

The God Who Shows Grace

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[0 : 0 0] Well, let's get started with the questions. So let's suppose for a moment that God offered you a deal, and the deal was this. You can be raised to life when you die.

You can live in the new heavens and the new earth forever and ever. You can enjoy all the benefits that come with living forever. You can have a life of pleasure and joy.

You can be free, entirely free from any suffering and pain. You'll be reunited with your family, your friends, you know, your favorite childhood dog, right?

You can travel the world. You can experience all the amazing beauty and adventures that you've never had an opportunity to see. And you have all of those things, and you have them forever and ever, and there's just one catch.

That one catch is that Jesus will not be there. Jesus will never be there. You will never see his face forever and ever. Would you take that deal? On a much smaller scale, this deal, and this deal, which I think many people in our town, many people in our culture, a great many, if the vast majority, I would say, would take this deal.

[1 : 1 9] But this deal, on a sort of a much smaller scale, is what the Lord is offering to the people of Israel in Exodus chapter 33. Exodus chapter 33 is on page 73 of the blue Bibles that our ushers handed out.

And as we've been proceeding through the book of Exodus over this last year, we've seen the Lord reveal that he is great. By rescuing them from slavery in the land of Egypt, just as he promised their ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we've seen the Lord show that he is good, not just great, but also good, by providing for their needs in the desert, by giving them his good laws.

God formed a covenant relationship with his people as he prepared to lead them into the promised land of Canaan. But almost immediately, we saw last week, his people betrayed him by creating an image, a statue of a golden calf, as an alternative way to worship him.

In doing that, they portrayed the Lord in a manner that was degrading, and they demonstrated their disobedience, they demonstrated their unfaithfulness to him. Last week, we learned how the Lord's appointed leader, Moses, he took away God's wrath, the right and holy anger that God has against those who sin against him, against those who rebel against him.

And God's appointed leader, Moses, took away his wrath against the people of Israel. But today, in Exodus chapter 33, we're going to see that the deal the Lord is giving his people is like offering heaven without Jesus.

[3 : 0 1] It's paradise without the presence of the Lord. And that's what Exodus chapter 33 shows us. 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. And everyone who sought the Lord would go out to the Tent of Meeting, which was outside the camp.

[4 : 27] 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 now your ways that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight.

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.

[5 : 50] 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.

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.

[6 : 54] Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen. This is the word of the Lord. Now, verses 1 through 3, they lay out for us the Lord's new approach to the people of Israel.

Now, notice all the good things that the Lord is going to do for them. He's going to keep all of the promises that he made to their ancestors. He's going to send a powerful, angelic warrior with them to give them victory over their powerful enemies.

The Lord is going to give to them this promised land to live in, a land flowing with milk and honey, he calls it. In short, God is going to give them all the material blessings that they were going to get before.

And if you're an Israelite who's just in this, you're just in this campaign for a prosperous new life and a good land, this is a marvelous deal. This is a tremendous deal.

If you identify as a Christian and you're just in it for a prosperous life with a happy and loving marriage, a respectful and successful children, you're in it for a good job, you're in it for a nice house, for financial security, for good health, for the adventurous lifestyle that Squamish can offer you, if that's all you want out of God, this is going to seem like a pretty good deal to you too.

[8 : 25] It's all the blessings of the kingdom only without the presence of the king. All the blessings of the kingdom without the presence of the king. In a nutshell, that's what we call the prosperity gospel.

You can have all this good stuff, just that Jesus isn't there. God isn't there. Here's how the people of Israel respond to this kind and generous offer because this is a very generous offer.

They should all be, based on the terms of the covenant, they should all be destroyed. And yet God is giving them this incredibly kind and generous offer. Here's how they respond in verse four. When the people heard this disastrous word, they mourned and no one put on his ornaments.

And they were right to do so because all this success, all this prosperity, this is not a good thing. It is a bad thing. It is a disaster.

And the people are mourning. They're taking off all their jewelry. They're dressing like they're at a funeral. And they're right to mourn. Would you not mourn if someone you loved, if your father who loved you dearly, who cared for you, if your father passed away, and yes, he left you great wealth, would you still not mourn and wish you were there even if it meant you didn't have all that wealth?

[9 : 49] The covenant relationship that the people have with the Lord is lost. Their relationship has been broken and it is entirely, 100% their fault. And they know it.

And they remain under the final judgment of the Lord. And he reminds them in verse five, you are a stiff-necked people. If for a single moment I should go up among you, I would consume you.

And that is the Lord's honest assessment of his relationship with them right now. That's their relationship right now. They are a stiff-necked people. Now, if you've ever gotten into an argument, has anyone here ever gotten into an argument with someone who you realize partway through the conversation, this person is not going to change their mind?

