

The Remnant of Israel in the Church

📖 Romans 9:19-23

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Q: Is Christ's blood divine? In the hymn *The Old Rugged Cross* it says, "with blood so divine."

A: Maybe you noticed that. It's commonly noticed. I haven't been able to trace this down entirely but it seems it might have originated from a poor understanding of the Doctrine of the Incarnation. Some have the idea that in the Holy Spirit's conception of Jesus Mary made no contribution, she was just a receptacle and therefore Jesus' blood was not human blood but divine blood. This violates the many promises in the OT of the seed line which begins in Gen 3:15 with a promise of the seed of the woman. There has to be a definite human lineage or seed line that gives rise to the Messiah. Since the woman was ultimately Mary then it is impossible to say that Mary made no contribution and was nothing more than a receptacle. It is more accurate to say that Mary's contribution was without sin because the Holy Spirit oversaw her contribution so that no taint of sin was passed on to Jesus. Viewed from this way Jesus' blood was human blood, though not touched by sin, pure, undefiled blood, and since the life is in the blood then what we are looking at in Jesus is a pure, undefiled life. Another way to look is through the doctrine of the Hypostatic Union. The Hypostatic Union is the doctrine that tries to describe the essential structure, essence or being of Jesus Christ as the God-man. How do His deity and humanity relate? How do we describe that relationship? Are the two so separate that He is divided into two distinct people? Are the two so blended that He is neither God nor man but a third kind of entity? How do we describe the essential structure or being of Jesus Christ as the God-man? This, of course, is one of the most difficult questions dealt with in Church History. The classic formulation came at the Council of Chalcedon in AD451. They put together the statement that Jesus Christ is undiminished deity united with true humanity without confusion, in one person, forever. That is the classic statement and what it is doing is protecting the Scriptural record that describes His person against various heretical understandings. On one hand it's protecting that Jesus Christ is 100% deity and not half deity, and on the other that He is also 100% man and not half man, it's also protecting that His deity and humanity are united in one person and not so divided that He is two people, and it's also protecting that His deity and humanity are not to be confused or blended together so that He is some kind of third kind of entity. Only when you understand that Jesus Christ is undiminished deity united with true humanity without confusion, in one person, forever can you deal with the question, "Was Christ's

blood divine?" From this standpoint how does orthodoxy answer this question? Orthodoxy answers this question in the negative. Why? Because blood is a characteristic unique to humans. God does not have blood. God is Spirit. And to confuse or blend human characteristics into the divine is to attribute to His divinity that which is His humanity. And to do that would introduce an essential change in God. So Jesus did not have "blood so divine" as the hymn says. He had human blood that was undefiled by sin and since the life is in the blood then this means that His life qualified to pay for our sin.

Q: You mentioned that the love/hate dichotomy means preference for one over another giving examples from Mal 1:2, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated," Gen 29:31, Jacob loved Rachel but hated Leah and Luke 14:26, Jesus said whoever wants to be My disciple must hate his father and mother and brothers and sisters...In Mal 2:16 God says, "I hate divorce." Does this mean He prefers you not to divorce? What does it mean?

