

Challenging Chapters of the Bible

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Rom 9:10-17

This son was our ancestor Isaac. When he married Rebekah, she gave birth to twins. 11 But before they were born, before they had done anything good or bad, she received a message from God. (This message shows that God chooses people according to his own purposes; 12 he calls people, but not according to their good or bad works.) She was told, "Your older son will serve your younger son." 13 In the words of the Scriptures, "I loved Jacob, but I rejected Esau." 14 Are we saying, then, that God was unfair? Of course not! 15 For God said to Moses, "I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose." 16 So it is God who decides to show mercy. We can neither choose it nor work for it. 17 For the Scriptures say that God told Pharaoh, "I have appointed you for the very purpose of displaying my power in you and to spread my fame throughout the earth."

Rom 9:18-24

18 So you see, God chooses to show mercy to some, and he chooses to harden the hearts of others so they refuse to listen. **19** Well then, you might say, "Why does God blame people for not responding? Haven't they simply done what he makes them do?" **20** No, don't say that. Who are you, a mere human being, to argue with God? Should the thing that was created say to the one who created it, "Why have you made me like this?" **21** When a potter makes jars out of clay, doesn't he have a right to use the same lump of clay to make one jar for decoration and another to throw garbage into? **22** In the same way, even though God has the right to show his anger and his power, he is very patient with those on whom his anger falls, who were made for destruction. **23** He does this to make the riches of his glory shine even brighter on those to whom he shows mercy, who were prepared in advance for glory.

A neglected chapter of the Bible.

- ❑ Romans 9 is a great chapter of the Bible, but is often avoided because we have trouble fitting its message into our tidy doctrinal packages.**
- ❑ Romans 9 speaks of things we find hard to accept for just one reason – we are not God.**
- ❑ We should not afford ourselves the luxury of picking and choosing what we want God to be like when it is all too obvious He is perfect as He is.**

A neglected chapter of the Bible.

- ❑ Our corrupt sense of fairness recoils at God choosing Jacob to rule over his brother Esau when neither one had yet made a mistake (Esau) or had done well enough to merit such elevation (Jacob).**
- ❑ We think God to be capricious and arbitrary in his selection of Jacob and we don't know what to do with that.**
- ❑ It often does not fit our template for how God is supposed to behave.**

A neglected chapter of the Bible.

My 30,000 foot conclusions from Romans 9 are –

- God is still everything else we know Him to be and so much more.**
- He will not allow Himself to be limited to what we approve or are able to comprehend.**
- Who are we to question God – he is not in the wrong because I don't happen to understand his workings.**

Nebuchadnezzar

- ☐ Dan 5:21 He was driven from human society. He was given the mind of a wild animal, and he lived among the wild donkeys. He ate grass like a cow, and he was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he learned that the Most High God rules over the kingdoms of the world and appoints anyone he desires to rule over them.**

- ☐ God is not limited to the choices we give Him nor by the circumstances we create.**

Kings, Politicians, and Presidents

- ☐ Ps 75:5-7 Don't raise your fists in defiance at the heavens or speak with such arrogance.'“ 6 For no one on earth—from east or west, or even from the wilderness— should raise a defiant fist. 7 It is God alone who judges; he decides who will rise and who will fall.**

- ☐ Prov 21:1 The king's heart is like a stream of water directed by the Lord; he guides it wherever he pleases.**

God is in control?

- There is a chorus I love to sing with the words, “God is control He’s determined His children will not be forsaken”, but is it true?
- God is sovereign, God is in charge, God has authority over all, but is He in control?
- I say not in the way we usually think where He is assigned the role of puppet master.

God is in control?

- We sometimes treat Him as though He were our personal vending machine or genie.
- We pray for parking spaces, for our teams to win, for good weather for our vacations, and other silly things. (“Lord. Make my life easy”)
- The question is not whether God can or cannot provide all of those – the question is why would He? (goes to our motive)

God is Sovereign

- By definition, sovereignty is having supreme and ultimate rank, power, and authority.**
- He is sovereign when life is smooth and when life hurts.**
- He has the right and ability to control every circumstance of our lives and at the end of the day the question for us never changes – “do I trust Him?”.**

God is Sovereign

- ❑ This light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:17-18.
- ❑ We are handicapped in our view of eternity and therefore in our evaluation of eternal things.
- ❑ We do not always comprehend the true value of our present conditions - what we think is good is often not best.

