

It's going to be a lot of words said this morning.

All right.

You guys got your Bibles?

Let's grab those and let's get to the book of Romans and chapter 8.

Romans 8 is where we're going to get started this morning.

If you need a Bible, by the way, we're going to have the words on the screen, but sometimes it helps just to have a physical Bible.

We love that.

So we have these great house Bibles.

Raise your hand.

We'll get one to you.

We've got great ushers who can pass those out to you.

Just raise your hand high so they can see you.

All right, Romans 8.

You know what?

Have you guys, have you all ever read 1 Corinthians?

You ever read 1 Corinthians?

1 Corinthians is great.

If you haven't, you should.

It's like the church in Corinth is like the Jerry Springer of churches in the ancient world.

It's just a hot mess of people getting drunk on communion wine, and it's unbelievable.

And you're just like, that's in the Bible?

So Paul writes this letter, and he has a lot of hard things to say to the church in Corinth in that first letter.

And I love what he says near the beginning of the letter.

It's actually at the beginning of chapter two.

You might remember it if you've read it.

He says, basically, he says, look, when I came to you, I came in weakness and in much trembling.

I didn't come to you in plausible words of wisdom or

Or in the wisdom of men.

I didn't come to you in my own strength.

I came to you with a posture of weakness where I'm boasting in Christ alone.

So here's the deal.

That's how I feel about this sermon.

Like we're talking about a bunch of really...

wonderful and weighty things and God's word is explicit and clear on these things but you need to understand that these aren't my things these are God's things and I just get the privilege of being the postal worker

Who delivers the mail i'm not writing the mail i'm delivering the mail and so here's what I want to say to you this morning Is god's got something for us?

That's beautiful, but I feel the weight that if he doesn't do the work in our hearts It's not going to get done and that's always true.

Amen So here's what I want to pray again And I just want to ask god before we even get to the discussion just to enter in And uh, and just wreck shop in our hearts and really here's what i'm we prayed this earlier in my office a bunch of us.

Um

There's this cool scene where

In the Garden of Gethsemane, when they go to arrest Jesus, you may have read right past this.

It's a very small detail in one of the Gospels.

They go to arrest Jesus, and it says, get the picture of this.

You've got this whole mob of soldiers and people with swords and torches, and they're there.

And it says, Jesus turned and looked at them, and they all fell backwards.

I don't know about you, but if I were one of the people arresting Jesus and he turned and looked and it knocked the whole group of us down on our backsides, I would make different plans real quick.

It just shows you the sovereignty of God in the plan of salvation that people were carrying this through.

But I love that because I think what's happening in that moment, I think personally, is that Jesus just is like, hey, before we do this, before we get started,

I want to just give you a glimpse.

And he looks at them and they all fall back.

And here's what I want this morning is that we would just get a glimpse of his glory.

That he would just, as he looks at us through his word, that we would look back at him through the lens of his word and then it would knock us on our backsides.

Because listen, some of y'all, all of y'all, me, we need to be knocked on our backside by the Lord.

Right?

Right?

Let's pray.

Father, I'm asking you to do that for your glory this morning.

That you would through your word humble us and magnify Christ and show us

Just a glimpse this morning of your eternity and infinite beauty and glory and majesty.

And that we would see in light of that our smallness.

Just the fact, God, that we are desperate for you.

Help us, God.

We are so needy of your grace this morning.

We pray this in Christ's name.

Amen.

All right.

Well, if you are just joining us, Claire, Shepard, good morning.

How are you guys?

Good.

You're looking for a seat?

Okay.

I haven't seen your dad, but I see your mom.

She's right back there.

There you go.

I'm going to say, you can come sit up here with me if you want.

It'd be good.

If you saw my sermon, thanks, Mateo.

If you saw my sermon notes, you wouldn't want to probably, but it's all good.

So, all right.

So if you're just joining the conversation, here's where we're at.

Because if you're like, look, Romans, Exodus, we're walking through this incredible journey through the book of Exodus that we began back in January.

And it's been great.

I hope that you have loved this as much as I've loved this and God's stirring up his redemption in the heart.

And we've come to the plagues.

And you all know the plagues.

Even if you don't read the Bible, you've seen the Prince of Egypt probably.

That's the animated version of the Ten Commandments.

I'm Charlton Heston territory.

I'm that age where I saw the original, the OG Ten Commandments, which isn't the original Ten Commandments because those are in Exodus.

And no liberties were taken in this account as in those accounts.

But you get to the plagues and there's a bit of redundancy in the plagues, right?

Where it's like God does this thing.

