



## [Romans 9:19-24](#)

(19) One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?" (20) But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?' " (21) Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? (22) What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction? (23) What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory— (24) even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?

*New International Version*

The question Paul poses is natural for those who do not have *the faith* and thus have not really submitted to [God](#). The far more important question for the converted is, "Does He not have the right to do as He pleases with us, since He is not only our Creator, but He has also purchased us from our spiritual bondage to [sin](#) through the payment of His sinless Son's lifeblood?" We therefore belong to Him, and He sees us now as both sons and slaves. God fully expects us to be slaves of righteousness even as we were once slaves to sin ([Romans 6:15-23](#)). A slave is one whose master makes his choices.

The majority of us have been born into cultures where literal, physical slavery is no longer practiced. We have no direct experience with it, though most of us have at least an intellectual understanding of some aspects of it. Consider, then, the relationship between master and slave. The apostles had a good reason to use the word that means "slave" (*doulos*). They wanted us to understand that in our [relationship with God](#) we not only experience the joys of freedom as His children but also the serious requirement to obey as His slaves.

Suppose the Master summons a slave to meet with him every seventh day for instruction and [fellowship](#) with Him and His other slaves, and the slave refuses, saying

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he has something more important to do. This "something more important" does not necessarily have to be working for pay. Perhaps his justification for staying away is, "I learn more studying by myself at home," or "So many 'unspiritual' people are there that I no longer feel comfortable." Suppose the Master says the slave is to pay back ten percent of his increase to Him, but the slave says, "I have other, more important things to do with my money."

Once we understand this, it becomes apparent where our parent church headed in regard to sovereignty. The leaders quickly changed many doctrines—and thus the theology of the entire institution—subtly turning the tables in the relationship. They made the slave the master by giving him the right to decide what is law and what is not, as well as permission to change established priorities. This is virtually the same ploy [Satan](#) used on [Adam and Eve](#) when he said, "You will be as God."

Who is the sovereign and who is the slave is one of the points Paul makes in Romans 9. Understanding that God is sovereign and we are the slaves and translating this into loving submission are essential to our relationship with Him. This absolutely requires trusting Him. Those without *the* faith cannot do this because they do not believe as God does. To have the faith of [Christ](#), we must believe what Christ believes. Will anyone be in God's Kingdom who does not believe as God does?

As we have experienced this life, most of us at one time or another have considered whether God is fair. Our Creator has designed experiences to bring this question to mind so we might consider as many ramifications of it as possible. We usually glean most of our information from the disasters and tragedies of human life. What we often lack are His perspective and [truth](#). As He gives these through the revelation of Himself, we begin to perceive His loving [grace](#), abundant generosity, infinite [patience](#), ready [forgiveness](#), stable oversight, and unswerving commitment to concluding His wonderful purpose successfully.

Those who see Him as unfair are usually ignorant of what is really going on because they have not yet been given eyes to see that they are included in His plan. Mankind's disasters and tragedies have their roots in sin, but God did not will man to sin. Solomon writes in [Ecclesiastes 7:29](#), "Truly, this only I have found: that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes." Mankind has chosen to bring disaster and tragedy upon himself. God is gradually removing the ignorance that holds mankind in thrall to choices that kill him. He has removed this ignorance from us already, and we are therefore free to choose life, as God commands in [Deuteronomy 30:19](#).

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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