

Paul's Epistle to the Romans

LESSON XXIV: VESSELS OF WRATH AND VESSELS OF MERCY — CHAP 9 VERSES 14-29

OVERVIEW / INTRODUCTION — “These verses are a detour from the main road of Paul’s argument. Paul takes this detour because he knows that his insistence on God’s initiative in determining who should be saved and who rejected (see vv. 10-13 especially) will meet with questions and even objections. Appropriately, therefore, Paul reverts to the diatribe style, with its question-and-answer format and references to a dialogue partner, that he has utilized earlier in the letter (see 2:1-3:8; 3:27-31; 6-7). *While Paul himself formulates these questions in order to carry on his argument, they undoubtedly represent objections that Paul has heard frequently during his ministry. Indeed, these questions state the inevitable human response to an insistence on the sovereignty of God in salvation: if God decides apart from anything in the human being whom he will choose and whom he will reject (v. 13), how can he still be ‘righteous’ (v. 14) — and how can he blame people if they reject him (v. 19)?*

“Paul responds to the first question with citations of and comments on Scripture (vv. 15-18) and to the second with a series of rhetorical questions (vv. 20-23). *These responses are not what we might expect. Paul does not attempt to show how God’s choice of human beings for salvation fits with their own ‘choosing’ of God in faith. Quite the contrary: rather than compromising the apparent absolute and unqualified nature of God’s election, he reasserts it in even stronger terms. God not only has mercy on whomever he wants, he also hardens whomever he wants (v. 18). God’s freedom to act in this way, Paul suggests, while directed toward a definite end (vv. 22-23), is the freedom of the Creator toward his creatures, and cannot be qualified (vv. 20-21).*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 589f]

PAUL DEFENDS GOD AS GOD — “Many commentators are troubled by Paul’s apparent disregard for human choice and responsibility. Dodd criticizes the argument here as a ‘false step’ (he further characterizes vv. 19-21 as ‘the weakest point in the whole epistle’). O’Neill goes further, claiming the teaching is ‘thoroughly immoral,’ and follows a number of the church fathers in ascribing the offending verses to someone other than Paul (many of the church fathers considered at least vv. 14-19 to be Paul’s quotation of his opponents’ viewpoint). *These criticisms are sometimes the product of a false assumption: that Paul’s justification of the ways of God in his treatment of human beings (his ‘theodicy’) must meet the standard set by our own assumptions and standards of logic. Paul’s approach is quite different. He considers his theodicy to be successful if it justifies God’s acts against the standards of his revelation in Scripture (vv. 15-18) and his character as Creator (vv. 20-23). In other words, the standard by which God must be judged is nothing less and nothing more than God himself. Judged by this standard, Paul contends, God is indeed ‘just.’ Paul does not provide a logical compelling resolution of the two strands of his teaching — God, by his own sovereign choice, elects human beings to salvation; human beings, by a responsible choice of their will, must believe in order to be saved. But criticism of the apostle on this score is unfair. It is unfair, first, because Paul can accomplish his purpose — showing God to be just — without such a resolution. And it is unfair, second, because no resolution of this perennial paradox seems possible this side of heaven.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 590f] Moo quotes Munck as saying, “... the difference between Paul and his Jewish adversaries lies in his refusal to measure God by human standards.” Excellent!

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. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. 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. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not

What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” It does not, therefore, depend on man’s desire or effort, but on God’s mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: “I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden. One of you will say to me: “Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?” But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? “Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’” Does not the potter have the right to make out of the

What, then, shall we say? unrighteousness [is] with God? let it not be! for to Moses He saith, ‘I will do kindness to whom I do kindness, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion;’ so, then — not of him who is willing, nor of him who is running, but of God who is doing kindness: for the Writing saith to Pharaoh — ‘For this very thing I did raise thee up, that I might shew in thee My power, and that My name might be declared in all the land;’ so, then, to whom He willeth, He doth kindness, and to whom He willeth, He doth harden. Thou wilt say, then, to me, ‘Why yet doth He find fault? for His counsel who hath resisted?’ nay, but, O man, who art thou that art answering again to God? shall the thing formed say to Him who did form [it], Why me didst thou make thus? hath not the potter

the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God. Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: for he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom, and been made like unto Gomorrah. (Rom 9:14-29 KJV)

same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath — prepared for destruction? What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory — even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles? As he says in Hosea: “I will call them ‘my people’ who are not my people; and I will call her ‘my loved one’ who is not my loved one,” and, “It will happen that in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’” Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: “Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved. For the Lord will carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality.” It is just as Isaiah said previously: “Unless the Lord Almighty had left us descendants, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah.” (Rom 9:14-29 NIV)

authority over the clay, out of the same lump to make the one vessel to honour, and the one to dishonour? And if God, willing to shew the wrath and to make known His power, did endure, in much long suffering, vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on vessels of kindness, that He before prepared for glory, whom also He did call — us — not only out of Jews, but also out of nations, as also in Hosea He saith, ‘I will call what [is] not My people — My people; and her not beloved — Beloved, and it shall be — in the place where it was said to them, Ye [are] not My people; there they shall be called sons of the living God.’ And Isaiah doth cry concerning Israel, ‘If the number of the sons of Israel may be as the sand of the sea, the remnant shall be saved; for a matter He is finishing, and is cutting short in righteousness, because a matter cut short will the Lord do upon the land. and according as Isaiah saith before, ‘Except the Lord of Sabaoth did leave to us a seed, as Sodom we had become, and as Gomorrah we had been made like.’ (Rom 9:14-29 Young’s Literal Translation)

v 14 — “The opening question — ‘What then shall we say?’ — is typical of the questions Paul uses at several points in Romans to advance his argument. At some points such questions introduces clarifications of Paul’s teaching (e.g., 6:1; 7:7). Here, however, it introduces a defense of his teaching, for the following question embodies an accusation: if God on the basis of nothing but his own choice (v. 12) determines who is to be saved and who rejected (v. 13), then there is ‘unrighteousness with God.’ The criticism Paul raises is that, in choosing and rejecting individuals apart from their own merits or faith, God has acted ‘against what is right.’ The standard assumed for ‘what is right’ might be general considerations of justice, in which case the objector might be accusing Paul of attributing to God a way of acting that is ‘unfair’ or ‘partial.’ ... At this point, Paul simply rejects the charge about God’s unrighteousness with his characteristic ‘By no means!’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 591f]

