

Tuesday, June 11, 2013 – Does Romans 9:14-24 Prove the Calvinist Theology?

A proposition wholly foreign to the entire tenor of Scripture is that God MADE some people to be lost and others to be saved. Unfortunately, this suggestion is argued by those of the Calvinist faith and they use Romans 9:14-24 to try and prove their point. It can be a confusing passage that seemingly brings mixed messages when compared to others verses. I hope that the explanation I provide brings the clarity to this passage for those seeking the truth.

In approaching a study of this passage, I would like to approach it from the perspective of a verse by verse study beginning in Romans 9:11 and work through the contextual aspect of these verses.

As we begin, it is prudent to remember that it is the case that all men sin and fall short of God's glory. However, God is not sitting in judgment against man for not being perfect, while at the same time knowing that man is not capable of being perfect. That would be unfair of a holy and righteous Father. That would be like saying that it is God who made man a sinner, then finds fault with man for being such. Paul corrects this by explaining that, though men sin, it is their fault, as we all have free will, and it is their fault for not repenting and being the kind of people God desires by adhering to the "conditions of election."

1. 11 - (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to **election** might stand, not of works but of Him who calls)
  - 1.1. The term election has nothing to do with the salvation of Jacob or Esau.
  - 1.2. He (God), for reasons expressed below, elected Jacob's line to be the lineage to carry out God's plan.
2. 12 - It was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger."
  - 2.1. This statement does not apply to Jacob and Esau as individuals but it relates to their descendants. The descendants of Esau served descendants of Jacob (1 Chron.18:12-15).
3. 13 - As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."
  - 3.1. In this verse Paul uses a Hebrew expression which indicates greater versus lesser. Remember, God knows what choices we will make even before we are born. God knew that Jacob would make choices that were indicative of someone that trusts and serves Him and Esau would not.
  - 3.2. God's promise to Abraham, "In you all the families of the earth will be blessed..." he had Jesus Christ, His plan of redemption and the church in mind.
  - 3.3. This "election" or "rejection" was not unto salvation nor damnation of the individuals involved. God was not choosing persons, but nations to fulfill His purpose. Thus, God's Word did not fail because He did end up with exactly what He wanted: children of promise, or people who would fulfill the description of those to receive His promise.

- 3.4. God chose Jacob's lineage over Esau's.
4. 14 - What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!
  - 4.1. Was God unfair? Absolutely not. He selected the best instruments through which to work His will.
  - 4.2. Even though God chose Jacob's lineage, all Jews had the ability to be obedient and thus be saved.
5. 15 - For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."
  - 5.1. God has already indicated the ones upon whom He would have mercy and compassion: Those who are obedient to Him (Matt. 7:21-22). These blessings from God are not automatic, but conditional. No one has ever deserved what God has promised, and when it has been received, one can only give thanks to God. Likewise, those who are lost must take the blame themselves. As the Lord said through the prophet, "It is thy destruction, O Israel, that thou art against me, against thy help" (Hos. 13:9).
  - 5.2. God wills to have mercy on those who trust and obey Him. He refuses to have mercy on those who trust in their own flesh and refuse to obey Him. Solomon wrote, "He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy."
6. 16 - So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.
  - 6.1. The promised seed was Jesus Christ and not Israel as they believed.
  - 6.2. Esau's character would not allow God to choose him over Jacob's lineage to fulfill the promise to Abraham.
  - 6.3. God selected Abraham, then Isaac then Jacob to fulfill the promise. However since the way of salvation through Christ has been opened to all men, a man decides, through his own will, whether he will trust and obey Jehovah.
7. 17 - For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth."
  - 7.1. Paul uses Pharaoh as an example to show God had the right to show mercy and compassion where ever he willed. God told Pharaoh through Moses that he had raised him up to be king (Exodus 9:16). God raised him to be king, others he did not raise up. But as to whether he was good or wicked, this was left to Pharaoh. God did not make him wicked. Pharaoh chose to disobey God; he is responsible for the type of person he became.
  - 7.2. After Pharaoh, of his own free will, had done evil, been wicked, committed crimes against God and God's people, God made an example of him, and punished him in a public way.
  - 7.3. Think of how many times Pharaoh hardened his own heart before the Lord (Ex. 7:13, 14, 22; 8:15; 8:32: 9:7; 34-35).