God is Sovereign

- All that we hold dear is held together and made possible by the sovereignty of our God.
- If God is not sovereign then he is not God.
- None of us would want to spend one minute in a world that has no Sovereign God.

God is Sovereign

- No one is born loving the sovereignty of God – we are all born presuming and assuming our own sovereignty.
- Just as difficult times make us more spiritual, they also tend to make us lovers (and wanters) of His sovereignty.
- The question is this – will we believe what the Bible teaches about our God even if it is way over our heads, or will we settle for only those things we can reason?

Point to Ponder

And the Lord said, in effect, "I will not simply be analyzed, I will be adored. I will not simply be pondered, I will be proclaimed. My sovereignty is not simply to be scrutinized, it is to be heralded. It is not grist for the mill of controversy, it is gospel for sinners who know that their only hope is the sovereign triumph of God's grace over their rebellious will." John Piper

Romans 10:16-21

16 But not everyone welcomes the Good News, for Isaiah the prophet said, “Lord, who has believed our message?” 17 So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ. 18 But I ask, have the people of Israel actually heard the message? Yes, they have: “The message has gone throughout the earth, and the words to all the world.” 19 But I ask, did the people of Israel really understand? Yes, they did, for even in the time of Moses, God said, “I will rouse your jealousy through people who are not even a nation. I will provoke your anger through the foolish Gentiles.” 20 And later Isaiah spoke boldly for God, saying, “I was found by people who were not looking for me. I showed myself to those who were not asking for me.” 21 But regarding Israel, God said, “All day long I opened my arms to them, but they were disobedient and rebellious.”

Not everyone welcomes the Good News

- This is certainly fact based not just on what the Bible says, although that would be enough, but based upon our own experience.
- Acts 17:32 When they heard Paul speak about the resurrection of the dead, some laughed in contempt, but others said, “We want to hear more about this later.” 33 That ended Paul’s discussion with them, 34 but some joined him and became believers.

How can this be?

- **We are born lost and separated from God.**
- **The remedy for our condition is available.**
- **So how can it be that everyone who hears the truth does not believe it and receive it?**

18 But I ask, have the people of Israel actually heard the message?

- Paul also gives an immediate answer of ‘yes’ and not only had they been given the law, and the prophets, but they had a history of God’s direct intervention in their lives.**
- So if all that going for them was not enough to convince them all to be saved, what will any of our day have as an excuse?**

The Mercy of God

- **Rom 10:20** And later Isaiah spoke boldly for God, saying, “I was found by people who were not looking for me. I showed myself to those who were not asking for me.” **21** But regarding Israel, God said, “All day long I opened my arms to them, but they were disobedient and rebellious.”
- **Found by people who weren't looking for Him – how many of us have a story like that?**
- **Rom 10:11** No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God.

The Mercy of God

- For people who already know Him we have promises like this -
- Jer 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. 12 In those days when you pray, I will listen. 13 If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me. 14 I will be found by you,” says the Lord.
- He is the God who wants to be found by his people.

The Mystery of God

- **Romans 11:7** So this is the situation: Most of the people of Israel have not found the favor of God they are looking for so earnestly. A few have—the ones God has chosen—but the hearts of the rest were hardened. **8** As the Scriptures say, “God has put them into a deep sleep. To this day he has shut their eyes so they do not see, and closed their ears so they do not hear.”
- This is hard, but true – Israel reached a point where God closed their eyes and shut their ears.

The Mystery of God

- **Rom 11:11 Did God's people stumble and fall beyond recovery? Of course not! They were disobedient, so God made salvation available to the Gentiles. But he wanted his own people to become jealous and claim it for themselves. 12 Now if the Gentiles were enriched because the people of Israel turned down God's offer of salvation, think how much greater a blessing the world will share when they finally accept it.**
- **Rom 11:19 "Well," you may say, "those branches were broken off to make room for me." 20 Yes, but remember—those branches were broken off because they didn't believe in Christ, and you are there because you do believe. So don't think highly of yourself, but fear what could happen. 21 For if God did not spare the original branches, he won't spare you either.**

Questions