

Title: Who Do You Think You Are?

Title: Romans 9:19–21

Introduction

Imagine someone going through life always giving into their base desires.

Let's say they are just an angry person, and they always allow their anger to control them. This, over the course of their life eventually gets them into some real hot water. Not only have they driven everyone out of their life because of their anger, but now their anger has driven them to kill someone who got in the way of what they wanted.

As this person stands before the judge and the judge asked why would you do such a heinous, monstrous crime.

The angry person simply responds – “It’s not my fault, it’s just how God made me.”

This guy is a sociopath! We would be appalled! We would want the judge to lock him up and throw away the key!

Folks, this is the line of reasoning of those who are against Paul and God that we see in Romans 9:19. Let’s review starting in verse 14

Romans 9:14–19 (ESV)

*¹⁴ What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God’s part? By no means! ¹⁵ For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” ¹⁶ So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” ¹⁸ So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills. ¹⁹ **You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?”***

Do you see the argument Paul is raising on behalf of those who have not embraced the glorious Gospel of freedom in Christ?

These people have a real attitude with God!

They have the attitude of “It’s not my fault I don’t follow God, it’s HIS fault!”

Woah! Be careful laying the blame for your sin at God’s feet.

Main Idea: Why Blame Me If I Can’t Resist Him?

What is at the heart of such questioning? The heart of the matter is this. Those who are opposed to God question God with an accusatory spirit.

“God, you need to prove yourself to me.”

“God, why did you cause a hurricane to kill so many people?”

“God, why do you hold me responsible when I am just a victim of your sovereign will?”

In essence the spirit of the questioner is - God, why are you so unfair?

Now, don't get me wrong, believers can, will, and should question God. There is nothing wrong with questioning God for understanding and growth.

Or even questioning God because you simply don't understand why you are going through what you are going through.

Questioning God becomes a problem when you blame him for evil. When you accuse him of unrighteousness.

Paul, in this passage employs a rhetorical line of reasoning on behalf of a group of people that place themselves, whether they realize it or not, in an authority over God.

When someone blames or accuses God, they are demanding an answer from him and therefore placing themselves as an authority over him. Not a great plan.

Paul, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, makes something obvious, **NO PART OF GOD'S CREATION HAS THE RIGHT TO ACCUSE OR BLAME HIM OF ANYTHING.**

We, His creation, must know our place and trust that whatever God does, is for His glory - because His glory is perfect!

There is nothing greater than Him!

We should rejoice in Him, even when we don't fully understand His ways.

There are three attitudes' believers should have when dealing with the temptation of blaming God...

Check out the first attitude you must have...

1. Be Careful About Accusing God (vs. 19)

Romans 9:19 ESV

¹⁹ You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?”

As I mentioned, it's not a problem to question God when you have a genuine desire to understand something.

In his book called Prayer, Phillip Yancey has a chapter dedicated to “wrestling with God.” His point is wrestling for understanding is good and it actually exhibits faith.

This is not what Paul is talking about in this passage.

“You will say to me then” - the “you” are the unbelieving trying to trap Paul in a theological conundrum. Their goal? Prove Paul wrong.

Their question? *"Why does God still find fault if he has mercy on whom he has mercy and he hardens whom he hardens?"*

This is a legitimate question. However, you can see the "blaming God factor" in the next part of this question.

"For who can resist his will?"

Romans 9:19 NLT

¹⁹ Well then, you might say, "Why does God blame people for not responding? Haven't they simply done what he makes them do?"

And there it is. A direct assault on the character of God.

After all the Bible says elsewhere...

2 Chronicles 20:6 ESV

⁶ and said, "O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you.

Daniel 4:35 ESV

³⁵ all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"

So, their question is, in one sense, valid.

"Who can resist the will of God?"

But the spirit in which they ask it is attempting to vilify God.

