



God Transforms Our Lives **The Doctrine of Sanctification**

We've got a lot of ground to cover. We're going to fly through this sanctification, and I know you're thinking, "You say that, but then you get caught, and we start going slow." We're going to try to fly through sanctification and the end of this picture because I want to make sure we'll be able to get some time to solving the doctrine of election for us this evening. So, all right, here we go.

Now, make a transition, and it's really worked out well...these segments...because we saw what Christ did (cross), we saw how God awakens our hearts, draws us to Himself (conversion), then we just looked at how God declares us right (justified), adopted, united with Christ. Now, all that happened at the point of salvation. What we're doing right now is transitioning from point to process of salvation. That's key. Point...you have been saved, and this is where Scripture starts talking about how you are being saved, working out your salvation. That's after the point, and so that's where we're at right now when it comes to sanctification.

Definition of Sanctification...

Sanctification is the process by which God transforms our lives into the image of Christ. I want to make sure to make this distinction between point and process. This is where, as we're talking about the Reformation, this is big dividing line and needs to be understood. Process, not point, process of sanctification. Justification is an instantaneous event; sanctification is a gradual process. We are being saved, being sanctified. Justification refers to how we stand before God; sanctification refers to how we live before God. From our standing overflows, then, our life.

Justification involves freedom from the penalty of sin, death; sanctification involves freedom from the power of sin, and in a sense, the ongoing presence of sin. We're leaving sin behind in our lives in the process of sanctification. Justification knows no degrees. We talked about it. You're not more or less justified. Sanctification admits of degrees, meaning you are being sanctified more and more and more into the image of Christ. So, it's key.

This is a process by which God...again, God is doing this. Even sanctification, when we talk about holiness and our pursuit of holiness, this is still...don't miss it...all of grace, still the work of God. We're sanctified by God the Father. "*May the God of peace himself sanctify you completely...He who calls you faithful,*" (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24). He will do it. He's doing it.

We're sanctified by God the Father in God the Son as we receive His grace. "*Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her,*" (Ephesians 5:25-27). As we receive His grace, as we behold His glory. 2 Corinthians 3:17 talks about as we behold the glory of Christ. As we behold Christ, we become like Christ. The more we look at Him, the more we become like Him. That's why 1 John 3 says what it does.

We're sanctified by God the Father, in God the Son, through God the Spirit. "*Sanctification by the Spirit and belief in truth*," (2 Thessalonians 2:13). Sanctification of the Spirit. So, this is a process by which God...Father, Son, Spirit...transforms our lives. This is a struggle. Struggles of sanctification, meaning it's a battle between our old sinful desires and the Spirit of Christ in us. What we're after is the mortification of the flesh. The word in New Testament is "*sarx*," the flesh, our sinful nature. So, we then say we've been clothed in the righteousness of Christ, and we still, while we're here on the earth, we still have a sinful nature. We war with flesh.

Vivification of the Spirit, the "pneuma." So, we want our lives to be conquered by the Spirit of God more and more and more every day. Death to flesh; life to the Spirit of Christ in us, and you've got Scriptures there...Ephesians 4, Colossians 3, Romans 6, Romans 7, schizophrenic Paul in Romans 7...all talking about this battle that we go through transforming all these different areas.

God transforms our minds; "*renewing of our mind*," Romans 12; "*taking every thought captive to obedience to Christ*," 2 Corinthians 10; "*increasing in the knowledge of God*," (Colossians 1:9-10). He transforms our emotions. Abstaining "*from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul*," (1 Peter 2:11). Not loving the things of this world anymore, but loving God. He transforms our wills as we work out our salvation. He works "*to will and to work for his good pleasure*" in us (Philippians 2:12-13). He transforms our bodies, holiness in our bodies.

He transforms our churches. Sanctification is a community project. "*Christ is formed in you!*" Galatians 4:19. That's a plural "you." We are together looking more and more like Christ, which is why we can't do sanctification on our own; we need one another in the church. You look at the fruit of the Spirit, and you'll notice that the fruit of the Spirit builds community. All these things: "*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*," (Galatians 5:22-23) they're all building community. Works of the flesh destroy community: "*immorality, impurity, sensuality, sorcery, strife, enmity, jealousy*," (Galatians 5:19-21) that destroys community. The flesh does.

So, sanctification...process by which God...Father, Son, Spirit...transforming us into the image of Christ, and that's what it's all going toward. Romans 8 says God works everything in your life...not so it's rosy, not so it feels good...He works everything in your life, so that you are more and more and more conformed into the image of Christ. That's what Romans 8:28-29 is all about.

The reality is, though, our sanctification will not be complete in this world. It's an ongoing battle. 1 John 1:8-10 makes this clear. Romans 7 illustrates this, and you think, some people might think, "Well, if you're growing your relationship with God, maybe you'll get to a point where you don't see sin in your life," some might say. Listen to John Murray:

"Indeed, the more sanctified the person is, the more conformed he is to the image of his Savior, the more he must recoil against every lack of a conformity to the holiness of God. The deeper his apprehension of the majesty of God, the greater the intensity of his love to God, the more persistent his yearning for the attainment of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, the more conscious he will be of the gravity of the sin that remains and the more poignant will be his detestation of it...Was this not the effect in all the people of God as they came into closer proximity to the revelation of God's holiness?"

The more and more we grow the more we hate sin.

The more we see sin, we hate it, detest it. So, our sanctification will not be complete in this world. Now, this is not an excuse for spiritual laziness. We don't say, "Okay, well then I don't need to grow in Christ then." A Christian would never say that. Someone who has the Spirit of Christ in them would not say, "Well, I don't want to grow in Christ." Not somebody justified by God, adopted by God, who's seen sin in their lives and turned from it. That's not to be an excuse for spiritual laziness. This is an exhortation to spiritual perseverance. We want to become more like Christ, and though our sanctification will not be complete in this world, our sanctification will be complete in the world to come. *"Everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure,"* (1 John 3:2-3). *"When he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is,"* (1 John 3:2-3).

Confusion Over Sanctification...

Now, confusion over sanctification from a couple of different angles, and this is where we're going to bring back in the "works" conversation...works and salvation, and how they relate to each other. Two dangers that I want us to remember, one we've already talked about...legalism. The effect of legalism is contamination. Paul says it works like yeast and dough. Guard against legalism with everything you've got. You give into legalism, working in your own power, according to your own rules to earn God's favor...you lose the benefits of Christ. If you're working for God, then what do you need Christ for? You apparently can do it on your own, so Christ is of no value to you. You'll gain the burden of the law. These are things Paul says in Galatians, especially, and will miss the grace of God.

The end of legalism is condemnation. "What can be more insane and wicked than to want to lose the grace and favor of God and to retain the law of Moses, whose retention makes it necessary for you to accumulate wrath and every other evil for yourself?" (Martin Luther). Good point Luther. So, no legalism.

On the other end, we have to be careful to avoid license, thinking that, "Okay, well I'll just disregard God's command." These are the blasphemous phrases. "Oh, I've prayed a prayer, saved by faith alone, so I can do whatever I want. Grace, I'm free, grace gives me freedom to do whatever I want." Let's follow this. Gospel truth is never intended only to be believed; gospel truth is always intended to be obeyed. *"Let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel,"* (Philippians 1:27). Let it be clear in your life, Paul says. He believed the gospel. Gospel truth is never intended to only be accepted in our heads; gospel truth is always intended to be applied in our lives. Faith without works is not really faith; it's dead. So, we want to avoid legalism and license.

