On Translators and Translating, Romans 9:22-23

We tend to think that translating from one language to another is a straightforward task, but translating is a complicated process. Rarely are translators able to fully enter into two worlds at once. Just think of the last directions pamphlet that you read which was translated from Chinese into English! With the biblical world, however, it is impossible for a translator to fully enter into an ancient world. Sometimes the cultural nuances intended for the original audience are simply lost to the dusts of time. Differences in worldview make translation a challenge. There is another challenge to translating:

Did you know that the theology of the translator also impacts the translation? Most of the translators are Calvinistic/Reformed in their theology and will favor a diminished role of a person’s personal responsibility.

Romans 9:22-23 is a good example of theology impacting translation. Verse 22, as NKJV translates it, has God preparing people for destruction… “vessels of wrath prepared for destruction.” However, the word “prepared” is a Perfect Participle which in Greek has identical forms for both middle and passive voices. It could just as easily be translated “vessels of wrath having fully arranged themselves unto (a directional preposition) wrath.” This makes the person fully responsible for the future wrath that comes upon them. As the NKJV translates the verse, God determined at some point in the past that some people would be destroyed. Yet the context of both the passage and this verse includes God’s gracious, longsuffering nature in the face of people who consistently refuse to believe!

Our goal is to **START** with a **clear Gospel,** and then we search for the **authorial intent**. Be suspicious of any translation that indicates our loving God is cruel and vindictive. He is NOT that kind of a person. There is usually a good grammatical explanation for the difficult passages.

My love to you all,