

Good morning. My name is Jeremy. I'm one of the pastors of City Church.

It's likely that you heard about what happened during the 2nd svc last Sunday... the worship gathering was interrupted by someone with an agenda beyond that of the elders of this church. That's the first time that has happened in the 13 years of this church. Lucky number 13 I suppose. But Listen, I'm glad you're here this morning. I know we all felt many various feelings and I've been praying this week that God would bring his comfort to us all. And That a disruption like that wouldn't hinder us from gathering together. For some of you, just being here today is a step forward in displacing fear. You're being obedient to Jesus and God tells us all throughout his Word that whenever we feel fear that it doesn't have to have the last word...why? b/c in the middle of the unknown and scary...he's present to us. He's with us. SO... I'm glad you took that step. You might not hear anything I say bc you might be trying to still your mind. That's ok. You're being obedient to be present today and I celebrate that obedience.

Let's have a moment of silence to still our hearts and minds and ask God to hear from him this morning.

I think for the last 3 months, Trevor has been setting you up with anticipation on me preaching ROMans 9. What's the deal? You see him over here. He's so glad that he's on sabbatical and that I get to do this. So...what's the deal with Romans 9?

Well...it's a very difficult passage right in the middle of the book of Romans. In The first 8 chapters of Romans Paul describes the beauty of the gospel: God's saving power, and the future hope of believers who place their trust in Jesus. We get new heavens and new earth and nothing can keep us from that Hope. Nothing at all. At the end of Romans 8, Paul just queued Queen's We are the champions. And Middle school boys everywhere are saying...LET'S GO!!

And then Romans 9-11 seems to come out of nowhere.

I mean this is a passage of scripture that it's very hard to find any other sermons on. Tones have been written about this very important chapter but not a whole lot of pastors want to take a stab at it. Many just skip over it. And only bc Trevor told you for the last 17 weeks that I had to preach this am I doing it today. I'm kidding. It's important so we're not gonna skip it.

You see it's one of the most extensive passages that speaks directly to the tension of what is theologically called God's Sovereignty and also our responsibility to choose. We've talked about God's Sovereignty before in terms of God being a sovereign over us...a King... and as King he can do what he wants when he wishes, how he wishes.

Additionally, How much is God in control of things? Can People make the choice to follow God? Or does God choose for them?

This passage gets a lot of airtime for the study of predestination, or Calvinism, or reformed theology. You might have grown up in a church that talked a lot about those things. I grew up in a fundamentalist baptist church so all I knew growing up was predestination or election was stupid. That's all. No explanation. So we obviously skipped over Romans 8 and 9. HA

So with that introduction, Dustin is now going to come up and share the rest with you...I'm kidding.

Look I don't intend to settle the debate on any of these subjects today. We're going to look at what God's word says and let it speak to us.

For some of you, today's sermon will bring immense comfort. God's mercy is unearned and can't be lost. For some of you, you might question why in the world God would save some but not others? And listen I get that. The Apostle Paul gets that. As a matter of fact, as we'll see in just a minute he's anguished at the thought that many of his own people, the Jews, haven't received God's mercy.

In Romans 8 Paul tells the church at Rome in vs 29 those who God Foreknew he also predestined and NOTHING not even death or life, could separate them from the love of God. mic drop, right?....

Well Paul is anticipating someone in the back raising their hand and saying... hang on a second, now.

And that's where Romans 9 comes in. What about the people of God, the Israelites? Aren't they God's chosen people/ Has God given up on them? Hardly any of them are following Jesus. If they aren't with Jesus, they aren't with God, right? So what about God's promises? It looks like God failed the Jews. How do we know He won't fail us?

If God predestined and foreknew and his power is so strong....what about his promises to Israel?

You see, This is not directly a passage about individual salvation... it's a look under the hood, as it were, about God's saving commitment to the people of Israel. We get a look at God's mercy. It has some implications for individual salvation as God constantly and consistently operates according to his character but it is not limited to talking about how you and I are saved.

But Paul immediately sets the tone that this isn't some academic or philosophical pursuit for him. No...Look at how he describes how he feels about what has happened. It's tear-filled.

Bibles...read the passage as we go through

**Look at Vs 2,3** that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. **3** For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off[b] from Christ for the benefit of my brothers and sisters, my own flesh and blood.

