

Romans 9:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?

Analysis

Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?—the objector protests: if God sovereignly hardens, how can he justly blame (memphetai, μέμφεται)? If none can resist his boulēma (βούλημα, 'sovereign will/purpose'), humans become mere automatons. This is the classic determinism objection. The Greek anthistēmi (ἀνθίστημι, 'resist/withstand') suggests the futility of opposing God's decree.

Paul's response (v. 20-21) doesn't resolve the philosophical tension by explaining compatibilism; instead, he rebukes the questioner's presumption. The very framing—"Why does he still find fault?"—reveals a heart that considers itself entitled to challenge God. The question isn't primarily epistemological (how can sovereignty and responsibility coexist?) but moral (who are you to question God?). The objection itself proves the depraved mind's hostility to divine sovereignty.

Historical Context

This objection has been raised against Augustinian/Calvinist theology for 1600 years. But Scripture doesn't resolve the tension by diminishing either God's sovereignty or human responsibility—both are affirmed. The mystery humbles us; God's ways transcend our comprehension (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. Why does Paul rebuke the question's presumption rather than explain compatibilism philosophically?
2. What does the very raising of this objection reveal about the human heart's attitude toward God?
3. How can we affirm both God's sovereignty and human responsibility without resolving the mystery?

Interlinear Text

Ἐρεῖς	οὖν	μοι	τίς	ἔτι	μέμφεται	τῷ	γὰρ
Thou wilt say	then	unto me	Why	doth he yet	find fault	G3588	For
G2046	G3767	G3427	G5101	G2089	G3201		G1063

βουλήματι αὐτοῦ τίς ἀνθέστηκεν

will	his	Why	hath resisted
G1013	G846	G5101	G436

Additional Cross-References

Daniel 4:35 (Parallel theme): And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

2 Chronicles 20:6 (Parallel theme): And said, O LORD God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?

1 Corinthians 15:35 (Parallel theme): But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?

1 Corinthians 15:12 (Parallel theme): Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

Psalms 76:10 (Parallel theme): Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.

Job 9:19 (Parallel theme): If I speak of strength, lo, he is strong: and if of judgment, who shall set me a time to plead?

Mark 14:21 (Parallel theme): The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born.

Genesis 50:20 (Parallel theme): But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

James 1:13 (Parallel theme): Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: