity past, (it's not clear in this passage) but at least the vessels are prepared for glory before the receiving of the mercy. So we will compare the 2 terms.

Terms

1. To prepare, repair - 13 times
Καταρτίζω (kah-tahr-téed-zo) may be reflexive or passive
2. Destruction - temporal, possibly alluding to 70 AD when their nation was completely destroyed.
3. To prepare beforehand - 2x (Ephesians 2.10 *for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.*)
προετοιμάζω (pro-eh-toi-máhd-zo) implies divine preparation

We might ask, when we accepted Christ, why didn't He take us, why do we have to suffer, deal with coronavirus or unbelieving neighbors who treat us badly. He had purposes: one is to purify us, to conform us to His image, but there is also a huge purpose in terms of our relationship to others. In Ephesian 2.10, He had prepared beforehand for good works, ie, He wants us to have a ministry in the world, be a part of what He is doing in the world.

This word implies, in this context, divine preparation, not only because of the meaning of the word, but because of the context in terms of God's choosing, and I have been emphasizing this underlying concept of God's election so we have some details added here.

Election Details

1. Israel corporately chosen (6-24)
2. Israel corporately set aside
3. Beforehand - eternity? (23)

I have been stressing throughout that in these passages we are dealing with Israel corporately, ie, Israel as a nation. And all of the passages that Paul refers to in the OT deal with Israel nationally. Now he is making the point that in this broader, corporate entity called Israel, God selects individuals, or those that represent the nation, like Isaac and Jacob, but overall he is dealing with the *nation* and the nation is going to be set apart. So he is dealing in large measure with this doctrine of election in terms of Israel corporately. And, corporately Israel will be set aside; that's part of the theme here.

But in verse 23, when he says 'beforehand', I am inclined to take it, along with the Ephesians passage, that this doctrine begins in eternity

past. Some may disagree with that, so I put a question mark by it. But you study it on your own, as good Bereans, and come to your own conclusions.

Main Answer

1. 2nd answer
2. Difficult grammar
3. Difficult theology
4. Bigger purpose
5. Broadens principle of Moses and Pharaoh

Back to the bigger passage, I think what Paul is doing is that he is broadening the principles about Moses and Pharaoh, saying that those principles applied to specific representatives of the nation of Israel where mercy was displayed, and Pharaoh was being hardened—those principles can be also to unbelievers in general and believers somewhat in general.

9.23 And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, 24 even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.

Now I think he is going to move into more of an application, to the 1st Century, to the experience of the audience, the believers that resided in Rome, 'even us'. And he is including himself, with 'even us',

Election Details

1. Israel corporately chosen (6-24)
2. Israel corporately set aside
3. Beforehand - eternity? (23)
4. Church age believers - us (24)

9.23 And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, 24 even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.

... 'whom He also called'

Election Details

1. Israel corporately chosen (6-24)
2. Israel corporately set aside
3. Beforehand - eternity? (23)
4. Church age believers - us (24)
5. Church age calling - (8.28-30)

9.23 And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, 24 even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.

... ‘not from among Jews only’,

Election Details

1. Israel corporately chosen (6-24)
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5. Church age calling - (8.28-30)
6. Individual Jews - (24-29)

9.23 And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, 24 even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.

... ‘but also from among Gentiles.’ Now he is kind of saying ‘everything I have been talking about through verse 23, now I am going to bring it home and apply all of these principles to the situation of the 1st Century’. He’s not talking about the church per se, but I think he is talking about specific individuals with regard to their relationship to God amongst Jews and also amongst gentiles. So I think he was expressing this in terms of the situation, during the church age, of the audience he dealt with. So when he talks about Israel being set aside—giving a time frame beforehand, perhaps eternity past—and now when he says ‘us’ especially when he refers to Jews and gentiles and including himself, he is including church age believers.