Paul is filled with sorrow. His heart hurts thinking that his people are missing out on the fullness of God. If it were possible, Paul would give up his own salvation so that his people could have God. So they could experience Jesus as the Messiah and LORD that they had longed for. He's sad that they've missed Jesus' righteousness in their place. They're still working hard on keeping the Ten Commandments and depending on bloodlines to honor God. But they've fully missed it. They had every opportunity. They had so many benefits as the people of God.

Now look at **Vs4,5** **4** They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the temple service, and the promises. **5** The ancestors are theirs, and from them, by physical descent, [c] came the Christ, who is God over all, praised forever.

Paul is saying They were adopted into God's family (Ex4:22) and God was Father to them. Not a tyrant but one who had tender care for them.

They had the glory of God WITH them. This is a reference to God's presence with them as they journeyed away from the captivity of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and then as they made their home in the land that God had promised. God was right there with them. His GLory or weight was obviously seen and felt. I mean...Parting the sea, a pillar of fire, water from a rock. God was with them.

They had the covenants or the promises that God had made with Abraham and Moses and David. God promised them that He would make their name great and out of them the future Messiah and LORD over all would come through them and this promise. They received the law, the Ten Commandments and laws concerning how to be a flourishing people who demonstrate the character of God.

They had the ancestors, people like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph and Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and David...people who trusted God and his promises. They certainly weren't perfect but God was working in spite of all that mess.

Of all the people, Paul says, The Jews should have recognized Jesus when he showed up. They were a people of spiritual privilege. And that privilege didn't help them see Jesus when he was right in front of them.

And that made Paul sorrowful.

But what happened? Was this an issue of unbelief? Was this an issue with God failing to keep his promises? And how are we to know that God will do as he said... with us?

Paul goes about answering this by asking and answering a couple of questions. Let's take a look at those and then I'll offer some conclusions at the end for us to think and act on. I appreciate Tim Keller's Roman's study for some really good thoughts on this and some material from JD Greear.

The First question, **Question 1. Has God's Promises Failed? NO! (9:6-13)** (Show this at the top above the scripture below)

God's promises have not failed because as Paul says in vs 6 not every person that was born into a Jewish family was a Jew. The assumption that was being made was that the entire ethnic group of Israelites, known as Jews, were all God's people. And they were all God's people simply bc they were born into it. Paul says, that's the wrong way to think about it. Ethnically they were Jews but their ethnicity didn't determine that they belonged to God.

He says in **Vs 6** Now it is not as though the word of God has failed, because not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. -- Romans 9:6 (CSB)

So Paul is clarifying that what happened in the OT was that people were either embracing God through faith or they weren't. They weren't included bc of their heritage or their bloodlines, it was bc of what was taking place spiritually within them.

The covenant that God made was about faith and trust in his promises. Though some might have experienced a physical circumcision to indicate their heritage, Paul says in Romans 2:28-29 that true circumcision was something that happened in the heart and not all Jews experienced that.

Paul gives 2 examples:

He says you remember when God made the promise to Abraham that he would make a people for himself through his family? First Abraham needed a family and against all odds in his old age Abraham had 2 sons

Look at **Vs 7-9** Neither is it the case that all of Abraham's children are his descendants. On the contrary, your offspring will be traced through Isaac. 8 That is, it is not the children by physical descent who are God's children, but the children of the promise are considered to be the offspring. 9 For this is the statement of the promise: At this time I will come, and Sarah will have a son. -- Romans 9:7-9 (CSB)

Isaac and Ishmael are the two sons born to Abraham. And out of these 2, Paul says, Isaac was the promise-embracer.

Now if you know your OT history you might say well of course, it was Isaac and not Ishmael. Ishmael was born when Abraham took matters into his own hands and had a son through Hagar... who wasn't even his wife. Of course, Ishmael wasn't a promise-embracer, he wasn't born into the "real" family of Abraham. He was born outside the "real" family because Sarah wasn't his mother.

But Paul says, I thought you'd say that.

