

## THE STAGE FOR CHRIST

By SCOTT GRANT

John the Baptist preached about the kingdom of God, and the people of Judea flocked to him. He gathered an impressive following of faithful disciples. When he saw Jesus, however, he told two of his disciples, “Behold, the Lamb of God,” whereupon the disciples began to follow Jesus. When his disciples expressed concern that Jesus was gathering a following, John told them, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” Shortly thereafter he was arrested and executed (John 1:36, 3:30; Mark 1:5, 6:21-28). To give Christ the stage, John needed to get off of it. Then he needed to give up his life.

The story of John floored me as a teen-ager when I encountered it for the first time. Up to that point, all the voices in my life were telling me that I must increase, that I must take the stage, but John was telling me that I must decrease and give the stage to Jesus. For me, the hairy-robed prophet was indeed a voice crying in the wilderness.

John was a transitional figure. He entered the human story just as the page was being turned on a new chapter. He came from Israel just as it was giving birth to the Messiah and the new age. As no one else, perhaps, he represents the people of God—past, present and future. What we learn from John is what every age needs to learn. It’s what I learn from my friend Travis Gray, a graduate of our intern program who started our R&R ministry. When I get lost in my theological wanderings, Travis faithfully reminds me, “It’s all about Jesus.”

John’s story—not to mention Travis’ mantra—serves as an apt introduction to Romans 9:1-29, which has attracted the interest of not a few theologians who have wandered off course without arriving at the goal of the passage: Christ. God has done what he needed to do in history, and he will do what he needs to do in our lives, so that Jesus may take the stage and that his mercy may be extended to all.

Romans 9-11 constitutes the third major section in the letter. Together, Romans 1-4 and 5-8 featured Paul’s sweeping vision of the gospel, the story and announcement concerning the lordship of Jesus the Jewish Messiah. In Romans, the gospel features, above all, the righteousness of God—that is, his faithfulness to his promises to rescue the world from sin and death. But there’s a problem: As a whole, Israel, the nation that received the promises, has not embraced Jesus as Messiah, let alone Lord. Some Gentiles in Rome, it seems, have assumed that God has therefore cast aside unbelieving Israel.

Paul responds in Romans 9-11 by telling the story of Israel in relation to Jesus: its past (Romans 9:1-29), its present (Romans 9:30-10:21) and its future (Romans 11). The story argues for God’s faithfulness. The gospel stands up to Jewish unbelief and undercuts Gentile arrogance while at the same time opening up God’s mercy to all. By telling the Jewish story in this way, Paul hopes to lead Jews and Gentiles in Christ to worship together. He opens with a lament (Romans 9:1-5) and closes with praise (Romans 11:33-36).

Romans 9:1-29:

<sup>1</sup>I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, <sup>2</sup>that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. <sup>3</sup>For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, <sup>4</sup>who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, <sup>5</sup>whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

<sup>6</sup>But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; <sup>7</sup>nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: **"THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED."**

<sup>8</sup>That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. <sup>9</sup>For this is the word of promise: **"AT THIS TIME I WILL COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON."** <sup>10</sup>And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; <sup>11</sup>for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, <sup>12</sup>it was said to her, **"THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER."** <sup>13</sup>Just as it is written, **"JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED."**

<sup>14</sup>What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! <sup>15</sup>For He says to Moses, **"I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION."** <sup>16</sup>So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. <sup>17</sup>For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, **"FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH."**

<sup>18</sup>So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. <sup>19</sup>You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" <sup>20</sup>On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? <sup>21</sup>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? <sup>22</sup>What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? <sup>23</sup>And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, <sup>24</sup>even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles. <sup>25</sup>As He says also in Hosea,

**"I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, 'MY PEOPLE,'  
AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, 'BELOVED.'"**

<sup>26</sup>**"AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO  
THEM, 'YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,'  
THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD."**