Now, we'll dive into that deeper. Two definitions, specifically, of the word "work." So, here's the deal. I was in Western Europe, and some guys came up to me and said, "You want to go play some football?" I said, "Yeah, I used to play, like, flag football here, some," and so I thought, "Yeah, let's go play." So, I go down to the field ready to play football, and when I get down there, they've got this white ball with like white and black dots with these two goals, and I'm like, "Where's the nice brown football?" That's what I remember. What they call football, I call soccer; and so, the same word, two different meanings. Right? Football: I picture one thing; they picture another thing.

"Work," when we look at the word "work" in Scripture, we see it used in two different ways. On one hand, we see negative work, work that is fueled by the flesh to earn favor before God. Legalistic work that we've obviously talked about as not good. Working to earn the favor of God. Positive work, though, is work that is fueled by faith to bring great glory to God. This is how James uses the word "work." Fifteen different times in the book of James,

we see "work" and all the time it's positive. It's faith-fueling work. You look at 2 Thessalonians 1, Paul uses it this way. *"That our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power."* *"For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision or uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love,"* (Galatians 5:6). So, work is not all bad. Work fueled by the flesh to earn favor before God; bad. Work fueled by faith that brings great glory to God; good work. So, we want to work hard in this way, and have nothing to do with work in this way. Make sense?

Two definitions leading to two realities. Salvation is by faith. We've talked about this. By faith, we've been accepted before God the Father. This results in radical confidence before God, but then, in sanctification, we realize faith works. We're not only accepted before God the Father, but by faith, we now walk with God as friends, and friends of Christ obey the commands of Christ. Our faith now results in radical obedience. Confidence: resting in the righteousness of Christ; obedience: following the commands of Christ. That's why I've got examples throughout here. Colossians 1:1-4 talks about resting in Christ, and then Colossians 1:5-10 talks about the work that follows from that. Same thing in 2 Peter 1:3-4 and then 2 Peter 1:5-7.

Here's how this works. Okay, follow with me. In our work, we are, first of all, dependent on God's work in our lives, God's work. Follow with me; this is getting a little confusing, particularly at eleven or midnight or whatever time it is for you. Our work is still, ultimately, fueled by God's work, but it's work that's fueled by faith. We believe in God and trust in God to give us what we need to work. Ultimately, we're not working for God. Ultimately, God is working for us. Philippians 2:12-13, *"Not only as in my presence but much more my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who,"* what? Works; *"Work out your own salvation...for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."*

So, God does this. God is molding our hearts. This is what He promised in the New Testament. He'll live in us, and He'll change our drive and our desires and our actions and mold our hearts. He'll empower our lives. Look at 1 Corinthians 15:10. This is a great example. Paul says, *"By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me."*

So, here's Paul saying, "I'm working hard out there with the gospel. I'm working hard. I get up in the morning I say, 'God, I need your grace today,' and all day long, I'm trusting in His grace, I'm leaning on His grace, and I'm needing His grace as I'm working hard. I get to the end of a long day of hard work, and I look back and I say, 'Only the grace of God.' Go to sleep, start over, and it's grace-fueled work." Does that make sense?

We look in Colossians 1:27, *"Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ."* Listen to this, *"For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me."* When we're working, it's God working for us on our behalf to enable us to glorify Him. So, we're dependent on His work in our lives, and as we depend on Him, we devote ourselves to God's will for our lives, and as He works in us, we follow Him, and we obey Him. Whatever He says we do it. Why? Because we trust Him. That's the whole point of Abraham. We trust Him wholeheartedly, and as a result, we follow Him sacrificially. That's why Abraham was willing to offer His son Isaac on an altar because He trusted God. That's why, when God calls us to radical obedience, we obey because we trust God. He is friend and Father.

We believe Him, and faith is fueling work. Now, we realize license makes no sense because we're not free from Christ; we're free to Christ. Not free to do whatever we want, but free to follow Christ. That's the beauty of the gospel. We're not free to flout God's commands; we're now free to follow God's commands. That's sanctification. Working hard, radical holy living for the glory of Christ...that all springs from faith in the grace of Christ.

Two conclusions, don't miss these. One: faith is the means of our justification. Keep coming back to that. We don't work for justification; we rest in Christ for our justification, and as we rest in His righteousness, that righteousness flows out in our lives, and works are the evidence of our justification. That's what sanctification is.

James 2, what it's talking about is how faith creates works. So, you go to a worship gathering in a church on a Sunday morning. If you're going there to earn acceptance before God in the flesh, think that in doing this you're getting credits before God, you're missing the point, but if you're going there because you believe God is holy, and worthy of praise, and His church is good, and you need His church, and you want to be with His church, you want to glorify...then, this is really good work on Sunday morning. You sit down with the Word. Yes, we read the Word, absolutely. Not thinking, "All right, I've got to do it...check this off." No, you sit down and read the Word because you know this Word is life, and you believe it's good, that it's sweeter than honey, and it's more valuable than gold, than much pure gold, and it's worth your time to sit down and read this because you know...that's faith-fueled work.

That makes this a really, really good work to read the Word, and so on, and so on, and so on. The reality is faith creates works and works complete faith. "*Obedience of faith*," great phrase in Romans 1 and then Romans 16.

God transforms our lives in sanctification.

God Transforms Our Lives The Doctrine of Preservation and Perseverance

The Realities We Need to Understand...

All of that leads to two final doctrines in this section: preservation and perseverance then glorification. Once you become a Christian, can you know for sure that you'll always be a Christian? Two realities we need to understand. One: superficial faith is always possible. That's where I'm just kind of taking us back to where we started tonight, that it's possible to profess publicly what we don't possess personally. That there are people, the Bible even warns of teachers in the church, who are not true followers of Christ. Okay, so superficial faith is possible. There are examples there. Saving faith, on the other hand, always perseveres, and by saving faith, what I'm referring to is the kind of faith we've been talking about tonight. You've been born again, you're born again forever. Your faith will persevere.

If you've really been born again, you'll be born again forever. It's what 1 John 2:18-25...1 John is written in a context where there had been some false teachers, and they had left the church and gone out from among them, and what John says is, "Clearly they were never actually of us. They claimed to be of us, but they were not followers of Christ." That's the first part of that text right there, and then he goes on to encourage them that they can know they have eternal life. That kind of begs the question, "Well, how do I know if I'm

really in Christ, if I've been born again?" This is the reality I want us to drive, want to drive us as we walk through this doctrine: when saved, always saved.

So, not trying to be careful, not to just put it all on, "Okay, once saved always saved" is sometimes how this is phrased, and people say, "Well, I prayed the prayer, and so then I'm good. I did this, and then I'm good." Well, just when you've been born again, you know you're always going to be alive to God in Christ. That's what I mean by "when saved, always saved."

The Truth We Need to See...

So, here's the truth we need to see. This is the doctrine. Everyone who has been born again will persevere to the end by the power of God's preservation. So, there are two key words here: preservation and perseverance. God will preserve us; we will persevere. Here's how we know that. Preservation is guaranteed by the Father. "*He will not forsake his saints,*" (Psalm 37:28). "*You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory,*" (Psalm 73:23-24). Listen to the appeals to God's character all throughout Scripture as a foundation for confidence in His preservation of our salvation. God will preserve us according to His perfect knowledge. "*The Lord knows those who are his,*" (2 Timothy 2:19).

According to His constant faithfulness. "*I will not turn away from doing good to them,*" (Jeremiah 32:40). God is faithful. The Lord is faithful. According to His righteous justice. "*I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy,*" (Hosea 2:19). According to His limitless power. This is a great text right here: "*According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded,*" the word literally means "protected," "*through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time,*" (1 Peter 1:3-5). According to His everlasting love. "*Your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever,*" (Psalm 138:8).

Preservation guaranteed by the Father, second, it's ensured in the Son. Christ says, "I will lose none that the Father has given to me, not one." "*No one will snatch them out of my hand,*" (John 10:27-29). You believe the name of the Son of God, you have eternal life. In Christ, we have eternal salvation. We have eternal redemption. We have an eternal inheritance. We have eternal glory. That's strong text to remind us that, in Christ, we're safe.

Preservation guaranteed by the Father, ensured in the Son, and preservation is accomplished through the Spirit. What's really cool is you look at the New Testament, and you see different metaphors to describe how the Spirit preserves our salvation. You see a family metaphor that the Spirit testifies that we're the children of God. A financial metaphor: the Spirit is literally a down payment of our salvation, kind of a first installment, a guarantee of what's to come. Agricultural metaphor: the Spirit is the firstfruits of our salvation. The crop that starts the harvest that guarantees there's more to come. There's more to come. A legal metaphor: the Spirit is the seal of our salvation, basically, a judicial marking that marks our inheritance in Christ. Incredible promises there.

So it's clear, based on what Scripture is teaching here, Father, Son, Spirit...Christians will persevere to the end, guaranteed. Born again means born again forever, but there's another way that Scripture talks about this doctrine, not just as a promise, but as an exhortation. Yes, Christians will persevere till the end, and Christians must persevere to the end. So, nowhere in Scripture is this doctrine of preservation and perseverance used to encourage people just to sit back and coast out your Christian life, because you have it

sealed for the day to come. You never see the Christian life described as rolling down a nice, smooth hill with the wind blowing through your hair. It's not Christianity. Christianity is a fight to be fought or race to be run. These are the kind of pictures we see, and that's where we find Jesus saying these words like Matthew 24:13, "*The one who endures to the end will be saved.*" Listen to this warning in Romans 11, "*Note then the kindness and the severity of God; severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off.*" Going to talk about that in a second.

The whole picture...look at, middle of the way through Colossians 1, "*In order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven.*" "*We have come to share in Christ,*" Hebrews 3:14, "*if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.*" "*You have need of endurance, so that you may receive what is promised,*" (Hebrews 10:36). 2 Peter 1:5-11, another great text.

The Questions We Need to Ask...

So, that brings us then to the questions we need to ask. Two questions; two very different questions. First question, "How do I become a Christian?" Hopefully, based on what we've seen tonight, you know the answer to that question. Turn from your sin and yourself and trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord. That's clear. That's one question. The second question is, "How do I know I'm a Christian?" That is a very different question with a very different answer. This is so key because how we're going to look at how the Bible answers this question...we need to make sure we don't equate it with answering the first question. The Bible answers these two questions differently. How do I become a Christian? Turn from yourself, sin, and trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord, period.

How do you know I'm a Christian? Well, there are all kinds of false foundations of assurance around us...a moral lifestyle, because you're a good person. That's not how you know you're a Christian. Intellectual knowledge, because you know about Christ or you know theology. That's not foundation of assurance. Religious activity, not a foundation of assurance. All kinds. I talked about Galatians 2, which talks about false brothers in the church. Religious ministry, "Well, I'm in ministry! That should give me some assurance." No. Judas would be one example. "Well that's sufficient, isn't it?" You've got two others there. A guilty conscious; "Well, I feel bad when I sin." Well, a lot of people feel bad when they do something wrong. Positive thinking; "Well, I think I'm a Christian." If that was the foundation, then nobody could be deceived. Just because you think you're a Christian doesn't mean you have assurance you're a Christian. A past decision. People say, "I know I'm a Christian because I remember when I signed that card." Big deal. You don't see that in 1 John. "Have you signed the card? Okay, then you're good." There are a lot of people who've prayed prayers, gone forward, signed cards, gone into prayer rooms, been baptized, joined churches who have never had saving faith.

True foundations of assurance, and this is what the book of 1 John is all about. Now remember, we're not talking about what we need to do in order to be saved, different question. How do you know salvation is sure? Foundations of assurance, one, the present truth of Christ in your life. Are you believing in Christ alone for your salvation? Are you believing in Christ—not Christ plus good works, Christ plus anything else but Christ alone—for your salvation? You look at all these Scriptures, and the reality is, if you are denying Christ, then you don't have much assurance of salvation, if you are denying Christ in your life.

Are you abiding in Christ alone as your salvation? "Abide in me, and I in you," John 15 says, and you get down to 1 John 4, "By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit...Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God." Are you living in Him? You don't need to be looking to a past decision you can't even remember. Look to...are you not in Christ, do you walk with Christ now? This is assurance. Christ living in you, you living in Him.

The present work of Christ in your life. Are you obeying what Christ says? Very simple, what 1 John teaches is, if you're a child of God, you live like God. If you're a child of the devil, you live like the devil. If you're living like the devil, it's not a very good foundation for assurance. It's what all these texts from 1 John are about. Now, that doesn't mean you're perfect, not holy perfection. We talked about that, sanctification not complete in this life. Not holy perfection, instead, holy direction. You're growing in Christ, and as you're growing in Christ, Christ working in your life, this is, oh, this is good assurance. You're obeying what Christ says.

Are you loving like Christ loves? You see pictures all throughout. How can the love of God be in you if you're not loving your brother? Foundations of assurance, Christ's truth in your life, Christ's work in your life, and, in the present, Spirit of Christ in your life, the Spirit of God in us is given to us for our assurance. Assurance of salvation is a gift that comes from the Spirit and fellowship with the Spirit. The Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. That's the whole point.

So, do you listen to the Spirit of God in His Word? If you're not walking in His Word, listening to the Spirit, you don't have strong foundations for assurance. Are you led by the Spirit of God in your walk? Whoever keeps...are you led by the Spirit of God in your walk? "Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us," (1 John 3:21-24). Here's the deal: if you are living your life in disobedience to the Spirit of God, ignoring the Spirit of God, wanting nothing to do with the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of God is given to us for our assurance, then how can you expect to experience assurance? You're ignoring the one who gives it.

That's why puritan Thomas Brooks, he said, "If you grieve by your willful sinning, the only one who can gladden you, then who will make you glad?" So, 1 John is pointing us to believing in the truth of Christ, walking in the words of Christ, with the Spirit of Christ, and as we're doing these things...now remember, not the first questions, not doing these things in order to be saved...but it's in doing these things, walking with Christ, living out the Christian life, sanctification; that's where foundations for assurance arise.

The Warnings We Need to Hear...

You say, "Well if I'm not doing those things, does that mean I'm not saved?" Well, here's the deal, that's where we realize, follow this, the warnings we need to hear. Throughout Scripture, God gives warnings to Christians about falling away. 1 Corinthians 10, Hebrews 3 and 6 are two of the most controversial passages about that, and we, obviously, don't have time to solve those, so to speak, tonight, but what I want you to see is, this is so key, that God uses warnings to Christians to keep them from falling away. People debate on..."Well, Scripture says if you do this, you might fall away," or, "If you don't endure, you won't be saved. Like, is this saying that you could lose your salvation?" It's not...we've seen God's preservation; it's promise of preservation. At the same time, what I want us to see is that God gives us good, real, authentic warnings not to fall away, and He gives us those to keep us from falling away.

I put an example here that's an illustration. Acts 27, we're going to read it real quick, but I put it here as an illustration. I'm not saying Acts 27 is teaching this doctrine, but I want you to see an illustration of how a warning and a promise go together. Okay, follow with me; this is Paul on a boat in a storm.

