

Why Does He Still Find Fault?

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[0 : 00] If you have your Bibles with you, then I'd like you to open up to Romans chapter 9, to the book of Romans.

Which, if you're using one of the Bibles that we have scattered out in the chairs for you that look basically exactly like this Bible, then you just need to turn to page 945. Otherwise, you'll find Romans in the New Testament, after the Gospels, and after Acts.

Romans chapter 9. We've been in Romans chapter 9 now for a few weeks. And we've come to verse 19. And so this morning, we're going to pick up in verse 19 and read down to the end of verse 24.

And I'd like to ask you guys to stand with me in honor of God's Word as we read together. The Apostle Paul writes, You will say to me then, Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?

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 for dishonorable use?

[1 : 17] 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?

Father, help us this morning to rightly understand your Word.

And help us not just to understand it with our minds, but help us to treasure the truths revealed about you here in our hearts. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. You guys just take a seat. I came across an article this week in the Huffington Post. And it was titled, 35 Affirmations for Your Life.

And it was a list written by a psychologist. And it was a list of several, of 35 of these affirmations, things that the writer of the article wants you to wake up in the morning, look yourself in the mirror, and say these things to yourself.

[2 : 24] Things like, and I'm not quoting it directly, but things like, I am a winner and I can do anything that I want to do as you stand and stare into the mirror. And as I read through them, some of them were fine, but many of them were really outright hilarious.

I just thought, if I say that to myself in the mirror this morning, then I know that some of these things are just going to be lies. One of them was, I have an endless supply of talents, and I can use them to do great things.

To which I thought, I have a very finite supply of talents. Which is why Justin starts us out and sings for a while before I get up here and talk, because the last thing you want is for me to get up here and to begin singing on a microphone.

I mean, there's a very, very finite amount of talent that I have. And yet, a lot of times that's the way that the world sort of will approach things.

Will say, if you'll just believe the right things about yourself or about the world around you, then those things will become real. Those things will become true. It kind of reminded me of that old skit from Saturday Night Live back in the 90s of where Stuart Smalley would make the affirmations.

[3 : 37] He would look in the mirror and he would say things to himself. And the funny thing about the skit was that you knew that none of the things he said were actually true. He was just trying to convince himself that he was as great as he would like to think that he was.

And I think sometimes we do that. I mean, there are entire ministries built off of telling you that if you will just believe that you're good enough, believe enough that God wants to give you money and wealth and all these other things, then you can have those things.

If you'll just affirm them with enough gusto, then you'll have all of those things. And that's simply not true. And in fact, when we open our Bibles, what we find is not a book filled with a bunch of affirmations about us that will make life just go smoother if we'll just believe all of these simple affirmations.

No, that's not what we find. What we find in the Bible as we open it is the truth, whether we like it or dislike it. The truth both about ourselves and mainly, chiefly, about who God is, about what God is like, and about what God has done.

And there are many times as we approach the Scriptures that we do not see these simple affirmations of things that we previously already believed about God. There are many times when we approach the Scriptures and we find things in them that are radically different than what we have presupposed to be true for so long.

[5 : 01] Sometimes we are confronted by the Word of God with truths that are uncomfortable because they conflict with what we have previously thought for so long in our lives.

And I think that that happens probably nowhere more clearly in the Scriptures than in Romans chapter 9. Because as we've been traveling through Romans chapter 9, we have had to deal with the issue of the doctrine of election or what is often called predestination.

It's an issue that most people would like to not give a lot of time to think about because, quite frankly, it kind of makes your mind go a little bit stir-crazy. It's kind of like sitting around trying to figure out the doctrine of the Trinity.

How is there one God but three persons? And if you think about it for an extended period of time, eventually you'll kind of go, I don't know, I believe it but I don't understand it. And sometimes we approach the doctrine of predestination like that because there are great mysteries involved.

And then oftentimes because of those great mysteries, we want to avoid thinking about some of these things at all. Oftentimes because what we find when we begin to read what the Bible has to say about this particular issue, we find that it has run so counter to much of what has been taught to us in our past and much of what we find being taught in many places that we would rather not think about it.

[6 : 26] But we do something pretty simple here at Church of the Cross. We just walk through books of the Bible verse by verse. And we've been walking through the book of Romans now since the beginning of last June.

