

ROMANS

9:22-24

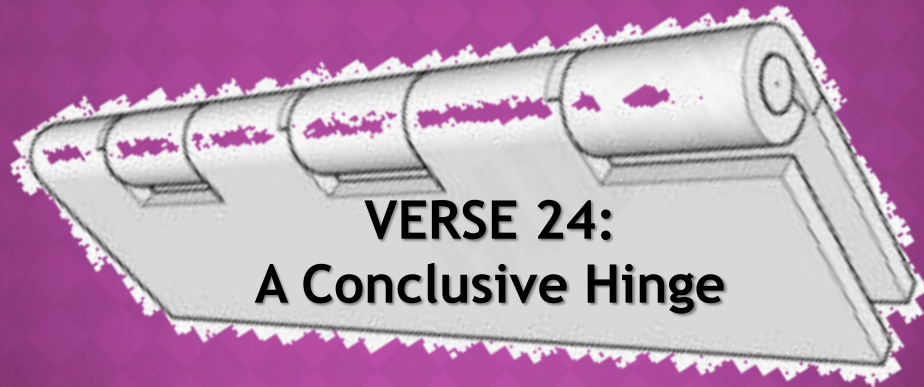


PART III

*Vessels of
Wrath*

And

*Vessels of
Mercy*



VERSE 24:
A Conclusive Hinge

ROMANS

9:22-24



PROLOGUE

Paul's point has been the total reliance that we must have in regards to God's mercy. We are not able to come before God and demand this or that and say He's unfair in this or that, or pretend to be wiser than Him in any way, shape, or form. God is God! We are His creation, and we've worsened that by our sin. It is sin that causes us to struggle with God's doctrine of election. Our sinful reasoning wants to say that God condemns some on a whim, and saves others—and "...*that's not fair!*" However, "double predestination" is not taught by God.

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Instead, our LORD tells us repeatedly that He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, and that He desires all to be saved (Ezek. 18:31; 33:11; 1 Tim. 2:3-4). Therefore, Paul is saying that in regard to saving faith, you must keep in mind that it is totally an act of God's mercy through Christ Jesus! The LORD does what He desires since He is God; yet, thanks be to Him that what He desires is the salvation of all (of you)!

PROLOGUE

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PROLOGUE

In his commentary on Romans, K. G. Stoeckhardt offers wise counsel for anyone who studies the doctrine of election (predestination):

“If ever any doubt as to our salvation wants to rise in our hearts, then we should remember and cling to the knowledge that God from eternity has taken the matter of our salvation and all that pertains to it into His merciful and powerful hand. In the midst of all crosses and trials, when it would seem that God has abandoned us entirely, we should rest our faith upon His Word, which tells us that all the tribulations of this present time are but incidents along the way to heaven, and can in no way compare with the glory which shall be revealed in us on the day of our final redemption.

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PROLOGUE

Stoeckhardt continues: If we thus adhere strictly to the argumentation of Scriptures and apply the comfort of Scriptures to our hearts, then our thoughts will not revert to others, then we shall not yield to the temptation of speculating about this doctrine in its so-called reasonable conclusions, and will thus be spared the dangers into which such speculations lead. If we thus hold fast the truth that the election of grace is not an absolute election, that it was not an arbitrary act of God's sovereign pleasure, but flows from the eternal counsel of love, that it is based alone upon His grace and mercy, and that its object is to keep us safe in His Word and faith unto our end, then all thoughts of doubt will be removed from our hearts, and our faith will be most firmly established."

[cited by P. E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible, New Testament*, vol. 2 [St. Louis: CPH, 1922], 47]

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²² And if God desiring to show the wrath and make known His power, bore with much patience, [the] vessels of wrath, having been fitted for destruction, ²³that also He might make known the riches of His glory upon [the] vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

²⁴even us, whom He also called, not only from [the] Jews, but also from [the] Gentiles?

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Vessels of Wrath
And
Vessels of Mercy

²² And *if* God desiring to show the wrath and make known His power, bore with much patience, [the] vessels of wrath, having been fitted for destruction, ²³that also He might make known the riches of His glory upon [the] vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

Sometimes, St. Paul makes a grammatical “mistake” that actually is used by the Holy Spirit to garner our attention. In Greek, Paul, in these two verses, writes an incomplete sentence! Paul begins with an “if” (εἰ) clause of a conditional sentence, called a protasis; but he never completes the “then” portion of the clause that’s known as the apodosis.

