

The Honor of God: God Honors God

The Honor of God
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Well, good evening. Tonight we are doing something a little different because tonight is our prayer, our prayer meeting, our prayer night. We're not going to do any music, so I'm going to immediately lead with our Bible teaching for tonight and then instead of doing Q&A like we've normally done so far in the series, we're going to immediately transition to probably about 15-20 minutes of prayer. So tonight, we've got a lot to do, but let me go ahead and open us up with prayer and then we'll get started.

Heavenly Father, Lord, we come to the throne of grace and we just, we desire to be in your presence, we desire to know you for who you truly are. We thank you, Lord, for this truth that you've given us in your word that you've revealed yourself to us, what a privilege it is to study the word of God, divine revelation, and to know you truly and honestly. We pray, Lord, that you would reveal yourself to us tonight as we study your word. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

So last week we looked at this rule from 1 Samuel 2. I want you to turn to 1 Samuel 2:30, and last week we saw that this is the non-negotiable rule of honor, that this rule is found throughout scripture, everywhere you look that God honors this rule, abides by this rule, and you see in verse 30, remember the Lord sends a man of God to Eli and it says, "Therefore the LORD, the God of Israel, declares: 'I promised that your house and the house of your father should go in and out before me forever,' but now the LORD declares: 'Far be it from me,'" and here's the rule, "those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed." So those people that honor the Lord God says, Those people will be weighty in my heart." Remember, "honor" means "to be

weighty; to be respected; to be treasured." God says, "Those people that honor me, I will honor. Those who esteem me lightly, I will esteem those people lightly."

Okay, so that's the rule. What we're going to do tonight is we're going to take a little side trail, okay, and we are going to think about the weighty things of God. One time I took a class in seminary called Advanced Greek Grammar and it was an elective. In the first day of class, the professor taught Semitic languages, he probably knew 16 languages, and he comes in and he goes, "Today begins advanced Greek grammar. This is an elective. This class is sink or swim and I'm not here to collect the sinkers." And we began translating the Epistle to Diognetus. Okay. Tonight we are going into the deep end of the pool. The deep end of the pool. So don't worry if at some point you're like, "Oh my goodness, where we're at," I promise you there will be moments where you can come up for air, but stay with me as much as you can. I promise you are going to be rewarded in what we are about to think about.

But the question that I want to put before you is this: who is God to demand that we honor him? Is God an egomaniac? Right? I mean, if you had a child and that child came to his friends and says, "If you honor me, I will honor you. If you treat me lightly, you're done in my eyes." If we had a child or an employee or anybody that we worked with that said what God just says in 1 Samuel 2:30, we would say, "Man, this guy needs some counseling sessions. We need some discipline. We need to come around this person and talk to them." But what we see from God over and over and over and over again in scripture is this demand that he be honored, that he be worshiped, that he be glorified. It's really when you take a step back and think about it, it's really startling how often you see God saying, "Worship me. Honor me. Glorify me." It's over and over again.

I'm just going to give you a few examples, okay. You remember when we saw this, this is when Jesus encountered the woman at the well, Jesus tells her, this is John 4:23 and then 24. He says, "the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him." The Father is seeking people to worship him. That word is *zeteo*, and it means "to go after; to find and bring up." The Father is seeking people to worship him. Psalm 147:11 says, "the LORD takes pleasure," listen to this, "the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love." Have you ever thought about that concept of the pleasure of God, that God takes pleasure in certain things? And we think about what we pleasure all the time, right? But what does God take pleasure in? The psalmist says God takes pleasure in those that fear his name, that that pleases the very heart of God. And then of course, you have the first commandment, do you remember the first commandment, "Thou shall not have any other gods before me." That's the very first commandment. That's the first one. *Numero uno* is, "You shall not worship anybody else. To me belongs all the worship." How can God demand that? Is that selfish of God to demand that we worship and honor him?

Now we're going to look at this biblically in a second, but before we do, and I debated about whether or not to do this with you all tonight because what we're going to look at requires your thinking cap, but I decided you know what, y'all are hungry because you're

here on Sunday night. And so what I want to do is I want to show you how Jonathan Edwards answered this question. Jonathan Edwards is probably the greatest mind that America has ever produced, certainly, the greatest theologian that America has ever produced. He lived from 1703 to 1758. He was just a remarkable individual. He was greatly used by God in the First Great Awakening. You remember his great sermon, the title of his great sermon, who remembers the name of the sermon that was so famous? Yeah. "Sinners in the hands of an angry God." But I want to show you how Edwards handled this for several reasons, one is because I want to expose you to Jonathan Edwards because he's been so helpful to me, but two, I want you to start breathing this God-centered air that he breathed, and I want you to just think about these quotes because they are such remarkable quotes.