And my task each week as I open the Bible is to read the next few verses and for us collectively to meditate on them, to think about them and come to an understanding of what they have to say.

So we can't possibly avoid the doctrine of election because it's right here in Romans chapter 9 and we're going through Romans chapter 9. And so we have not avoided it. In fact, we have seen it taught very, very clearly that God of His own will, of His own plan and own pleasure chooses out of the mass of fallen humanity certain sinners to save.

In fact, you can see it as clear as anywhere else if you glance down in chapter 9, jumping in in verse 11 where Paul is speaking of God's choice of Jacob over his brother Esau where he says that though they, that's Jacob and Esau, were not yet born, they 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, their mother, was told the older will serve the younger as it is written, Jacob I love, but Esau I hated. So there it is. God makes a choice of Jacob over Esau.

[7 : 50] He makes that choice before they're ever born without reference to anything that they would do in their lives. And it's clarified further if you read down in verse 16 where we're told, so then it, that is God's choice, election.

So then it depends not on human will or exertion but on God who has mercy. It doesn't depend upon anything that we think or feel, our will or anything that we do, our exerting, literally our running. Nothing internal, nothing external. God's choice simply flows from His own plan and His own desires. And that truth, that reality, can be off-putting and even upsetting at times.

So that as we saw last week, Paul knows that he has to answer some objections when it comes to this particular issue because it is hard. It's hard. It's hard to wrestle with. It's hard to grapple with. It's hard to achieve peace over this.

But once you achieve that peace, then you begin to see that there are reasons for rejoicing over this reality. But as we saw last week, it's a little bit difficult to get there. And so Paul began, as we saw last week in verse 14, to answer some objections.

[9 : 02] And the first question that arises, Paul says, is does this make, does God simply choosing, not on the basis of anything that we do, does this make God unrighteous?

Does it mean that there is some sort of injustice on God's part? Is he righteous to do that? And we spent some time looking at Paul's answer to that question and concluded that no, God is not unrighteous.

Because if we understand righteousness the way that Paul does, righteousness being a commitment to uphold and preserve and proclaim the glory of God, if that's what righteousness is, as we've seen throughout Romans, that's how Paul understands righteousness, for us to be righteous, we must seek in all that we do to bring honor and glory to God, and for God himself to be righteous, he must seek to bring honor and glory to himself.

If that's true, and if, as Paul's quotation shows in verse 15, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion, that quotation from Exodus 33 shows us that God's name and glory essentially, at its most basic, consists of God's freedom to give mercy to whomever he wants.

That's who God is. That's what it means for God to be God. And so we answered the question last week, is God unrighteous to elect people like this? Is God unrighteous to make this kind of a choice without reference to anything that we do or feel or anything that we might do or feel in the future?

[10 : 43] The answer is no, because for God to be righteous, he has to pursue his own glory, and God's glory is manifested, revealed, seen in, consists of, his freedom to give mercy to whomever he wants.

So when God gives mercy to whomever he wants, he is proclaiming his own glory, and therefore he is righteous in that event and in that moment.

But that's not the only question that arises. That's not the only thought that sort of comes to our minds, because Paul doesn't stop there. He doesn't simply stop with saying, well, God has mercy on whomever he wants to have mercy.

He also looks at the flip side of the coin. I don't know about you guys, but when I was growing up, we had some other kids in our neighborhood. We moved a few times, but in some of the neighborhoods that we lived in, we had other kids.

And I had an older brother, many of you know him, but I had an older brother, a year and nine months older than me. That means that he was close enough to my age that I would try to tag along with him and hang out with his friends in the neighborhood and do the things that they did.

[11 : 52] But he was also older enough that I really couldn't fully keep up with him and with his friends and everything that they did, which meant that every time it came time to pick teams, whether we were playing baseball or kickball or whatever we were doing out in the yard, every time that it came time to choose teams, I would just sort of stand waiting and everybody else would be picked.

Everybody else gets picked except for Curtis's little bratty brother who followed him over here. And so I'm just waiting. And finally at the end, when there's nobody left to pick, whosever's turn it is, they had to put me on their team.

And hopefully by the end, they stacked it well enough to where I'm not going to offset it and make them lose at that point because I'm just the little guy right there in the neighborhood. And because what you realize in that moment, what I saw was that they're not just picking who they want.

