Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Love of God, Part 4
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 90-80

As you know, a few weeks ago we began a discussion of the love of God built around this Christmas season and based on the verse "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." And I suppose when we announce we're going to speak about the love of God, most people would think, "Well that's a fairly simple, straight-forward, direct subject, one that would be easy to understand, easy to treat." But I think we have found in going through this concept of the love of God that it has some profound mystery and it has some depth to it that taxes our greatest intellectual and even our greatest spiritual capacities.

At the very beginning four weeks ago when we started the series on God's love, I said to you that to say to people that God loves the world is simple. But to accept that statement as fact is not so simple. There are some probing, disturbing and often unanswered questions that plague the minds of anybody who thinks deeply about the idea that God loves the world.

For example, if God is love and loves the world, why is the world such a place of tragedy where so many people suffer so severely? If God is love and loves the world, why does He allow disease and death and why does He allow eternal hell? If God loves the world, why does He let people perish and why is He their punisher? If God loves the world then why didn't He devise a plan to save the world? If God is a loving Father, a loving Father of all humanity who cares so deeply, why doesn't He act like a human father would act who would never allow His children to make a choice that could destroy them if he could overrule it or prevent it?

Now these kinds of questions are deep questions. And when people struggle for an answer it very often leads them to some seriously wrong conclusions. These very questions have driven people to universalism, that is the idea that in the end everybody will be saved and that will solve the problem. God does love and in the end He'll just save everybody.

These questions have led some other people to what is called annihilationism, that God loves the world so much He could never punish people forever in hell so the believers will go to heaven and the unbelievers will just go out of existence and there will be no conscious punishment at all. These kinds of questions have not only driven people to universalism and annihilationism, they have driven people to hyper Calvinism to saying basically God loves His elect and hates everybody else, feels no compassion for any other than those who are His by virtue of a divine decree and is content to send

people to hell as He is content to send some to heaven. And others have solved this problem by being driven into Arminianism. Arminianism is the theological perspective that basically says man is sovereign and God can't really determine what he's going to do, He just leaves it up to man and God does love everybody and certainly wishes everybody would get saved, but everybody won't. So God's disappointed as anybody else would be who would like to see that happen.

But universalism or annihilationism or hyper-Calvinism or Arminianism are not biblical responses to this very, very important issue of God loving the world. We have to turn to the Bible to learn the truth and we can understand the problem clearly, we can understand what is at stake here, we can't fully comprehend all of its implications but at least we can understand the problem if we can't fully grasp the solution. And we have to go to the Word of God. And when we go to the Word of God, what I've tried to do is to simplify what it teaches about God's love into three propositions.

Proposition number one, God's love to the world is unlimited in extent. It is unlimited in extent. God so loved the world...He does love the world. There is an unlimited love of God which extends to all men and manifests itself in common grace, compassion, warnings and the gospel invitation. And that is God's unlimited love. God's love for the world then is unlimited in extent, that is it extends to the whole world.

But the second proposition that was essential for an understanding of God's love is this, God's love is limited in degree. He does love the world enough to give them common grace and compassion and warnings and a gospel invitation. But He does not love them the way He loves His own. The love that God has to the world is bounded by time and space, it is temporary, it is temporal, it turns to hate for those who reject Him and ultimately He will cast those people into eternal judgment. His love for the world is not like His love for His own. In John 13:1 it says, "Having loved those who were in the world who are His own, He loved them unto perfection," or He loved them eistelos, having loved His own, eistelos. What does it mean? Perfectly, fully, comprehensively, completely, to the limit, to the max, to the last, eternally, all of that. God has a love for the world that is limited in extent when compared to the love that He has for those who are His own.

And we've been talking about God's love for His own which is unique for the elect, for those who repent and believe. That love is merciful and gracious and forgiving and restoring and exalting and lavish and everlasting love that holds nothing back, that pours out every good gift forever on every child of God. It is an inseparable, unbreakable, unconquerable, unchangeable, unwavering, unfading love that is impervious to all attacks. It is kind, sanctifying, cleansing, purifying, nourishing, cherishing love that makes its object holy. It is a love that disciplines, trains, chastens and leads toward godliness. It is a love that surpasses all human knowledge and reason and experience and can be known only to those who experience it because they are the beloved of God. It is that limitless love that God has for those who pursue righteousness and the obedience of faith.

