Is God Unrighteous?

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Preacher: Chris Trousdale

[0:00] I'd like you to open your Bibles up to Romans chapter 9.

! It's been two months now since we've been in Romans. We took some time off for Christmas and then some other things after the New Year. But we're finally back in Romans and we left off in the middle of Romans chapter 9.
Having gone through the first 13 verses. So this morning we're going to pick up with verse 14 and read down through verse 18. If you're using one of the Bibles that are scattered around in the chairs, you can just turn to page 945.
Otherwise, I hope that you found Romans 9 in your own copy of the Scriptures. And I want to ask you all to stand with me in honor of God's Word as we read together this morning. In verse 14, Paul writes, What shall we say then?
Is there injustice on God's part? By no means. For he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.
[1:08] So then, it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, For this very purpose I have 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. Father, there are great truths in this passage this morning.
Truths that will force us to think differently. Truths that will challenge our hearts to respond in ways that are not natural for us to respond at times.
And so, we ask this morning that your spirit would guide us as we wrestle with this text. That you would give us insight into the truth of your word.
We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. You guys take a seat. You know, we sort of live in a time where it's very difficult to be shocked by anything.
[2:25] We don't see very often, at least not in any authentic way, where people around us are really shocked at things. Because it's almost as if we've sort of seen everything, and you can find the strangest looking creatures just by turning on your TV, and looking on any number of the nature channels.

We don't find anything surprising really all that often to see in the natural world. I mean, my kids can name animals that I had never even dreamed existed when I was their age, just because they're able to watch these shows and do different things.
It's just, we live in a world where it's hard to be surprised by anything. It's difficult to be shocked by anything. I mean, when you can have a man dress up like a woman and be named man of the year, and everybody just kind of goes, whatever, and moves on with life, you know that we've reached a point as a culture where it's very difficult for people to be shocked and surprised by things.
And yet, I still find that as we turn to God's Word, there are times when we encounter truths found there that can be shocking. They can be stunning, really.
And I mean that word stunning in both senses of the word. They can shock and amaze us. And when we come to really understand them and see them in relation to all the other truths that God's Word reveals, they can have a kind of stunning, captivating beauty about them.
[3:47] But as so often happens, a lot of times the shock comes before the awe. When we first see some truth about God or His nature or what He has done in eternity past or throughout human history, sometimes we are surprised by that because it doesn't quite fit with some of the things that we've been taught growing up.

It doesn't quite fit the things that we've thought in the past about what God is like. And the last time we were in Romans chapter 9, we encountered one of those truths that for many, many people has

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a kind of shock value to it.
We encountered what we call the doctrine of election or sometimes called predestination. And more specifically, we encountered what we today often call, theologians will refer to as the doctrine of unconditional election, which is this idea that is most of the time foreign to us.
This idea that God in His own sovereignty and for His own reasons has chosen to save and rescue certain people out of the world.
And His decision, we've seen, is not based on anything that those people do. It's not based on anything that He looks into the future and sees that they will do. It's not based upon their character. [5:04] It's not based upon their thinking or their feeling or their acts that they perform. It is simply God's good pleasure and goodwill to choose certain people. And we wrestled with that for a couple of weeks back in November.

In fact, I want your eyes to glance up at some of the verses that we covered the last time we were in Romans chapter 9, where Paul is really dealing with a very specific issue.
And the issue is, if God has given great promises to the people of Israel, to the Jewish people, and yet the vast majority of people in Paul's day and ours, a vast majority of Jewish people have rejected the Messiah, how can it be that we can trust God's promises?
If He gave promises to the Jewish people, and now most of the Jewish people are in Paul's day and ours lost, and Paul says, cut off from Christ, then how can we trust all of God's great promises to us?
And so Paul begins in Romans chapter 9 to address that very issue. Can we trust God's word given the fact that most of the Jewish people are lost and apart from turning to Christ, headed toward hell?
[6:19] And he answers that question by saying, it was never God's intention to save every single individual. It was never God's promise and plan to save every single descendant of Abraham.

In fact, it was God's decision and plan to save certain descendants of Abraham. And so Paul says, he chose Isaac rather than Ishmael, and then he chose Jacob rather than Esau.
And we'll jump into the middle here where he deals with Jacob and Esau so that we can get a good summary of what we saw the last time we were here. Look in verse 10, discussing Jacob and Esau, he says, and not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children, that's Jacob and Esau, by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad.
So God's going to do something that doesn't depend upon anything that Jacob and Esau does in their lifetime. He chooses them before they're born so that we won't make the mistake of assuming that his choice of Jacob over Esau had something to do with anything Jacob would do.
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, as it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.
[7:42] All this in order that God's purpose of election, or God's electing purpose might continue, or might be made to stand, might be manifest, might be made known.

