

Vessels of Wrath and Vessels of Mercy (vv. 22-24)

VERSE 22 What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath (εἰ δὲ θέλων ὁ θεὸς ἐνδείξασθαι τὴν ὀργὴν [*conj. ei “if it is true that” d.a.w/noun nom.m.s. theos + aor.act.infin. endeiknumai demonstrate + d.a.w/noun acc.f.s. orge wrath*]) **and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction** (καὶ γνωρίσαι τὸ δυνατὸν αὐτοῦ ἤνεγκεν ἐν πολλῇ μακροθυμίᾳ σκεύη ὀργῆς κατηρτισμένα εἰς ἀπώλειαν [*conj. kai + aor.act.infin. gnorizo make known + d.a.w/noun acc.nt.s. dunamis power + pro.gen.m.s. autos + aor.act.ind.3s. phero endure + prep en + adj.dat.f.s. polus much + noun dat.f.s. makrothumia patience + noun acc.nt.p. skeios vessel + noun gen.f.s. orge wrath + pf.pass.part.acc.nt.p. katarizo prepare + prep. eis for + noun acc.f.s. apoleia destruction*])?)

VERSE 23 And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory (καὶ ἵνα γνωρίσῃ τὸν πλοῦτον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ σκεύη ἐλέους ἃ προητοίμασεν εἰς δόξαν [*conj. kai + conj. hina in order that + aor.act.subj. 3s. gnorizo make known + d.a.w/noun acc.m.s. ploutos wealth, riches + d.a.w/noun gen.f.s. doxa glory + pro.gen.m.s. autos + prep epi upon + noun acc.nt.p. skeuos vessel + noun gen.nt.s. eleos mercy + rel.pro.acc.nt.p. hos which + aor.act.ind.3s. proeteomazo prepare beforehand; also at Eph. 2:10*]),

VERSE 24 even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles (οὓς καὶ ἐκάλεσεν ἡμᾶς οὐ μόνον ἐξ Ἰουδαίων ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐξ ἐθνῶν [*pro.acc.m.p. hos whom + adj. kai even + aor.act.ind.3s. kaleo call + pro.acc.p. ego “us” + neg ou + adv. monos only + prep ek + adj.gen.m.p. Ioudaios Jew + conj. alla but + conj. kai also + prep ek from + noun gen.m.p. ethnos Gentile*]).

ANALYSIS: VERSES 22-24

1. These verses constitute an unfinished sentence.
2. The translation “What if” (or ‘If it is true’) is correctly translated.
3. The completed thought is “What if God does as He pleases relative to “vessels of wrath” who can sustain an objection?
4. “What if” is a rhetorical device of restating the question of v. 20a.
5. These three verses constitute an expansion and application of the analogy to the potter and his vessels noted in vv. 20 & 22.
6. Some observations on the expression “vessels of wrath” and “vessels of mercy”:
 - a. The potter is God who freely makes vessels with contrasting purposes.
 - b. The vessels (containers) are viewed as either unbelievers or believers destined for wrath or mercy.
 - c. God anticipated the volitional response to His plan of salvation, and this is basis for the two opposite destinies of the two broad categories of humanity (cf. Matt. 7:13 “Enter through the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it”).
 - d. God assigns their destinies based on foreknowledge.
 - e. The assignment to wrath or mercy is a function of the divine will (Sovereignty).
 - f. The divine will is based on foreknowledge.
 - g. Therefore it is not a capricious assignment.
 - h. God is totally free and righteous to provide both souls (contents of the container) and bodies (the container), knowing the outcome for the two disparate classifications of humans.
7. The participle “willing” emphasizes the fact of divine resolve to bring the vessels of wrath to their final and just punishment.
8. In other words, God is not at all reluctant to bring the world of unbelievers to their final judgment (body and soul in the LOF).
9. This fate is reserved for all who are negative at God-conscious and Gospel hearing (cf. Jn. 3:36; Rom. 2:8-9).
10. The demonstration of God’s wrath and power all unbelievers will experience collectively in connection with the Great White Throne Judgment set forth in Rev. 20:11-15.
11. As a side-note all unbelievers will spend time in hell below.
12. All will be resurrected and witness the destruction of the firmament domed earth (their home), and then face Jesus Christ their final judge.
13. The historical timing of this judgment, and the fact that it will encompass all non-believers enables God to give a more illustrious display of His wrath and power.
14. In the second half of v. 22 Paul makes mention of divine restraint over these “vessels of wrath.”
15. By delaying this judgment God displays His patience with respect to unbelievers.
16. This restraint is done in the interest of the vessels of mercy.
17. These vessels had to come on the scene with many being the offspring of unbelieving parents or ancestors or both.
18. Negative volition typically misinterprets the forbearance of God (cf. Rom. 2:4).
19. So God has great patience towards those who reject His plan of salvation in the interest of those who turn up positive.

20. Think of all the negative people who have lived on this earth, and have not been formally judged by the Lord.
21. The expression “prepared for destruction” carries the idea of being readied for destruction.
22. The preparation phase includes their birth as living souls, their allotted time on earth, and their time in the underworld of sheol-hades.
23. And finally, the resurrection of their bodies uniting soul and body, and their evaluation at the Great White Throne by the Savior they rejected.
24. Destruction here refers to their banishment into the LOF.
25. Also, during their time on earth God hardens their obstinate hearts in response to their negative volition at God-consciousness and Gospel hearing (if so exposed).
26. God also permits the god of this world to deceive the masses who are perishing (Rev. 12:9; 20:2, 8).
27. God’s display of patience over negative volition serves to provide the opportunity for God to make known what He has planned for the vessels of mercy.
28. That is the thrust of v. 23.
29. God has revealed through His prophets and through the writers of Scripture “the riches of His glory.”
30. “Glory” refers to the divine attributes, and what God is capable of bringing into the lives of believers in Ph 3.
31. “Riches” include a resurrection body just like Jesus came forth from the grave with (1 Jn. 3:2).
32. Even with an in depth insight into the WOG we cannot fully fathom Ph 3 glory (1 Cor. 2:9; 13:12).
33. So in the meantime we should exercise patience (Jam. 5:7; 2 Pet. 3:9).
34. The phrase “which He prepared beforehand for glory” refers to the eternal divine decrees.
35. “Glory” here refers to the afterlife with the resurrection body and SG3.
36. It also includes our surroundings especially on the new earth in the New Jerusalem for all eternity.
37. All the negatives that plague us here will be eliminated like sin and death.
38. In verse 24 Paul makes it clear that all races who are among the “called” will inherit Ph 3 glory.
39. Calling refers to Gospel hearing related to life on earth after the teaching in Rom. 8:29-30.
40. So calling is a temporal phenomenon where the called are given a Gospel hearing.
41. God preserves the life of each person He foreknew would believe.
42. Positive Jews living in the CA are not denied salvation based on the negative volition of Jews at large.
43. The failure of the Jews to uphold their special place in the Plan opened the door for the Gentiles to be elevated to a higher status, that being the royal family of this present dispensation (see upcoming verses).