IS THERE UNRIGHTEOUSNESS WITH GOD? — “It is probably to be explained as being simply the author’s own rhetorical question (or we might perhaps here speak of a ‘reflective question,’ meaning by that the sort of question which one asks oneself, when one is trying to think one’s way through a difficult matter or, having once thought one’s way through it, to retrace the steps of one’s own thinking in order to clarify the matter for someone else).” [Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, pg 482]

v 15 — “The ‘for’ introducing this verse shows that Paul is not content simply to reject the accusation that God is unrighteous: he will also explain why that rejection is justified. The first part of Paul’s explanation uses Scripture to show that God’s unconstrained decision to choose Jacob and reject Esau was no isolated case but reflects God’s very nature (vv. 15 and 17). Continuing the trend of this passage (see vv. 7, 9, 12, and 13), Paul cites OT texts in which God himself speaks. **Such texts constitute the most important evidence we can have about God’s essence and ways of acting.**” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 592] Cranfield makes the comment that Paul, using Greek word order, **emphasizes the person of Moses** — “[M]oses the recipient *par excellence* in the OT of God’s self-revelation.” [Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, pg 483]

EXODUS 33:19b QUOTE — “Paul’s first citation is from Exod. 33:19b. In the Exodus context, Moses requests that the Lord show him his glory. The Lord replies by promising to cause all his ‘goodness’ to pass in front of Moses and to proclaim to him his name, ‘the LORD.’ Then follows the words that Paul here cites. **Justifiably, Paul finds in God’s words to Moses a revelation of one of God’s basic characteristics: his freedom to bestow mercy on whomever he chooses. It is against this ultimate standard, not the penultimate standard of God’s covenant with Israel, that God’s ‘righteousness’ must be measured.** Paul’s reference to Moses reinforces the point, for it is to the mediator of the covenant himself that God reveals his freedom in mercy.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 592]

THE “WILL OF GOD” IS THE WILL OF A “MERCIFUL GOD” — “These words of Exodus clearly do testify to the freedom of God’s mercy, to the fact that His mercy is something which man can neither earn nor in any way control. But — and this is most significant, but has often not been recognized — they do not suggest that this freedom of God’s mercy is an absolute freedom either to be merciful or to be unmerciful. They give no encouragement at all to the notion that there is behind God’s mercy a will of God that is different from His merciful will.... It is perhaps necessary to stress here the importance of not allowing ourselves to be so preoccupied with what may be called the negative aspect of mercy (the fact that it excludes all ideas of merit on the part of the object), which is expressed by speaking of the freedom of mercy, that we lose sight of its fundamental positive content — overflowing, active compassion.” [Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, pg 483f]

v 16 — “Paul now spells out the conclusion (‘therefore’) he wants to draw from his quotation: ‘it is not a matter of the person who wills or the person who runs, but of the God who shows mercy.’ The sentence reads like a general principle (note the present tense of the verbs). But to what does the principle apply? Our translation preserves the ambiguity of the original in not making clear the subject of the sentence (‘it’). We might substitute ‘salvation’ or ‘God’s purpose in election’ (cf. v. 11b), but the connection with v. 15 suggests rather ‘God’s bestowal of mercy.’ In keeping with a popular view of this passage as a whole, many commentators think that the ‘mercy’ involved here is God’s mercy in choosing different persons or nations in the outworking of his historical plan. But, as we have seen earlier, *Paul’s use of OT examples of God’s choosing and rejecting develop a principle that he applies to the salvation of individual Jews and Gentiles in his own day (see 9:3, 6a, 22-23, 24). Here, the principle Paul formulates moves beyond the positive assertion of v. 15 — God’s bestowal of mercy has its origin in his own will to be merciful — to its negative corollary — God’s mercy does not, then, depend on human ‘willing’ or ‘running.’ The former denotes one’s inner desire, purpose, or readiness to do something; the latter the actual execution of that desire. Together, then, they ‘sum up the totality of man’s capacity.’*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 592f]

THE SOURCE OF MERCY IS GOD — The phrases used by Paul in this verse might be considered in a ‘source’ sense: “*God’s bestowal of mercy does not ‘come from’ a person’s willing or running, but ‘comes from’ the God who shows mercy.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 593] “The meaning would seem to be: ‘*God’s mercy is not a matter of (or perhaps, ‘does not depend on’) man’s willing or activity, but God’s being merciful.*’” [Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, pg 484f]

“*So Paul draws out the obvious conclusion: ‘it is not a matter of someone wanting or of someone being energetic, but of God exercising mercy.’ ... The central motivation in election is God’s compassion; his purpose has the primary object of showing mercy.*” [Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, pg 562]

v 17 — “In vv. 15-16 Paul reiterates and expands the positive side of God’s sovereignty in election that he alluded to in vv. 10-13 (‘Jacob I have loved’). Now Paul will do the same with respect to the ‘negative’ side (‘Esau I have rejected’). Verses 17-18 parallel vv. 15-16: Paul begins by citing Scripture and then states a principle drawn from it (note, as in v. 16, the ‘therefore’ in v. 18). The ‘for’ introducing v. 17 may, then, function as does its counterpart in v. 15 and indicate that vv. 17-18 contain a second reason to reject the accusation that God is unjust.