This is why God did this. God made a choice before they were ever born, before they had done anything good or bad. He chose one over the other.
And Paul says, that's what God has done throughout history. God, when he gave the promises to the people of Israel, was not giving those to every single individual descendant of Abraham, but to those whom he had chosen.
And that's a difficult, difficult idea for us to grasp. I think it's even more difficult for us to accept it at times. It's a struggle for us to imagine that God would, of his own good pleasure in eternity past, choose to save certain individuals, rather than every single person on the face of the earth.
And yeah, that is exactly what Paul says God has in fact done. I don't expect that to be an easy thing for us to swallow, especially if you've been in church for a long time, and you've never encountered that doctrine, you've never heard that, you've never been shown that in the scriptures. [8:58] It hits you like a ton of bricks. It seems strange, it seems odd that God would do such a thing. And we're not the only ones to think that.

People throughout church history have wrestled with this, have struggled with this particular doctrine. People in the past, for instance, let me share with you something that Jonathan Edwards, a great theologian of the first great awakening, one of the great Puritans of the past.

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He said this, he said that from my childhood, my mind had been full of objections against the doctrine of God's sovereignty in choosing whom he would give eternal life and rejecting whom he pleased.
Leaving them to eternally perish, to be everlasting tormented in hell. And then he says this, he says it, this whole doctrine of election, it appeared like a horrible doctrine to me.
That's how he felt. This great theologian of the past says, I was taught this from a child, I was taught this growing up, and yet I had all these objections in my mind against it, and when I thought about it, it seemed like a horrible, terrible doctrine to me.
[10:11] And that has been the sentiment of many people throughout church history. I myself struggled with this. I was not like Edwards heard this doctrine growing up. I grew up in church, but had never really thought about these concepts because I had never been pointed to where they were found in Scripture.

It just wasn't something that we had ever discussed or talked about. And then suddenly I'm in college listening to guys argue about it, and I thought, this is the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard of.
What are they talking about? That sounds ridiculous. That doesn't make any sense at all. Why in the world would God do such a thing? But then you read Romans 9, and you see how clearly it is taught right here in the pages of God's Word.
But it's not as if the Apostle Paul is unaware of the great difficulties that this doctrine can cause. It's not as if Paul is aloof, as if he just doesn't know the kinds of objections and feelings that this can bring up in our minds.
And so he begins in verse 14 to address the natural objections that we have. And in fact, if you notice both in verse 14 and in verse 19, he asks a key question.
[11:21] And these are the kinds of questions that we ask. He anticipates. You've got to remember that Paul has traveled from city to city. He has taught the gospel in place after place. And he can now, at this point in his ministry, he can anticipate the objections that he has heard over and over before.

And so he anticipates our own objections in this letter. Notice what he says in verse 14. We'll look at the first question. He says, What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part?
Or more literally, Is there unrighteousness with God? We would probably say this along the lines of, Is that fair? I mean, is that right? Is that fair that God would do a thing like that?
That just doesn't seem right. That's Paul's question. Is there unrighteousness in God because He has done this very thing? And then if you look down to verse 19, you will see another question.
You will say to me then, Why does He still find fault for who can resist His will? Another question here. Then why is He blaming us? If we can't resist His will, why is He still finding fault?
[12:23] Is God unrighteous? And then why does He find fault with those whom He does not elect or choose? We'll talk about that second question next week as we approach verse 19.

But I want us this morning for a bit to look at Paul's answer to the question. If God in fact does unconditionally, not based upon anything we do, if He does choose certain individuals unto salvation and reject others, does that mean that there is unrighteousness in God?
Is God unrighteous to do that? That's His question. And as He begins to answer it, we can see that this paragraph is really laid out for us very, very neatly.
Verse 14 has the question, Is there any unrighteousness with God? And in the short answer, No, there's not. By no means. The rest of this paragraph is Paul's explaining his answer. How can he say, by no means, to that question, when it appears to most people as they read what He's already said, it appears that to be unfair or unrighteous?
How can he say, by no means? Here's his answer. He quotes a passage of Scripture, He draws a conclusion from it. Then he quotes another passage of Scripture, and he draws a conclusion from it.
[13:39] Just look at the way that it's laid out for us there. Verse 15, a quotation from Exodus 33. For he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.

