

**(9:14) - WHAT SHALL WE SAY THEN? IS THERE UNRIGHTEOUSNESS WITH GOD? GOD FORBID -** What caused the apostle to anticipate this objection? We know that God the Holy Spirit inspired him to do so because of unbelievers who, in light of God's sovereignty, view God to be unjust and unfair. Consider:

(1) Paul had written that **"the Gospel of Christ ... is the power of God unto salvation TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH"** (Rom. 1:16-17). The Gospel reveals salvation by God's grace by the merits of Christ Who is God manifest in the flesh. As Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of sinners, Christ worked out a perfect righteousness which God has imputed to His people. This insures that they will be born again by the Spirit and brought to believe the Gospel. Salvation is for all who believe this Gospel - **"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"** (Rom. 10:13). God's sovereignty and election do not mean that God turns away sinners who desire salvation HIS way. The problem is that none of us by nature desire salvation GOD'S way (1 Cor. 2:14). We want it on our own terms so that we can, to some degree, glory in ourselves. By nature, we insist on believing that we, not God alone, make the difference in our salvation. But God sends His Spirit to convict us of sin to show us that if we are saved, it is ALL OF GRACE. He shows us our depravity and gives us a new heart and a new will to call upon HIS name and submit to HIS way of salvation by grace through Christ. A sinner who calls upon HIS name is the work of God (Eph. 2:8-10) and not the result of "free-will" or "decisional regeneration." But, rest assured, God has never, and will never, refuse salvation for ANY sinner who believes the Gospel and calls upon His name according to HIS terms of grace in Christ.

(2) Paul had also made it clear that by nature (i.e. as we are naturally born dead spiritually in trespasses and sins), none of us, of our own choice, will believe the Gospel or call upon God's name. Left to ourselves, none of us would choose God's way of salvation. This is due to our sinful human natures wherein we are totally depraved. Naturally, we are sinners who will not seek the Lord and bow to His way of salvation by His grace in Christ (Rom. 3:10-12). It is like this - If God were to come to earth and gather all fallen and sinful human beings before Him and without any work on His part simply ask who among this mass of fallen humanity would, of their own free will, choose Him and His way of salvation over our own devised ways of salvation, none of us would choose God. Paul uses the example of the natural children of Abraham to show this depravity (Rom. 9:31-10:3, 16-21; cf. 1 Cor. 2:14).

(3) Paul then makes it clear that God has purposed to save a remnant of people whom He chose before the foundation of the world to save by His grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. They are called God's elect (Rom. 8:33-34; 11:1-7). God has chosen some and passed by others. Those whom God has chosen will be saved by God's grace in Christ. God justified them based on Christ's righteousness imputed to them (Rom. 4:1-8; 6:2-7). God will give them all spiritual life by the Holy Spirit in the preaching of the Gospel (Rom. 1:16-17; 6:17-18). And they all will call upon the name of the Lord and believe the Gospel (Rom. 10:9-17). In Rom. 9:11-13 he used Jacob as an example of God's elect and Esau as an example of the non-elect. Now comes the question - Is God unjust or unfair to do this?

Imagine sitting with Paul and asking this question knowing that by Divine inspiration Paul is answering you with the authority of God. This is the final word on all matters concerning God, man, and how a right relationship with God is gained by His grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. You ask, "Paul, if God loved Jacob and chose to save him, and God hated Esau and passed him by with no consideration of their having done any good or evil, isn't that unfair? Isn't God unjust to do this?"

**“God forbid”** - The Bible teaches that even though we may not understand all the workings of God Who is eternal, immutable, wise, holy, and just in all His ways, and though God’s workings may seem unjust to us, **GOD IS ALWAYS WISE, RIGHT, AND JUST.** God never condemns sinners who do not deserve it based on sins imputed to them. God never saves sinners but those whom He has chosen to save in sovereign mercy based on the merits of Christ’s righteousness imputed to them - **“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. 18:25).** We may ask, “Why doesn’t God save everybody?” The answer is that this is God’s sovereign will and way. We have to accept that we are sinful and, by nature, think too highly of ourselves. There is no unrighteousness with God. Whatever God does is right and just. If God gave any of us what we have earned and deserved, it would be eternal death (**Psalms 130:3**).

There are some who contend that if it is true that God sovereignly saves whom He will and condemns whom He will (and according to the Bible He does), then that fosters an indifferent (even fatalistic) attitude and approach to evangelism. Some reason that if this is true, then it does not matter what we do. They assert that if God is absolutely sovereign, we do not need to preach or witness the Gospel to the lost, and we do not need to pray. This kind of fatalistic approach to God’s sovereignty is sinful and totally unbiblical. Consider the following:

(1) God commands His people to preach the Gospel to the lost because it is His way of calling His chosen people into the kingdom for His glory (**Matt. 24:14; 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 10:13-17; 1 Cor. 1:17-24**). God also commands His children to pray (**Matt. 26:41; Mark 13:33; Luke 18:1; 1 Tim. 2:1; Eph. 6:18; Rom. 12:12**), and prayer is God’s appointed means by which He blesses His people for His glory. God has appointed the end of all things and has appointed the means by which He accomplishes His purpose for His glory (**2 Tim. 1:8-12**). The glory of God is the manifestation of His nature and power as seen in the salvation of sinners by His grace through Jesus Christ our Lord (**Col. 2:9-10**).

We are not responsible for the secret things that God has not revealed, but we are responsible and accountable for what God has revealed to us (**Deut. 29:29**). How should we as creatures respond to the sovereignty of our Creator? Paul gives an extended answer to this beginning in **Romans 9:30** (*cf. Eccl. 12:13-14; Isa. 46:9-13*). One who uses God’s sovereignty to justify fatalism thinks himself wiser than God. When it comes to salvation and obedience, our rule of life is the revealed commandments of God. God has revealed HIS way of salvation by His grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other way! He commands sinners to believe HIS way and reject all others (**Acts 17:30-31**).

(2) The Apostle Paul never viewed God’s sovereign electing grace as a deterrent to fervent evangelism or prayer. Paul viewed this truth as an incentive to evangelism and prayer (**2 Tim. 2:9-10**). Paul’s passion for evangelism was inspired by the reality of God’s sovereign mercy in light of the total depravity of man. Paul knew that if the natural man was left to himself (his own will and desires), he would never choose Christ (**Rom. 3:10-12; John 6:44**). But knowing that God chose a people for Himself in Christ before the foundation of the world, knowing that God would save them from their sins, and knowing that God would regenerate them and bring them into His kingdom by the preaching of the Gospel, Paul was zealous to preach wherever God opened the door (**2 Cor. 2:14-17**).

(3) Believing the Gospel is the first evidence of being God’s elect, redeemed by Christ, justified before God, and born again by the Holy Spirit (**1 Thess. 1:4-5; 2 Thess. 2:13-14**). We are never told to address any unbeliever as elect or non-elect. One who is lost may be a lost sheep who will (by the grace and power of God) eventually HEAR HIS VOICE in the preaching of the Gospel (**John 10:11-30**). We are to tell all who will listen that whosoever desires salvation God’s way by grace, whosoever will submit to Christ and His righteousness as the only way of being justified in God’s sight, shall be saved. This is what it means to call upon HIS name.