A: That's a good question because it allows me to show that dictionaries do not define the meaning of words but contexts define the meaning of words. The information dictionaries provide is the various accepted usages of a word in a language. How a word gets introduced into a dictionary is by analyzing the use of the word in various contexts. All languages have words used in various contexts and the dictionary will list the meanings in these contexts with some explanation. Here we are looking at the same Hebrew root word used in two different contexts. It is the Hebrew word *sane* (sn) and if we look up this word in a Hebrew dictionary we will find it has various usages, as a noun it is used this way, as a participle it is used this way; it has been variously translated in the NASB as "unloved, hated, enmity, turns, turned, enemy, foes, detest." How it is translated and how we are to understand it is conditioned on the context where it is used. In the first context, Gen 29:31 we read, "Now the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, and He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren." The translators decided to translate *sane* here as "unloved." Why did they translate it as "unloved" and not "hated"? They are trying to soften the meaning because of the context. However, it's another language and so it is difficult to bring over the meaning in a word for word correspondence. We may not have a word in English that matches the meaning of a Hebrew word. That is why we have to talk around these words, give descriptions and examples to get the true sense. That's what we call circumlocution, talking around a word with many words in order to give the sense. Because this is necessary to do some bible translators, such as the NIV, have adopted a philosophy of translation known as dynamic equivalence, where they translate concept for concept and not word for word. What they are trying to do is give you the sense of the original. Of course, sometimes it is good and sometimes it is not so good. The point though, is that when we come to Gen 29:31 we are trying to understand this word *sane* in its context. Should it be translated "unloved, hated, detested, an enemy"? All these are in the Hebrew dictionary. But the context gives us the answer. Verse 30, "So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and indeed he loved Rachel more than Leah, and he served with Laban for another seven years." The expression "he loved Rachel more than Leah," shows that what is meant in verse 31 is that Jacob had a preference for Rachel over Leah, or his love for Rachel relative to Leah was more. So it's the context which tells us that. When we come to the second context, Mal 2:16 we read, "¹⁶For I hate divorce," says the LORD, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with wrong,"

says the LORD of hosts. "So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously." The translators decided to translate *sane* here as "hate." Why did they translate it as "hate"? They are trying to harden the meaning because of the context. What's the context? The context in verse 14 is that they were dealing treacherously with their Jewish wives whom they married in their youth but when they got older they were ditching them for younger Gentile wives. The text says, "Because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant." The real key to marriage is the covenant. To make a covenant is extremely serious. God makes covenants and He keeps His covenants. To divorce is to break a covenant. What these Jewish husbands were doing was making a covenant with their Jewish wives when they were young and pretty and then when they got older they were breaking the covenant in order to marry younger Gentile wives. This was treachery in God's sight. Therefore it is justifiable to translate *sane* as "hate" in 2:16. But even here we must circumlocute some. God, we would say, detested what they were doing. It does not say He detested the people who were divorcing but He detested the act of divorcing. He did not detest the sinners but the sin. So it does not mean that He simply preferred that they not do it. It is stronger than that in context and I've used this as an example of part of what is involved in doing word studies. It's complex. It's a lot of work studying ancient texts and contexts. But that's what I'm doing every week and so I'm just spilling some of that out before you here. It's a technical skill that you have to learn and sharpen.

Turning back to Romans 9. We worked last week with the issue of whether the focus is national or individual and we did a quick run through Rom 9-11 to observe that the focus is national and not individual. Individuals are involved, of course, but the big picture is God's dealing with nations. It's interesting that there were no nations prior to the tower of Babel. God's strategy before the Tower of Babel was to deal with individuals. But after the tower of Babel God formed nations and His strategy was to choose one nation and one land in the center of the world and through that nation bring blessing to the whole world. And yet despite the many advantages of that nation when their Messiah came they rejected Him. Then He shifted the strategy again and now God is dealing with Gentile nations and when the fullness of the Gentile nations has come in then God will return to dealing with the nation Israel and He will fulfill His covenant. Therefore, the big takeaway of Gen 9-11 is that God is not through with the nation Israel. They have only temporarily been set aside. And because of this we can have certainty that God is not going to ever be done with us. We have eternal security and they have eternal security, but just as we can through divine discipline so Israel is presently under divine discipline.

Last time we looked briefly at the potter and the clay analogy in Romans 9:19-23. Retracing our steps for a moment here, in 9:19 Paul uses the expression, "You will say to me then..." to introduce a hypothetical objector.

The objection is “Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will or intent.” Why does God find fault because no one is capable of resisting His intent with history? The Greek word **fault** is *μεμφομαι* and means “to find fault with, to blame.” Now I think this is a general question. I don’t think it’s referring directly to God finding fault with Pharaoh.¹ I’ve written into a footnote in the lesson why God found fault with Pharaoh. The objection here is a general one. If God is calling the shots in history then how can God hold Israel responsible for their rejection of the Messiah? For this seems to be His intent with history and who can resist that? Paul’s answer to the objector is 9:20, **On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God?** As if God doesn’t know what He is doing with the nation Israel. God knows exactly what He’s doing. He is the Creator and this Jewish objector here is just a creature, a man. The Greek places **O man** in the emphatic position at the beginning of the sentence to draw a strong contrast with **the God** which is in the emphatic position at the end of the sentence. The point in the grammar is to say that man and God are as far away as can possibly be on this matter of what God is doing with Israel. The text literally it says, “Who O man, on the contrary, are you to cross-examine the God? The Jew who was making this objection had no business questioning how God is running history and he should have known better because the OT uses this type of contrast repeatedly.