And now a conclusion in verse 16. So then, it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who has mercy. So we have him saying, by no means is God unrighteous, for, quotation from Exodus.

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So then, conclusion, based on that quotation from Exodus. And then he does the same thing again. This time, though, quoting Exodus chapter 9. Look at verse 17.
For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth. There's the Scripture quotation. And now the conclusion, the so then.
So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills. So we have, Scriptural answer, conclusion drawn from Scripture, second Scriptural answer, second conclusion drawn from Scripture.
[14:44] That's how it's laid out for us. But what strikes me as odd is trying to figure out how do these verses actually serve as an answer to the question.

Remember, the question is, is there unrighteousness in God by unconditionally choosing one sinner and not another? That's the question. And his answer is basically, no, because the Bible says he can have mercy on whoever he wants to have mercy.
And then he says, no, because he told Pharaoh, I raised you up so that I could show my power in you. That's why I've created you, even though you're destined for condemnation. How do those two biblical quotations from Exodus, how do they prove Paul's point that there is, in fact, no unrighteousness in God?
Because they seem to be simply restating what brought the objection out in the first place. If the objection is that God is unrighteous because he chooses certain people, and the answer for him not being unrighteous because, well, he gets to have mercy on whoever he wants, that does not sound like an answer.
It doesn't sound initially as if Paul is really providing us with any reasons to believe that God's not unrighteous in doing this.
[16:01] Which is why we can't simply rest here in Romans chapter 9. Paul assumes that we understand the context in which these words were spoken.

Particularly his first quotation, which does, as I said, come from Exodus chapter 33, which for those who know the Old Testament really well, and I understand many of us struggle with the Old Testament, sometimes our knowledge is a bit lacking, but for those who know the Old Testament well, Exodus 33 is a key, pivotal passage in the story of the history of God's dealings with his people Israel.
So I want you to hold your place in Romans chapter 9, and I want us to go all the way back to Exodus 33, because we're asking a very specific question this morning. How does saying, he can have mercy on whomever he wills, and he can have compassion on whomever he wills, how does that prove that God is not unrighteous in choosing certain individuals for salvation?
How does that, how is that an answer? So there in Exodus chapter 33, we arrive at the place where Moses, standing upon the mountain, asks God, God, I want you, I want you to show me your glory. Take a look in verse 18. It says, Moses said, please show me your glory. And then God replies to Moses and says, I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you my name, the Lord.
[17:38] And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. There's the quotation, almost word for word, from verse 19 of Exodus 33.

So in the midst of this encounter that Moses has with God, Moses says, I just want to see, I want to see your glory. Show me your glory. Give me a glimpse of it.
Let me see your glory. To which God responds by saying, I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim before you my name. So he wants to see glory, and God says, I'll show you my goodness and my name.
So the goodness of God, and the name of God, show us what God's glory actually is. The goodness of God, and the name of God proclaimed, show us the glory of God.
And then he associates his name. He attaches his name, which is his essence. You may remember further back in Exodus when God appeared to Moses at the burning bush, and Moses said to God, what's your name?
[18:49] What am I going to tell the people to whom you're sending me your name is? And God says, I am that I am, or I am who I am, or I will be who I will be. And the wording there is so similar to what we read in verse 19 here, that there is a very clear connection, that God is not saying to Moses, I'll tell you my name, and in addition to that, here's something else you need to know about me.

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I can show mercy, and I can show compassion to whomever I want. What God is saying to Moses is, my name, my essence, who I am, who I am, consists of the reality that I will be gracious to whom I'll be gracious, and I'll show mercy on whom I will show mercy.
That is my name. That's who I am. That's what it means for me to be God. For God to be God, He must have a freedom in showing mercy to whomever He wants to show mercy.
So a part of the answer to the question is, why would Paul quote this? It's because in context, God's freedom to choose those whom He wants to show mercy and grace is a part of His very nature. That's simply who He is by His own nature. When we say God, part of what we mean or what we ought to mean is one who is sovereign in the distribution of mercy.
[20:13] That's part of what it means for God Himself to be God. So part one of our answer of why does Paul reference this particular passage is because Paul wants us to see and know that God by His very nature is one who possesses the freedom and the sovereignty over the distribution of mercy to whomever He wills to give it.