They're also by their refusal to pick me, they're showing who they don't want. By their choosing, they're automatically not choosing some others. So anytime you choose between two things, two people, you're choosing one and by implication rejecting the other.

And Paul doesn't hide from that. He doesn't simply say, God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy and then hide away from the fact that he doesn't give mercy to others. He doesn't hide from that.

[13 : 12] He moves on and he cites the book of Exodus again, going all the way back to Exodus chapter 9 and showing that God hardened the heart of Pharaoh. He may have chosen Moses, he may have chosen the people of Israel to deliver them out of slavery, and yet he did not choose Pharaoh.

In fact, he did the very opposite. Notice Paul quotes from Exodus chapter 9 in verse 17. 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 there it is again. The end is God's glory, right? So it's righteous for God to do this because he's displaying his glory by not choosing Pharaoh, by raising Pharaoh up to a position of authority and then rejecting him.

Verse 18, so that he has mercy on whoever he wills. And the flip side, what Pharaoh receives, he hardens whomever he wills. And so there's always the reverse side.

God elects, chooses some. There's a Jacob. There's also always an Esau. There are those that he doesn't choose. And that raises another question.

[14:24] And the reason that Paul is well aware of the questions that are raised is because this is not the first time that Paul has talked about this. As Paul traveled from city to city, starting church after church, teaching these doctrines, he had to confront all the various objections.

And so he knows what they are and he anticipates them and he comes to another. If God not only has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, but he hardens whom he wants to harden. And that hardening is not based upon anything that we do.

Just as his mercy is not based on anything we do, so the hardening of the heart is not based on anything that we do. Because the rejection of Esau was also not based on anything that Esau would do.

That raises the second question. You see it in verse 19. You will say to me then, why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?

If this is true, if God gives mercy to some, changes their hearts, and they come to faith in Christ, and yet others he does not have that mercy upon, in fact, he hardens their hearts, they remain in their sin, then why does he still find fault with Pharaoh?

[15:42] Why judge Pharaoh? Why continue to find fault with Pharaoh? Why find fault with Esau if you rejected him before he was even born? Why find fault with all the sinners whose hearts you don't change and who are not among the elect?

Why? If your will is ultimately going to be accomplished, we cannot ultimately resist your sovereign decrees, then why do you find fault?

Why? And in answer to that question this morning, Paul lists a series of other questions. He just runs through a list of questions which are essentially his answer.

And all I want us to do for the next few minutes is I want us to summarize the content of these questions that Paul asks under three terms, three R words so that you can remember it.

Okay? Three R words. First of all, the first one is going to be recognize. If you're taking notes, just jot them down and leave plenty of space right underneath them. Recognize. And then secondly, after we recognize, then we're going to see that he gives a reason for that.

[16:51] He tells us why, rather than, he gives us a reason, alright? So we have to recognize it. He gives us a reason and then we have a responsibility that flows out of the reality.

So let's take a look here real quickly. First of all, we must recognize, Paul says, that there is a fundamental difference between human beings and God their maker. Notice what he says in verse 20.

This is his answer and it's a question. Who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Can you sort of hear that when he addresses us now as human beings?

Who are you, O man, to answer back to God? He's holding up this clear distinction between we're the creation, he is the creator. We have to recognize that.

There is a creator-creation distinction that we need to be aware of. We are not on God's level. We are not God. And so he says, first thing, O human being, O man, who are you to answer back to God?

[17:54] That's the first thing. You must recognize who you are in light of who God is. You have to know that. You have to be aware of that reality. You can't just walk around assuming that you're on the same level as God and demanding answers from the king of the universe.

We go over this sometimes in my house on a much smaller scale. There are times when a parent has a conversation with a kid and as they begin to reply to you, they don't reply in exactly the tone with the words you'd like them to reply.

And so I have actually found myself uttering the words many times, have you forgotten who the parent here is and who the kid is? I mean, I have found myself saying that over and over again because sometimes we just don't recognize our role and our position.

But this is not even simply about our role. This is about our nature and who we are. We are created. He is the creator.

Yes, we are made in the image of God and so we stand over and above the rest of creation. We have dominion over the rest of creation and so responsibility toward the rest of the creation.

[19 : 05] We are uniquely in the image of God. Nothing else has ever been created in the image of God. Yet nevertheless, we are created. He fashions us out of the dust of the ground.

But not only are we created, but we are the descendants of the one who was initially fashioned out of the dust of the ground. And it's not for no reason that Paul, in his next question, clarifying the first question turns to the issue of clay and being molded.

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? And he begins to talk about the potter and the clay. It makes you recall to mind the reality that although this is a metaphor, there is a real sense in which we are clay.

Our forefather, the father of us all, Adam, was fashioned from the dirt of the ground, molded and shaped into a human being by God. The breath of life breathed into him.

Yes, we are uniquely created in the image of God, but we are nevertheless created, fashioned, and formed by him. And we have to recognize that clear distinction between who he is and between who we are before we begin to answer back to God and demand that he respond to our questions.

[20 : 24] If we don't recognize that distinction, then we can very easily as the questioner, the imaginary questioner here, we can very easily begin to set ourselves up as the judge and jury of God himself.

And we begin to measure God by some standard that we have thought of. God, you shouldn't do this. It's not right for you to do that. And it takes us back to the first question of unrighteousness because to continue to ask these questions is still to assume that there could be unrighteousness of God when there cannot be.

I read a quote from A.W. Tozer this week where he says that justice, another word for righteousness, justice is not something that God has. Justice is what God is.

By definition, all that God does is good and just and righteous because all that he does ultimately aims at his own glory. And when we begin to question that, we begin to place ourselves in a position of judge and jury over God.

And Paul says, if you're going to make any headway in understanding what God is doing in this area, the first thing you need to do is to recognize that you are his creation. You are the thing molded.

[21 : 37] You don't answer back to the molder and say, what do you think you're doing? Why are you making me like this? So the recognition that we are at the sovereign mercy of God and that he can do with us as he pleases.

But Paul doesn't leave it there because he does want us to understand. He does want us to push beyond simply going, well, okay, he's sovereign and he's never going to explain any of this to me and I'm not going to understand it and so I'll just leave it at that.

He does push beyond that because he does want us to see reasoning in God's heart for why he hardens Pharaoh or rejects Esau, why he doesn't choose every single individual when he could.

Why does he not do that? And he begins to explain that to us in the following verses. So look closely at what he begins to say next as he carries this analogy of the potter and the clay.

He says, has the potter no right over the clay to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use.

[22 : 48] God has a right because in fact he is the creator. He's the potter, we're the clay, so he has the right and the authority to shape us into whatever he wants. And sometimes he might shape a person into something honorable.

To carry the metaphor forward, he might shape someone into a cup to be used at the king's table as he drinks. Or he might fashion you into a common utensil to be used for digging out in the garden. Some for honorable use, some for common dishonorable use. God as the potter has the right to shape us however he wants. And then he begins to explain why would he not shape them all for honorable use?

Why not just make us all cups in the king's palace? Why not? Notice what he says, verse 22. 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?

So that clarifies what he means by dishonorable use now. It's very clear now he's talking about utter rejection. He's talking about being judged for your sins.

[24 : 03] What if God chose to judge some people for their sins? This is what he's decided to do. They have been prepared before and this has been determined beforehand that this is their destiny.

What if he did this? Verse 23. In order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy which he has prepared beforehand for glory.

God with great patience we are told endures with these vessels of wrath. in order that he might more greatly display the riches of his glory to those who receive mercy.

That's his goal. Remember again that God in all that he does is pointing at preserving and upholding the honor and glory of his own name and now we are told even in judgment he is upholding the honor and glory of his name.

A question might arise though what does he mean here when he says God endured them with much patience. What does that mean? We know his purpose. He wants to reveal his glory by showing his wrath making known his power.

[25 : 22] That's what he's doing. His glory will be displayed as his wrath and power are shown. But what is this business about patience? patience. What does that have to do with anything?

I think again Paul is drawing on Exodus and specifically he's drawing once again from Exodus chapter 9 that he's already quoted previously. For this purpose I have raised you up speaking to the Pharaoh that I might show my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth. So you can hear similar language. God is being patient. he's bearing with so that he can show his wrath, make his power known. Sounds similar to what he did with Pharaoh.

And when you look to Exodus chapter 9 in context, the verse that comes just before this verse, God looks at Pharaoh and says, I could have utterly destroyed you by now.

That's my paraphrase. I could have utterly destroyed you by now. I could have already wiped you off the face of the earth. earth. He's already brought six plagues upon Pharaoh and Egypt.

