

Y'all ready to get after it?

Okay.

I appreciate that.

All right.

Well, grab your Bibles then.

Let's get after it.

Romans chapter 9.

We'll be back in Romans chapter 9 this week.

If you need a Bible, by the way, we have some house Bibles available.

Just raise your hand and one of our ushers will get that to you.

And we say, you know what?

I haven't said this for a while.

I should say it every week.

If you don't own a Bible, take that home with you.

Consider that a gift, okay?

If you don't have a Bible, take it home and consider that a gift.

We need one up here in the front, Bill, when you're on your way.

Appreciate you.

All right, so here's where we are, okay?

We started a journey through the book of Exodus in January, and it's been quite a ride as we've looked at this incredible historical narrative that teaches us about the redeeming, rescuing love of God for His people.

I hope that's been a blessing to you as much as it's been to me, and

A few weeks ago, as we approached the account of the plagues, you know the plagues, right?

God's dropping all these plagues on Egypt in the rescue and the release of his people.

As we approached the plagues, we thought, there's a good bit of...

repetition when you when you just read the accounts of the plagues and instead of just going through and reading about you know frogs and reading about boils and reading about hail and all the other things and walking through that that repetition we thought how cool would it be to

identify some underlying theological doctrinal areas that the plagues really put on display and then walk through those areas of theology in a way that makes them practical and accessible and applicable to our lives where we can really see more of the character and the nature of God and just be led to worship.

And by the way, we preach systematically through books of the Bible.

So

Those texts are important, and here's what I encouraged you at the beginning, and I'd re-encourage you in this.

As we're walking through these theological lessons from the plagues, be reading the account of the plagues over and over and over and over again in your personal time so you can see what we're talking about at work in these texts.

And so we're over halfway now.

We're now on week four of six.

unpacking these theological lessons.

And if you're just joining us, I should tell you that we are in the deep end of the pool right now.

We've been getting sort of deeper each week.

And I want to actually take a moment to recap some of what we've talked about because these conversations are really meant to build upon each other.

But I also want to remind you, particularly as we're talking about theological topics,

that might really challenge our presuppositions and what we've always believed.

And maybe some of the things we're saying ruffles a few of our feathers at times.

I want to remind you that the point of theology, and I mean the entire point of theology, is to move us further into delight in and dependence upon God.

Greater intimacy with God must always be the aim of theology.

Always.

We don't talk about theology just to fill our heads with more knowledge.

You might remember what Paul said to the church in Corinth.

about information just for the sake of information.

He said it actually puffs up.

It creates pride in us, meaning the more we just gain factoids without it changing the heart and transforming us, the more we'll be moved to weaponize the information and be moved towards self-righteousness.

So the point of all of this is that we would see pride not grow, but destroyed.

And be humbled before the Lord and be more needy and more desirous of God's sustaining grace in our lives.

That's what right theology does.

It makes us decrease.

and him increase.

It gives us a proper view of a God who is infinite in his character and nature and puts us in right perspective, I guess, in our relationship to him, which is incredibly good because that's where we're brought into the true purpose of our lives and are able to enjoy the sweetness of God's presence when we're with and enjoying him.

I just wanted to say that

Because I know that some of you might be getting a little itchy with some of what we've been talking about.

A good thing to think about when there's a theological position that you interact with from scripture and it irritates you or even maybe makes you a little angry, a good question to ask is why?

Why is this irritating me?

In fact, by the way, that's a good exercise all the time.

It's a good exercise all the time.

If you're frustrated or irritated, it's good to ask what's going on inside the heart to actually give rise to those feelings and those reactions because it's not about the feelings or the reactions.

It's always about what's going on in the heart.

The Bible says that's what's actually most important and giving birth to whatever's coming out of your life.

So as we think about these areas, if there's something that's unsettling, it's good to explore, okay, why do I feel unsettled about this?

And then wrestle with things on that level.

Because each of these areas of doctrine that we're focused on will push on the unbelief in us.

They just do.

Every single area.