That's just part of what it means to be God. But then we can't forget about the glory language either. Because God's giving mercy to whomever He wills is also a manifestation of His glory.
Not just His name, but His glory. It is the glory of God that He is free to give mercy to whomever He pleases and to withhold it from whomever He pleases.
That is God's glory. And now we return back to Romans to finish answering the question. Why quote this particular passage?
Answer number one to that is because Paul is showing us that it is God's nature and God's glory to choose whomever He wants to show mercy to. That's just a part of who He is and it is a part of His glory.
[21:36] Now, what about the issue of righteousness? How is that tied in? Well, if we were reading Romans the way that the ancient church would often do, they would receive these books and they didn't spend two or three or four years going through them most of the time the way that we're doing with Romans.

They would oftentimes read the entire letter to the church so that they could hear it all at one time and in that way it was somewhat easier to sometimes make connections with what was said earlier in the book.
And if you'll remember, I want you to still hold your place in Romans 9 but I want you to go back to Romans chapter 3 where Paul discusses and talks about the glory of God in relation to His righteousness.
Paul says in Romans 3.23, this is a passage that most of you are familiar with, Paul says that all human beings, all of us, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
So that the glory of God for Paul is seen to be slighted and set aside when we choose sin. Or another way to say this is to say that sin or unrighteousness is by definition failing to give God the glory that He rightly deserves.
[22:58] We've talked about this to quite some extent when we were going through the first three chapters of Romans. But we need to have this understanding of what sin is firmly fixed in our minds.

Sometimes we think, well, sin is just breaking God's law. Well, that's a narrower category. That's transgression. That's a narrower category. Sin is a broader category than just breaking God's law. Sin is anything that we do to detract from or refuse to give to God the glory that rightly belongs to Him. That's what sin is.
And yet, even though we have done that, even though we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, in verse 24 we are told that God still justifies us. He declares us to be righteous. He rescues us. He redeems us. Notice verse 24. All those who've sinned are justified by His grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.
[23:53] So even though we have, by Paul's own reckoning here, we have all failed to give to God the glory that He rightfully deserves, and that makes us sinners, that makes us unrighteous, nevertheless, God has saved us and rescued us from the penalty that we deserve as God belittling sinners.

God has done that. To which now Paul must answer the question, if righteousness consists of upholding God's glory and sin consists of belittling God's glory, how can God Himself still be righteous if He doesn't hold accountable those who belittle His glory, who fall short of giving Him the

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glory that He deserves?
How can God save sinners and still be righteous? That's exactly what He addresses in the verses that follow. Verse 24 again. We are justified by His grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood to be received by faith.
So God put His Son forward as an atoning sacrifice. This word propitiation means a sacrifice that removes God's wrath. God set forward His Son and poured out His wrath onto His Son and punished His Son for our sins.
Why? Now we're back to the idea of God's righteousness. This was to show God's righteousness. Because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins.
[25:31] It was to show His righteousness at the present time so that He might be just and the justifier, the one who has faith in Jesus. So Paul's argument in Romans chapter 3 is that even though we have sinned and by definition failed to give to God the glory that He deserves, He nevertheless forgives us and redeems us and does not punish those who trust in His Son.

And the way that God remains righteous while allowing our sins to go forgiven is by actually punishing our sins in His Son.
Paul is very much concerned to make sure that we understand that in all that God does, He is working to uphold and preserve and display His own glory.
He does not allow the belittling of His glory to go without punishment. He does not allow our sin, our failure to give Him the glory that He deserves.
He doesn't allow that to go without punishment. He does punish all sins. And in doing that, He remains righteous. So let me see if I can connect all the dots here for you.
[26:44] I know you feel like I'm going all over the place right now. Let me see if I can connect some dots here for you so that we can really get down to why is Paul using this quotation. In Paul's mind, what it means for God to be righteous is for God to do whatever is necessary to uphold His own glory.

That's what it means for God to be righteous. Sometimes we imagine that there's some standard outside of God by which we might measure His righteousness.
Because that's how it works for us. Our righteousness can indeed be measured by a standard of laws that God has given us. We can measure ourselves. We can take the Ten Commandments, for instance, and we could set our life up against the Ten Commandments and we could easily conclude that based upon these guidelines, we're not righteous because we've broken these laws.
And sometimes we imagine that God's righteousness can be determined in the same way. And yet there's no set of rules outside of God by which to judge whether or not He's righteous.
So how do we know if He's righteous? Because the righteousness of God... This is very important for us to understand God Himself. The righteousness of God consists not in His adhering to some code outside of Himself, but His righteousness consists of His own unswerving commitment to uphold and display His own glory.
[28:17] So that in everything God does, He works to uphold and display His glory. Therefore, in everything God does, He is righteous. And what does God's glory consist of, at least in part, according to Exodus 33?