[26 : 32] There are four more to come. And I don't know about you, but I remember hearing the story of the plagues when I was a kid. I knew the end of the story because I heard it more than once. I knew the end of the story.

I knew that ultimately God was going to kill the first born of Egypt and then Pharaoh and his army would pursue and the army and Pharaoh would be wiped out in the wilderness. I know these things were going to happen at the Red Sea.

I know the end of the story and so sometimes I wondered, God, why not just do that at the beginning? Why spend your time with ten plagues? Why bother with all of these things?

They do seem to start small and move to the big final judgment. Why start small? Why not just go to the big thing? Just get the big show over, okay?

Just shoot the big fireworks at the end instead of having to see and listen to all the little poppers. Just get it over with. Take care of it. Why do we even have all of these plagues? Just wipe out Pharaoh.

[27 : 29] Wipe out his army. Send your people on their way. He could do it with a word. That's all it takes. But God says, by now I could have already done that. Six plagues in.

But he hasn't. Why? I raised you up for this purpose. That I might show my power in you. God delays his final ultimate judgment over Pharaoh because even in the meantime he is gaining glory for himself as minor judgment after minor judgment comes to fall upon the Pharaoh.

See, there are many people who read the story of the ten plagues and they think that God is really trying to get Pharaoh to change his mind. He's really trying to get Pharaoh to turn around and become a good guy and let the people go and forsake his own gods and turn to the true God and that sounds wonderful except at the very, very beginning of the story before God even sends Moses into Egypt as he's telling him that he's going to send him into Egypt he tells him but I'm going to harden Pharaoh's heart so that he will not let my people go.

He says that twice at the very beginning of the story. So God's patience with the Pharaoh and plague after plague is not aimed at getting the Pharaoh to suddenly turn over a new leaf.

God knows he's not going to turn over a new leaf. God has not given Pharaoh the mercy necessary for a changed heart. He knows that and yet he endures patiently through all these plagues of judgment until the final judgment comes because in all of that God is being glorified.

[29 : 16] His power is on display. His name is proclaimed in all the earth afterwards because of all the plagues that he brought upon the people of Egypt and Pharaoh himself.

And now we come to Romans chapter 9 where Paul says what if God willing desiring purposing to make his wrath and power known.

What if that being his goal he endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction. That is in fact what God has done.

God does not immediately wipe off of the stage of human history all the non-elect. God does not immediately step into history and remove all the Esau's and all the Pharaoh's.

He doesn't do that glory. Because what God knows is that what brings him the most glory is to bear with much patience through all of human history.

[30 : 23] And I think for two reasons. I think for one on the one hand there is that display of God's temporary smaller judgments that are worked out in human history on people.

But I think in addition to that, and this is something that we see in the story of Pharaoh, in addition to that, as God delays the bringing of his final wrath, those who are destined for that wrath become more and more worthy of the judgment that they will receive.

In other words, they are filling their hearts and their lives with more and more sinful desires and sinful acts so that by the time God's final judgment, come, he has borne patiently and not wiped them off the face of the earth, by the time the final judgment come, there will be no one who will be able to stand and say, I don't deserve this, don't blame me, don't find fault with me, no, God bore with much patience.

He let you get to the point, all people through their lives rejecting the gospel, rejecting Christ, through their lives, living lives that were not aimed at his glory.

And now at the end of it all, the wrath of God comes. He bears with patience because he displaces glory in the temporary smaller judgments and he bears with patience so that when the final ultimate judgment comes, those who receive it, it will be clear to all that they are fully deserving of what they receive.

[31 : 58] this is the reality that Paul is pointing us toward. We can't ask the question, why are you still finding fault?

Because he has shown throughout the course of human history that those whom he brings his judgment upon deserve it. Because as the descendants of Adam, we all come into this world as fallen, sinful human beings.

We don't come into the world like Adam, free of sin. We come into the world as descendants of Adam. As Paul says in Romans chapter 5, through one man condemnation came to all men.

Through one transgression the many were made sinners. So we don't come into the world as blank slates. We come into the world with sinful inclinations and sinful hearts.

And as we grow and gain the capacity to make decisions and make choices in life, our choices and decisions begin to flow out of those hearts that are directed at self rather than naturally to the glory of God.