- 14 Is God unjust?
- 15 A [No], because it says ...
- 16 Therefore ...
- 17 B [No], because Scripture says ...
- 18 Therefore ...” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 593f]

“As in v. 15, Paul introduces the OT quotation with the verb ‘says’ and specifies the person to whom the text is addressed (‘to Pharaoh’; cf. ‘to Moses’ in v. 15). The words are again from Exodus, from the Lord’s instructions to Moses about what he is to say to Pharaoh on the sixth occasion that Moses and Aaron are told to go before the Egyptian ruler to demand the release of the people of Israel (9:16). Paul’s wording, ‘I have raised you up,’ differs from both the standard Greek LXX text and the Hebrew MT. Various explanations for the differences have been offered, but it seems reasonable to conclude that *Paul has deliberately accentuated God’s initiative in the process.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 594f]

GOD’S MOTIVE FOR RAISING UP PHARAOH — “Of particular importance in the quotation is the purpose of God’s raising Pharaoh up: ‘so that I might demonstrate through you my power and so that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.’ Indeed, this purpose clause is probably the reason that Paul has cited this particular text since its lack of explicit reference to Pharaoh’s ‘hardening’ makes it less suitable than others as a preparation for Paul’s conclusion in v. 18. *Paul wants to make clear that even God’s ‘negative’ actions, such as the hardening of Pharaoh, serve a positive purpose (a point Paul will develop further in vv. 22-23). And this positive purpose is the greatest imaginable: the demonstration of God’s power and the wider proclamation of God’s name. In Pharaoh’s day, the plagues on the land of Egypt and the deliverance of Israel through the ‘Sea of Reeds,’ made necessary by Pharaoh’s hardened heart, accomplished this purpose (see Josh 2:10). In Paul’s day, he implies, the hardening that has come upon a ‘part of Israel’ (see 11:5-7, 25) has likewise led to the name of God being ‘proclaimed in all the earth’ through the mission to the Gentiles. ... I consider it likely, therefore, that Paul sees a similarity between Pharaoh and unbelieving Israel.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 595]

“*The other phrase, [‘my name’], will no doubt have signified for Paul the character of God revealed in His words and acts, God’s self-manifestation and its inherent, overflowing glory.... The implication of v. 17, then, is that Pharaoh too, ‘this dark prototype of all the rejected in Israel’, as Barth calls him, serves in his own different way the same gracious purpose of God, to*

the service of which Moses and the believing in Israel have been appointed. He too is a witness, albeit an unwilling, unbelieving and ungrateful witness, to the saving power and truth of God." [Cranfield, Romans 9-16, pg 488]

v 18 — *"Anyone who knows the Exodus story would understand that God 'raised up' Pharaoh with a negative rather than a positive purpose. By resisting God's will to deliver his people from bondage, Pharaoh caused that deliverance to assume a more spectacular aspect than it would have otherwise. Pharaoh's resistance to God's purpose is caused, according to Exod. 4-14, by his 'hardness' of heart. It is this concept that connects vv. 17 and 18, as Paul now states a principle of God's acting that Pharaoh's experience serve to illustrate: God hardens 'whomever he wishes.' But Paul expands the principle to reiterate God's freedom in bestowing mercy as well. This shows that v. 18 embodies a conclusion drawn from all of vv. 15-17. As God's self-revelation to Moses demonstrates that he is a God who freely bestows mercy on 'whomever he wishes,' so God's words to Pharaoh reveal that he is at the same time a God who hardens 'whomever he wishes.'" [Moo, Romans, pg 595f]*

HARDENS — *"The term 'harden' (Gk. sklērynoō) occurs 14 times in Exod. 4-14, where it has the connotation 'make spiritually insensitive.'" [Moo, Romans, pg 596] Dunn takes it in the sense of "make unresponsive, unyielding, make stubborn."*

IS GOD'S 'HARDENING' NATIONAL OR PERSONAL? — *"Many scholars, noting that Pharaoh's role in Exodus is purely salvation-historical and that reference to his own final spiritual condition is foreign to the context, insist that Paul applies God's hardening only to the processes of history. God prevents some people, or nations, from understanding his work and message in order to further his plan of salvation; no implications for the ultimate destiny of the individuals concerned are present. However, this limitation of Paul's language to the sphere of historical process, which we have seen to be unlikely in earlier texts (vv. 12-13, 16), is particularly difficult here. In addition to the points I have made earlier with reference to Paul's purpose in this section as a whole, we may note the following.*

- *First, structural and linguistic considerations show that v. 18 is closely related to vv. 22-23, where the 'vessels of mercy, destined to glory' are contrasted with 'vessels of wrath, prepared for destruction.' As God's mercy leads to the enjoyment of glory, God's hardening brings wrath and destruction.*
- *Second, the word group 'harden' is consistently used in Scripture to depict a spiritual condition that renders one unreceptive and disobedient to God and his word.*
- *Third, while the Greek word is a different one, most scholars recognize that Paul's reference to Israel's 'hardening' in Rom. 11:7 and 25 are parallel to the hardening here. Yet the hardening in Rom. 11 is a condition that excludes people from salvation (in v. 7, the 'rest' who are hardened are contrasted with the remnant who have obtained righteousness, see 9:30-31; while in v. 25 it is the removal of Israel's 'hardening' that prepares the way for her salvation).*
- *Fourth, it is even possible that the references to Pharaoh's hardening in Exodus carry implications for his own spiritual state and destiny.*

God's hardening, then, is an action that renders a person insensitive to God and his word and that, if not reversed, culminates in eternal damnation." [Moo, Romans, pg 596f]

DID GOD 'HARDEN' PHARAOH ONLY AFTER PHARAOH 'HARDENED' HIMSELF? — *"We have seen that Paul has insisted that God bestows his mercy on his own initiative, apart from anything that a person is or does (v. 16). The strict parallelism in this verse suggests that the same is true of God's hardening: as he has mercy on 'whomever he wishes,' so he hardens 'whomever he wishes.' However, many scholars deny that this is the case. They point particularly to Exod. 4-14, where the first reference to God's hardening of Pharaoh (9:12) comes only after references to Pharaoh's hardening of his own heart (8:11, 28). This background implies, these scholars argue, that Paul would think of God's hardening as a response to a person's prior decision to harden himself or herself. God's hardening may then be likened to his 'handing over' of sinners to the sin that they had already chosen for themselves (see Rom. 1:24, 26, 28). Yet the assumption that Paul expects his readers to see behind God's hardening a prior self-hardening on the part of the individual is questionable.*

- *First, Exod. 4-14 does not clearly indicate that Pharaoh's hardening of his own heart was the basis for God's hardening; in fact, it may well imply that Pharaoh's hardening of his own heart was the result of God's prior act of hardening (Before Pharaoh is said to harden his own heart, God twice predicts that he would harden Pharaoh's heart (4:21 and 7:3), and there are also five references, in the passive voice, to Pharaoh's heart being hardened (7:13, 14, 22; 8:11, 15). The understood subject of these passive verbs is probably God).*
- *Second, Paul's 'whomever he wishes' shows that God's decision to harden is his alone to make and is not constrained by any consideration having to do with a person's status or actions.*
- *Third, if Paul had in fact wanted his readers to assume that God's hardening was based on a person's self-hardening, we would have expected him to make this clear in response to the objection in v. 19. What more natural response to the objection that God is unfair in 'finding fault' with a person than to make clear that God's hardening is based on a person's own prior action?*