Maybe it's your spouse. Maybe it was me. I don't know. But sometimes you can tell, right? It's not just the words they say. Sometimes it's their posture. Their neck goes rigid.

They're stiff. They're not going to change. No matter what words you use, no matter what you say, no matter how nice to them you are, no matter how mean to them you are, no matter what you come at them with, they're not going to change.

[11 : 07] Stiff-necked. The people of Israel, they are stubborn, they are set in their ways, and the Lord who is entirely good, entirely holy, who passionately hates everything that's evil, who passionately hates sinful rebellion against him.

He knows that the people will not survive a close relationship with him, not under the current circumstances, not as things are. They will not survive any longer than you and I would survive a close encounter with the surface of the sun.

It's about how long they'll last. The God who is great, the God who is good, he cannot be the God who is with us. That's what Moses is telling the people right now.

God is great, God is good, and God cannot be with us because he is great and because he is good. Now, one thing that is good in this situation is that the people of Israel, they are not doing what so many people in our culture, and maybe many of us sitting here would do, they are not settling.

They are not okay with losing this relationship with the Lord. They're not settling for less than the best that God has for them. No matter how kind the Lord is in giving them the promised land, they're not happy unless they have him too.

[12 : 27] And this is because God's people are not satisfied with anything less than God with us. Though the Lord shows kindness to everyone, his people long for his presence. Though the Lord shows kindness to everyone, his people long for his presence.

They want more. Our entire town is built on people who are settling for just the kindness of God and giving them a place to play and adventure for a brief period of time, a moment in time, a window of time, but without his presence.

But that's not the way the people of the Lord think. His people long for his presence among them. Verse 7, we see how the presence of the Lord is far from his people.

Now, we've been, over the last few Sundays, reading about the Lord's plan for the tabernacle, the images of which appeared on the screen at the beginning of the service. And part of what we read at the beginning of this service was we had the tabernacle and in particular its courtyard.

So this fenced-in area around the tabernacle tent. And this fenced-in area, this courtyard, and the tabernacle inside of it, they were supposed to be located right in the middle of the Israelite camp with all of the tribes of Israel camped around it.

[13 : 50] So the Lord was literally right in the middle of his people. And that courtyard that we read about, there was a screen, a curtain, that gave access to any Israelite, any person of God's people who purified themselves by coming in, washing themselves with water.

They had access to this courtyard. They could come right up to the outside of the tabernacle tent. This was God with us. This was God in the center of his people.

That's not what we see in verse 7. In verse 7, Moses doesn't begin the construction of this tabernacle. Moses instead takes a tent, some other tent of his own making.

He takes it and he carries it outside the camp, away from the people of Israel. He pitches it far away from the people and that's where he meets with the Lord at a distance.

This was the tent of meeting where Moses spoke with the Lord and if anyone wanted to inquire of the Lord they would have to go out to Moses and then Moses would be the one to speak with the Lord. So right now that gives us an image of what the Lord's relationship with his people is like.

[15 : 01] It's strained and it's distant. If we were to think of this as a marriage relationship, right now Israel has committed adultery and the Lord has moved out. He's moved away from them.

And understand, at this point the Lord owes them absolutely nothing. He owes them nothing more than what he promised to their ancestors because the people have broken the covenant, the Lord is no longer bound to it.

There's no longer any binding reason that the Lord has to dwell among his people. He doesn't have to do it. But though the Lord shows kindness to everyone, his people do long for his presence.

And now God's relationship with his people, his presence with his people, it is hanging by a single thread. There's just one tiny single thread that's holding this all together.

That thread is found in verse 11. Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend.

[16 : 08] Face to face as a man speaks to his friend. And that is the one single thread of hope. The Lord is still meeting with Moses. The Lord is still listening to Moses.

He's still speaking to him. He's still sharing with Moses his desires, his plans. He still has a relationship with Moses and a relationship that these verses say it's a friendship.

That's what you have to call it. It's a friendship. It's this close, personal, intimate relationship with the Lord. Lord. That's what Moses is going to draw on starting in verse 12.

And when Moses meets with the Lord out in this tent of meeting away from the camp, Moses is doing what good friends often do. He's starting an argument. Right? You've got a friend like this, right, who just, something's not quite right and they just kind of get in your face a little bit or they find little ways to sort of kind of start pushing at you.

that's what Moses is doing in verse 12. He's very polite by the way. He's very politely suggesting to the Lord verse 12, you know, this angelic warrior, this is, it's not what Moses really wants for their relationship.

[17 : 22] Verse 12, 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.