It pushes on unbelief.

It exposes pride.

And that naturally makes us uncomfortable.

Agree?

So here's where we've been over the last few weeks, and you'll see what I mean by us getting our pride pushed on.

We started week one by talking about monotheism.

And it's pretty easy to understand.

There's one God and you are not him and I'm not him, right?

So that's monotheism.

Now that immediately pushes on our pride because in our pride, the whole idea of pride is we want to usurp authority and put ourselves over and above God.

That's what sin does.

And so immediately that starts getting exposed.

But the truth is, is that God is self-existent.

He's self-existent.

It means that he depends on nothing and no one.

Now we, on the other hand, are made, we're creatures, we're not the creator, we're creatures who have been made by God and for God and for specifically worship and dependence upon him.

So what we talked about is the fact that the sin nature that we all still struggle with bends us towards what I call practical polytheism.

And what that means is that not only are we trying to rob God of the glory that he's due by acting like we're God and he's not, but we also take all the good things that God gives us as gifts and we try to make those God things.

In other words, we try to elevate those things above God

in our worship, our trust, our hope, our affections.

The Bible's got a word for that.

It's called idolatry, meaning we are all practically an idolatrous people who are chasing after other things than God all the time.

John Calvin, if you're a Calvin fan, said that the heart is a factory of idols.

You are cranking them out constantly, right?

So this practical polytheism.

Now here's the good news.

The good news is the gospel is working to reorient our hearts and our worship back to God, which is where it belongs exclusively.

Now, that conversation led us into a conversation, week two, of God's covenant faithfulness.

We just sang about that in one of our songs this morning.

God is a promise keeper.

You and I are habitual oath breakers.

We constantly let people down.

We don't live up to our end of the deal.

That's not God.

God is a promise maker and a promise keeper.

Here's the beautiful truth is that he is the one who is upholding both sides of the covenant.

So redemption...

is based entirely on God's faithfulness and not our ability to measure up, which is really good news because none of us measures up.

If you've never heard that before, that's what the Bible says.

I want to invite you into the freedom of the fact that it's okay that you're not okay.

Okay, because we walk into church a lot of times and we're like, ooh, especially when we're going, we don't know people.

And we're like, man, people are gonna be looking at me.

I gotta like put on a deal.

Like I gotta pretend.

I don't want people.

This is a hospital for really sick, broken people.

And there's not a single person in here who's got anything figured out.

The only bit of good in us has been put there by Jesus.

The only bit of faithfulness in us has been put there by Jesus.

It says in Ephesians 2, 8, and 9 that the faith that we have was given to us as a gift of God's grace.

It doesn't belong to us.

He gave it to us.

So nobody gets to be awesome in here.

We all get to say we all need Jesus and we can be okay being broken and walking authentically with each other about our brokenness as we walk together towards Jesus.

You with me?

Yes.

God's faithful it's not about our faithfulness it's about God's covenant faithfulness now that led us into a discussion last week about divine sovereignty and that's where we moved I remember when I used to go to the pool when I was a kid and you know you're like oh I can finally go in the deep end and you have to go under that thing you remember doing that you have to go under that barrier and then you get into the deep end of the pool last week we went under that barrier and got into the deep end of the pool here's God's sovereignty

God rules and reigns over absolutely everything.

You're like, Jeff, everything?

100%, everything.

There is nothing that exists or happens outside of his ordination, him determining that it would happen, his say-so.

I didn't say this last week, but Job is a great example of that.

Because when you read Job, you're like, man,

The enemy's like dropping bombs in Job's life.

That's crazy.

You remember the conversation that happened?

Job doesn't get to do a single thing without God's leave to do it, right?

God's the one who ordains this.

God's the one who's sovereign over all of this, which means that everything in your life has purpose.

Everything.

God has planned it for your good and for his glory.

Now, it doesn't always feel like that, does it?

No, of course not.

And we don't always see how that works, do we?

No, but God does.

Here's the illustration that I think of when I think of this.