The ‘hardening’ Paul portrays here, then, is a sovereign act of God that is not caused by anything in those individuals who are hardened. And 9:22-23 and 11:7 suggest that the outcome of hardening is damnation.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 597f]

DOUBLE PREDESTINATION? — “It seems, then, that this text, in its context, provides important exegetical support for the controversial doctrine of ‘double predestination’ : *just as God decides, on the basis of nothing but his own sovereign pleasure, to bestow his grace and so save some individuals, so he also decides, on the basis of nothing but his own sovereign pleasure, to pass over others and so to damn them.* Many scholars argue, however, that God’s hardening of an individual is not final. They note that Romans clearly teaches that Israel’s hardening will one day be reversed (see 11:25). But this objection fails to make the vital distinction between the individual and corporate perspectives. In Rom. 11 Paul is arguing about the position of Israel as a nation in the plan of God: how God called that people (11:2), hardened much of it (11:7), and will eventually remove that hardening so as to save it (11:26). Here, however, Paul is speaking about the work of God in individuals. And vv. 22-23, where Paul expands on the idea of both God’s mercy and his hardening, suggest that the division between those individuals who receive mercy and those who are hardened is basic and final.

No doctrine stimulates more negative reaction and consternation than this one. Some degree of such reaction is probably inevitable, for it flies in the face of our own common perspectives of both human freedom and God’s justice. And vv. 19-23 show that Paul was himself very familiar with this reaction. Yet, without pretending that it solves all our problems, we must recognize that God’s hardening is an act directed against human beings who are already in rebellion against God’s righteous rule. God’s hardening does not, then, cause spiritual insensitivity to the things of God, it maintains people in the state of sin that already characterizes them. This does not mean, as I have argued above, that God’s decision about whom to harden is based on a particular degree of sinfulness within certain human beings; he hardens ‘whomever he chooses.’ But it is imperative that we maintain side-by-side the complementary truths that (1) God hardens whomever he chooses; (2) human beings, because of sin, are responsible for their ultimate condemnation. Thus, God’s bestowing of mercy and his hardening are not equivalent acts. God’s mercy is given to those who do not deserve it; his hardening affects those who have already by their sin deserved condemnation. ...

The doctrine of double predestination has its roots in Augustine and was taught by some early medieval theologians. But it was given its classic expression in the theology of Calvin and (even more forthrightly) in the teaching of his theological descendants....

Calvin, Institutes 3.23.3 : *‘But if all whom the Lord predestines to death are by condition of nature subject to the judgment of death, of what injustice toward themselves may they complain?’* It must be said, however, that Calvin’s view on this issue is not altogether clear. The ‘sublapsarian’ view (God’s election follows — in logical, *not* temporal order — human beings’ fall into sin) became the dominant Reformed position, as opposed to the ‘supralapsarian’ view (God’s election precedes human beings’ fall into sin [or God’s decree of permitting the Fall]).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 598ff]

ALL MEN ULTIMATELY SERVE THE PURPOSE OF GOD, EITHER POSITIVELY OR NEGATIVELY — *“Two contrasting forms of God’s determination of men corresponding to the two different ways in which men may serve the divine purpose are indicated by [mercy] and [harden]. Some serve it consciously and (more or less) voluntarily, others unconsciously and involuntarily. And men’s stances in relation to God’s purpose depend ultimately on God. He has mercy on some in the sense that He determines them for a positive role in relation to His purpose, to a conscious and voluntary service: others He hardens in the sense that He determines them for a negative role in relation to His purpose, for an unconscious, involuntary service.... That there are difficulties here is not to be denied. It is obvious that for the individual concerned it is a matter of tremendous consequence whether he has been determined for a positive or a negative role in relation to the divine purpose. To miss the inestimable privilege of belonging here in this present life to the company of those who are conscious and (more or less) willing and grateful witnesses to God’s grace is far indeed from being a trivial loss.*” [Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, pg 488]

This may be a good place to provide some balance to our discussion. Here are some comments from the Calvinist Charles Spurgeon: *“‘Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.’ — John 6:37 — Is there any instance of our Lord’s casting out a coming one? If there be so, we would like to know of it; but there has been none, and there never will be. Among the lost souls in hell there is not one that can say, ‘I went to Jesus, and He refused me.’ It is not possible that you or I should be the first to whom Jesus shall break His word. Let us not entertain so dark a suspicion. Suppose we go to Jesus now about the evils of today. Oh, this we may be sure — He will not refuse us audience or cast us out. Those of us who have often been and those who have never gone before — let us go together, and we shall see that He will not shut the door of His grace in the face of any one of us. ‘This man receiveth sinners,’ but He repulses none. We come to Him in weakness and sin, with trembling faith, and small knowledge, and slender hope; but He does not cast us out. We come by prayer, and that prayer broken; with confession, and that confession faulty; with praise, and that praise far short of His merits; but yet He receives us. We come diseased, polluted, worn out, and worthless; but He doth in no wise cast us out. Let us come again today to Him who never casts us out.”* [Spurgeon, *Faith’s Checkbook*]

v 19 — “The diatribe style becomes more pronounced in this next paragraph (vv. 19-23). Paul explicitly quotes his interlocutor — ‘You will then say to me’ — and answers the objections raised in the questions of v. 19b with a series of rhetorical questions of his own (vv. 20a, 21, 22-23). Paul’s sharp response to the questions of v. 19 suggest that the interlocutor here is an opponent and not just a ‘dialogue partner.’ The objector wonders how God can ‘still’ — that is, assuming the truth of Paul’s teaching in v. 18 —

