

LETTING GOD BE GOD
Romans 9:19-24

Exegetical Idea: The manner by which God displays His mercy . . . is by exercising His sovereignty over all. - *Good!!*

Introduction: Having just stated that the answer to the question "Is God just in what He does?" the Apostle now turns to the overall question of God's sovereignty. Moses and Pharaoh served as illustrations of the principle that God has mercy and withholds mercy as He sovereignly decrees, not as man wills it (vss. 16-18). Paul anticipates the next line of argument in the polemic, where he deals with God's motivation in the sovereign exercise of His mercy. *Good!*

μεμφεται
Verse 19: Ἐρεῖς μοι οὖν, "You will say to me therefore," the οὖν tying this section to the discussion from the preceding section. Two figures are employed here, first, counter-question and second, anticipation ("anteisagoge," and "prolepsis," Bullinger, 964, 981). Paul is playing out a hypothetical argument, dealing with the seemingly inescapable determinate will of God. Although the verb ἀνθεστήκειν is in the perfect tense, it has the force of a present condition and is translated, "who withstands His will?" (Murray, II, 31; Zerwick, 480). The objection then (as now) is common when dealing with the matter of reprobation. *Good!*

Verse 20: The answer to the question is one of reprimand, not implying that the question is irrelevant, but rather inappropriate. The construction μενούυγε is rare, occurring only here, in 10:18, Phil. 3:8, and without γε in Luke 11:28, (MG, 628) where it invariably means, "no, rather," and corrects the self-vindication implied in the preceding questions (Murray, 31). As Murray notes, the answer appeals to the silence which the majesty of God demands of us. God is not obligated to answer to us for His acts. This is the evidence of His sovereignty. The contrast "O man" and "God" sets up the emphasis of the section. Man, in Romans, is the one on trial, not God. Verse 20b illustrates a personification (Bullinger, 867), and is reminiscent of Isaiah 29:16. F. F. Bruce adds (p. 195), "God is not answerable to man for what He does, yet He can be relied upon to act in consistency with His character" *Good!*

Verse 21: This verse continues the thought of 20b, ἢ, "or." The question here expects an affirmative answer, employing the introductory οὐκ (Goetchius, 230). BAGD (278) gives ἐξουσίαν as "freedom of choice," putting the freedom attribute emphasis squarely with God, not man. *Good!*

Verse 22: εἰ δὲ is translated "What if" and reiterates the question of verse 20. The verse indicates God's restraint of His execution of His wrath, out of His longsuffering. His patience is evident. σκευῆ ὀργῆς, "vessels of wrath," is a genitive of direction (Wallace, 35), as indicated by the participial phrase, κατηρτισμένα εἰς ἀπώλειαν. *Good!*

It must be borne in mind that in earlier chapters of Romans, Paul has shown that the wrath of God is earned by its objects, not arbitrarily handed out. //

ΕΚΙ?

ΠΡΟΤΟΜΑΣΕΝ?

Verse 23: There is a great contrast in this purpose of God. The vessels of wrath stand in contrast to the vessels of mercy, σκευή ἐλέους (again, the genitive of description) but these are specially prepared by God for glory. The absence of God from the subject in the case of verse 22 does not neglect that God is still involved in the hardening, verse 18. Here though, God is clearly the subject both of the preparation and of the glory. With Murray (p. 35), "God's glory is the sum of His perfections and the riches refer to the splendour and fullness characterizing these perfections." The ἵνα clause indicates result....?

ΜΗΤΑ ΑΛΕ ΤΗΣΕ ΠΛΟΥΤΩΝ ΤΗΣ ΔΟΣΗΣ?

Verse 24: This continues the description of the vessels of mercy. The purpose of God is to call out His chosen. προητομασεν... ἐκάλεσεν is somewhat reminiscent of 8:29 where the same idea occurs. The verse here speaks of the covenant promise, and brings the discussion back to personal application, out of the realm of the abstract. The verse ties back to verses 6-8 where the promise is articulated.

ΕΚΑΛΕΣΕΝ?

Conclusion: The section illustrates Paul's skill in anticipating and answering objecting arguments to stated Christian theology. Where he has an answer, he offers it, logically and Scripturally. In areas where he has little or no answers, he is not intimidated, but defers to the sovereignty of God. Here however, the answer to the objection is given: God is sovereign, do not be surprised by this! Rather, let us focus on His mercy and longsuffering.!!

Good!

Theological Implication: There are few places in Scripture more full of theological grappling than this one. The fear (and here charge) of God is that He is arbitrary and coldly determinate. Paul tells us that He is sovereign, but that He is also longsuffering and merciful. Those two attributes, so masterfully displayed by Paul's account of the purposes of God, stand as evidence against the proposed "cold-hearted orb, that ruled the night."!

Very Good Effort, Neil !!

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