

# Romans 9:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

## Analysis

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**For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion**—Paul quotes Exodus 33:19, where God proclaims his name/character to Moses. The double assertion (eleēsō...oiktirō, ἐλεήσω...οἰκτιρῶ) emphasizes sovereign freedom in dispensing mercy. The Hebrew behind 'I will have mercy' is *chanan* (חָנַן), 'to be gracious'; behind 'compassion' is *racham* (רָחַם), 'to show tender mercy.'

The structure 'on whom I will...on whom I will' underscores divine prerogative. Mercy is by definition undeserved; therefore God owes it to none. He dispenses it according to his own good pleasure. If mercy were based on foreseen merit or faith, it would cease to be mercy (*eleos*, ἔλεος) and become reward. God's freedom in mercy doesn't make him arbitrary; it makes him gracious. The wonder is not that he doesn't show mercy to all, but that he shows it to any.

## Historical Context

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Exodus 33 follows the golden calf apostasy. Israel deserved destruction; God showed mercy. Moses asked to see God's glory (33:18), and God revealed his gracious character—proclaiming mercy even to rebellious Israel. This became the paradigmatic revelation of God's sovereign grace in the OT.

## Related Passages

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**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

## Study Questions

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1. How does God's freedom to show mercy preserve the very definition of mercy?
2. Why would mercy based on foreseen faith cease to be mercy?
3. How does Exodus 33:19's context (golden calf judgment) illuminate God's mercy after deserved wrath?

## Interlinear Text

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τῷ G3588	γὰρ G1063	Μωσῇ G3475	λέγει G3004	ἐλεῶ G1653	ὃν G3739	ᾧ G302	ἐλεῶ G1653
	<b>For</b>	<b>to Moses</b>	<b>he saith</b>	<b>I will have mercy</b>	<b>on whom</b>		<b>I will have mercy</b>
καὶ G2532		οἰκτείρω G3627	ὃν G3739	ᾧ G302	οἰκτείρω G3627		
<b>and</b>	<b>I will have compassion</b>		<b>on whom</b>		<b>I will have compassion</b>		

## Additional Cross-References

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**Exodus 33:19** (Grace): And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.

**Romans 9:16** (Grace): So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

**Micah 7:18** (Grace): Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

**Isaiah 27:11** (Grace): When the boughs thereof are withered, they shall be broken off: the women come, and set them on fire: for it is a people of no understanding: therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour.

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