‘find fault.’ For, ‘who resists his will?’ Embodied in these questions is the objection that God’s sovereign act of hardening (v. 18b) jeopardizes the clear biblical teaching about the justice of God’s judgment on people who resist him (see, in Romans itself, 1:19-23). For only if people are responsible for their own actions can God’s judgment be truly just. Yet Paul’s teaching about the sovereignty of God in hardening appears to remove such responsibility. **Before analyzing what Paul does say in response to this objection, we do well to note what he does *not* say. He makes no reference to human works or human faith (whether foreseen or not) as the basis for God’s act of hardening. Nor does he defuse the issue by confining God’s hardening only to matters of salvation history; quite the contrary, vv. 22-23 make more explicit than ever that Paul is dealing with questions of eternal destiny. In fact, Paul never offers — here or anywhere else — a ‘logical’ solution to the tension between divine sovereignty and human responsibility that he creates. That he affirms the latter is, of course, clear; and we must never forget that Paul will go on in 9:30-10:21 to attribute the Jews’ condemnation to their own wilful failure to believe. Paul is content to hold the truths of God’s absolute sovereignty — in both election and hardening — and of full human responsibility without reconciling them. We would do well to emulate his approach.**” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 600f]

“If things are as v. 18 has indicated, why does God find fault with men, holding them responsible (as, according to Scripture, He certainly does)? What grounds has He for reproaching men, since no man actually resists His will? If men’s resistance is predetermined by God, it is not really resistance to His will at all, since this predetermination must be assumed to be the expression of His will. Such is the objection.” [Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, pg 489f]

CONTEMPORARY JEWISH THEOLOGY — Paul may have had in mind certain Jewish objections as he ‘answered’ these objections. “Early Judaism was torn by debates over the relationship between divine sovereignty and human free will. Indeed, Josephus, in a famous passage, uses this issue to distinguish the main Jewish ‘parties’ : *‘Now at this time there were three schools of thought among the Jews, which held different opinions concerning human affairs; the first being that of the Pharisees, the second that of the Sadducees, and the third that of the Essenes. As for the Pharisees, they say that certain events are the work of Fate, but not all; as to other events, it depends upon ourselves whether they shall take place or not. The sect of the Essenes, however, declares that Fate is mistress of all things, and that nothing befalls men unless it be in accordance with her decree. But the Sadducees do away with Fate, holding that there is no such thing and that human actions are not achieved in accordance with her decree, but that all things lie within our own power, so that we ourselves are responsible for our well-being, while we suffer misfortune through our own thoughtlessness.’* Paul’s ‘opponent’ may then be a Pharisaic Jew who criticizes Paul’s doctrine for not leaving enough room for human free will.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 600]

v 20 — “The adversative ‘on the contrary’ contrasts the objection implicit in the second question of v. 19 — it is ‘wrong’ of God to ‘find fault’ if he himself is the cause of a person’s behavior — with Paul’s viewpoint.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 601]

O man — “‘O man’ need not have a derogatory sense, since this address occurs in dialogues similar to Paul’s as a polite address (one commentator paraphrases it as ‘my dear sir’). **But the present context, which emphasizes the gulf between human beings and God (v. 21; and note the contrast between ‘man’ at the beginning of v. 20 and ‘God’ at its end), shows that Paul chooses the term to accentuate the subordinate, creaturely status of the objector: ‘who are you [the ‘you’ is strongly emphatic in the Greek] to answer back to God?’**” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 601]

“[I]n the present sentence there is surely a conscious contrast between [o man] and [God] (the first and last words of the sentence), so that the translation ‘man’ or ‘O man’ is required. **By thus setting man over against God Paul is certainly putting man in his place.**” [Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, pg 490]

“Paul quotes Isa. 29:16 to remind the objector of the dependent and subordinate position of the human being in respect to God. Human beings are in no more of a position to ‘answer back’ to God than a vase is to criticize its molder for making it in a certain way. **Paul is not here denying the validity of that kind of questioning of God which arises from sincere desire to understand God’s ways and an honest willingness to accept whatever answer God might give. It is the attitude of the creature presuming to judge the ways of the creator — to ‘answer back’ — that Paul implicitly rebukes.**” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 601f]

v 21 — “Paul continues to use the imagery of the potter and his clay to reinforce the point of v. 20. His rhetorical question asserts the right of the potter to make out of the same ‘lump’ of clay both a vessel ‘for honor’ and one ‘for dishonor.’ While Isa. 29:16 and (probably) 45:9 have furnished the immediate source of Paul’s language, the metaphorical application of the potter and the clay is quite widespread in both the OT and Judaism (see esp. Job 10:9; 38:14; Isa. 29:16; 45:9-10; 64:7; Jer. 18:1-6, as well as Jewish apocryphal literature). Scholars have argued that one text or another is key to Paul’s imagery here and draw conclusions about Paul’s meaning accordingly.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 602] An obvious parallel NT text which uses many of the same words is 2 Tim. 2:20.

GOD’S RIGHT AS CREATOR — “[S]cholars ... note that many of the OT and Jewish texts that compare God to a potter focus on God as Creator — a point that Paul underscores by using the verb *plassō* (This verb is used in the creation account, Gen. 2:7, and in many other texts referring to God as Creator: Job 10:8-9; Ps. 33:15; 2 Macc. 7:23. Paul’s only other use of the verb is in reference to creation, 1 Tim. 2:13). Further, the contrast between ‘honor’ and ‘dishonor’ is said to match the contrast between ‘glory’ and ‘wrath,’ or ‘destruction,’ in vv. 22-23. On this reading, **Paul is asserting God’s right to make from the mass of humanity (the ‘lump’) some persons who are destined to inherit salvation and others who are destined for wrath and**

condemnation.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 603] “*For Paul there is no higher power than God; the ultimate shaper of human destiny is none other than the purpose of God. The imagery of the potter and his clay artifacts serves this end well, for it was both characteristically and distinctively Jewish in its emphasis that the divine potter’s authority over his products was the authority of a powerful creator.*” [Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, pg 565]

“Certainly about which OT and Jewish texts Paul may have in mind is impossible to attain and probably immaterial: Paul’s imagery is probably distilled generally from many of them without being specifically dependent on any one of them. This means that our exegetical conclusions must be guided by Paul’s own use of the metaphor, and not by any specific contexts in which the metaphor appears. *We have seen that Paul is applying his teaching to the issue of the present spiritual condition and eternal destiny of unbelieving Jews (and believing Jews and Gentiles). This makes it likely that Paul is thinking here also of the eternal destinies of individuals.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 603]