***FIND FAULT** - means to "blame." Paul again poses human questions that he will answer in v.v. 20, 21. If God hardens whom He wills (vs. 18), why blame the one who was hardened? **HIS WILL:** If God hardens, how can it be said that person is resisting God? Isn't the hardened one only doing what God has willed him to do? **ANSWER BACK** means "to make a rejoinder," implying an argumentative attitude. Paul rebukes anyone who would raise such objections, which in the end are only a protest against God's ways, and not a sincere request for an explanation." - NKJVB*

So, it goes back to the motive of their heart in their line of questioning. And in their motivation, they are in essence putting the all-powerful, all knowing, all loving God of the Universe - the creator of all who is, on the witness stand and poking Him in the chest and saying, "How dare you hold me accountable to my sin!" How dare you still blame me when you are supposedly in charge!

People like this want all the benefits from God but no obligation to God.

What's their problem?

In their own eyes they are basically good, innocent, and lovely. God is wicked, evil, and unfair.

They have become the judge over the King. They are inditing his character.

These sinners are BLAMING HIM for finding fault in them.

This is what the Pharisees (the religious group that hated Jesus because he threatened their position and power) did over and over with the God/man, Jesus.

Mark 3:1–6 (ESV)

¹ Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. ² And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. ³ And he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come here." ⁴ And he said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. ⁵ And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. ⁶ The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

Seriously? They wanted to destroy Jesus because he healed someone on the sabbath? No, they wanted to destroy Jesus, because he threatened their autonomy. They were wrong, He was perfectly right and righteous. They were pursuing their will, couched in religiosity, Jesus was doing the will of His Father – perfectly.

Jesus was good and perfect, they were wicked and wrong. And they were especially wicked and wrong by accusing Jesus (God himself) of breaking God's law.

Before bringing an accusation against God, you had better know Him. You can reject God if you want, but don't blame him for your sin.

You have willfully chosen against God and his ways over the course of your life.

You have willfully lied, stolen, cheated, coveted, murdered others in your heart with you anger, committed adultery either physically or in your mind, you have failed to totally and completely honor your father and mother, you have failed to keep the Lord's Day for Him alone, you have failed by putting no other god's in front of the one true God.

If you are a human, this is true of you and this is because of you. You have failed and God will punish you in eternal Hell because of your failure.

This is true of everyone -

Romans 5:12 ESV

¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—

Romans 3:23 ESV

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

1 Kings 8:46 ESV

⁴⁶ "If they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you are angry with them and give them to an enemy, so that they are carried away captive to the land of the enemy, far off or near,

So, all have sinned against God and because of this are deserving of Hell.

Everyone is on their way to hell. God is under no obligation to save anyone.

Yet, if you are IN CHRIST this morning, you have experienced His mercy and grace. You, by no effort of your own have become part of the family of God. You, by no effort of your own are saved from eternal condemnation and are transferred to the kingdom of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:13–14 ESV

¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Sinner, instead of blaming God, turn to God because He is your only hope from the wrath of God!

Don't be a fool and blame God - so dumb!

By the way, Paul is going to answer their question...

But before he does, what should we do with this information?

Remember biblical application leads to life transformation.

So, how do we apply this?

Simple...

For the sinner, the one who is an antagonist against God - God cannot be blamed for your sin. You have chosen to go against God, and you are responsible to pay the tab.

God is under no obligation to save you from your eternal fate, but the good news is the gospel call goes out to you and he desires for you to become his child.

What is stopping you. It's not him, it's you. Turn to him right now!

For the Christian - When tough stuff happens in your life or the lives of those around you, resist the immature response of blaming God. Recognize that God is always at work for the good of His people. And He allows a lot of difficult trials in your life...

To force you to your knees in prayer.

To force you to His Word for answers.

To force you to His People for support.

Instead for blaming God for your difficult circumstances, praise Him that He is walking with you through them.

Psalm 23:4 ESV

⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Hebrews 13:5 ESV

⁵ Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Live believing these promises knowing that God is for you and not against you.

