

- I. Introduction (1:1-17)
- II. Credenda: "The Righteous by Faith" Shall Live (1:18-11:36)
 - A. No justification by our own righteousness (1:18-3:20)
 - B. Justification by Faith Alone in Christ Alone (3:21-4:25)
 - C. All those that God justifies, He shall also glorify (5-8)
 - D. The Universality of God's Righteousness (9-11)
 - 9:1-5 Paul's Grief for his Unbelieving Kinsmen
 - 9:6-13 The Purpose of God According to Election
 - 9:14-29 Questions of Sovereignty & Responsibility
 - 9:30-10:21 The Righteousness by Faith in Christ
 - 11:1-10 Israel's Rejection not Total
 - 11:11-32 Israel's Rejection not Final
 - 11:33-36 Closing Doxology
- III. Agenda: The Righteous "Shall Live by Faith" (12-15:13)
- IV. Conclusion (15:14-16:27)

The Potter's Freedom

Romans, Part XLVI

Romans 9:19-24

Stuart W. Bryan

I. Man is on the Bench (Job 40:1-8; 42:1-6)

Job learns that it is a far different thing to debate with his friends than to contend with the Almighty. God does not answer to _____, man answers to _____.

As Isaiah declares (45:9-10):
⁹"Woe to him who strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth! Shall the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' Or shall your handiwork say, 'He has no hands?' ¹⁰Woe to him who says to his father, 'What are you begetting?' Or to the woman, 'What have you brought forth?'"

Romans 9:19-24

¹⁹You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?" ²⁰But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" ²¹Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? ²²What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

II. Why Does He Still Find Fault?

A. Questioning God's Judgment (19)

God's purposes never fail – though many of Paul's kinsmen have rejected Christ, this fulfills God's purposes it does not violate them. God's purpose in history is to display the fullness of His glory in all the earth – to reveal His *mercy* and *justice* before all nations. Hence, God *elects* some in His *mercy* and *rejects* others in His *justice*. But is that just?

B. Rebuking human hubris (20-21 cf. Is 45:9-10)

Paul responds first by rebuking *human pride*. When it comes to questioning the mystery of God's decrees, we have no _____ to contend with our Maker. "*Our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases*" (Ps 115:3). The distance between the Creator and the creature is as great as the distance between a potter and his clay. God is the Lord.

C. Proclaiming God's Name (22-24 cf. Ex 34:6-7)

So why does God elect one and reject another? *To declare His Name in all the earth*, to reveal His *justice* and His *mercy* to all men (22-24). God proclaims His Name to Moses:

⁶"The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, ⁷keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation." (Ex 34:6-7)

God's purpose in history is twofold. On the one hand, God purpose is to *show His wrath and to make known His power* (22). On the other, God purpose is to *make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy* (23).

III. Behold your God!

A. God, the Potter (cf. Gen 50:20; Is 10:5-19; 40:9-17; Rom 3:5-8)

In our text today, Paul insists that all men and nations are accountable to God, and we are to Him like unto pots of clay or grasshoppers. Isaiah declares:

¹⁵Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, And are counted as the small dust on the scales; Look, He lifts up the isles as a very little thing. ¹⁶And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, Nor its beasts sufficient for a burnt offering. ¹⁷All nations before Him are as nothing, And they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless.

God is completely sovereign and human beings are completely responsible. This is a mystery that Scripture repeatedly emphasizes. Paul writes in Romans 3:5-8:

⁵But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.) ⁶Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world? ⁷For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner? ⁸And why not say, "Let us do evil that good may come"?—as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just.

If God ordains all things and governs all things to proclaim His *mercy* and His *justice*, then how can He still hold people accountable? But Paul insists that when we ask questions like that, we are failing to reckon with the distance between God and man. God's sovereignty does not excuse sin; rather, it highlights our finitude and serves to warn all men: you will either serve God as a _____ or as a _____.

B. Reprobation and Condemnation

God's purpose in history is to proclaim His Name in all the earth – hence, alongside His *mercy*, God intends to reveal His *justice* in all the earth. Paul wrote earlier in Romans:

⁴Or do you despise the riches of [God's] goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? ⁵But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, ⁶who "will render to each one according to his deeds"... (Rom 2:4-6)

Eventually God's *longsuffering* will end and He will execute His *wrath in the day of wrath* and will *destroy* the *vessels of wrath* (cf. 9:22). God will manifest that He is a just God who hates injustice. He will condemn the wicked *according to their* _____ (2:6).

So this introduces an important distinction between *reprobation* and *condemnation*. _____ is God's choice in eternity past on the basis of His own good pleasure to reject some and leave them in their sin. _____ is God's judgment on *the day of wrath* on the basis of the *deeds* of those He rejected (2:6). While God's *rejection* of certain people is based solely on His sovereign will, His *condemnation* of them is based on their own sin. In other words, God will not *judge* the *reprobate* because He *rejected* them; He will *judge* them because of what they have _____.

C. Man, the Potsherd

IV. Conclusion (cf. Acts 4:27-28; Jas 5:11)