

“So you see, God chooses to show mercy to some, and he chooses to harden the hearts of others so they refuse to listen. Well then, you might say, “Why does God blame people for not responding? Haven’t they simply done what he makes them do?” No, don’t say that. Who are you, a mere human being, to argue with God? Should the thing that was created say to the one who created it, “Why have you made me like this?” Romans 9:18-20 NLT

lectio // Romans 9:14-29

Wow Paul, tell us what you really think! This is why this letter to the churches in Rome are so beautifully complicated. The Apostle Paul is not afraid to present the hard truths, the ultimate reality of how this life really works. God is in control, total control and you’re not! God **CHOOSES** to show mercy to some and harden the hearts of others so they **REFUSE** to listen. First of all, when God comes to a human and tells them to do something, he expects obedience. Often when that command or request (if that makes you feel better) is **NOT** obeyed, the human heart hardens and the very nature of our existence, our free will bristles, and bucks and declares “**NO.**” I don’t want to. I can do what I want, when I want to do it and no one can tell me different. Want to know why our world is such a mess? 7.8 billion people wanting to do their own thing and in the United States, we give protections to folks who want personal rights to do so. I would be the one to ask the question that Paul asks for me. What’s the point if God just makes humans rebel? Does God **MAKE** us rebel? Paul uses the illustration of an artist using the medium of clay. The artist decides that one will be “destined” to honor, the other will be tossed in the trash. I get the object lesson. However, it gets more complicated, because God (as the artist) breaths his very existence, his essence into these dirt-bags of dusts and so we **ALL** bear not only the creators image, but also his nature. Thus, one person’s self will and creativity dreams, designs and builds a rocket that flies to the moon. Another, dreams, designs and builds death camps to murder 6 million humans in an attempt to create the perfect race. Both are created by the same God. Both are given a will, dreams and desires. But both do not use their dust to do good.

oratio

pray as responding to the words, phrase, sentence that God has stirred within you

Dad,

I know you created us for your pleasure, and in relationship of perfection and beauty. Our choices then and now have created a breach that only you can repair. I still like to think about the true question that the book of Job brings up. **Can a human love you when not forced (destined) to do so?**

contemplatio

rest in the presence of God, allowing the words revealed to take root