If you've ever seen, like, there are these ancient tapestries that exist that are just exquisite.

I mean, they're crazy.

Some of them are hundreds and hundreds of years old and they're massive.

Well, here's the way it works.

Somebody will take a colored thread, a piece of yarn, and will poke that through the canvas and will make a single dot of color on that canvas.

Single dot.

And on the back side, what do you have?

The two end pieces sticking out.

So when you look at, and by the way, I researched it this morning.

I got on the Google machine, Richard, and it said, I forgot the names of them, but there's a couple tapestries that are so big that there are 100 to 200 million pieces of thread stuck through the canvas.

Get your mind around that.

So when you're looking at a tapestry from the back side,

It makes no sense.

It looks like a yarn store threw up all over the place.

It's just a color of shag.

It's just a motif of shag nonsense that makes, it looks like chaos.

You can't make heads or tails of it.

It doesn't look like anything.

But you turn that thing around and you would just stand there in wonder.

By the way,

especially after you've seen the chaos of the other side.

Wow.

I mean, some of these things are massive.

That's God's sovereignty in our lives.

He is making a masterpiece, and Ephesians 2.10 calls us the poiema, the poems, the works of God, his masterpieces.

He is making a tapestry out of each one of our lives that is an incredible masterpiece that would blow our mind, but right now you and I are seeing the backside of that that looks like a hot mess.

One day we'll see a picture of what God's doing and it will blow our minds.

God is sovereign over every single piece of thread that he is putting into the canvas of your life with great intentionality.

And here's what I challenged us in last weekend.

The calling on our lives is to rest in God's sovereignty.

It's to find rest in that.

But the truth is, is that in our sin, we want to usurp God and try to be in control, but it doesn't work like that.

God is God and we are not.

And apart from Him and His working, listen, you and I, apart from the working of the Lord in us, are spiritually dead things who are utterly hopeless.

We've gotta understand that.

Now, I'm gonna get to divine sovereignty.

That's what we're talking about today, divine, sorry, divine justice.

I'm gonna get to that in just a moment, but I don't wanna graduate too soon from the tension that exists from our discussion last week.

So there's tension when we talk about divine sovereignty.

I don't wanna run from that tension.

I wanna press into it.

And here's the tension.

If God is sovereign over everything, that means that he is sovereign over the salvation of people.

You understand?

You can't dilute God's sovereignty or he's not really sovereign.

You can't take away from it.

So here's what we talked about last week.

The question that really gets to the heart of this is, does God choose us or do we choose him?

And here's what I said.

The answer is...

Yes.

The answer is yes.

But the more important issue is who initiates?

Who chooses first?

And here's where I took us to explain this.

Because for people who are talking about belief and choice, they want to run towards John 3.16, which is a great place to run because John 3.16 is amazing.

It says that we must believe in Jesus in order to have life.

God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

And there are dozens and dozens and dozens of verses that accord with John 3.16 that talk about how we must believe in Jesus to have eternal life.

But we can't move past what Jesus says in John 3.3 just before that.

Because this is all the conversation that Jesus is having with Nicodemus.

And what Jesus says in John 3.3 is he says, look Nicodemus, unless you are born again.

Unless you're remade, you cannot see the kingdom of God.

What Jesus is saying is, it takes rebirth.

Did you all know that you had nothing to do with your birth?

You didn't.

You don't have anything to do with your rebirth either, by the way.

We're going to talk about the mystery involved in that in just a second, so hang on to that.

We can't make ourselves and we can't remake ourselves.

God initiates and comes in and regenerates a heart and gives us the gift of faith which...

with which we then put into Jesus in the form of belief.

This is what happens.

Now, here's the point that I'm making.

We could go to about a hundred passages that clearly articulate this sovereign choice of God of his people.

I'll give you a few.

John 6, 44.

Jesus says, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him."

That's pretty clear.

Nobody comes to me unless the Father draws them to me.

And then just to make sure we didn't miss it, later in the chapter in verse 65, Jesus says it again.