God uses that so Pharaoh's like, okay, and then hardens Pharaoh's heart, and then God does another thing, and then Pharaoh's like, okay, and then God hardens his heart again, and

You know, we see this hardening and softening of Pharaoh's heart repetitively.

There's three terms that are used, by the way.

If you look throughout the plagues, it says God hardened Pharaoh's heart, Pharaoh hardened his heart, and Pharaoh's heart was hardened.

Those three things are almost used interchangeably.

And so there's a lot of repetition there.

And so here's what we thought is, instead of just reading through and saying frogs, you know, gnats, boils, and

and then explaining the same thing over and over.

We wanted to say, what are the theological...

principles that underlie everything that we're thinking about and reading and looking in in the plagues and our desire was to say and there's six of them that we identified clearly and our desire was to say look let's walk through each area of doctrine uh with the aim of getting to application where we're able to see god more clearly and where his presence here's the

Because that must always be the aim of theology if we're doing theology right.

It's not just to know more about God.

It's to know God more as he becomes increasingly precious to us.

You got me?

Like that's so important.

So if you're ever studying theology and you feel your head filling with knowledge but you're not sensing it's getting digested in the heart and then changing you and like making you more humble and

and look more like Jesus, and more grace-filled, and all that kind of stuff.

Something's stuck in that, and you need to ask questions about what's going on.

So that's what we want to do.

We want to fall more deeply in love with Jesus as we see Him in the Scriptures.

So we began two weeks ago by talking about monotheism, the fact that there's only one God.

And that's an important place to start, because unless we understand and embrace and live from the truth that there is only one God and that we aren't Him...

We aren't going to get very far in any of these other areas of doctrine.

The truth is, as we discussed, that we are all of us practical polytheists.

And what that means is, is that because of indwelling sin and idolatry that...

that often rules our hearts.

We chase after all kinds of other created things as though those are better than God.

So we take good things given to us by God to increase our worship of Him.

We take those good things and we try to make them God things.

as we elevate them above God in our worship and our affection.

And what God is doing through the working of the gospel, through this redemptive work that He's doing in us, is He's progressively setting our hearts free and bending our worship back to Him.

And that's all his work.

It's all his work.

We'll talk more about that in just a bit.

But that leads us then into an understanding of the covenant faithfulness of God.

That's what we talked about last week.

The fact that God is completely and utterly faithful in keeping his promises even when we are not.

which is very often, if we're going to be honest, because we're not really that faithful.

We're not really that good at obeying and doing what God's called us to do.

And yet, that doesn't dilute God's faithfulness to us.

And I'll just tell you, my heart was so full after that conversation last weekend.

It was so full.

Because I don't know about you, but

I need to be continually reminded that every single aspect of my salvation is based on the faithfulness of God and not my ability to measure up.

Because I don't measure up and I can't measure up.

I'm not even close.

I'm not even Jeff.

I'm not even close to reaching any sort of measurable scale when it comes to holiness.

I'm not.

The truth is, is that you and I have nothing good and nothing faithful inside of us besides what God puts there and cultivates over time.

And listen, that's not bad news.

It's

It's bad news for our attempts at autonomy and independence, but it is incredibly good news for us that all of this is about God's covenant faithfulness.

If you missed that conversation, I would highly recommend you go back and watch that sermon online.

I think it's such an important and freeing

conversation for us now all of that leads us up to this week and next week and conversations that we will be having about the divine sovereignty of god and the divine justice of god which are closely linked in fact every one of these areas of doctrine are closely linked it's hard to understand one area without the other areas they're symbiotic in that way and

And so here's how we're going to handle the discussion about these two things this week and next, and probably even the following week.

We're going to allow Paul to be our guide as we look at the last section of Romans chapter 8.

And then we dig into the bulk of Romans chapter 9.

Now the reason that I want to go to Romans is because Paul in that letter, it's amazing.

We preached through that here.

We took like two and a half years to go through it.

So if you want to dig on any of this, you can go back and listen, interact with those individual sermons.

But Paul in Romans connects all of these things that we're talking about.

How understanding God's covenant faithfulness

moves us into an understanding of God's divine sovereignty and justice.

He's connecting them, showing us how they flow together.

And so this letter is going to serve us really well over the next couple of weeks.

And so that's how I want to start.

I want to start...

By looking at a section of Romans chapter 8.

And be reminded again of God's covenant faithfulness.

And as I read this passage.

I just want you to sit there.

Read it along with me.

And just drink in the goodness.

And the loving kindness of God toward you.

Because it is so good.

Romans 8 beginning in verse 28.

