

ROMANS

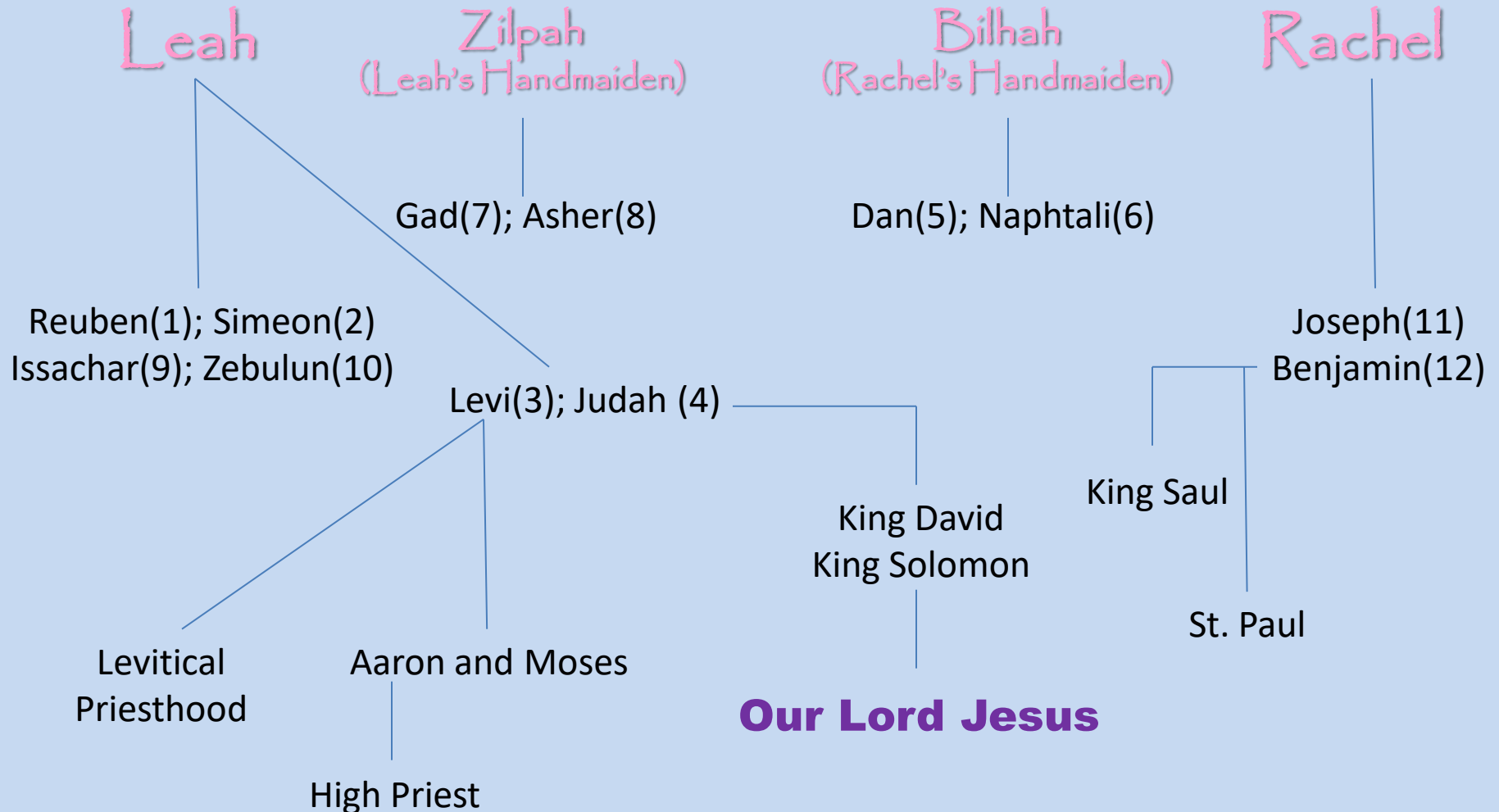
9:14-18



*The God
Who Shows
Mercy!*


PART I

JACOB'S Sons (The 12 Tribes of Israel)



ROMANS

9:14-18



¹⁴What then shall we say? [There is] not unrighteousness with God, is there? Never may it be! ¹⁵For to Moses He says: *“I will show mercy to whom I may show mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I may have compassion.”* ¹⁶So then, [it is] not of the [one] willing, nor of the [one] striving, but of God showing mercy. ¹⁷For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: *“For this very [purpose] therefore I have raised up you, so that I might show in you My power, and that My name should be declared in all the earth.”* ¹⁸So then, to whom He wants, He shows mercy; now whom He wants, He hardens.