He says, this is why I told you that no one can come to me unless, he uses a different word here, it is granted him by the Father.

Romans chapter 8 verses 7 and 8.

For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law, God's word.

Indeed, it cannot, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Paul's saying that when we're in our natural state, separated from God, there is zero in us that is alive spiritually and can actually please God.

There's nothing there.

We have to be remade.

Acts 13, 48.

This is probably the clearest of them all.

When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord.

and as many as who were appointed to eternal life believed.

Luke's telling us that the ones who were appointed to eternal life believed, and consequently, the ones who weren't appointed to eternal life obviously didn't believe.

You think about the example of Lydia.

this seller of purple goods from Thyatira in Acts 16.

It says, the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.

There are many other examples.

I picked a few, about 100 in total, where the Bible makes it clear that God chooses us, and that is what enables to choose him.

That's what we talked about last weekend.

But there's still tension in that.

There's still tension in,

in that why does God choose some people and not others?

Or I'll personalize it.

Why did God choose me and not Joe Schmo down the street?

And the answer is, you ready?

I have no idea.

And neither do you.

Now that's what we don't like.

That's the part we don't like.

It's not the order of choosing because I think you have to be illogical to not see how that kind of works together.

It's this part.

It's this part.

Why does God, we don't like not knowing why God would choose some people and not other people.

And here's what I'm saying.

At the end of the day,

I think oftentimes we want to know things that God has not chosen to reveal to us.

And I think for some of us, and this includes, it's probably all of us on some level, I know it's me, is that we want to be in control of things over and above God.

And so we drift into thinking at times that we might know better than God knows.

And by the way, that's how it's been in our sin and pride ever since the fall.

That's exactly what was happening with Adam and Eve in the garden, right?

They thought that God was holding out on them.

And the things that God said, you don't need to worry about that.

You just need to worry about this piece right here.

And they're like, no, but we want this other stuff.

That's it right there.

I mean, these have always been the two big issues that we face in the heart, every single one of us.

One is entitlement, right?

entitlement where we think that we deserve things from god and the truth is is that no one deserves anything from god but death because of sin did you know no one should be saved did you know that no we're going to unpack that this morning no one should be saved no one deserves that right so this idea like this isn't fair

When we look at God and say, well, that's not fair.

Fair is everyone dies.

That's fair.

That's in God's economy, that would be fair, but for the working of the gospel, which is where we're going.

So the first is entitlement.

The second thing that we all struggle with is self-righteousness.

where we minimize our sin and believe that we're better than we really are.

And that causes us at times to try and judge God in what he's doing.

And so you end up with phrases like this.

How could a loving God fill in the blank?

Let me just tell you, if you are asking that question, how could God fill in the blank?

Right off the bat, it's not good.

Not in a good place.

We'll talk about that from Romans 9 in just a second.

If we are growing in faith, we're recognizing and embracing the mystery that exists all over the place when it comes to how God works.

There is mystery everywhere.

Everywhere.

All kinds of things that we don't know.

Because God doesn't want us to know, and that's okay.

In fact, it's not just okay, it's called faith.

Deuteronomy 29.29 says this, the secret things belong to the Lord our God.

But the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever that we may do all the words of his law.

What this is saying is that God has given us his revealed word.

And then, outside of what God has revealed to us about salvation and life and us and redemption, his character and nature, outside of this, you could fill the expanse of the universe a million times over with all this stuff that God has not chosen to give us.

You understand that?

Which means that there is mystery all around us.

All the time.

And what I'm telling you is that we have to get to a place where we can learn to recognize and embrace the mystery.

God calls us to have humility and joy in his presence where we're growing in trust and childlike dependence and experiencing the freedom of not knowing certain things.

There's freedom in not knowing certain things.

He's given us in his word precisely what he wants us to know and has not given us what he doesn't want us to know right now, and that's okay.

So I don't know.

I have no idea why God chooses who he chooses, and I certainly don't know why he chose me.

I don't know why he chose me because, listen, I don't deserve a single thing from him.