Review - Why Blame Me If I Can't Resist Him?

- Be Careful About Accusing God

2. Be Mindful of Your Position Before God (vs. 20)

I warned you that Paul would respond to this heinous accusation. And he has some very strong words for those blaming God...

Romans 9:20 ESV

²⁰ 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?"

What? Who in the world does God think He is to talk to us in such a fashion.

If God is not careful, He might just get himself CANCELED!

Doesn't He realize that our fragile egos can't handle such hateful and hurtful speech?

Who does God think He is?

He thinks He's God! And God answers to no one. The ways of God are not up for negotiation.

God doesn't have a council or a board to bounce things off of.

God has the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - And this God-head answers to no one.

God explains himself to no one.

God is obligated to no one.

Ladies and gentlemen. God is God and you and I are not God.

We don't get to vote Him out of office because He is not popular.

What we do get to do is to submit to his good and glorious will. This is our highest calling. This is our greatest privilege. This is for our greatest good.

Dr. David Jeremiah said this - "God hardened Pharaoh's heart after Pharaoh hardened his own heart ([Ex 9: 34, 35](#)). God's hardening always presupposes sin and can be part of the punishment of sins ([John 12:40](#)). God can freely extend His mercy or withhold it. All deserve judgement. The

question is never “Why did He not save that one?” The question must always be, “Why did he save any?” - TJSB

So, we must be careful to remember to whom we are speaking.

Paul gives an amazing illustration to make his point abundantly clear - he reminds his readers of what they are not and what they are.

What they are not? The molder - The creator.

The creator of the mold has the distinct privilege, honor, and authority to make what they want to make.

What they are? They are the molded.

And Paul makes it very clear that the molded have no say in anything regarding their creation.

Elliot's drawing of me

Why does Paul remind us of our position before God? Why does he make it abundantly clear that He is the Molder and we are the molded?

So, we can see his MERCY!

He is merciful! Explain...

What should we do with this information?

Christian - Remember that our God is no one to be trifled with. He is God very God and we are not.

Please remind yourself of who God truly is. You can do this by reading about God in his Word.

Read a book on the attributes of God.

Spend time in prayer about who God is and what He has done for you.

Unbeliever - Remember this, if you fail to repent and place your faith in Christ - *“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God!”*

Review - Why Blame Me If I Can't Resist Him?

- Be Careful About Accusing God
- Be Mindful of Your Position Before God

3. Be Humble Regarding The Rights of God (vs. 21)

Continuing with his molder analogy, Paul gets specific and graphic regarding God's right to do what He wishes with His creation. He does this by asking another rhetorical question...

Romans 9:21 ESV

²¹ 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?

So, does the potter (God) have a right over the clay to do what He wants with that clay or not?

It is interesting that Paul uses the analogy of clay.

What did God create Adam out of in the book of Genesis?

Genesis 2:5–7 ESV

⁵ When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, ⁶ and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground— ⁷ then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

From the dust of the ground. Adam came from the ground and God formed him and breathed life into him.

I'm not sure what worldview you hold to, but the fact of the matter is God molded Adam and gave him life. And He has molded you and given you life.

Adam rebelled against the one who created him.

We rebelled against the one who created us.

This rebellion caused our separation from God

At the very point of Adam and Eve's rebellion God could have justly thrown them into eternal Hell / Prison.

He did not. He implemented a plan of rescue that we first see in this enigmatic statement spoken to the evil one found in...

Genesis 3:15 ESV

¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

This act and subsequent plan of rescue was an act of immense mercy and glorious grace.

Like Adam and Eve, at the very point of your rebellion, God could have justly throw you into eternal Hell / Prison.

But He did not. If you have not already, you still have opportunity to turn to God. The Bible says, *"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you WILL be saved!"*

The simple point is this. God is the Creator. God is your Creator, and you are subject to Him.

