

(14) What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! For He says to Moses,

"I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." (Exodus 33:19)

(16) So, then, it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh,

"For this is very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed in all the earth." (Exodus 9:16)

(18) So, then, He has mercy on whomever He wills, and He hardens whomever He wills.

(19) You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who can resist His will?" But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?

(22) What if God --- desiring to show His wrath and to make known His power --- has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of His glory for vessels of mercy, which He has prepared beforehand for glory --- even us whom He has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?

NOTE: For today's discussion, think about your childhood, or that of your children or grandchildren. Remember playing with Tinker Toys, Wooden Logs, and/or Legos, maybe those green Army men, today's super heroes, or dolls. Who decides who is better off, who lives or dies in a battle, or what becomes something super fancy or just a common piece in your play time? You, as a child, built and played with these things according to your desires and wishes. It was your decision...and we call this "sovereignty."

Think on These Things

- 1) The basic issue people have with God's sovereignty is this: "Does God have the right to do anything He wants with His creation and created beings?" Sounds simple to comprehend, maybe even to answer, but the implications to human beings are important. Before we look deeper in this lesson, what is your response to the question? Explain your position.

Personal responses, and the teacher-leader will probably need to be prepared to share his/her own position. Broadly speaking, does God have the right to make people differently, some to honor and save, while others to condemn? Academically thinking, the answer would be yes. If He's the Creator, that's His right. Socially, though, God has given people 'free will' -- the right to accept or reject Him. Therefore, an academic answer isn't so simple....

Doctrinally, this is where we fall back on Arminius & Wesley --- or Calvin. Arminius explained that condemnation is predetermined for 'people' who chose the path of rejecting God. Calvin teaches God simply made some people to be saved, and others to be damned. Which is right?

- 2) Paul poses the question, "Isn't God being unjust?" Does God have the right to save this person, but condemn that person --- without considering their desires? What is Paul's answer? Yours? **Paul's reply is that people DO NOT have the right to question God (v.20), any more than a piece of pottery should question the potter who made it. As identified above, theologically, God's sovereignty is being balanced with the biblical teaching of mankind's 'free will.' Class members may have already taken a side in the debate, and almost all churches have taken a stand they've placed in their doctrines. This is a good time to review your church's doctrine.**

- 3) According to v.16, what is the basis for God making His selections?

V.16 says it depends “on God, who has mercy.” The use of the term ‘mercy’ intimates that God is operating in a rescuing fashion, saving ‘some’ folks from among people who are undeserving. V.16 also says it doesn’t depend on human will or exertion! It’s God’s decision.

- 4) Did you know that --- good or bad --- all governing leaders at the local, regional or national level are in place with God’s consent? What was the purpose for God putting the Pharaoh in place during the time of Moses? See Romans 13:1-7, Colossians 1:15-16, and 1 Peter 2:13-17.

God selected Egypt’s Pharaoh for that specific time so that God could: 1) show His power through Pharaoh; and 2) exalt His Name upon all the earth.

Romans teaches us to be subject to governing authorities, that those who exist have been instituted by God, and that only wrong-doers need to live in fear of them. Colossians adds that all authorities and rulers were put in place by Jesus, for Jesus. Peter adds that it is God’s Will for us to be subject to authorities, that by doing good we can shut down people who wrongfully accuse us, and that we should never do wrong under the guise of freedoms.

- 5) The next question in v.19 seems like a logical follow-up. If the salvation of people is totally up to God’s decision to show mercy or not, why does He still find fault with those who are unsaved? Who is able to resist God? Paul’s answer is, “Does a thing shaped by a potter turn around and ask the potter, ‘Why did you make me this way?’” It is God’s prerogative (choice or decision). If you believe you are saved, how does this passage make you feel?

Personal response. Generally, whether Calvinist or Wesleyan by faith doctrine, people will have a real sense of gratitude. Genuine gratitude for deliverance should lead saved people to reach out to unsaved loved ones, friends, and other people in general.

However, there is always the chance of complication that people will feel ‘special’ in a bad way, the “See, I’m better than most people,” attitude (a smugness). It becomes worse should it devolve into a, “God chose me, not you!” perspective.

- 6) V.22-23 point out that God created some for destruction (which He patiently puts up with) and some for revealing His mercy and glory. In the final judgment, the “justice” of God will be meted out by Jesus on the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11-15). Is God’s salvation only for His chosen people, the Jews?

No, the Great White Throne judgment will encompass all peoples of all nations. In v.24, Paul says even “us who He has called, not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles.”

- 7) What caution does Paul give for people arguing with God (v.20)?

Basically, Paul refutes the idea that man has any right to question God! “Who are you...to answer (talk) back to God?”

People and situations I want to pray for this week: