

Romans 9:14-24

Election

Outline of the passage:

- V 14 **Question 1: Is God unjust?**
 Answer: No
- V 15 - 18 Justification & Explanation (incl. OT examples)
 God's saving anyone is a great act of mercy. Justice would lead to
 condemnation for all.
- V 19 **Question 2: Why does God still blame us?**
- V 20 - 21 Answer 1: God is the potter, we are the clay
- V 22 - 23 Answer 2: In order to display his glory
- [V 24-29 OT quotations to illustrate]* – but I didn't include this bit in the sermon

Context:

Last week's study ended with the example of Jacob and Esau, and stated that God chose Jacob according to his purpose of election. This passage (v14-24) then deals with a couple of common questions about election.

Summary of message:

The purpose of the passage is to defend election.
Paul says that it is not unjust because God's saving anyone is an act of his mercy. Besides, God is God and doesn't he have the right to do as he chooses?
The punishment of some serves to highlight his mercy in saving others.

Other relevant passages:

Ephesians 1:1-7
Romans 8:31-39
1 Thess 1

Sermon Outline with some notes:

Election

An act of God, before creation, to choose some people to be saved. Election does not depend on our actions or works, or even our faith, but on God's choice alone.

Two questions:

1) Is God unjust? (v14)

- Not justice but mercy

Nobody deserves to be saved – all have sinned and fallen short (Rom 3). But instead of dealing with us with justice (which would result in punishment), God has chosen to deal mercifully with some.

We cannot call this unjust – even if he only chooses some and not others – because those who are not chosen are dealt with justly.

e.g. Kirk and Hannah rob a bank.

Both deserve prison.

If one of them gets their fine paid and gets out that's very lucky for them, but the one who remains has still been treated justly.

2) What does God still blame us? (19)

- He is the potter, we are the clay
- The punishment of sin reveals God's glory

The judgement and punishment of those who do not know Christ – as well as the salvation and glory of those who do – are both used by God to demonstrate his power and glory.

- In the forgiveness of sinners God is glorified because we recognise his mercy and his grace.
- And in the punishment of sinners God is glorified because we see his justice and righteousness and his overcoming of evil.

So both – God's mercy and his hardening – are for the sake of God's name. And in fact, the just punishment of some shows God's glory all the more because he shows how amazing and miraculous his grace towards us really is.

The balance:

- Divine sovereignty and human responsibility

God is sovereign over everything BUT we are still held responsible for our sin

- Election and non-election - NOT equal opposites

Election THEREFORE faith

Non election AND no faith

The bible DOES NOT EXPLICITLY SAY that God has eternally predestined some people for damnation. It does EXPLICITLY SAY that God has eternally predestined some people for salvation.

The bible always maintains human responsibility over the decision to reject Jesus.

- Our will and God's will

Our will is real – we do make real choices and there are real consequences.
But it is bound by God's will.
e.g. like a fish. Has a real will, but it can't leave the water.

Application:

1. Confidence and hope

In the bible election is always presented as a positive thing – to encourage us and give us confidence and hope. As Christians we can be confident in our salvation, and sure of our future!

2. Prayer and proclamation

Election is not fatalism or determinism. It is not an excuse to be lazy, or to avoid decision making/responsibility/evangelism.
We must still pray and share our faith because we know that God uses these things to bring people to himself.
We do not know who is elect and who is not – the way we know is if they respond in faith to the gospel (1 Thess 1).

Questions for reflection:

You could use these in your group or give them to people to take home?

How does learning about election make you feel?

Why?

Do you see it as a positive or a negative thing?

Why?

Has this passage changed your view on election?

Have you learnt something new?

Can we be sure that we are saved? How?

How do you feel about Paul's response in verses 20-21?

Why?

What do you need to pray in response to this passage?

How does learning about election shape the way you live as a Christian?

What troubles you the most about election (if anything)? Offer that question to God and ask him to teach you.