Paul's rhetorical question leads to a logical conclusion. An airtight case, if you will.

The Potter has the right to do with the clay whatever he wants to do.

He can make a pot for honorable use.

He can make a pot for dishonorable use.

Romans 9:21 NLT

²¹ When a potter makes jars out of clay, doesn't he have a right to use the same lump of clay to make one jar for decoration and another to throw garbage into?

"The lump of clay (v. 21) refers metaphorically to all of humanity from which the potter (God) chooses to make a vessel for honorable use (in context, to receive His mercy and compassion) and another for common use (i.e., to be excluded from his mercy and compassion)." The Moody Bible Commentary

So, does the Potter, God have this right over his pots?

If you say yes, then you understand the authority of the Sovereign God.

"You don't give God the authority over your life. He has it, totally. - John Piper

If you say no, then you fail to understand the complete and all encompassing, supreme authority of God.

"Every sin is an act of cosmic treason, a futile attempt to dethrone God in His sovereign authority." - R. C. Sproul

I think it is crucial for you to understand that God does not answer to his creation. He does what he wants, when He wants, and how he wants to do it.

We don't mind this thought until it messes with our autonomy.

God allows you to live in your autonomy - at least your perceived autonomy simply because he is merciful and can still get his will accomplished in spite of our sinful rebellion.

Yet we are called to live "Coram Deo."

What is this?

"To live coram Deo is to live one's entire life in the presence of God, under the authority of God, to the glory of God." - R.C. Sproul

Unfortunately, the vast majority of humanity does not live under the authority of God. They live under the delusion that they are the authority of their own life.

God may give them the "freedom" to live how they desire, but that freedom is short lived because of the inevitability of what comes next.

For the believer - the new heavens and the new earth.

For the unbeliever - the lake that burns with fire.

Revelation 20:11-15 ESV

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

For the believer, this is what you are saved from.

For the unbeliever this is your future.

Ultimately this dichotomy falls under the authority of God for His glory and good purposes.

I have loved ones that are most likely writhing in eternal torment. I don't like this thought. However, I trust God and believe that when I see Him face to face, He will help me to understand more clearly and fully why...

Romans 9:21 ESV

²¹ 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?

Remember...

Deuteronomy 29:29 ESV

²⁹ "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Isaiah 55:8–9 ESV

⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. ⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

This concept is rooted in the Old Testament...

*"Both OT prophets used the image of the potter's total control over the shaping, reshaping, and purpose of his clay creations to emphasize Yahweh's sovereignty over His creation (see [Jer 18:4](#) and note)." John D. Barry, Douglas Mangum, et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), [Ro 9:21](#).*

Jeremiah 18:6 ESV

⁶ "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.

Proverbs 16:4 ESV

⁴ The LORD has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble.

Okay, so if what I have said about God is true - that He can do whatever He desires with His creation - what should that do to your attitude toward Him?

It should humble you.

Why? Because you recognize that you are at his mercy!

Honestly this has been our struggle as humans since the beginning.

Who's the Boss? God or You?

The only logical conclusion to this verse is twofold

Worship and awe for the believer. Do you?

Repentance and salvation for the unbeliever. Why won't you? I'm begging you to taste and see that the Lord is good.

Review - Why Blame Me If I Can't Resist Him?

- Be Careful About Accusing God
- Be Mindful of Your Position Before God
- Be Humble Regarding The Rights of God

Conclusion

Do you remember **the angry guy** I mentioned in the beginning of the sermon this morning?

I think we all agreed that him telling the judge for his reason for killing the person out of anger was because *"that's just the way God made me,"* goes against everything we understand to be right.

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We cannot ascribe our evil actions to God.

God is sovereign over all creation, and He creates all of His creation for His purposes and His glory - including you

Although we cannot understand God's side of salvation completely, and we cannot comprehend how all of this works out in the end...

I do know this.

God desires to rescue you today and bring you into His family.

Connection Group Reflection Questions