

## Is it unfair that God loved Jacob and hated Esau?

Written by Josh Winslett

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"As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." -Romans 9:13

The typical response to God's sovereignty in salvation is to question the fairness of election. Election being God's choosing of some of the human race to salvation through Jesus Christ. When considering that God did not chose all but left some in their sins, the usual response is, "that's not fair." The apostle Paul records this type of argument in Romans 9:14, "Is there unrighteousness with God?" This question comes after writing that election is prior to any good or bad works, and that God loved Jacob and hated Esau before they were even born. Consider Paul's response to that question recorded in verses 15-18.

First response: Romans 9:15-16 "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."

Paul appeals to the fact that God is sovereign in all of his decisions. We sometimes think negatively concerning God's choice to show mercy to some and not others, but consider this from a natural perspective. Do we question this harshly the autonomous decisions of other mere humans? No person thinks less of other people for their own choice of one single spouse, or even who we choose to charitably help. Why would we place a standard on God that we are unwilling to place on ourselves? God as the ultimate authority has more right to make decisions concerning whom he would bestow his own love upon. He will have mercy on whomever he will. As the verse states, "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." God is sovereign.

Second response: Romans 9:17-18 "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."

God sustained Pharaoh so that the power of his sovereignty would be made known. God's

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power was manifested in two ways as described in verse 18, 1) God's mercy in the salvation of Israel from Egyptian bondage, 2) God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart. God's power of sovereignty is easily seen through his choice and care of Israel, but how is his power of sovereignty shown through Pharaoh? The example of Pharaoh is used to remind the questioner that all people in their natural state will reject God. Paul shows this by the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. Pharaoh exemplifies the position, and reaction of the wicked toward God. You see, God hardened Pharaoh's heart through external means. God showed Pharaoh harsh judgment and his heart was hardened. God showed Pharaoh goodness by removing harsh judgement and his heart was hardened. In one sense his heart was already hardened being in a state of depravity, but God proved himself just in Pharaoh's damnation by manifesting his hardened condition through living circumstances. Point being, any person apart from God's grace will hate God and do wickedness regardless of if God shows them goodness or judgment. Man is without excuse. God does no injustice to those he did not choose to save. They will forever hate him and prove so by their actions.

Simply stated, God is sovereign in his choice to save some and humans cannot question this justice because all humans deserve God's wrath, and prove so by their actions. The fact is that without God's electing grace, we would all be lost. Therefore, question not why he didn't save all, consider your own sin and marvel that he saved any.

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." -Romans 7:24-25