

Title:The Potter and the Clay

Passage: Romans 9:19-29

Summary:

Response to objections to God's sovereignty:

I. God is like a potter who has the right to form His clay.

II. God's actions reveal His glory through His wrath and mercy.

III. God fulfilled His plan to rescue many Gentiles and a remnant of Israel.

Key Truths:

- Mercy: not receiving what we deserve (death)
- Grace: receiving what we do not deserve.
- In Christ, we receive both mercy and grace.
 - Mercy: we are spared death (eternal separation from God)
 - Grace: we are adopted as God's child and given the riches of His kingdom.
- The ultimate aim of God is to show mercy but to do so, it must be in the backdrop of wrath and justice.
- On our own, we are happily going to hell without thinking twice about it. But by God's sovereign plan, He changes and molds our lives to bring us to Him.

Application:

- God's sovereignty and human responsibility are compatible with each other.
- Be humble and thankful for God's mercy and grace that He chose to give us.
- If God can save you, anyone can be saved.
- We should not look to doctrine that instead elevates human reasoning and downplays God.
- If not a Christian: You are called to come to Jesus.

Possible Discussion Questions:

- What point(s) in the sermon did the Lord most impress upon you?
- How have you seen God's sovereignty when look back on your life thus far?
- James 1:22 admonishes us to be "doers of the Word." What next steps will you take in response to the truths you have been exposed to?

Introduction

"The greatest barrier to faith is the absence of sense of sin....each individual is a judge and God is on trial." (C.S. Lewis)

- Misperception: man is the center of the universe. If there is a God, He is the one who must submit to man's own beliefs or preferences.

- Man is wanting to create their own god their own understanding of God.

Context of Passage:

Roman's 9

- a treatise on God's sovereignty.
 - God is loving and kind but He is also holy and just and sovereign.
- Deep truths that are key to one's faith.
 - God is sovereign.
 - If God is not sovereign, then left with unanswered questions about suffering.
 - If God is not sovereign, then their faith is shaken when suffering comes because think they haven't done enough.
- Predestination/election.
 - Romans 8-9
 - shifting to this passage, Paul anticipates potential objections to the doctrine of predestination and election.

Passage:

Romans 9:19-29 (ESV)

You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? As indeed he says in Hosea, "Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,' and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.'"

"And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called sons of the living God."

And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved, for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay." And as Isaiah predicted,

"If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring, we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah."

EXPOSITION

Romans 9:19

You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?"

- Objections from readers questioning the doctrine of God’s sovereignty.

Overview

Response to people’s objections:

- I. God is like a potter who has the right to form His clay.
- II. God’s actions reveal His glory through His wrath and mercy.
- III. God fulfilled His plan to rescue many Gentiles and a remnant of Israel.

Context of Passage:

Romans 1

- All are sinners

Romans 3

- Human morality can never rescue oneself.
- Analogy: people trying to swim from California to Japan. Olympic swimmer or novice = all will die on the effort.

Romans 6

- How can we be saved?
- God provided Jesus as way of salvation:

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 9

- God’s sovereignty is compatible with human freedom

I. GOD IS LIKE A POTTER WHO HAS THE RIGHT TO FORM HIS CLAY. (v.20-21)

Romans 9:20-21

But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?” Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?

- analogy of God as a potter while all others are clay.
- Other passages of picturing God as a potter:

Isaiah 29:16

You turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, “He did not make me”; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, “He has no understanding”?

Isaiah 45:9

“Woe to him who strives with him who formed him, a pot among earthen pots! Does the clay say to him who forms it, ‘What are you making?’ or ‘Your work has no handles’?”

Isaiah 64:8

But now, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.

Jeremiah 18:1-11

The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: “Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear my words.” So I went down to the potter's house, and there he was working at his wheel. And the vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to do.