<sup>27</sup>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; <sup>28</sup>FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD ON THE EARTH,  
THOROUGHLY AND QUICKLY."** <sup>29</sup>And just as Isaiah foretold,

**"UNLESS THE LORD OF SABAOOTH HAD LEFT TO US A POSTERITY,  
WE WOULD HAVE BECOME LIKE SODOM, AND WOULD HAVE**

## *RESEMBLED GOMORRAH.*”

### **The storyteller’s sorrow**

After celebrating the love of God that is in Christ Jesus in Romans 8:31-39, Paul turns to the plight of those Jews who have resisted this love. As a Jew who was similarly resistant, he can identify with them. He seeks to arouse sympathy for the Jews among his mostly Gentile readers in Rome. Because of his love for his Jewish brothers, he intercedes for them in the manner of Moses, who offered to be blotted out from the Lord’s book for the sake of the Israelites who worshiped the golden calf (Exodus 32:32). Paul’s love is such that he contemplates being cast away from Christ, as Christ was cast away by God on behalf of humanity, if it would bring the Jews to God (Galatians 3:13). He sees himself as bringing the gospel to the world by living out the story of the gospel, suffering for the world and, in this case, for his Jewish brothers (2 Corinthians 4:10). Nevertheless, Paul knows that nothing can separate him from the love of Christ, so it’s only something for which he “could wish.” (Romans 8:35).

Paul has demonstrated and will demonstrate that gospel believers, both Jews and Gentiles, now share in the privileges God originally bestowed on the Jews.<sup>1</sup> The “fathers” of the Jews, beginning with Abraham, are also the fathers of Gentile believers in the gospel (Romans 4:16). The final privilege, the goal of all the privileges and the answer to the plight of both Jews and Gentiles, is the Messiah, the Israelite who is now Lord of the world. The Jewish origination of these privileges, and of the Messiah himself, should cause Gentiles to appreciate Jews.

### **The patriarchs: God was selective**

Although the failure of his Jewish brothers to believe the gospel pains him greatly, Paul doesn’t want to leave the impression that word of God—his promises to Israel, which were to culminate in blessing for the world—have failed. In fact, this is of such urgency to Paul that he will set out, in the next three chapters, to demonstrate that God has been faithful to his promises, even if their fulfillment is different from what the Jews, including Paul, had imagined.

In Romans 3:1-9, God’s faithfulness was called into question by Jewish unfaithfulness to its vocation to extend God’s salvation to the world. Paul defended God by telling first the story of Christ, who assumed Israel’s vocation, and then the story of Abraham, in order to show how Christ defeated sin and created the worldwide family promised to Abraham (Romans 3:21-4:25). Once again, in Romans 9-11, Paul defends God’s faithfulness, which is called into question by Jewish failure to believe the gospel, the announcement and story concerning the lordship of Jesus. Once again, Paul tells a story. This time, instead of starting with Christ and backtracking to Abraham, he tells the story of Israel, beginning with Abraham and culminating in Christ (Romans 9:6-10:21).

Paul is not saying that God predestines some to salvation and others to condemnation. In verses 1-5, he was speaking of Israel in order to set up the story of Israel. Now he will show how God advanced his purposes by choosing some within Israel to set the stage for Christ, through whom salvation would open to all.

The failure of most Jews to believe the gospel is consistent not only with God’s purposes but with Israel’s history. In Paul’s day, not every Jew belongs to God’s Israel.

There continues to be an “Israel” within Israel that remains faithful to God. Neither is every Jew chosen by God to carry forward his purposes.

Abraham had two sons, but God chose Isaac, not Ishmael, to be the “seed” that bore the promises for the sake of the world. God’s choice of Isaac, whose birth was brought about by the power of God, establishes the basis for the transmission of God’s promises: It will be according to God’s gracious choice.

