

Romans #21 - Predestination Problems Unloving?

- The music is so dramatic. I feel like I should. It feels a little anticlimactic. It's like, well, here I am. And here's my Bible. My name is pastor Mark. I don't have a smoke machine. I feel like I should come in like on a zip line or something, you know, something like a thing, but I don't, that's all, I'm 50. I just, I walked up. That's all I did so good to have you with us live or online. And what I like to do what we like to do is go through books of the Bible. So we're in the book of Romans, amazing incredible book. We're in chapter nine, find your place there. And if you're new, we're so glad to have you. This is gonna be one of the greatest four or five hours of your life. That's how we do the sermons here at the Trinity Church. And if you're laughing, it's 'cause you're a visitor the people that are part of the church they know that's a prophecy right there. That's what's gonna happen. So what we're talking about in Romans 9 and 10 is what can be a kind of a big, complicated, controversial issue. And that is, do we choose God first? Or does God choose us first? In any relationship both people need to agree. They want a relationship, but in our relationship with God does God choose us first? Or do we choose Him first? And the big category, something called predestination. And if you're from GCU, you've argued about this for the last two years with all of your fellow classmates this is all you've talked about. Now, that being said, it does have some real importance because it explains how we are to tell our story, and the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian on how we tell our life story. For a non-Christian it really is a biography and a biography is here's what I did. Here's what I overcame. Here's what I learned. Here's here's what I did to sort of pull myself up by my bootstraps. For a Christian the way we tell the story of our life is a testimony. And that is that this is what God said. This is what God did. This is how God sustained me. This is what God taught me. The difference between a biography and a testimony is really who's the hero of the story, who gets all the credit. Or to use a word from the Bible the glory, and for us it's God who saves us. It's God who does the work. And when we tell the story of our life we wanna tell the story in such a way that people know who our God is and what our God does. And so I'll tell you a little bit about my story. I grew up marginal Jack Catholic. My mom knew the Lord. It was filled with the spirit and I didn't know the Lord, and I didn't really have any interest of the things of God. Nobody's fault, but my own. I thought it was a good moral kid. So I just tried to be a good person. I believe there was a God didn't know Jesus just tried to be a good person. So I didn't drink. I didn't smoke. I didn't do drugs. And I never beat anybody up that didn't deserve it. 'Cause I was moral and you can ask them, they all agree. They're like I deserved it. So, and then I only did well in school. I got an academic scholarship, leadership scholarship. I was most likely to succeed student body president for your Letterman, men of the year, played a little quarterback. I wasn't very good. That's why I'm free on Sunday. And I played baseball which I really loved. And then I went off to college and was on a scholarship and everything was fine. I didn't have some cray, no addiction, no cratering of life, no major existential crisis. And I wasn't really looking for God. I wasn't going to church. I was just going to class, just a regular normal guy. And it wasn't a particularly great guy. My girlfriend was a pastor's daughter and I was sleeping with her. So there's that. And at the time, I didn't think it was a big deal. Now that I'm pastor with a daughter I have a totally different perspective on that. So. I should have been set

on fire and it should have been broadcast to the world as a warning to all others young man. Yeah, so all the dads are ready to collect the offering. Now they're like that's something I can get behind right there. Okay, so I remember I was in college and all of a sudden something in may just changed. I didn't do it. God did it. I remember Grace called me my now wife. She was many miles away to different college. And she said, so how are you doing? I was like weird. I said, I'm reading the Bible. I'm going to church. She's like, you're wild. I said, yeah. She's like why? I was like, I have no, I don't know. I said, I want something in me wants to do this. And this is totally new. I remember sitting in my dormitory as a freshman reading Romans 1 and it says and your called to belong to Jesus Christ. And I thought, okay, I belong to Jesus now. I was like, oh, that was for me. She's like, well, what did you do? I was like, I don't think I did anything. I'm trying to figure out what happened to me. I don't think I did anything. I think God did something and I'm trying to figure out what happened. She's like, so what's different? I said, well, I said, I'm trying to figure out how to pray. And I said, I'm reading the Bible a lot. And I like it. She said, really? I said, yeah. So where are you going to church? I was like, I don't know. And that's a scary thing when you're new, you don't know if you're in a church or a cult. And the problem is you never know till the last day. You're like, I love this church and white sneakers. And I think Kool-Aid is amazing. And then you're like front row picker. And I was like, I think it's a church. I don't know. I think I'm in a church. And so Grace was asking what happened? You know what, God did something. God changed my desires. He gave me a new nature. He gave me a love for Jesus, a desire for scripture. God changed me. And ever since then I've been trying to figure out what that means for me, okay. And so of you, for those of you who are a Christian, the Bible is gonna use some words to explain how God does this in our lives. And the Old Testament use words like plan, purpose and choose. In the New Testament words like predestine, elect, choose and appoint. So here's the big question for someone to have a relationship with God who makes that choice? Do we make it or does someone else make it? So this is the big sort of introduction to our theme for the day. Who chooses our salvation? Option number one. So it's either Satan, us or God. Those are the Satan and demons, human beings or God. So it's divine sphere of beings. Human beings or God. Option one is Satan. How many of you are not really excited if Satan's making choices for your life. And just so you know, he does make choices for your life. He does, question is, does he make the choice regarding your salvation? He said this in Romans 8:38, 39, we're gonna stay in the book of Romans, neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers that's divine beings. And that word for rulers can mean Holy or unholy divine beings, including angels, nor things present, nor to come, nor powers. The powers there would be supernatural powers that could include Satan and demons, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. What he's saying is this, that Satan and demons are trying to separate us from God's love. That's what, that's their mission. God loves you. Satan hates God. And he hates you. And he wants you to be like him forever separated from the love of God. Satan and demons are separated from the love of God and you and I get an offer from God that they don't get. That is an offer for a relationship. Satan and demons like us, divine beings just like human beings, rebelled against God. And as a result are separated from the love of God and the differences. Jesus never came in the image and likeness of a demonic being, he didn't die for them. He didn't rise for them. He doesn't give an opportunity or possibility of salvation for them. So Jesus

says that hell was made for the devil and his angels. They're all going there. None of them are going to make it to heaven. That's why if Satan makes the decision. He's going to want us to join him in that doom project together forever. The other option is that maybe we can choose. And he said this in Romans 3:10-12, none is righteous. How many?