And so, we've looked at that unlimited love of God toward the world. We've looked at that limited love that God has toward His own. That takes us to the third and perhaps most significant question and that is: how do we answer all those initial queries? How do we understand the difference between the way God loves the world and the way He loves His own? On what basis does He do that? Why does God have a different love for some folks than other folks all bound up in His own purpose, His own will, His own desire, His own decree? And that leads us to the third proposition...God's love to the world is qualified by the demands of His glory. God's love to the world is qualified by the demands of His glory. That is to say that however God loves, He will love in a manner that is absolutely consistent with who He is with His glory.

Now I want to address that this morning with you because it is an absolutely essential truth to understand. Because God loves the world does not mean that He is obligated to be an unqualified lover of everybody equally. That is not the case. He is not a prisoner of His own love nor is He a prisoner of man's desire for that love or of man's reasonings about that love. God does not have to love everyone the same no matter what, no matter who just because people expect it or men think it's fair or equitable. And so I say again, because God loves does not mean He is obligated to be an unqualified lover of all people equally. Obviously He is not. He loves the world in one sense, He loves His own in a far-greater way.

Let me say it another way. Because God loves does not mean that His love is separated from His other attributes. It does not mean that that love exists, as it were, in isolation from everything else as if it was untouched, unmodified and unmixed and unaffected by holiness, wrath, righteousness, judgment and every other attribute. God is neither the jailor nor is He the prisoner of any of His attributes. Each of them acts not independently but in perfect harmony with all the others. If God then is to glorify Himself, He must put all of His attributes on display. And whatever His love accomplishes can in no way obliterate His other attributes. Whatever His mercy and grace and kindness and goodness and tender-heartedness achieved cannot obliterate what will be made manifest by His hatred, His anger, His wrath, His vengeance and His justice. All of God's attributes have a place in the demonstration that He carries out through the purposes of creation.

And so, we can simply say this that God loves in a way that is consistent with His full glory...God loves in a manner that is consistent with His full glory. God glorifies Himself by manifesting all of His person. And God's saving purpose and God's love is tied to God's glory, not man's. It is tied to God's purposes, not man's. It is tied to God's desires, not man's and God's will, not man's.

If you understand this one great surpassing truth about God, it's going to answer all those difficult questions that I posed at the beginning. If you only understand this, you're on the way and that is the simple truth although it is profoundly revealed and much of it unknown to us...the simple truth is God does whatever manifests the fullness of His glory. Whatever puts His glory on display and His glory

is the sum of all of His attributes. God cannot in doing one thing cancel out something else. God's glory is the issue.

And I want to lay that foundation down as well as I can for you to understand it. So turn to Psalm 31. We're going to look at a few Old Testament passages and then two in the New to just lay this groundwork and then next Sunday we'll complete this series with a look at one particular passage. I'll say more about that in a few moments. This is not like a sermon but more like a Bible study but it's very important to understand this if we're going to deal with these hard questions.

In Psalm 31 the psalmist is coming before the Lord and talking about God's power and salvation and deliverance. And he says basically that there is obviously trust in God's ability to save and deliver and rescue and help and strengthen. But that's not what I want you to focus on. What I want you to focus on is the reason why. But let's start with verse 1, "In Thee, O Lord, I've taken refuge. Let me never be ashamed. In Thy righteousness deliver me. Incline Thy ear to me. Rescue me quickly. Be Thou to me a rock of strength, the stronghold to save me for Thou art my rock and my fortress."

Now you have a lot of statements there. "In your righteousness deliver me, listen to me, rescue me, be my rock, be a stronghold, save me, You're my rock, You're my fortress," all repeating God's saving delivering rescuing work. And when he's done with all of that he says in verse 3, "For Thy namesake Thou wilt lead me and guide me."