One part ... another — “Regular idiom for contrast (*men — de*) with the old demonstrative *ho* (this), ‘this vessel (*skeuos*, old word as in Mark 11:16) for honour, that for dishonour.’ Paul thus claims clearly God’s sovereign right (*exousian*, power, right, authority) to use men (already sinners) for his own purpose.” [Robertson, *Word Pictures*]

v 22 — WHAT IF ... — There are grammatical complications with these next few verses, of which there are several possible conclusions. The one most generally accepted is to take vv. 22-23 as the first part of a clause (the protasis) which is not completed by the second half of the clause (the apodosis). “Paul is inviting his readers to complete the thought from the context. Many English versions suggest something of this sort by translating ‘what if’ (KJV; NIV; RSV; NRSV; NASB), or, as we may paraphrase, ‘*what if God has acted in this way? who will question God’s authority to do so?*’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 604]

WISHING — Another grammatical difficulty brought out by the commentators is the use of the Gk word *thelōn*, ‘wishing,’ in v. 22a. Douglas Moo follows Calvin, Cranfield, Murray, Piper and Dunn to translate it in a ‘causal’ sense:

“But (what) if God,

because he wished

[1] to manifest his wrath and

[2] to make known his power,

bore with much patience the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,

[3] [doing this because he wished] also to make known the riches of his glory to vessels of mercy that he prepared beforehand for glory....”

“[This] interpretation fits the context better since it achieves a more natural parallel with vv. 17-18. In the case both of Pharaoh and of the vessels of wrath, God withholds his final judgment so that he can more spectacularly display his glory.... I will summarize my conclusions on the structure of these verses in a paraphrase: ‘What objection can you make if it is in fact the case that God has tolerated with great patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction when you realize that his purpose in doing so has been to demonstrate his wrath, make known his power, and — especially — to make known the riches of his glory to vessels of mercy, prepared beforehand for glory?’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 605f]

MAKE HIS POWER KNOWN — “In v. 22, then, Paul is reiterating the point that he made with respect to God’s dealing with Pharaoh in v. 17: God works with those who are not in positive relationship with him to display in greater degree his own nature and power. The Exodus background makes it clear how God’s raising up of Pharaoh contributed to the widespread publication of his power and name: Pharaoh’s obduracy required God to work miracle after miracle in order to secure his purpose.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 606]

ENDURED WITH MUCH LONGSUFFERING — “*endure, put up with,*” the sense being “*God has very patiently put up with vessels of wrath.*” “[P]aul may here be viewing the revelation of God’s wrath and power as taking place at the final judgment (as he often does; see, e.g., Rom. 2:5). In this case, the purpose of God’s patience here would be to allow the rebellion of his creation to gain force and intensity so that his consequent victory is all the more glorious and also (and perhaps primarily) to give opportunity for him to bestow his mercy on those whom he has chosen for his own (v. 23). This interpretation fits better with the causal meaning of the participle ‘wishing’ (see above). In addition, it accords better with the sharp contrast Paul draws in these verses between the vessels of wrath and the vessels of mercy. This contrast would be unfairly diminished, I think, if we were to assume that the vessels of wrath could have the same ultimate destiny as the vessels of mercy. We must remember at this point that God, in strict justice, could have executed his sentence of condemnation on the entire human race immediately after the Fall. It is only because of God’s great patience that he has waited to bring down his wrath on a rebellious world so that he can finish his wise and loving plan.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 606]

PREPARED FOR DESTRUCTION — “But what of the objects of God’s patience endurance, the ‘vessels of wrath’? Is God’s patience also for the purpose that they might come to repentance? Much depends on our interpretation of the participle ‘prepared’ that describes the vessels of wrath. For Paul does not tell us who has done the ‘preparing.’ Many commentators argue that the parallel with vv. 17-18 — where God ‘raises up’ Pharaoh and hardens — and with v. 23 — where the subject of ‘prepared beforehand’ must be God — make clear that God is the agent of this ‘preparing’ (see Calvin, Hodge, Piper). The phrase ‘prepared for destruction’ would then refer to God’s act of reprobation whereby he destines the vessels of wrath to eternal destruction. However, others argue that it is the difference between Paul’s description of the vessels of mercy in v. 23 and the vessels of wrath

here that is significant. In contrast to the active participle ‘prepared beforehand’ in v. 23, Paul here uses a middle / passive participle that does not clearly bring God into the picture. But *the parallel with vv. 17-18 suggests strongly that the agent of ‘prepared’ is indeed God: Paul considers the ‘vessels on whom God’s wrath rests’ as prepared by God himself for eternal condemnation.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 607]

Douglas Moo continues by giving explanations of those who reject that it is God who does the preparing beforehand: “Scholars who adopt this interpretation [that God does not prepare beforehand] view the participle as (1) a passive, with Satan (Lenski) or their own sins (Chrysostom, Haldane, Godet, Morris) or ‘their own impenitence’ (Wesley) as the implied agent; (2) middle, with the idea of ‘fitted themselves;’ or (3) a simple adjective.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 607]

DESTRUCTION — “The word ἀπόλεια [apōleia], ‘destruction,’ is always used by Paul with reference to final condemnation: Phil. 1:28; 3:19; 2 Thes. 2:3 (probably); 1 Tim 6:9 (probably); and see the cognate verb ἀπολλύμι [apollumi] in Rom. 2:12; 1 Cor. 1:18; 2 Cor. 2:15; 4:3. That the word connotes the eternal fate of the individual is especially clear from the contrasts with salvation in Phil. 1:28; 1 Cor. 1:18; and 2 Cor. 2:15.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 607]

v 23 — “[T]his verse expresses a third, and climatic, purpose of God’s patient endurance of the vessels of wrath. God has withheld the final judgment that could rightfully fall on his rebellious creatures at any time not only because he wanted to display more gloriously his wrath and power (v. 22a) but also, and especially, because he wanted to ‘make known his glorious riches to vessels on whom his mercy rests, vessels whom God has prepared beforehand for glory.’ God’s ultimate purpose in his decree of hardening is mercy. But his mercy is in this context clearly discriminating rather than universal: some receive mercy (v. 18), those ‘vessels’ of mercy whom God chooses (vv. 15-16); others, vessels of wrath, are hardened (v. 18). Therefore we must not allow the preeminence of God’s purpose in bestowing mercy *on some* to cancel out the reality and finality of his wrath *on others*. Paul is clear here, as he is elsewhere: some people receive God’s mercy and are saved, while others do not receive that mercy and so are eternally condemned. And as those who do not receive that mercy refuse to do so ultimately because God himself hardens them, so those who experience that mercy with its outcome, glory, do so because God himself ‘prepared them beforehand.’ ‘Prepared beforehand,’ then, refers to the same thing as the word ‘predestine’ in 8:29: a decision of God in eternity past to bestow him mercy on certain individuals whom he in his sovereign design has chosen.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 608]