Not one thing.

But the fact that God has set his affections on me and brought me back from the dead, there are no words to express the gratitude and worship and thanksgiving and praise and adoration and wonder that well up inside my heart constantly because of what he's done and because of the fact that I get to be with him.

I cannot believe it.

And that's the point.

That's the point.

I don't ever want to get to a place where I stand before God and try to point my finger at him in judgment of him.

Because the entire narrative of my life is that he has rescued me to be declared not guilty in his judgment of me, and I don't deserve that at all.

I don't deserve that at all.

So I never want to graduate from being so incredibly amazed and

That God has brought me back from the dead.

And that wonder and that worship is meant to grow progressively throughout the life of a rescued person.

As we marvel at how amazing he is.

And that's the point.

that I want to drive our hearts to this morning as we think about the topic of divine justice.

I want us to be driven to the gospel because the gospel is the only place where all of the tension that we see in this area of doctrine can be reconciled.

I'll explain what I mean by that in just a moment, but first let me define it for you.

Divine justice.

It's the doctrine that God is always right.

He's always just.

He always does what is right.

He's perfectly holy, perfectly righteous, pure in every way.

There's no evil, no error, no lack in Him whatsoever.

Everything that God does is right and good all the time.

And this is where the tension comes in for us.

Let me frame it for you from the book of Exodus because there's a point later in Exodus where God reveals his character and his nature to Moses in a fresh way and it puts on display the tension that exists in the doctrine of divine justice.

By the way, let me set the context for you.

In Exodus 34, this is after the whole thing with the golden calf.

Right?

It's after Moses interceded for the people and then God relented from his anger and Moses is back on top of the mountain with God as God is making this new set of tablets for the Ten Commandments.

You remember the first set?

Moses smashed when he saw the golden calf okay so he's back up on the mountain and that's when God reveals something of his character to Moses. Look at this the Lord passed before him and proclaimed the Lord the Lord a God count look look at these words merciful

and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty.

Do you see the tension in that?

There's tension in that.

God's merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and covenant faithfulness.

He doesn't quickly forget his love.

He forgives iniquity and transgression and sin, which is all amazing.

We love every bit of that, but God will by no means clear the guilty.

Do you see the problem?

We're all guilty.

Every one of us is guilty.

There is not one of us who's not riddled with sin.

Romans 3 states it clearly that there's none who's righteous, not even one.

We talked about it last weekend.

Our sin is way more pervasive than we have any idea of.

I talked about it last weekend as being a deep ocean.

We have no idea the depth of our sin.

Jeremiah 17, 9 says that the heart...

is wicked and desperately sick.

Who can understand it?

Apart from God, there is a sickness in the heart of sin that we have no idea how deep that goes and how problematic that is.

So here's the truth.

The truth is, is that everyone is hopeless and helpless before the Lord when it comes to our sin and the judgment that is due for that sin.

And in order for God's divine justice to be upheld means that God's holiness must be upheld and sin must be paid for.

It has to be paid for.

And by the way, Romans 6.23 is abundantly clear.

The wages of sin is what?

Death.

The wages, it means the payment that is due for sin is always death, right?

So how do we balance this?

How is the mercy and steadfast love and faithfulness of God balanced with justice and the fact that evil and wickedness and sin must be paid for?

It only happens in the gospel.

That's right.

The good news of salvation from the Lord, which let me be more specific, is all about the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ to rescue and redeem his people.

The work that Jesus has done to pay for our sin and to make us righteous is the only thing that allows mercy and justice to coexist.

Where God doesn't sweep our sin under the rug, thereby diluting his holiness, because he can't, and whereby he doesn't instantly destroy us for sin, thereby nullifying all of his redemptive characteristics.

God can never deny himself.

Instead, he steps in and he dies in our place so that we can be set free from death, be born again to life, and exist in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

That's what we're talking about this morning.

The mind-blowing reality that Jesus has made the only way for us to be brought back into right relationship with God and that happens only as an act of his mercy and as a gift of his grace which we simply do not deserve.