Whatever You do in my life, God, is not so much for me as it is...what?...for You. It is for the sake of manifesting Your glory in order that people might see that You are a God in whom we can take refuge, that You are a God of righteousness, that You are a God who hears, that You are a God who rescues, that You are strong, that You are a Savior, that You are a leader and You are a guide--do it, God, to put Yourself on display. That is the prayer of a knowing saint...not for my sake but for Your sake. That is the reason for everything that God might display His glory before the angels and all creation. So whatever God does is not going to be because the majority of evangelicals have voted Him to do it. It is not going to be because it seems the most rational and the most reasonable thing to do or we think it's the most equitable. It will be done without regard for what we would desire but with regard only to that which would be consistent with the display of God's glory. And whenever you see "for Thy name's sake" the concept of God's name is just an embodiment of all that He is. When you remember confronting Moses He said, "My name is I am that I am." In other words, My name is who I am. So God is going to display who He is in what He does. He is a God of salvation and He is a God of judgment. He is a God of grace and He is a God of vengeance. He is a God of mercy and He is a God of justice. And He will display all of that because that puts His name in a place to be respected, revered, honored and worshiped.

In Psalm 79 and I'm giving you just a few brief samples, a small little sampling of many verses that address this, but in Psalm 79:9 the psalmist here is crying out to God because he fears the

destruction of Jerusalem...that is the historical notation on this Psalm. He says, "Help us, O God of our salvation," and then this, "for the glory of Thy name and deliver us and forgive our sins for Thy name's sake." That is always the issue. Do what is consistent with who You are. Do what is consistent with Your glory, with Your name, with the manifestation of Your character, Your nature, Your attributes.

In Psalm 143:11 is another very brief comment. "For the sake of Thy name, O Lord, revive me." For the sake of Thy name, O Lord. Again, that is always at issue. And so we can't go to God and say, "Look, Lord, now we're trying to figure out how You ought to treat this world and we think it wouldn't be fair for You to let some people go to hell cause that's not very nice and that's not loving and so we'd like to suggest to You a view called universalism and just ask You if You would just please adapt that to Your plan and let it happen." Or we might say to God, "We don't like that idea of a conscious punishment of the ungodly forever and so we would like to suggest to You that we've taken a vote and we vote for annihilationism." Or, "Lord, we think the whole thing shouldn't resolve itself in Your character because that puts too much pressure on You, so we would like to suggest Arminianism and just let man be completely responsible for whether he's saved or lost and that way he can bear the whole brunt of the deal and it doesn't reflect on You at all."

But what we want and what we desire is not the issue. We are the pot and He is the potter, we are the created and He is the creator. We are the maid and He is the maker. And we're here because He put us here and He's in charge of everything and everything that He does will be a consistent reflection of who He is. And if you understand that, you are on the path to resolving all the difficult questions because the answer to whatever might seem to you to be inequitable or unfair or difficult or hard to understand is that it must in the end bring God...what?...glory.

Now look at Daniel chapter 9. I want to give you a couple of illustrations that I think will be most helpful to you. In Daniel chapter 9 Daniel is praying a marvelous prayer, one of the model prayers of Scripture. He is anticipating that God is going to deliver His captive people out of Babylon back to their land because God promised that He would after 70 years. So he reminds himself when reading Jeremiah the prophet that the captivity was for 70 years, the 70 years is nearly up. And so he starts to pray to the Lord. In verse 4 he calls Him the great and awesome God who keeps His covenant in loving kindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments. And then he launches in to this confession, "We have sinned," verse 5, "committed iniquity, acted wickedly, rebelled, turned aside from Your commandments, ordinances." And he keeps talking like that all the way down, verse 11, "All Israel has transgressed Thy law, turned aside, not obeying Thy voice." So the curse...curse has been poured out on us along with the oath which was written in the law of Moses, servant of God, for we've sinned against him.

