

The Favor of God

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[0 : 0 0] If you have your Bibles, please turn to Exodus chapter 33. If you don't have a Bible, please raise your hand, and we'd love to bring a copy over to you that you can use and you can have. And if you don't have a Bible, please raise your hand, and you could also just look it up on your phone or app if you have it, Exodus chapter 33.

It's the second book in the Bible. So, we are in, we're gonna go through verses 1 to 23.

And let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's word. Heavenly Father, we ask you this morning, as Moses asked you many years ago, show us your glory.

Reveal your goodness. How gracious you are. How merciful you are. So that as we sinners gather before your throne, we might be assured because of what Jesus has done on the cross, of your favor, of our acceptance, our status within your household.

assure us of that this morning from your word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. If you are willing and able, please stand for the reading of God's word from Exodus 33.

[1 : 5 9] The Lord said to Moses, depart, go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, to your offspring I will give it.

I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey, but I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people.

When the people heard this disastrous word, they mourned, and no one put on his ornaments, for the Lord had said to Moses, say to the people of Israel, you are a stiff-necked people.

If for a single moment I should go up among you, I would consume you. So now take off your ornaments, that I may know what to do with you.

Therefore the people of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments from Mount Horeb onward. Now 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.

[3 : 1 6] 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. And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people 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. When Moses turned again into the camp, his assistant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.

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 your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight.

[4 : 33] Consider, too, that this nation is your people. And he said, My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.

And he said to him, 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, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name.

Moses said, Please show me your glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you my name, the Lord.

And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But, he said, You cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.

[5 : 46] And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, and while my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by.

Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen. This is God's holy and authoritative word. You may be seated at this time.

In 2 Samuel 13-14, David's son Amnon falls in love with his half-sister Tamar, and uses cunning to bring her to his bedchamber, and then violates her and sends her away, so that she lives as a desolate woman in her full brother Absalom's house for the rest of her life.

Absalom, her brother, full brother, on account of this, hates his half-brother Amnon, and he eventually murders him. Fearing punishment for his murder, Absalom flees to Geshur and lives there in exile for three years.

After that, David allows his son Absalom to return to Jerusalem, but even after two full years in Jerusalem, Absalom is not allowed to come into the king's presence, to come see his father, King David.

[7 : 03] So imagine yourself in Absalom's shoes here. Even though your father and king has shown you mercy by inviting you back to the capital, he has not fully forgiven you.

He refuses to see you. You're no longer exiled, but you're still estranged from your father, and you live with the lingering feeling of his displeasure every day.

This eventually is too much for Absalom, and he demands, Why have I come from Geshur? It would be better for me to be there still. Let me go into the presence of the king, and if there is guilt in me, let him put me to death.

He's saying, I'd rather die than to be estranged from you in this way. Some of you can probably relate to that feeling of estrangement. Maybe you wronged your friend or a family member.

You said something hurtful, or you betrayed them in some way. And knowing this, maybe you acknowledged your fault, and you tried to make amends, and your friend accepts your apology, but your relationship is still not what it used to be.

[8 : 11] Maybe the way they look at you has changed. Maybe the way they speak to you is different, their tone. There isn't the same level of affection and intimacy.

There's an invisible barrier, a distance. It feels like they are tolerating you, but they don't seem to enjoy your company. It's not a good feeling, and it makes you wonder, can things ever be the same between us again?

That's the question that the Israelites are left to ask in their relationship with the Lord God here in Exodus 33. In the preceding chapter, the Israelites made an idol of a golden calf and worshiped it, saying that it is the Lord, Yahweh.

And thereby, they exchanged the glory of the living God for the image of an ox that eats grass. In doing so, they violated the second commandment, you shall not make for yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth.

You shall not bow down to them or worship them. They offended God by misrepresenting him and attempting to domesticate him into something that they can touch, feel, and manipulate to their own liking.

[9 : 33] How do you reduce the uncreated God, the invisible God who dwells in unapproachable light, whose glory appears in the form of pillar of fire and smoke to some image or a statue that we can conceive in our own heads and fashion with our own hands?

It's unthinkable, and yet that is exactly what the Israelites did, and that's what we all do when we co-opt God for our purposes and we make him in our image to reflect our values, to justify our opinions, to justify our lifestyles.

Instead of worshiping the creator, we have worshiped the creatures, prostrating ourselves before money, sex, and power, worshiping other gods, other people, and ourselves.