We don't deserve it.

I want to look at that through the lens of Romans chapter 9 as we continue digging on this passage that we began looking at last weekend.

In fact, I want to start by reading the passage that we ended our time with last weekend.

And if you're new to Heartland and you're like, is he just getting to his text?

Listen.

Welcome to Heartland.

We're not going to take that.

See, Antonio's out.

He's leaving.

We're not going to take that much time.

But this is where we're jumping back in because I want to start connecting dots with what we were talking about last weekend.

Look at verses 14 through 18.

What shall we say then?

And here it is.

Is there injustice on God's part?

By no means.

That's Paul's fancy way of saying not a chance.

For he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy.

And I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.

Get this next part because it's real important.

So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who has mercy.

This is about the mercy of God towards us.

There is nothing you can do to ever save yourself.

Nothing.

Not a chance.

It's God pouring out his mercy upon us.

Now he goes and illustrates this from the life of Pharaoh.

And this is where we see this at work in the plagues.

He says, for the scripture says to Pharaoh, for this very purpose I've raised you up that I might show my power in you

and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.

So then, he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

Paul is addressing the tension that exists in people's heart over what he just said in verse 13 about Jacob and Esau.

Remember he said, Jacob I loved?

And Esau, I hated.

He's essentially saying, because remember we walked through the Semitic use of the word hate.

It's a comparative thing.

Go back and listen to that if you didn't have time.

It's an important conversation.

But we unpacked that.

But what Paul's really saying is, God chose Jacob and didn't choose Esau.

That's what he's saying.

Paul makes it super clear that,

that it's God's choice.

He says, look, this doesn't have anything to do with Jacob being a good guy and Esau being a bad guy.

He says, before they were born and could do anything, that's when I made my choice.

That's what God says.

Which immediately, again, brings people to the objection, that's not fair.

Because we think in terms of behavior, performance, those kind of things.

And so here's what Paul's doing.

He takes that subject and he identifies that as a question of God's justice.

Is God's justice violated by him choosing someone and not choosing someone else?

And the answer to that question is 100% no, absolutely not.

But that answer is based on the fact, and this is what we have to understand if we're really gonna embrace the gospel and see it drive us to worship.

That answer is based on the fact that no one deserves to be chosen.

No one deserves to be chosen.

No one deserves to be brought from death to life.

Not a single person ever.

And God alone, what Paul's saying, God alone has the authority and the right

to pour out his redemptive characteristics of which mercy is a part on whomever he chooses, and God is answerable to no one for this, least of all me.

That's what he's saying.

He's right in all his judgments.

which is precisely what we see God displaying through the plagues, by the way.

That's the illustration that Paul gives in this passage.

He's raised Pharaoh up and has chosen Pharaoh to harden his heart in order to display his mercy as he showers it upon his chosen people.

That's what we see in the plagues.

Now, Paul goes on to explain this in verses 19 through 24.

This is what he says.

So you'll say to me then, why does God still find fault?

For who can resist his will?

Now this is important.

He says, but who are you, O man, to answer back to God?

Will what is molded say to its molder, why have you made me like this?

Has the potter no right over the clay to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another vessel for dishonorable use?

What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?

in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom he's called, not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles.

So, get this.

Paul's not saying that

that there's no answer to these kind of questions, like is there any injustice on God's part?

Paul's simply telling us that we're not in a position to ask the question.

He's not saying there's not an answer.

He's just saying we don't have any right to ask the question.

And that's the part we don't like.

Let's just be honest.

We hate that.

We absolutely hate that in our pride because we want to make judgments of what's right and wrong and put those judgments on God oftentimes.

And listen,

This does not mean that we should not wrestle with these things.

It doesn't mean that we shouldn't be honest about our confusion about these things.

It certainly doesn't mean that we can't take that confusion to the Lord.

God, I don't understand how this stuff fits together.

I think we should take that to the Lord.

But it does mean that we don't get to accuse God.