- [Congregation] None.

- Some of you're like, I'm a good person. No, you're not. So be like, I'm offended. Like, well, that's really bad of you. It'd be like, my mom said I'm a good person. Your mom's a liar. Mom's a liar, she's a false prophet. She said, I have a good heart. Yeah, she started to call it right then. Okay, none is righteous. No not one, no one, no one understands you. Like I know, I went to community college. I got a minor in religion. Well, you don't understand. Neither did your profit. No one seeks for God. See people are looking for spirituality, miracles, the supernatural and power but not God. All have turned aside together they have become worthless. No one does good, not even one. So if it's up to us to choose, how many of us choose God, zero, zero of us do. So people will seek what God gives, but they don't love who God is. See, we want the gifts not the giver. And so if it's Satan and demons, we all go to hell. If it's we choose, we all go to hell. And then the third option is God chooses in light of the options, you should be pretty excited about this, okay. Option three God, and this is where he started the whole section that we'll jump into. He introduces the themes here that he then unpacks and Romans 9 and 10. And this is the introduction to our time together. For those whom he foreknew He also predestined, there's our word. To be conformed to the image of His Son. God wants you to be like Jesus. And those who He predestined. He called those whom He called He justified. Those whom he justified He also glorified. So they call this the order of salvation. And it goes from eternity past to eternity future. It starts with foreknew, before God created the heavens and the earth. God, foreknew that he was going to send His Son Jesus Christ to seek, to save, to love, to serve me in you. God knows everything in totality. God is not like you and I, He's not stuck in the middle of history, hoping to anticipate what comes next. He rules over history and He knows the beginning and the end, He's the alpha and the Omega the beginning and the end. God exists outside of time. He can act in time. He's not shocked because everything is foreknown by Him. So before God made the world God knew what you and I were going to do in sin. And He knew that He would send His Son to fix our biggest problem. And that is our relationship with God. He, foreknew, not only that, it says that then he predestined and what this is is that God predetermines a destiny for you. And I want you to take this as such encouragement and hope. So oftentimes we look into the future. We're like, I don't know where I'm going. I don't know what I'm doing. I don't know what to expect. I don't know how to anticipate. Or even we found this last year you make a plan and things change, things change. The good news is God rules over all of history including the details of your life. And He has a destiny for you. I wake up every day quite frankly, as a really excited hopeful person like God, what do you have for me today? What do you want me to do? Where do want me to go? Who can I serve? What can I give? What can I learn? You know, what needs to change. God today is a day of adventure. My God has a destiny for every day for me and I wanna wake up and I just wanna walk in God's will. And I wanna find his destiny for that day. And so for me, it's not an anxious thing. It's actually a really

exciting thing. My life is not without meaning, value or purpose. God is over it. God is with me in it. And He has something important for me every day to contribute to whatever He has planned for my destiny. And I tell this to our family and our kids. We're chasing God's destiny for our life. And it's super exciting 'cause God loves us and He has good plans for us. And we wanna discover what those are. It says, then at some point you get called and there's two kinds of calls. There is an external call and an internal call. External where somebody is talking to you about Jesus. Right now we're talking about Jesus. This is an external call. Internal call is where the Holy Spirit flips the switch in your soul gives you faith brings you from death to life spiritually. It takes out your heart of stone gives you a heart of flesh to quote Ezekiel. How many of you, you heard about Jesus externally. And then all of a sudden one day something just clicked internally. And it was like, okay, I love Jesus now. I was talking to someone recently. They'd only been to church a few times in their entire life and they're a newer Christian. They're like I heard about Jesus a few times. It didn't make any sense to me. And then one day I just love Jesus. Like every, like a switch flipped in my soul as like I love Jesus and now they totally loved Jesus. And they're walking with Jesus and they're excited about Jesus. That's God's calling, bringing you from death to life. This is what God does now out of this new heart, this new nature, and these new desires will call out to God because God has called on us. We'll love God because He's first loved us. We'll work out our salvation with fear and trembling because God has already worked in us to willing to do according to His good pleasure. That God initiates that we respond, that God leads and we follow. And within this, when God does call you it literally is a little bit like the story of a guy in the Bible named Lazarus. He died. He was a friend of Jesus. He and his two sisters. And the Bible says that he was very much dead. The King James Bible says he stinketh, he stinketh, okay. So he's very dead and Jesus comes and He says, Lazarus come forth. And Lazarus goes from death to life because he was called by name. What Jesus did for Lazarus physically. He does for every Christian spiritually. He calls you by name and he brings you from death to life. So foreknown predestined called and then he uses this word justified. And if you've not been here you can go back and find it all online. But this is one of the major themes in the book of Romans. And we looked at it in earlier chapters. And this is that God is Holy and we are unholy. The God is good and we're bad. And that we have been unfaithful to God. We have behaved unlawfully toward God and now things are not right between us and God. And so how do we declared righteous? And what that allows is things to be made right with God. How can all the dismayed wrong be made right? That's what justified means. And the issue is this that God does that. That God sent Jesus Christ. I have the most exciting news for you. Jesus Christ is God, that ours is not an abandoned planet. Ours is a visited planet by our creator. That he humbled himself and He entered into human history as Jesus Christ. And He lived without any sin. The life that you and I should have lived but we have failed to live. He died the death we should have died the death for sin. And what Jesus did on the cross He brought justice and He justified us by taking places and trading places with us. So Jesus goes to the cross and He takes all of the wrath, and the punishment, and the death. And he gives to you all of the righteousness, the obedience, and the life. And this is why we love Jesus so much that Jesus took care of our problem with God. And he has justified us allowed us to be acceptable in the sight of God. It's nothing that we do. It's what Jesus does for us. And not only that, ultimately as we trust in Him this process that began in eternity past with God foreknowing you, it