“We turn now to the three statements of purpose contained in this passage. *That the last of these is dominant is clear.* It alone is introduced by [‘in order that’]; and it is given special emphasis by its position in the sentence, by the fact that it is extended by means of the two relative clauses which follow, and by the fact that vv. 25-29 focus further attention on it. Above all, its content marks it off from the others; for *the manifestation of the wealth of the divine glory is nothing less than the ultimate purpose of God.* The two other statements of purpose must therefore be explained in relation to it, and not independently of, or in opposition to, it.” [Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, pg 496]

SUMMATION OF PAUL’S DIGRESSION — “Verses 14-23, while something of a parenthesis in Paul’s argument, contribute significantly to our understanding of Paul’s teaching in this chapter and to our conception of God. In the face of the accusation that his stress on the initiative of God in determining who would be his people turns God into an unjust tyrant, Paul retreats not one step. On the contrary, he goes on the offensive and strengthens his teaching about the unconstrained freedom of God in making choices that determine people’s lives. Paul also makes even clearer that the choices he is talking about have to do not just with historical roles but with eternal destinies. This text, then, gives further support to the doctrine of unconditional election. It also supports, although more ambiguously, the doctrine of reprobation. Paul teaches that God has brought upon certain people whom he chooses on the basis of nothing but his own will a condition of spiritual stupor, a condition that leads to eternal condemnation.

Allusion in this part of the chapter to unbelieving Israel is muted but clear. So many Jews have failed to embrace the gospel because God has so willed it: as with Pharaoh, God has hardened them, and they are now vessels on whom God’s wrath rests.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 608f]

v 24 — “These verses return, after the excursus in vv. 14-23, to the theme of vv. 6-13: *God’s call is the sole basis for inclusion in the true people of God.* Thus we encounter here again the characteristic vocabulary of that earlier paragraph: ‘sons of God’ (v. 26; cf. v. 8); ‘seed’ (v. 29; cf. vv. 7 and 8); and, especially, ‘call’ (vv. 24 and 26; cf. vv. 7 and 12). Another similarity is Paul’s constant appeal to the OT for substantiation of his teaching. In vv. 6-13 Paul mined the patriarchal stories for his citations; now he turns to the prophets. It is probably Paul’s intention to cite the OT in 9:6b-29 in the order of the canon, moving from the patriarchal narratives (vv. 7-13) to the events of the exodus (vv. 14-18) to the time of the prophets (vv. 21, 24-29). Paul also changes his style of scriptural citation: whereas he has in the earlier paragraphs interspersed OT quotations with his own commentary, he now quotes in rapid sequence a series of quotations (vv. 25-29) to confirm his initial thesis statement (v. 24).

While vv. 24-29 pick up the theme of vv. 6b-13, they also move beyond what Paul has said in vv. 6b-13. *For Paul now explicitly includes Gentiles among those whom God is sovereignly calling to be part of his people. God’s people are constituted by his call and not by natural descent. Paul now takes this point to its logical and (from the prospective of first-century Judaism) radical conclusion: physical descent from Abraham not only does not guarantee inclusion in the true people of God; it is not even necessary.* Verses 14-23, despite their somewhat parenthetical nature, have prepared the way for this conclusion by highlighting so intensely God’s absolute freedom to bestow his mercy on faithfulness to his word to its climax. The small number

of Jews who have responded to the gospel fits with the prophetic insistence that only a remnant of the people of Israel would be saved. And the inclusion of Gentiles within the eschatological people of God, while not so clearly predicted in the OT, conforms to God's character and actions as presented in the Scriptures." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 610]

PREDESTINED THEN CALLED — *"The sequence in vv. 23b-24 from God's 'preparing beforehand' vessels of mercy and his calling of them into relationship with himself is similar to that in 8:30: 'those whom he predestined, he also called.' But Paul's focus here is not on the antecedents of God's calling or on its nature, but on its scope: God summons into relationship with himself Gentiles as well as Jews. This is the point Paul supports with the OT quotations that follow."* [Moo, *Romans*, pg 611]

v 25, 26 — "These quotations are chiasmically related to the final words of v. 24:

- A God calls Jews (v. 24)
- B God calls Gentiles (v. 24)
- B' OT confirmation of God's call of Gentiles (vv. 25-26)
- A' OT confirmation of God's call of Jews (vv. 27-29)

Paul's OT support for the calling of Gentiles comes from 'the book of Hosea.' He quotes freely from Hos. 2:23 in v. 25 and then verbatim from the LXX version of Hos. 1:10a in v. 26.... A similar application of Hos. 2:23 in 1 Pet. 2:10 to *Gentile* Christians suggests ... that the text may have been a standard 'proof-text' in early Christianity." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 611f]