"Since they had been without food for a long time, Paul stood up among them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss. Yet now I urge you take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, and he said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar.'"

That was where they were headed.

"And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you."

So, God had said to him, "You and all the other guys in the ship are going to be fine."

"So, take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told."

So, there's the promise.

"But we must run aground on some island." When the fourteenth night had come, as we were being driven across the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors suspected that they were nearing land. So they took a sounding and found twenty fathoms. A little farther on they took a sounding again and found fifteen fathoms. And fearing that we might run on the rocks, they let down four anchors from the stern and prayed for day to come. And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, and had lowered the ship's boat into the sea under pretense of laying out anchors from the bow, Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay on the ship, you cannot be saved."

So, he's telling...he's giving them a warning, "Keep these guys on the ship."

"Then the soldiers cut away the rope to the ship's boat and let it go. As day was about to dawn, Paul urged them all to take some food, saying, 'Today is the fourteenth day you have continued in suspense and without food, having taken nothing. Therefore I urge you to take some food. For it will give you strength, for not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you.'"

There's the promise again. He's telling them to take food.

"And when he had said these things, he took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat. Then they were all encouraged and ate some food themselves...And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea. Now when it was day, they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, on which they planned if possible to run the ship ashore. So they cast off the anchors and left them in the sea, at the same time loosening the ropes that tied the rudders. Then hoisting the foresail to the wind they made

for the beach. But striking a reef, they ran the vessel aground. The bow stuck and remained immovable, and the stern was being broken up by the surf. The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any should swim away and escape. But the centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and make for the land, and the rest on planks or on pieces of the ship. And so it all was that all were brought safely to land."

All right, Paul receives a promise, "You're all going to live." That's a promise; guaranteed. In the process, these guys are starting to jump ship, and he says, "Don't jump ship. I'm warning you. If you jump ship, you're not going to be saved." Now, he already knew they were all going to be saved, but the warning was the means by which they got to promise...on land, everybody saved. Does that make sense? So, you have a promise.

So, again it's not...I'm not saying this is what this text is teaching. I'm saying it's an illustration to help us envision that God has promised preservation of all who have been born again, all who are His. He knows those who are His. He will preserve. At the same time, you and I are prone to wander, and so God, all throughout Scripture, gives us very gracious and stern warnings and says, "Don't do that or you won't make it." Now, it's not that the promise has failed, but the warnings are the means by which the promise is accomplished. Make sense?

The Actions We Need to Take...

So, here are the actions we need to take from this. We need to, number one, beware of spiritual deception. Beware of spiritual deception. Superficial faith is possible, so examine yourselves. Even if you leave tonight, unsure of where you stand before God, this is worth spending long hours with God over. Beware of spiritual deception. Don't walk in spiritual deception.

Be warned concerning spiritual inaction. If you have been wandering in your relationship with God, with Christ, be warned tonight. Stop wandering and wavering. Be warned, and then be working and waiting in spiritual anticipation. Fight this good fight of faith. Finish this race. Persevere, especially our brothers and sisters in persecution and suffering. Persevere in persecution and suffering, 2 Thessalonians 1:4. Even in the face of death, Revelation 6:9-11.

The Lord will bring you to eternal life by His grace. He will bring you there. Augustine said, "Lord, those who are bowed down with burdens you lift up, and they do not fall because you are their support." The Lord will bring you to eternal life by His grace, and the Lord will bring you to eternal life for His glory. "To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen," (Jude 20-25).

God Resurrects Our Bodies The Doctrine of Glorification

Old Testament Hope...

That leads us perfectly into the doctrine of glorification when God will resurrect our bodies. This is the completion of salvation. You see from sin, sinfulness and our status...alienation from God; we will be with Him...resurrected bodies. This is Old Testament hope. Job, Psalms, Hebrews 11, a picture of Old Testament saints looking forward.

How did Old Testament believers experience salvation?

I've got a little side thing here because I thought...I bet the question will be, "How did Old Testament believers experience salvation?" These people in the Old Testament, how do they experience...well, again, we're flying through this, but our commonality with Old Testament believers, here's the deal: we're all saved by grace alone through faith alone and Christ alone from the Spirit alone.

Our differences...follow this...we're all saved by grace alone, yes, through faith alone. So, we're saved through faith alone. Old Testament: faith looking forward to a coming Messiah. Not saying they even recognized all the ramifications of what that meant, but they were looking forward. They had a faith in a promise and a future. New Testament: faith looking backward, looking back to what Christ did, in Christ alone. Old Testament: an anticipated Messiah; New Testament: an ascended Messiah.

We're all saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone from the Spirit alone. Now, in the Old Testament, you do see an incomplete experience in the Spirit. That's why you see these new covenant promises, "the Spirit will dwell in you." Ascended Messiah, the New Testament, Old Testament and complete experience in the Spirit, New Testament and indwelling experience of the Spirit, but we're still united together by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone by His Spirit.

New Testament Promises...

New Testament promises of glorification; so, Old Testament hope, New Testament promise. Christians will be completely redeemed. We will be completely redeemed. Redemption of our bodies. There is coming a day when we will be free from the presence of sin, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we will be conformed into the likeness of Christ, and we will be welcomed into an everlasting kingdom. "*The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen,*" (2 Timothy 4:18). Christians will be completely redeemed, and creation will be completely restored. All creation restored...new heaven, new earth.

The Realization of Glorification...

So, what does this mean? Realization of glorification. Okay, John 5, John 6, Philippians 3, "*Our citizenship is in heaven.*" You've got dual citizenship. You have a passport, your name on it, heaven where we await a Savior; the Lord Jesus Christ will transform our lowly bodies to be like His glorious body by the power that enables Him to even subject all things to Himself. This is the doctrine of glorification: in the final stage of salvation, Christ will return for His people and resurrect their bodies to reign forever with Him.

Four Phases of Glorification...

What that means...four phases of glorification. One, most believers will die. Most believers will die. Not all believers will die. 1 Corinthians 15, "*We shall not all sleep.*" Jesus is coming

back; some believers are going to see it from the earth. Those believers who do die, their bodies are buried in the earth, and their souls are welcomed in heaven... "Away from the body and at home with the Lord," (2 Corinthians 5:6-10). "Today you will be with me in Paradise," (Luke 23:43) Jesus said to the thief on the cross. When Stephen was being stoned, "Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit," (Acts 7:59). Ladies and gentlemen, for believers who die on this earth, death is not the end. Death is just the beginning. So, most believers will die.

Second phase: all believers will be resurrected. There is coming a day when God's people on earth, and those in heaven, will receive a resurrected body. It's what 1 Corinthians 15 is all about. We don't have time to read that whole passage, what it's talking about. Our bodies will be raised up with His because of the resurrection of Christ. Our bodies will be eternal. They'll be imperishable, 1 Corinthians 15 says, not susceptible to corruption but reflect the image of Christ. Eternal. Our bodies will be beautiful, raised in glory and honor. I'm not talking Vanity Fair like; I'm talking real beauty, shining like the sun in the kingdom of the Father. Our bodies will be powerful. I'm not talking Superman here. I'm talking we will not have weakness, susceptible to disease and sickness and pain.

I'm talking to a brother in our church who I went visit the other day in the hospital, and his body was weak and frail. He, that brother, and every one of us have a new body coming. It's not weak, and it's not frail. Our bodies will be spiritual, meaning permanently Spirit-filled. I don't mean non-physical by that. Jesus' resurrection body was physical, filled with the Spirit of God, and our bodies will be recognizable. There's a lot unknown here in Scripture when we see glimpses of heaven, but we don't see anything that would indicate a gender. Ethnic characteristics would be totally gone, but, obviously, no pride or vain delight in what we look like or don't look like. Our bodies will be recognizable, and so our bodies will be resurrected.

