

Question: Is God Just (9:14)

9:14 *What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!*

- When Paul asks a rhetorical question, he’s either answering a false teaching/understanding that he’s actually heard, or is anticipating the readers’ possible misunderstanding.¹
 - This same line of reasoning is found in 3:1-8.
- The justice of God in salvation is a concern throughout Romans: “...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed [under the old covenant – “passed over” being a reference to Passover]; **for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the Justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus**” (3:23-26; see also Acts 17:30,31).
- God is righteous.² In saving a people who do not deserve to be saved, He is careful to still display that righteousness.

¹ For other rhetorical questions, see Romans 3:5; 6:1; 7:7.

² Deuteronomy 32:4; Ezra 9:15; 2 Chronicles 12:6; Psalm 11:7; 119:37; 129:4; 145:17; Jeremiah 12:1; Lamentations 1:18; Daniel 9:7,14; Zephaniah 3:5; Revelation 16:5,7; 19:2. The longing of human beings for “justice” and “fairness” has been placed in them by God the Creator (Romans 2:14-16); this is a point of contact when witnessing to them. Unbelievers think “justice” and “fairness” can be achieved through purely human means (since they are suppressing “the truth in unrighteousness,” 1:18); a biblical worldview, however, correctly accounts for the universal sin of humanity and its effects on our efforts to construct a “Tower of Babel” of justice. Merely human efforts can only go so far, because humans are sinful. We pursue

After all, Proverbs 17:15 says, “*he who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous, both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD.*” All sins are judged and punished, either eternally in hell or through Christ’s substitutionary atonement on the cross.

Revelation of God’s Glory (9:15)

9:15 *For He says to Moses [in Exodus 33:19], “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.”*

- It is the Exodus. The covenant people of God have sinned by creating the golden calf and worshiping it. Judgment falls. Moses intercedes. God promises to send them into the Promised Land, but threatens not to go with them because of their spiritual unfaithfulness. Moses says, “*If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here*” (Exodus 33:15). It wasn’t about the land (and still isn’t!); it’s about the presence of God.
- Moses asks, “*I pray You, show Me your glory!*” (33:18). God responds, “*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*” (33:19).
- God’s glory and goodness is that He chooses to save a people out of the great mass of humanity in active and willing rebellion against Him. We should praise Him for this!

justice in this world by God’s grace, while at the same time “*according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells*” (2 Peter 3:13).

Human Will and God’s Will (9:16)

9:16 *So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God Who has mercy.*

- God doesn’t look at the actions of human beings before decided whether or not to have compassion and mercy on them through the salvation which comes through Jesus Christ. It is His will that is dominant in salvation.

God’s Will in Those to Whom He Has Shown Mercy

- Once God, by His sovereign will, brings us to salvation by faith in His Son Jesus Christ, His merciful and sovereign will still works in our lives as believers:
 - “...he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God” (John 3:21).
 - “...by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” (Ephesians 2:8-10).
 - “So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God Who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12,13).³

³ While God is the One Who enables us to do good works as believers, this doesn’t mean we sit back and wait for “promptings” or “leadings” to do the good works commanded in Scripture: “Their ability to do good works is not at all of themselves, but wholly from the Spirit of Christ; and that they may be enabled thereunto, besides the graces they have already received, there is necessary an actual

- “Now the God of peace, Who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to Whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen” (Hebrews 13:20,21).

- God receives all the glory, even when we are the ones who are doing the good works He has commanded.⁴

Why the Pharaoh (9:17)

9:17 *For the Scripture says to Pharaoh [in Exodus 9:16], “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 Raised Pharaoh Up

- God does all things for His own glory. He even uses the God-rejecting powers of the world to accomplish His purpose for His glory.
- Consider the sovereignty of God from the wisdom of Proverbs:
“The Lord has made everything for its own purpose, Even the wicked for the day of evil.”

influence of the same Holy Spirit, to work in them to will and to do of His good pleasure; yet they are not hereupon to grow negligent, as if they were not bound to perform any duty, unless upon a special motion of the Spirit, but they ought to be diligent in stirring up the grace of God that is in them” (1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, 16.3).

⁴ “Good works are only such as God hath commanded in his Holy Word, and not such as without the warrant thereof are devised by men out of blind zeal, or upon any pretense of good intentions” (1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, 16.1). God alone is good, and alone dictates what is good in His Word.