Then the word of the LORD came to me: “O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done? declares the LORD. Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it. And if at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, and if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will relent of the good that I had intended to do to it. Now, therefore, say to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: ‘Thus says the LORD, Behold, I am shaping disaster against you and devising a plan against you. Return, every one from his evil way, and amend your ways and your deeds.’”

How foolish are we when we (the clay) question God (the potter)?

Clay is an accurate picture of us as sinners

- Clay, left alone, will harden and good for nothing but to be destroyed.
- Clay, in its own nature, is not innocent but dirty and broken.

- But God applies His redeeming grace to a humanity filled with sin.
 - His sovereign choice of salvation reflects His grace.
- God doesn't make people wicked and sinful.

Grace vs. mercy - Clear distinction:

- Mercy: not receiving what we deserve
 - As sinners, we deserve nothing but death (separation from God for eternity)
- Grace: receiving what we do not deserve.

In Christ, we receive both mercy and grace.

- Mercy: we are spared death
- Grace: we are adopted as God's child and given the riches of His kingdom.

Objection: Why only save some?

II. GOD'S ACTIONS REVEAL HIS GLORY THROUGH HIS WRATH AND MERCY. (v. 22-24)

Romans 9:22-24

What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?

- To our human minds, this is a foreign idea and we may object (“This is not how I would do it”)
 - But God is wiser and stronger and more good than we could ever be.

Ephesians 2:4-7

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, 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 coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

- Why salvation of those elected?
 - Future glory:
 - “...so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”
- Analogy: When viewing a diamond, it is presented in contrast with black velvet cloth.
 - God's glory/mercy/grace given the backdrop of wrath and justice given to others.
 - If everyone gets grace, then it is hard to see the distinction.
- The ultimate aim of God is to show mercy but to do so, it must be in the backdrop of wrath and justice.
- On our own, we are happily going to hell without thinking twice about it.
 - But by God's sovereign plan, He changes and molds our lives to bring us to Him.

III. GOD FULFILLED HIS PLAN TO RESCUE MANY GENTILES AND A REMNANT OF ISRAEL.

(v. 25-29)

Romans 9:25-29

As indeed he says in Hosea,

“Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’”

“And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called sons of the living God.”

And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: “Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved, for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay.” And as Isaiah predicted,

“If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring, we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah.”

- God chooses some Gentiles and some of Israel in His plan of salvation.

APPLICATION POINTS

For Christians:

Remember God’s sovereignty and human responsibility are compatible with each other.

- Analogy: Plane with two wings. One wing of God’s sovereignty while another wing is human responsibility.
 - One cannot lean on one over the other.
 - If lean too much on human responsibility:
 - Then leads to legalism (believe one can lose one’s salvation so must be strict in behavior and actions)
 - If lean too much on God’s sovereignty:
 - Then become fatalistic. Blame God as culpable for evil. Also ignore the call to make disciples and evangelize the lost.

Acts 2:23

this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

- Question: Who killed Jesus?
 - Foreknowledge of God
 - Jews/Romans crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men
 - People willing crucified Jesus through their sinful, evil nature.

Genesis 50:20

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

- God is 100% sovereign. But man is also 100% responsible.

We need to be humble and thankful for God's mercy and grace that He chose to give us.

- Rejoice in God's sovereign plan in your life.
- If God can save you, He can save also anyone else.'
- We must recognize that God is God and we are not.
 - We have finite minds tainted by sin.
 - We should not look to doctrine that instead elevates human reasoning and downplays God.
- Doctrines:
 - Trinity: 3 Persons in One God.
 - Writing of the Bible: God used Paul but also used Paul and his personality.
- Is this doctrine that I am learning exalting more of God or more of humans?
 - True doctrine exalts God more.
- Pursue holiness and trust God.

For Non-Christians:

You are called to come to Jesus.

- God is welcoming you with open arms.
- God has a special plan with your life proven by the fact you hear this message.
- Appropriate response?
 - Pray in humble repentance. How would God be so loving to choose me to receive this message?
 - Dismiss in arrogance. How can God be the one who decides?
- Humbly consider the right choice.