

## EXPOSITION OF ROMANS

Message #36

Romans 9:20-33

There are those who believe they have a right to debate and argue with God, especially when it comes to the subject of God's sovereignty in salvation.

It seems to me that people who really have a problem with this doctrine are people who have works confused with salvation. In fact, that is precisely the issue Paul was facing with some of the Romans.

**NO HUMAN HAS ANY RIGHT TO EVER QUESTION GOD CONCERNING HIS SOVEREIGN WORK IN SALVATION.**

**REASON #1** – Because God is the sovereign creator of all. **9:21**

To make this point, Paul cites an illustration that was used by Jeremiah 18 and Isaiah 29 and 45, the illustration of the potter. In the first century Roman world, there was a great demand for ceramic pottery. A metal pot cost a great deal of money, and since the majority of believers were poor, pottery making was a big business. The art of ceramics wasn't just a hobby in Paul's day, it was a necessity.

Most of the pots were made out of clay. A potter would take clay, add some water and trodden it down with his feet. He had a wooden stand or workbench in front of him and he would pile wet clay on the bench. He had two wooden discs beside his wooden stand. He would take the clay and pile some on the stand and begin to spin it. He would then take his thumb and begin to form an opening, and he would keep working until he could get his entire fist in that opening. After he had completed forming the pot, he would take the vessel and put it in the sun to dry. He would not expose it directly to the sun, but he would put it in a place where the warm wind could evenly dry it.

After it was dried, the potter would decide how much time he wanted to invest in it. Sometimes he would decide to make a beautiful treasured masterpiece which could be displayed or put to use at formal events. Sometimes he would decide to sell it right off the rack as a cheap vessel. The potter might decide to make one vessel a prized honorable piece, or he might decide to make it one that wasn't an honorable piece. The truth is, the potter could do what he decided with the clay.

Let us observe how Isaiah the prophet saw this in Isaiah 45:5-10. He saw it the same as Paul. We do not have a right to talk back to God.

What is truly sad is that in many cases a lump of clay is smarter than many people who go to church. A lump of clay does not ever talk back to his maker, but certain people dare talk back to and argue with God. As Dr. H. A. Ironside said, "...it is the height of impiety for puny man to sit in judgments upon God" (*Romans*, p. 122).

**REASON #2** – Because God has a sovereign purpose for all. **9:22-29**

There are four groups of people that God’s sovereign plan includes:

**Group #1** - God has a sovereign purpose for those prepared for destruction. **9:22**

The participle “prepared” is passive, meaning God is the outside agent who performs the action on the recipient. Now someone might ask, “How could God prepare anyone for destruction?” Frankly, this is the wrong question to ask. All humanity is under a death sentence because “all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God.” The right question is, “How can God give anyone salvation?” We may easily and certainly see why God would prepare us for destruction for that is what we deserve.

***(Purpose #1)*** - He prepares some to destruction to show His wrath. **9:22a**

Lost people are going to end up revealing something about God’s character, namely God has a wrath side to Him.

When we read verses like Revelation 14:11 or 19:3, it becomes very evident that God wants His people to forever realize He does have a wrath side to Him.

***(Purpose #2)*** - He prepares some to destruction to make known His power. **9:22b**

When God destroys the wicked, all will stand in awe of the power of God. The greatest and most prestigious will be demolished by the power of God and God’s power will be clearly seen. One may mock God, reject Christ and arrogantly pursue his own way. There will come a day when that person will wind up being an advertisement for the power of God!

**Group #2** - God has sovereign purpose for those prepared for glory. **9:23-24**

**Notice carefully in verse 23, these people are called vessels of “mercy,” not vessels of merit.**

The ultimate objective for the vessels who have been the recipients of God’s mercy is to make us rich in His glory. We have been prepared to receive the riches of the glory of God, and, according to I Corinthians 2:9, it has not even entered into our hearts all that God has prepared for those who love Him.

Here is one of the most important verses in all of the Bible for it clearly reveals that “the” major purpose of our salvation is to reflect the glory of God.

No one can say God is the source of sin (James 1:13), but no one can ever say He is not the source of mercy.

**Group #3** - God has a sovereign purpose which includes Gentiles . **9:25-26**

This is a very interesting quote from Hosea. Paul is obviously using this quote to explain that God, in His sovereignty, has made a provisional plan for the Gentiles. The quote, however, that Paul cites, refers to Israel and to the fact that God will ultimately fulfill His sonship promises to the nation even though it doesn't look like it. Hosea is discussing the 10 tribes of Israel being scattered and God promising to regather those tribes and make them His people (Hosea 1:10; 2:23).

The main point was that whenever Israel came to the place where she was totally surrounded by enemies so that the entire world claimed she was no longer God's nation, then God would intervene. He would sovereignly intervene and show the world that people who didn't look like His people were called to be His people.

It seems to me that Paul's point here is that the Gentiles are in the plan of God. They will continue to dominate Israel until God steps in and claims Israel as His own. God is a sovereign God over all things.

**Group #4** - God has a sovereign purpose which includes Jews . **9:27-29**

The "Lord of Sabaoth," literally the Lord of Armies, will ultimately step in and finish His work with Israel.

Things will eventually become so hostile for Israel that unless God steps in, she would be annihilated like Sodom and Gomorrah. Jesus said, "Except those days would be shortened, there would be no flesh saved" (Matthew 24:22).

Paul's main point is this - God has this complex sovereign program for the ages. This program includes people who are saved and people who aren't saved. His program includes a plan for Gentiles and a plan based on promises to Israel. Who in the world are we to dare talk back with this sovereign God?

**REASON #3** – Because God has a sovereign provision of salvation. **9:30-33**

The Gentile Concept - God has decreed that salvation is by His sovereignty and comes by faith.

**9:30**

The Jewish Concept - God has not decreed that salvation comes by man's works. **9:31-33**

What will you say to this God of Israel? What will you say to His method of salvation?  
What will you say to God's sovereignty? Do you want to argue with God or debate Him?  
Do you want to humbly submit to Him?

Will you believe on Jesus Christ right now? Will you place your faith in Him and rely on God's sovereignty to save you? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved!