

Introduction: Objection to Sovereignty (9:19)

9:19 *You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?”*

- Paul has been exalting the sovereign will of God in human beings coming to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Let’s look over some of the statements he has made since the beginning of this chapter:
 - *“...God’s purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls”* (9:11).
 - *“...He says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion’”* (9:15).
 - *“...it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God Who has mercy”* (9:16).
 - *“...He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires”* (9:18).
- How can some ethnic Israelites be true *“children of God”* (9:8), while others are *“accursed, separated from Christ”* (9:3)? Because the ultimate Cause of salvation by faith in Christ is the unconditional election of God.¹

¹ “Those whom God hath predestinated unto life, He is pleased in His appointed and accepted time effectually to call, by His Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by His almighty power determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace. This effectual call is of God’s free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, nor from any power or agency in the creature, being wholly passive therein, being dead in sins and

- As we continue on this topic reading along with the apostle Paul, can I commend the words of Jesus to you on the topic of God’s sovereignty in salvation? *“At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, ‘I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows Who the Son is except the Father, and Who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him’”* (Luke 11:21,22).² Can you, by the power of the Holy Spirit, follow Jesus’ example in praising the Father for His sovereign hand in saving His elect? If you can’t, can you pray that the Spirit helps you toward this goal?

Answer to the Objection (9:20,21)

Who Are You, O Man (9:20a)?

9:20a *On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God?*

- While this may not seem like a satisfactory answer to the objection, it touches the heart of the problem: the unwillingness of humanity in its sin to submit to the authority of God.

Two Illustrations (9:20b,21)

Why Did You Make Me Like This (9:20b)?

trespasses until being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit; he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it, and that by no less power than that which raised up Christ from the dead” (1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, 10.1,2).² Notice that this verse is Trinitarian: the Son praises the Father in the Holy Spirit.

9:20b *The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me like this,” will it?*

- This first illustration points to our origin: we did not make ourselves, and, therefore, cannot complain to the Maker.³

Potter and Clay (9:21)

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?*

- If the first illustration (9:20b) points to our origin, the second illustration (9:21) points to our purpose. God is sovereign over both.
- The “*potter*” theme is echoed from the Old Testament prophets. READ Isaiah 29:13-16; Jeremiah 18:1-11.

Exalting God’s Patience Before Judgment (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?*

God’s Current Wrath

- God is currently revealing His wrath against sinful humanity: “...*the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness*” (1:18).
- John the Baptist taught this, as well: “*He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the*

³ This is why Genesis 1-2 is so important to a right understanding. It establishes God as the Creator of everything and, therefore the only One with the right to determine how everything is to operate and to what purpose. See also: pjmedia.com/faith/2017/01/09/twenty-six-reasons-why-genesis-1-1-is-the-most-offensive-verse-in-the-bible.

Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36).

God’s Future Wrath

- God’s wrath is also eternally future (Romans 2:8; Ephesians 5:5,6; Colossians 3:5,6).
- At every moment, God’s wrath is building against those who are in rebellion against His righteous truth.

Filling Up Wrath

- The LORD, in speaking to Abraham, said, “*Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age. Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete*” (Genesis 15:13-16). It is God Who decides what nations exist at what time and where. God held off bringing His people out of Egypt and into the Promised Land because the Amorite people had yet to sin as long as He had determined they were to sin.
- In Matthew 23, Jesus condemns the religious leadership for persecuting God’s spokesmen just as their own fathers had done: “*Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell? Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth*” (Matthew 23:32-35). Christ used His servants as instruments of judgment, bringing the damned closer and closer to judgment as their persecuted the Christ’s people.

READ 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16 to see this principle described there, as well.