continues into eternity future with God glorifying you. You know there are so few people and things that we can ultimately count on. This is a God we can count on. When it says that you will be glorified. What that means is one day Jesus will return that heaven and earth will reunite, and that God will resurrect you from the grave. And there will be you perfect forever. I wanna encourage you. Don't look back at who you used to be. Look forward to who you're going to be. When God sees you, he sees you as he is completed with you. God sees you as healthy, not sick. God sees you as living, not dying. God sees you as healed, not broken. God sees you as wise, not foolish. God sees you as you will be in Christ when He is done with his work for in and through you. And so what God is, He's so committed to you that He is committed to making you like his son Jesus Christ together in relationship with Him forever. Now within this, there are two ways that we can respond. One is very arrogant and it is well then I must be very important. The other is very humble in saying He must be very loving. I would just encourage you to take that second path. Don't stand before God and say, you're welcome I'm here. Stand before God and say, thank you I'm here. That ultimately this is the difference between a biography and a testimony. Who's the one that's faithful. God is the one who's faithful. We have faith in a God who is faithful, Now in saying all of this. Paul anticipates five questions and or objections that people will have regarding God choosing us before we choose Him. We've already dealt with three of them. Today we'll deal with question number four. And then after Easter we'll finish up with question number five. And here's basically the essence of this week's question does predestination may God unloving if God chooses some people, but not all people is that unloving. What shall we say then the Gentiles, those are non-Jewish people. That's the rest of us. The naughty dirty Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it. That is a righteousness that is by faith, but that Israel the Jewish people and the descendants of Abraham ultimately through whom came Jesus Christ. Who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith but as if it were based on works, they have stumbled over the stumbling stone. His name is Jesus. As it is written behold I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. And whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame. Let me unpack this for you. The concept here is righteousness. It's a concept that appears 33 times in the book of Romans, eight times just in Romans 9:30 - 10:6, just pack into this short little section. And the issue of righteousness is this our relationship with God has gone wrong. How will it be made right? That's really the essence of the issue. How many of you have had a stranger or a broken relationship? And how many of you that stranger broken relationship, it was your fault. If you're married, you know exactly what this looks like. We've all done this, the question is, well how do we take a broken relationship and make it right? How do we bring righteousness into the position where everything has been wrong, and people have been wronged. And the same is true in our relationship with God. And what he's saying ultimately is this, the way that our relationship with God is made right is not that we make it right but that he makes it right. In the same way in our personal relationships. If you do something evil towards someone and it breaks that relationship, they need to be the one who forgives you, and embraces you, and reconciles with you. They need to be the one who is willing to make it right because you're the one who has made it wrong. In our relationship with God because of sin, offense, rebellion, and folly. We have made it wrong and God through Jesus Christ He makes it all right. That's the basic concept of righteousness. And what He's

saying is this it's a very loving thing for God to do so. Let me just say this. How many of you don't devise very complicated plans so that you can love, bless and care for your enemies. See, we all kind of chuckle. If you have an enemy you're like, yeah, I'm not gonna do all I can to make their life better. I'm gonna watch Liam Neeson movies and I'm gonna do some stuff. That's what I'm gonna do. God, we were His enemies. And what He decided was, He was going to make it right for some of us. And he was going to do something special for some of us. And so number one, if work needs to be done for our salvation it is loving the God would do all the work. See? Because something has gone wrong in our relationship with God, namely sin. Some work needs to be done to make it right. The question is, who does the work? Well, it's very loving. That God doesn't look at us and say, here's all the work you need to do to make this right. He says, I'm sending Jesus to do all the work for you. He'll make it right. This is a great gift that God gives. And in most other religions they're all what we would call works-based. And it is, here's what you need to do to get right with God. And in Christianity, Jesus does all the work. That's why on the cross, as He is dying in our place for our sins, He utters this famous line. "It is finished." All the works done. Jesus did all the work. And so we are saved by works, but it's not our works it's the works of Jesus. Jesus does all the work. And He gives us this relationship with God this righteousness from God as a gift. And what happens is most people still have some sense that some work needs to be done. So some years ago there was a Christian training that would send Christians out to talk to non-Christians about Jesus. It was for the purpose of evangelism introducing them to the Lord Jesus. And one of their questions was, if you died tonight do you know where you would go? And one of the other questions was why should God let you into heaven? That was the basic question. And the vast majority of people that answer that question answer it with some form of works. I'm a good person. I'm moral. I believe in God. I was baptized. I went to camp. I grew up in a Christian family. I pray, they would give some work. They're like, here's something I did, but those works are not enough. Our problem is so big. It's a God-sized problem. And the work can only be done by God. And so ultimately the good news is the love of God is that God does the work for us. Number two, if all people are unrighteous it is loving for God to make some people righteous. If everyone rebels, if everyone acts like a criminal it is very kind of God to pursue some people, to love them, to change them, to rehabilitate them and to serve them. He's obligated to no one. It's very loving that he would do that for anyone, including someone like me. Number three, Paul's argument includes this. If no one earns salvation, it is loving of God to give it to us as a free gift. Think of it in this way. Think of, and he talks about the Jews and the Gentiles. So let me compare and contrast, the Jews are the people who tried, the Gentiles are the people who don't even try historically, okay. So this is the Bible in the Old Testament. It's got a lot of laws. The first five books are called the books of the law. There's 600 rules or laws, the Jewish people are like, okay, do it. And they tried really hard. The guy who tried hardest was maybe the author of the book of Romans. His name is Paul. He was devout. He says as to the keeping of the law without blemish or fault that he was nearly perfect. So these guys literally they're like great. We don't eat pork. We take Sabbath off. We tied 10%. We learn Hebrew. We wait until we're married to have any sort of intimacy. We don't take the Lord's name in vain. Like they got a lot of stuff to do. They working really hard. How many of you grew up in more of a religious home? A lot of rules. And you were the raise your hand. If you were the rule keeper, I know you want to like, yes Mark, tell me what to do. I