We'll read through the end of the chapter.

And we know.

that for those who love God, all things work together for good.

For those who are called according to his purpose.

Logan, that's what I call a Christian coffee mug verse.

It's one of those ones where you just put it on, you slap it on a coffee mug or on a thing, you put it on your desk, makes you feel good, warm inside, and it should.

It should.

The fact that God is taking what the enemy means for evil, Genesis 50, 20, and he's turning every single bit of it for your good.

Ridiculously, unbelievably good truth for us.

And look at verse 29.

This is where we start to get into it a little bit.

For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined

to be conformed to the image of his son in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

I want to be very clear about that word foreknew.

When you look at it in the Greek, we think about the foreknowledge of God in that, but it's a much deeper word.

When a husband and a wife, the easiest way I know how to illustrate this is when a husband and a wife get married, on their wedding night, they know each other.

You know, that's actually common language in older English.

That's how they would say that, is they said they knew each other, right?

That's the idea.

This word carries with it far more than God for knowing you here.

It means God for loved you.

And that is so beautiful.

That in God's heart and mind into eternity past, you were there.

in his heart.

There's intimacy with God in his heart with you into eternity past.

That's a beautiful, beautiful reality.

Those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

And those whom he predestined, he also called.

And those whom he called, he also justified.

I'll define that word for us in just a bit.

And those whom he justified, he also glorified.

What then shall we say to these things?

If God is for us, who can be against us?

He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?

It is God who justifies.

Who is to condemn us?

Christ is the one who died.

More than that, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

As it is written, for your sake we are being killed all the day long.

We are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

For I am sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all of creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

You see what I'm saying?

It's the covenant faithfulness of God on display.

Our calling is to love God, to enjoy Him, to delight in Him as He works in us according to His will and His good pleasure.

Can you see how this passage just drips with the covenant faithfulness of God?

The fact that He's the one doing all the work.

Paul wants there to be no confusion that this is all about his faithfulness, not about our work.

He says, God foreknew us, predestined us, called us, justified us, glorified us.

God does all of those things because of His good pleasure to do them, not because we deserve them, because in fact we deserve nothing but death and eternal separation from God.

So in light of these things, what shall we say?

Who can be against us?

Who can bring a charge against what God has elected?

Who can condemn what God has declared not guilty and righteous and has justified?

Who can separate us from God's love?

The answer to these things, of course, is that nothing can come against us as though it's bigger than God.

No one can charge us with anything.

Because it's been paid for by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Which was shed for our sin.

There is according to Romans 8.1 at the beginning of the chapter.

Therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

So not a single person can condemn us.

And there is not a single thing in all of creation.

That can get in the way as a barrier between God's love and us.

Is that good news or is that good news?

Thank you.

Thank you, Don.

Is that good news?

It doesn't get any better than this.

It's staggeringly good news.

And it's all based on the covenant faithfulness of God to work according to what He has purposed to do.

Now, let's pause there and

And let's think about everything that we just read in its context of how Paul's writing it and to whom Paul's writing it.

Because Paul knows that for people who are paying attention, this is going to create some natural tension in their hearts.

Because it raises a natural, honestly, blaring objection.

And here's the objection.

If God is faithful to the covenant, if he's the one fulfilling both sides of it, like we talked about last weekend, what on earth do we make of Israel?

What do we make of Israel?

Because most of Israel is actually separated from God because they've rejected Jesus as the Messiah.

So how do we reconcile that?

without God somehow being depleted of his faithfulness while his sovereignty and justice are upheld.

And that's exactly what gets addressed and held in tension in Romans chapter 9.

So let's look at this together.

And we're going to start with Paul defending, Travis bring me down just a little bit if you wouldn't mind, defending the faithful covenant faithfulness of God in these first eight verses.

Look at what it says.

Romans 9 verses 1 through 8.

I am speaking the truth in Christ.

I am not lying.

My conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.

For I could wish that I myself, listen to this, were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen, according to the flesh.

They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the

the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.

To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever.

Amen.

But it is not as though the word of God has failed.

For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel.

And not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring.

But through Isaac shall your offspring be named.

This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

Now, let's stop right there.

We'll pick it up in verse 9 in just a second, but stop there.

So, right off the bat, you see from Paul's verbiage how difficult this is going to be for people to reconcile and to believe.

Most people are going to think that God's word has failed, that God isn't faithful to what he's promised, that he hasn't upheld his covenant because so much of Israel has rejected Christ.

And so Paul steps in and says, look guys, you need to understand, I'm speaking the truth to you.