Look **Vs 10-13** 10 And not only that, but Rebekah conceived children through one man, our father Isaac. 11 For though her sons had not been born yet or done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose

according to election might stand — 12 not from works but from the one who calls — she was told, The older will serve the younger. 13 As it is written: I have loved Jacob, but I have hated Esau. -- Romans 9:10-13 (CSB)

The other example Paul provides then, is Isaac's two sons, Jacob and Esau. They were twins. Esau was born first and then Jacob. Jacob was known as a cheater and not a guy you want any dealing with. Things become bitter between these two when Esau trades the privileges of being the firstborn, the privilege of wealth and status, he traded that to Jacob just so he could indulge in his desires...and he chose to indulge in a bowl of soup and give up his birthright

Paul says so here are twins, born of the same mother and Father, and before they were born, before they could do anything good or anything evil. They had a clean slate, as it were, and God says the older one, the one who comes out of the womb first, Esau, will serve the younger one, Jacob.

Paul says, God chose or elected that his purpose to make a name for himself would take place through Jacob.

And these two kinds of people have always existed in Israel. The Esaus and Ishmaels were not promise-embracers.

So you can't say, says Paul, that God's promises failed when the Jews rejected Jesus. There have always been people throughout the history of Israel, in the OT, who didn't embrace God. And God drew it up that way. He chose some and some he didn't.

So, then **Question 2. Is God unfair in how he chooses to show mercy? No! (9:14-19)**(Show this at the top above the scripture below)

**Vss 14-15** 14 What should we say then? Is there injustice with God? Absolutely not! 15 For he tells Moses, I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. -- Romans 9:14-15 (CSB)

Now ask yourself, why would Paul feel the need to answer this question? When he says God chose some Jews and not others. What naturally follows? Paul knows people might think "That's not fair. God is unjust". He knew people might think God must have done something wrong by choosing some Jews and not others?

Think of it like this...a wealthy person wants to fully pay for 20 students to go to college (an actual version of Scott's tots). There are literally thousands of other students who could be picked and this wealthy person is capable of paying for far more than just 20. But can anyone actually say that she is being unfair to everyone else when she only chooses the 20? No. She has no obligation to pay for those 20 or any one else for that matter. Her actions are pure mercy.

The same is with God in this case. If there was something in Jacob and Esau or any other Jews that obligated God to choose them, it wouldn't be mercy... It would be justice. Do you understand that? Let me say that again If God is obligated to be merciful that's not mercy, it's justice. He would be simply giving them what they are owed. That's justice. But they were owed nothing. So it's mercy.

Because God had chosen them based on nothing they had done. It was pure mercy for him to choose some and not others.

But Paul is saying, The only way they could have God was if he gave himself to them. He would have to be merciful.

Paul's reasoning goes like this (Keller)

- Are you saying God owes anyone salvation? No, definitely not.
  - Well, if he owes no one salvation, then he is free to give it to a. All, b. Some, c, none. Make sense? It's God's choice.
  - IN fact, God would have done no injustice at all by leaving all to perish.
  - What WAS fair is that everyone be left in the condemnation they had chosen for themselves.
- ROMans 1-3
- The fact that anyone knows him is absolute and abundantly grace.

Jon Stott says it like this "Paul's way of defending God's justice is to proclaim his mercy. It sounds backward to us. But it's not. It simply indicates that the question itself is misconceived because the basis on which God deals savingly with sinners is not justice but mercy."

- John Stott

In other words, it doesn't follow to speak of justice in this case bc if God were to act in justice, no one would be saved. Instead the only way God can save sinners is by his mercy. Mercy is defined as not getting what you deserve. Paul says, they deserved justice but instead they were saved bc God was merciful.

The shock isn't that God does not extend his compassion to everyone...but that he extends it to anyone.

So why did God choose some and not others?

**Vs16 says...** So then, it does not depend on human will or effort but on God who shows mercy. --  
Romans 9:16 (CSB)

Well, Paul is saying that God doesn't look at any of the good things that anyone has done. Human will or effort...not enough. He doesn't look at anyone and say "Oh that person looks like they deserve it". Nope. Or "that person over there they just really mean well. They're trying really hard." Nope. Or "Now that person, they're a diamond in the rough. They're really gonna be something." nope

Listen... if God's response...again... had depended on anything the people of Israel had done. He most certainly would have had to punish them. Not in one single generation did the people of God follow him wholeheartedly. It could only have depended on his mercy for him to maintain relationship with them.

