

Rev. Lex DeLong / General Adult

Romans Road to Recovery / Romans 9:19–29

Notes

Romans 9:19–29, "Chosen by Grace," Subtitle: Answering the Objection to God's Sovereign Choice
Scripture: Isaiah 45:9–12. (This continues Romans Chapter 9. The passage addresses the human question of "Why does He still find fault?" with the "potter and clay" imagery. Pairing it with the reading of Isaiah 45:9–12 reinforces a Creator/creation distinction)

Join us this Sunday at 10:30 in person or online live as we learn that if we spend our lives demanding an answer from God that satisfies our logic, we will miss the mercy that saves our souls. We don't find meaning in the answers we get, but in the shape the Potter gives us. #Romans9 #Preaching

Sermon: Chosen by Grace

Text: Romans 9:19–29

Main Idea: "We do not find our meaning in the answer to our questions, but in the shape the Potter gives us."

Introduction: The Illusion of Control

Context: For eight chapters in this letter, Paul has been building a mountain of hope. He's told us there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus; that nothing can separate us from His love. But as we hit chapter 9, a shadow falls over the argument. The rhetorical question arises: *If God is so faithful, what happened to Israel?* If the people who received the promises are currently in unbelief, has God's Word failed?

In the first 18 verses of this chapter, Paul's answer is a resounding "**No.**" He has shown us that God's promise wasn't based on DNA, but on **Divine Choice**. He pointed to Isaac, not Ishmael; to Jacob, not Esau. He established that God's purpose in election stands—not because of the one who runs or the one who works, but because of God who shows mercy.

The Consultant in the Workshop That brings us to the tension of today's text. When we hear that God is the one who initiates, chooses, and has mercy on whom He wills, something in our human nature rebels.

We've all been there. You've planned a project—maybe it's a new concrete pad in the backyard or a complex engine repair on your F-150—and you think you have every variable accounted for. You have the blueprint and the "right" to see it go your way. But

then, the material doesn't cooperate. In those moments, our first instinct isn't submission; it's **objection**. We want to cross-examine the situation. We want to know why the plan we designed isn't the one unfolding.

The Potter's Workshop: Paul knows that after 18 verses of hearing about God's sovereign choice, we are ready to put God on trial. We have questions. But if we are honest, our questions are rarely about information; they are about **autonomy**. We don't want an explanation as much as we want a seat on the board of directors.

As we open this passage, we have to face a hard truth:

Main Idea:

We do not find our meaning in the answer to our questions, but in the shape the Potter gives us.

If you spend your life waiting for God to satisfy your logic before you trust His hand, you will live a life of restless frustration. Peace is not found in understanding the Potter; it is found in yielding to Him.

Transition: This brings us to the first hard turn in the text. In verse 19, Paul, through the Holy Spirit's leading, anticipates our protest. He hears the voice in our hearts that says,

"If God is the one who chooses, then why does He still find fault with me? For who can resist His will?"

Paul's response is one of the most sobering in all of Scripture. He doesn't offer a philosophical compromise. Instead, he reminds us of a reality we often try to forget: **God doesn't owe us an explanation; He offers us His glory.**

I. God Doesn't Owe Us an Explanation; He Offers Us His Glorious Design (v. 19–21)

A. Our "Question" is often a mask for our Objection v. 19

- "When we ask, *"Why does He still find fault?"* (v. 19), we aren't usually seeking light; we are throwing heat. Like a child asking philosophical questions about the necessity of work just to avoid cleaning their room, our "Why" is often a sophisticated way of saying "No" to God's authority, or at least complaining about it.
- The Greek word here is **antapokrinomai**—it's the sound of a creature trying to litigate against the Creator.
- Verse 20 stops us in our tracks: *"Who are you, O man, to answer back to God?"*

We must realize that...

B. We do not direct the Potter; the Potter defines us v. 19-20

- We spend our lives trying to act as consultants on our own lives. But Paul uses the word **boulema** (v. 19) for "will"—this is an unshakeable blueprint, not a suggestion.