Paul then picks up the illustration of the potter and the clay. We said you find this illustration several times in the OT and we looked at one in Jer 18. This was when Babylon had already attacked Judah twice and had exiled many Jewish citizens and now Israel was on the brink of being finally defeated and sent into exile. It was a very difficult time for Jeremiah and his nation. If you recall, in this frustrating situation, Jeremiah was instructed to go to the potter’s house to get an object lesson. When he went he saw the potter make something on the wheel but then the clay was spoiled in his hand and so he remade it into another vessel as it pleased the potter. God then gives Jeremiah some encouragement, “Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does? “Behold, like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel.” In other words, God is the potter and Israel is the clay, and just like the clay spoiled in the potter’s hand so Israel spoiled in God’s hand; that’s why they were in Exile. But just like the potter remade the clay into a vessel so God could remake Israel into a worthy vessel. And He did. So let’s turn to the passage where He did.

Turn to Isa 45. This passage is another one that uses the potter and the clay illustration. It’s down in verse 9 and we’ll get there. But this one was written 145 years before the exile to Babylon, 145 years, and it uniquely points out by name a great Persian ruler that was to come, Cyrus the Persian, and let Israel go free from Exile. And it was unbelievable to the Jews that God the potter would use a Gentile as a tool to remake Israel the clay. Just unbelievable that God could do that, but what God is showing is that He is for Israel and He is sovereign over all the nations of the earth. Look at the last verse in Isa 44 and remember, this is over 100 years before Cyrus was even born.²⁸ *It is I* who says of Cyrus, ‘*He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire.*’ And he declares of Jerusalem, ‘*She will be built,*’ And of the temple, ‘*Your foundation will be laid.*’ ” Some think that Daniel showed this text to Cyrus and he said, you’re in our book Cyrus, your name was written before you were born! And it inspired him to fulfill the prophecy. Isa 45:1, “Thus says the LORD to Cyrus, His anointed, Whom I have taken by

the right hand, To subdue nations before him And to loose the loins of kings; To open doors before him so that gates will not be shut: ²"I will go before you and make the rough places smooth; I will shatter the doors of bronze and cut through their iron bars. ³"I will give you the treasures of darkness And hidden wealth of secret places, So that you may know that it is I, The LORD, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name." Cyrus was chosen by God. What was He chosen for? 45:4, "For the sake of Jacob My servant, And Israel My chosen *one*, I have also called you by your name; I have given you a title of honor Though you have not known Me. ⁵"I am the LORD, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me; ⁶That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun That there is no one besides Me." Remember, this is God's strategy for history, to make His name known. That is the big purpose of history. There is no greater purpose in history than God making His name known. He says, that "I am the LORD, and there is no other, ⁷The One forming light and creating darkness, Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these. ⁸"Drip down, O heavens, from above, And let the clouds pour down righteousness; Let the earth open up and salvation bear fruit, And righteousness spring up with it. I, the LORD, have created it. ⁹"Woe to *the one* who quarrels with his Maker— An earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth! Will the clay say to the potter, 'What are you doing?'" This is Israel, the clay, saying to God, the potter, what are you doing raising up Cyrus, a Gentile, to send us back to our land? Why are you doing what you are doing? We don't understand your strategy? God asks, "Or the thing you are making say, 'He has no hands'? In other words, God can't reach over and use a Gentile He called by name? What's the problem with that? Verse 10, "Woe to him who says to a father, 'What are you begetting?' Or to a woman, 'To what are you giving birth?' " See, you're just in no position to ask such questions. Verse 11, "Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: "Ask Me about the things to come concerning My sons, And you shall commit to Me the work of My hands. ¹²"It is I who made the earth, and created man upon it. I stretched out the heavens with My hands And I ordained all their host." You see, there is nothing too hard for God. Verse 13, "I have aroused him in righteousness. And I will make all his ways smooth; He will build My city and will let My exiles go free, Without any payment or reward," says the LORD of hosts." Who's going to do all those things? Who did God arouse in righteousness? Whose ways would God make smooth? Who would say rebuild Jerusalem and who would let His exiles go free? Cyrus! And that is why Cyrus is a very special person to the Jews even today. Cyrus is considered one of the righteous among the nations, a righteous Gentile. But it was simply because God the potter chose Cyrus as a tool to refashion Israel which was spoiled and in exile but now restored as a useful vessel through Cyrus. A remarkable story of how God the potter can refashion Israel through righteous Gentiles.