I think this whole concept of God setting aside some on a *temporary* basis and choosing to incorporate others in the family of God, he is bringing it closer to home. So he is going to specify, ‘even us, whom he also called’. Keep in mind the context here. This is same word that we spent much time developing in Romans 8: the idea of *calling*. In chapter 1 and the calling of Paul himself, back then we developed the idea of this ‘calling’.

But very specifically in the context of Romans 8.28-30, that calling pertains to believers in terms of Jesus Christ, the body of Christ, of salvation and of eternal destiny—that package, the chain, ‘those whom he called he also predestined, those whom he predestined he also justified...’ Remember you can’t break the chain; they all go together. ... ‘and whom he justified he also glorified’, even though it hasn’t occurred yet, it is put in the past, aorist, tense, the same as if we have

already been glorified. So Paul is bringing Romans 8 into this passage: individual Jews, (not talking about corporately or nationally anymore), and not only them, but also from the gentiles.

So he is dealing with this calling, from 8.28-30, not only with individual Jews, 9.24-29, but also from amongst gentiles. He is not specifying what he makes very clear in Ephesians 3 where he defines the church as being made up of Jew and gentile, but it is the same concept here.

Just a reminder, he has been talking about all, ethnic Israel or national or corporate Israel. And there has always been a True Israel, all the way back to Isaac, chapter 9, a believing remnant within the broader Israel of which covenants and promises are made in terms of the nation. And within that there are regenerate individuals that he describes as children *of God*, and also as we saw in this Romans passage, as children *of promise*. That is not the church; it is within Israel. Some theologians have taken those passages to refer to the church, but I think they are not

looking at the details in the text.

And now, beginning in verse 24, he is going to bring in the idea of gentiles but in this context they are still separate, not incorporated into Israel. They are not part of even believing Israel; they are believing gentiles but we know that Jew and gentile will make up the church.

That is not what is in view here; he is just trying to

explain why God has set aside *national* Israel, not that remnant God preserved.

So I think he is dealing with individual Jews, 24-29, and also individual gentiles. That’s why I have entitled the last part of the paragraph ‘Sovereignty over Jews and Gentiles’.



Election Details

1. Israel corporately chosen (6-24)
2. Israel corporately set aside
3. Beforehand - eternity? (23)
4. Church age believers - us (24)
5. Church age calling - (8.28-30)
6. Individual Jews - (24-29)
7. Individual Gentiles - (24-29)

So we can add to our list of Election Details, individual gentiles, a revolutionary idea, something unthought of, something almost unthinkable in the thinking of a Jewish believer in the OT and certainly even believers in the 1st Century after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now gentiles are to be included and we see this worked out as you study the book of Acts. The gospel began amongst Jews in Jerusalem, extends to even the hated Samaritans and some Judeans, and then extends to gentiles to the ends of the earth. And Paul is introducing some of that here in Romans 9, God now extending mercy and grace to gentiles.

Main Answer

1. 2nd answer
2. Difficult grammar
3. Difficult theology
4. Bigger purpose
5. Broadens principle of Moses and Pharaoh
6. Applies 9.6-23

So now he is applying what he said in chapter 9.6-23, coming to his conclusion concerning the explanation of Israel's rejection. In fact it is kind of a transition to what he is going to make more specific beginning in verse 30 through the end of chapter 10.

God's Election - Romans 9

...

8. Does not violate or remove man's responsibility (19-22)
9. Is absolutely free and sovereign (20-21)
10. Is dependent on God's will, not man (22)
11. Provides for display of His glory through unbelievers (17,22)
12. Includes Gentiles (24-26)

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|---|-----------|
| I. Introduction | 1.1-17 |
| II. Provision of God's Righteousness | 1.18-8.39 |
| III. Vindication of God's Righteousness | 9-11 |
| A. Past Sovereign Election of Israel | 9.1-29 |
| 1. Sorrow of Paul Vindicated | 9.1-5 |
| 2. Word of God Vindicated | 9.6-13 |
| 3. Justice of God Vindicated | 9.14-18 |
| 4. Sovereignty of God Vindicated | 9.19-29 |
| a. Human Responsibility Issue | 9.19 |
| b. Sovereignty of Potter | 9.20-21 |
| c. Sovereignty Displayed | 9.22-24 |
| d. Sovereignty Gentile & Jew | 9.25-29 |

The concluding part of this longer paragraph of God's Sovereignty Vindicated, 19-29, is not only displayed on a broad basis but more specifically His sovereignty is displayed in gentile and Jew, specifically sovereignty in terms of *choosing*.

