**God Has Mercy on Whom He Desires, Part 2**

**Romans 9:14-18 (ESV)**

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***14*** *What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!* ***15*** *For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.”* ***16*** *So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.* ***17*** *For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.”* ***18*** *So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.*

Romans 9:18 says:

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Romans 9 is a difficult chapter for us because it teaches the doctrine of God’s sovereign working in the salvation of man. This doctrine presents a tension with the doctrine of man’s responsibility, that is also taught in God’s Word. This doctrine rightly causes us to think how God’s sovereign working in salvation aligns with man’s personal believing unto salvation. Both doctrines are taught in scripture, yet they pull against each other like ropes pulling in opposite directions on a giant tent. If we feel the tension as we hammer the tent peg of God’s sovereignty into the ground of our faith, we must not ease that tension by going to the other side and pulling up the tent peg of human responsibility. That indeed would relieve us of the uncomfortable tension, but the tent of the worship of God would collapse all around us.

Likewise, if we feel the tension of hammering down the tent peg of human responsibility into the ground of our faith, we must not relieve that tension by pulling out the tent peg of God’s sovereignty in election. That too collapses the tent of our worship of our great God. God designs these doctrines to be in strong tension pulling against each other precisely so that He would receive blessing and honor and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and power and might in our worship of Him. God designs the tent of His Gospel to be filled with this kind of mysterious tension so that it would be filled with joyful, awesome worship.

Donald Grey Barnhouse, who is now in heaven, often used an illustration to help God’s people understand how the doctrine of God’s election fits together with the doctrine of man’s responsibility. He asked people to imagine a cross like the one upon which Jesus died, only a cross so large that it had a door in it. Over the door were written these words from Revelation 22:17: “Whosoever will, let him come.” These words represent the free, universal and sincere offer of God to every person to come to Christ Jesus to receive eternal life. By God’s grace, God does indeed invite every person to drink freely of the water of life in Jesus. Every man, every woman, every child who is willing to come to Jesus and believe on Him will find an open door into God’s very presence, so that we would know Him and that we would enjoy Him.

After entering that door, on the other side, a joyful wonder awaits the one who believes and who has entered. From inside, anyone glancing backward at that cross would see the words from Ephesians 1:4 written above the door. And those words would read, “Chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.”The person who has entered, has entered without being forced against his or her will, and now understands that salvation did not rest upon his or her own will. Rather, their decision to enter through Jesus Christ rested solely upon God’s mercy.

God’s election can only be understood and enjoyed after one has entered into God’s kingdom. It is only then that the believer affirms that nothing in our hearts brought us to our faith in Christ. Only through God’s miracle of opening up our blind eyes to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus, only after that miracle, did we come to faith in Christ Jesus. Only after entering into communion with God do we agree that He is the One who loved us before we loved Him. Those who choose to follow Christ have done so because God had already chosen them in eternity past.

Now we think about that illustration that Dr. Barnhouse gave often, and I think is very helpful. I believe very few Christians have trouble seeing and rejoicing in the message on the front side of that door: “Whosoever will let him come.” If we took a poll, very few in evangelical churches would deny the truth of God’s free and sincere call upon sinners to come to Jesus as Savior. And that’s wonderful because that is an absolute truth that the Bible teaches. But many believers have difficulty after they’ve entered, looking back up at the cross and seeing the sign reading, “Chosen before the foundation of the world.” I believe that those words are written as clearly and as boldly in God’s Word as the words on the front of the sign.

Now it is true that if you read the front of the sign without reading the back of the sign, you are still in God’s kingdom. Praise God! So the front of the sign is more essential to the condition of our soul before the Lord. So I would ask you: Friend, have you read the front of that sign and have you heeded the invitation, received Jesus Christ as your own? If you have not, then nothing in this message I’m going to give you will be of any value or will be accepted or understood. So have you trusted in Jesus Christ? Your eternal life rests upon that question. God has given you an invitation. Receive Him this very day!

Yet, the back of the sign is not unimportant. It helps us to know God as God. It helps us to worship Him as the sovereign who is altogether wonderful and strong. It helps us to abase ourselves before Him,knowing that nothing in us contributed to our own happiness in being reconciled to Him. It helps us to rejoice that our salvation is 100% a work of the Lord**.** It helps us to think lofty thoughts of God and it leaves us in awe of Him.