All believers will be justified, meaning...now, what I mean is not that we haven't already, but the judgment, justification pronounced by God here on earth will be pronounced in glory. It will stand before the Father on that day, stand before the Father. Same thing we've already talked about. On that day, Christ is the basis for our justification. Nothing in my hands I bring simply to the cross I cling. Believe in Him; trust in Him, and in the background, in the background, works that show...yes, absolutely, faith, works, evidence of justification.

All believers will enter into heaven where we have citizenship. Enter into heaven...a place of unhindered fellowship where God will dwell with us, wipe every tear from our eyes, death no more, no more mourning, no more crying, no more pain. Former things have passed away. We will be with Him. Death will be replaced by life. No more sin, no more sorrow. God is personally pictured as wiping away the tears from our eyes. No more sickness, no more cancer, no more AIDS, no more hunger or starvation, no more tragedy, no unexpected tragedy, no more separation. Death will be replaced by life. Night will be replaced by light. Light will be no more. "They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever," (Romans 22:5).

Corruption will be replaced by purity. "Nothing unclean will ever enter it," (Revelation 21:27). Curse will be replaced by blessing. "No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God under the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him," Revelation 22:4-5, then, the most beautiful words in all of Scripture, "They will see his face." We're going to see His face. Unhindered fellowship, place of indescribable worship. Just picture it; "Voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty

reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready...’ fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints,” (Revelation 19:6-9). The grace of Christ, *“These are the true words of God.”* That’s what we long for. Salvation full and free and complete, and it’s all for His glory.

THE GLORY OF GOD

By God’s Grace The Doctrine of Eternal Election

So, all this picture, our glorification, ultimately, resounding to His glory. So, we come to these last two truths that I think, I hope, will only make sense in light of all that we’ve looked at. I want you to follow with me. Obviously, it is late, and we are about to dive into the doctrine of eternal election. What am I thinking? There’s so much here because I know that in 50,000 people that this is a charged word in our day and in our culture even.

You know it’s interesting, as I travel around to different contexts in the world, not everybody is quite as hung up on this doctrine as we are. There are people who are used to sovereign leaders, and sometimes in bad ways, sometimes in good ways, but they’re used to...they don’t have quite the view of freedom that we have. That’s not to say that anything is bad or good, but just want us to know that this is not the theological hang-up for everybody in the world. In a sense, it is an affront to our...the very idea is an affront to human freedom, and so, I want to be faithful to the Word in this. I hope, and you, obviously, be on lookout for anywhere where I am not faithful to the Word, but I want to see what the Word says about this. In the process, I joked that we’ll solve it. This is a mystery that we’re about to dive into. We’re about to jump into the theological deep end where none of us can swim. None of us can swim, and so, it’s not that we’ll figure out how it all comes together. My goal is for us to see the Word and just believe the Word and submit to the Word and trust it. It’s just, this is a mystery, theological mystery.

How We Come...

We don’t just resort to “mystery” when we can’t figure something out. We don’t get lazy, but there are things that are in the divine mind that are greater than our finite minds, and this is one of them. So, we come to this doctrine humbly, humbly. There are secret things that belong to the Lord our God, and for any prideful men and women, that’s not easy to hear. There are things that God knows and understands that we can’t know and understand.

So, we’re coming to this doctrine humbly. We come to this doctrine communally, meaning we come to it together. It is tragic that this doctrine has proved so divisive when it’s given in Scripture to encourage unity in the church. Charles Simeon, a pastor who refused to be labeled as a Calvinist or Arminian, had a dialog with John Wesley. Now, John Wesley was labeled Arminian, and many labeled Simeon a Calvinist. Simeon said to Wesley,

Simeon: Sir, I understand that you were called an Arminian; and I have been sometimes called a Calvinist; and therefore I suppose we are to draw daggers. But before I consent to begin the combat, with your permission I will ask you a few questions. Pray, sir, do you feel yourself a depraved creature, so depraved that you would never have thought of turning to God, if God had not first put it in your heart?

Wesley: Yes, I do indeed.

Simeon: And do you utterly despair of recommending yourself to God by anything you can do; and look for salvation solely through the blood and righteousness of Christ?

Wesley: Yes, solely through Christ.

Simeon: But, sir, supposing you were first saved by Christ, are you not somehow or other to save yourself afterwards by your own works?

Wesley: No, I must be saved by Christ from first to last.

Simeon: Allowing, then, that you were first turned by the grace of God, are you not in some way or other to keep yourself by your own power?

Wesley: No.

Simeon: What then, are you to be upheld every hour and every moment by God, as much as an infant in his mother's arms?

Wesley: Yes, altogether.

Simeon: And is all your hope in the grace and mercy of God to preserve you unto his heavenly kingdom?

Wesley: Yes, I have no hope but in Him.

Simeon: Then, sir, with your leave I will put up my dagger again; for this is all my Calvinism; this is my election, my justification by faith, my final perseverance: it is in substance all that I hold, and as I hold it; and therefore, if you please, instead of searching out terms and phrases to be a ground of contention between us, we will cordially unite in those things wherein we agree.

So, the purpose of election in Scripture is to unify the church, not to divide the church. That's the whole point of Ephesians 1, this chapter. "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us...even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.*" You keep going on.

People say, "I don't know about Ephesians 1." Why would you want to take Ephesians 1 out of the Bible? That's a good chapter, and it's used to build up the church; the purpose of election in Scripture is to comfort those who are saved, not to confuse those who are lost. That's also key. It's where Romans...I bring in as an illustration here. There's a reason Romans 9 talks about election; we're about to look at in a second. There's a reason Romans 9 is not Romans 1 or 2. You walk through the gospel for eight chapters, and then Romans 9 makes all the more sense. Election is kind of like a family secret. I really think, I mean, it's hard enough to comprehend, to get mind and heart around as a follower of Christ. It makes absolutely no sense to the unregenerate mind. Unregenerate mind, it just doesn't make any sense.

This quote from Spurgeon,

“When I was coming to Christ, I thought I was doing it all myself, and though I sought the Lord earnestly, I had no idea the Lord was seeking me. I do not think the young convert is at first aware of this. I can recall the very day and hour when at first I received those truths (of the doctrine of election) in my own soul – when they were as John Bunyan said, burnt into my heart as with a hot iron, and I can recollect how I felt that I had grown on a sudden from a babe into a man – that I made progress in scriptural knowledge, though having found, once for all, the clue to the truth of God. One weeknight when I was sitting in the house of God, I was not thinking much about the preacher’s sermon.”

That’s encouraging.

“The thought struck me, ‘How did you come to be a Christian?’ I sought the Lord. But how did you come to seek the Lord? The truth flashed across my mind in a moment – I should not have sought him unless there had been some previous influence in my mind to make me seek him. I prayed, thought I, but then I asked myself, ‘How did I come to pray?’ I was induced to pray by reading the Scriptures. ‘How came I to read the Scriptures?’ I did read them, but what led me to do so? Then, in a moment, I saw that God was at the bottom of it all, and then he was the Author of my faith, and so the doctrine of grace opened up to me, and from that doctrine I have not departed to this day, and I desire to make this my constant confession, ‘I ascribe my change wholly to God.’”