That's what it means.

We don't get to accuse God.

When you and I forget that God is the potter and we are the clay, it's not going to end well for us.

We can't forget that.

That's the way of it.

I know we love, it is the me-centricity.

We love, this comes back to our problem with monotheism.

I call this dog and cat theology, by the way.

It's a simple way to remember it, okay?

Because if you own dogs or you've owned cats or you've ever seen a dog or cat, you know how this works.

A dog looks at its owner and says,

You feed me, you give me water, you take me out to go to the bathroom, you buy me toys, you spend time with me, you play with me, you must be God.

And that's how a dog treats its owner.

It's like everything, like the owner's the greatest thing in the world.

A cat looks at its owner, says you feed me, you water me, you buy me toys, you change my litter box, you spend time with me, I must be God.

And that's a cat's personality in a nutshell.

They're like, please, I'll let you know when I'm ready for you.

That's how a cat looks at you.

Dog's the opposite.

You get home, that dog is not a care in the world, just the owner.

We operate like cats with God instead of dogs.

We think that everything revolves around us and we're God and he's not.

And so it leads us to this position where we will in subtle ways accuse God and act as though we can judge God.

And Paul's reorienting the heart here saying, guys, you're clay.

You're clay.

He's the potter.

He's gonna do with you whatever he wills.

Now, I'm not saying we don't participate in that.

We talked a little bit about that last week.

You can go listen back online, and we're gonna talk about it a lot next week when we talk about compatibility, this doctrinal area of compatibilism.

How can God be sovereign, and how can man be responsible at the same time?

Because both those fit together.

We'll get there, okay?

We'll keep swimming in the deep end next weekend.

But you and I tend to forget that God is the potter and we're the clay.

And here's the thing.

God owes no one mercy.

Think about it like this.

If mercy is owed, it ceases instantly to be mercy.

That violates the definition of mercy.

I'll give it to you the other side of the coin.

If grace could be earned, it's no longer grace.

It becomes a wage.

It becomes something that's deserved.

It's not grace anymore.

So when we weigh the sovereignty of God and the justice of God and the reality of our sin and brokenness and we dig into a passage like Romans 9, it's all meant to drive us to this one overarching, staggering reality.

And we spent the first 15 minutes singing about it, that we have been given the treasury of heaven and the gospel when we deserved only death and separation from God.

We deserve death.

And for whatever reason, I don't know, other than to promote his redemptive characteristics in a visceral, tangible, experiential way in his people, he has lavished through the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ, his grace and his mercy and his forgiveness and steadfast love and forbearance and forgiveness upon his people.

And the fact that we should be counted among them is mind-blowing.

Mind-blowing.

The only ability that you and I have to stand in the presence of God and enjoy freedom and life is entirely because God has chosen to give us the gift of faith and to make us righteous by paying for our sin himself and giving us the righteousness of Jesus Christ in return.

This is 2 Corinthians 5.21.

For our sake, listen to this, personalize it.

You say, for my sake.

He, the Father, made him, Jesus, the Son.

For your sake, the Father made the Son to be sin.

You understand?

He takes it upon himself, the one who knew no sin, so that in him,
you might become the righteousness of God.

Jesus lived the life that we couldn't and haven't lived.

Jesus died the death that you and I deserve to die because of our sin, taking that sin with him to the cross and into the grave.

Jesus bore the wrath that we had earned

in our pride and rebellion.

That wrath being stored up against sin, we had earned that in a life feasting on sin.

He absorbed all of that so that we could receive his righteousness in return, and it is all a complete act of his grace and mercy.

Ephesians 2, 8, and 9, I alluded to it earlier, says, "For by grace you've been saved through faith, "and this is not your own doing."

It is a gift of God, not a result of works so that no one can boast.

If you and I can somehow muster up faith to believe in Jesus, we have room to boast.

The Bible says repeatedly, no, you don't get to do that because you were dead and dead people don't do things.

God made you alive because he loves you.

Why me and not somebody else, God?