Like his father Abraham, Isaac had two sons, but God chose Jacob, not Esau. Unlike Abraham’s sons, Isaac’s sons were by the same mother, Rebekah. Moreover, they were twins who were conceived at the same time. From a human standpoint, there was nothing to choose between the two. Nevertheless, God chose Jacob, the younger son, before he was born in order to demonstrate that the continuance of his purpose was not based on human qualities such as ethnicity, character or birth order.<sup>2</sup>

The patriarchal chapter demonstrates that God’s promises are based on God’s choice.

### **The exodus: God was merciful**

If God is selective in this way, can it be said that there is “injustice”—literally, “unrighteousness”—with him? The question concerns whether God has been unfaithful to his promises to Israel. Paul’s answer, of course, is an emphatic no, which is supported by divine words to both Moses and Pharaoh. The story, which began with the patriarchs, now continues with the exodus.

Israel as a whole could not be the solution to the problem unleashed by Adam, because it recapitulated the sin of Adam by worshiping the golden calf (Romans 5:20, 7:8). None of the Israelites deserved God’s mercy, but the Lord told Moses that some would be shown it. From Paul’s telling of the story, some were shown mercy so that God’s purposes for the world could continue. It cannot therefore be said that the purposes could be advanced either by the intentions or activity of Israel. On the contrary, God’s mercy is responsible.

Moses, as the leader of Israel, was one of two principal players in the exodus. The other was Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, who held Israel captive. After Pharaoh refused to release the Israelites, the Lord raised him up. Instead of killing him immediately, God allowed Pharaoh to remain in power (Exodus 9:15-16). God’s purpose in delaying the judgment that Pharaoh deserved was to rescue the Israelites in such a way that the rest of the world would take notice. The Lord wants his name “proclaimed throughout the earth” inasmuch as “whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:13). The exodus advanced God’s purposes for Israel to bless the world. God had mercy on Israel, but he hardened Pharaoh—he postponed judgment—in order, finally, to “show mercy to all” (Romans 11:32).<sup>3</sup>

Based on the exodus story, God’s selectivity—choosing some who deserve judgment but not others—is indicative of his faithfulness to his promises to rescue the world. The exodus chapter demonstrates that God’s promises not only originate with his choice but are perpetuated by his mercy.

## **The exile: God was sovereign**

God hardens those who deserve a worse fate. Nevertheless, he shows mercy to some who deserve the same fate. If he shows mercy to some, why not show mercy to all? Yes, God's merciful choices allow his purposes to advance, but how can he find fault with some but not with others? The story continues with the exile.

After God liberated the Israelites from Egypt, they wandered in the wilderness and then entered Canaan, the Promised Land. God warned them, however, that he would send them into exile if they worshiped other gods. True to his word, God empowered Babylon, which conquered Israel, sacked Jerusalem and carried off many Jews into exile.

The prophets Jeremiah and Isaiah, however, spoke of God as a potter and Israel as clay (Jeremiah 18:5-12; Isaiah 29:16, 45:9, 64:8). Just as a potter must start over with a lump of clay that has not served his purposes, God needed to start over with Israel. Just as in the wilderness, when he showed mercy to some but not others, in the exile he remade Israel, creating out of it two "vessels," but only one "for honorable use" to carry forth his purposes.

The entire lump deserved immediate destruction, but God was patient, withholding his wrath from those who were not part of his plans. These "vessels of wrath" were prepared for destruction, either by themselves, by God or by both. God's part in preparing them for destruction, if he played a part at all, occurred not before they were born but in response to their idolatry.

God allowed Israel as a whole to continue so that he could make out of it a new Israel. This new Israel should be well aware that it too deserves God's wrath and that it was spared only because of his mercy. This new Israel is thereby composed of "vessels of mercy," who receive God's mercy and whom God uses to advance his merciful purposes for the world. These would know "the riches of his glory," finally as God's rulers in the new creation. Indeed, God, as the potter, prepared them for this glory.

