

IS GOD UNFAIR?

A Question of Justice and Mercy

Exposition of Romans, XXXVI

Romans 9:14-18

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INTRODUCTION

I. OUR SUPREME, GOOD GOD IS NEVER UNJUST ~ 9:14

For Further Study: Matthew 20:1-16; II Peter 3:16; II Timothy 3:15-17

II. OUR SUPREME, GOOD GOD IS FREE TO EXTEND MERCY TO WHOMEVER HE PLEASES ~ 9:15-16

For Further Study: Exodus 32-33; I Corinthians 1:27-29

III. OUR SUPREME, GOOD GOD IS FREE TO HARDEN WHOM HE WISHES, AND TO THEREBY SHOWCASE HIS GLORY ~ 9:17-18

For Further Study: Genesis 45:5; 50:20; I Kings 22:19-23; Habakkuk 1:13; Acts 4:27-28; Romans 1:24, 26, 28; II Thessalonians 2:11-12; James 1:13; I John 1:5

ALSO CONSIDER: God's Hardening Pharaoh's Heart: Exodus 4:21; 7:3; 10:1; 11:9 to fulfill a plan; etc.; Pharaoh Hardening His Own Heart: Exodus 8:15; 19; 9:7, 17, 27; etc.

CONCLUSION

“[Paul is saying]: ‘If you want to bring in the notion of justice, very well– you will get your wages, you will get what you deserve, and the wages of sin is death! If God’s [salvation were totally] a matter of justice and righteousness, all would be damned; nobody has any claim upon God’s mercy.’ The fact that anybody has ever received mercy is entirely because of the character and nature of God. The real mystery is not that everybody is not saved, but that anybody is saved– that is the mystery! God owes nothing to anybody...”

– D.M. LLOYD-JONES

No human being deserves His mercy. The choice of Isaac over Ishmael and Jacob over Esau must be construed as a merciful one. In other words, the stunning thing for Paul was not that God rejected Ishmael and Esau but that He chose Isaac and Jacob, for they did not deserve to be included in His merciful and gracious purposes. Human beings are apt to criticize God for excluding anyone, but this betrays a theology that views salvation as something God “ought” to bestow on all equally... What is fundamental for God is the revelation of His glory and the proclamation of His name, and He accomplishes this by showing mercy and by withholding it. God’s righteousness is upheld because He manifests it by revealing His glory both in saving and in judging.

– THOMAS SCHREINER