But listen, Paul doesn't say that God's reasons are arbitrary for choosing people. And Paul never says that God doesn't have any reasons. We just know that the reasons God (slow) did choose does not at all correspond to any goodness within those people.

In vs 17 Paul provides what might be a little hint

**Vs17** 17 For the Scripture tells Pharaoh, I raised you up for this reason so that I may display my power in you and that my name may be proclaimed in the whole earth. -- Romans 9:17 (CSB)

This is a case study of how God's sovereignty relates to human responsibility.

When Moses went in and told Pharaoh he had a message from God and told him ""God said "Let my People go that they may serve me."" We're told that pharaoh said "no", and when he pushed back against God, he hardened his heart towards God.

And then Even before this whole thing went down, God told Moses that he, God, would harden Ph's heart. And then later when Moses comes in, Ph keeps saying no and 5 times it says that Pharaoh hardened HIS heart. He chose to rebel against God. Then God gave him over to the hardening and then God hardened his heart even further. Somehow both of these things are true. Pharaoh hardened his heart and then God hardened his heart

Paul has gone over this in Romans 1:24...people's hearts, yours and mine, are full of evil desires and if we don't surrender to God, he will eventually give us over to our desires and our heart will become hard towards the things of God..towards his love, mercy, and grace.

But WHY did both God and Pharaoh harden Pharaoh's heart? Why did God not choose to choose Pharaoh?

We see the outworking of Pharaoh's hard heart in the preceding days. There are the plagues against the Egyptians and then the crossing of the Red Sea. All of the hardening, according to Paul took place that God might display his power over wickedness. It was an opportunity for God to display his power to show his children his love and commitment to his promises.

God allowed Pharaoh to rebel against him so that He could display his overwhelming power. According to Paul, without opposition, there's no display of power. Jumping a water puddle and jumping the Grand Canyon are two different things.

Now I know this can be hard to reconcile. This is the question that Paul knows was going to be asked in vs 19 when he says You will say to me, therefore, “Why then does he still find fault? For who resists his will?” -- Romans 9:19 (CSB).

If God is the one who is in control of who hears and believes...and If Pharaoh is just playing the role he's supposed to play, How can God condemn him? He's just playing the part.

Well, the truth is twofold.

God's treatment of Pharaoh was consistent with Pharaoh's own actions. As Pharaoh resisted and hardened his heart, God turned him over to his desires and hardened his heart even further.

Pharaoh was fully to blame.

Listen, I don't at all pretend this is easy. This is really hard to wrap your head and heart around.

Secondly, C.S. Lewis said that hell is always a door first locked from the inside. In other words, it's true that if anyone is saved the credit is God's alone, but if anyone is lost, the blame is all theirs. (Stott)

The late Pastor **D. James Kennedy** uses a really helpful **illustration**: “Say you have 5 people planning to hold up a bank. They're actually friends of mine. Why this sort of company? anyway... Well, I find out about it and I plead with them to not go through with it. I beg them. Finally, they push me out of the way and head out. I tackle the weakest-looking one and wrestle him to the ground. The others go ahead. They rob the bank and in the process kill a guard and 2 civilians. They're **captured, convicted, and sentenced** to life in prison.

But the one man who was not involved in the robbery, the one I tackled, goes free.

Now I ask you this question: Whose fault was it that the other men were arrested and sentenced? Can they blame me? No. They chose to do that.

And this other man who is walking around free—can he say, ‘Because my heart is so good and resisted the temptation, I am free?’

No, the only reason that he is free is because of me. I restrained him.

So it is that those who are separated from God have no one to blame but themselves. And Those who trust Jesus have no one to praise but Jesus Christ. Salvation is all grace from beginning to end.

**Question 3 Does choosing to save some and not others mean God is not good? 9:19-29**

This is one that I imagine many of us ask. It can just seem like God is a malicious puppeteer.



We wonder...if God is so concerned with demonstrating his power why wouldn't he just save everyone and doing that would show that He really cares. So if he doesn't do this...then he doesn't care. And if he doesn't care well... he ultimately must not be good and he can't be trusted.