That comes at a later point. That’s Romans 9, not Romans 1-8. That’s why I wanted to put this in, not just because I thought you’d be tired, and we could get through this, but I wanted to put it at the end because I want to make sense about all we saw. So, we come to this doctrine preferably as a church communally. We come to this doctrine worshipfully. “*Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!*” (Romans 11:33-36).

“When (Paul) introduces (election) into his teaching, it is for one end only – to help Christians see how great is the grace that has saved them, and to move them to a worthy response in worship and life,” (J.I. Packer). This truth we’re about to look at drives to worship, and we come to this doctrine evangelistically. What I mean by that is longing for people to come to Christ. That’s where Romans 9 starts. Paul says, “*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 unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsman according to flesh.*” This is Paul saying, “I’d go to hell if that would mean that Jewish people around me would be saved.” This longing, unceasing anguish in his heart, for people to come to Christ. This is not an argument for theologians to have. This is an affection for Christians to feel, and if studying, looking at election does not drive us to more intense, more passionate evangelism and mission, then we missed the whole point. So, I pray that’s where we end up, not baffled by theological debate but burdened to make this salvation known among every person on the planet.

What We Know...

Okay, here’s the theological mystery, what we know. All right, let’s read part of Romans 9 here, okay? Go down to...it starts,

"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.' As it is written, 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.' 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.' 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. 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? What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory - even us whom he has called, not from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?"

All right, here's the deal. Number one, we cannot deny God's election. Every Christian who believes the Bible believes in election, period. Every Christian who believes in the Bible believes in election. Here's what I mean by that. You look in the Old Testament...God clearly chose Abraham. He chose Abraham and not somebody else. It's not, Abraham went seeking after God when nobody else was. God chose Abraham. There's no doubt God chose Israel. Look at Deuteronomy 7, *"It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers."* Deuteronomy 10, *"Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. Yet the Lord set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are to this day."* God chose Israel. Clearly.

Ministry of Jesus. *"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws me to him,"* (John 6:44). John 15, He says to His disciples, *"You did not choose me, but I chose and appointed you."* When He says that He means, *"You did not choose me, but I chose and appointed you."* In the book of Acts, end of Acts 2, *"All who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."* Acts 13:48, *"As many as were appointed to eternal life believed."* Acts 16, Lydia, *"the Lord opened her heart."* Acts 18, God says, *"I have many in this city who are my people."*

You look in the New Testament letters, *"Those whom he foreknew he also predestined...those whom he predestined he also called...those whom he called he also justified...those whom he justified he also glorified."* (Romans 8:28-39) You get down later in the chapter, in that passage it says, *"Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?"* *"For we know, brothers,"* 1 Thessalonians 1, *"loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction."* 2 Thessalonians 2, *"God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved."* Revelation 13, *"Everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the*

world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain." You get the point. You can't believe the Bible and deny this doctrine. We know this from the Bible.

We know this from personal experience. No Christian congratulates himself or herself on their conversion. We don't say, "I saved myself." We say, "I was saved. He saved me. He did it," and we know other people can't convert themselves, that's why we pray for them. We pray that God would draw people to Himself. This is practical. This is...every Christian believes this. There are theological nuances where people kind of get carried away in a disagreement, but we all...it's clear. The Bible teaches election.

Now, keep going here. God's call to salvation is unconditional. Meaning it's not based on conditions met in anyone. 1 Corinthians makes this clear. *"Consider your calling, brothers:"* about halfway down that passage, *"not many of you were wise...powerful...of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God."* God's call to salvation, and we see this tonight. I hope it's been clear. It's not based on who we are. The Bible is saying just because someone is born into an Israelite family, even...that's what Romans 9 is saying...doesn't make them a part of the people of God. God's salvation is not based on who we are. It's not based on what we've done. We've talked about that. You can't do anything to earn God's call to salvation. It's not based on how we would respond. It's not based on how we would respond. Some people say, "Well, God calls the people whom He knows will respond to Him," but that misses the point. You're not saved by anything you have done, will do, could do. You're saved because He's gracious. That's the whole point of Romans 11, 2 Timothy 1, *"Called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began."*

Objection: Doesn't God desire for everyone to be saved? Doesn't God love everyone in the world?

Now, at this point I know that there are questions that come to our minds. I can see them swirling around the room. I've got them too. Doesn't...here's the objection so to speak. A question, it's a good question, "Doesn't God desire for everyone to be saved? Doesn't God love everyone in the world?" 2 Peter 3:9 says, *"The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise to some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."* John 3:16, *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."* Are those verses true? That answer is, "Yes, like, these verses are true." God doesn't want anyone to perish, and He loves the world that He gave His Son. These verses are true, and Romans 9:11-13 is true. *"They were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad – in order that God's purpose of election might continue...she was told, 'The older will serve the younger...Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.'"*

Now, how are those true? How are they all true? And they're all true. This is what I want us to remember. The multiple perceptions of the will of God, follow with me. When we see the Bible talking about the will of God, desires of God, we see His will, the desires talked about in different ways. We've got a variety of Scriptures here. Follow me in your notes, and we'll see this in some of these Scriptures. Two different pictures where we see the will of God that I want to put in front of you. One, God's revealed will: what He declares in His Word. So, this is His Word, His precepts. The Bible is the Word of God, the will of God for our lives. So, this book, His will is for us to be holy. His will is for us to walk in obedience to Him. His will is for us to be clean, to be pure, to glorify Him, to praise Him, worship, this is His will. Now, do we sometimes disobey His will, His Word in our lives? Absolutely. We disobey Him.

Does that mean, then, that we are outside the will of God? Well, yes in this sense, but certainly, we've not caught God off guard.

Certainly, He is sovereign over all things, even our disobedience, which is where we see the second picture of God's will in Scripture. His hidden will: what He decrees in the world. Hidden...meaning that it's hidden until something actually happens, but it's His will. All my days were formed for me before one of them came to be. There is nothing that happens outside of the will of God in this sense. God is sovereign over everything. He is not surprised by things. He's not sitting back wondering, "Oh, what's going to happen here? What's going to happen in North Korea? What's going to happen in Libya? What's going to..." He's sovereign over all. He's in control of it all, and certainly, not all of it's squaring with what He says in His Word, and so we see these two different senses of God's will.

You think about, think about...and I think I've got...yeah, Acts 4:27-28. Just think of the crucifixion of the Christ. We've talked about this tonight. Was it God's will for Roman soldiers to murder Jesus? Was it His will for Roman soldiers to murder Jesus? Yes and no, right? Certainly He doesn't say to murder. He says, "Don't murder." They were outside of the will of God when it comes to first sense, what He declares in His Word, but absolutely, it was in His will in the second sense. He wasn't hoping they would do this, or maybe that they'll do this...He had ordained that they do this. "*Whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place,*" Acts 4:27-28.

So, now bring this back to the question we're thinking about: does God will for all people to be saved? Well, certainly in one sense. 2 Peter 3:9, and we'll see this in 1 Timothy 2:3-4...yes, God desires all people to be saved. Absolutely, that's in His Word. In a second sense though, clearly not everybody is saved. Right? Not everybody is saved, and that's still under His will in the second sense. So, all right, hold on to that.

Now, second, remember the multiple dimensions of the love of God. Okay, the love of God. When we talked about God's love...actually the Bible talks about God's love in many different senses...let me give you two. One, God's general love for all people, John 3:16, 1 John 2:2, great examples. God loves all people. At the same time, in Scripture, we also see God's particular love for His people, particular love for His people. When you get to Deuteronomy 7, it says, "*He chose you Israel among all the peoples of the earth.*" Deuteronomy 10, He chose your offspring in love to your fathers. Clearly, He is loving Israel in a way. Now, it's intended for...Genesis 12...is intended to be a blessing to all nations, but He is showing love to Israel in a way that He's not showing to all these other peoples.