And now he is going to conclude, like he has concluded a lot of other sections in chapter 9, with a series of quotations from the OT. We have to develop the context. He doesn't explain, doesn't expound, he just quotes them.

9.25 As He says also in Hosea, "I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, 'MY PEOPLE,' AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, 'BELOVED.'"

He says, 'As He [God or the Holy Spirit] says also in Hosea,' He is going to use these passages to support and confirm and to apply what he says in verse 24. In other words, this mercy has been extended to a new group—a new group of gentiles. Verses 25 and 26 are connected with the gentiles even though it is kind of an odd passage to use—he could have used maybe the Abrahamic Covenant, Genesis 12, or some passages in Isaiah that specifically spell out gentiles, but for some reason, he chooses Hosea. So it is a little bit of an interpretive problem here. The passage in Hosea pertains to the Northern Kingdom, Israel. Hosea is a prophet to the Northern Kingdom and he is calling them to repent of their idolatry.

We need to look at that passage, to understand what Paul is doing here. Because of the context, I think he is applying Hosea, not as a fulfillment in terms of the gentiles, because then he would violate hermeneutical principles. In the NT when there are quotes like this one, sometimes they are prefaced in terms of such fulfills such and such, and that word *sometimes* is referring to a fulfillment.

What was happening in the 1st Century was actually fulfilling what was predicted in the OT. Matthew uses that phrase in this sense, but he also uses it in another sense as well, where he will take a passage from the OT and will say that this is a fulfillment, eg, the birthplace of Messiah: the Micah passage is fulfilled as it predicts that Messiah will be born in Bethlehem, and he gives the account of His birth there. But not every quotation is marked this way, eg, this one in Romans 9. We do not have the preface, 'this fulfills such and such'. It is just a reference to Hosea.

Also, sometimes a NT author will take a passage from the OT and he is not saying that it is necessarily fulfilled and even Matthew does this with a passage out of Hosea 11 and he uses the word fulfilled but he is using it not in the sense of a prophecy because that passage is not a prophesy; it is actually a historical statement of what took place.

But I think Paul is doing something similar here. Matthew says, when he talks about Israel being called out of Egypt, in a similar way, in the NT there is a coming out of Egypt of the Lord Jesus Christ—not as a fulfillment because it is not a prophecy, but more as a reflection of this is how God works, this is a pattern, an example.

Hosea is not dealing with gentiles. What Paul is doing is he is taking a pattern in the OT and using and applying it. And, by the way, some writers will quote an OT passage as an *application* of a truth, not as a fulfillment. That's another way they are used. This is kind of a complicated area that scholars debate and talk about with how the the NT uses the OT. And there are maybe 4-6 different ways that writers quote from the OT and in that quote sometimes they will summarize, sometimes capture the essence of it, sometimes it will be almost a verbatim quotation. And they use it in different ways.

So here is an example where Paul is taking Hosea and seeing a pattern of how God dealt with Israel. So first let's look at chapter 1. Verse 25 is actually a quotation of the passage in Hosea 2. In verse 26 Paul goes back to Hosea 1 because it is an illustration of a different pattern, what God does in time and what he does with the nation of Israel.

Hosea 1.2-4, *When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry; for the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the LORD." 3 So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. 4 And the LORD said to him, "Name him Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will punish the house of Jehu for the bloodshed of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel.*

It's very strange: God commands a prophet to have a relationship with a prostitute! But He is creating an object lesson, and as abhorrent Biblically as this concept of prostitution and harlotry is, God is taking that imagery and using it as an object lesson and He uses one of His prophets to be the instrument of this illustration. He has 2 children from them and names them—which is significant. Jezreel: God is going to bring destruction, will bring an end. 'I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel (4). Interestingly that will take place in that same valley, the Valley of Jezreel, which is Armageddon—way in the future. But He is dealing with the immediate time frame and He is going to talk about the destruction of the Northern Kingdom, verse 4.