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Vessels of Wrath
And
Vessels of Mercy

²² **And if** God desiring to show the wrath and make known His power, bore with much patience, [the] vessels of wrath, having been fitted for destruction, ²³that also He might make known the riches of His glory upon [the] vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

The “**And if...**” (Εἰ δὲ) is used by Paul to introduce his final response to the assertion that he has made in v.14

(“There is not unrighteousness with God, is there?); **and also v.19** (Why then is He still finding fault?). **Paul’s focus remains firmly upon God and, though he begins with “if” (εἰ), he is clearly stating what he believes (and knows) to be true. Paul is not being hypothetical!**

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God's
Desiring

²² And if God *desiring* to show the wrath and *make known His power*, bore with much patience, [the] vessels of wrath, having been fitted for destruction,

The Greek verb that Paul uses for “desiring” is θέλων (thee’-lown) that literally means the Lord is extending His “best-offer” to the believer – desiring (wanting) to birth faith in them which also empowers and manifests His presence. And what follows God’s “desiring” is expressed in two ways: 1) “...to show His wrath...” and to 2) “...make known His [saving] power.”

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*God's
Desiring*

²² And if God *desiring* to show the wrath and *make known His power*, bore with much patience, [the] vessels of wrath, having been fitted for destruction,

These two aspects are fully expressed in God's righteousness (1:17), which Paul elaborates upon extensively in Chapters 1-4. Paul outlines and defends God's righteous wrath in 1:18 – 3:20. He then follows with the Good News of God's saving power in Christ Jesus which proves His righteousness in His saving power.

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God's
Patience

²² And if God desiring to show the wrath and make known His power, *bore with much patience*, [the] vessels of wrath, having been *fitted for destruction*,

Now Paul demonstrates how God deals with disobedient man; He “...*bore with much patience*” vessels of wrath, who, due to their unbelief, are “...*fitted for destruction.*” We see throughout history God’s patience: Jonah, Nineveh, Pharaoh, the Israelites, etc. As Chrysostom writes: “God, being very good, shows the same kindness to both [*he is speaking of Israel and the Pharaoh of the exodus*]. For it was not only to those who were saved that God show kindness but to Pharaoh also...For both Pharaoh and God’s people [Israel] had the advantage of God’s patience. And if Pharaoh was not saved it was because of his own will, since God had done as much for him as He had done for those who were saved.” [Chrysostom. *Homilies on Romans*, 16 (Bray, *Romans*, ACCS NT 6:255).]

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***Vessels of
Wrath and
Destruction***

²² And if God desiring to show the wrath and make known His power, *bore with much patience*, [the] *vessels of wrath*, having been fitted for destruction,

Notice that God did not endure; He actually “...*bore with much patience*” those whom Paul describes as: “...*vessels of wrath*.”

Grammatically, in the Greek, this phrase can be debated regarding its construction. Is it an objective genitive: *vessels that are objects of God’s wrath* (a present impact); or, a simple genitive: *vessels that are characterized or described by wrath*?

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***Vessels of
Wrath and
Destruction***

²² And if God desiring to show the wrath and make known His power, bore with much patience, [the] vessels of wrath, having been fitted for destruction,

Remember, God's mercy and His patience bears with these vessels of wrath, which is quite astonishing, seeing that they are fitted for destruction. We would have already smashed them to bits; however, God is patient...why?

He has the goal of moving them to repentance (2:4). The goal of moving them to repentance also explains the primary reason why a partial measure of His divine wrath is already being poured out (1:18; cf. Rev. 16:1, 9, 11). To put it another way, the clear fact is that they are indeed objects of God's wrath, however, that does not imply that they will remain such. In His mercy, He still desires, in mercy, to move them to repentance and salvation.

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Vessels of
Mercy

²³that also He might make known the riches of His glory upon [the] vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

God not only desires to demonstrate His wrath, but He also wills to “...make known the riches of His glory upon [the] vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory.” The phrase that Paul utilizes “...the riches of His glory...” is the same noun (πλοῦτος – literally, “wealth”) that he uses in 2:4 to speak of God’s “...abundance of His kindness and forbearance and patience.” The further confirms the interpretation that, just as in 2:4, God’s patience “wills” (θέλω) to lead vessels of wrath toward repentance and salvation. Why? So that they, too, may share in the complete “πλοῦτος” of His glory that He will fully reveal on the Great Day of Judgment!

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*Vessels of
Mercy*

²³that also He might make known the riches of His glory upon [the] vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

So, who are these “...vessels of mercy?”

The noun that Paul uses for “mercy” (ἐλεος) appears here for the first time in Romans. And the phrase “...vessels of mercy” is also a “simple genitive” as with the “vessel of wrath.” Thus, the “vessels of mercy” are vessels on which God’s mercy NOW rests. Therefore, such vessels can be confident and certain that they are also depicted as headed for glory (cf. 8:17, 18, 21, and 30).