The end is to show His love eventually to all these peoples, but it's through Israel, through Him calling them to Himself. Which is why, when you get to Romans 9, Malachi 1, mentioned there, "*I have loved Jacob but Esau I hated,*" there's a difference there, significant difference. Ephesians 5 talks about Christ's love for the church, and so, when people say, "Well, God loves everybody the same," is that true? Absolutely, in the first sense. Yes, God loves all people in the world. At the same time, those who are His, who have believed on His name, will experience His love forever in heaven. Those who have rejected Him, turned from the gospel, not believed on His name will not experience His love forever in the way that those who have will. Does that make sense?

When we talk about God's call to salvation here we are talking about what God decrees in the world according to His particular love for His people.

There's a difference there, key difference. So, multiple dimensions of God's will, multiple dimensions of God's love. So, when we see the Bible talking about His will, His desires, His love, we've got to look at them every time in context. Which leads us, then, to realize, when

we talk about God's call to salvation, we're talking about what God decrees in the world...second sense of the will...according to His particular love for His people...second sense of His love. Okay, when we talk, we're not saying that God...the Bible's not saying that God doesn't love all people when He says He calls some to salvation. It's a different sense here. It's not that God doesn't will, He does. God wills all people, desires all people to be saved. He declares that in His Word. At the same time, it's not, doesn't happen, decrees in the world.

So, we're talking about the second senses on both those, and that call to salvation is effectual, meaning...so, it's unconditional, it's not based on anything in us. It's all of grace, and it's effectual, meaning God finishes what He starts. It's Romans 8:28-30. God does this from beginning to end. Haven't we seen that tonight? So Christian, oh, Christian this compels humility in ourselves, doesn't it? To know that the ground of your salvation is not your commitment to God, but ultimately in God's commitment to you. Oh, that God decided for you, before you ever decided for Him. Spurgeon said,

"I believe the doctrine of election, because I am quite certain that, if God had not chosen me, I should never have chosen Him; and I am sure He chose me before I was born, or else He would never have chosen me afterwards."

Can I get an, "Amen?"

"And he must have elected me for reasons unknown to me, for I never could find any reason in myself why he should have looked upon me with special love. So I am forced to accept that great Biblical doctrine."

Malcolm Muggeridge said,

"How ever far and fast I've run, still over my shoulder I'd catch a glimpse of You on the horizon, and then run faster and farther than ever, thinking triumphantly: Now I have escaped. But no, there You were, coming after me. There was no escape. I have never wanted a God, or feared a God, or felt under any necessity to invent one. Unfortunately, I am driven to the conclusion that God wants me."

This compels humility in ourselves, and this creates hope for others. Oh, hear this, it's hopeful. You know people in your life who don't know Christ, running from Christ, even. Know this: no matter how much they resist, no one whom God calls can outrun His grace. It's hope. We cannot deny God's election. That's in Scripture. Leads us to the second reality, we do not deserve God's mercy.

We do not deserve God's mercy. So, in Romans 9, Paul quotes from Exodus 32 when God says, "*I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. I will have mercy on whom I have mercy.*" The story there...I put Exodus 32 in here...the story there is when the people of God are worshiping a golden calf, idols, they've turned against God, totally turned against Him. God comes down, judgment; Moses intercedes, one of the great pictures of intercessions in Scripture, and says, "Please spare them." So, God, at the end of Exodus 32, God only strikes down 3,000 of the people. Only strikes down 3,000. They all deserved to die before a holy God, back where we started tonight. He only strikes down 3,000 people. So, what Paul does is He uses that to say, and He quotes from Exodus 33, God could have struck them all down; He only struck down some.

Now, we hear that God calls some to salvation in a way that others are not drawn to salvation. Our immediate thought is, what? Our immediate thought is, "That's unfair!" But be very, very careful here, because as soon as you say, "That's unfair," or I say, "That's unfair," we're showing that we think that God ought to save everyone. We're saying that everyone is entitled to salvation, when the whole point of the gospel is that no one is entitled to salvation; no one. There is no one, absolutely no one whom God ought to save.

The reality of the gospel is clear: God would be just to condemn all of us. If God were acting only on the basis of justice, we would all go to hell forever. That's the only thing God ought to do. It's what He did with all the fallen angels, 2 Peter 2:4. It's by sheer mercy that God is gracious to save some. That's what Romans 9 is saying. We don't deserve God's mercy. None of us deserve God's mercy. We cannot deny God's election. We don't deserve God's mercy.

We dare not defy God's authority. This is not easy to process. You, me, this is not easy to process. I don't understand all of this, but I want to encourage you to be careful in how we process this. It's not easy to process, but if we're not careful, we will begin to find ourselves sitting in judgment on God here, which is not a good place to be. It's not a good place at all to be. Romans 9:19, Paul addresses the objector who says, "Well, how can God find fault in man?" Basically, an objector says, "Well, isn't then God then to blame for all of our sin?" Paul immediately says, *"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?' Is not the potter right over the clay to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?"*

Ladies and gentlemen, don't forget this...He is God and we are not, and we are so quick to forget this distinction. We are so quick to put ourselves on the plane of God, in a position to judge God. He is Creator; we are creature. He is potter; we're clay. He's infinitely wise and infinitely good, and He has all authority to do what he knows is best. He is Owner; we are owned. We do not have the right to judge His ways; He has the right to do what He wants. We do not indict God and say to Him, "How can you act in this way?" Be very, very careful. Be careful not to play God and tell Him how He should act. Be careful not to say to God, "Your ways are different than my ways, and my ways are better." That is, don't forget, the essence of sin...to say to God, "My ways are better than your ways." Be very, very careful not to go there in your wrestling with this.

We dare not defy God's authority. Leads us to the reality that we must not diminish our responsibility. Listen to this...we must not diminish our responsibility. Yes, God is sovereign. God is sovereign. Sovereign over nature, people, events, everything in all creation including His mercy. He's sovereign over it all. He's sovereign, but man is responsible. The objector is saying here, "Well, if man can't thwart God's will, then man's not responsible for his sin," and that is refuted here in Romans 9 and all over Scripture. We are responsible in our sin.

Scripture never teaches that, if you sin, you experience the consequences of that sin, then you can point the finger at God and say, "You did this." Well, is God sovereign over that? Yes. Are we responsible for that sin? Yes. You think back to the crucifixion of Christ. Roman soldiers murdering Christ on a cross. Were they responsible? Absolutely. They were responsible for everything they did. Was God sovereign over it? Yes, absolutely He was. Now, how can God be sovereign and man be responsible at the same time? That's the mystery. That's the mystery, but they're both there. They don't necessarily...we can't comprehend it, but we embrace it.

Two trips ago, I was flying to Southeast Asia. Jonathan and I were going to Southeast Asia, and Delta...okay, I probably shouldn't have said Delta...an airline. Okay, well, it's out there so all right, Delta. We were delayed; first plane, 24 hours. Okay, we had to change everything on our plans. It took us close to 70 hours to get to Southeast Asia...delays, problems, this, that...was God sovereign over all that? Absolutely. He was sovereign over what was going on in Southeast Asia. Sovereign over what was going on in our lives. Absolutely, God was sovereign, but, ladies and gentlemen, Delta was responsible. Just saying, totally responsible.