How the Damned Reveal God’s Character

- Have you ever asked the questions, “if God knows all things, why did He make Adam when He knew Adam (and us) would fall into sin? Why did God allow Adam (and all of us with him) to fall into sin? Why did God create the serpent that would tempt Adam and Eve? Why did God put the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden in the first place? Why does God allow so much evil to go on so long in the world? If God is all-powerful and good, why is there evil?” I think this verse, more than any other in the Bible, answers that question.
- God’s allowing the freely-chosen sin of the serpent, Eve, Adam, me, you, and the world, and His long-delaying judgment over that sin, **is to highlight His great patience**. No one will, at the Judgment Day, say, “You didn’t give us enough time to repent!”
- READ Psalm 73. The Psalmist struggles with God’s long patience with the wicked; the remedy to his faith-struggle is a realization of the inevitable judgment of the wicked.⁴
- We have an illustration of this patience-before-judgment in Noah’s day: “...*the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water*” (1 Peter 3:20).
- Paul’s statement here in 9:22 echoes and elaborates on what he said previously in this letter: READ 2:3-6.

⁴ Sadly, God’s patience in delaying judgment is sometimes lifted up by false teachers and backslidden Christians as a reason to sin with impunity (2 Peter 3:3-9). This is age-old, going back even to the Old Testament (Isaiah 5:19; Jeremiah 17:15; Ezekiel 11:5; 12:22,27; Malachi 2:17).

- God’s delay of judgment grows us in our trust in Him. When we see the super-abundance of sin in the world and around us, we learn to trust His timing for judgment.

Prepared for Destruction

- These “*vessels*” are “*prepared for destruction.*” God, by electing some to a gracious, merciful salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, hardens others and leaves them in their sin. This doctrine is called reprobation.⁵

Only One Escape from God’s Wrath

- On the cross Jesus took God’s infinite wrath against our sin upon Himself. Only by faith in Jesus can we escape this wrath:
 - “...*having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him*” (Romans 5:9).
 - “...*you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, Whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, Who rescues us from the wrath to come*” (1 Thessalonians 1:9,10).

Praise Him for His Patience by Showing It

- The same patience God shows in holding off His judgment against the unrepentant is the same patience He shows us before He saves us: “...*for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect*”

⁵ For other verses in the Bible on reprobation, SEE Proverbs 16:4; 1 Peter 2:8; Jude 4. “By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated, or foreordained to eternal life through Jesus Christ, to the praise of His glorious grace; others being left to act in their sin to their just condemnation, to the praise of His glorious justice” (1689 Baptist Confession, 3.3).

patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life” (1 Timothy 1:16).

- God, by His Holy Spirit Who is present in all believers, produces this same patience in us: “...walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh...but the fruit of the Spirit is...patience...those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16,22,24,25; see also Colossians 1:9-12).
- You should be able to see this God-reflecting, God-produced patience in how you treat other believers (Ephesians 4:1-3; Colossians 3:12,13).⁶ It should be a quality seen on those who teach the Word in the Church (2 Timothy 4:2). This patience ought to be seen in our prayer lives (James 5:7-18)

The Riches of His Glory (9:23)

9:23 And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory...

God’s Sovereignty Over Salvation Fuels His Praise

- 9:22 is a difficult verse, for sure, but it is directly connected to 9:23.
- “Vessels of mercy” are to realize that they deserve to be “vessels of wrath prepared for destruction.” This realization should move them to glory in God’s grace. “No man shall be in heaven but he that sees himself fully qualified for hell” (Robert Traill, 1690).

⁶ “...God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us...therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing” (1 Thessalonians 5:9-11)

Glory

- “Then Moses said, ‘I pray You, **show me Your glory!**’ 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**’” (Exodus 33:18,19). God’s sovereignly-given grace and compassion is His “glory” and “goodness.” Why? Because none deserve it. When He gives it, it is not because we were good enough or worthy enough, for none are. When He gives it, it is good and glorious beyond reckoning and should move us to humble praise forever.
- This “glory” for which we are prepared will be one we enjoy forever and ever: “...God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:4-7).

**Jesus died for sins and rose the third day
that eternal life may be received by faith in Him.
In Him we are delivered
from God’s right wrath against us, and in Him
we are destined for joyous glory
beyond all imagination. Repent and believe today.**