As **C.H. Spurgeon** once said: "*The vessel is not consulted as to its shape... and remember, that we are not only clay, but we are fallen clay.*"

- True peace begins when we stop trying to manage the Potter and start trusting the Hands that found us in our fallen "lump" and chose to reshape us.

C. Our value isn't found in being "special" compared to others; it is found in being "special" because of God's plan for us v. 21

- In the workshop, a greasy RIDGID impact wrench used to pull rusted bolts off an F-150 is often more valuable to the mission than a gold-plated wrench sitting on a shelf.
- Our significance isn't in our "status" or being more "honorable" than the person in the next seat; it's found in being the specific tool the Potter designed for His kingdom purpose.
- Too many times, the world judges God as objectionable or judgmental, but for one who is willing to read the Bible as is, rather than just judging based on what others have told them, they would find a God who desires to rescue.

The thing is, in the Bible, God's...

II. Sovereignty Isn't About God's Right to Reject, but His Freedom to Rescue (v. 22–24)

A. God's patience is the only reason we have a pulse v. 22-23

- It says here that He "*endured with much patience*" the vessels of wrath.

As **Jerry Bridges** reminds us:

"God's sovereignty is never exercised in a vacuum. It is always exercised in perfect harmony with His other attributes—His love, His wisdom, and His justice."

- Greek distinction: The vessels of wrath (v. 22) are **katertismena** (passive)—they were "fitted" for destruction by their own persistent rebellion.

- But the vessels of mercy (v. 23) are ***proetoimases*** (active)—"He prepared them beforehand." God is the active author of mercy, but man is lost in the state of being the author of his own ruin.

B. We are vessels of mercy, not trophies of merit v. 23

- Election (God's choosing and predetermining) isn't a wall that keeps us out; it's the only reason anyone gets in.
- We are not trophies of our own effort; we are vessels of His mercy. This mercy is not a wage we earned; it is a gift the Potter was free to give to those who deserved nothing but the scrap heap.
- The beauty of this passage comes when Paul dismantles the objection, but clarifying the immense reach of God's Mercy.

C. The rescue of God's grace pierces through any created barrier to reach His vessels, you and me v. 24

- Verse 24 shatters our ethnic and social categories. By calling us, "us," from both Jews and Gentiles, God is creating a "New Man" reality.

He is not "replacing" His people; He is sovereignly expanding His program.

- His grace pierces through heritage, borders, and baggage.
- He is able to do that because no barrier we build is stronger than the hand that formed us.

III. Our God Is Too Holy to Be Questioned, yet Too Merciful to Be Resisted (v. 25–29)

- Our biggest struggle is our perception of an eternal, sovereign God. It is in our finite and fallible minds trying to understand the omniscient mind of God.
- Only God can reside in full and complete holiness and yet operate toward His creation in unstoppable Mercy. He strives to shift our identity from that which reflects destruction to that which reflects redemption.

A. God specializes in renaming the rejected v. 25-26

- Using Hosea (v. 25), Paul shows that God's "No" to a disobedient people was the prelude to a "Yes" for the world.
- He takes what was "Not My People" and renames them "My Beloved." This isn't just a change of status; it's a change of identity.

- The Potter has the authority to rename the clay.

B. God is faithful to His promise, even when we are faithless to His person v. 27-28

- The existence of a "remnant" (v. 27) is the anchor for our hope.
- If God saved *all* of Israel regardless of faith, it would be ethnic universalism.
- If He saved *none*, He would be a covenant-breaker.
- The remnant proves that God's Word **cannot and has not failed**.

C. If it weren't for the mercy of God, we would all be ashes v. 29

- Paul calls Him the "Lord of **Sabaoth**" (v. 29)—the Lord of Armies.
- He has the power of heaven to judge us like Sodom, yet He uses that same power to preserve a "seed."
- As **Robert Mounce** noted, the wonder of the gospel is that the Potter Himself entered the clay to redeem the vessels of mercy, you and me.

