

## The Potter and the Clay (*Part 2*)

*Romans 9:19-29*

**Thought for the Day:** Those who reject God and refuse His gracious offer of salvation are preparing themselves for eternal destruction.

In Romans 9:14-18 Paul has argued that God is sovereign over His universe and therefore has the right to have mercy on whom He chooses to have mercy and to harden whom He chooses to harden. But such an argument opens Him to the accusation that He is unjust in His dealings with man. How is it fair for Him to blame people who do not respond to Him? Aren't they simply doing what God created them to do?

### **19 One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?"**

- How can God blame men for their disobedience or unbelief, if they have no real choice in the matter? Are they not simply doing what He created them to do?
  - Pharaoh (vss. 16-18) did have a choice and he repeatedly chose to resist and reject the will of God—even in the face of God's patience and repeated opportunities to repent.
  - The Lord only hardened Pharaoh's heart after Pharaoh hardened his own heart and refused to submit to the will of God.
- The questions in this verse come from an attitude of arrogance and rejection of God and His right to rule over us! Paul is addressing those Jews: 1) who rejected Jesus as their Messiah; 2) who refused to submit to the will of God; 3) who despised the idea that God was offering salvation to the Gentiles
- "The sovereignty of God is absolute; yet it is never exercised in condemning men who ought to be saved, but rather it has resulted in the salvation of men who deserved to be lost. Surely no one can regard God as unjust if He is rejecting impenitent and unbelieving Israelites and is saving Gentiles who turn to Him in penitence and faith." (*Charles Erdman, Romans, p. 109*)

### **20 But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" 21 Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?**

- Paul gives a sharp rebuke to those who are not inclined to submit to the will of God, who are rather inclined to question and resist in arrogance, pride and self-righteousness!
- Why is Man so adamant and hostile against God?
  - Could it be that, if God is, in fact, our Creator, that we must humbly submit to Him and acknowledge that He has the right and the power to do with us as He pleases? That's hard to accept when you have decided that you, yourself, are god!
- The Potter, because He is the Creator, has the right to make some people for "noble purposes" and some people for "common use" according to His will and purposes.

### **22 What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with**

**great patience the objects of his wrath — prepared for destruction? 23 What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory—**

- Paul identifies two groups: 1) those who are the objects of God’s wrath; and 2) those who are the objects of His mercy.
  - Both groups equally deserve God’s wrath!
  - The essence of mercy is that you do not get what you deserve. (Psalm 103:10)
  - God chooses to deal with some in mercy. If He did not, no one would survive!
- The wrath of God is the holiness, righteousness and justice of God poured out in devastating and final judgment on those who reject His offer of salvation and forgiveness.
- What does the Bible teach elsewhere about the objects of God’s wrath?
  - John 3:36 – the one who does not believe in the Son and who rejects the Son.
  - Romans 1:18-19 – those godless and wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness and who reject what God has made plain to them.
  - Romans 2:5-11 – those who are stubborn and unrepentant; who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil; those who do evil, either Jew or Gentile.
  - Romans 4:15; 5:9; Galatians 3:10 – those who try to earn a right standing with God by the works of the law rather by faith in Jesus Christ.
  - Ephesians 5:5-6 – those who are immoral, impure, greedy and disobedient; who worship and serve idols.
  - Ephesians 2:1-4, 8-9 – those who follow the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air (Satan); who are disobedient; who gratify the cravings of the sinful nature, following its desires and thoughts; who reject the love, grace and mercy of God.
- God deals with the objects of His wrath with great patience.
  - The example of Pharaoh. (2 Peter 3:9)
- How should we understand the phrase, “objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction?”
  - The objects of God’s wrath are prepared for destruction by their own unbelief, rejection of Jesus Christ, suppression of the truth, self-righteousness, disobedience, hatred toward God, and willful rejection of His love, grace and mercy.
  - Those who are lost must take the responsibility for their own eternal destruction. (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12)
  - “Don’t be confused or misled by the phrase ‘vessels of wrath prepared for destruction’ (9:22). Many grammarians understand the Greek verb translated ‘prepared’ as being in ‘the middle voice,’ which indicates that the subject of the verb acts upon itself (reflexive action). So, it should be translated ‘vessels of wrath fitted *by themselves* for destruction’ (italics mine).” (Swindoll, *Insights on Romans*, p. 197)
- God is very *graciously proactive* in showing mercy to the objects of His mercy and He is very *patiently reactive* in showing wrath to the objects of His wrath.

**Verses 24-29** – Paul applies all of this teaching to the question of God’s laying aside of the Jews and His calling of the Gentiles to Himself: In His sovereignty, God was dealing in justice with the Jews and in grace with the Gentiles.