*Everyone who is proud in heart
is an abomination to the LORD;
Assuredly, he will not be unpunished...
...the mind of man plans his way,
But the Lord directs his steps”* (Proverbs 16:4,5,9).
Is your God this big? How should this affect the
political commentary of Christians?

God Raises Up All World Leaders for His Purpose

- While Paul specifically references Pharaoh of Egypt in the time of the Exodus, it’s worth being reminded that God raises up all world leaders for His purpose:
 - *“Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever,
For wisdom and power belong to Him.
It is He Who changes the times
and the epochs;
He removes kings and establishes kings”*
(Daniel 2:20,21).
 - *“...the Most High is ruler over
the realm of mankind,
And bestows it on whom He wishes”*
(Daniel 4:17).
- This is the God Who raised up Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon to exact judgment on His people and, seventy years later, raised up Cyrus the Great of Persia to send them back to Judah.

God’s Will (9:18)

9:18 So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

Mercy

- Christian, as recipients of God’s sovereignly-given, undeserved mercy, receiving that mercy through our only Mediator, Jesus Christ, is a daily spiritual discipline:
 - *“...since we have a great high priest Who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of*

God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One Who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:14-16).

- *“...you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life”* (Jude 20,21).
- This is a continual, prayerful seeking of mercy from the heavenly Jesus Christ. It can be described as *“waiting anxiously.”* Does that sound like you? Are you that aware of your great need for divine mercy every moment? Are we like those who cried out to Jesus in His earthly ministry, *“have mercy!”* (Matthew 9:27; 15:22; 17:15; 20:31,32; Mark 10:47,48; Luke 17:13; 18:38,39)?
- It is a mercy we pray toward other believers (Galatians 6:16; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2,16,18; Titus 1:4).
- What does this sovereignly-given, undeserved mercy look like in a Christian’s life? Do you see these evidences of divine grace shining through your life to others?
 - READ Matthew 18:21-35; Luke 10:30-37.
 - Those who have received divine mercy are passionate about faithfully proclaiming God’s Word (2 Corinthians 4:1,2).
 - *“It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus*

“God’s Sovereignty Told Through the Exodus”
from Romans 9:14-18 (NASB)

Pastor Michael Head – Indian Hills Baptist Church, Silver City, NM
Sunday, January 15, 2017

Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life”

(1 Timothy 1:15,16).

- *“...you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him Who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy”* (1 Peter 2:9,10).
- *“...have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh”* (Jude 22,23).
- We just came out of the Advent season; God’s mercy is a frequent theme of those Christmas songs/prayers recorded in the Gospel of Luke (1:50,54,58,72,78).

Hardening

- Concerning Pharaoh during the Exodus, notice the progression:
 - The LORD tells Moses what Pharaoh’s response will be before Moses ever goes to Egypt; in fact, the LORD not only says He will harden Pharaoh’s heart from the beginning, but foretells the tenth and final plague of Egypt: *“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. Then you shall say to Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Israel is My son, My firstborn. So I said to you, “Let My son go that he may serve Me”; but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I*

“God’s Sovereignty Told Through the Exodus”
from Romans 9:14-18 (NASB)

Pastor Michael Head – Indian Hills Baptist Church, Silver City, NM
Sunday, January 15, 2017

will kill your son, your firstborn””
(Exodus 4:21-23).⁵

- Pharaoh hardens his heart, just as the LORD said he would (Exodus 7:13,22; 8:15,19,32; 9:7,34,35).⁶
- The LORD hardens Pharaoh’s heart as He promised (Exodus 9:12; 10:1,20,27; 11:10; 14:8).⁷
- The majority of the Jews in Jesus’ day rejected Him as Messiah – they were hardened by God. READ John 12:37-43. We’ll return to this theme of the hardening of many Jews to the Gospel in Romans 11:7.

God has decreed that salvation comes through Jesus alone. Repent of your sins, believe in the risen Jesus alone for your salvation, and follow Him. Your salvation reveals the sovereign and merciful plan of God, Who deserves all praise and glory for your life in Christ.

“Salvation is of the LORD.”
(Psalm 3:8; 37:39; 68:20; Jonah 2:9; Revelation 7:10)
Praise Him with great praise!

⁵ People sometimes say that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart only after Pharaoh hardened his own heart; the Scripture denies this, though.

⁶ The Egyptians’ stubbornness of heart toward the LORD became legendary; the Philistines warned each other against it in 1 Samuel 6:6.

⁷ During the Exodus, the LORD also hardened the heart of *“Sihon king of Heshbon”* (Deuteronomy 2:30).