Now we come back to Romans 9 and we move to verse 21 and we don't lose sight of the fact that God is the potter and the nation Israel is the clay. Israel is always the clay. If God is the potter and Israel is the clay then what is verse 21 saying? **Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?** So it makes more sense; let's read it and replace **potter** with God and **clay** with the nation Israel. "Or does not God have a right over the nation Israel, to make

from the same nation Israel one vessel for honor and another for common use?" The picture Paul seems to be painting is that there is one lump of clay which is the entire nation Israel and God, who has the **right** over Israel since He made Israel, is to take a portion of the nation and make it a vessel of honor and take the other portion of the nation and make it a vessel for common use. Alright, so what is the portion of the nation that God made into a vessel of honor? The remnant of believing Israel. The remnant was clay that was malleable, that God could work into something of important use, an honorable vessel. What is the other portion of the nation that God made into a vessel for common use? The non-remnant. The non-remnant was clay that was stubborn and could only be worked into something for common use. So what Paul is explaining is that when the Messiah came to the nation Israel there was a split in the nation Israel because there was a portion of the nation that did respond positively to the Messiah and another portion that did not and so there has come to be at this present time a remnant. So the big picture is the doctrine of the remnant and this gets clearer by the time Paul gets to verse 27. But so that we see that is what Paul has in mind let's read verse 27 now. "Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA, IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED;" So there is the full number of Israel on the one hand and within that number the believing remnant.

Now let's go back to verses 22, 23 and 24 and what we'll see is that everything in verse 22 is talking about the non-remnant of Israel, everything in verse 23 is talking about the remnant of Israel and then what verse 24 does is brings believing Gentiles into the picture along with the remnant of Israel so that the concept of the Church as believing Jew and Gentile in one body is introduced. This is really a fascinating section of Scripture. In 9:22 Paul sets out God's patience toward those of Israel who had the opportunity to respond positively to the Messiah and yet did not. He asks, **What if God, although willing**, concessive participle, willing and able **to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known**, that is, to make an example of what happens to those who oppose God, but instead, He **endured with much patience vessels of wrath** having been **prepared for destruction** or **having prepared themselves for destruction**. The participle is either a passive voice in which case they were prepared by God **for destruction**, but this doesn't make sense when compared with verse 23 where God is clearly the one who prepared the vessels of mercy. And so the great likelihood is that the participle in verse 22 is a middle voice in which case they prepared themselves for destruction by rejecting the Messiah. So the way I'm looking at verse 22 is that although God could have totally wiped out unbelieving Israel and by that made His power and name known throughout the world, instead He **endured with much patience** the unbelieving Israel set for **wrath** who **prepared** themselves **for destruction**. The participle is also a perfect tense meaning they prepared themselves at a moment in time, perhaps looking at the national rejection of Jesus as the Messiah in Matt 12, and because the perfect has ongoing results then they remain in a state of preparation **for destruction**. When contrasted with verse 23, those prepared for glory, the destruction seems to have in view being cast into outer darkness away from the kingdom which was covenanted to that nation, but which they will have no part (Matt 25:30). It's interesting that God did not decide to totally wipe them out when he had every right to, and He

could have used them to make His power known but instead we see He wanted to make something else known in 9:23.