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PREFACE

We must keep in mind that this section of Romans 9 concerns Paul's teaching about God, in particular, the mercy of God. Many scholars take issue with this section and without reason vilify it; since, they take the wrong perspective of God and attempt to tie these verses to God's sovereignty & freedom; which are never mentioned!

Therefore, the theme Paul identifies is the language which actually appears in the text (what a concept!); Thus, a more fitting evaluation is that this section is addressing God's Mercy (cf. vv.15, 16, 18 and later, 23; this by Paul's use of the Greek verbs for mercy: ἐλεήσω, ἐλεῶ, ἐλεῶντος. Therefore, this section is aptly entitled: *"The God Who Shows Mercy."*

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Setting the Stage

This section of Romans 9 is interactive; that is, Paul will first give a suggestion (v.14) as a reaction to 9:6-13. Then Paul will give responses in vv.15-18, based upon statements by God from the OT; and then, draw out the consequences in vv.16 and 18. All this interaction will certainly reflect upon the importance of the topic at hand: **God's Mercy.**

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9:14



*A Challenge to
God's
Righteousness
Rebuked*

¹⁴What then shall we say? [There is] not unrighteousness with God, is there? Never may it be!

Unrighteousness (ἀδικία) with God? Who would ever entertain such an idea? By this time, in Paul's letter, he is now reflective. It would be inappropriate to see Paul engaging in theodicy. In reality, he is dealing with the implications and ramifications of God in His concrete acts throughout history. In reflection, then, we hear Paul's rebuke: *"Never may it be!"*

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*A Challenge to
God's
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Rebuked*

¹⁴What then shall we say? [There is] not unrighteousness with God, is there? Never may it be!

Hence, it's important for you to understand that the use of *“unrighteousness”* accurately conveys what is being contested. Paul has already felt the need to affirm God's righteousness, faithfulness, and truth (cf. 3:1-8 and 3:26). As this matter resurfaces, Paul resolutely refutes!

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(w/the use of
Ex 33:19)

God's Mercy
is Affirmed

¹⁵For to Moses He says: *"I will show mercy to whom I may show mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I may have compassion."*

What is the best way for Paul to respond to such a baseless assertion that God is unrighteous? Instead of giving his opinion or engaging in theodicy, Paul uses God's Word from two quotations in the OT. Paul begins...with the use of an explanatory "For" (γάρ)! And the following two-fold blessing that God spoke to Moses from Exodus 33:19 - *"I will show mercy to whom I may show mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I may have compassion."*

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9:15



*(w/the use of
Ex 33:19)*

*God's Mercy
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¹⁵For to Moses He says: *"I will show mercy to whom I may show mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I may have compassion."*

In context, God is speaking this two-fold blessing directly after Israel's golden calf apostasy (Ex 32:1-6) and, as you may recall, Yahweh intended to destroy them (Ex 32:10). However, Moses intercedes in Israel's behalf and Yahweh relents (Ex 32:11-14). Moses then seeks assurance that God's presence will be with the people and himself (Ex 33:15-16). And with the quote above, Yahweh provides that assurance.

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9:15



*(w/the use of
Ex 33:19)*

*God's Mercy
is Affirmed*

¹⁵For to Moses He says: *"I will show mercy to whom I may show mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I may have compassion."*

The quote identifies the key component at issue through Yahweh's emphatic double repetition of His Divine Mercy! Why would Paul utilize this passage? True, he is under inspiration of the Holy Spirit; and yet, secondly, this passage emphasizes the dominant, essential nature of God's character! He is gracious, compassionate, and merciful! This is Yahweh in His fullest self-disclosure to man, being to His great glory. Finally, restate: Note that Yahweh says nothing concerning His sovereignty or freedom!

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*God's Mercy
Reaffirmed*

16 So then, [it is] not of the [one] willing, nor of the [one] striving, but of God showing mercy.

Paul now draws his conclusion in regard to Yahweh's quotes by the use of: Another way to translate these "So then..." (ἄρα οὖν). **God's mercy...** [it is] not of the [one] willing, nor of the [one] striving. In other words, God's mercy isn't reliant, in any way, upon the will of man or even man's "striving" (τρέχοντος) - literally, ("running wide-open" like Usain Bolt in the 100m dash!). It conveys an intense desire to get to the goal as quickly as possible. This verb was used of runners in a race, of swiftness, or of effort to attain an end (cf. 9:11 and "not of works").