will do that right now. I love doing what I'm told. How many of you were the rule keeper? You're you like your parents told you do something like I'll do it. You're the good kid. I wasn't that kid by the way. I did raise one of those kids maybe more but at least one. I had one daughter that was such a rule keeper, rule follower. I just reduced it to 50% chance, you know what I'm talking about, I told story before, but there was one day she did something wrong. I didn't even raise my voice or yell. I just said her name and she threw up. The thought that she didn't keep a rule, destroyed her. My sons didn't go like that. They were Gentiles. They didn't even try, okay. How many of you in your family you were the Jew. You were the good one, the rule keeper, the law keeper, right? You were like the third parent. Mom said only two gummy bears that's three. You're the Pharisee gummy bear. Older sibling, okay. How many of you, I didn't even try whatever. And I put pants on. I don't even care. That's you. thank you for putting pants on, by the way. I mean, we appreciate that. So now imagine, imagine there's a job and the employer says, okay if you complete this job, I'll pay you. Now, One group of people shows up on the job and they work really hard, but they don't do the job. Did they succeed or fail? They failed. The other group is hung over. They don't even show up to work they're union, Okay. They're union. So I just say what I think, okay. If you wanna complain, feel free to send an email. We'll delete it. We minister to people like that all the time. So a ministry, ministry, ministry, ministry. Okay, so they don't even show up to work. Did they fell? So should either of them earn, get the wage? Should they get paid? No, but these people would say, at least we, at least we try. Yeah, but you both failed. So neither of you is earned anything. See whether you are sort of a Jew person who really tried or a Gentile who did not either way if you failed, you don't earn merit deserve salvation. You didn't make it, because here's God's standard. God's standard is perfection. Jesus says, be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect. God doesn't see good people in bad people. He sees Jesus and then those who are sinful and fallen short of the glory of God. It's perfect and imperfect, okay. Now what happens with religious people? Sometimes they get a little frustrated because they were trying really hard. And sometimes let me say this. Sometimes religious people are trying very hard, are farther from God than those who didn't even try. Because what they're saying is I'm gonna work my way to God. And God's like, actually, that's not how this works. And so sometimes the religious people, the people who are all about the rule making and keeping, at least we tried. Well, actually that was your problem. 'Cause when Jesus shows up, it's primarily the religious people who hate Him and oppose him the most. Because they don't think that they need His works because they think that they have their own. And sometimes your works makes your hands so full of your performance, that you don't have room for Jesus and His performance. That's what he's talking about here is it's a gift. It's a gracious gift. It's not something that we earn Meredith deserved, but it is something that God gives. And I love this as well. He says, if everyone acts shamefully, it is loving that God does not put some people to shame. Let's just be honest in our world. If you do something you're gonna be put to shame. I mean, social media exists in large part to shame people. Cancel culture, critical theory. The whole goal is to shame you. Shame you. Rub your nose in it. How do I know? I know a guy. So I know a guy. And how many of us, you get put to shame for things that people know? Imagine if they knew everything. Imagine if your critics, your enemies, they knew not only what you did but what you thought. Uh-oh, two or three witnesses there's a confirmation. You know that God knows every word you've ever said. Every deed you've ever

done. Every motive you've ever held and every inclination of your heart. If there was anyone who could ultimately and utterly put us to shame, it would be God. You know what, He says if you trust in Jesus, you'll never be put to shame. I love that. Jesus not only died for your sin. He died your shame. He died your shame It says in Hebrews that he endured the cross scorning its shame. You know what? That means that in a world where people are shaming one another and what's so weird in our world, they wanna make you ashamed of Jesus. You know, God just reminds me early in Romans 1, he says I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. You know what? We should be ashamed of some of the things we've done but we should not be ashamed of Jesus and what He's done. And if we're with Jesus, He doesn't put us to shame. So we don't live under shame. And we don't put other people to shame. I want that lifted from you. Some of you have carried a burden of shame. There are things you've said or done, ways you have failed. And it's almost like an identity that you wear. It's a burden that you bear. It's not a cross for you to carry. He took it with Him to the cross and He scorned its shame. And those who trust in Him will never be put to shame. And what he's ultimately saying is this it all comes down to Jesus, and that Jesus is either your cornerstone or your stumbling stone. And he says that Jesus is like a rock of offense and some trip over Him. And Jesus is called the rock, right? Throughout the scriptures, that's an indication of his strength, and of his stability, and his certainty. How many of you for many, many years you stumbled over Jesus Christ and Christianity. I got to disagree, I'm offended. I don't like that. You just tripped over it. Even to this day, people are still tripping over Christ and Christianity, 'cause I don't think that's true. I don't like that. So this is where we have a little conversation. Thank you for being here. What are some of the ways that people are still tripping over Christ and Christianity? I don't like that.

- [Congregation Member] Isn't fair.

- That's not fair. Oh, it is not fair. Hell is fair. And I go, I don't want fair. Oh, so you want grace. If God set us all on fire it'd be like fair. And if he takes us to heaven it's like grace. Christianity's not fair it's gracious. If it's fair, we wouldn't be any happier. I'll tell you that right now. Other ways that people trip or stumble over Jesus.

- [Congregation Member] Intolerant

- It's very intolerant. You know what? I find that the most tolerant people are the most intolerant people when it comes to things that the Bible says. Like there's one God, we male and female, marriages is for a man and a woman, life begins in the womb. And that ultimately there are demonic beings that are propping up counterfeit religions. You say that you'll find that those tolerant people, they're very intolerant. They suppress the truth is what Romans 1 told us. on social media, we'll call this throttling or banning. How do I know? I know a guy. Okay, other ways that people stumble or trip over Jesus,

- [Congregation Member] I don't deserve it.