Charles Spurgeon said that free will and election are like two parallel lines that don't seem to ever touch. But he said that if you follow them far enough, all the way up to Heaven, there they do meet each other. When asked how he reconciles free will and election, Spurgeon replied “You don't have to reconcile friends!" I love that! The doctrine of man’s responsibility and the doctrine of God’s election aren’t enemies warring against each other. These are friends, and we don’t have to reconcile friends. Yet they are friends that communicate two different and yet equally wonderful truths.

Now, remember as we look at Romans 9 that it begins with Paul describing the depth of his heart’s anguish over individual Jewish men and women who remained outside of God’s salvation. We saw that in verses 2-4.

**Romans 9:2** I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.

And he does so over those fellow Jews who are yet outside of Christ’s salvation, who have not received eternal life, who are yet in their sins, who remain underneath God’s condemnation. This theme of zeal to see the lost won to Christ is the theme that begins this whole conversation about God’s election of His own people. Remember that! The doctrine of God’s sovereign election doesn’t keep us from having zeal for the lost. It rather fuels our zeal to evangelize the lost, to share the Gospel with them, to pray for them. A true belief in God’s sovereign election always marries a heart anguish for people who are not saved. The doctrine of God’s sovereignty fuels our passion to proclaim the Gospel and to see men and women saved from sin through Jesus Christ. It’s not enough of course to have head knowledge. We must have a heart of fire for the Lord. Cold-hearted Calvinists are truly diseased men and women. We must not be satisfied with a cold heart. So then after describing this great passion and zeal, the question is going to be asked:

**Question #1: Does God’s sovereign purpose in salvation always succeed?**

If some Jews who were part of God’s covenant people are left outside of God’s covenant blessing, does God’s sovereign purpose in salvation always succeed?

**Answer: Yes. God always saves all whom He chooses to save.**

He uses the illustrations of Isaac and Ishmael and then of Jacob and Esau to illustrate that God saves all whom He chooses to save. His purposes stand! So in this passage in Romans 9, God says, in speaking about Rebekah and her son

**Romans 9:10-12** 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.”

So keep note of verses 10-12. Paul is teaching us that before these two twins, Jacob and Esau, were born, God chose Jacob to enter into His covenant of love and God passed over Esau so that Esau would remain in his sin and thus be deserving of God’s condemnation and judgment. So Jacob’s blessing is undeserving. It’s on the basis of God’s mercy. Esau’s condemnation is deserving. It’s on the basis of Esau’s sin. The basis of God’s decision to have mercy or to choose, to call Jacob, is not on the basis of works. It was not on anything that Jacob had done or on anything that Jacob willed to do. But rather, Paul says it’s because of Him who calls. That’s the reason why Jacob is chosen for a blessing. It’s rooted in something regarding God’s Person. So toward what end is God moving when He chooses to place mercy upon Jacob?

**Romans 9:11** …in order that God’s purpose of election might continue…

God’s purpose in election is that God would receive all the glory and all the praise for man’s salvation and that we would receive none of it. God is intensely zealous to pursue His glory. God displays the glory of His freedom and His sovereignty in our salvation in such a way as to bring Him the most praise and the most honor. So that’s how Paul is setting forth this doctrine.

So now he anticipates a second question. That’s where we want to begin our thoughts today on verses 14-18. The second question relates to God’s fairness or God’s justice or God’s righteousness. And that question is asked:

**Question #2: Is God unjust in His purposes?**

Is God right to act the way He does, to choose Jacob for blessing and to pass over Esau? Is God right in that?

***14*** *What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!*

Is there unrighteousness on God’s part? Paul says, “By no means!” May it never be! He uses the strongest way to say “No,” to say, “Let’s put that question completely aside.” No, no, no! Don’t even think the thought that God is unrighteous or unjust in any of this. We must not doubt or deny God’s righteousness. That’s something that is settled eternally.