[33 : 06] And after a lifetime of that, it becomes clear. And God is glorified in the display of his wrath after he is born with much patience.

The objects destined for his wrath. But even that is not ultimate. Because ultimately the display of God's glory that he's aiming at is for those who receive his mercy to see what they ought to have gotten.

For them to see what they should have deserved. And then God's mercy is highlighted and shown to be all the greater in light of it. Look at what he says in verse 23.

In order. He's doing all this. In order to make known the riches of his glory. Not generally. But for vessels of mercy. Which he has prepared beforehand for glory.

God is at work in all things. Yes. Even in the hardening of the non-elect. He is involved in all things.

[34 : 13] And directing all things. So that those who belong to him and who trust in Christ will at the end of it all give him maximum praise and glory.

I think that's what Paul is getting at in Romans chapter 8. When he looks to the future and speaks of the future revealing of the sons of God. When all things finally at the end of history are set right and those who belong to him, those who have been adopted into his family, they are revealed and it is glorious.

Why is it glorious? Because now we can see. We can see all that we deserve and the greatness of God's mercy toward us in delivering us and rescuing us from all that we deserve.

So how do we respond to that truth? How do we respond? because these are not easy things to square with. These are not things that we just read through and kind of go, oh, am I right?

Well, that sounds good. That sounds familiar to me. How do we respond to this? How do we think about these great truths that Paul is revealing to us here? What do we say?

[35 : 33] I think first of all, you have to think in terms of the non-Christian. If you were non-Christian and you're sitting here and you're listening to me say this, you're listening to all these things, you might be thinking in your mind, well, it doesn't really matter.

I mean, if he's going to harden me, he's going to harden me and I don't have anything to do with that, so I'm just going to continue on my way. To which I would say, no, listen to the words of the following chapter, all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved, Paul says in Romans chapter 10.

And what Romans chapter 9 is making clear for the non-Christian, is not there's no hope for you, because God does not reveal to us who the elect are and who the non-elect are. What he does reveal to us is that all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

And what he shows us in Romans chapter 9, in this passage in particular, don't be scared by the noises, it's alright, what he shows us here in particular is that there are only two destinies ultimately. There are only two. There is glory in God's presence and there is wrath away from his presence. There are no other ultimate destinies. There are no other places to go to. So call upon the name of the Lord and be among those who are destined for glory.

[36 : 51] That's what I would say if you're sitting here thinking, I don't know where I belong. Call upon the name of the Lord and you will be saved and the glory that he speaks of here will be yours someday.

And to the believer, I would say that you know how to respond to this already. Because we respond to this the same way that we respond to the rest of the revelation about who God is.

Because our desire in opening up this book to see things and learn things about God is to gain a clearer vision of who he is so that we will be motivated all the more to honor, serve, and praise him. In other words, you are to take the truths that you learn here and not simply say, oh, there's glory in the future. You are to rejoice in the glory that you see here and now.

Because in rejoicing in the glory that you see here and now, you are prepared to rejoice for all of eternity in the glory that is to be revealed in us, to us, and through us.

[38 : 06] I said last week that most of the time when people first encounter the doctrine of election, many people move through three stages. First, there is disbelief or rejection.

I don't want to believe that. That sounds terrible. I don't like that. And then there is, as you study the Bible and as you begin to wrestle with it and see that it's there, it is in the Bible, there is a kind of begrudging acceptance many times.

I don't like it, but it's there, and I'm a Christian. I believe the Bible. Jesus says the Bible is true, and so I'm going to believe the Bible, but I don't like it yet. I don't get it. I don't understand it. I wish it wasn't in here, but it's here, so I believe it until finally you move through that stage and God begins to open your eyes to see it's not only true, it's good news.

It's good news because apart from God's sovereign mercy, there is not a one of us in this room or in this world who would ever call upon the name of the Lord and be saved.

It's good news because we know that no matter how far gone our loved ones may seem to be, God has the power. If He can save a Jacob who's a deceiver from the very beginning, he's not a good guy in the story at first, and if He can save a Jacob, He can save your lost son, your lost daughter or grandchildren or your lost friend or co-worker, He can overcome.

[39 : 27] He is the one who gives mercy and He calls those who intends to call upon Himself so that they might be saved. This is good, good news because it reveals in a clearer fashion the glory of God that awaits us and the glory that we are to rejoice in even now.

Let's pray.