- I don't deserve it. That's totally true. That's the really good part, right? If you get something you

don't deserve that's why it's good news. See people, they trip and stumble over Jesus for this reason that if it's about, see Christianity is simple, but it's not easy. It's simple, you need Jesus. But it's not easy because that means that you're the problem. And you're not part of the solution. And that requires a lot of humility. I said it in a previous sermon, people were like, well, what part do you play in salvation? Well, I do the sinning, He does the saving. So I did my part, but it's not a lot to brag about. Right? He did all the saving. That's why, when I brag, I brag about Him and it's called worship. And so ultimately what he's saying here is Jesus is either the stumbling stone, that you trip over. It says elsewhere in the Bible that He can also be the cornerstone that you build your whole life on. And that day when you wanted to build something he would start with a cornerstone and everything would be built on it. And so for us as Christians, people are like, why are you so into Jesus? 'Cause he's the cornerstone of my life. My marriage is built on Jesus. My parenting is built on Jesus. My budget is built on Jesus. Our church is built on Jesus. A real faith ministries is built on Jesus. My relationships are built on Jesus. My eternity is built on Jesus. My understanding of the Bible is built on Jesus. You know why? Jesus is my cornerstone. Jesus is my everything. And apart from Jesus, I have nothing. Okay, that's it. So then he goes on. So some will say, okay, if God chooses us and we don't choose Him. And he's the one who initiates and we respond, that's on loving. So I was thinking about it as I was praying for you this week. And God brought to mind in Romans I'm gonna go through the whole book eventually, but God uses some analogies for our relationship with Him. The first is a marriage analogy in Romans 7. So I'll tell you a little story. It was March 12th, 1988, Grace and I my best friend, my incredible life. We had our first date and we just celebrated 33 years after our first date. And so on the first date when we were dating, I was like, I adore this girl. She's my favorite person. I want a lifetime supply of being with her. I like having her around. She has the most incredible laugh and I this'll shock you. I say crazy stuff. And then I know, I know, I know. And then, and then she laughs I love it. I love it. And I love this girl with all my heart. Every day I wake up and I look at my first choice, okay. And so when it came time to get married we were married at the age of 21 in college between our junior and senior year. Let me ask you this. Did she propose to me or did I propose to her? This is not a trick question. I propose to her and then she received my proposal. This is how marriage works. The man, I know we're talking crazy now. Crazy, like wait a minute. That seems binary. It is. It is. It is. I have an Adam's Apple and a beard it's should be fairly clear. It should be fairly clear. It should be very, very clear. What if I identify as a pony? don't judge me. So in a marriage, at least in a healthy marriage proposal the groom always proposes to the bride. So the analogy of our relationship with God it is a loving relationship, but who's the groom, well, Jesus is. Who's the bride, the church is. Who does the proposing the groom does. The next analogy that he uses is it now adoption analogy. So how many of you were adopted or have adopted a kid, adoption, okay. Can we just say thank you to those people for adopted kids? Amen. Here's what's crazy. Our God it was adopted. Jesus Christ was not the biological Son of a man named Joseph. But that man adopted Him. So only was our God adopted our God adopts. And this is where we learned in Romans that God is a father and become a Christian is to be adopted by God. So for those of you who did adopt a child lemme ask two questions first. How many of you went in, filled out the paperwork and you chose to about the child? How many of you did that, okay? How many of you the child lawyered up, filled out the paperwork and adopted you as there parent? It doesn't work that way, right?

I've never seen a child adopt a parent. I've seen parents adopt a child. In our relationship with God. We don't choose Him. He chooses us. See, this is the way that it works, but it is very loving. Ask any woman who's engaged. If she's feeling loved? Ask any kid whose parents are adopting them if they feel loved, this is love. The choosing is the loving. And then lastly, he uses this analogy of the kingdom of God or Zion. He just used the he's gonna use this word in our section today, but he uses it again in Romans 11, Zion was God's earthly kingdom. That was a shadow of his heavenly kingdom. And one day the invisible invisible kingdoms of Zion would come together with the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. We're here talking about heaven and eternal life. That being said, Jesus says that this is the Father's house. So here's another question. Do you get to decide or does someone else get to decide who lives your house? We do, right? Like this is why every house comes with a door. And if you don't have a door on your house you have a problem. We put a door on our house because there is a barrier that says, we get to decide who lives here. We get to decide who dwells here. The Bible says that Jesus is the narrow door. That unless you pass through Jesus you can't enter into the Father's house. And it would be silly for people to say, well, I decided I get to move in. It's not your house. See people who believe that everybody should go to heaven. They literally should take the door off their house. 'Cause they're hypocrites. If everybody gets to go to his house then everybody should get to come to your house. So ultimately in all of these metaphors or analogies, marriage is a loving relationship. Adoption is a loving relationship. Inviting someone to be part of your family and live in your home is a loving relationship. But it is the groom. It is the father. It is the head of household who makes those decisions. All of those point to the fact that when it comes to our relationship with God, God makes those decisions. And so someone asked in SAP obviously sweet is God loved the whole world. He does. God has a general love for the whole world. Right now, people are living. They're living on a planet that God made, their dwelling in the body that God gave them. They're working the job that God gave them, the ability and provision for. They're eating food. They're swimming in their pool. They're hiking up Camelback. There's, God's been very good, very loving. And then there's a special unique love for his kids in the same way. I love everybody, but I have a special unique devotion and commitment to my kids. I give time to people, but my kids get my first and best time. I give money to people, but my kids get my first and best financial contribution. People I care deeply about, but my children are the first priority. And if I'm committed to help somebody and my child has a crisis, I cancel that commitment. And I go with my first priority, which is my children. If you were the children of God, you have a unique and special love that God has bestowed upon you. And he wants you not to think about the people who don't know Him, but he wants you to think about his great love for you. This is where it says in Ephesians 1, before the foundations of the world, He predestined us in love. That the choosing is the loving. The choosing is the loving. He then continues. God saves and softens people. And before this man who writes this became a Christian and was saved. Was he very tolerant, patient loving and considerate of people who disagreed with him?

