

Discussion Guide

Romans 9:14-18

Opening Prayer

- **Guided Prayer:** Pray asking for the Holy Spirit's guidance in understanding and applying the truths discussed.

Recap

- **Brief Recap of the Sermon:** Discuss the context of Romans 9, focusing on Paul's deep emotional struggle over Israel's spiritual state and the broader theme of God's sovereignty in salvation.
- **Here is a summary of the text to facilitate this recap.**
 - Exploring God's Justice (Romans 9:14): Reflection on the question of whether God is unjust in His sovereign election and the affirmation of God's righteousness.
 - The Role of Mercy (Romans 9:15-16): Examination of the statement that God's mercy is not dependent on human will or effort, but solely on God's sovereign choice.
 - The Example of Pharaoh (Romans 9:17-18): Discussion on how the hardening of Pharaoh's heart serves as an example of God exercising His sovereign will for His purposes.

Summary of Romans 9:14-18

In this passage, Paul addresses potential questions about the justice of God in the context of divine election. He asserts that God is not unjust in His sovereign choosing, illustrating this with references to Scripture, particularly God's words to Moses that He will have mercy on whom He has mercy. This demonstrates that salvation is a result of God's mercy and not human desire or effort. Paul further illustrates his point by referencing the story of Pharaoh, showing that God hardened Pharaoh's heart to display His power and make His name proclaimed throughout the earth. This passage emphasizes God's freedom and sovereignty in dispensing mercy and hardening hearts according to His purposes.

Understanding the Text

1. **God's Justice and Divine Election:** How does Paul address the issue of God's justice in His sovereign election?
2. **God's Mercy and Divine Election:** What does it mean that God's mercy does not depend on human will or effort? How does this challenge our understanding of how God operates?
3. **Historical Example of Pharaoh:** In what way does the story of Pharaoh exemplify God's sovereign purpose?
4. **Distinguishing Between Justice and Injustice:** How does Paul's reasoning in this passage help distinguish between human conceptions of justice and injustice and the divine perspective?
5. **The Concept of Hardening Hearts:** What implications does the hardening of Pharaoh's heart have for our understanding of God's sovereignty? How does this align with the overall theme of Romans?
6. **God's Sovereignty and Human Response:** How does this passage challenge our views on free will and human responsibility in the context of God's sovereignty?

7. **Understanding God's Purposes:** In what ways does the hardening of Pharaoh's heart serve God's broader purposes, as illustrated in this passage?
8. **The Relationship Between Justice and Mercy:** How does this passage reveal the balance between God's mercy and justice?

Practical Application

1. **Building a Biblical Perspective:** How can our understanding of God's mercy, independent of human effort, affect the way we view our own salvation and relationship with God?
2. **Responding to God's Sovereignty in Daily Life:** How can acknowledging God's sovereignty in all aspects of life change our daily decisions and attitudes?
3. **Confronting Difficulties with Trust:** When faced with difficult or seemingly unjust situations, how can we lean on our understanding of God's sovereignty and justice?
4. **Evangelism and God's Sovereignty:** How should the understanding of God's sovereign choice influence our approach to sharing the Gospel with others?
5. **Reflection on Mercy and Judgment:** How does recognizing the balance of mercy and judgment in God's character impact our interactions with those who hold different beliefs or values?

God Has More to Say

When studied together with Romans 9:14-18, these passages provide a deeper insight into the challenging but critical biblical concepts of God's sovereignty, mercy, and justice. It's important to approach these texts within the broader context of the whole counsel of God's Word, recognizing the depth and complexity of these theological themes.

1. **Exodus 9:16:** This verse is directly quoted by Paul in Romans 9:17. It refers to God raising up Pharaoh to demonstrate His power and proclaim His name throughout the earth, highlighting God's sovereignty over human rulers and events.
2. **Exodus 7:3; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8:** These passages in Exodus detail the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, either by God or by Pharaoh himself, providing the historical backdrop for Paul's argument in Romans 9 about God's sovereign hardening.
3. **Deuteronomy 7:7-8:** This passage speaks of God's choice of Israel not based on their merit but because of His love and the oath He swore to their ancestors, reinforcing the idea of God's mercy and choice.
4. **Jeremiah 18:1-10:** The potter and clay imagery in this passage parallels Paul's argument in Romans 9. It emphasizes God's sovereignty in shaping the destiny of nations and individuals.
5. **John 12:40:** This verse refers to God hardening the hearts of people so they would not understand and turn for healing. It aligns with the theme in Romans 9 of God's sovereign decision in hardening certain hearts.
6. **1 Peter 2:8:** This passage talks about those who stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do, complementing the theme of divine sovereignty and human response found in Romans 9.
7. **Isaiah 6:9-10:** Quoted in part by Jesus in the Gospels, this passage from Isaiah talks about people's hearts being made callous, their ears dull, and their eyes closed. It's related to the theme of God hardening hearts as discussed in Romans 9.

8. **Ephesians 1:4-5, 11:** These verses in Ephesians emphasize predestination and God's purpose in accordance with His will, which ties into the broader theme of God's sovereignty in Romans 9.
9. **Proverbs 16:4:** This verse, stating that the Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble, relates to the themes of God's sovereignty and the hardening of hearts.

Prayer

- End with a time of prayer, focusing on specific requests related to the sermon's themes, personal struggles, and applications.