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9:16



*God's Mercy
Reaffirmed*

¹⁶So then, [it is] not of the [one] willing, nor of the [one] striving, but of God showing mercy.

Therefore, in regard to the issue at hand, neither the willing nor the striving of people has any effect, whatsoever, on God's mercy! There's nothing determinative, or even of influence, going from humanity toward God; instead, the actions that matter come exclusively from God toward man...to you (*"...but of God showing mercy"*).

Or as an early church father, Apollinaris of Laodicea wrote:

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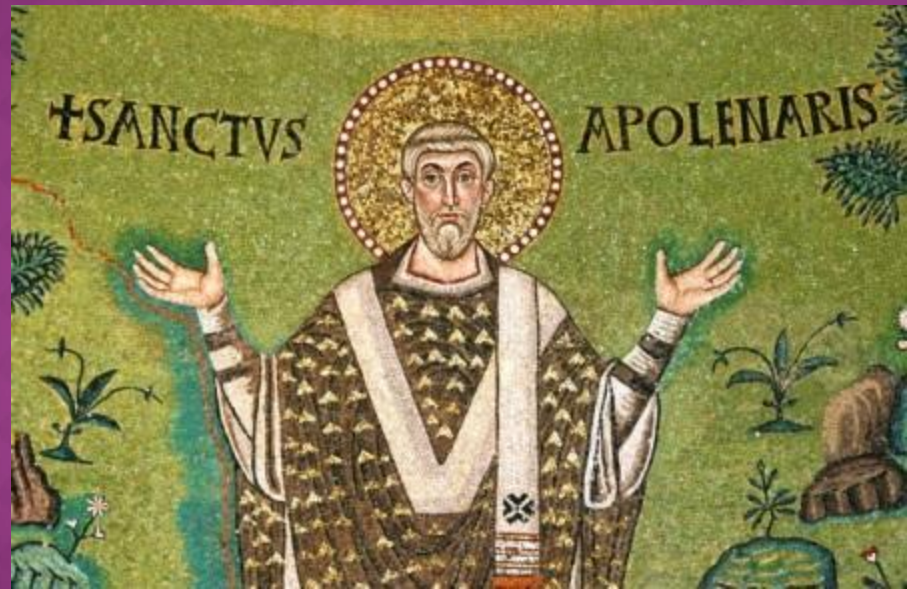
9:16



*God's Mercy
Reaffirmed*

¹⁶So then, [it is] not of the [one] willing, nor of the [one] striving, but of God showing mercy.

“[God]...does not dispense mercy according to human standards, but according to the wisdom of God. For we are shown mercy not because of our own works but because of God, who has the power to show mercy.”



Apollinaris of Laodicea, *Romans* (Bray, *Romans*, ACCS NT, 6:246).

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9:16



*God's Mercy
Reaffirmed*

¹⁶So then, [it is] not of the [one] willing, nor of the [one] striving, but of God showing mercy.

Lastly, the emphasis on God's mercy stands validated when Paul ultimately arrives at the culminating theological assertions of Romans 9-11. We will see this, exclusively, in 11:31-32, where Paul will use the Greek verb “*show mercy*” (ἐλεέω) three times. Here he uses a genitive participle [ἐλεῶντος], “of God showing mercy.”

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9:17-18



*Is This Fair
to the
Pharaoh?*

17For the Scripture says to Pharaoh:
*“For this very [purpose] therefore I have
raised up you, so that I might show in
you My power, and that My name should
be declared in all the earth.”* **18**So then,
to whom He wants, He shows mercy;
now whom He wants, He hardens.

We now arrive at a complex portion of
our study for today. Paul goes back
further from Mt. Sinai to Egypt and a
quotation of God found in Ex 9:16!
You may ask why does he do this?
Well, the fact that Paul reverses
course to an earlier point indicates the
use of a deliberate non-chronological
event in order to reinforce his point
concerning God’s Mercy!

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9:17-18



Thutmoses III
1485-1431 BC

*Is This Fair
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¹⁷For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: *“For this very [purpose] therefore I have raised up you, so that I might show in you My power, and that My name should be declared in all the earth.”* ¹⁸So then, to whom He wants, He shows mercy; now whom He wants, He hardens.