But Paul says **Vs 20-21** On the contrary, who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? Will what is formed say to the one who formed it, "Why did you make me like this? " 21 Or has the potter no right over the clay, to make from the same lump one piece of pottery for honor and another for dishonor? -- Romans 9:20-21 (CSB)

That's hard...but true.

Remember, no where does Paul say that God overrides people's choices. We choose what we'll do. God uses our agency to choose to set up a display of his glory. A person will think.."why did you make me like this? You're not good"...but Can we really question his goodness? We can...it just doesn't mean it's true.

Furthermore, Paul is saying that that question is an entirely wrong question. Basically, who are you to question God? Who are you to stand in judgment over God? That's it. That's his response. He doesn't say the question doesn't have an answer, it's just....unknown.

The truth is Man (a placeholder for men and women) was created by God. Man chose sin. And God dealt with man according to his sinner status. If God wanted to treat them according to their rights...well it would be fully just to give them the doorkey to hell. That's what they've chosen in the first place.

BUT, paul says

**Vs 22-23** 22 And what if God, wanting to display his wrath and to make his power known, **endured with much patience** objects of wrath prepared for destruction? 23 **And what if he did this** to make known the riches of his glory on objects of mercy that he prepared beforehand for glory -- Romans 9:22-23 (CSB)

What if God endured with the people of Israel who didn't choose him, the people like Pharaoh, and people who were opposed to his way of rule...what if God endured and exercised incredible patience...so that he could make the riches of his glory known to YOU and to ME...and anyone who chooses to trust him...we are the objects of his mercy. Jews and gentiles alike. When the people of Israel didn't choose God, that opened up a way for us to receive his mercy. And this was for his glory

The ultimate end that God pursues in all things is his glory. God endured ....and he endured all that rebellion bc that makes demonstrating his mercy all the more amazing.

But you understand the beauty of that...it's just hard to fully wrap our heads around.

He does it because he is concerned with HIS renown, his glory, his weightiness. If he created all things and holds all things together...does he not deserve that?

**The late Tim Keller** says this: "If God had mercy on all or condemned all, we would not see his glory. I don't think Paul is giving us much more than a hint here, but it is a very suggestive hint. For the biggest question is: If God could save everyone, why doesn't he? And here Paul seems to say that God's chosen course (to save some and leave others) will in the end be more fit to show forth God's glory than any other scheme we can imagine." –Tim Keller

And that is a hard truth. We're just not at the center of all things...well we actually place ourselves there and that's called sin. We put ourselves in the place of God and we question HIM.

We talked about this before....

We're told by scientists that it's **a good thing for us** that the sun, not the earth, is the center of the solar system. If **the earth were at the center**, it would never have the gravitational ability to hold the rest of the solar system in orbit and we'd all die.

- **Because the sun is 30,000x bigger than the earth**, and because it is an independent source of heat and light, it can sustain an orderly solar system that enables us to have life.
- **So, if the sun were a person**, the most loving thing the sun could do would be to keep itself at the center.
- **And so it is** with us and God. If God is the pinnacle of joy, then having him at the center, recognized for his worth and importance, is the most loving thing he can do for us. (JD Greear)

Now look at **vss25-26** 25 As it also says in Hosea,

I will call Not My People, My People,

and she who is Unloved, Beloved.

26 And it will be in the place where they were told,

you are not my people,

there they will be called sons of the living God. -- Romans 9:25-26 (CSB)

The OT prophet Hosea told God's people this would happen. In Israel's rejection of God, he was making a way for Gentiles, for us, for all people to know and find him. The unloved become the beloved. The people not called his people will be called sons. We get adoption into his family. That was Romans 8.

Now if you recall, the whole reason Paul started this line of q and a was because Israel had rejected Jesus. So if they had rejected Jesus, had God's promises failed? The answer to that was no.

So...why did they reject Jesus?

**Vs31-32** But Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not achieved the righteousness of the law. 32 Why is that? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone. -- Romans 9:31-32 (CSB)

His answer is not, they rejected Jesus because God had appointed and elected them to reject him. No. They rejected Jesus because they wouldn't humble themselves!

They chose to put all their effort into works, effort of making a name for themselves, effort of looking like they had it all together, instead of accepting that salvation came by grace through faith.

