

(9:14-15) - WHAT SHALL WE SAY THEN? IS THERE UNRIGHTEOUSNESS WITH GOD? GOD FORBID. FOR HE SAITH TO MOSES, I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I WILL HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I WILL HAVE COMPASSION - Paul quotes from **Exodus 33:19** when Moses asked the Lord, **“Show me Thy glory” (Exod. 33:18)**. The Lord’s answer is very significant for us to understand something of the glory of God in His character and His purpose. God said to Moses, **“I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.”** God’s glory is not only in the fact that He has mercy and compassion upon sinners through Christ, but that He is also SOVEREIGN in showing mercy and compassion on whom He will.

God reveals His mercy and compassion to save sinners in the Lord Jesus Christ and based on His shed blood and imputed righteousness alone. He commands sinners to seek Him and to seek salvation from Him in Christ. By nature, as sinful, rebellious people, we all refuse to admit our depravity and that we deserve damnation. By nature, we refuse to admit that even our best efforts to be good are wicked and evil when compared to Christ’s righteousness. By nature, we all stubbornly insist on salvation our own way by our works, efforts, performances, and/or our wills. God’s Word as revealed in passages such as **Romans 3:10-20** shows us that we have no goodness and no desire for the things of God. We insist that there is some goodness within us whereby we have the power to choose good over evil according to God’s standard. God says that if we are left to ourselves, we would never choose Him. We would of our own wills perish in unbelief. But it is God’s glory that He has sovereignly chosen to save some sinners by His grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. He has determined to show His mercy and compassion on an elect people. Those whom God has chosen are known only to Him and can only be known to us as they are brought by God through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit to hear and believe the Gospel wherein Christ is revealed as the Lord our Righteousness.

(9:16) - SO THEN IT IS NOT OF HIM THAT WILLETH, NOR OF HIM THAT RUNNETH, BUT OF GOD THAT SHEWETH MERCY - God’s choice and the salvation of His people are in no way conditioned on them. Nothing outside of God Himself had any influence on Him in these matters. No good in the sinner or done by the sinner had anything to do with God’s mercy and compassion. **“So then it is not of him that willeth”** - God’s choice and salvation of His people were and are not based on their willingness to believe. All by nature are unwilling to be saved God’s way. This does not mean that those whom God saves do not choose eternal life in Christ or are not made willing, or that they are compelled to be saved against their wills. It means that naturally people have no desire for salvation by God’s grace in Christ and will not choose eternal life God’s revealed way. God, however, sends His Holy Spirit to make His people willing by the powerful convictions of truth that show us our sins and drive us to Christ for all salvation. Eternal life is not given because man had any original willingness to be saved. It is because God gives him a new heart and spirit in new birth. God gives him true knowledge of and faith in Christ that brings him to repentance of dead works (**John 1:11-13; 6:44-45; 16:8-11**). The word **“willeth”** here denotes wish or desire. Salvation is not by man’s free will; for fallen men have no free will. By nature, we are dead in trespasses and sins, and this includes our wills. Men cannot come to Christ because they will not. In salvation Christ conquers us, including our wills, and draws us to Himself.

“Nor of him that runneth” - This describes man seeking to work his way into God’s favor. It denotes strenuous, intense effort, as when a man is anxious to obtain an object or hastens from danger. The meaning is not that the sinner does not make an effort to be saved; nor that all who become Christians do not in fact strive to enter into the kingdom, or earnestly desire salvation (**Luke 16:16 13:24**). There is no effort more intense and persevering, no struggle more demanding or agonizing, than when a sinner seeks eternal life. Nor does it mean that they who strive in a proper way, and with proper effort, shall not obtain eternal life (**Matt. 7:7**). But the sense is: (1) That the sinner would not put forth any effort himself. If left to his own course he would never seek to be saved; and (2) That the sinner is pardoned, not on account of his efforts; not because he makes an exertion; but because God chose to pardon him in Christ. There is no merit in his anxiety, and prayers, and agony, on account of which God would forgive him; but he is still dependent on the mercy of God to save him.

“But of God that sheweth mercy” - Mercy (salvation) is the sovereign will and purpose of God alone. God is the first cause of salvation, and Christ’s righteousness is the only ground of salvation. If God saves any of us, it is because of His sovereign mercy and not because of our wills or our works.

(9:17) - FOR THE SCRIPTURE SAITH UNTO PHARAOH, EVEN FOR THIS SAME PURPOSE HAVE I RAISED THEE UP, THAT I MIGHT SHEW MY POWER IN THEE, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE DECLARED THROUGHOUT ALL THE EARTH - The Lord raised up Pharaoh to show that no one, not even the most powerful king and nation on earth at that time, could prevent Him from accomplishing His purpose. **“That MY name might be declared”** - This is God’s glory. No charge of unrighteousness can be proven against God because His grace and mercy are perfectly consistent with His holiness and truth. We know that all sin is with men, but we see that even the wrath and rebellion of men will ultimately praise the Lord. In hardening Pharaoh God did no injustice, nor did He act contrary to the perfection of His character. It is not as if God persuaded or forced an unwilling, kind-hearted Pharaoh to be hard towards God and His people. In hardening the heart of Pharaoh, God simply allowed his heart to pursue its natural inclination. However, the birth, situation, power, and conduct of Pharaoh were all by divine appointment to accomplish the will of God concerning Israel and, ultimately, to use them to bring Christ into the world for the salvation of His people, Jew and Gentile (**Acts 2:23; Acts 4:27-28**). Even the wrath of man will praise the Lord; and for His purpose and glory all men and things exist (**Psalm 76:10**). Wicked men are sometimes restrained by God. They are hardened when the restraints are removed, and they are left free to act according to their own depraved wills (**2 Thes. 2:10-12**). This is judicial hardening wherein God acts according to His strict justice.

(9:18) - THEREFORE HATH HE MERCY ON WHOM HE WILL [HAVE MERCY], AND WHOM HE WILL HE HARDENETH - Paul repeats that God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy (**Matt. 11:25-26**). Mercy is a divine attribute! Mercy is sovereign! God must deal in justice with all men; but His justice towards His elect people is satisfied by the obedience unto death of the Lord Jesus Christ Who is the seat of all mercy. Grace and mercy cannot be exercised at the expense of justice. The proof of this is the cross of Christ where He bore away the sins of His people.