I'm not lying.

He's being repetitive.

Like my conscience is clear in this.

And then by the way, how beautiful is it that we see Paul's heart for his kinsmen, for Israel?

He wants everyone to know that he's not being judgmental or overly harsh with Israel and what he's about to unpack.

He loves the Jewish people.

These are his kinsmen.

In fact, he says, hey, if it meant that they could come to know Christ, I'd be cut off from Christ.

That's amazing.

Like, sidebar, is that our heart for the lost around us?

Anybody running around thinking that?

Hey, if this group of people could come to know Christ, I would gladly be separated from him if it meant they could know him.

Is that the burden that we feel?

That's not the point of this message.

But I read that again, and I was like, man, I'm way too indifferent about lostness around me.

I say I love people a lot.

But a lot of times I won't even be like, yeah, but if I go hang out with them and share the gospel, it means I can't do this other thing that I want to do over here.

I'm not bringing you into my mess.

You're probably way better at that than I am.

I'm just saying I do that sometimes.

I got Paul over here like, man, if it meant me losing my salvation, which can't happen, but if it meant me doing it, I mean it, I would if they could come to know Christ.

Man.

So then Paul gets into the main section of, the main point of this entire section of the letter.

And it's found in Romans 9, 6 through 8.

Look at it again.

Here's what he's saying.

A lot of people think that Romans 9 was written by Paul.

to promote or display the sovereignty of God and salvation.

And it does do that, but that's not the point of why he wrote it.

He wrote it because of what this says specifically in verse six.

It's a defense against the objection that will naturally arise about Israel.

And this is what he says, verses six through eight, but it's not as though the word of God has failed.

Not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel.

Not all are children of Abraham because there is offspring, but through Isaac shall your offspring be named.

Not Ishmael, Isaac.

And this means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

So Paul tells us clearly that God's word, that means his covenant, his promises, his plan for salvation has not failed.

Because salvation has nothing to do with what family you're born into or what your bloodline is or what ethnicity you are.

That would be like somebody thinking that they're a Christian because their parents were Christians.

They were raised in a Christian household.

Can I just tell you, God doesn't have a single grandchild.

You know what I mean?

Ain't a single grandchild in the kingdom of God.

There are only children.

So that doesn't get passed to you.

True Israel, Paul's saying, is based exclusively on the promise of God, and that promise is based on faith, not ethnicity, not bloodline, but by being covered by the blood of Jesus Christ as a gift of God's grace.

So God's word has not failed.

His promises are sure.

And the reason that's true has everything to do with our conversation this morning about the divine sovereignty of God.

Now, I want to define that for you.

I want to explain briefly how we see it at work in the plagues because it's actually one of the clearest things, theological things that we see at work in the plagues.

And then I want to unpack it from Romans chapter 9 as I attempt to get to the heart of the issue for us.

All right?

Okay.

Here's a simple definition.

of divine sovereignty.

I didn't put it on the screen, but just listen.

I'll say it slow.

God is absolute in his authority, his power, and his rule over all things into eternity past, now, and forevermore.

Nothing happens outside of God's will or decree, but everything fits within the ordination of God and his providence.

In short, God is in complete control and he is utterly in charge of all things from the biggest of things like the expanse of the universe, which he's currently upholding by the word of his power, Hebrews 1 says, to the smallest things like how many cells are in your body.

And everything in between.

He knows it all.

He rules over it all.

He's in charge of it all.

And there is nothing that escapes his working and his holy will.

So God is able to do all of his holy will.

That's what it means.

I say holy will.

That phrase is important because there are obviously some things that God cannot do.

For example, God cannot sin completely.

God cannot deny his own character and so forth.

Does this make sense?

You guys tracking with me?

That's the theolog... Grudem would be proud of me.

That's the theological definition.

Here's how the West... I'll hit all you Presbyterians in the room.

Here's how the Westminster Confession of Faith puts it.

This will make you feel all warm and fuzzy.

Karen, there you go.

God...

I love that we're a denominational melting pot, by the way.

I love it.

Like 10 different groups represented in the room, and it's perfect.

Here's how the Westminster Confession puts it.

God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass.

That's it.

It's nothing.

You're like, but what about World War II?

What about the extermination of the Jews?

Because all your mind starts popping up.

All fits under the ordination of God and his sovereign control.

Now, before we start unpacking this, let's talk plainly about the tension that exists with people on this subject at a foundational level.

We're gonna talk about the tension that exists in this with salvation in just a minute.

But let's talk about it on a general level first because we sort of have to start there.