Listen to what he says, he says, this is his argument for why God has himself as the chief end for why he created the world, or in other words, why God demands that we honor him, that we worship him, worship him. So first thing he says is that God doesn't receive anything from the world. Here's the quote, "No notion of God's last end in the creation of the world is agreeable to reason which would truly imply or infer any indigence, insufficiency, immutability in God," now listen to this, "or any dependence of the Creator on the creature for any part of his perfection or happiness." Here's what he's saying: God doesn't need us to be happy. God's independently happy. He didn't need to create the world to add something to himself. "You know, I need to create the world for a nice birthday present to make myself happy." He's saying, no, God was actually completely satisfied in and of himself. That's the first point.

Second, God always values what is intrinsically most valuable. So God as a divine judge values what is truly valuable and despises what is not valuable. Here's what Edward says, "Whatever is good and valuable in itself is worthy that God should value for itself and on its own account, or which is the same thing, value it with an ultimate value or respect. It is therefore worthy to be ultimately sought by God, or made the last end of his action and operation if it be a thing of such a nature as to be properly capable of being attained in any divine operation." In other words, God values what is most valuable.

Third. What is intrinsically most valuable must have preexisted before the foundation of the world. Here's Edwards, "Whatever that be, which is in itself most valuable and was so originally prior to the creation of the world and which his attainable by the creation, if there be anything which was superior in value to all others, that must be worthy to be God's last end in the creation, and also to be his highest end." So God can't create something that is the highest end, because then God would have needed that in order to create it.

Alright, it's about to start making sense here in the fourth point, all right? It is reasonable to suppose that he had respect of himself as his last and highest end in this work. Listen to this, this is a direct quote from Edwards, "Because he is worthy in himself to be so, being infinitely the greatest and best of beings." Isn't that stunning? So he's saying that God knows that he is infinitely the greatest and best of beings.

Now just listen to these quotes. All things else with regard to worthiness, so everything else important in excellence are perfectly as nothing in comparison of him. And therefore, if God esteems, values and has respect to things according to their nature and proportions, he must necessarily have the greatest respect to himself. It would be against the perfection of his nature, his wisdom, holiness and perfect rectitude, whereby he is disposed to do everything that is fit to be done, to suppose otherwise. Now listen to this one. God is infinitely in most worthy of regard. The worthiness of others is nothing to him, so that to him belongs all possible respect. That honor, right? To him belongs the whole of the respect that any moral agent, either God or any intelligent being, is capable of. To him, listen to this last sentence, to him belongs all the heart. To him belongs all the heart. What's he saying? He's saying that in comparison to God everything else is but a drop in the bucket. Nothing else compares to him. Nothing, not even close. And he's going to go on. I'm not going to go through these last points point by point, but he goes on to argue that God therefore, then created the world to go public with his own glory, his own honor, and he created us so that we might see and rejoice in his beautiful perfections.

Here's a couple more quotes. He says it seems to be a thing in itself, fit and in desirable, that the glorious perfections of God should be known and the operations and expressions of them seen by others besides himself. So what he's saying is, is that God created the universe to display his glory, and that is the ultimate reason why you and I are on this planet is to behold the glory of God, to feel the weightiness of God.

Now you ask yourself, what does that do for me, right? What does that do for me? Look what he says. He says it is worthy for God to delight in himself. If it is worthy for God to delight in himself, then it is worthy and excellent for his creatures to delight in himself. So you ask, "Well, how can I be happy? How can I be satisfied?" He says the happiness of the creature consist in rejoicing in God by which also God is magnified in exalted joy, or the exalting of the heart in God's glory is one thing that belongs to praise. So I know this is somewhat antiquated language, but I think you hear the heart of what he's saying and he's saying if you want to be ultimately truly happy, you have to find that happiness in God himself. You have to find that joy in seeing God, in rejoicing in his character. He says that is what belongs to praise.

Okay, I want to show you how God reveals this now in scripture. Still with me? I know that was some heady theological philosophy right there, but I want to show you how God reveals this in the word of God and I want to show you how he reveals it through the revelation of his name, his name. Tonight we're going to be talking about the name of God because in the scriptures a name represents who you are, your name symbolizes your character. So God's name is very important and God's name is explained in Exodus 3. I want you to turn to Exodus 3, the context is this: you remember Moses has fled out of Egypt to Sinai and he has been in the wilderness for how long? Forty years, 40 years he has helped his father-in-law Jethro watch sheep. He's now 80 years old.