Emerging from the exile, the remade Israel was prepared for the coming of the Messiah, when the purposes of God to bless the entire world would be fulfilled with the calling of the Gentiles to join the people of God. Paul sees the words of the prophet Hosea as being fulfilled in the inclusion of the Gentiles. The prophet was originally speaking of the northern kingdom of Israel, which had been severed from the people of God because of idolatry. The Gentiles had been excluded for the same reason (Romans 1:23), but the gospel would call them to join God's people.

As for national Israel, some, but not all, would survive God's judgment to emerge as his people, just as the prophet Isaiah predicted. Israel deserved destruction, like Sodom and Gomorrah. But as God saved Lot's family from those corrupt cities, God would save a remnant of Jews to continue as his people.

How can God find fault with some Israelites and not with others, even if all deserved judgment? Answer: As God, he has the authority to do so, and even an obligation to do so, if he is to be faithful to his promises.

The patriarchal chapter of Israel's history demonstrates that God's promises are based on his choice. The exodus chapter demonstrates that they are perpetuated by his mercy. The exile chapter demonstrates God's authority and obligation to be both selective and merciful. The whole story tells us that God did not choose to be merciful to some in order to exclude others; it tells us that he chose to be merciful to some in order to include as many as possible. God's judgment had mercy in view. This passage, then, does not

contradict other passages that speak of God's love for the world. On the contrary, it complements them by showing how God's love for the world was made operative.

It had to be this way because God had quite a mess to deal with: sin, which deconstructs humanity. The only way for him to clean up the mess was to choose a people, the Jews, who were part of the mess. Because of the enormity of the mess, the whole plan was bound to appear messy, with God choosing some Jews and judging others. The story of Israel, however, demonstrates that God's word has not failed. God's promises were never applicable to all of Abraham's ethnic descendants. God was faithful to his promises to bless the world by preserving a remnant of Jews to provide the context for the Messiah, who would defeat sin in his death and resurrection and open membership in God's people to all. The world is a mess, but the plan is beautiful.

### **Appreciating the story**

What do we do with this part of Israel's story? Two things: We appreciate it, and we find our place in it.

Some today would discredit the gospel because of Jewish unbelief. If Jesus was Jewish, they suppose that historic and ongoing rejection of him by most Jews invalidates the gospel's claims. But if God's purpose for Israel was not for all its members to believe in the Messiah but for it to give birth to the Messiah, then Israel's response to the Messiah has no bearing on the gospel's claims. Some believe the gospel; some don't. Truth often defies majority rule.

Gentiles who believe the gospel, however, have no reason to be smug and every reason to be appreciative. The gospel is, after all, a Jewish story. Where would we be without the Jews? We wouldn't have the scriptures; we wouldn't have the promises; we wouldn't have Jesus. Where would we be? Dead in our sins. The history of the church is not entirely a proud one, however. An anti-Jewish streak runs through it. Thankfully, the streak is less pronounced today. Ongoing and deepening appreciation for the gospel's Jewish roots can only bring about improvement.

If we want to take practical steps in this regard, there are plenty of Jews around here to appreciate. Some, of course, are part of this church. Most are not part of any church, and most don't believe the gospel. Meeting someone who's Jewish, regardless of his or her spiritual inclinations, should gladden us.

I've found it quite easy to meet Jews around here. I've done it without even trying. All you have to do is sit down in a local coffee house and open a book with some Hebrew writing on it. You'll often find me studying in coffee houses. When I'm working on a passage from the Hebrew Scriptures, I'll take with me a copy of the Hebrew text. Every so often, someone seated at a table next to me, or someone walking by, starts a conversation with me. The interested party is invariably Jewish and wants to know what I'm doing with a Hebrew text. Of course, I tell them that I'm a pastor who teaches the Hebrew Scriptures. Two weeks ago I noticed someone else with a Hebrew text and introduced myself. He was a rabbi. We had a delightful conversation. I concluded by saying, "I'm sure I could learn a lot from you." He said the same to me. I hope we meet again, and I have a feeling that we will.