His glory and His name consist of His freedom to choose some and reject others. His glory and His name consist of His freedom to give mercy to whomever He wills.
And God is righteous because He remains faithful to Himself. God is righteous because He upholds His own glory even in the act of exercising His choice.
Because that's what His glory consists of. His own sovereign freedom. And so when Paul asks the question that comes to our minds and oftentimes to our lips in Romans chapter 9, is God unrighteous to do this?
Is it wrong for God to choose one and reject another the way He did with Jacob and Esau? Is God unrighteous to do that? Paul's answer is no. Because His righteousness is His commitment to His glory.
[29:33] And His glory is His sovereign freedom to choose to give mercy to whomever He wills to give mercy.

That's why Exodus 33, 19 serves as the perfect answer to this question. The question itself reveals that we have not yet fully understood what God is like.

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We have not yet wrapped our minds around what it means for God to be God and for God Himself to be righteous. Because anytime that we begin to accuse God of being unrighteous, we're doing that by some standard that we have set up, either that we've inherited from others or that we've just sort of made up in our own minds.
Anytime we say, I don't think it's right for God to do that, I don't think it's fair for God to do that, we're judging Him by some standard that we have chosen. And yet God says His own standard for judging His own righteousness is whether or not He upholds His glory.
He upholds His glory seen mainly in the fact that He will not allow the sliding of His glory to go unpunished, but He punishes it in His Son.
[30:48] He upholds His glory even in electing some, because His glory is seen in His sovereign freedom to choose Him ever He wants.

And if that is true, if God is not unrighteous in doing this because of who He is, because this is His very nature and this is what His righteousness consists of, then the conclusion naturally follows in the next verse in Romans chapter 9.
So then, verse 16, it depends. What? What is it? The mercy giving. The sovereign distribution of mercy.
It depends. Not on human will or exertion, but on God who has mercy. Or, quite literally, it does not depend upon human willing or running, but on the mercying God.
In other words, God's choice of certain sinners does not depend upon anything that we think or feel. It's not anything internal to us. God doesn't base His decision on anything internal within us, within our hearts, within our minds.
[32:09] Nor does it depend upon any of our running or our exertion, anything that we do in the world, whether it be good or bad. God's choice isn't based on anything within us, or anything outside of us that we do.

It's not based upon any of that. It is based solely upon the will of the God who shows mercy. That's quite a conclusion.
Is God unrighteous? No, He's not unrighteous. Because it's to His glory that He chooses whomever He wants, and His righteousness consists in upholding His glory. So then, it's clear, God's choice can't be based on anything that we think, feel, or do.
It must be simply based upon His will. He shows mercy. To Him He wants to show mercy. And then, so that we don't think that this is unbalanced, Paul turns to his next quotation from the book of Exodus.
So that we can see it's not just in the giving of mercy that God is sovereign, but it's also in the withholding of mercy that God is sovereign. Take a look at verse 17.
[33:19] For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name, here it is again, God's name, God's glory, His power, His name, His glory are going to be shown and proclaimed, so that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.

So here we are, back again to the theme of God manifesting His glory or His name. And how is He doing that with Pharaoh in the book of Exodus?
Over and over we hear the refrain throughout the book of Exodus. God's saying, I will harden the heart of Pharaoh. In fact, before God even sent Moses into Egypt, He told Moses, Pharaoh will not relent.
He will not, no matter what you say or do, He will not relent and simply let the people go. I will harden his heart. He will not do it.
And over and over and over throughout the book of Exodus, we see God hardened Pharaoh's heart. He hardened his heart so that He would not let the people go.
[34:27] And that hardening is seen in God's purpose for Pharaoh. This is why, Moses, this is why I've raised up Pharaoh.

This is why He's the king of Egypt at this particular time. This is what He was born for. This is why Pharaoh is there, so that I might show my power in Him, so that I might proclaim my name or my glory through Him.
So is God unrighteous in His rejection of Pharaoh? No, because He's upholding His glory and His righteousness consists in upholding His glory. He is not unrighteous.
Not in the giving of mercy and not in the withholding of mercy. It's a part of who He is.