- [Congregation] No.

- Not at all. He was religious. He was punitive. He was dangerous. He was violent. You'll meet

some guys. They've got a religious demonic spirit about them. They're always right. They're never wrong. They're gonna work through bullying, intimidating, shoving, pushing, threatening. That was this man. If you disagreed with them, he was going to eviscerate you. He was a control freak. And then he met Jesus and he realized he wasn't in control. The Jesus was in control. And it softened his heart toward people who disagree with him. Brothers speaking to Christians, my heart's desire. So she's talking about God doing a work in his heart, and prayer to God is for them, his family, friends, neighbors, coworkers who don't know the Lord Jesus that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge, for being ignorant of the righteousness of God. God is the righteous one. We're the unrighteous ones, and seeking to establish their own. They did not submit to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law. That the person who does the commandments shall I live by them. So a couple of things, if you know that you're chosen, you should have more passion for lost people. He says, my heart's desire is that they would meet the Jesus whom I have met. How many of you have someone that you know, you love you care about, and your heart is for them, but their heart not for Jesus. And it breaks your heart. You should have a longing to see people meet Jesus. Sometimes people say, well, if God saves people, why do we pray? Why do we care? Why do we do missions? Why do we do evangelism? Why do we try? Let me say, it's very simple. He's gonna get into it in the next section. That God is not only sovereign over who He saves. God is sovereign over how He saves. He's not just sovereign over the ends. He sovereign over the means to the ends. I'll give you an analogy. Some years ago, I was the first born of five children. My dad was a carpenter construction worker literally hung dry wall till he broke his back to feed five kids. I love my dad with all my heart. And so when I was little, my dad one time was like, Marquee. You wanna go to work with me? I do. I wanted to be like my dad. So I had little work boots. a little jeans. a white t-shirt, a little vest. a little tiny hard hat. I got a little lunchbox, had a little thermos. And I was my dad's little buddy. And I jumped in his truck and we're going to the job site to do construction. I'm a little guy. Question am I needed?

- [Congregation] Yeah.

- If you have children, you have power tools. Your whole goal is to keep them apart, amen. I was a little kid like that. Put me on a table saw I got this. No, no you don't, no you don't, no you don't, don't. Was I needed? No, was I even helpful? No, why did my dad bring me to work?

- [Congregation] He loved you.

- He love me. And he wanted me to see what he was doing. And he wanted me to do it with him. This is where for the Christian. When we talk to people about Jesus, when we pray for Jesus, when we give financially, when we work faithfully, where we're just little kids that are going to work with our dad. And it's not that He couldn't do the work without us. It's that He wants to do the work with us, so that we get to know our dad, and we get to see what our dad is doing. And when we get to participate in it we get to share in his joy, okay? I like to say that Christianity is

not what we have to do. It's what we get to do. And what makes it awesome is we get to do it with our dad. It's about the relationship. So Paul says my heart's desire. Your heart should be opened because let me say this. Sometimes people, especially if you know and love them they're family friends. They're close to you. If they don't know Jesus eventually they can annoy or frustrate you. Like why don't you just accept Jesus. At some point, somebody felt that about you. And they prayed for you. So pray for them. If God has a heart for you He wants you to have a heart for them. The other thing that he's saying here is that if God has chosen you, you should be more inclined to pray for lost people. People who don't know this is Jesus says my prayer, my prayer. And what praying does. It keeps our heart tender toward the people who don't have a heart that's tender toward Jesus. It also causes us to trust that God is at work in their life. And when we are speaking to them I think can give us an opportunity to just tell them I really love you. I'm praying for you. And let me say this. If you're dealing with a non-Christian sometimes the best way to start to sort of introduce them to the work of Jesus is to just ask them, how can I pray for you? How can I pray for you? And what I find is if you come at people you're like, okay, give me all your objections to Jesus and all argue with you about those things. It tends not to go that well, you come and say is there anything I can be praying for? Even people who don't believe in Christianity, like, well, I mean, it can't hurt just send it up and they'll give you a per request. Okay, great. And what that does that allows you then to follow up with them, okay. I've been praying for you about this. I just want to check in how's it going? Anything else I could do to help. See our heart needs to be for people. And then praying is the beginning of ministering to people. And if God has chosen you, you should be more zealous than people who are zealous for misguided things. And what he says is they have a zeal that's misguided. How many people do you know, they're really excited about something that they shouldn't be. You ever seen an election cycle. People have zeal a little bit misguided, a little bit misguided people get into relationships. Their sports teams, sports are coming back online and I'm pro sports by the way. But for some people it's a religion. It is a religion, man. I mean, they're tailgating. There wearing the colors, if their team dies, it's good Friday. And there's a funeral. 13 wins, it's Easter Sunday. We've resurrected from the dead. I mean, it's a whole religion thing. And what he's saying is this that people get really zealous. We should be at least as zealous for Jesus as misguided people are from this guy to things. That's why we believe in a passionate, emotional activated Christianity. Amen. All right. One guys with me, amen. The rest of your life, we drink decaf. Tell more jokes. Okay, and he says that we should have more. If God has chosen us, we should have more compassion for those who don't know Jesus 'cause he says they're ignorant. Meaning they don't understand. Are we better than non-Christians?

- [Congregation] No.

- No, I know Christians. Some of us are terrible. If it was my works, it wouldn't work. Are we smarter than non-Christians?

- [Congregation] No.

