



# God's Sovereignty and Mercy: Seeing Through Renewed Lenses

by John Himmelberger

## Intro

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When life seems unfair, Romans 9 asks us to look again, through the lenses of mercy, sovereignty, purpose, and grace. This teaching invites us to exchange our human expectations for a God-centered view that reveals not only His justice, but His heart. As we explore six transformational lenses, we learn to trust His character even when we don't fully understand His ways. This isn't about letting go of hard questions, it's about letting go of small perspectives.

## My Intention and Assumptions

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I hope that your relationship with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit is strengthened through this teaching. My assumption is that you have read or are reading all 66 books of the Bible for context. This is meant to be 'salt' and make you thirsty. You're welcome.

## About the Author

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John Himmelberger is a teacher, pastor, and lifelong learner. With decades of experience walking with Jesus and leading others into transformational truth, John brings a grounded yet radical perspective rooted in Scripture, personal growth, and kingdom living.

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# God's Sovereignty and Mercy: Seeing Through Renewed Lenses

**Romans 9:14-15:** *"What shall we say then? Is there injustice with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whomever I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I have compassion.'"*

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## Introduction

### 1. The Big Question: Is God unfair?

- Romans 9:14-15 addresses objections about God's sovereignty in showing mercy to some and not others.
- *"What shall we say then? Is there injustice with God? Certainly not!"* (Romans 9:14).

### 2. Focus Verse:

- *"For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whomever I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I have compassion.'"* (Romans 9:15).

### 3. Why This Matters:

- This passage challenges human assumptions about fairness and invites us to explore God's justice, mercy, and sovereignty.
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## Key Themes

### 1. God's Justice Is Not Measured by Human Standards

- Paul anticipates our natural objection: "Is there injustice with God?"
    - His emphatic answer: *"Certainly not!"*
  - **Insight:** Justice in God's economy is rooted in His perfect nature, not human ideas of fairness.
    - Humans equate fairness with equality or predictability, but God's justice aligns with His sovereignty and redemptive purposes.
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## 2. Divine Mercy Is Unmerited and Sovereign

- Quoting Exodus 33:19, Paul reminds us that mercy is an act of God's sovereign will.
  - **Insight:**
    - Mercy, by definition, cannot be earned or demanded—it is an expression of God's character.
    - No one *deserves* mercy; all humanity is in a state of sin and deserving of judgment (Romans 3:23).
    - Mercy is a gift, not a right.
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## 3. God's Sovereignty and Freedom

- God is not bound by human expectations or entitlements.
  - **Key Point:** His choices are purposeful, not arbitrary, and serve His redemptive plan.
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## Addressing the Perception of Unfairness

### 1. Cultural Bias Toward Equality

- Modern values equate fairness with equal treatment for all.
- Paul challenges this by showing that God's justice operates on a divine framework that prioritizes redemption and purpose.

### 2. The Entitlement Mindset

- Humans often believe they deserve blessings or mercy based on effort, goodness, or identity.
- **Paul's Counterpoint:** Mercy is never owed—it is entirely God's prerogative.

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## 3. Limited Perspective

- Our finite understanding makes it difficult to see God's eternal purposes.
  - **Illustration:** The potter and the clay (Romans 9:21) emphasize God's authority and intention in shaping His creation for His glory.
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## Applications for Today

### 1. Humility Before God

- Recognize that God's mercy is a gift, not a right.
- Let this truth foster gratitude and awe rather than entitlement.

### 2. Trust in God's Character

- Even when we don't understand His decisions, trust in His perfect wisdom and goodness.

### 3. Celebrate Grace

- Grace disrupts fairness, and that's good news!
- Focus on the abundance of what we've been given rather than what we think we deserve.

### 4. Speak God's Truth

- Like Jesus in Matthew 4, counter lies with the truths of Scripture:
    - *"God is rich in mercy"* (Ephesians 2:4).
    - *"His ways are higher than ours"* (Isaiah 55:8-9).
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## Reflection Questions for the Audience

- How does focusing on God's mercy change the way you see fairness?
- Am I willing to trust God's sovereignty even when I don't fully understand His decisions?

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- How can I celebrate grace, knowing it's unearned and freely given?
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### Closing

- Remind your audience that Romans 9 invites us to shift from a human-centered view of fairness to a God-centered view of mercy, grace, and purpose.
- God's actions are always good, even when they challenge our assumptions. Trusting His sovereignty brings peace and transformation.

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## Understanding Through Lenses

To grasp God's actions in Romans 9:14-15, we need to shift our focus from a human-centered lens of fairness to a God-centered lens. Here are six lenses that can help us understand His sovereignty, mercy, and purposes more deeply:

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### 1. The Lens of Mercy

- **Key Idea:** Mercy is not about entitlement but God's choice to withhold judgment and extend grace.
  - Romans 9:15 quotes Exodus 33:19, where God declares: *"I will have mercy on whomever I have mercy."*
  - **Shift in Perspective:**
    - Instead of asking, *"Why doesn't everyone receive mercy?"* the better question is, *"Why does anyone receive mercy?"*
    - If all humanity is guilty (Romans 3:23), the fact that God shows mercy at all is a profound act of love.
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### 2. The Lens of Sovereignty

- **Key Idea:** God, as Creator, has the authority and wisdom to carry out His plans.
  - The potter and clay metaphor (Romans 9:21) reminds us that God has the right to shape His creation for His purposes.
  - **Shift in Perspective:**
    - Trust God's greater plan, even when it's beyond our understanding (Isaiah 55:8-9).
    - His sovereignty is not arbitrary but purposeful, always aligned with redemption and His glory.
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## 3. The Lens of Purpose

- **Key Idea:** God's actions are always intentional and redemptive.
  - Example: Pharaoh's hardening (Romans 9:17) wasn't an act of cruelty but served to display God's power and bring about Israel's deliverance.
  - **Shift in Perspective:**
    - Recognize that God's purposes are far-reaching and often beyond our immediate view.
    - Every act of mercy and judgment fits into His plan to bring salvation to the world.
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## 4. The Lens of Relationship

- **Key Idea:** God engages with humanity relationally, not mechanically.
  - Examples:
    - Mary's influence on Jesus at Cana (John 2).
    - Abraham interceding for Sodom (Genesis 18).
  - **Shift in Perspective:**
    - God's sovereignty includes space for our participation. He invites us into His plans through faith and relationship.
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## 5. The Lens of Grace

- **Key Idea:** Grace is inherently unfair—and that's the beauty of it!
- The parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16) illustrates this: the landowner's generosity defies human ideas of fairness.
- **Shift in Perspective:**
  - Instead of focusing on what we think we deserve, celebrate the abundance of grace we've received.

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- Grace shows us God's character—His generosity and love.
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### 6. The Lens of Glory

- **Key Idea:** God's ultimate goal is to reveal His glory and bring redemption to all creation.
  - Romans 9:22-23 explains that God's actions—both in showing mercy and in hardening hearts—serve to make His glory known.
  - **Shift in Perspective:**
    - Move from a self-focused view of fairness to a God-focused view of His greatness.
    - God's glory invites us to trust in His perfect plans, even when they challenge our understanding.
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### How These Lenses Change Us

- They realign our focus from “what seems fair” to “what reflects God's character.”
- They help us see God's actions as purposeful, loving, and redemptive, even when they challenge our human assumptions.
- They invite us to approach Scripture with humility, curiosity, and trust.