Although the story of Israel beckons us to appreciate the Jews, mostly it compels us to appreciate its author: God. Paul told it, but God dreamed it. The problem that the story addresses—sin—is so immense that it can be difficult at times to see the sublime

answer. God has dealt with the overwhelming problems of the world, all of which stem from sin, in the death and resurrection of one man, who took the vocation of Israel upon himself. We get sidetracked into endless theological debates about, say, predestination, instead of letting the story take us, awe-filled, into the presence of the Author.

### **Our place in the story**

Paul doesn't tell us the story of Israel simply that we might appreciate it. He also tells it that we might find our place in it. Our bookmark, if you will, is after the first coming of Christ but before his second coming, when God will make all things new. If the purpose of Israel was to set the stage for Christ, the purpose of church, now that Christ has come, is to give him the stage.

If Israel's part in the story featured plot twists that seemingly defied the possibility of a good ending, we can expect no less from our part. For Israel to set the stage for Christ so that God's mercy could be extended to all, it needed to get smaller. By and large, we are reluctant to give Christ the stage, because we want it for ourselves. Who knows what it will take for us to get off the stage and give it to Christ? Who knows what God needs to do in your country, in your church, in your family, in your life? He will do what he must, for his Son must have the stage. For God's merciful purposes to advance, our grandiose plans may need to die.

We need to understand that we deserve judgment. We came to Christ with nothing, and we are incapable of advancing God's purposes. Our brilliance had nothing to do with our coming to Christ, and it has nothing to do with giving him the stage. Our brilliance needs to get out of the way so that others can see the brilliance of Christ. If we're the chosen few, we've been chosen to declare the wonders of God (1 Peter 2:9). If God has shown us mercy, it's that we might extend mercy. God has the authority, and even the obligation, to remake his church, as he remade Israel of old, so that his merciful purposes for the world may advance. It may seem that God is against us on the one hand or that we are failing him on the other. Like Jacob on the banks of the River Jabbok, we may have to wrestle in the darkness with the strange purposes of God, only to emerge with the belief that even our wounds are for his glory.

We must be careful, then, how we evaluate success. Spiritual success often appears in the guise of worldly failure. Based on Romans 9, you cannot discount the possibility of something you cherish shrinking—in size, importance or reputation—because it serves the purposes of God.

A few years ago, fellow pastors Danny Hall, Judy Herminghaus and I started an evening service here at PBC. We called it Nightlife. I felt God had called me to do it. Nevertheless, it started small and got smaller. We had grand visions for it, but it was a spectacular failure. At one point we decided we needed more publicity, so we printed up business cards that advertised it, complete with a spiffy map to PBC. I proudly handed them out to the members of the ministry team, all of whom were duly impressed except for the guy who kept looking for the star on the map that indicated where the church was. Problem: There was no star. After a year, we put Nightlife out of its misery. But I got to work closely with Danny and Judy, two friends and co-laborers whom I cherish. Near the end of Nightlife's run, Danny and I would sit on the front steps of the auditorium and look out as the worshipers were arriving. When the service was supposed to start, we joked that there were more people in the band than there were in the congregation. In my

farewell words to Danny, before he left for Memphis last week, I told him that he makes failure fun.

Serving with Danny and Judy—it was worth it. And one more thing: As our year of failure was winding down, I met a woman who started attending the worship services. A week before Nightlife ended, I asked her if she wanted to go to lunch with me. She said she would. Five months later I asked her if she would marry me. She said she would. Six months after that we were married. Seven years later, we have two beautiful daughters. For me, the failure of Nightlife set the stage for what God really wanted to do.