Jesus showed up saying You're sick and in need of Dr, you're in need of a savior, will you trust me to save you? With their arm, dangling by the skin, ...they said "No thank you. I'm ok. there's nothing to see here. We can handle it."

They wouldn't humble themselves to admit that they needed to be saved. They were handling it on their own. And in the process of handling it on their own...they hardened their hearts towards a righteousness that only Jesus could give them. A right standing with God that came only by placing their trust in Jesus instead of themselves.

That's Romans 9, so what does this mean for us?

Ok...let me briefly give you a couple of conclusions

### **1. Don't go and pretend you'd be more merciful than God**

- a. This gets me thinking back to things I heard from people where I grew up. Nobody never did nothing gooder than me. In other words...If I were in charge, I'd kill the game at this God thing. I'd be more merciful. Dear Friend...Hardly!
- b. The only reason we think we'd be able to be kinder and better than God is because we don't see the totality of the situation. We're not all-powerful, all knowing, and you don't stand outside of time. Do you really think you could put yourself in the place of God? This was Paul's response in vs 20
- c. **Think about how much power it took to create our Universe.** We say God is infinite in power. If God is infinite in power, and infinite in goodness, should we not suppose that he is also infinite in wisdom? **And, here's the question:** if his wisdom is as high above ours as his power is above ours, should it surprise us that there is a lot about the wisdom of his ways we can't grasp yet?" (JD)
  - i. I've talked to you before about the time my young 9-year-old son SHEpherd wanted to get up on the roof with me. I said no...bc first I'm thinking we aint trying to go the ER today. But he asked, "Why not?" In that moment I can

attempt to explain to him how climbing up and getting on the roof is the easy part. The hard part is getting off the roof. You need to face the ladder and ground, shuffle to the side, put one foot on the rung nearest the edge of the roof, not above the roof because that will actually create a pendulum and kick the legs of the ladder out, destabilizing the ladder and making your descent down to the ground a rapid descent. Nope...too much to explain AND too much for him to grasp. So when he asked why not? I said as I calculated his level of capacity to understand, You're just gonna have to trust daddy. Ok?

- ii. There's a considerable gap in wisdom between what I know and what a 9 year Shepherd knew. If that gap existed...imagine the gap that exists between my wisdom... and the wisdom of God. A God that sees all things as present and stands outside of time. It's incomparable

- d. We are incapable of doing it better

## 2. Can you admit that you're unworthy of God's love?

- a. First there are those in this room who proudly think you're worthy of God's love, attention, and mercy. I'm gonna address you in the next point...
- b. Then there are those of you who indeed think you're unworthy of God's love bc you think you're too bad of a person for God to love you
  - i. You've disappointed so many people. Other people have misused and mistreated you...you feel unworthy. You've never felt lovable to anyone...only used. Or You're a person who keeps indulging in the same sinful patterns. You say, "Jeremy, if you actually knew me, my story, or my thoughts...you'd know that I was unlovable."
    - 1. I think of the story of when Jesus meets the woman at the well. She was an outsider and a sinful one at that. She had had multiple husbands and was living with a man that wasn't her husband. In the mind of a Jewish listener and not to mention Jesus, who newsflash was a Jew, she was the worst of the worst. And what happens? Jesus tells her... "I can satisfy you with living water. I'll give you the good life and that good life is found in trusting me. AND then she goes on to start a revival in her town bc she can't believe that God is available to HER. The best evangelists are not the ones who can talk good. The best evangelists are the ones who are amazed that God talks to them.
    - 2. Jesus didn't come to heal the healthy, he came to heal the sick. When you admit you're unworthy and throw yourself into him, then and only then does he go to work to make you whole.
- c. God's love is available. Will you not harden your heart and receive it?

## 3. The way God gives mercy destroys our pride (put this up with the short verses below)

- a. For those in this room who proudly think you're worthy of God's love, attention, and mercy.