Generally speaking, we don't love the idea of God's sovereignty in our natural sinful state because, how do I put this simply?

We want to be in control.

That's why.

We want in our sin and pride and selfishness and egocentric, me-centric, nonsensical living, we want to be in control.

I don't want God to be sovereign because I want to be sovereign.

And isn't that the problem from the beginning, by the way?

I mean, ever since sin entered the world, we've been working in our pride and selfishness to move ourselves to the center and to usurp God's authority.

And by the way, that actually predated the fall because that's exactly what Satan and his demons did.

So in our sin and unbelief, we act as though we can be independent, as though we can be sovereign over our little kingdoms, as though we don't need God and we're perfectly fine on our own.

And I just have to tell you, that will never go well.

It will never go well because it defies the foundational and ultimate reality that we are creature and God alone is creator.

That we were made to be joyfully dependent upon God in all things.

And by the way, the truth is, is that we have no control over anything anyway.

I mean, we just don't.

Like, I'm serious.

Like, you have zero control.

A plane could land on the building right now and be headed for us this very moment from Lambert because of some kind of a malfunction, and we don't even know that's about to happen.

You have no control.

When you're driving on the road, there are certain things that could happen to you and me over which we have zero control.

None.

I don't care how great, like, how fast, like, your twitch reflexes are.

You're gone.

Besides the fact that if God stopped speaking right now and upholding the universe, everything would cease to exist like a Thanos finger snap.

You don't have control over that, and neither do I. The oxygen could get sucked out of this room right now.

I'm not oxygenating the room, Dave.

I don't know if you are, but I'm not.

Okay.

You see what I'm saying?

Control is a facade.

You could lose your job tomorrow like that.

No control.

Okay.

God has complete control.

God has total control over absolutely everything at all times.

And that is precisely what God is displaying his divine sovereignty as we see the unfolding of the plagues.

That's it.

God's like, watch this.

Y'all want to see something?

Watch this.

I'll show you how in control I am of everything.

And he just starts dropping plagues.

And they're incredible.

We're not going to go read them, I said, but read them on your own.

Read them over and over and over again as we're going through this.

I will read you this, though.

Before God does the plague of hail in Exodus 9, look at what he says through Moses.

For this time, I'll send all my plagues on you yourself and on your servants and your people so that you, listen to this, so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth.

For by now I could have put out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence and you would have been cut off from the earth.

God's like, listen, I have the ability to make it so that you instantly don't exist.

But for this purpose, I've raised you up to show you my power.

Why?

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

The point of the plagues is that God is displaying to Egypt, to Israel, to Moses and Aaron, to the surrounding nations, to us so many years later that he is God and that there is no other and that he is infinitely and completely powerful to do whatever he pleases, whenever he pleases to do it, and everything he does is completely right and good.

And that wasn't just true then, that's true right now.

Are you guys with me?

Okay.

You and I have to understand the sovereignty of God or we won't understand how life works.

And we won't understand how salvation works.

If we put ourselves at the center, it won't make sense.

So that's what we're going to explore in Romans chapter 9 for a few minutes.

Can I just jump into the deep end of the pool?

I'm just going to jump into the deep end of the pool.

We're going to try to get to the heart of the issue with God's sovereignty.

We've already talked about our natural objection to God's sovereignty in a general way.

I want to talk about God's sovereignty when it comes to how salvation works, because I think that there's some objection and also some confusion on that.

But before I do that...

Let me just say one thing.

This is not a one-part discussion, okay?

The conversations that we're going to be having next week and the following week about divine justice and compatibilism are going to be very helpful in

understanding this more fully.

Compatibilism is a fancy church word.

It means theological word.

It means that God is sovereign and man is responsible at the same time.

And so there's some mystery in how those are compatible with one another.

And we're going to unpack that because there's questions that will linger.

So just understand that I can't in the next, I don't

I can't unpack this whole deal.

We're going to keep going over the next couple of weeks and unpack it more.

But let's keep going in Romans 9.

I'm just going to read a big chunk of text in its entirety.

We're going to stop and we'll chop it up.

Verse 9.

For this is what the promise is.

He's been talking about the promise.

About this time next year I will return and Sarah shall have a son.

That was God's promise to Abram.

And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad,

in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works, but because of him who calls, she was told the older will serve the younger, that's opposite in culture, as it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.

Y'all with me?

Right?

Okay, let's keep going.

I'll circle back to that part.

What shall we say then?

Is there injustice on God's part?

And we're going to deal with that next week with divine justice.

But Paul says clearly by no means with a big fat exclamation point.

Absolutely not.