Many charge God with unfairness or injustice for many, many reasons today. Some look at children suffering in terminal illness and their heart pours out to those children, as well it should. But they ask, “Is God unjust? Is God doing what is right here?” Others look at victims of violent crimes and they see the fallout not only physically, but emotionally, spiritually, and they ask, “Is God unjust? Is God righteous in this?” Others look at the terrible and immense poverty that many experience all throughout the world. They see starvation. They see disease and they ask, “Is God unjust? Is God fair in His dealings with man?” Here in Romans 9, some are thinking about the doctrine of election. It’s a different circumstance than the ones I’ve mentioned, but it leads to the same question. Is God unjust? Is God right in how He acts toward people in this world?

The fact that God’s ways are not our ways must not lead us to the defiant conclusion that God is unjust. The fact that we do not agree with God’s working does not give us legitimate reason to lay the charge of injustice against God. God’s choosing Isaac over Ishmael and His choosing Jacob over Esau must not lead us to the conclusion that God is in some way unfair or unjust! There is no unrighteousness, no injustice with God! May God protect our hearts and our minds from believing that! Once Satan deceives us at this level, there is no depth to which our spiritual life would descend.

Since man’s first sin in the Garden of Eden, humans have attempted to blame God for the sorrows and the miserable condition of their life. Adam, you will remember, said, “God, it was the woman that YOU put here. That’s why I sinned.” And from that day forward, the finger has been pointed back at God. Our flesh desires to blame God for His decisions and His actions as though He is the source of our sorrows, even as though He is the source of our very sin. And the truth all through Scripture is that God is not the author of sin, nor is God the author of our unbelief. If we refuse to believe in Christ Jesus and receive the gift of eternal life, we cannot blame God for our unbelief.The source of our unbelief is our own sin-stained hearts. That’s why Peter would say:

**1 Peter 1:5-7** God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

But the question is still asked: Is God unjust in choosing to have mercy on some?

**Answer: No. God is just to have mercy on those whom He has mercy.**

Now Paul is going to explain or defend his answer by bringing forward two Old Testament passages of Scripture. He is going to explain that the character of God helps us understand what righteousness is so that we won’t be confused about whether God is righteous in His election or in His mercy. Before we look at the details of God’s answer, I just want you to notice that he gives two reasons. And those reasons are highlighted by that word “for” in verse 15 and then in verse 17. Do you see that? In each of these verses he’s going to quote an Old Testament passage from Exodus.

***14*** *What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!* ***15*** *For…*

Paul says, “Let me tell you why God is not unjust.” And he’s going to quote Scripture to defend his answer. But then skip down to verse 17, and he’s going to say the same thing. He’s going to say, “Now let me tell you a second reason.”

***17*** *For the Scripture says to Pharaoh…*

We’re going to look at those two reasons, if you’re taking notes, that are presented from Old Testament passages. And I just want you to note that the Word of God is Paul’s final authority for everything. And that’s really important, especially when we discuss mysterious doctrines. Our problems almost always stem from having a wrong foundation for our beliefs or our values. We go astray from God and from worship because we allow the foundation of our thinking about God and our thinking about life and our thinking about values, to be on some other ground. Our authority might be society. We look around and ask, “What does society say today? Let’s take a poll.” Our authority might be some philosopher that we’ve been recently reading. Or some denomination or even some Christian teacher. Our foundation might be some psychologist or self-help book that is very winsome and uses a lot of great illustrations and makes us think that they understand life. Our foundation might be our own thoughts and our own emotions, the way we feel about things. Satan offers hundreds of different foundations upon which we would build our life. But the only sure truth we have to build our lives upon is God’s inerrant, trustworthy Word. That’s the reason why God says in Proverbs 3:

**Proverbs 3:5-7** Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.

Don’t trust your own thinking about this. Do not trust your own reasoning about these things. Trust the revelation that God has given in His Word. It’s not that God’s Word is unreasonable, or that it’s contrary to logic. It’s just that it is contrary to our own personal, corrupted, willful logic. So let’s be sure that we’re settling the foundation of our faith upon a firm foundation—Jesus Christ, the living Word, and the Bible, the written Word of God.

The first reason that God gives is from Exodus 33:19, on why He is not unjust in His election of individuals to receive mercy.

**Reason #1: God is right to act upon His freedom in giving mercy to individuals whom He chooses to give mercy.**

In other words, it has to do with what is right. What’s the definition of “right, righteous or just”?