There's the rub.

I don't know.

I don't know.

Ask him when you get there.

I'm going to ask him.

I'll be like, why me?

And he's just going to look at me probably and be like, because I love you.

I'll be like, I don't, it doesn't matter.

That's what I'm going to say.

That's what you're going to say.

It doesn't matter.

What I'm saying is, what does it look like to live that way now?

Okay.

There's mystery.

Okay.

God says two things that we can't necessarily reconcile.

Try to get your mind around the Trinity.

How God's three distinct persons and one God?

Try to get your mind around that because I'll tell you what happens.

When we try to get our mind around that and we try to come up with cute illustrations like, well, it's like an egg or it's like different forms of water.

Every one of those analogies that cleans it up for you ends in a Trinitarian heresy.

Every one of them.

Because you can't make sense of it fully.

There's mystery.

God wants it to be that way.

where you're like, I'm just gonna believe what the Bible says about who God is.

So we embrace the mystery.

Understand this this morning, and I'm gonna close this with this.

We can never gain right standing with God through our good behavior or moral living.

No amount of good stuff

can ever bridge the gap between God's holiness and our sin because that gap is infinite.

We can only respond as God comes knocking on our hearts by collapsing on Christ through faith.

So how do we respond this morning?

I'll give you four things.

I'm not gonna elaborate on them, I'm just gonna give them to you.

First, don't minimize sin.

Don't try to excuse your sin away.

Don't try to pretend like you're better than you are because you're not.

We're all a hot mess, okay?

Understand the horror in your sin and then don't give in to the temptation.

This is the second thing, to trust in your own righteousness.

Don't be like, okay, I understand my sin.

I'm gonna try to do better.

You can't.

You can only be made right.

That's what the word righteousness means.

It means right standing with God.

You can only be made right through Jesus Christ, through his righteousness covering you as a gift of his grace by faith.

That's it.

So don't trust in your own righteousness.

Here it is.

Three, run to Jesus.

Like, Jeff, I already have a relationship with him.

I already get the gospel.

Great.

Run to him anyway.

Because you and I are like dumb sheep and we just continue to wander away from him in our unbelief.

Run, run, run.

Did you know that Jesus is the only thing that's like, we can be like insatiable for?

Like he's the only, you never get enough.

There's always more running to do into him.

In fact, you and I will be doing that for all of eternity as we explore the beauty of who he is and marvel at his goodness.

So run to him.

Trust him.

And then here's the last thing.

Rest.

Rest in the sovereignty of God.

Trusting him and embracing mystery where there's mystery.

I'm not saying don't be inquisitive.

I think God loves that.

He made us that way.

It's great to ask questions.

It's great to explore.

It's great to be inquisitive.

It's not great to accuse.

It's not great to try to sit in judgment over him.

with a posture of being wowed and awed at the fact that you've been made new and brought back from the dead, run to him with your unbelief and the mysteries and say, God, I don't get it.

I do this all the time.

I'm like, I don't get it.

I'm not the sharpest.

God knows I'm not the sharpest knife in the drawer.

He made me.

I don't get it.

God's like, you don't have to get it.

I want you to just delight in my presence and depend upon me and let's just hang out.

So then we can be like, okay, cool.

I don't need to get it right now.

See what I'm saying?

So we don't need to be scared of these areas.

We need to treasure Christ because all of theology is driving us into him.

So let's run to Jesus this morning together.

Let me pray for us.

Oh, Father, would you do this in us for your glory?

God, there's so much here that

We don't necessarily understand.

There's so much here that could be said that maybe hasn't been said.

That's okay, God.

I'm just asking that you would stir in us in fresh ways.

Rapture our hearts in fresh ways this morning with a knowledge of your redeeming love, God.

I pray that you would humble us.

You would kill pride in us, God, that you would

Just cause us to treasure Jesus as we collapse on him.

So God, please, as we respond to you this morning, orchestrate these things in our heart by your spirit.

Give us eyes to see you.

We pray this in Jesus' name.