For he says to Moses, I'll have mercy on whom I'll have mercy and I'll have compassion on whom I'll have compassion.

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

For the scripture says to Pharaoh, now we're getting into it.

For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.

Verse 18.

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

All right?

You guys still with me?

Let's think about this then through the lens of...

salvation and in order to do that I have to do a very quick treatment on how we think about and define salvation because when you look at salvation as Paul describes it in scripture it has three parts okay and it's important to understand the difference and we're going to focus on two of those parts this morning there's justification

There's sanctification and there's glorification.

At the risk of oversimplifying this, I'm going to define them in very general, easy terms.

Justification is that moment in time when God regenerates the heart, brings you from death to life, adopts you into his family.

removes your sin from you imputes to you the righteousness of Christ by the way I love that the fact that there's an amputation and an imputation that happens at the same time our sin is amputated from us and the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us and that's amazing it's the great exchange

whereby Jesus became sin for us so that in Him we could become the righteousness of God.

That's our justification.

It's that moment in time where we become a child of God and we're declared not guilty.

Got it?

Okay.

Sanctification, let me skip forward.

But glorification will be that moment in time when we are united with Christ physically and he finishes the work that he started in us, not even at our justification, but according to what we already read in Romans 8, into eternity past in his heart when he chose us.

It's that moment in time where the presence of sin is going to be removed from us all together and we're made perfect in Christ to live forever with him.

That's our glorification.

Now, justification happens like that.

Glorification happens like that.

The creamy filling in the middle of the Oreos.

And I say that a little tongue in cheek because our sanctification, like our justification is amazing.

And it's like, oh my goodness, like I can't believe I've been forgiven.

I have new life.

Our glorification, like we're all looking, who is not looking forward to being completely unfettered by sin so that we can worship Jesus forever, right?

I mean, you're like, man.

But our sanctification is brutal.

It's brutal.

It's made to be that way because God's doing a thing.

We'll talk about that in a minute.

But our sanctification is that lifelong process that begins at our justification where he's conforming us to the image of Jesus and bringing into practical alignment progressively over time what is positionally 100% true of us in Christ at our justification.

So like when in 1 Peter 2, 9, when he says you're a chosen race, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, when he calls us blameless, holy, like a priesthood of believers, those things are 100% true of you right now in Jesus Christ, positionally.

And you're like, I don't feel holy.

I don't feel blameless at all.

Like when I just told that dude he was number one after he cut me off on 270 going south, I don't feel holy.

That's hypothetical.

I did not do that.

I really, I didn't, but that's hypothetical.

Yeah.

I just do it in my heart, which is worse.

Right?

That's a whole other sermon, Dawn.

You don't feel holy in that moment, but positionally you're completely holy, but God's growing you over time to bring into practical reality what's true of you positionally in Christ.

You guys with me?

Justification, sanctification, glorification.

Now, I'm going to deal, I'm not going to deal with that third piece, glorification, this morning.

We're only going to think about this from the perspective of our justification and our sanctification.

Here's what lies at the heart of the issue that people have with God's sovereignty, his sovereign grace in justification.

Here's the question that lies at the heart of it.

Does God choose us or do we choose him?

The raging debate throughout the ages, which need not be debated at all because the answer is yes.

Yes.

You're like, I hate when you do that.

When you ask an either or question and you say yes.

The answer is yes.

But the issue isn't in the choosing because clearly God chooses his people.

Did you know there's over a hundred passages in scripture that reference God choosing his people?

Can't argue with that.

And his people clearly choose him in believing because there are many passages that reference that.

The issue is in the order of the choosing.

You understand?

It's not in who chooses, it's in the order of the choosing.

Let me explain with an illustration.

I had a robust conversation, let's call it that, not long ago with somebody about Romans chapter 9, and she could not reconcile...

what is said in Romans chapter 9, with all the passages that talk about the necessity of a person believing in Jesus for salvation.

She couldn't reconcile those things.

So she kept coming back over and over and over again to John 3.16.

I love John 3.16.

Don't you love John 3?

I kept telling her, I'm like, that's one of my favorite verses.

I love it, for God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

Yes and amen, 100%.

I don't think any of us in this room would argue against the necessity of choosing to believe in Jesus for salvation that is clear biblically.

And it is choosing.

Believing in Jesus is choosing to believe in Jesus.

But the question is, why are we choosing to believe in Jesus?

That's the question.

Because there's nothing good or spiritually alive in you and me apart from God.

Not a single thing good and not a single thing alive in us spiritually.

So where did the faith and life come from that is necessary to believe in Jesus?