- b. Jesus will be a stumbling block to you. He's calling you to lay down your self-worship and humbly admit that you're a broken, sinful person in need of a God outside of you. You're proud and either think You don't need God (if he even exists) or you're someone who thinks that bc Jesus has you on his team, well he'll most certainly get more glory. You tend to look down your nose at people bc no one is quite as incredible as you.
- c. If you think you're worthy of God's love, on what basis are you worthy? And for whatever reason you think you're worthy...what happens if you can't do that thing anymore? You must admit then that God's love is losable in your line of thinking.
  - i. My friend, Do not miss the tender love of God that's only available to those who repent of their self-righteousness and self-importance and depend only upon Jesus. You stand....or sit... here today only bc God has put the breath in your lungs. You've accomplished only what you've accomplished bc God has been gracious and merciful to you to give you those talents. He's the one worthy of worship...not you. Fall completely into the grace of Jesus. You are unworthy.
- d. You and I have no goodness worthy of God's attention and affection. Paul has already reminded us in Romans 3:10 that there is no one righteous and worthy of God's love. None of us seek after God. We're so hard to the things of God that it takes a miracle for us to be awakened to it.
- e. And Jesus is quite familiar with miracles. It took a miracle to make the lame walk. It took a miracle to make the blind see. It took a miracle to make a dead man come back to life. God's in the business of miracles.
- f. You can't wake your dead self. You're dead in your sin...BUT God being rich in mercy and wanting to show his love...HE CAN make you alive again.
- g. God's miraculous grace saves you...and that and only that makes you worthy of God's mercy.

#### 4. Let's boldly share the gospel even with the unlikely

- a. How God's election all works out, I'm not completely sure.
- b. But here's something that's interesting...The more the gospel is shared somehow, the more people God keeps choosing.
- c. And listen we share the gospel not bc there's a competition in heaven or even bc it makes God's happy with us (though he loves hearing the gospel proclaimed) We do it bc we're convinced that we're hopeless without and we want other people to get in on this relationship with God.
- d. It's not up to us to try and figure out the mysteries of God...it is our responsibility to obey and one of those commands is to Go and share the good news
- e. And listen, we're shown throughout the Bible and history that God can save ANYBODY. He wants to display his glory and make his power known. So go after the wealthy and the popular but remember in God's economy... momentum is unnecessary and popularity is pointless. God already has a spokesperson. His name is Jesus.

- f. Have no fear. Go after the down and out. Go after the people who are really hard. Go after atheists and agnostics. God has made a commitment to his glory and when the unlikely come to faith, God's glory and greatness is put on display. So go after them all!
- g. But don't give up! Even when it's hard and seems pointless
  - i. Keep sharing with that husband and wife
  - ii. Keep sharing with that son or daughter
  - iii. Keep sharing with that brother or sister
  - iv. Keep sharing with your boss
  - v. Keep sharing with your neighbor
  - vi. The more you share the more God's gonna choose some people.
- h. God will save all sorts of people. He's gonna save people in India, people in Russia, People in China. He's gonna save Republicans. He's gonna save democrats. He's gonna save people in Hollywood. And He's gonna save people on Pinetree court or whatever your street is. He's gonna save THOSE people and to someone you're one of THOSE people
- i. He is gonna save people and he invites you into the joy of sharing!
- j. As you know we're emphasizing IHOP this year. The I is invitation to church, H is hospitality...having non-christians in your home, O is obedience to the spirit, and P is proclamation of the gospel. And that tub out there shows that that is taking place with many of you.
- k. I heard a story recently wherein a covenant member here was meeting with someone over dinner to share the gospel and talk about trusting Jesus. And towards the end of the dinner a server comes over and says...I heard what you were talking about and I'm needing something like that. Can you tell me about that?
- l. City Church...there are people all around you in this room and outside this room who are longing for the hope of Jesus. NO ONE. I repeat no one is outside the hope of God's love, mercy, and grace. Share liberally. God is not dependent on your pristine logic or rhetoric
- m. We pastors joke all the time it's the times we think we have a real good sermon that seems to fall on deaf ears and the times we feel like we have a dud...well it's those times that God just does something miraculous.
- n. And today, perhaps you're here on invitation or you've been coming for a bit but you don't yet believe. I can't help but wonder how God got you in this room in the first place. I believe that God has put you in here and orchestrated all the events of your life to get you here just so you can hear this today. He has chosen you and wants to be merciful towards you. Will you give yourself to his loving mercy?

City Church, God has been merciful towards us. He has gone before us. Jesus Secured us. Brought us in close. Let's not stumble over him. We get him...Face to Face.

