

# Romans 9... 10... 11

God was offering the privileges of birth and birthright to the Gentiles. The Jews would accuse God of being unrighteous by showering such privileges on the undeserving Gentiles while withholding them from Israel.

Paul had probably heard this objection from Jews. He knows he must do two things:

1. He must answer their objection.
2. His answer must be grounded in an Old Testament biblical text.

Paul thus refers them to Moses.

Romans 9:14 What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!

Paul sometimes simply told people they were wrong in the way they thought about God. My favorite one is when some folks misunderstood the Bible's message of grace. Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds. They asked, "Should we sin that grace might abound?" To which Paul simply and straightforwardly said, "God forbid!"

These questions challenge the nature and character of God. They must be answered with Scripture, as Paul does in every case. But it is also important to remind people Who it is they are talking about. The thrice-holy God could never want sin to abound so that grace might much more abound. From everything we know about God it should be impossible for us to even think of such a thing.

The same is true in Romans nine. Knowing God, how could we ever conclude He would act unrighteously? God forbid!

Always, always bear in mind the nature and character of God. I think whole systems of theology should be scrapped when they come to conclusions about the Lord that are weird. Reformed doctrine, for example, that suggests God predestines souls to Hell who had no

possibility of ever being saved should be scrapped. Knowing the nature and character of God, it can't be true. We still must argue from Scripture; but we should not overlook God's nature and character.

Romans 9:15 For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."

Romans 9:16 So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

This quote from Exodus comes after the Jews had sinned by worshipping the Golden Calf. The Law had scarcely been given to Moses when he returned from Mount Sinai and heard the sound of partying in the camp. While Moses was gone the Israelites had his brother Aaron make them an idol - the Golden Calf.

Moses smashed the tablets of stone upon which the finger of God had written the Ten Commandments. It was fitting since the people had broken the Law.

Moses had the Golden Calf ground into powder and then mingled it with their water supply. He forced the idolaters to drink it. Then he issued a challenge, crying out, "Who is on the Lord's side?"

The tribe of Levi responded and rallied to Moses. He commanded the Levites to kill many of their brethren.

Afterwards Moses went to God to plead for the Jews. His prayer for them, by the way, is similar to Paul's attitude earlier in this chapter. Both men, Moses and Paul, would wish they could be cursed if Israel would be saved.

God pardoned His sinning nation.

With that background we can make this application. The Jews at the time of the Exodus were drunken, perverse idolaters - yet God had mercy on them and showered His privileges on them while withholding them from other nations.

A first century Jew would see the connection: The Gentiles were drunken, perverse idolaters upon whom God now in mercy was showering His privileges upon.

They could not accuse God of being unrighteous. He was only doing for the Gentiles what He had long ago done for their ancestors.

This passage, then, does indeed show the sovereignty of God. What it does not do is show His sovereignty as being arbitrary. You see, there are those who believe this passage supports their position that God predestines some to Heaven while simultaneously predestining other to Hell. Period, end of discussion. Only those elect in eternity past will get saved. None who were not elect in eternity past can get saved.

**I hope you understand that these verses do not say that at all!**

They argue that God is not unjust in saving Gentiles simply because He made promises to the Jews. He can show mercy to Jews and Gentiles alike.

That is exactly what He is doing in the age in which we live. Israel as a nation is being disciplined for rejecting the Messiah and His offer of the kingdom. God will renew His dealings with them once the church is raptured.

In the end God's character is upheld. He cannot be unrighteous.