Now I'm going to stop you right here. First of all, what Daniel is saying is this, "God, You've punished us severely." Dispossessed from their land, slaughtered in the assault that came, carried off into

captivity, they have been severely punished. And they have been living in idolatry prior to that time so the punishment of God was a just punishment. God then by showing that idolatry is a severe sin worthy of destruction has glorified His name. It magnifies the holiness of God, doesn't it, when He has a holy reaction against idolatry. And Daniel would agree to that, that what You've done to these people they deserve and it does not impinge on Your glory at all to do it, it exalts You and honors You and glorifies You that You have judged this iniquitous and wicked people with a severe judgment because it tells us how holy You are. So God is glorified in the judgment, God is glorified in having showed that idolatry is a severe sin worthy of destruction. That magnifies His glory.

But now God has promised that He's going to restore His people to the land and the prophet is now going to say, "God, glorify Yourself now with Your mercy." It isn't either/or, it's both. And so he prays in this prayer for the Lord to bring the people back.

Go down to verse 17, Daniel 9. "So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Thy servant and to his supplications," and here it is, "for Thy sake, O Lord, let Thy face shine on Thy desolate sanctuary." That is again on Jerusalem and on the mount where the temple was. "O my God, incline Thy ear and hear, open Thine eyes and see our desolations and the city which is called by Thy name for we are not presenting our supplication before Thee on account of any merits of our own but on account of Thy great compassion. O Lord, hear. O Lord, forgive. O Lord, listen and take action for Thine own sake, O my God."

For You, put Your grace on display. Put Your mercy on display. Put Your restoring power on display. That's the point. You've glorified Yourself in Your wrath, now glorify Yourself in Your mercy. In Isaiah 49:3 God said, "You are My servant Israel, in whom I will show My glory." And He did. He showed His glory in judgment and He showed it in mercy. He showed it in justice and He showed it in grace. He showed it in vengeance and He showed it in forgiveness. You cannot isolate God to just one attribute. You can't make God the prisoner of one attribute. He is glorified in the full range of His glorious nature. And Daniel is saying, "God, do this for Your own sake, do it to glorify Yourself."

Look at Isaiah for a moment, chapter 48...Isaiah chapter 48. And here we find the same kind of perspective. Verse 9, here God says, Isaiah 48:9, "For the sake of My name I delay My wrath." How interesting. God shows His glory in His judgment, His wrath. He shows His glory in His mercy, His grace. And He also shows His glory in just His patience...in delaying wrath. And He says, "For My praise I restrain it for you in order not to cut you off." You can glorify Me for My justice, you can glorify Me for My grace and you can glorify Me for My patience.

Verse 11, here's the key, "For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act." That's the key. You ought to underline that and never forget it. Whatever God does He does for His own glory. "For My own sake, for My own sake I will act. I cannot let My name be profaned and My glory I will not give to anyone else." I will do whatever My glory dictates I must do. And My glory is a glory manifest in

wrath, it is a glory manifest in forgiveness, it is a glory manifest in restraint and patience, whatever it is I will do it if it's consistent with My glory. We could sum it up by saying God has an unswerving commitment to act for His own glory.

Now look at Jeremiah 14 and this is nothing new but another illustration among many of this great principle. Jeremiah 14 verse 7, "Although our iniquities testify against us, O Lord, act for Thy namesake." You see, the prophets really understood this that God was compelled to do whatever revealed His glory. That's what He did. "Our iniquities testify against us, but, O Lord, act for Thy namesake." What is he saying? Forgive us for that too will display Your glory.

Later in the chapter, look at verse 20, "We know our wickedness, O Lord, the iniquity of our fathers for we have sinned against Thee, do not despise us." Why? "For Thine own namesake. Do not disgrace the throne of Thy glory. Remember and do not annul Thy covenant with us." In other words, what they're saying is, "God, You made a promise to this nation, You can't leave us in this kind of situation, You've got to come back, Your glory is at stake." What aspect of His glory? Not His wrath, not His grace, not His patience, but His...His faithfulness, His promise because He made a covenant. "Do it for Your own namesake, don't disgrace the throne of Your glory. Remember and don't annul Your covenant."