***15*** *For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.”*

Now at first reading, someone will say, “That still sounds very arbitrary to me. Why is God right to have mercy on whom He chooses to have mercy?” I want to take you back to Exodus 33 and see some of the context of this to understand it. And I think this is awesome! I wish we had about another hour to talk about this, because that’s what it really requires. But it’s so beautiful!

You remember Moses. Exodus 33 is when Moses says, “Please show me Your glory.” Moses understands something about God’s glory. He understands that life consists of seeing God’s glory. If you don’t see God’s glory, you don’t have anything. And so he says, “God, show me Your glory. Eternal life is all about not falling short of the glory of God, but meeting and enjoying the glory of God. Please show me your glory.” And notice what God says here.

**Exodus 33:18-19** Moses said, “Please show me your glory.” And he said, “I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The Lord.’

When Moses asks to see God’s glory, God responds to him by saying, “Okay. Yes. I’ll do that. I will proclaim My very name ‘Yahweh’ to you.” Right after saying, “Here’s how I’m going to show you My glory, by proclaiming My name to you, He says:

**Exodus 33:19** And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

There are two big ideas that God teaches us about Himself in Exodus 33.

1. God shows His glory to us by showing us the meaning of His name. God’s emphasis on His glory is an emphasis on the meaning of His own name.

That’s going to be really important in just a moment. God defines righteousness by His very Person. What is righteousness? The answer to that is found in the meaning of His name.

2. The meaning of the name “Yahweh” declares that God is free to be God. He is free to be gracious to anyone whom He chooses.

That’s why He says, “I’m going to proclaim My name to you.” And then immediately following that, He connects, He marries this idea of what His name is with this statement: I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious. I will show compassion to whom I will show compassion. I will be merciful to whom I will show mercy.”

The name “Yahweh” means “I am right to act on my own without any compulsion from anyone or anything outside Myself.” Now at this point you might be asking: Where does the Bible say that? Good question! We have to root our ideas about God in the Word! We want to turn back to Exodus 3, where God reveals His name to Moses, the name “Yahweh.” “I’m showing you my glory by proclaiming My name, showing you the meaning of My name. The meaning of My name is tied to the statement, I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. I will show mercy to whom I show mercy.” Why is that? Because of what God said about His name.

**Exodus 3:13-14** Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I am who I am.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I am has sent me to you.’”

I am who I am. God is saying, “I am self-existent. I am absolute in Myself. I am self-determined. I am free. I decide who I am and no one decides for Me. I am free from all intrusion from outside forces or influences. My freedom to act without any outside interference is central to who I am.” God says that His very name proclaims, “I am free to act as I choose for My own glory.” Remember Moses plead, “Show me Your glory!” God says, “Okay. I will proclaim My name, Yahweh, to you.” In other words, he says, “I will show you who I am. I will show you that I am, ‘I am that I am.’” God’s absolute freedom, self-determination and sovereignty are central to His glory because that’s what His name means and He shows us His glory by proclaiming or teaching us His name. Do you catch that?

So we ask the question: Is God righteous to pursue His own glory? Paul’s answer is “Of course He is righteous to pursue His own glory.” And that’s the catch. Because if we become man-centered and believe that God is all about pursuing our glory, and that it’s somehow wrong for God to pursue His own glory, of course we’re going to get off track in reference to the doctrine of election. The doctrine of election is all about God revealing His glory and God pursuing His own glory and God being zealous for His own glory. God highly values His name more than anything else because His name is more valuable than anything else. If God valued anything else above His name, He would be making a wrong value. His name is more valuable than anything else, particularly in all creation. And so God is right to value His own name. At the very center of the meaning of His name is His independent, self-existence. So when God acts independently of man and when God exercises His freedom as God, He is acting in a way that is consistent with His own name and that thus promotes and teaches His own name.

The problem, I believe, with the doctrine of election for many, is that we often look at life with man at the center, not with God at the center. We think that the idea of “righteousness” means that God commits Himself to act in such a way as to make much of us and to make our name great. And that is not what righteousness is. Righteousness means that God acts according to the ultimate good of His own name. And thank God that mercy is part of those actions by which He pursues His own glory.

The name of God and the glory of God are central to what is good and right. So when we ask the question: Is God right to act in freedom? We say, “Of course He is right to act in freedom. That’s what righteousness is. It’s God’s pursuit of His own glory.” Because God’s name is the most valuable thing in all creation, it is necessary that God act in accordance with the honor of His own name. So whatever we think righteousness or justice is, we must define it according to God’s name and God’s glory, not according to our own sensibilities or according to our will or our own importance or our own desires. Is God unjust because He shows mercy to whom He wills to show mercy? By no means! God is completely right to act in that way because that’s who God is. He is completely free.

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

What does God’s mercy or God’s election depend upon? On what ground does it stand? It’s not upon human will, human desires. Human will and desires are corrupt. It’s not upon human exertion, but rather it rests solely upon God who has mercy. God’s election does not depend on human will or exertion, but on God who has mercy.

Now, verse 16 is a restatement of verse 11. In verse 11 God says:

**Romans 9:11** …not because of works but because of him who calls—

Here in verse 16:

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

It is not because of works, but because of God who has mercy. This statement is so important! Paul says it twice in these five short verses so that we don’t miss it. He understands that we’re going to struggle. Both theses phrases negate human self-determination and affirm God’s freedom. God is the only Being who is completely free. We must begin our thoughts about this subject of God’s election by confessing that God is right to act like God. He is right to exercise His freedom. Now does this negate human responsibility? And the answer to that question is: By no means! No! Human responsibility is taught all through Scripture.

John Piper, of who I have been so helped as I’ve read through some of his works on Romans 9, uses 2 Corinthians 8:16-17 to illustrate and demonstrate the clear affirmation of both God’s sovereign grace working alongside man’s real, willing desire. Let’s look at this passage together.

**2 Corinthians 8:16-17** But thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care I have for you.

So, Paul is thanking God that this other pastor named Titus had the same kind of burning love for the Corinthian church, the same kind of burning devotion to care for them and to shepherd them. And notice what he says. He says God did that for Titus. He put it in his heart.

**2 Corinthians 8:16-17** For he not only accepted our appeal,

Do you see human responsibility? Do you see his decision being involved, here? Paul went to Titus and said, “Hey, Titus! Would you care for the Corinthians? Would you go there? Would you shepherd them?” He not only accepted our appeal,

**2 Corinthians 8:16-17** but being himself very earnest he is going to you of his own accord.

He also now is very earnest. He’s not being coerced. He’s not being chained. He’s not being obligated, demanded. But as Paul looks at Titus’ heart and his earnestness to help the Corinthians and of his own accord, his willingness to go there and to help them, he says, “It’s all because of what God did in his heart.” It’s not because of what Titus did in his heart. Titus didn’t decide this on his own. He did on his own, but he didn’t on his own. This is how they work together, God’s sovereign mercy and our human willingness, our human responses.

So, God is not unjust first, because God is right to act upon His freedom in giving mercy to individuals whom He chooses to give mercy to.

**Reason #2: God is right to do whatever advances the honor of His own Name.**

That’s what he’s going to get to now as He quotes Exodus 9:16.

***17*** *For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.”*

God says, “I raised up Pharaoh and put him in power in Egypt with a specific purpose in view, namely the honor of My own Name. That My name might be proclaimed!” By the time God says this statement in Exodus 9, God had already sent Moses six times to Pharaoh. “Pharaoh, let my people go!” “No, I won’t!” Okay, then Plague #1. “Pharaoh, let my people go!” “No, I won’t!” Plague #2. Six times God has already done this. He sent plagues to Pharaoh in judgment for Pharaoh’s devaluing of God’s name. Pharaoh says, “I don’t want to honor and glorify your God, Moses. I refuse to!” And God says, “Okay. Here’s what I’m going to do. I’m going to send you plague, after plague, after plague, after plague.”

Now, here’s the question as you think of that story: Is this a wrestling match where God wins one period when He send the plague. It seems like He’s going to win, but then Pharaoh rises up and says, “No, I decided not to.” And so God loses another period. Then He wins one period and He loses a period. Is this a back and forth wrestling match between Pharaoh and God? And the answer to that question is No, it’s not. If we see that, we misread the story altogether.