- No, have you ever met a stupid Christian? I know a guy, right? That ultimately we're not

smarter. We're not better. We're just loved and we're blessed. And so it should give us a compassion. Like you're not, I'm not better than you and I'm not smarter than you. Ultimately, he goes on to say as well that it cause us not to seek to have salvation by manipulation. If God chooses and he does the work that means that we don't get to choose. And we don't get to do the work to save somebody. And salvation by manipulation is I predestined you. Now I'm going to do something and make you do something so that I can make you saved. This is where you get manipulative Christianity. I'll give you an example. I was thinking about it in the last sermon. Some years ago, I was at a relatives house and all of us cousins were gonna go swimming. And our newly saved, well-intended probably watching love you and forgive you. But every time I get the Christmas card I get a little nervous I twitch PTSD because they pulled us into the shed where all the swimming stuff was housed the boats, and the oars, and the life jackets. And they blocked the door and they're like nobody goes swimming until you give your life to Jesus and get saved. This was a hostage situation. I was like, why? I'm a little kid. I'm like, I'll go swimming. They're like, if you drown, you're going to hell. He's like, this is very serious, very intense. I was like, well, no, we just wanna go swimming. No, you all need to pray this prayer, get saved. Okay, what they were doing is predestinating. And they were gonna make us work. So I thought, you know what? We're gonna wait this out. We're gonna see how committed they are, by wait a little while, I was like, we going swing and they are like, not till you're saved. Well, guess what? I got saved. I was like, what do you need, tell Jesus, you want to be a Christian? I'm like, Jesus, I wanna go swimming. And be a Christian. So I prayed this prayer. Did I mean it in my heart?

- [Congregation] No.

- No, I didn't. He's gonna say it just a moment. If you believe in your heart and confess with your mouth, I confess with my mouth, but I didn't believe in my heart. I was like, whatever. I just want you to stop annoying me. I'm sure. Like this relative meant really well, super well. I'm sure they went home that day and I'm like I begged 10 pagans today. No you didn't. You angered 10 cousins. That's what you did. So we don't need to do salvation by manipulation. 'Cause God predestines we don't and God does the work. Not us or them. And God, if God is choosing it should give us hope that God is doing more than we are seeing. So people are like, what about those who are aborted or miscarried? Well, you know what? If God chooses, God can get somebody in the womb. Well, what about those who've never heard of, I don't know who's never heard, my God does dreams, angels, visions. One day He talked through a Bush, like he's super creative. He talked through a donkey. He does every week right here. I mean, He's super. He's super creative I don't know. Somebody recently they had their dad died and their dad didn't seem to know Jesus. And I believe my dad's in hell. I said, don't put your dad in hell and they'll put them in heaven. Just let Jesus figure it out. I don't know, were you there at the end? Do you know what they said, or thought, or did? They're like, no. I said, well look Jesus and then we'll figure it out. I do believe in hell, but I don't believe I'm putting anybody in hell. That's not my job. I don't put anybody in heaven either. I've I've seen 10,000 people baptized under my preaching in my lifetime. I saved zero people. God does the saving. We can speak and serve only God can save. Let God figure it out. I just, you just don't know. Don't emotionally live with that. Just trust

Jesus and wait to see what in fact happened. 'Cause if you ever seen somebody who got saved at the very last minute. I have, I've been at people's deathbed. I got like one eye open, one eye closed. Like they're almost done. And then they're like, oh Jesus, forgive me. You're like, wow, that was close. That was really close. That was really close. I don't want that guy to visit me. If I'm on my death bed. I don't wanna deal with that guy. And it also should cause us if God has chosen us to keep from religious legalism, what he calls the law. Cause here's the rules. I need to keep them and I need to keep keeping them. And then I'm gonna make more rules and I'm gonna enforce the rules and I'm gonna force you to enforce the rules. And this is where you get something called legalism. It's all about works, and performance, and earning it, and meriting it. And it leads to judging everyone else and looking down on everyone else. And not looking up to Jesus, because we're so focused on our works that we ignore his works, right? That ultimately it says that if God has chosen us that for us the end of everything should be Christ. He says the Christ Jesus is the end of the law. What that means is the point of purpose of everything is to get you to Jesus. So the point of everything in the Bible to get you to Jesus. The point of everything is just get it to Jesus. Get your marriage to Jesus, get yourself to Jesus, get your sin to Jesus, get your money to Jesus. Get your schedule to Jesus. The goal of everything, the end of everything, the telos, the goal, the ultimate end zone, everything should be driving for is just get it to Jesus. Just get it to Jesus. And if God has chosen you, what this means is, let me say it this way. For those who are not Christians, they are rejected by God because they have rejected God. For those who are Christians they love God because God first loved them. That's how this works. Lemme close with this section, two kinds of righteousness. But the righteousness based on faith says do not say in your heart, who will ascend into heaven that is to bring Christ down or who will descend into the abyss. That is to bring Christ up from the dead. But what does it say? And he's gonna quote a ton of Old Testament verses for this reason. The Old Testament, New Testament, same God, same means of salvation. So he's saying, everything ultimately in the Bible is about Jesus. But what does it say? The word is near you in your mouth and in your heart. That is the word of faith that we proclaim. We trust in Jesus. Because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart. It's both. That God raised Him from the dead. This is what we're gonna celebrate next week, Easter, the church was closed last year and we're gonna throw the biggest party ever this year, to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. You will be what saved guaranteed. If you call out to God, it's 'cause God has called out to you. And if you call out to God, everyone who calls out to God will be saved by God. For with the heart one believes and is justified. And with the mouth, one confesses and is safe. For the scripture says, keeps quoting the Bible or a Bible church. Everyone who believes in Him will not be put to shame for. There is no distinction between Jew and Greek. Those who try and those who don't. But the same Lord is Lord overall. His name is Jesus bestowing His riches, His generosity, His inheritance on all who call on Him, for quote, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- Okay, and we'll be saved. This is our hope. And it's believing in your heart. So my question to you is, do you believe in your heart that Jesus Christ is Lord and that he died and rose and that