So you see, the Old Testament prophets and the psalmist all understood and so did the people that whatever God did He did for His own glory. That's the simple truth. And if heaven is to be populated on the Lord Jesus Christ and hell is to be forever populated with those who do not, that is to the glory of God. And if God chooses to save some and not others, that is to the glory of God because God does what is consistent with His glory.

In Romans chapter 1 and verse 5 Paul says that the grace of God that called him to be an Apostle by which he preached the gospel which brought about the obedience of faith among the nations, end of verse 5, was for His namesake. Again, salvation is for God's glory. Third John, that little epistle says in verse 7, "They went out for the sake of the name. They preached the gospel for the sake of the name for the glory of God." Salvation is for God's glory. Vengeance is for God's glory. Patience is for God's glory. Faithfulness is for God's glory. Every aspect of God's nature puts His glory on display. And you cannot isolate one attribute of God and let it erase all the rest. So God will love but in loving He will not obliterate His judgment. In showing compassion He will not eliminate His justice. God is God. And God will consistently and perfectly and purely and with absolute holiness enact everything that is consistent with every characteristic that He possesses.

So for the purposes of His eternal glory, God does what He does whether it is to save sinners or damn them. We can say it this way, while God loves the world, while God is not willing that any should perish, while God finds no pleasure in the death of the wicked, while God feels compassion for all who die in their sins, while God offers warnings of judgment and a gospel invitation to the whole

world, in the end He will still be glorified by the damnation of sinners, or He wouldn't do it because He will always do what gives Him glory. His sincere and legitimate and real love to sinners is not separated from His ultimate glory. His ultimate glory demands that He not save everybody or He would.

You say, "Well then how can His love be real?" Well a human judge may have a sincere compassion for a guilty criminal, sincere pity, real tenderness and yet be forced to have him executed to uphold the standard of justice. You see, in enacting justice does not necessarily eliminate compassion. You can weep over one because you love that one while at the same time upholding the standard of righteousness. R.L. Dabney(?) writes about Chief Justice Marshall who wrote a book called The Life of Washington, actually several volumes on the history of George Washington. And one section in that work on Washington deals with Major Andre, a famous name you remember, and Marshall in writing about Washington says this, "Perhaps on no occasion of his life did the Commander In Chief obey with more reluctance the stern mandates of duty and of policy," end quote.

In other words, he felt compassion and love and affection for the man but the standard of righteousness had to be upheld in order to maintain the integrity of his office in the dignity of his person. About that incident, Dabney comments, "In this historical instance we have these facts. Washington had plenary power to kill or to save a life. He was Commander In Chief. Yet he signed his death warrant with spontaneous decisiveness." He goes on to say, "Every deliberate rational volition is regulated by the agent's dominant subjective disposition and prompted by his own subjective motive but that motive is a complex, not a simple modification of spirit." That's well put.

To make that kind of judgment doesn't mean the only thing he felt was justice. There was a complex of motives, a complex of attitudes. But the end result was the result of the most compelling of those. Dabney goes on to say, "The motive a single decision may be complex, involving many intellectual considerations of prudence or righteous policy and several distinct and even competing compensions(?) of the optative powers. And Washington's volition to sign the death warrant of Andre did not arise from the fact that his compassion was slight or feigned, but from the fact that it was rationally counterpoised by a complex of superior judgments and propensions of wisdom, duty, patriotism and moral indignation." He says, "The pity was real but was restrained by superior elements of motive. Washington had official and bodily power to discharge the criminal but he had not the sanction of justice." And God has that complex of motives which in the end must manifest justice. Not in every case, but in some at His own discretion.

Now this should be obvious to any thinking person who looks at Scripture. It is obvious that God seeks His own glory, right? It is obvious that everything He does is for His glory. His glory is the manifestation of the fullness of who He is, therefore He is going to get glory in wrath as well as in grace. So He's going to do what manifests wrath as well as grace. We see that throughout the Old Testament. Some people live and are forgiven and some were killed by God directly in their sin,

right? And God made those choices and was glorified in either case. When He judged and destroyed the people in Israel, that gave Him glory. When He forgave and restored them, that gave Him glory. And the point is that God will be glorified in all those ways.