I have a friend who led a large and growing church in Texas. He moved to California 13 years ago to take a small church of mostly older people that hasn't grown at all. In Texas, he knew success no matter what he did. He knew it would be different in California, but he was convinced that God has leading him away from mega-church leadership. "For me," he told me, "the path has been downward." A curious thing began to happen in California, however. Pastors from churches much larger than his recognized his wisdom and began seeking out his counsel. I'm one of them. He's one of my heroes. I listen to every word he says.

Our country, say many cultural observers, is now "post-Christian." There's no doubt that the church's influence has declined. At the same time the gospel is making unprecedented inroads in other parts of the world, particularly Latin America, Africa and Asia. The gospel was largely planted in those places by the American church. While the church in America, which gave the gospel to the world, continues to shrink, the church in the world is growing by leaps and bounds. God, it seems, has been remaking the church in America. The death of modernism has given birth to new movements under banners such as "Seeker Sensitive," "Purpose-Driven," "Postmodern" and "Emerging." Time will tell how these movements play out, but they deserve our encouragement and our prayers.

Last weekend the elders and pastors of this church went away on a retreat to pray and seek the Lord together. We praised him, we confessed our sins to him, and we cried out for him to lead us. We emerged with the sense that we had met with God, that we're all in this together and that he is giving us, and will give us, ways to move forward as a church so that Christ may be honored and God's mercy may be extended.

Finally, consider Paul himself. Like most Jews of his day, Paul's nationalistic worldview prevented him from recognizing the Messiah when he came. He had to be struck blind in order to recognize Jesus as Messiah. When Jesus called him, Paul envisioned an ever-growing ministry of preaching the gospel to his Jewish countrymen, but it was not to be. The Lord told him, "Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles." Near the end, when he was in prison, his supporters abandoned him. (Acts 9:1-10, Acts 22:21, 2 Timothy 4:10-18). His view of Israel failed. His view of ministry failed. His supporters failed.

This is the man who penned the amazing words at the top of Romans 9. This is the man who wished that he could be severed from Christ for the sake of his countrymen. This is the man who lived the story of the gospel, suffering for the sake of the world, in order to give the stage to Christ so that God's mercy could be extended to all. May God do his work in our lives, and in our church, so that we, like Paul, care so much about the world that we get off the stage and give it to Jesus.



## The voice

More than 30 years after I heard the voice of John the Baptist for the first time, the voices around me, and even within me, still cry out for me to make a name for myself. When those strong and lovely voices seem all but irresistible, like the song of the Sirens in “The Odyssey,” I know I must listen to John’s voice again and make it my own. As a church, we must hear John’s voice and make it our own.

Christ must increase, but we must decrease.

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<sup>1</sup> Both Jewish and Gentile believers in the gospel have been adopted as sons of God (Romans 8:15). They look forward to “glory” (Romans 8:18). They receive the new covenant, which fulfills the previous covenants (Romans 2:14, 25-29; Romans 3-8). They fulfill the law (Romans 2:14, 26-29; 3:31; 8:2-4). They fulfill “temple service” by worshiping God (Romans 1:5, 12:1-2). They inherit the covenant promises (Romans 4:13-25).

<sup>2</sup> The seemingly harsh language used in verses 12-13 distinguishing Jacob from Esau is employed in order to communicate that God’s promises would continue through one and not the other. Esau would not literally “serve” his brother, nor would Jacob be Esau’s master. The Lord didn’t literally “hate” Esau; he simply didn’t choose him to advance his purposes. Likewise, in Romans 9:25, God doesn’t love Israel one moment and then not love it the next. Jesus himself used similarly harsh language to make a point (Luke 14:26). See also Deuteronomy 21:15, 22:13, 24:3; Judges 14:16; and Proverbs 13:24.

<sup>3</sup> God’s dealings with Pharaoh mirror his dealings with recalcitrant Israel in Paul’s day. Just as God hardened Pharaoh in order to make his name known, he has hardened Israel, postponing judgment, in order to save the Gentiles (Romans 11:7-11).