he alone is your savior. Do you believe in your heart? You see there was a season in my life that I would have confessed with my mouth, but I didn't believe in my heart. The Bible says that man looks at the outward, God looks at the heart, God knows your heart. And if you believe in your heart, confess with your mouth. And what this is, this is how you love your neighbor. And this is how you tell them about the Jesus who loved you. And so ultimately, God doesn't need you to confess with your mouth, all your neighbor does. And in our day there is this great pressure to keep your religion private. Keep that to yourself. No, no, no. Ours is public because our Jesus is public. His life, death, burial, resurrection, we're public. And his second coming will be public. Okay, it is very public. We don't just have Jesus in our heart. He's Lord over all. Therefore we confess Him everywhere and anywhere to anyone and everyone. So my question is to you with Easter coming up we've got the big party next weekend. And we're gonna have seven services. So two on Friday, if you've never been, my goal is to wreck your soul, okay. Emotionally, my goal is to break you, okay? So one guy says, yes, the rest are like I feel a cold coming on. And we're gonna have a funeral where we look at the death of Jesus Christ in our place for our sins. It's a funeral. And then Saturday night two services, Sunday morning three services celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That he defeated Satan, sin, death, hell, the wrath of God. And here's the good news. He also saves you from you. See, you can't save you. You need to be saved from you. I don't know about you, all the bad decisions in my life. I made them. The good decisions in my life. Jesus made them for me. And we're gonna celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. So between now and then my question would be who are you praying for? Like Paul did, who is your heart's desire for? And you need to be speaking to them about your testimony what God has done in your life, and then inviting them to church. And we're gonna baptize people. We're gonna throw a huge carnival and party because our belief is that the kingdom of God is the party that never ends. And everybody who's there is in a really good mood and there's bouncy houses. And so it's in the Greek, trust me. And then, and we're gonna throw this big, huge party. And I would ask you between now and then, to give very generously up to half a million dollars. Every dollar that you give will be matched, so that we can do all that we can to reach as many as we can and to be part of the father's work. And what he's talking about here is when all is said and done, there really only are two kinds of righteousness our righteousness and His righteousness, the righteousness of God. Our righteousness shows up in political causes, moral causes, you know, woke social justice warriors who we're good, you're bad. We're here to judge. We don't need God. We've got this. We live in this world that is filled with self-righteousness. And oftentimes the self-righteousness in the sight of God is actually unrighteousness. They're having parades for things they should have funerals for. They're proud of things. They should be ashamed of. The only other righteousness is not ours, but it is God's. That's what the apostle Paul is saying. And it's received as a gift. It's the Saint Jesus. I love you. Jesus I need you. Jesus I receive you. And if that's what's in your heart, let me tell you this, God has changed your heart. God has changed your heart. I'm gonna bring the band up and we're gonna confess with our mouth. We call it worship and singing. But in the, in the last service as we were singing, I felt like God sort of reminded me of a story that I want to share with you in closing. And we're gonna get to in Romans 10 after Easter, Paul's talking about how God works through us to save others. And how God doesn't need us. But God loves us and missions, and ministry, and evangelism is going to work with the father. So I'll give you a story. It was some

years ago, I was a young pastor. I've been a senior pastor 25 years, half my life. I started at 25 years of age, I'm 50. And so I was a young pastor and somebody in our church was in the hospital and I needed to do a hospital visit. And so I grabbed a little Bible that would fit in my pocket because again, I was in my twenties and I could read small print. If you don't understand that you're young. Congratulations, so I grabbed the little Bible. I put it in my pocket and I was walking out of the house jumping in my truck to go to the hospital. And I felt like God spoke to me and said, bring your big Bible. And I started arguing with the Lord. I was like, Lord, I have the little Bible. The little Bible has all the same stuff as the big Bible. I'm not bringing the big Bible. I'm not bringing the big Bible. So now I'm arguing with God about the size of the Bible. And then ultimately I'm arguing with God and He's like, bring the big Bible, bring the big, He didn't say it like that. He was nice, but like bring the big Bible. I was like, no, I'm bringing the little Bible. It's like bring the big Bible. So what I did, I was like, okay, am bring both. See, it's like a half submission. So I grabbed the big Bible, the little Bible I jump in my truck. I parked at the hospital. I'm gonna go in and do this hospital visit. And God spoke to me and said, bring the big Bible. I said, I'm not bringing the big Bible into the hospital. I bring in a little Bible. The little Bible is fine. God was like, no, bring the big Bible. I was like, I'm not bringing the big I put the big Bible on the dash. So the Lord could see it. Like, no, no, no. There it is. I got out, I locked the truck. I put the little Bible in my pocket and I walked in. As I'm entering toward the hospital, God says, you go back and get the big Bible. I was like, I'm not going back and get the big Bible. This is the hill I'm dying on today. I'm a little Bible, not big Bible. That's what we're doing today. You pick the wrong guy. God said, go get the big Bible. I was like, okay. So I go, now I'm defined. I'm like, okay, I'm gonna bring the big Bible but I'm also bringing the little Bible. So I bring both Bibles. So, you're from Arizona. You know what that is? So I walk into the hospital. There's a woman from another country looks up starts bawling runs to me. She asked me this question. She's very emotional and anxious. She's asked, are you the man of God? Am like no, we're just fighting over how big the Bible should be. I was like, yeah, I don't think I'm the man of God. I said, why is that? She said, I committed adultery on my husband. He doesn't know. She said, I'm pregnant with another man's baby. I'm here to have an abortion. She said, but something in me just feels like this is wrong. And she said, so I just said, God, if you're real send the man of God. And she said, I saw the big Bible. And I knew that you were the man of God. I kid you not. So I told her, I said, well, yeah, you're in this big Bible. It says that you're a sinner and what you've done deserves death, but Jesus died. So you don't need to die. And He will forgive you and He will love you. And He will never change His mind regarding you. I said, furthermore, that baby in your womb is probably a son and He doesn't need to die because the Son of God died and God has a destiny for you. And He has a destiny for your unborn baby. And I kid you not. She gave her life to Jesus and she asked me could I have your big Bible? I said, yeah, I got a little one.