That's the question.

And it's actually not that complex to answer it.

Are you asking a question?

Okay.

Reconcile.

Great question.

Bring back together into a right place.

Does that make sense?

Great question.

Thank you.

Sorry, I thought you were worshipping.

I literally, when I said John 3.16, hand went up.

I was like, girl is worshiping right now.

And I was here for it.

But when the hand stayed up, perfect.

All right.

So let's bring it back in because this connection is really important.

All right.

So

Jesus actually makes this really clear.

Do you know what context John 3, 16 is in?

The conversation Jesus is having with who?

Nicodemus.

Remember the Pharisee that came to Jesus in the middle of the night?

And he's like, what gives?

And he's explaining all this to Nicodemus.

So in John 3, 3.

Jesus says this to Nicodemus, and it accords with so many other passages that explain the connection that I'm driving at here.

Here's what he said.

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

What Jesus is saying to Nicodemus is that without being reborn, remade spiritually, you have zero capacity and nothing in you to even believe in Jesus.

None.

Now, here's the thing.

You and I didn't make ourselves.

We had nothing to do with our birth.

Right?

Nothing.

And we most certainly cannot remake ourselves.

That's the point.

God's the one who chose that we would be born, and it's God's choice that regenerates the heart and necessarily causes us to put faith, which is a gift from God, in Jesus Christ.

Now we see that issue pressed here with Jacob and Esau.

Notice how God's decree about these two boys, God's choice, happened before they were born.

Paul references God saying that he loved Jacob and hated Esau before their birth and

And that was, he says just before it, to show the purpose of God in election and the fact that this is based on the calling of God.

It's clear in Scripture.

By the way, sidebar, there's this idea of prescience or foreknowledge.

That's a fancy term.

It just means foreknowledge that suggests that God knew.

Okay, God knew.

what Jacob and Esau would choose.

And so God based his choice on what they would choose.

The problem is what Paul says explicitly in this text destroys that argument because he's talking about this happened to promote his sovereign choice in election.

So he's literally saying, no, no, it's the opposite of that in this verse.

I think the thing that really causes people to bristle here in this passage is the idea that God would hate someone.

And that it wouldn't be based on what they've done or not done.

Because we are so oriented towards works and performance.

Right?

That's the issue.

That's what gets all... Because listen...

It's not the issue, I think for most of us, it's probably not the issue of God hating someone that gets stuck in our craw.

Like you might be like, I mean, think of somebody that you don't like.

Practically, you're probably like, yeah, God hates that dude.

Or let's take it to the extreme.

You're like, well, yeah, of course God hates Hitler, you know, or whatever.

So, but here's what you're doing.

You're translating that to what they've done, right?

Yeah.

based on their behavior the whole bible calls that out as a broke down system it's never performative so so we know we're off track on that conversation but then we go to wait a second these are before they were born god loved jacob and hated esau like what gives so let's talk about that does god love everyone or just his people you ready

Yes.

You did it, not me this time.

It's Joseph's fault.

He did it.

Yes.

Yes.

God has a posture of love and benevolence toward the whole of creation as he showers everyone with his common grace.

When you read passages like, God makes it rain on the just and the unjust alike.

God is showering people.

So this includes a general knowledge of him, which is an absolute gift.

We see that in Romans chapter 1.

It's all over the place.

Common grace.

God's benevolent love towards his creation.

But God also has a very specific...

covenantal love and benevolence toward his people whom he has showered with his specific grace whereby he calls people to himself now this is where it's important for us to understand how the bible sometimes uses the word hate because we bristle

But this is oftentimes a Semitic use of the word hate, which is a comparative usage.

It means that you love something so much more that it makes the other thing look like hate.

You ever read Luke chapter 14?

Jesus says, oh, you want to be my disciple?

You want to follow me?

Well, you can't follow me without hating your mother and your father and your brother and your sisters.

I know some of you are like, I already hate my brother and sister.

That's not the point.

Listen, Jesus is not promoting hostility or malice.

It is a comparative meant to show the depth of love.

Jesus is saying, your love for me needs to be so white hot because of our union that it makes all your other relationships look like hate.

You get the difference?

So here's the bottom line.

Romans 8, 29 and 30.

For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

And those whom he predestined, he also called.

And those whom he called, he also justified.

And those whom he justified, he also glorified.

God calls and justifies his people whom he has foreloved and predestined to be conformed to the image of his son.

God's choice of us precedes and fuels and necessitates us putting our faith in him.

And that is the exact same issue at work in our sanctification.

Same, same.

The issue comes down to this.