DOES PAUL HANDLE THE TEXT HONESTLY? — There have been questions concerning Paul's hermeneutics in his application of the text in Hosea. "For the prophet Hosea is predicting a renewal of God's mercy toward the rebellious northern tribes of Israel: those whom God rejected and names *lō-ruhnamah*, 'not pitied,' and *lō-ami*, 'not my people' (the symbolic names given to Hosea's children, 1:6-9) are again shown mercy and adopted again as God's people. The problem disappears if Hosea is including the Gentiles in his prophecy; but this is unlikely. Others avoid the difficulty by arguing that Paul applies these passages to the calling of the Jews rather than the Gentiles. But the explicit reference to Israel in the introduction to the Isaiah quotations in v. 27 suggests that Paul views the Hosea quotations as related to the calling of the Gentiles. Others think that Paul may imply an analogy: God's calling of Gentiles operates on the same principle as God's promised renewal of the ten northern tribes. But Paul requires more than an analogy to establish from Scripture justification for God's calling of Gentiles to be his people. ***Therefore we must conclude that this text reflects a hermeneutical supposition for which we find evidence elsewhere in Paul and in the NT: that OT predictions of a renewed Israel find their fulfillment in the church. Moreover, Paul's use of these texts may further his effort to break down the boundaries between the Jews and other peoples that were so basic to Jewish thinking.... It is not that Paul's convictions about Christ have blinded him to the meaning of the OT text, but that God's final revelation in Christ gives to him a new hermeneutical key by which to interpret and apply the OT. [One theologian] notes that some rabbis applied these texts to the conversion of proselytes.***" [Moo, *Romans*, pg 613]

Dunn regards Paul's use of the text as typical: "***Paul sees in the words addressed to the Northern Kingdom (Israel), prior to its annihilation by the Assyrians, a foreshadowing of his point. By his call God can transform the covenant status of those outside the covenant, or rejected from the covenant. He can invite those with no standing whatsoever to become 'sons of the living God' (Hos. 1:10; 2:23). It is hardly likely that Paul means to imply that the Gentiles who have responded to God's call have shown themselves thereby to be the lost and dispersed ten northern tribes. It is simply that scripture proves that those who were not God's people can by God's gracious act become his people.***" [Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, pg 575]

v 27, 28 — "If Hosea speaks allusively to the situation of the Gentiles, Isaiah quire directly 'cries out concerning Israel.' Paul quotes in vv. 27-28 from Isa. 10:22-23." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 614]

CRIES OUT — κράζει [krazei] denotes intensity and urgency.

"Paul's purpose in citing what Isaiah 'cries out concerning Israel' is not simply, or even mainly, to cite OT support for God's calling of Jews to be his people — a point that hardly required such substantiation. Rather, ***his purpose is to establish the truth that God is calling his 'vessels of mercy' from among Jews.*** He thereby ends this section on the note with which it began (vv. 6b-13): the OT itself shows that God chooses only some from among national Israel to be his true spiritual Israel. It is in this way that Paul reconciles the promises of God to Israel and the small number of Jewish Christians (see v. 6a). To establish the truth of God's selectivity from within Israel, Paul cites texts from Isaiah that describe the important OT concept of the 'remnant.' Characteristic especially of the prophets, the remnant doctrine contains both a word of judgment and a word of hope. The judgment consists in the fact that, though 'the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea' *only* 'a remnant will be saved.' In contrast to the smug self-assurance that the Lord's covenant with Israel insured both the political integrity and spiritual vitality of the people as a whole, the Lord through his prophets announces doom for the people as a whole. In the Hebrew text, this note of judgment is sounded at the end of v. 22 and v. 23: 'Destruction has been decreed, overwhelming and righteous. The LORD, the LORD almighty, will carry out the destruction decreed upon the whole land' (NIV). The LXX paraphrases here, however, and it is not therefore clear what Paul means when he takes over its wording. ***But the idea of judgment, plain in the Hebrew text, is probably intended by Paul also: God will carry out his word [of judgment]; and it is a word that he will carry out 'completely' and 'decisively.' For Paul also, then, the remnant doctrine confirms his word of judgment to Israel: it is 'not all who are of Israel who are truly Israel' (v. 6b).***" [Moo, *Romans*, pg 614f]

“The note of hope in the prophetic remnant doctrine consists in God’s promise that, despite the widespread disobedience of his people, ‘a remnant will be saved.’ God’s promise to preserve a remnant signals his continuing faithfulness to his people, however faithless they may have been. That Paul wants us to hear this note in the remnant doctrine also is clear both from the connection between these quotations and v. 24 and from his development of the remnant teaching in chap. 11, where the existence of a remnant (11:1-10), he suggests, is laden with hope for the future of Israel (see esp. 11:16a).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 616]

v 29 — “Paul’s catena of quotations ends with a further word of prediction from Isaiah. Paul cites Isa. 1:9 exactly according to the LXX, which faithfully renders the MT. What undoubtedly drew Paul’s attention to this text was the word ‘seed,’ which was so key in vv. 7-9. While, however, the tone in vv. 7-9 was mainly negative (among all the descendants only those whom God ‘reckons’ as seed will be saved), here it is positive: God’s ‘leaving’ a seed means that he will not allow Israel’s rebellion to bring her to the annihilation experienced by Sodom and Gomorrah. This concluding note of hope paves the way for Rom. 11.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 616]

“I have chosen you out of the world.” — John 15:19

Here is distinguishing grace and discriminating regard; for some are made the special objects of divine affection. Do not be afraid to dwell upon this high doctrine of election. When your mind is most heavy and depressed, you will find it to be a bottle of richest cordial. Those who doubt the doctrines of grace, or who cast them into the shade, miss the richest clusters of Eshcol; they lose the wines on the lees well refined, the fat things full of marrow. There is no balm in Gilead comparable to it. If the honey in Jonathan’s wood when but touched enlightened the eyes, this is honey which will enlighten your heart to love and learn the mysteries of the kingdom of God. Eat, and fear not a surfeit; live upon this choice dainty, and fear not that it will be too delicate a diet. Meat from the King’s table will hurt none of His courtiers. Desire to have your mind enlarged, that you may comprehend more and more the eternal, everlasting, discriminating love of God. When you have mounted as high as election, tarry on its sister mount, the covenant of grace. Covenant engagements are the munitions of stupendous rock behind which we lie entrenched; covenant engagements with the surety, Christ Jesus, are the quiet resting-places of trembling spirits.

*“His oath, His covenant, His blood,
Support me in the raging flood;
When every earthly prop gives way,
This still is all my strength and stay.”*

If Jesus undertook to bring me to glory, and if the Father promised that He would give me to the Son to be a part of the infinite reward of the travail of His soul; then, my soul, till God Himself shall be unfaithful, till Jesus shall cease to be the truth, thou art safe. When David danced before the ark, he told Michal that election made him do so. Come, my soul, exult before the God of grace and leap for joy of heart. [Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening*]