Introduction

The Doctrine of Election

"Election is an act of God before creation in which he chooses some people to be saved, not on account of any foreseen merit in them, but only because of his sovereign good pleasure." Bible Doctrines by Wayne Grudem

Is that fair? Is God just? Romans 9 is a theodicy – a defense of God’s sovereignty and justice.

I. God’s Word is true. Romans 9:1-9

We need to settle that question in our own mind. Is the Bible God’s Word? Is it true?

Paul expresses his deep love for his people. Verses 1-5
Paul talks about the privileges Israel has had.
But it is not as though God’s Word has failed.

From the very beginning, there have been two Israels.
There is the physical Israel and the spiritual Israel – the children according to the flesh and the children of promise.
Just because some refused to believe, it doesn’t mean that God’s Word has failed.
II. God’s decisions are just.
Romans 9:10-18

The Bible clearly teaches that God has made decisions (choices) in salvation history.
- God chose Isaac and not Ishmael. Verses 6-9
- God chose Jacob and not Esau. Verses 10-13

Is God unjust? No. Not at all. “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy…” Exodus 33:14
If we wanted justice, we’d all be lost, because we are all sinners. The fact that any of us are saved is only because of his mercy.

God used Pharaoh to display his glory and power. Pharaoh hardened his heart and God hardened his heart – both are true and taught in the Scriptures.

There is a strong warning here. God is patient and longsuffering. II Peter 3:9 says, “God does not want anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” But he won’t wait forever.

“Today if you hear God’s voice, don’t harden your heart.” Hebrews 3:7-8a

Does the Bible teach election? Acts 13:48 – “When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.”
Romans 11:7 – “the elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened.”

Ephesians 1:4-6 – “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love, he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure and will – to the praise of his glorious grace.”

III. God’s sovereignty does not take away from human responsibility.
Romans 9:19-29

“Who are you, O man, to talk back to God?”

The Reformed tradition says that God chose us simply because he decided to bestow his love on us. It is “unconditional election” because it is not based on any merit in us.

The Arminian tradition says that God’s election is on the basis of foreseen faith. God knew those who would believe.

So “why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?”

God is free and sovereign in his actions over individuals and nations. Yet at the same time, man is fully responsible for the choices he makes. How all of this fits together is a mystery.
Each side recognizes that some will be saved and some will be lost. How do you know if you are one of the elect? “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.” Acts 16:31

The Reformed theologians emphasize God’s sovereignty and that salvation is all of grace. Arminian theologians emphasize man’s free will and the responsibility we have to follow Him.

Conclusion
We need to hold on to both God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility.
When we read the Scripture, we need to let it speak for itself and not try to explain it away by our human logic or systems.