- 7.4. God hardened Pharaoh's heart by commanding him to do what was right. This happens today when preachers drive men away by preaching the truth to them. The same gospel that drives some men from the truth will touch the heart of another and lead him to become a Christian.
8. 18 - Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.
- 8.1. Does God actually harden people so they cannot obey nor please Him? The wording seems to say so, yet we know the correct answer is, of course, NO! When God allows people to be hard-hearted, He, in not going against His nature or His Word, "hardens" them (gives them over to their own decision to be hard-hearted), because He will not change His mind with regard to what He wants from them or for them.
- 8.2. When people are stubborn and will not do His will, they are hardened, and this by their own choice! Then comes the time that God will "give them up" to their hardness (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28). Paul has anticipated, and answered the Jewish objection to the doctrine that says they are not saved merely because they are part of Israel after the flesh.
- 8.3. Israel thought that God would never abandon them or accept Gentiles
9. 19 - You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?"
- 9.1. The wording of this proposed objection seems to anticipate the fact that there are still some of Paul's readers are not quite convinced (or are otherwise confused) about whether God causes men to be the way they are. This is typical of those who do not understand that God does not program a person's character.
- 9.2. God does NOT make men what they are. Morally, men make themselves what they are and this is when God finds fault with them.
- 9.3. The "withstanding" (resistance) mentioned in this verse is interesting. It is the word from which we get our medical term "antihistamine." It means to "stand against" something. Paul uses it in its perfect tense, meaning that the action in view was accomplished and will not be repeated. In other words, the objector is saying, "We Jews (or mankind in general) have never stood against the will of God," which was, of course, simply not true. After all, "resisting the will of God" amounts to sin, under which all (Jews and Gentiles) have been indicted (Rom. 1--2) and have thus fallen (Rom. 3:23).
- 10.20 - But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?"
- 10.1. Paul, in this verse, is rebuking those who question God's wisdom, goodness and mercy.
- 10.2. Such questions show a lack of reverence and respect for God.
- 10.3. The grammar underlying the phrase, "the thing formed" means "a plastic model" of something. Here "the thing formed" is not merely asking God, "Why is this?" but is taking God to task and contending with Him. Paul says that God not only has the right to do with us as He pleases (as does an artist with flexible materials), but that we have no right to complain. Again, he is taking the supposed objections to their logical

conclusions and showing that mortals have no authority to so speak or to hold such attitudes toward God. He is not concluding that we have no choice in what we are and how we act.

11.21 - Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

11.1. Paul here is reminding his audience of the sovereignty of God, the Almighty. He seems to grant the objection for a moment to remind us that God may do as He pleases. Let us not, however, forget that He will not be unloving, unfair, unjust, nor hypocritical.

12.22 - What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,

12.1. God "endured" a great deal from mankind. He did so with "much longsuffering," which means He was "slow in avenging wrongs." If God created some men just to destroy them because they could only be sinful, why would He wait to do so? What kind of tyrant do these objectors think Jehovah is? Man, who has sinned against God, has "outfitted himself" unto destruction (set himself up for destruction).

13.23 - and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory,

13.1. There are those to whom God will give abundant blessings Paul now states. These have been "afore-prepared." This verb is found only here and in Eph. 2:10, which speaks of "good works" which have been prepared to be done or fulfilled by faithful followers of Christ. It would seem, then, that these "good works" are accomplished by "good children," those who have "fitted themselves" to do them. These have met the conditions of election set forth by God (trusting and obeying God) in order to do these "good works" acceptably.

14.24 - even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

14.1. From what two groups do "the called" come? Jew and Gentile! Therefore, Paul has proved what he set out to in Rom. 1:17 -- that all can be saved and made righteous through the gospel, God's power to save (Rom. 1:16)! This was the wisdom even from the Old Testament. "Happy is the man that feareth alway; but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief" (Prov. 28:14). From the prophets we learn, "let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:7).

God desires all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4) but only those who are obedient to His will shall ever walk the heavenly shore.

I hope this makes sense and allows you to view these verses with a new understanding.

In Christ, Chuck