

THE BOOK OF ROMANS
"God's Justice Upheld"
Romans 9:14-18

INTRODUCTION

1. Paul expressed great sorrow over Israel (vv 1-3). He was pained that the nation had so many privileges, yet had failed God.
2. Israel's failure and subsequent rejection by God called in question God's promises to the nation. However, Paul argues that the promises still are valid and God's Word has not failed.
3. But the underlying truth is this: Israel must lose her promises unless, on their own history, they leave God to His own sovereignty. In a very real sense, Israel had absolutely no title to what God wanted to give them. They deserved to be cut off. Yet, God's sovereignty spared them. In doing this, is God unrighteous? That is the question now to be answered:-

1. God's Sovereignty--Questioned v. 14

a. Noted

The question is introduced as a supposed objection (cf. 3:5; 6:1; 7:7). It is not a question posed by some unknown objection or an unsaved Jew, but just a natural connection. The point is: since God's will is absolute and His promises totally faithful, is He unrighteous to take Isaac over Ishmael and Jacob over Esau?

b. Replied

The familiar "God forbid" is the reply. The thought is: perish the thought! The negative used in the question expects a negative response. For this expressive phrase, see 3:4, 6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 11:1, 11).

2. God's Sovereignty--With Moses vv 15, 16

a. Illustrated v. 15

The circumstances of the direct quotation here need to be studied (Ex 33:19). A great breach with God by Israel is recorded (Ex. 32): Israel changed their glory for the likeness of an ox that eats grass. As a resort, God wanted to destroy the nation and bring a new one into existence around Moses (Ex 32:10). Moses pled with God for the people. He offered to be blotted out of God's book for the nation (Ex 32:32). He sought to make atonement for the people (Ex 32:30). Moses spent 40 days and nights interceding for the people (Ex 34:28). What a record in Exodus 32-34! God shows Moses himself favor and then all the people (Ex 33:18, 19; 34:10). Who can find fault with that? God had to come out to

man in mercy or all was over for the nation!

b. Declared v. 16

"So then" introduces a divine inference from the O.T. passage cited (Ex 33:19). Here is a bold word. Neither the context nor the scope of the argument suggest any limitations. No compromise of these plain words is to be made. The effects of God's mercy does not depend on human effort or will, but on God's will.

3. God's Sovereignty--With Pharaoh vv. 17, 18

a. Illustrated v. 17

The reference to Moses illustrates divine mercy in the choice of Isaac and Jacob (cf. vv. 7, 10-13). The reference to Pharaoh illustrates divine judgement in the rejection of Ishmael and Esau (vv. 7, 10-13). Clearly the Bible teaches that Pharaoh hardened his heart. He did this seven times before God hardened it (7:13, 14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7 and three times more afterward 9:34, 35; 13:15). Ten times the hardening is referred to God (two predictions: 4:21; 7:3; 9:12 [first hardening by God] 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17). There is no question about the sovereign work of God (albeit the freewill of Pharaoh). Now, Pharaoh was sovereignly "raised up" by God (Ex 9:16). His purpose is clearly noted here: 1) to show God's power and 2) that God's Name might be published in all the earth.

b. Declared v. 18

"So then" (same as v. 16) is the conclusion for the illustration of Pharaoh and Moses. All is reserved for God's sovereign will. Without controversy, here is solid glory for God. To be God, God must have absolute sovereignty. Nothing must direct His activity but His own will. Let us bow to worship Him.

CONCLUSION

God is sovereign. Man is free. The reconciliation of these two is beyond our powers. The Bible teaches both and leaves them. We shall be wise to do the same. Amen.