Is God the one working in our spiritual growth, or are we working in our spiritual growth?

The answer is, now you're getting it.

Yes.

But the central issue is which working is constantly preceding and fueling the other.

That's the issue.

Philippians 2 says,

12 through 13, a verse with which you might be familiar.

Paul says, therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now not only is in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

A lot of people stop there because they don't understand the connection.

I've explained the connection.

It's proceeding.

What's underlying us working out our salvation with fear and trembling?

It's God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

When you start to understand what's actually happening with God's sovereignty, it changes the way you see all of this stuff.

Our working is God's working.

Without God working in us, there's no working that comes from us, but it all comes from a place of believing and resting and delighting and depending upon his finished work and his continuing work in us.

Here's where I think we get caught up on this issue, and it hurts us in how we live out the gospel and find rest in the finished work of Jesus and how he conforms us to his image over time.

We think that sanctification primarily means steady, noticeable, measurable victory over sin.

That's how we define sanctification most often.

Am I experiencing increasing victory over sin?

And so we think that if we're seeing victory over sin, then that means that we're growing spiritually.

And if we're not seeing victory over sin, then we don't think we're growing spiritually.

I want to propose a different understanding of sanctification.

What if your sin is way bigger than you actually know?

What if...

It would blow your mind if God showed you just how depraved and wicked and sinful you are in your heart.

Like your mind, like if the old movie Scanners, dude's head just explodes while he's on a newscast.

It would blow your mind.

What if you and I are operating this way?

And you think that our sin is like a pond.

your backyard and that pond just needs to be drained over time down to nothing and that's what represents growth that pond being drained over time down to nothing but what if our sin is actually like a deep ocean and

that can never be even remotely close to being drained this side of glory.

And instead of basing our sanctification on trying to drain that ocean, we understand that our sanctification is way more about walking on top of the water with Jesus the way that Peter did.

Think about it.

What if that's our sanctification?

Not about, oh, I got to have victory over these sin patterns.

I'm not advocating for sin at all.

It's horrible.

It should horrify us.

I'm saying, what if God and his sovereignty and our sanctification is using our sin?

Remember how he turns all things that the enemy means for evil towards good?

What if he's using those things to actually cause us to delight in and depend upon Jesus as we walk with him on top of all of that?

Because walking on top of all of that is a miracle.

Because we should be sunk by it.

And just like Peter, water molecules were upholding his feet while he was looking at Jesus and started to sink when he took his eyes off of Jesus, we need to start to see our sanctification in those terms.

What if we saw our sanctification as being more about a growing communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ through a growing dependence upon him so that we understand that God is actually sovereignly using our struggles with sin to drive us to an end of ourselves and more in his presence.

I really believe that if you get this and can start to live from it, it'll completely change your walk with the Lord.

I don't think we understand His sovereignty in our salvation, in our sanctification.

We need to come to understand that God is not surprised by our sin.

He's not wringing His hands over our slow progress.

He's not abandoning us in our weakness.

but that he's actively governing every aspect of our growth for his glory and for our good, even and especially in our sinful mess.

I guess I'd bottom line it like this, and we're almost done.

I think we often think of our spiritual growth in terms of us becoming more impressive as we overcome sin, and that needs to change.

to us boasting more in Jesus as we embrace our weakness and our constant neediness of his grace.

So here's my question for you this morning.

And listen, it doesn't matter if you're like, ooh, I don't think I know the Lord.

I thought I did.

I've been trying to do a bunch of stuff for him.

It doesn't matter if it's for your justification or for your sanctification.

What does it look like for you this morning to collapse on Christ?

To truly collapse into him.

To embrace your weakness and neediness and not see that as a bad thing.

but as a thing that God has ordained from before the foundation of the world to drive you into his presence.

Listen, because he foreloved you before he made a planet or came up with gravity or any of those other things.

Collapsing on Christ is our posture.

Let's pray.

Father, I ask that you would

do all of this in us for your glory.

We can't muster up faith even in our belief as Christians.

Father, those of us who belong to you, we resonate with that Father in the Gospel of Mark.

Jesus asks him, he says, yeah.

Yeah, it's possible.

If you believe.

Father says, I believe.

but help me in my unbelief.

God, we need you to help us, to fuel this, to work in us.

And so I'm praying, God, that you, by the power of your spirit, would open the eyes of the hearts of your people this morning, mine included.

God, we need you.

I don't have anything else to say than we need you.

So God, meet us in our neediness and show us Christ.

Draw us to yourself and let us just drop everything and run into his arms.

We pray in his name, amen.