1.5 *"On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel." 6 Then she conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. And the LORD said to him, "Name her Lo-ruhamah, for I will no*

longer have compassion on the house of Israel, that I would ever forgive them.

Lo = no, *ruhamah* = compassion: I will no longer have compassion on the house of Israel. These children are named after what God is going to do. This is the object lesson. 'that I would ever forgive them.' is a strong statement.

1.7 *"But I will have compassion on the house of Judah and deliver them by the LORD their God, and will not deliver them by bow, sword, battle, horses or horsemen." 8 When she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and gave birth to a son. 9 And the LORD said, "Name him Lo-ammi, for you are not My people and I am not your God."*

Lo = not, *ammi* = my people: You are no longer my people. You are idolatrous people, you have followed after other gods, just as I am illustrating with Hosea, you are a harlot, you are cast out, you are no longer my people.

That is kind of the context. Skip to chapter 2. God has rejected this people.

Hosea Context

1. Hosea 2.23 *"I will sow her for Myself in the land. I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion, And I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' And they will say, 'You are my God!'"*

Now this looks to restoration. In the same context Hosea where is predicting the destruction that will come by the Assyrians, and God is justified in abandoning, rejecting and judging them, but because He is also a merciful God, He promises in the next chapter of Hosea, that He is going to call those, who are not His people, to be His people once again. He is going to restore them. Some of the other prophets and even Paul himself are going to expand upon this idea, but Paul is already introducing the idea in Romans 9. 2.

- North Kingdom
3. Indictment for Idolatry
Historically he is indicting them for idolatry in that time frame (of the prophet) and he is predicting in 1.2-9 the Assyrian captivity. That is the context.
4. Assyrian Captivity (1.2-9)

9.25 As He says also in Hosea, “I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, ‘MY PEOPLE,’ AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, ‘BELOVED.’”

In this context Paul has just referred to the gentiles and he is not saying that now the gentiles are Israel but he says that just as God took a people that were *not* his people—were abandoned—He would again call them to Himself. In a similar way, now He is extending to these ‘not His people’ His mercy and His grace.

9.25 As He says also in Hosea, “I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, ‘MY PEOPLE,’ AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, ‘BELOVED.’”

He is going to call these ‘not His people’ gentiles now ‘His people’ and her, who was not beloved, beloved. He is going to take an outcast people and bring them into the fold, in fact make them beloved. He is going to do this for Israel as well, quoting Isaiah. But he is referring to the gentiles, I think, in verses 25 and 26, and now, in 9.26 a quote from Hosea 1.10.

Hosea Context

1. Hosea 2.23
2. North Kingdom
3. Indictment for Idolatry
4. Assyrian Captivity (1.2-9)
5. Hosea 1.10 *Yet the number of the sons of Israel Will be like the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered; And in the place Where it is said to them, “You are not My people,” It will be said to them, “You are the sons of the living God.”*

9.26 “AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, ‘YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,’ THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD.”

Even in Hosea 1, he is quoting from 1.10 where it is talking about that restoration again, Israel will be restored in the future.

9.26 “AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, ‘YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,’ THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD.”

And I think Paul is using this as a pattern, ie, just as God is going to do this for Israel, in this context He is going to do something similar for the gentiles. They are now going to be His people and not only that, ‘they SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD’. And you see that as a title of believers during the church age. That’s my attempt at harmonizing the passage.

Hosea Context

1. Hosea 2.23
2. North Kingdom
3. Indictment for Idolatry
4. Assyrian Captivity (1.2-9)
5. Hosea 1.10
6. Not fulfillment but pattern

God is Sovereign in executing all aspects of His eternal plan.