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It's a part of His very nature. If God is God, He has the right to give and the right to withhold.
[35:35] This is God as He is revealed in His Word. And no matter what objections might arise in our minds, no matter what discomfort this might initially make us feel, we have to remember our concept, our understanding of who God is must be based upon God's Word and not what I think God ought to be like.

It must be based in the Scriptures and not anywhere else. I was reading a while back from a particular theologian who does not like this doctrine at all, does not believe that it's right and true, and in fact doesn't believe that it's biblical.
And yet, I remember this particular author making the statement, but even if it could be proven to me that unconditional election is the biblical doctrine, so in other words, even if somebody could show him and convince him from the Bible that this is what God is like, he said, I would not worship such a God.
That's what he said. So that we see in that, I think oftentimes, a reflection of our own reaction to the truth of God's absolute sovereignty in all things.
That there is within us a rebellion against the nature of who God is. But if we are to love Jesus, we must love the God that Jesus proclaimed.
[37:13] If we are to love Christ, we must love the Scriptures that he held up and said, not one jot, not one tittle, not one mark will pass away from this book until all is fulfilled.

If we are to be faithful servants of Christ, we must be faithful servants of the God proclaimed in the Word that Christ cherished so much.
And so we can never say when we encounter difficult doctrines and things that seem foreign to us about who God is and what God has done, we can never say, if that's what God is like, I won't worship Him.
Because that's the essence of sin. A refusal to give to God, the God of the Bible as He reveals Himself to be, a refusal to give to God the worship, honor, and glory that He rightfully deserves.
We cannot and we dare not do that. Do we feel a sense of discomfort and frustration when we first hear about this doctrine?
[38:17] Do we even after that point continue to wrestle with that sense? Yeah, we do. Jonathan Edwards, we read earlier, he's a testimony to that. He was raised in a time period and among a people who taught their children from the time that they were very young, taught them these, what we might sometimes think of as the deeper truths of the Word of God, taught them from the time that they were small, and he confessed as we read that he struggled with this, that he wrestled with this.

But I didn't finish the quotation earlier. I want you to read what he says happened later on. He says, after saying that this seemed like a horrible doctrine to me, he says, but I have often, since that first conviction, in other words, since that first reaction, thought, I have often, since that first conviction, had quite another sense, kind of sense of God's sovereignty than I had then.
He says, I have often since, not only had a conviction, in other words, not only been convinced that this is true when previously I thought this is terrible, not only have I had a conviction, he says, but a delightful conviction.
The doctrine has very often appeared exceedingly pleasant, bright, and sweet. Absolute sovereignty is what I love to ascribe to God, he says.
But, my conviction was not always so. I think that sometimes we approach things the way that Edward does initially.
[39:48] to say, just feels not right to me. It feels, at times, horrible to me when I first encounter this doctrine.

But as, as you come to know God as he's revealed in his word more intimately, as you come to understand more clearly who God is and what he's like, then this doctrine begins to move from difficult to even think about to convinced that it's true to delighting in the truth that you are now convinced of.
And I don't know where you are in that journey, in that spectrum. I think the vast majority of people go through it in that order. Some people don't. I've talked to some people who don't.
But the vast majority of people encounter the doctrine of election and go through stages something like that. Initially to shock and maybe even horror and surprise because it doesn't fit the image of God that we have in our minds.

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So initially we don't like it. We don't want to hear it. But then as we begin to turn to the Scriptures over and over, it's there, it's clear, it's in your face. And so we begin to say, I still don't like it, but I believe it.
[41:04] I see it in the Word. I'm still not comfortable with it. But whatever the Scripture says, that's what I've got to believe. And then from there God begins to do a work in your heart to not only believe His Word, but to delight in His Word.

To not only see that God is sovereign over all things, even salvation, but to rejoice in His sovereignty over all things, even in His sovereignty over salvation.
And we need to begin to move in that direction if we're not there yet. We need to begin to say, the answer to the question is God unrighteous, is not, I don't think He is, so He must not do the things that Paul says He does.
No, the answer to the question is God unrighteous, is no, He cannot be. Now let me open the Word the way that Paul does. And let me find, let me find out why it's not unrighteous.
let me see what His righteousness is and let me see what His glory looks like. Because what we will find is that His righteousness consists of His commitment to His own glory.
[42:21] And His glory consists at least partly in His freedom to show mercy to whomever He wants and to withhold it from whomever He wants. Let's pray.

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