It says, "Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God." It's called the Mountain of God because you remember Moses will lead the

children of Israel to this mountain. Sometimes it's also called Sinai, Mount Sinai, but it's going to be the mountain of God where Moses meets with God. Verse 2 it says, "the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush." Now this is very interesting and significant. That word "angel" simply means "the messenger of the Lord," and there's a lot of debate about whether this is an actual angel or whether this is God himself. Sometimes in scripture what you have is called a theophany, which is an appearance of God, not in the form that he actually is because God is a spirit, we can never actually see God, but in appearance, inform that manifests itself to people. And one of these appearances that happens often throughout the Old Testament is called the angel of the Lord, and I believe that this is God himself, and you'll see why in a second.

So, "the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He," that's Moses, "looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, 'I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.' When the LORD," do you see that, verse 4, when the Lord saw so apparently this angel of the Lord is the Lord himself, that he "turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush," and he said, "Moses, Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am." And notice how God emphasizes his own holiness. He says, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." That word "holy" means "separate; distinct." You know, in the tabernacle you had tools that were used for certain reasons, they could only be used by the priests for these types of sacrifices or these types of ceremonial rituals. They were set apart from other tools. They were holy. And we as believers are called to be what? Holy. Set apart from what? The world, right? Set apart from the sins of the flesh. Well. God is Holy, God is distinct. He's set apart from us. Yes, we are created in his image, but God is other. He's different. He's perfect. He's eternal. We are not. He's immortal. He's a number of things that we're going to talk about but the point is, is that God is holy and because of that he is to be revered, and that's why God says, "Take off your sandals. You don't want to approach me just like you approach anything else, like, you know, your father-in-law's tent. You need to take off your sandals, for you are on holy ground."

And then God says to him, verse 6, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And notice how Moses responds. I think there's great insight here into the heaviness and the weightiness of the presence of God. "Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. Then the LORD said," and notice the Lord's mercy upon his people. The Lord says, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites." And lots of other ites, okay. "And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them." So God remembers his promise to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He hears the cries of the people and God pities them. He has mercy upon them. And so now he is approaching Moses to send Moses to bring them up out of Egypt.

Verse 10, "Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." Now look at verse 11, "Moses said to God, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?'" And then he said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain." So God tells Moses this is a sign, you will actually bring the people back here to Mount Horeb, to Mount Sinai. Verse 13 is really where we want to focus our study. Look at verse 13. "Then Moses said to God, 'If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you," and they ask me, "What is his name?" what shall I say to them?'" In other words, he's asking, "Who's sending me? If they ask me who's sending you to come bring us up out of Egypt what am I supposed to say to them?"

Now there's some debate amongst commentators and scholars if at this point they already knew God's name. If you read the book of Genesis, God's covenant name Yahweh has already been mentioned at least four times, so I'll give you those references: Genesis 4:26; Genesis 12:8; Genesis 13:4; Genesis 21:33; Genesis 26:25. So Moses already probably knew what God's name was but the question that he's asking is, "What does your name mean? What is the true identity of God? What does your name mean?" He's asking, "What is the explanation of your name?" Okay?

So look at God's explanation of his name in verse 14. "God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And he said, 'Say this to the people of Israel: "I AM has sent me to you."'" So what God does is he repeats twice the simple Hebrew verb, haya, which is just the present verb to mean "to be" or "I am," haya aser haya, "I am that I am." And this is God's explanation of his name and they would essentially shorten that haya to four letters that the Hebrews would, called the Tetragrammaton. It's YHWH. So they took haya and said, "Okay, God's name then is Yahweh, YHWH." And this name by all the Jews was so revered that when it appears in the Bible, they wouldn't even pronounce it. They wouldn't even say Yahweh. They would say Adonai. They would just use the basic term "Lord," which is what Adonia is. And they wouldn't use those four letters, they wouldn't even pronounce it. So early Christian church, early Christian history, have you ever heard the name Jehovah God called Jehovah, basically, that's taking the vowels from Adonai and putting them between the letters of Yahweh. So you take the Y, the H, the WH, and you add the vowels from Adonai, the A and go on and so forth, and you get Jehovah as the name of God.

My point being is that this name amongst the Jews was revered. This name has been throughout history for the past 3,000 years, honored, but what is this name saying about God? Remember we said a name speaks to your identity. What is God saying here that his named means regarding his identity? And here's what he's saying, he's saying that he is pure being, that he is the essence of what it means to exist. Let's think about this for a second. World War I. Anybody know the dates of World War I? Anybody remember the dates of World War I? 1914 to 1918. How do you know those dates? Maybe why don't you know those dates? No, I'm just kidding. How do you know those dates? Because you learned them in a history class, right? Maybe you saw a documentary. Was anybody

there, lived through the war to end all wars? No, nobody was there? Wait, so you didn't exist then. You weren't existing in 1914. God was. What God is saying is, "I AM THAT I AM," is that, "I am self-existent." There's a word for that, a theological word, aseity, a-s-e-i-t-y. R. C. Sproul used to always say when I hear aseity chills go down my spine. Chills go down my spine. Have you

When I was a little kid, I always used to ask my mom the question when did God begin? You know, God created the heavens and the earth in the beginning but where did God come from? And my mom would always just say, "Well, God's always been." God's always been there and you think with your mind, okay, alright, so he goes back a million years, a billion years, a trillion years. You just keep going back and our minds can't comprehend the fact that God is always there. Pure being. The essence of what it means to actually exist.

Stephen Charnock, he's a Puritan, he says this is what that means. He says God depends upon no other in his essence, knowledge, purposes, and therefore hath no changing power over him; that God is not dependent upon anything. We're dependent, right? You and I, each of us was dependent upon, we're here because of our parents and our grandparents and numerous events that brought them together and a whole host of other things. You and I are dependent upon the fact that the earth is a certain distance from the sun. We're dependent upon that the fact that our atmosphere has oxygen in it. We're dependent upon the fact that there's fresh water. We are dependent upon millions of things. God is independent. God is independent. We're fish in the sea and God's just not the biggest whale in the sea, God's outside the sea. He's not even in the same ocean.

So several implications of this. Obviously what this means is that God is eternal. Revelation 1:8 God says, "I'm the Alpha, the Omega, the beginning and the ending sayeth the Lord, which is and which was and which is to come, the Almighty." It means that everything that you and I know that exists God created. Everything is derived from him. Revelation 4:11, "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."

Also, God is holy because if God is self-existent, no one else compares to him. We are all dependent, right? So Isaiah 6:3, this is the angels in heaven, the seraphim, "And one called to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!'" Isaiah 46:9 says, "remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me." There's none like God. There's nobody even in the same category as God. Therefore, listen, so all of this, what God is saying, "I AM THAT I AM," he's saying, All of that that we just covered is encapsulated in my name." Isn't that interesting, all of that is encapsulated in my name. And therefore the name of God is to be honored and revered. Isn't that the third commandment? Remember, the third commandment? Have you ever wondered? Okay, you go through the first commandments, "You shall have no other gods before me. No graven images." What's the third? "Take not the Lord's name in vain." Why is that there? Why is that so significant that you add it as one of the commandments? It's significant because the name of God encompasses all that he is, and so to spurn the name of God is to spurn God

himself. Isaiah 42:8 says, "I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other."

So God's name is to be revered, to be honored, because it encapsulates who he is. Remember that scene where Indiana Jones and his father are in that little, and this is "The Last Crusade," they're in that little trike cart coming out of Berlin, and they stop and they have this conversation and Indiana Jones takes the Lord's name in vain and Sean Connery slaps him. Do you remember this? He says, "That's blasphemy." That's one of the best scenes Hollywood has made in a long time, right? But that's right. I mean, I think I mentioned this last week. I remember my grandfather walking out of movies because they said the Lord's name in vain. I mean, the worst thing that you can have in a movie isn't the cussing or the violence or whatever, the worst thing is the blasphemy against Almighty God, that God's name would be dishonored.

What God is doing is he is proclaiming his name throughout the universe so that his name would be honored. Remember Romans 10:9 that we looked at this morning? "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, that God raised him from the dead in your heart then and believe in your heart then you will be saved," it's the confession that he is Lord. It's the honoring of that name and God is proclaiming that name.

I want to show you this. I want you to just turn a few pages to the right to Exodus 33. This is such an interesting and fascinating chapter. I'm not going to do an exposition of it, I'm just going to show you some highlights, but they're in the wilderness, they're near Mount Sinai now so Moses has gone into Egypt, the 10 plagues have happened, the first Passover has happened, they've come through the Red Sea, now they're at the mountain, the children of Israel have made the golden calf and God has said, "I'm not going to go with you now. This is a stiff-necked people." And Moses has essentially separated himself from the camp because there's all sorts of sin in the camp. So if you look at verse 7, "Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting." This tent isn't the tabernacle. I used to think that growing up, "Oh, he would set up the tabernacle." No, no, this is a special tent. This is a tent that Moses used to meet with God and Moses felt like he had to go outside far from the people because of the sin that had been present in the camp, and I think there's something there to think about in terms of meeting with God and seeing a great movement of God. This is just a little side note, but revival happens when the people of God say, "Look, the things of the world we're going to separate from, we're going to put behind us, and we are going to intentionally move to a place where we meet with God." And this is what Moses does. We'll just read it and you can just have the mental picture in your mind.

Okay, so you have the whole camp. You have millions of Israelites. Moses, this one man, sets up this tent outside the camp. He calls it the tent of meeting. "And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp. Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people would rise up, and each would stand at his tent door, and watch Moses until he had gone into the tent. When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the LORD would speak with Moses." So the cloud obviously represents the presence of God.

"And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people," so all the Israelites, "would rise up and worship, each at his tent door. Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend." Now obviously this is anthropomorphic language. It's metaphorical. Moses didn't see God face to face. It's just talking about the intimacy in which God communed with Moses through his spirit, okay? Now, "When Moses turned again into the camp, his assistant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent."

Now Moses begins to intercede with God and begins to pray to God in the tent. So he's in this tent meeting and, "Moses said to the LORD, 'See, you say to me, "Bring up this people," but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, "I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight." Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people.'" He's basically saying, "God, you need to go with us. This is your people. I am your servant. You remember you're the one at this mountain who asked me to go get this people." "And he said, 'My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.'" So God says. "My presence will go with you and I will give you rest." So now God agrees, "my presence will go with you, Moses."

"And he said to him," so now, Moses says to God, "If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?" And the LORD said to Moses, "This very thing that you have spoken I will do," in other words, I will go with you, "for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name," talking about Moses. Isn't that awesome? Isn't that remarkable? Moses is feeling pretty good about himself. He's feeling pretty good about where he stands with the Lord, "Man, I found favor with the Lord. God's now said that he's going to go with us."

So Moses goes for it. "Moses said, 'Please show me your glory.'" In other words, "I want to see the essence of who you are, God." And look at this, God agrees. God says, ""I will make all my goodness pass before you," now look at this next line. Wouldn't that be enough just to have the goodness of God pass before you? Wouldn't that be enough? I mean, that would be enough for me. But in the mind of God, God says that's not enough. What you also need is this look, "and I will proclaim before you my name." Isn't that remarkable? So the name of God which encapsulates all that he is, God says, "As I show you my goodness, I will declare, I will proclaim my name, the Lord, I AM, Yahweh, I will proclaim it to you." And then look what God adds here. This is so important, "And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." What God is saying here is that, "I am sovereign and that I am free to do whatever I please." Right, isn't that what he's saying? He's saying, "I am the Lord. I am the essence of being and I will have mercy on whom I shall have mercy. And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious to." You can't put God in your box. You can't say. "God, you're only supposed to like those types of people." God says, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious to." Hold that thought. Keep that in your mind.

So what happens next? Remember, they're in the tent meeting when this conversation is taking place, is God instructs Moses to come up onto the mountain and you remember they go up onto the mountain and God puts Moses in the cleft of the rock, right? And God says, "You can't see my face." Now obviously God doesn't have a face, he's a spirit, but it's, again, it's metaphorical language. You can't see the full manifestation of the glory of God but you can see the backside of it, a partial side of it. I don't know exactly what that means. I don't think anybody knows what that means. I don't even think Moses actually understood what that meant because it's so transcendent. But God puts Moses in the cleft of the rock and look at verse 6 of Exodus 34, "The LORD passed before him and," again he proclaims his name, "The LORD, the LORD." Notice capitalized in your Bible. It's the same name that he revealed in Exodus 3. "Yahweh, Yahweh, I AM, I AM a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation." And notice what happens when Moses hears the name of God proclaimed. "Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped." Worshiped. That is the only right response to the revelation of who God is.

Alright, so that is God proclaiming his name and our response to that is worship, and the last thing I want you to see tonight is the application of his name, and what I mean by that is God over and over and over again brings us face to face with the reality of who he is, what his name means. So when we look at verse 19 of Exodus 33, look at verse 19. God says, "I will proclaim you my name 'The LORD.'" And then this phrase, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." What God is saying here when he says, "I will proclaim to you my name, 'The LORD,'" he's saying like we've covered that God is pure essence, that God is the Creator of everything, right? He's saying that with "The LORD." Now, what does he mean when he says, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious"? What's God trying to explain there? His sovereignty. You see, God is self-existent. God creates but then God sovereignly governs the universe. That's what he's communicating there.

Now we call the general governance of God one word, it's one of the most beautiful words in the English language, providence. The governance of God over his creation is called providence. This is Martyn Lloyd-Jones describing providence. He said, quote, "Providence means the continuation or the causing to continue of that which has been called into existence. Creation brings things into existence in fulfillment of God's purposes. The doctrine of providence does not just mean, therefore, that God has a foreknowledge of what is going to happen, but it's a description of his continuing activity of what he does in the world, and what he has continued to do since he made the world at the very beginning." So what God is saying here is that God is actively involved in the events and the affairs of the world. Actively involved.

Psalm 33:11, "The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations." Daniel 2:21 it is he, God who changes the times and the epochs. He removes kings and establishes kings. He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to

men of understanding. Isaiah 46:10, "declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My purpose will be established and I will accomplish all my good pleasure.'"

So God is sovereign. Ephesians 1:11 says he works all things according to the counsel of his will, and that is really hard for us to understand, right? Because we don't see the hand of God in everything. There's things that happen that are tragic, there's difficulties that we face, there's sickness, there's evil in the world, but as my theology professor said in seminary, God handles sin sinlessly. God is not the author of evil but yet God works evil in his plan. Does that make sense that God's plan involves evil and it's all going to this ultimate purpose of his name being honored and glorified, but yet he's not the author of evil.

Now I want you to turn to the right all the way to Romans, and this is where we're going to end to Romans 9. When we talk about God's freedom, right, God's sovereignty in this world, normally there's, you know, every Christian confession affirms the sovereignty of God but there's really two categories that we want to say, "Wait a second. Is God really sovereign over this?" There's two things that we want to just say, "Uh, I really don't like the idea that God would be sovereign over these things." You know what those things are? Suffering and salvation or evil and salvation. We really don't want to say, "Man, I just can't, I don't think that God is sovereign over that. I don't think that God is sovereign over salvation. That's a really tricky thing."

Well, I want to show you here what Paul unfolds. Alright, you remember Exodus 33? Okay, Romans 9. Look at what Paul says, he says, "I am speaking the truth in Christ--I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit-- that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart." Why is he upset? Why is he sad? Look at verse 3, he says, "For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Verse 3 is Paul saying that he would be willing to be damned so that his fellow Jewish brothers and sisters would come to faith in Christ. That is really remarkable. It shows his love, his compassion for people. He says, "I would be willing to be accursed and cut off from Christ himself for the sake of my brothers, my sisters, my kinsman according to the flesh." He says, "They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption," that's God choosing Abraham, Isaac and Jacob from all the peoples of the world, "the glory," think the glory cloud that accompanied them out of Egypt, "the covenants," think the Abrahamic covenant, the Mosaic covenant at Sinai, "the giving of the law, the worship," at the tabernacle and the temple, all the promises of God. He says, "To them belong the patriarchs," in other words, they descended from these guys, right, "they're from that race of people according to the flesh, and according to the flesh is Christ himself who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen."

So here's what he's dealing with, okay? So Paul is going, you remember he would go from city to city, the first place he would go is to the synagogue, right? And he would preach to the Jews. What would happen in every single synagogue? Some would believe. Many would reject the gospel. Many would reject the gospel. So Paul is now asking this

question, "Okay, why are there unbelieving Jews? I mean, I'm willing to be accursed for them but why are their unbelieving Jews? Have the promises of God failed?"

Look at verse 6, he says, "it is not as though the word of God has failed." It's not that God's promises have come to naught. Then he explains an important principle, "For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring." So just because you're a Jew doesn't mean that you are ever actually saved. Yes, you have the promises of God but it doesn't mean that you actually believed, it doesn't mean you actually trusted in those promises. You were born into this covenant, but it doesn't mean that you ever actually exercise faith in the covenant promises that God has given. Notice that phrase, "not all Israel belongs to Israel." That last, the second way that he's using Israel is to describe the true people of God. He's saying there's a true Israel and not all who belong to ethnic Israel belong to the true Israel. Do you see that? Really important to see that.

Then he says verse 7, God said, "but 'Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.'" Through Isaac shall your offspring be named. That's in reference to Ishmael. Remember, there were two sons that Abraham had, one by Hagar and then the child of promise by Sarah. And God said the promise is going to come through Isaac, not Ishmael. "Send him and Hagar away. This child, not Ishmael, is the son of promise."

Then he says verse 8, "This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. For this is what the promise said: 'About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.'" Okay, that's self-explanatory. So basically what the argument that he's saying is, "Look, in the economy of God, God chose Isaac, not Ishmael."

Now you ask, "Well, that's obvious because Ishmael was the son of a slave. Of course, God's going to choose Isaac." But Paul gets it a little tighter in his argument. Look what he says next. He says, "And not only that, not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac," remember, Rebekah conceived how many kids? Twins. Two. Look, look what he says here, this is, man, this is sobering, fascinating. He says, "though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad--in order that God's purpose of election might continue." Now look at this clarification, "not because of works." So it's not based on the works of either of the boys, either Esau or Jacob, but because of God who calls. Rebekah was told, "'The older will serve the younger.' As it is written, 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.'"

Let me explain that a little bit. Was Jacob a good guy? Jacob was a bad guy. Really, Jacob was a deceiver. Jacob was a mama's boy. I mean, Jacob not that being a mama's boy is bad necessarily but Jacob was a liar, right? I mean, you look at Jacob's early years, is there anything becoming of Jacob? No. What did Jacob deserve? The judgment of God. Now we know Esau was also a bad guy, really bad guy. What did both of these guys deserve? Judgment of God. But God because he's God, chose to exercise mercy on one. Not both one. Now Paul anticipates your thinking. What are you thinking?" That's not fair. Why would you choose to exercise mercy on one and not the other?" Look at verse

14, "What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!" How is that possible? Because they both deserve judgment. So just because God chooses to exercise mercy on one doesn't mean that he's being unjust to the other.

Now look at verse 15. Look what he quotes, "For he says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.'" He's saying God is free. You say, "Well, I'm free." Yeah, but God's more free. God has the freedom to exercise divine mercy and compassion to whomever he chooses. That is the divine sovereignty of God.

Verse 16, Paul just keeps laying it on, "So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.' So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills." God doesn't proactively make someone evil. That would be wrong. The way that God hardened someone is by removing his hand of grace. In sin, we are naturally inclined towards evil. We've talked about this, so when God hardens someone he pulls back his hand of grace from that person. So it's not an active hardening. It's God restraining his grace and mercy so that person is left in their sin and when we're left in our sin, what do we do? We become more calloused, more hard, and that's how God hardened Pharaoh and that's how God hardens people. God says, "Okay, I'm pulling back my grace, my mercy." And Paul says he hardens, then, whomever he wills. He has mercy on whomever he wills.

So you're left asking this question in verse 19, again, Paul anticipates your question. "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" Isn't that the question? Okay, if God is sovereign over salvation and no one can resist the will of God, then what are we doing here? Who can resist the will of God? Now our natural thought is, okay, well, Paul is going to answer back with some sort of, "Well, people are responsible agents. We have free will." Something like that, right? You think that that would be the logical response. "Yeah, but you're still at fault." But look at what Paul's response is. He says, "But who are you, O man, to answer back to God?" He's saying God is God and who are we to question the divine freedom of God to have mercy on whomever he has mercy? Why? Because God made us. "Will what is molded say to its molder, 'Why have you made me like this?' Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory--even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?" Look, I know this is really heavy, but this right here is the borderline to understanding the weightiness of God. You understand this and you've crossed into new territory. When you understand that God is going to honor his name and that God presses that reality in upon us and he shows us that in his name that he has this divine freedom to have mercy and to save whomever he likes, and if he desires to pull back and by so doing harden whomever he desires.

So what's our response to that? The response is to realize that your salvation is completely and totally of divine grace of God; that God found you. If you're in Christ, God found you and had mercy on you and had compassion on you not because you were a good person but because he desired to have mercy and compassion on you. Listen to this quote from Martyn Lloyd-Jones. He said, "If your view of salvation in any respect doesn't give all the glory to God, you haven't understood salvation properly."

So what I've just showed you and this is why, by the way, Paul goes all the way back and quotes God in the encounter with Moses, where God is proclaiming his name to be honored, is Paul is saying, "Look, to really understand God and things the way they are, you need to understand this about your salvation is that all of it is orchestrated by him." And we're not to worry about the people that God doesn't choose for salvation, that's not something that you and I have to bear. That's God's choice. I assume that everybody that I encounter is chosen by God and I do all things to win all men to Christ, and I persuade as much as I can to win them to Christ. But I also know in the final analysis that it depends upon God who has mercy. God reveals this so that we might feel that heaviness and that weightiness of who he is, of his name, and that we might praise him and honor him that every detail in this world is sovereignly orchestrated by him and even ordained by him and especially our salvation. And we could talk a lot more about man's responsibility to believe the gospel and the free offer of the gospel and all those things, but that's not what Paul's focused on here. He's focused on the honor and glory of God and our response then is to turn in honor and glorify his name.

Thanks for listening. For more sermons, information and events, check out our website at capitalcommunitychurch.com.

The Honor of God: God Honors God

Grant Castleberry

1 Samuel 2:30 – [30] *Therefore the Lord God of Israel says: 'I said indeed that your house and the house of your father would walk before Me forever.' But now the Lord says: 'Far be it from Me; for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.*

But did you stop and ask the QUESTION: WHO is GOD to MAKE this RULE?

- John 4:24 – [23] *But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.*
- Psalm 147:11 – *But the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.*
- The First Commandment – Exodus 20:3 – *You shall have no other gods before me.*

Why DOES GOD demand that HIS NAME to be honored and revered? Does GOD ever JUSTIFY why He should be HONORED?

The Answer of Edwards

To help me answer these OBJECTIONS: The ARGUMENT of Jonathan EDWARDS. Who answered these OBJECTIONS 300 YEARS ago.

