

ROMANS: RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH FROM START TO FINISH

VII. God's Sovereign Administration Of His Righteousness

(Romans 9:1-33)

I. Introduction

- A. The theme of the epistle to the Romans is that God's righteousness is available to man by faith from start to finish (Romans 1:16-17; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 441).
- B. This belief is often not accepted in Christendom: Some claim that one must have faith plus works to be justified, and others say that though we are justified by faith, we cannot righteously live a godly life by faith.
- C. Having taught the *certainty* of the hope of a believer's reaching heaven in Romans 8:28-39, Paul added that God sovereignly administers His righteousness in Romans 9:1-33. We view this passage for our edification:

II. God's Sovereign Administration Of His Righteousness, Romans 9:1-33.

- A. Calvinists interpret Romans 9:1-29 to teach that God sovereignly decides those to whom He will give an immediate gift of faith to believe to be saved and who God will either not give such a faith or even who He will harden against the Gospel so that the one so hardened will be predestined to go to hell.
- B. However, the context reveals that Paul had a very different concern in mind, namely that God's selection was sovereignly based upon His desire to save all who believed versus saving Jews just because they were Jews:
 1. Though the Hebrew people in Paul's day "gloried in the fact that as Israelites they were God's Chosen People (Deut. 7:6; cf. Rom. 2:17-20a; 3:1-2), . . . Jewish involvement" in the Church universal "was decreasing while Gentile participation was becoming dominant," Ibid., p. 476.
 2. This raised the question of whether God had "abandoned the Jewish people," Ibid.
 3. Paul's answer, given in the summary of Romans chapter 9 at Romans 9:30-33, was that Israel as a whole had errantly sought justification by the works of the Law instead of by faith like the Gentiles had sought it.
 4. Paul's Hebrew countrymen might object to God's decision to save man by faith versus works, claiming that God owed them salvation since they were God's Chosen People, but Paul's reply in Romans 9:1-29 was that God was sovereign, so He could decide the basis for why He saved people, and He had decided to save Jews and Gentiles alike by faith and not by Hebrew lineage or by works! (cf. Romans 1:16-17)
- C. We thus explain Paul's teaching in Romans 9:1-29 (as follows):
 1. God has decided not to treat all of Abraham's physical descendants as His **actual spiritual** people, but to select those who like Isaac **believed** in Him in accord with His promise, Romans 9:6-13.
 2. Paul anticipated that a Hebrew might object to this view, claiming that God would be unjust for not choosing every Hebrew who descended from Abraham, but Paul replied that God is not unrighteous, but sovereign in deciding to show His mercy on those who believe versus those who do not, Romans 9:14-16.
 3. Paul then gave the illustration of the Pharaoh of the Exodus, and alluding to Exodus 9:16, he cited God's statement that He had raised Pharaoh up to show His power in him that God might be glorified, Romans 9:17. The way God would achieve this objective was by hardening Pharaoh while having mercy on whom God chose to have mercy, Romans 9:18. Lest we think this teaches that God hardened Pharaoh so that he could not believe in God, the Old Testament record reveals that God gave opportunity for Pharaoh to believe, but when he refused to believe, the Lord let Pharaoh augment his own initial unbelief (as follows):
 - a. When God first told Moses to ask Pharaoh to release Israel, He said that Pharaoh would not, Ex. 3:18-19.
 - b. When Moses later asked Pharaoh to let Israel go, Pharaoh refused just as God had predicted, Exodus 5:1-2.
 - c. After that, God declared that He would harden Pharaoh (Exodus 7:3), and He started to do this by letting Pharaoh's servants duplicate Moses' miracles, allowing room for Pharaoh to rationalize that Moses did not represent any special deity (Exodus 7:8-13) until the plague of the lice where Pharaoh's servants were unable to duplicate that miracle (Exodus 8:16-18), but by then Pharaoh would not repent (Exodus 8:19).
 - d. Thus, God did **not control** Pharaoh's *will*, but He arranged circumstances to fall out so that Pharaoh had **room to augment** his *own* initial *unbelief* in Israel's God, in effect hardening his own initial decision!
 4. Paul then answered the objection that a Hebrew might voice that God could not righteously fault those who could not resist His will, but Paul replied that God was sovereign, and if He chose to glorify Himself by hardening those who [like Pharaoh] had decided to rebel against Him, He could do so, Romans 9:19-29.

Lesson: *God sovereignly chose those who trust in Christ and not those who rely on their Hebrew lineage or works!*

Application: *May we trust in Christ to be justified by God, and may we proclaim the Gospel of salvation by grace.*