Here we find the remnant. **And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory...**end of sentence. The sentence does not continue in the Greek into verse 24 but halts at the end of verse 23. What God decided **to make known**, rather than His power, was the riches of His glory as He bestowed it **upon vessels of mercy**. The vessels of mercy, of course, are the remnant of Israel who when the Messiah came they believed in Him. As such they were recipients of His mercy, that is, the failure to receive what one deserves. God prepared them beforehand, meaning, at the moment of their salvation He prepared them or outfitted them **for glory**. **Glory** in the resurrection body, **glory** fit for the kingdom which was covenanted to that nation, and which they will enter into and take part as a part of the believing remnant (Matt 25:21, 23).

9:24 is a new sentence. It introduces a new idea, the inclusion of Gentiles alongside the believing remnant in this present age and we want to at least introduce it today because, of course, this was an anomaly. **Even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles**. The strange thing in the gospels is that Jesus came only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel but there were Gentiles who responded positively to Him. Remember, the Canaanite woman who tried to get Jesus to heal her daughter? People who hold to a one people of God theology have a very difficult time dealing with these kinds of passages. This is a Canaanite woman, I mean, for goodness sake, these are some of the nastiest people, and she comes to Jesus and says, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David, come heal my daughter who is demon possessed." I can just imagine what Jesus is thinking, yeah, all you Canaanites are demon possessed. And so what was Jesus' response? He ignored her, totally ignored her. In the Greek she was crying out in the imperfect meaning it went on and on and she wouldn't shut up and so finally the disciples say, "send her away, for she keeps shouting" and Jesus answered and said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she wouldn't stop. She came and she started bowing down before Him over and over and saying, "Lord, help me!" And He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." So now He's ignored her, He's referred to her as a dog, an unclean animal because they ate filthy. He didn't come to unclean animals. And then she persisted and said, "Yes," she agreed she was unclean. "Yes Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from the master's table." And at this "Jesus said to her, "O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish." It is one of the most remarkable features of the Gospels; that here Jesus coming only, exclusively, narrowly to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and they are rejecting and out of nowhere there are these Gentiles who are responding positively to Him. And the way Paul describes that in Rom 9:24 is to say, **us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among the Gentiles**. Of course the Book of Acts goes on to show that even though Gentiles believed during Christ's earthly ministry it took some serious mental changes for Jews to admit that Gentiles could be saved simply by faith and apart from circumcision and works of the Law. But Paul's point here is that now we've got believing Gentiles and we've got the believing remnant of Jews and

though the word “church” is not used here the concept of the “church” is just that, believing Jews and Gentiles in the body of the Messiah. And so we have at least an introduction to the idea that the Church is composed of the believing remnant of Jews and believing Gentiles. Only the Jews are a remnant because they come out of the lump of clay that signified the nation Israel. The Gentiles are not a remnant, they’re just believers and so the Gentile believers along with the Jewish remnant compose the church. That’s not really Paul’s point here, of course, he’s not interested in developing the church. What he is interested in doing is showing that God is not entirely done with Jews because there is still a remnant, but during this time He is doing something fantastic with Gentiles. And he’ll start to show this next week by quoting more OT Scripture.

Alright, what have we seen? In 9:19 the hypothetical objection “You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?” is a general one? In short, if God is calling the shots in history then how can God hold Israel responsible for their rejection of the Messiah? Paul’s response in 9:20 is to directly confront this Jews audacity as a creature to content with God. Paul uses an illustration common from the OT. “The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me like this,” will it? It should be clear from the illustration that God had every right as the potter to make what he wants out of the clay. In 9:21 Paul then continues with the illustration to ask, “Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?” Since God is the potter and the nation Israel is the clay then it becomes apparent that God has every right to take a portion of the nation Israel and shape it into a vessel for honorable use and the other portion into a vessel for common use. In 9:22 Paul applies this to the situation at hand in light of the Messiah’s first coming. “What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known,” but rather than doing so, He “endured with much patience vessels of wrath that prepared themselves for destruction.” God had every right to totally destroy the non-remnant of Jews but He did not. Nevertheless, they prepared themselves for destruction and so would be cast into outer darkness and not enter the covenanted kingdom. On the other hand, in 9:23 we find the remnant of Israel. “He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory.” Having believed God prepared them at that time to be resurrected and to enter into the covenanted kingdom, 9:24 then introduces the fact that God had also called Gentiles from among the nations to be partakers of the covenanted kingdom along with the believing remnant of Jews and so in this present time God is building the two into a church which is not the kingdom but which is destined to enter into the kingdom.