Now there are some people who don't want to accept that. And so this is the scenario that they will come up with. God loves everybody so much God wants everybody saved. And God is calling everybody to be saved but the power to be saved is not His, it's in man. And man refuses to exercise that power. He refuses to make that move and make that choice because he loves his sin and his sin is more powerful than God. Right? Wouldn't you have to conclude that? If God wants everybody to be saved and the power is in man and God wants him to be saved and God does everything He can do to get him saved but they don't become saved then whatever is working in them is more powerful than God.

And then you have to add another component. And they say also the difficulty is that Satan is making a lifelong effort to keep the person from believing. So the combination of their own fallen flesh and sin and the efforts of Satan are just more clever and more powerful than God.

I can't accept that because those who believe that are saying God wants everybody saved and He's exerting all His power, all His omnipotence that He can muster on the free will of the sinner hoping he'll repent and believe for salvation, God is not indifferent, He is loving, He is compassionate, He's working as hard as He can to get people saved and they just won't. Now such a perspective saves the sincerity of God, it saves the love of God at the expense of the power of God and the sovereignty of God. Right? He's really not in charge and He can't pull it off though He is sincerely compassionate and He does love them. That diminishes God's glory.

On the other hand, let's go the other way. Some would say, "No, God has the power," by the way, that was an Arminian approach, some would say, "God has the power and God has the sovereignty, He just hates sinners so He doesn't care about them. Doesn't feel anything toward them." That's a hyper-Calvinist perspective. He's not loving. He's not compassionate. He just loves His own. And what you've done there is you've saved the sovereignty of God and the power of God at the expense of...what?...the love, the compassion of God. You can't do that either because the Bible is replete with evidence that God loves and is compassionate. How else do you explain the tears of Jesus, Luke 19:41, when He wept over Jerusalem? How do you explain the tears of God that were cried through the eyes of Jeremiah? How do you explain the tears of Paul? God loves and God is compassionate and God grieves and God aches because He cares about sinners. His pity is real. His compassion is real. His love is real. But that does not mean that He saves everyone because pity and love and compassion are overridden by weightier matters in God's eternal purpose. God truly pities but that pity is counterbalanced by superior motives so that even though He pities the sinner He does not will to save the sinner because if He did He would. The all-wise mind of God can look at the multiplicity of issues in His vast Kingdom and He has good reasons and motives to do

every single thing He does, actions for which we have not the least conception. We have no idea why.

But we do know this. His ultimate goal is not to please the evangelical majority. His ultimate goal is not the greatest aggregate of well being among His creatures. His ultimate goal is...what?...His glory. And we don't know all the ways in which God may deem His glory is most highly promoted, all that we can say is this, whatever God does in saving, whatever He does in damning, whatever He does in electing, whatever He does in rejecting is the most for His glory beyond anything else and apart from every other consideration. God's purpose is not to make the most sinners in the universe happy. His purpose is to glorify Himself. And God may see in His omniscience divinely rational ground for every single thing He does though we can't see it at all. God knows and does what brings Him glory. And obviously He is glorified when vessels are fitted for wrath just as when vessels are prepared for glory.

A monarch, let's say, benevolent king has two murderers before him on trial, both guilty. Murderer A has committed a crime equal to murderer B, they're culpability is exactly the same. However, murderer A is a physician, a medical practitioner. Murderer B has absolutely no knowledge of the craft. Murderer A is not just a physician he is the best. The king finds both A and B equally guilty yet he reprieves A. Why? Because in his kingdom there is a plague and that plague is destroying lives and he knows that the skill of this physician can save lives. So A is reprieved simply because of his skill to help the suffering. B is hanged. He's hanged for murder. But some people think he's hanged for not going to medical school. But that's to miss the point. A who escapes was equally guilty of murder, isn't it true then that B was really hanged because he didn't know medicine? No. B was hanged because he murdered. A was spared because there was a purpose which the king knew he could fulfill.