By their idolatry, the Israelites broke their covenant with Yahweh, and note that this happened right after the establishment of the covenant. While God was giving Moses instructions for the construction of the tabernacle, a tent for Yahweh, the great I Am, so that he might dwell in their very midst, the Israelites prostituted themselves with a golden calf, with an idol.

Israel, as God says of the Israelites in Jeremiah 31, 32, they broke my covenant, though I was their husband. The nation of Israel became, metaphorically, an adulteress by their idolatry.

[11 : 04] They were unfaithful to Yahweh and broke their covenant vows, and they were left asking, can our relationship with God ever be the same again? That's the question that faces us this morning, and thankfully, this passage teaches us that God shows mercy to a stiff-necked people out of his sovereign grace.

So we're gonna look at that in three parts. God's mercy, how he sends the angel to go before you, God's intercessor, who interacts with God, discourses with him face to face, and then finally, God's favor, coming among his people again.

The Lord says to Moses in verses one to three, depart, go up from here, and you and the people whom you have brought up out of the land of Egypt to the land with which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying to your offspring, I will give it.

I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey. So far, so good, right?

Most of this sounds very good. We were told in Exodus 32, 14, that the Lord relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people because of their sin.

[12 : 14] The Lord is being patient. He's being forbearing. And he will not wipe out the Israelites from the face of the earth as they deserved. Though golden calf has been burned and ground into powder, and the people of Israel were made to scatter it in the water and drink it.

So the Israelites have gotten a taste of their own bitter medicine. Some of them were slain for their idolatry by the Levites. So they're asking, well, so are we good now, God?

God, it seems that way for the most part based on this few verses that we read. God tells Moses and the Israelites to go to the land flowing with milk and honey. That's the promised land. He promised to send an angel to go before them and drive out the nations who are living there.

So some people think that this is kind of a letdown, that God's, instead of going with them himself, that he's just gonna send an angel, kind of a lowly angel in his place, almost like a renowned professor, instead of coming to do the lecture himself, sending his intern or something like that.

But that's not what's going on here because earlier in Exodus 23, before the Israelites broke the covenant, when God was first formalizing his relationship with his people, he said that he would send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I prepared.

[13 : 31] So this is not a downgraded promise. It's the same promise that he gave earlier. Furthermore, this is not an ordinary angel. About the angel of the Lord, the one of whom the Lord God said, my name is in him.

This angel doesn't merely speak in the name of God. It's Yahweh's name is in him. And because of that, this angel has the power to forgive sins, which we know from other parts of scripture is a divine prerogative.

And that's why in Joshua 5, 13 to 15, people worship the angel of the Lord and the angel doesn't stop it because he is actually a representation of the Lord God himself, a manifestation of the Lord God himself.

And many pastors and theologians make the connection that the angel of the Lord is in the Old Testament the pre-incarnate form of Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, appearing before he took on human flesh.

So God is still planning on fulfilling his promise to Israel. He's still planning on bringing them to the promised land. But there's something still amiss between God and his people.

[14 : 39] As we see in the second half of verse 3, go up to a land flowing with milk and honey, but I will not go up among you lest I consume you on the way for you are a stiff-necked people.

There's a subtle but important distinction here between going before the Israelites to clear the land and going among the Israelites to dwell there with them.

God is still going to go before the Israelites to drive out the enemies. He's still going to deliver them into the promised land, the land flowing with milk and honey as he had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but he's not going to go among them.

This is an allusion to Exodus 25.8 where God said, and let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell in their midst. The book of Exodus devotes 13 chapters to the construction of the tabernacle, the sanctuary of God, because it's the climax of God's salvation plan for the Israelites, not only to deliver them from Egypt, but to dwell among them.

But God is now saying that he will not dwell among them. God will still take care of their transportation, but he's canceling his own reservation.

[15 : 55] While God was giving Moses instructions for the construction of his dwelling place among them, the Israelites instead constructed for themselves this golden calf, an idol, in the middle of their camp. To continue the analogy that I used earlier of marriage that God himself uses in the scriptures between God and his people, it's like a wife cheating on her husband on their wedding day.

While the husband is out purchasing furniture for their new home. It's the equivalent of what the Israelites did. While God was giving Moses instruction for the tabernacle, right after establishing their covenant, they gave themselves away, prostituted themselves, adulterated the camp.

So God says, I will not go up among you. It's like a husband who cannot quite bring himself to move into that house to share the bed that has been adulterated.

I will not go among you lest I consume you on the way for you are a stiff-necked people. That's a farming metaphor, stiff-necked. When a farmer tries to get an ox to go the direction he wants to go and the ox just stiffens his neck because he doesn't want to move that way.

It's probably more familiar, I guess, example is dogs. If you guys have dogs and you walk dogs and you have a very untrained, poorly trained dog, the owner is supposed to lead the dog but instead the dog is pulling you every which way he wants you to go with the stiffened neck.

[17 : 22] So imagine the Israelites that way. That's what they are. They're stiff-necked people, stubborn and willful, unsubmitted to the will of God. And the Israelites recognize in verses 4 to 6 that God's refusal to dwell among them is a disastrous word, they say.

So they mourn and in response to God's command to take off their ornaments, they strip themselves of all ornaments, jewelry, rings. This is a sadly symbolic act in a number of levels because if you remember, first, when God delivered the Israelites from Egypt, he instructed them to ask the Egyptian neighbors for their silver and gold jewelry and in doing so, they plundered the Egyptians and stripped them of their ornaments.

But now, the Israelites have also been stripped of their ornaments like the Egyptians. They've been reduced to the state of the Egyptians. Second, as we see later in Exodus 35, 22, the Israelites were supposed to bring their brooches and earrings and signet rings and armlets, all sorts of gold objects for what?

As an offering to the Lord so that it may be used for the construction of the tabernacle. But instead, they used their golden rings in Exodus 32 to build the idol, the golden calf.

So the stripping of the ornaments is a reminder to the Israelites of their sin and of how low they have fallen. Yahweh no longer dwells among them.

[18 : 52] Dwelling among them is a disastrous word, but there is actually a mercy in this disaster because not only is God still going to go before them to bring them into the promised land, it's actually merciful of God to not go up with them in their midst.

Why? Because he says in verse 5, you are a stiff-necked people. If for a single moment I should go up among you, I would consume you.

If God in all his glory and holiness would dwell among these adulterous Israelites, his righteous wrath would consume them in a single moment.

So God is actually mercifully sparing them by not dwelling among them. Sometimes non-Christians say to me, well, why doesn't God just come and show himself right now so that I would believe in him and follow him?

Because God is being merciful to you. Because you have rebelled against him, unfaithful to him, because you have been adulterous and idolatrous, loving other things more than God, living for yourself rather than for God.

[20 : 09] Because if for a single moment he should go up among you, he would consume you. We so quickly forget the judgment that all sinful humanity is under. That's why 1 Peter 3, 9 says, the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

Why doesn't God just show up now? Because he is being patient toward the people. Because he wants to give you time to repent, to turn from your sins and toward him in faith and obedience so that you might not perish.

Believers and unbelievers like today enjoy many of God's general blessings. That's what we call common grace. He gives us all food to eat, places to live, sunshine in the morning, rain for water.

He gives us families. He gives us our talents and abilities. He supplies the very air that we breathe. And this kindness of God is supposed to lead us to repentance.

Romans 2, 45 says, or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance, but because of your hard and impenitent heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

[21 : 39] Are you enjoying the blessings of God without worshiping God himself? Do you love the gifts more than the giver of all good gifts?

Are you fine with enjoying the land flowing with milk and honey apart from God himself? If you could enjoy all the pleasures of this life, of this world, all the money, all the sex, all the pleasures, all the success and recognition, but you could never have God for himself, would you take that exchange?

If your answer is yes, then you are not a Christian because a Christian is he who forsakes the world to gain his soul. What good is a honeymoon without the bridegroom?

What good is heaven itself apart from the loving presence of God? 17th century English poet John Milton put it this way, thy presence makes our paradise and where thou art is heaven.

17th century Scottish pastor Samuel Rutherford said this, oh my Lord Jesus Christ, if I could be in heaven without thee, it would be a hell and if I could be in hell and have thee still, it would be a heaven to me for thou art all the heaven I want.

[23 : 17] That's the new heavens and the earth. Nothing less than God dwelling with us, making his dwelling place among us so that we are his people and he himself is our God.

Brothers and sisters, that's what heaven is. Our eternal destiny is to enjoy and cherish God forever. Are you enjoying a foretaste of God here and now?

Or is something other than God your chief enjoyment? Even though God is mercifully sparing the Israelites, his absence is ultimately a disaster and things cannot be left alone like this.

Israelites need a mediator. They need an intercessor to come between them and God to bridge the gap, the distance. Thankfully, God has appointed Moses for this precise purpose and verses 7 to 11 give us some background information about how Moses used to talk with God and commune with him as a mediator.

He says in verse 7, Notice how many times this verse tells us that this tent was outside the Israelite camp, far off from the camp.

[24 : 43] This is intentional, lest we confuse this tent of meeting with the tabernacle, which has not yet been constructed because the tabernacle is also at various places in Exodus called the tent of meeting.

According to Numbers 2, the tabernacle, the one that's not built yet, the official one, it occupies the very center of the Israelite camp, like the king who sits in the middle of his people.

To the east and south and west and north, it's flanked by the people of God. It's right at the center. But this tent of meeting is outside the camp, far off from the camp. This is not the tabernacle that God commends Moses and the Israelites to build.

Rather, it's a makeshift tent that Moses was in the habit of using to meet with God before the construction of the tabernacle. It's not a tent designed for God to dwell in.

It's only a temporary tent where God would meet with Moses and speak to him. And so, the mention of this tent here is a tragic reminder of the alienation between God and Israel due to their idolatry.

[25 : 47] God's plan was to move inside, into the camp, to dwell among them, right at the center. But that plan is scrapped now.

Now they're back to the way things used to be. The holy God cannot dwell among a sinful people. So he meets with Moses outside the camp, far off from the camp, away from the defiling sins of his people.

But Moses, as God's chosen mediator, enjoyed intimate fellowship with God. He says in verses 9 to 11, 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. And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people 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.

When Moses turned again into the camp, his assistant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man would not depart from the tent. The pillar of cloud is the manifestation of God's presence.

[26 : 54] It's a reflection, an expression of his glory. So when the pillar of cloud stands at the entrance of the tent, notice that God doesn't actually enter the tent, from there the Lord speaks with Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend.

It's a stunning description of Moses' relationship with God. The expression face to face, we have to note here, doesn't literally mean that Moses saw God's face.

We know this because later in verses 17 to 20, Moses asks God, please show me your glory, and God specifically tells him, you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.

Similarly, in Deuteronomy 5, 4, when it describes how God spoke to the Israelites out of the mountain, the fiery mountain in Mount Horeb, it says that the Lord spoke with you face to face at the mountain, even though we are told earlier in Deuteronomy 4, 12, that clearly that they did not see God's form, or they did not see, or they only heard his voice.

So clearly the expression face to face is not literal, rather it means person to person. it's a figurative way, like when we speak of seeing someone eye to eye, we don't mean that literally you're staring at each other's eyes, rather we mean that we're in agreement.

[28 : 16] So it's a figurative way face to face here of saying that God spoke with Moses personally and directly. This sets Moses apart from the other prophets of old.

Numbers 12, 68, after Miriam and Aaron oppose Moses, rebel against him, God defends his special favorite servant this way. He says, hear my words.

If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make myself known to him in a vision. I speak with him in a dream, not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house.

With him I speak mouth to mouth clearly and not in riddles. And he beholds the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?

So Moses enjoyed a special favor with God and set the standard really for all the Old Testament prophets. The Israelites have sinned against God and have alienated him but Moses is a friend of God.

[29 : 17] Maybe Moses can mediate on their behalf. Maybe Moses can speak to God on their behalf. Verses 7 to 11 are building that, that suspense in preparation for the verses that follow and especially chapter 34 1 to 9 which we'll talk of, speak of next week.

But will Moses succeed in his intercessory work? That's what we see in verses 12 to 23. Moses said to the Lord in verse 12, 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. Moses is here citing God's command to him in verse 1. God told him, go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up from the land of Egypt.

God has told them that while the angels of the Lord will go before them, that he will not go up among them or with them. So Moses is pushing back here in a very deferential way.

God, you want me to bring this people into the promised land, but do you really expect me to do that without your presence in our midst? Surely you will send someone to go with me, right?

[30 : 35] And by this, Moses is implying that he wants Yahweh himself to come with him. Didn't you say to me, God, I know you by name, that you have found favor in my sight? Moses continues in verse 13, 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. Moses is very ingratiating in his dialogue with Yahweh as he should be, and he's saying, in effect, if I have really found favor in your eyes, then please show me what you intend to do.

Show me your plans, that I may really know I have your favor. And, by the way, please remember that this nation is your people.

Remember what God said earlier in verse 1, go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up from the land of Egypt. Prior to Exodus 32, God always refers to Israel as my people.

And he says, I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt. But after their idolatry, because they set an idol up in the place of God, after that point, and as you can see here, God refers to his people instead as your people, your people, Moses, that you brought out of the land of Egypt.

[31 : 57] It shows how Israel's idolatry has alienated God so that he's now distant from them. And Moses gently pushes back on this notion. He's reminding God, remember God, this nation is your people, not mine.

And God responds favorably to Moses' request to go with him. He says in verse 14, my presence will go with you and I will give you rest.

But the you here is singular. God's saying I will go with you, Moses, not with the people. It's still a favorable response to what Moses was initially requesting, so Moses is emboldened to press the matter even further in verses 15 to 16.

As I read it, please pay attention to the personal pronouns as I read verses 15 to 16. 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?

[33 : 08] So Moses is not trying to confirm his own favor status with God. He's already been assured of that. He's trying to leverage his favor status with God to bring God's favor to bear upon the rest of the nation of Israel.

Here is Moses, the man who speaks with God face to face, pleading for God's presence, which literally in this passage in Hebrew is God's face. Moses is saying, God, what distinguishes us from these other nations on earth is not some good piece of real estate.

It's not our military victories. It's you, Yahweh, your presence. How else can we know that we have your favor apart from your presence among us?

Please go with us. And God remarkably says yes. He says in verse 17, this very thing that you have spoken, I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know your name.

God's God. This is such a gracious condescension from God. The usual course is for God to speak and then for people to listen and to do what he told them to do.

[34 : 20] But here, Moses speaks, and then the king grants his favored servant's request. This very thing you have spoken, I will do.

Christian brothers and sisters, this is the privilege that we now enjoy in Christ. Because Jesus made a way for us to be reconciled with God instead of being enemies, Jesus said, I have now called you, my friends.

So we can now approach God's very throne of grace and bring our petitions to him, and because we are in Christ and we're no longer merely a servant, but in God's son, we can be assured that God will look upon us with favor.

Hebrews 3 tells us that Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, was faithful to God who appointed him just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself.

Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant to testify to the house, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later. But Christ is faithful over God's house as a son.

[35 : 36] And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and are boasting in our hope. In Jesus Christ, we have even greater confidence than the Israelites had in their mediator, Moses, because as favored as Moses was, he was merely a servant of God.

But Jesus is God's beloved son, his only son. Who has more clout in the king's household? A servant or a son?

The heir. And that's what we have access to in Jesus because we are his son. We are his children in Christ. To the unbelieving friends among us, do you feel alienated from God?

Do you not know his gracious presence? Have your sins driven God far from you? Have you turned the blessings and gifts that God has given you into idols that have displaced God from your heart and from your life?

Then you must strip yourself of the ornaments and cling to Jesus. Plead with God to intercede on your behalf.

[36 : 52] If God listened to his favorite servant, Moses, then he will certainly listen to his favorite son, Jesus, on your account. You can be restored to the presence of God.

You can be indwelt by the very spirit of God and many of us here can attest to that reality. You can be forgiven and reconciled to God.

You must only turn to Jesus and put all your faith in him. The only reason why God can actually grant Moses' request here and dwell among them again, though they have sinned against him, is because he looks ahead to what Jesus will do, making atonement for the sins of his people on the cross.

Moses could only win the temporary suspension of God's righteous wrath, but Jesus, the son, pays the penalty for our sins once and for all, to do away with the wrath of God forever.

So receiving God's affirmative answer, Moses makes one final request in verse 18. Please, show me your glory. Undoubtedly, Moses yearned for a deeper knowledge of God and a deeper encounter with God, but that's not all that's going on in this request.

[38 : 09] In Exodus 24, when God first made his covenant with his people Israel, with Moses mediating, Yahweh confirmed that covenant with his presence by appearing before them. In Exodus 24, he says, the glory of the Lord dwelt on Mount Sinai. And the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel.

So Moses is now asking for a similar confirmation. Lord, if you really intend to dwell among us and go with us again, then please assure me of this favor.

Please show me your glory as you did before, more than the destruction of our enemies, more than the inheritance of land flowing with milk and honey. We want your presence, God.

So please show me your glory. And God says in verse 19, I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name, the Lord, and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

[39 : 20] This is an astounding revelation. What does the glory of the Lord consist of? It's his goodness, his graciousness, his character. And God proclaims his name, which represents his identity, who he is.