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*Vessels of
Mercy*

²³that also He might make known the riches of His glory upon [the] vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

To conclude this section, let's hear, once again, from our Confessions:

“Concerning “the vessels of mercy” he says [St. Paul] specifically that the Lord Himself “has prepared them unto glory” [9:23]. He does not say this of the damned, whom God has not prepared but who have prepared themselves to be vessels of damnation.” [FC SD XI 82]

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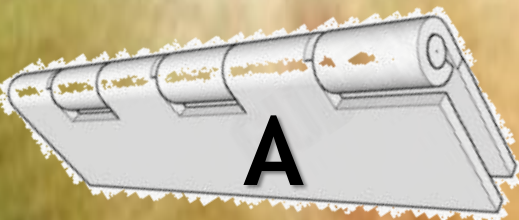
The Final Implication of 9:22-23

God wills (θέλων ὁ θεός) to make known His “*saving power*” “*in all the earth*” (v.17). This is the point of Paul’s Letter to the Romans and his exposition of the Holy Gospel. God’s righteousness is revealed therein to the Jews and Gentiles (1:16-17; 3:27-31; 9:24, see below) by One who mercifully deigns to declare the godless, “*fitted for wrath*” vessels righteous on account of and for the sake of Christ Jesus, His Only-begotten Son (cf. 4:6; 9:15-16, 22). God also wills to make known the abundance of His glory which He prepared beforehand for the vessels of His “*mercy*” (v.23). So then, we ask the question:

*How can we know that His
mercy is ours?*

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9:24



**Conclusive
Hinge**

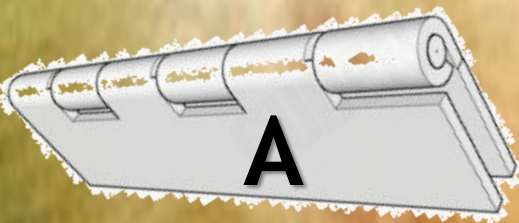
²⁴*even us, whom He also called, not only from [the] Jews, but also from [the] Gentiles?*

St. Paul proceeds by using the previously used theme used in 9:6-13. There he described God as “...*the One who calls*” (τοῦ καλοῦντος, v.12). The “*vessels of mercy*” are defined here in v.24 as those “...whom He also called...” namely, you! And also, not only from Jews, but also from Gentiles!

As further evidence, as seen in 9:6-13, Paul’s argument steadily progresses forward! He uses the people of the OT, namely Genesis, as his “proof texts” to support his argument as he quoted, three times, along with Malachi’s writing, concerning Jacob and Esau; the Prophets (9:20 and 25-29). Therefore, Paul will now pivot and introduce his next section with the use of:

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**Conclusive
Hinge**

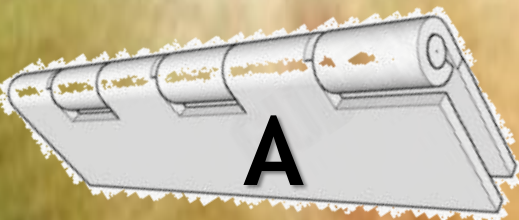
²⁴even us, whom He also called, **not only** from [the] Jews, **but also** from [the] Gentiles?

“Not only...but also”

Paul uses his favorite formula of **“not only...but also”** [as he has already done in *Rom* 1:32; 4:16, 23-24; 5:3, 11; 8:23; *here*; and as he will do in 13:5; and 16:4] to move his discussion along. As you can see, throughout his Letter to the Romans, Paul makes the point that The God (ὁ θεός) who calls (v.12) and who shows mercy (v.16) is a **“not only...but also”** God!

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**Conclusive
Hinge**

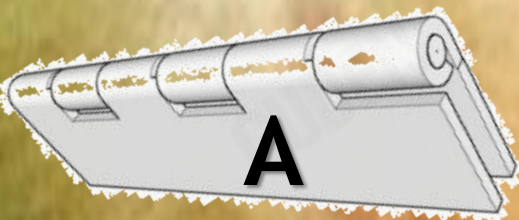
²⁴even us, whom He also called, **not only** from [the] Jews, **but also** from [the] Gentiles?

This concept of God floods this entire section of Romans! For instance:

- 1) “not only mercy, but also compassion” (9:15);
- 2) “**not only mercy, but also hardening**” (9:18);
- 3) “not only honorable use, but also ordinary use” (9:21);
- 4) “**not only wrath, but also saving power**” (9:22);
- 5) “not only vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, but also vessels of mercy prepared beforehand for the abundance of glory” (9:22-23).

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**Conclusive
Hinge**

²⁴even us, whom He also called, not only from [the] Jews, but also from [the] Gentiles?

Now Paul calls “even us” who are not only from the Jews, but also from the Gentiles; a recurring theme of his letter.

Finally, we are reminded that most of the original recipients heard this letter orally! As you may recall, the unusual construction, the “awkwardness” of the grammar is “actually” on purpose! This would have forced the speaker to read aloud very painstakingly and ardently. The declaration of this verse that “*even us, whom He also called...*” includes Paul and his addressees, both Jews and Gentiles, who are among the “ones in Rome who are loved by God, ...those called, holy” (1:7). Indeed, it still reaches out to encompass all of “us” who hear the call of our Lord’s mercy, TODAY!

ROMANS

*God's Word Stands - for
Both Jews and Gentiles*

ROMANS 9:25-29