

- Paul uses an analogy drawn from the OT metaphor of God being the potter and the people being the clay (Isa 29:16; Jer 18:1-6). This analogy rightly represents God as the potter, the maker, that He can do with the clay whatever He wants to do with it. If God wants to make a vessel for dishonourable use, to display His glory in judgment (Pharaoh), He has that right. If He wants to make another vessel for honourable use, to display His glory in mercy (Moses), He has that right. In both cases the right is absolute.
- God did it according to the principles of justice and mercy. In order to display His wrath (His displeasure against sin) God will punish the “*vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.*” The Greek verb rendered “fitted” (or “prepared”) is passive. God is not the subject doing the preparing. It should read: “fitted themselves for destruction” - the vessels participated in their own preparation. Because sinners refuse to repent of their sins and turn to the Lord for salvation, it is their choice if they perish. They are ripe (fitted) for destruction because of their own actions of rejecting the truth.
- There are two sides to predestination. One side of predestination is sovereign election, that there are those whom God has chosen from before the foundation of the world to save from their sins. There is also the flipside, the other side of the doctrine of predestination, which is what we call the doctrine of reprobation, that there are those whom God chooses to leave in their sins. Reprobation is the Reformed doctrine that God has eternally decreed:
  - to refrain from extending saving grace to particular individuals, and
  - to judge them according to the strict standards of divine justice.
- The sovereignty of God in the election of some inevitably implies the reprobation of others. Since a person’s salvation depends upon God’s unconditional choice, and since not all are saved, it necessarily follows that God has excluded some from His saving grace. Though election and reprobation are the head and tail of the same coin, there are distinct differences. God does not carry out both election and reprobation in the same way.
  - In election, God works directly on our hearts through His Spirit to impart new life & saving faith. This contrasts with the doctrine of reprobation. God does not put forth an effort to cause people to sin. When God chooses to bypass a sinner, He does not work to create unbelief in that person's heart. Rather, God simply let him go his own way. Note that God “prepared” vessels of mercy for glory (v23). But v22 says God “endured” the vessels of wrath. God does not prepare anyone to hell. Men chose hell for themselves by their resistance to the truth, their rejection and unbelief of Christ.
  - With election, sinners receive what they do not deserve – they receive mercy. With reprobation, they receive what they do deserve – they receive justice. With election, sinners will be in heaven by the will of God; with reprobation, sinners will be in hell by their own will.

- In the case of Pharaoh and the vessels of wrath, God withholds His final judgment so that He could more spectacularly display His glory for the vessels of mercy. God’s plan includes everyone, Jews and Gentiles (2 Peter 3:9). Election is a comfort to believers because it assures us that what God purposes to do for us, He will complete it despite our many sins.
- Election (& Reprobation), while a difficult doctrine to contemplate, comforts believers with the truth that nothing can thwart the sovereign purpose of God. It invites Christians to submit to a God who is all wise and loving, and who has revealed through His Word that He is the supreme end for which all things exist (Rom 11:36; Col 1:16).

#### 4. Prophecies Concerning God’s Sovereign Choice (9:25-29)

- Paul turns again to the OT to show that the rejection of the greater part of Israel was foretold by the prophets.
  - In vv25-26, Paul quotes from Hosea 2:23 & 1:10 concerning the rejection and restoration of Israel. The theme of Hosea is God’s steadfast love for Israel in spite of her continued unfaithfulness, vividly depicted by Hosea’s marital experience. The prophet foresaw a period of time when Israel would no longer be considered God’s people, but also a time afterwards when Israel would once again be called “*children of the living God.*”
  - In vv27-28, the apostle refers to Isaiah 10:22-23 & 28:22 in support of the same theme. The passage speaks of God’s work in saving a remnant from the coming Assyrian destruction. God assured them that He would always preserve His remnant: “*A remnant shall be saved*” (v27b). The national aspects of the OT promises made to Israel (e.g., promised land, throne of David, restoration of Jerusalem) are preserved in the believing Jewish remnant according to God’s election.
  - V29 concludes this aspect of Paul’s argument with a further reference to Isaiah 1:9. Except for this remnant preserved by God’s grace and mercy, no Israel would have remained at all. Israel would have been as Sodom and Gomorrah, which were utterly destroyed. Even in the midst of judgment, God showed His mercy to Israel.
- Romans 9 is God speaking to us with His authority through Paul to tell us what we need to know to be assured about our salvation. How can we know that God’s promise of salvation will not fail? Paul’s answer is that our salvation is secure because it does not depend on us, but rather on God’s purpose according to election. As the Sovereign of the universe, God always accomplishes what He purposes to do.