What can we learn? First, the potter is God. He has the sovereign rights over the clay to fashion it into whatever He wants. Second, the lump of clay is the nation Israel, not the mass of fallen individuals in Adam, not all men, not anything like that. The OT clearly teaches that the lump of clay is always Israel. Third, some clay is malleable and some is not. That which is malleable is the remnant of Israel that responded positively to the Messiah. That which is not malleable is the non-remnant of Israel that rejected the Messiah. Fourth, those Jews who rejected their Messiah prepared themselves for destruction. God did not prepare them for destruction. They prepared themselves. Fifth, those Jews who received their Messiah God prepared for glory. They did not prepare

themselves. God prepared them. Sixth, this goes for Gentiles whom He also called. They too were prepared for glory by God. They do not prepare themselves. God prepared them. His preparation is always His work solely accomplished by grace through faith...

¹ If we want to know why God found fault with Pharaoh there are wonderful technical reasons. The technical is covered in the lessons on the Book of Exodus and it goes into the three different words used in the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. That is an important study but what I want to do here is review how God did find fault with Pharaoh. The bottom line is that Pharaoh's heart was already stiff and calloused and God only strengthened Pharaoh's resistance to let the people go in Exod 9:16. If you think about it, the entire contest, though it appears to be between the God of Moses and the gods of Pharaoh is actually dealing with the Israelites in Goshen and the Egyptians as well. Pharaoh was the leader of all Egypt and so in a very real sense, the destiny of all Egypt hinged on Pharaoh. Pharaoh was viewed by the Egyptians as a god and the intermediary between men and the gods. For an Egyptian to be opposed to Pharaoh was to be opposed to the gods among whom Pharaoh conversed. This is why, when Moses goes before Pharaoh and says, the LORD says, "Let My people go!" that when Pharaoh refuses the plagues come upon all Egypt and not just Pharaoh's palace. All Egypt suffered because Pharaoh represented the entire nation (the land of Goshen being excluded). Another thing that was happening here when Moses came before Pharaoh and said, the LORD says, "Let My people go!" is that God was actually giving the leader of Egypt an opportunity to respond to His revelation and turn from evil. If he had turned from evil and let Israel go all Egypt would have turned from evil and let them go (as in fact was later the case). But Pharaoh would not. His heart was strong or resistant because he viewed himself as a god and it would require him to humble his heart before the one true God and tell his people, in effect, that he was not a god. As this dialogue progressed through the plagues there were those who approached Pharaoh and tried to get him to turn and let Israel go. Remember the occasion when Moses and Aaron brought forth gnats on all the land of Egypt and Pharaoh's magicians tried to bring them forth but they could not and they said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God!" Even they could see it. Pharaoh had tremendous revelation from the one true God and people involved in demonic magic and sorcery were saying, this is beyond our capability. This is the finger of God! But he said, no. On another occasion his servants said to him, "Let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God. Do you not realize that Egypt is destroyed?" I mean, there is nothing left to salvage Pharaoh. The whole of Egypt was a desolation. The greatest superpower on earth went from flourishing to famishing in a matter of months. Why resist letting them go? Egypt is totally destroyed. This is another case where you see that Pharaoh had so much revelation and even the encouragement of the men on his staff to let them go, but he would not. So God did the ultimate thing and had the firstborn of all Egypt killed, including the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who was viewed as being born a god. Who could do such a thing but the one true God? And so when the objector asks in Romans 9:19, "Why does He still find fault?" If we make application of that to Pharaoh, we can see exactly why God found fault. It was not arbitrary. Pharaoh was hell bent on not letting the people go!