What God is saying in Exodus 9, quoted here in Romans 9, is that, “I win every part of this story.” God says, “I could have easily humbled Pharaoh the first meeting. I chose not to.” Why not? “Because I wanted My name to be more honored than what that would have done. My name is more advanced by having Pharaoh after Round 1, say No. After Round 2, say No. After Round 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10—No, no, no! And finally, “Yes.” And even then it was a No. And then it ended up in the Red Sea. And God says, “Here’s the reason why I did that. I chose not to humble Pharaoh for this purpose. So that My name might be exalted and My power might be made known throughout all the earth. That’s why I do what I do. It’s for the cause of My name.”

God is in control even of Pharaoh’s rebellion and God chooses the path that leads to His greater glory. Now, God is not the author of Pharaoh’s rebellion, but God is not the victim of Pharaoh’s rebellion either. God is free to work His plan in Pharaoh’s life, a plan that advances His own glory. Pharaoh is guilty of hardening his own heart. This is where human responsibility comes in. Pharaoh is completely responsible for his own sinful decisions. This is not a situation where Pharaoh says, “Oh, I really, really want to humble myself before God, but God, you just won’t let me.” This is a situation where Pharaoh’s will desired to rebel against God and God sovereignly worked in the midst of Pharaoh’s rebellion to advance the glory of His name and never lose a single chapter of that whole story. Here’s the truth. God never hardens an innocent, pure heart. God only hardens hearts that are already set against Him. Everyone who is condemned by God, who doesn’t receive His mercy, is deservingly condemned.

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

So then, in order to display the glory of His own name, just like he did with Pharaoh, this is how He continues to work out His plan of salvation among mankind. God has mercy on whomever He wills and He hardens whomever He wills. God does whatever advances the glory of His own name and this is always the right thing to do since God’s name is the most precious value in all the world.

Who hardened Pharaoh’s heart? The Scripture says that God did. (Exodus 7:3-4) Who hardened Pharaoh’s heart? The Scripture says Pharaoh did. (Exodus 8:15) And both are true. There is not a contradiction. These are married together to help us understand who God is and what He calls us to be and to do. They reveal God’s glory to us and His working in our hearts.

I want to close with some applications.

1. Each one of us need mercy, not justice from God.

If we are of the like to begin to look at the various aspects of God’s dealings with us and with the world around us and say, “I don’t think God’s being fair. I don’t think God’s being righteous in this.” Please understand that the last thing you want is for God to be righteous with you. It would be a terrible thing for God to be righteous with any one of us. If God is just with any one of us, we will suffer immeasurably forever and ever under His righteous condemnation for our rebellion and for our sin. What each of us need is God’s mercy. And we must not count on our own human will, our own exertion, to connect us to eternal life. What we must do is look to Christ Jesus. We must look to God for mercy.

Jesus tells this beautiful story. And He says He told it about people who trusted in themselves that they were already righteous, that they could do by human will or human exertion what was required.

**Luke 18:9-14** He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

In other words, one was a moral man and one was an immoral man.

**Luke 18:9-14** The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayedthus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

I know of no doctrine that humbles my heart more than the doctrine of God’s sovereignty working in salvation.

2. God never turns a deaf ear to anyone who asks Him for mercy.

Let’s not confuse this doctrine with twisted thoughts.

**Revelation 22:17** The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

God never turns a deaf ear to anyone who asks Him for mercy.

3. If we do come to Christ for mercy, let us give God all the praise for every part of our response to Him.

The truth is, we would be blind to His mercy. We would never want it. We would never ask for it, left to ourselves in our sinful state. If we’ve come to ask God for mercy, it is because of His amazing grace and His amazing mercy. So let us be a people who rejoice.

4. As recipients of mercy, let our very lives be to proclaim the Name of the Lord.

If the glory of God’s Name is a worthy pursuit of the eternal, infinite God Himself, a pursuit that makes this God happy from eternity past until eternity future, it is a pursuit that will completely satisfy any soul who enters it. It is the meaning of life. It is the purpose for which we are created. It is so that we would glorify God, that we would enjoy Him and that we would proclaim Him and communicate His goodness and grace and power and sovereign glory to others. So let us live to proclaim the Name of the Lord. Let us share with others with a heart desiring as sinners who have received mercy, to call other sinners to receive mercy along with us.