



Sermon Text: Romans 9:19-20

Sermon Date: November 15

Paul's teaching throughout Romans 9 is especially difficult for many to understand and embrace. Surely Paul cannot mean what it sounds like he is saying: that God sovereignly chooses who will be saved on the basis of His own will and not on the basis of anything in those individuals chosen. This idea raises deeply emotional objections. This is hard truth! Are we interpreting Paul correctly?

Pastor Justin outlined two ways that verses 19-20 prove that we are properly following Paul's argument.

1. **The OBJECTION reveals our interpretation is correct:** The objection of verse 19 – “You will say to me then, ‘Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?’” – wouldn’t be raised if the previous verses taught that the ultimate factor in human destiny were human choice. If God’s election was His response to His perfect knowledge of our future free, self-determining choices (i.e., He elects those He knows will believe & hardens those He knows will disbelieve), then no one would object. But the objection is here, and its thrust is that God can’t justly hold us accountable because His will is irresistible. As one man said, “How can God blame the victim of his sovereignty?” Thus the fact that this objection is raised demonstrates Paul has been teaching God’s sovereign, unconditional election.
2. **Paul’s NON-RESPONSE reveals our interpretation is correct:** It is important to see what Paul does not say: He doesn’t refute the objector’s premise. If he is being misunderstood, now is a perfect time for Paul to clarify and remove the stumbling block of God’s irresistible sovereignty. He doesn’t! Paul doesn’t backtrack or soften anything He has said. He doesn’t even attempt to refute the premise that God’s will of decree is irresistible (remember: the two wills of God). This too demonstrates we have been interpreting Paul correctly.

Having seen what Paul does not say, we closed by looking at what he does say. He rebukes the insolence of the objector and highlights the infinite gap between lowly finite man and infinite Creator God. “*But who are you, O man, to answer back to God?*” Paul’s first goal isn’t to answer the objection but to silence the objector! Who do we think we are to sit in judgment on God? When did we, foolish human creatures, grow so wise and powerful that we get to be the god of God and dictate how He should govern his own creation? Paul wants us to get our hearts right, to remember our vast limitations, and to recognize that our proper place is sitting beneath God’s revelation, not standing above it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. **What stood out to you from the sermon and the biblical text from this Sunday?**
2. **Can you relate to the objection of verse 19? In what way do you find yourself “answering back” to God as we walk through Romans 9?**
3. **How can you rightly humble yourself by remembering the infinite gap that separates you, O man, from eternal, creator God?**