



Sermon Text: Romans 9:20-23

Sermon Date: November 22

As we arrived at the conclusion of this challenging section of Romans 9, Pastor Justin opened by offering 3 qualifying truths that help frame our understanding of this passage.

1. **God is good.** Psalm 119:68 declares, “You are good and you do good.” Even though this challenging subject strains our minds, we mustn’t forget that God is always fully and completely good.
2. **Humanity is sinful.** Paul established this point firmly beginning in Romans 1:19-23. In Romans 9 God is interacting with fallen humanity. The single lump of clay from which vessels of honor or dishonor are fashioned is the lump of sinful, idolatrous, guilty humanity. Paul’s emphasis upon God’s mercy throughout this chapter highlights this fact.
3. **God’s ways are beyond our comprehension.** By His very nature, God is beyond our figuring out. We are incapable of fully finding out how God is just to act as He does in election. As Luther said, “His judgments would not be past finding out if we could always perceive them to be just.”

In our text, we saw three main points.

1. **The absurdity of our objecting:** *verse 20.* As the thing molded, we have no right to dictate to the Molder the terms of our existence. It is absurd, and Paul wants us to feel the weight of the absurdity.
2. **The ability and authority of the Creator:** *verse 21.* Just like the potter, God is free to do whatever He wishes with his creatures—to make from the same lump of fallen humanity some vessels for honorable use and other vessels for dishonorable use. He has the power to do this (the ability). But he also has the right to do this (the authority).
3. **The agenda of God in election:** *verses 22-23.* God “has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction” for three reasons.
 - a. **God desires to manifest the fullness of his character.** God desires to show his wrath, and thus manifest the fullness of who He is, his righteousness and justice toward sin.
 - b. **God desires to showcase the extent of his power.** Instead of immediately destroying sinful humanity, God endures them patiently (just as He did Pharaoh) so that He can showcase the vastness of His might in their eternal destruction. Through their willful, persistent rebellion, humanity is “storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed” (Rom. 2:5).
 - c. **God desires to highlight the majesty of His mercy.** This is God’s ultimate purpose; the previous two are means to accomplish this end. In order for His mercy to be fully comprehended as marvelous, God places it against the backdrop of his just, unfathomable wrath and power. The existence of Hell will eternally exalt the wonder of Heaven.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. **What stood out to you from the sermon and the biblical text from this Sunday?**
2. **What is your biggest takeaway from this section of Romans: Romans 9:6-23?**
3. **How do the three qualifying truths help you as you wrestle with Paul’s teaching of God’s unconditional election?**