His two points:

1. Paul purposefully uses *“...I have raised up you...”* to prove a point concerning His mercy! The Greek (ἐξήγειρά) (ex-e'-gei-ra) is what Paul uses to translate the original Hebrew (הִמָּלֵךְ) (he'-e'-mad-ti-kā) from Ex 9:16. The sense, then, is that Yahweh raised Pharaoh up, but not in a general sense. Rather, Pharaoh was granted an *“exalted position.”* In other words, God granted Pharaoh his powerful role so that, in the end, God would show His power, glory and

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9:17-18



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¹⁷For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: *“For this very [purpose] therefore I have raised up you, so that I might show in you **My power**, and that My name should be declared in all the earth.”* ¹⁸So then, to whom He wants, He shows mercy; now whom He wants, He hardens.

2. Paul then alters the original Greek translation in the LXX “my strength” to “**my power**” (δύναμιν). He does this recalling 1:16: *the Good News is the “power of God!”* Thus, God will show His Almighty, Divine power in His deliverance of Israel from the weak “human power” of Pharaoh.

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9:17-18



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And, this also relates to the power of God’s name! As we recall, “My Name” is a Gospel term, since it reveals Who and What God really is in His great love, mercy, grace, and saving power! So, in Yahweh revealing His great power, all of Egypt, including Pharaoh, would know that Yahweh is the One, True and Only God!

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9:17-18



Thutmose III
1485-1431 BC

*Is This Fair
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**¹⁸So then, to whom He wants, He shows mercy;
now whom He wants, He hardens.**

Lastly, let's discuss "*hardens*"
(σκληρύνει) (sklay-roo'-nee). In Exodus 4-14, hardening is a prominent feature, especially in God's interaction with the Pharaoh of Egypt (who actually thought of himself a god or demi-god). As we have previously discussed, in this section of Romans, having a thorough knowledge of the OT is paramount. Therefore, Paul's use of "*hardens*" is significant.

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9:17-18



Thutmose III
1485-1431 BC

*Is This Fair
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**¹⁸So then, to whom He wants, He shows mercy;
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In Exodus 9:16, and the point of hardens or the hardening of the heart of Pharaoh, is to prove that Pharaoh wanted none of the mercy for himself and for his nation (Egypt) and with all his “power” intended to block the plans of that mercy that Yahweh intended for Israel. It’s important to know that the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart does not convey a predetermined judgment against Pharaoh or that he was “predestined” not to believe the Divine Word.

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9:17-18



EPITOME
of the
Formula
of Concord

by
Jakob Andreae

*Is This Fair
to the
Pharaoh?*

So, again, our Confessions speak to this in the Epitome:

“I will strengthen/harden his heart (Ex 4:21; 7:3), spoken before Pharaoh had heard the first plea to let His people go, imply that those declarations refer to this subsequent hardening that began in Ex 9:12 after Pharaoh had repeatedly rejected the divine Word. Anyone who rejects the Word of God hardens his or her heart against it, and God foreknew that unbelieving Pharaoh would do this. However, God’s foreknowledge, which is part of His omniscience, is not to be equated with divine predetermination. Knowing in advance how someone will react is not the same as causing a person to react in that manner.” (FC Ep XI 1-4 and FC SD XI 4; *there is further discussion about Pharaoh in FC SD XI 83-86*).

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**¹⁸So then, to whom He wants, He shows mercy;
now whom He wants, He hardens.**

To conclude the discussion of “*hardens*” here are three major points:

- 1) The hardening of Pharaoh’s heart was not immediate, much less already accomplished before the hearing of God’s Word;
- 2) At least through the first five plagues, Pharaoh’s hardening was also not final; indeed, Yahweh’s hardening of him had not yet begun(!); and,
- 3) Exodus demonstrates how God was incredibly patient with Pharaoh, a point that Paul reiterates in general terms in v.22, prior to any hardening of him.

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Conclusion

Finally, with the discussion of “hardens”, Paul’s anguish and his ardent pleas on behalf of ethnic Israel now come into focus. Just as God was patient with the Pharaoh of the Exodus; how much more is He patient with those in Israel that persists in their unbelief (cf. 11:23), which is their hardening! God’s hardening of His people is by no means permanent; instead, His hands reach out to them (10:21), and His merciful call is to all people, to Israel, and to you!

ROMANS

9:19-21



PART II

A close-up photograph of a person's hands shaping a piece of clay on a pottery wheel. The hands are positioned to guide the clay as it rotates. The wheel is dark and has some visible wear. The background is a solid purple color.

*Thou Art the
Potter; We
All Are Like
Clay*