- 1) God doesn't receive anything from the WORLD.
 - “No notion of God's last end in the creation of the world is agreeable to reason which would truly imply or infer any indigence, insufficiency and mutability in God; or any dependence of the Creator on the creature, for any part of his perfection or happiness.”
- 2) God values what is Intrinsically Most Valuable.
 - “Whatsoever is good and valuable in itself is worthy that God should value for itself, and on its own account; or which is the same thing, value it with an ultimate value or respect. It is therefore worthy to be ultimately sought by God, or made the last end of his action and operation; if it be a thing of such a nature as to be properly capable of being attained in any divine operation.”
- 3) What is Intrinsically Most Valuable must have pre-existed before the Foundation of the World.
 - “Whatever that be which is in itself most valuable, and was so originally, prior to the creation of the world, and which is attainable by the creation, if there be any thing which was superior in value to all others, that must be worthy to be God's last end in the creation; and also to be his highest end.”
- 4) It is reasonable to suppose that he had respect to himself as his last and highest end in this work; because he is worthy in himself to be so, being infinitely the greatest and best of beings.
 - “All things else, with regard to worthiness, importance and excellence, are perfectly as nothing in comparison of him. And therefore if God esteems, values, and has respect to things according to their nature and proportions, he must necessarily have the greatest respect to himself. It would be against the perfection of his nature, his wisdom, holiness, and perfect rectitude, whereby he is disposed to do everything that is fit to be done, to suppose otherwise.”
 - “God is infinitely and most worthy of regard. The worthiness of others is nothing to his: so that to him belongs all possible respect. To him belongs the whole of the respect

that any moral agent, either God or any intelligent being, is capable of. To him belongs all the heart.”

- 5) God’s ultimate End in Creation is Himself.
 - “Whatsoever is good, amiable and valuable in itself, absolutely and originally, which facts and events show that God aimed at in the creation of the world, must be supposed to be regarded or aimed at by God ultimately, or as an ultimate end of Creation.”
- 6) God has attained His Own GLORY through the creation of the WORLD.
 - “We see that it is a good that God aimed at by the creation of the world; because he has actually attained it by that means.”
 - “If the world had not been created, these attributes never would have had any exercise.”
 - “It seems to be a thing in itself fit and desirable, that the glorious perfections of God should be known, and the operations and expressions of them seen by other beings besides himself.”
 - “If It is worthy for God to delight in Himself than it is worthy and excellent for His creatures to delight in Himself.”
 - “The happiness of the creature consists in rejoicing in God; by which also God is magnified and exalted joy, or the exalting of the heart in God’s glory, is one thing that belongs to praise.”

The Meaning of the Name

See Exodus 3

God responds by SAYING in verse 14: [14] *God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, “I AM has sent me to you.”*”

- God repeats twice the Hebrew verb ehyeh (I am)
 - *Ehyeh aser ehyeh.*
 - I AM that I AM.
 - This is God’s explanation of His NAME. I AM that I AM
 - The NAME was written YHWH. Tetragrammaton
- *What God is saying about HIMSELF with the NAME?* Remember a Name speaks to your identity.
 - It means essentially that I am PURE BEING.
 - Aseity. God is self-existent.
 - He is PURE ESSENCE.
 - And from God everything else derives its ESSENCE.
 - Puritan Stephen Charnock, “he depends upon no other in his essence, knowledge, purposes, and therefore hath no changing power over him.” (Charnock, 330-331) See also Beeke Page 533
- Several implications of God’s self-existence.
 - God is Eternal.
 - Revelation 1:8 – [8] *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.*
 - God is the Creator – everything else must be derived from Him.
 - Revelation 4:11 - *“Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.*
 - God is Holy. No one compares with Him.
 - Isaiah 6:3 – [3] *And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!*
 - Isaiah 46:9 – [9] *Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me,*

- Therefore God's Name is to be HONORED.
 - Isaiah 42:8 – [8] *I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other.*
 - Therefore the NAME of GOD is to be HONORED. It is to be REVERED.
 - Exodus 20:7 – [7] *“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.”*

The Proclamation of the Name

See Exodus 33 and 34.

The Application of the Name

Martyn Lloyd-Jones – “Providence means the continuation, or the causing to continue, of that which has been called into existence. Creation brings things into existence, in fulfilment of God's purposes. The doctrine of providence does not just mean, therefore, that God has a foreknowledge of what is going to happen, but is a description of His continuing activity, of what He does in the world, and what He has continued to do since He made the world at the very beginning.”

- Psalm 33:11 – [11] *The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of His heart from generation to generation.”*
- *Sovereign over Nations. Daniel 2:21 – *It is He who changes the times and the epochs He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding.*
- Isaiah 46:10 – *“Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, ‘My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure.”*
- It's the FREEDOM of GOD to PROVIDENTIALLY govern however he PLEASES. Everything that occurs happens according to the Counsel of His sovereign WILL (Ephesians 1:11).

This includes REDEMPTION. This is the BORDER CROSSING to the HONOR of GOD. God reveals that even SALVATION is a RESULT of HIS SOVEREIGN WORK.

- God IMPRESSES This HEAVINESS upon US.
- That EVEN our SALVATION itself is a WORK of GOD.

See Romans 9