Conclusion: The Gold in the Cracks

The Illustration of Kintsugi: In Japanese culture, there is an ancient art form called **Kintsugi**. When a valuable piece of pottery falls and shatters, they don't throw the shards away. Instead, a master craftsman takes the broken pieces and joins them back together using a lacquer mixed with **pure gold**. The result is stronger and more beautiful than the original. The cracks aren't seen as failures; they are seen as the places where the gold is most visible. What was once destined for the refuse pile has now become a treasure. This one pot pictured here is on the market for around \$23,000, in case any of you have some extra change and are so inclined.

The Application: Renaming the Broken

- This is the heart of Romans 9. We come to this text with our objections and our "Why" questions, feeling like marred or broken clay.
- But look again at verse 25. God takes the "Not My People"—the ones the world of sin has thrown in the scrap heap—and He doesn't just repair them; He **renames** them. He calls the rejected "Beloved." He takes the "Not-Mercied" (the cracked) and He pours His glory into the very cracks of sin's destruction. That added glory in their cracks is their inheritance.
- Their value now changes because of His glory being melded into their cracks. What

was once broken has now become His treasure, Christ's inheritance.

We can spend our lives fighting the hands on the Potter's wheel, demanding an explanation for our shape, or we can find our peace in the Potter's Hands that are shaping us.

You won't find the meaning of your life in an answer that satisfies your logic; you'll find it in the mercy that saves your soul.

- We stop asking "Why?" when we realize that the Potter didn't just stay behind the wheel. In the person of Jesus Christ, the Potter became a vessel of clay. He entered our world and allowed Himself to be **broken** on a Roman cross. Why? So that the "gold" of His grace could be poured into our brokenness, to change us from vessels of destruction to vessels of Mercy.
- When you look at your life, don't just see the cracks. As a child of God, see the gold of His mercy holding you together. Submit to the wheel. Trust the hands. Because in the final analysis of your life, your past, and your future...

"The Potter's power is the servant of His mercy."

- *"Church, we won't find the meaning of our lives in an answer that satisfies our logic; we'll find it in the mercy that saves our souls. Let's stop directing the Potter and start trusting His hands. Because when we see the Cross—where the Potter Himself was broken for the sake of the clay—we see the ultimate proof that his Mercy absolutely masters His Power, compels it to mend the broken, rename them in glory, and preserve them for peace."*
- When you encounter the cracks of this broken world this week, may you see them not as a sign of His absence, but as the very place where He is pouring in the gold of His mercy.

Main Idea:

We do not find our meaning in the answer to our questions, but in the shape the Potter gives us.

- May we all leave with the peace that comes not from having all the answers, but from knowing the One who uses the wheel to shape and rename us.

Reflection & Discussion Questions

1. **On the "Masked" Objection** Think back to a recent time you asked God "Why?" Was that question born out of a genuine search for clarity, or was it a mask for an "objection" to how He is currently shaping your life? What would it look like to turn that "Why?" into a "Yes" to His authority?

2. On the Blueprint vs. the Consultant In what specific area of your life (family, career, health, or ministry) are you currently trying to act as a "consultant" to the Potter rather than a vessel on the wheel? How would your stress level change if you truly accepted that the Potter defines the Clay, and not the other way around?

3. On the Value of the Assignment Paul speaks of vessels for "honorable" use and "common" use. Do you find yourself comparing your "shape" or your "assignment" to someone else's? How does the truth—that your value is found in the *Owner's hand* rather than your *function*—change the way you view your current circumstances?

4. On the "Gold in the Cracks" Where are the "cracks" in your life right now? Instead of trying to hide them or fix them with your own effort, can you see them as the very places where God wants to pour in the "gold" of His mercy to show off His glory?

5. On the Lord of Sabaoth How does knowing that the "Lord of Armies" (the Commander of History) is also the "Father of Mercy" give you confidence for the week ahead? If His power is the servant of His mercy, what is there to fear?