And his name is the Lord. And when you see that name in all caps, it stands for his proper, his name, the proper noun, Yahweh or Yehovah. In the Hebrew, it means I am who I am, or as it is given here, I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

Note how that parallels the name I am who I am that God revealed in Exodus 3, 13 to 15. It's saying the same thing, but this phrase, it's phrased this way here to explain why God is showing his favor to Moses and the Israelites again.

Because the Hebrew word gracious, be gracious, is a verbal form of the noun that is translated favor, which is repeated five times in this passage. So why does God show favor to Israel?

Because his name is Yahweh. I am who I am, who shows favor to whom he shows favor. In Romans 9, Paul speaks of how God sovereignly chooses those who will be his children, just as he chose Jacob rather than Esau, according to his purpose of election, his choosing, so that those who are saved are saved not according to their works or according to their desserts or their worthiness, but according to God's sovereign favor.

[40 : 58] Not because they did something right, but because God chose them and called them. And then Paul anticipates the people's objection in Romans 9.

He says, isn't that unfair? Why does God choose some people but not others? And then to answer that objection, Paul cites Exodus 33, 19, our verse here.

For he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who has mercy.

The word for, in introducing that quotation from Exodus, suggests that the quotation answers that objection, that God is being unfair and unjust when he chooses sovereignly some people to be his and not others.

However, at first glance, Exodus 33, 19, doesn't seem to actually answer the question, right? He seems to just restate the problem. I will have, be gracious to whom I will be gracious.

[42 : 02] I will show compassion to whom I will show compassion. And the reason for that lies in the fact that it, this is the very nature of God.

It's in his very name to act in this way. As we'll see next week in Exodus 34, 6, it's in God's very nature. It's part of his name to be merciful and compassionate.

But his name also speaks of God's radical independence and sovereignty. God is not an admissions officer whose job is to admit the most qualified students.

God is not a hiring manager whose job it is to hire the most qualified candidates. God is a king who appoints whomever he wishes to his service.

God is a father who adopts whomever he wishes as his children. In other words, God dispensing mercy to whom he wills is part and parcel of the very name and identity of God.

[43 : 07] It is part of God's very nature. He is gracious to whom he is gracious because he is the I am who I am. He is the sovereign Lord who is accountable to no one and subject to no one else's authority.

I am who I am means that God never changes. He's the same yesterday, today, and forever. He was and is and will be. God is always true to himself.

He's faithful to his character. He never deviates from his purposes. He never changes his will. So why is God favorable toward Israel despite the fact that they are an unfaithful, undeserving, and adulterous bride?

Despite their idolatry and rebellion? Because he is Yahweh. I am who I am. And he has chosen Israel and he has put his name upon them.

And the name Yahweh is made up of the Hebrew verb to be. And it's related to God's promise earlier given to his people in Exodus 3.12. I will be with you.

[44 : 15] So how can Yahweh forsake his people, change his mind, and renege on his promise when his name means I will be with you?

I will not leave you or forsake you. God shows his favor to his people because he has chosen to show favor to his people.

God never reneges on his promises. That God's ongoing favor toward his people depends not on our works, not on our deserving, but on his sovereign purposes should be a source of great comfort for us as Christians.

Because our sins are many, are they not? But his mercy is more. Do we deserve his favor?

No, we do not. We do not deserve his favor. But Jesus has come to declare the ear of the Lord's favor. We do not deserve to be his people.

[45 : 21] But God calls us his own. God calls us his people. And he shows us mercy. Why? Because God says, I have chosen you. And I have mercy on whom I have mercy.

So Christian brothers and sisters, perhaps some of you have lapsed recently.

You've backslidden. You're living in unrepentant sin. Maybe you're afraid of turning to God. Maybe you're afraid that he will turn you away.

Maybe. Maybe. Are you afraid that things will never be the same again between you and God? God says, fear not.

For I have redeemed you. I have called you by name. And you are mine. Rest assured in God's favor toward you in Jesus Christ.

[46 : 31] Because God shows mercy to a stiff-necked people out of his sovereign grace. Let's pray together.

God, we praise you and we worship you because our salvation depends not on our works.

That the basis of our relationship with you is not what we do or have done, but it is what you have done in Christ. It's not because we chose you.

Love. Love. Because you are. I am who I am.

We love you. We worship you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen.

[47 : 59] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.