So, see this on a serious note, does God sovereignly call an elect people to Himself? Yes. Does that mean that we're not responsible for whether we believe in Christ? No. Every single person in this room, in any of these rooms, every single person...the world is responsible for how they respond to Christ. God is in charge. We are making choices. These are both biblical realities, and our choices are certain, not necessary. This is probably a little deep for a midnight or a 1:00 AM, but what I mean by that...we're not robots in our choices. Necessary choices must happen, meaning, we cannot act in a way contrary to God's plan. That would be more robotic, but certain choices will happen. In other words, we will act. We will always act in accordance with God's sovereign plan. Sovereignty, authority, yeah, we have real choices. You choose whether or not to trust Christ. You choose whether or not to obey Christ. Our choices have real consequences with real responsibility.

Here's the deal now. I know there are some people who are listening who aren't Christians, and God has said, "All right, this is really for Christians," but if you're not a Christian, believe the gospel. If you are not a Christian hearing this, the Word of God to you is clearly not for you to try to figure out if you're among the elect, or to assume that, because you're not a Christian that, obviously, you're not among the elect. That's not the point at all. The point is you have sinned against a holy God, and He loves you. He loves you. He desires your salvation. He has sent His Son to provide for your salvation. Turn from your sin and yourself and trust in Him. Roman 10, very next chapter, "*Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*" So, do that. Confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord. Believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead. Don't refuse Christ. Trust in Christ.

Then, if you are a Christian, preach this gospel. For every Christian who has trusted in Christ, anyone and everyone who trusts in His mercy...let this text lead you to rejoice in mercy, to fall on your face and say, "God, be praised for your indescribable grace," and then proclaim it to the ends of the earth. You say, "Well, if you believe that, then everybody is going to be okay in the end, it doesn't matter what you do." Wrong, because God has also ordained the means to bring people to salvation, which is the proclamation of the gospel through the church to the ends of the earth. God has ordained you and I to spend our lives making this gospel known to the ends of the earth, so that people will be saved. You go with confidence because you know people are going to be saved by this gospel.

So, we've got to be careful. We should not minimize this mystery. God is sovereign; we're responsible. We say, "How do you reconcile that problem?" Not my problem to reconcile. It's God's problem, but it's not a problem. That's the point. It's a mystery. Election is the sovereign act of God before the foundation of the world in which He chose to save His people solely by His grace and solely for His glory, and if that still...this whole thing...still rubs you wrong, I'm guessing it does some. I hope I've been faithful to the Word here, but think about the cross.

Just think about the cross. Did God ordain the cross? You see it together, God's sovereignty and man's responsibility at the cross. He ordained His Son's crucifixion before the foundation of the world. He ordained that He would die on the cross for sin to be murdered

by these men. That was ordained. They were responsible for the whole picture. If He ordained His son's crucifixion, it certainly makes sense that He would ordain His people's salvation.

Now, I don't have this in your notes but just listen. Donald Gray Barnhouse, famous American Bible teacher, uses an illustration to try to make sense of election. He asked people to imagine a cross like the one on which Jesus died, only so large that it had a door on it and over the door were these words from Revelation, "Whosoever will may come." Words; cross; "Whosoever will may come," representing the free universal offer of the gospel. By God's grace, the message of salvation is absolutely for everyone. Every man, woman, child who comes to the cross, who will come to the cross is invited to believe in Jesus and enter eternal life, but on the other side of the door, you walk through into heaven, and a happy surprise awaits the one who believes and enters, because from the inside, anyone glancing back can see these words from Ephesians written on the front, over the door from that side, "Chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world." "Election is best understood in hindsight," Barnhouse said, "For it is only after coming to Christ that one can know whether or not one has been chosen in Christ."

So see it...free offer of the gospel to all. Get in the other side, and you realize only grace, only grace for His glory. Oh, this is great salvation. So, why have you been saved? God saves His people for the spread of His glory to all peoples.

For God's Glory The Doctrine of Global Mission

We have received salvation as His people.

This is a recap. We've received salvation as His people. God has satisfied Himself, sacrificed His Son, and sent His Spirit in order to make it possible for sinners to be saved. We were dead in our sin and unable to save ourselves. In an instantaneous, unrepeatable, mysterious act of God, He changed our hearts, and we were born again. God enabled us to turn from our sin and ourselves and to trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord. He declared us right before Him by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. In His grace, God the Father conferred upon us the position of sons and the privileges of sonship.

Christ now lives in us, we live in Christ, we're with Christ, and Christ is with us. God is daily transforming us more and more in the image of Christ. We will persevere in our salvation to the end by the power of God's preservation in our lives, and one day soon, Christ will return for us, resurrect our bodies to reign forever with Him. Our salvation is only possible by the sovereign grace of God who chose us before the foundation of the world. That is good news, and we receive His grace as His people.

We now spread His glory to all peoples.

We now spread His glory to all peoples. You read Matthew 24:14, last verse, Matthew 24:14. In that passage, "This gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." Here's the deal. Number one: the purpose is clear. This gospel must be proclaimed to all nations. It's the purpose. This gospel must be proclaimed to all nations.

There are over 11,000 people groups, nations in the "ethne" sense of Mathew 24:14. Over 11,000 people groups in the world today. Over 6,000 of them are still not reached with the

gospel. Over 6,000 people groups, comprising a billion and a half people, who haven't heard what we've dove into tonight. This condition is not acceptable, not with all that we have, brothers and sisters. There is no way 6,000 people groups should not have heard this, and this commission is absolutely achievable.

George Ladd, a New Testament scholar, said, "If a relatively small minority of God's people took this text seriously and responded to its challenge, we could finish the task of worldwide evangelization in our own generation." God, may it be so. People say, "Well, are you saying that Jesus couldn't come back tomorrow because we've still got 6,000 people groups?" Well, the reality is, we don't know if we've defined people groups exactly right, and we don't know for sure when those are counted as reached. George Ladd said,

"God alone knows the definition of terms. I cannot precisely define who all the nations are. Only God knows the exact meaning of evangelize. He alone will know when that goal is fulfilled. But I do not need to know. I know only one thing: Christ has not yet returned; therefore, the task is not yet done. When it is done, Christ will come. Our responsibility is not to insist on defining the terms; our responsibility is to complete the task. So long as Christ does not return, our work is undone. Let us get busy and complete our mission."

Know this, though, the price is high. Following Christ to the ends of the earth may cost us everything we have. You read Matthew 10, and that will be very clear. You go into your community, city and to the ends of the earth with this gospel, expect to be met with challenges on earth, expect to be met with combat from hell. Matthew 24:14, I'm convinced Satan has it plastered all over the walls of hell. "*This gospel of the kingdom will go to all the nations, then the end will come.*" End...not good news for Satan.

The end is really bad news for Satan, and he is doing everything he...you give your life, your church, your community of faith, you give yourself to making the gospel known to the ends of the earth, you can expect to be met with the force of hell. You will be betrayed. You will be hated. "You will be persecuted," Jesus said. Fear will tempt you. Fear will tempt you. Jesus said, "Don't be afraid of those who kill the body but can't kill the soul."

You know, you realize what He's saying there? "Don't be afraid of those who kill the body but can't kill the soul." What He's saying is that the only one you need to fear is God. What's the worst thing those people can do to you, kill you? Is that encouraging? You're about to go on a mission trip, "Well, don't worry, like, the worst thing that could happen to you is you get killed." The only way that's encouraging is when you know that to live is Christ and to die is gain. Fear will tempt you, but the Father will take care of you. He will take care of you.

This promise is sure. Jesus is coming back for us, and we will be completely and eternally saved, and He will be universally and joyfully praised.

"After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." Then one of the elders

addressed me saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?"

"I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe every tear from their eyes."

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