So it is with God. We all should be damned but God has designed for some of us to fulfill a redemptive purpose. And purely on that basis alone we are redeemed...though as guilty as those who perish so that it's all of grace and it's all for divine and holy purposes which are unknown to us apart from the unfolding of those in the experience of our lives and some day perhaps in retrospect from glory. God knows what His purposes are. He is wise. He is sovereign. His motives are unrevealed to us. But this we know, whatever He does He will do for the sake of His own glory. He will put Himself on display as a God of justice, judgment, vengeance, wrath, punishment. He will put Himself on display as a God of mercy, grace, love, forgiveness and everything in the middle...a God of patience, a God of faithfulness. The salvation of some sinners and the eternal misery of others all focuses on God's glory. And, friends, that's all we need to know. And then we just worship God for His glory. And then when we think about our own salvation, what does that elicit? Gratitude, overwhelming gratitude...Why, O God, why out of all...why was I in the A group? Why?

So a true compassion and love for sinners is restrained by a consistent and absolutely holy motive so that it never takes the form of a will to regenerate. God's compassion is real. His love is genuine.

But overruling it is an immutable and sovereign necessity to display His glory in His judgment. And that's why He doesn't save everybody. His glory demands the true and complete satisfaction of all His wondrous attributes. And when we look at our own lives and we see that we have been saved and we have been forgiven and we have been given eternal life and been imputed the righteousness of Christ and we're on our way to eternal glory, purely at the discretion of God who prompted our hearts, it is overwhelming cause for praise and worship and adoration. Isn't it? It should fill us with thanksgiving that should come out with every breath, every breath.

You say, "What about the people on the other side?" Well the Bible addresses them and all I can say is this, to those of you who don't know Christ the issue is always your unbelief. You can't look around to see if your name is on a list of the chosen. There's no list, at least in this world. You don't need to try to talk to somebody who can find out for you from God whether you've been chosen. What you need to do is repent and believe cause that's what the Bible tells you to do. In fact, the Bible says God has commanded all men everywhere to repent. And Jesus said, "Him that comes to Me I will not turn away." And the book of Revelation ends with this invitation, "Whosoever will, let him come." It's not an issue of trying to find out if you belong to the ones that God has chosen to display His grace, it's an issue of whether you're willing to turn from your sin. And that's what God says to you...turn from your sin. In fact, the prophet said, "Why will you die? Repent, turn, turn, why will you die?" As if to say it doesn't have to happen.

These inscrutable truths about the glory of God are beyond us. But one thing is not beyond us. If you confess your sins and believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, you'll be saved and on your way to heaven and numbered among the elect. And you forever and ever and ever will be an agent through whom God will display the glory of His grace and His love and His mercy and His forgiveness and His kindness. And not one through whom He will display forever His justice and His judgment. And so, I say to you what Jesus would say if He were here--Repent and believe the gospel...believe that Jesus died and rose again for you. Embrace Him as Lord and Savior, turning from your sin and become one of God's own children and enter into the sphere where God is glorified through His goodness and His grace.

Next week we're going to look at the one passage that pulls all of this together in one text, Romans 9. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, these passages and these thoughts that come from Your Word are so profound and yet so essential for us. We can't go through life dictating to You how You ought to act, what You ought to do. We need to gladly submit ourselves to the one compelling driving motive of the whole universe and that is that You would be glorified. O God, we thank You for glorifying Yourself. You are worthy to be honored and praised and exalted by all created beings. And we think about the fact that there were angels who were created to give You glory and they fell, a third of them and now two thirds have

been left in Your presence to glorify You, one third have become demons. And, Lord, You never had any plan to redeem them, You never had any way they could ever be restored or saved or forgiven. From the moment of that rebellion throughout all eternity their damnation was fixed. There was no grace with angels, no mercy and no forgiveness. But that wouldn't have been adequate. You needed a place, You needed a creature in whom You could display Your glory, the glory of Your mercy and so You made man. And when man did what angels did, You set out to redeem him. Father, thank You for calling sinners to repent and believe and may sinners do that even this day and enter into Your grace in the manifestation of Your glory through the means of Your love for all eternity. We thank You for such a privilege, such a wonder, in Christ's name. Amen.

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