So in other words, Moses is telling the Lord that this angel whom you will send with me, this is somebody Moses doesn't know. There's no, there's no relationship there.

Some random angel. And so Moses is making this personal. Moses is reminding the Lord that the Lord, it's the Lord who has shown him favor.

I know you by name and you have also found favor in my sight. And so Moses begins to argue in verse 13, you know, that's what our relationship is so it should be the Lord. The Lord should be the one remaining with Moses as he leads the people of Israel into the promised land.

And the first thing he says is, 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.

[18 : 35] So he gives two reasons why the Lord should remain with him. And the first reason is that Moses wants a deeper relationship with the Lord.

They have a good relationship right now. They know each other. Moses wants a deeper one. He wants to know the Lord more by knowing his ways.

ways. Now, when we use that word, the ways, like the ways of a human being, that's what we might call our settled manner of life. Just our mannerisms, our habits, our actions that reveal who we are inside.

And they reveal who we are because they flow naturally and they flow unconsciously out of our own character. They're more than just words. They're more than just occasional things that we do. They're that settled way of life, that way that we live, that reveals who we are on the inside.

And how you know someone's ways are you spend time with them over a period of time. That's something that takes a long time to develop that relationship.

[19 : 41] Moses wants to know the ways of the Lord, especially the ways as they are revealed in his laws as they play out in the real world over time. And Moses wants to know the Lord more.

Moses wants to find even more favor with the Lord through a deeper relationship with him. That's the first reason that Moses says the Lord should continue with him.

He wants that deeper relationship. The second reason in verse 13, it's very simple. Consider too that this nation is your people. That's it. Consider too that this nation is your people.

In other words, the Lord placed Moses in this assignment because these are the Lord's people. Moses, he's recalling the commission that the Lord gave him from the burning bush all the way back in chapter 3 that we read at the beginning of this year.

The Lord said, come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt. But Moses said to God, who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?

[20 : 50] Now, here was what the Lord said then. He said, but I will be with you. 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. That's the same mountain that the people of Israel are camped at now. And that brings us to this very mountain of Sinai and that's where Moses is now effectively saying, these are your people that you called me to lead.

And at that time, Moses was essentially saying, I can't do this. And now he's saying, that's still true. I still can't do this alone, any more than I could face Pharaoh alone.

You have to be with me. And so the Lord responds to Moses in verse 11. Sorry, verse 14.

My presence will go with you and I will give you rest. My presence will go with you and I will give you rest. So the Lord is agreeing to Moses' request.

[22 : 05] He is going to continue to be with Moses. He's going to continue to deepen their relationship with one another. He is going to ensure that Moses finds rest, that he finds life and security in the Lord's presence.

And this tells you what kind of relationship that Moses has with the Lord. Because Moses doesn't stop here. He doesn't just ask that the Lord's presence remain with him.

Moses keeps asking. He keeps speaking boldly. He asks that the Lord's, not only his presence, but his name remain upon him and upon his people.

Moses wants to be identified as belonging to the Lord, as set apart for the Lord. Verse 15. 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?

[23 : 10] Now back in verse 12, it was the Lord telling Moses, if you look at verse 12, it's the Lord telling Moses to bring up the people of Israel into the promised land. Now in verse 15, Moses is sort of subtly handing that back to the Lord.

Do not bring us up. He's saying, you know what, if we're going to go up at all, it's going to have to be you who brings us up, Lord. And if the Lord won't be with Moses, Moses believes they're better off not going at all.

They're better off dead in the wilderness than entering that land without the presence of the Lord. And the reason they're better off is in verse 16.

Moses says there, how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Now what's important to Moses here is how he is known?

His honor, his reputation, his distinctive identity as a man who is favored by the Lord. Moses wants other people to see, to know that he has this amazing personal relationship with the Lord.

[24 : 26] Moses wants to be able to say to other people, do you see how much the Lord loves me? Do you see the favor that he has towards me? Do you see this relationship that I have with him?

That's how Moses identifies himself. In our culture in which people have a tremendous struggle not knowing who they are, not knowing their identity, not knowing how they fit in, Moses knows who he is.

He is a person belonging to the Lord and he will not lose that. He is determined to hold on to that. Moses wants to boast in the grace of God, in the unmerited favor that the Lord has towards him.

And then Moses also, I love this, he's just so subtle. He slips in that little phrase, I and your people, just sort of sneaks that in there because he's a very subtle guy and he's saying to the Lord, we come as a package deal.

I and your people. We come together. I want us all to be known as your people. I want all of us to have our honor, our reputation, our distinctive identity as a people who are favored by the Lord.

[25 : 48] This is not something that he just wants for himself. He sees himself as part of this family, part of this community. He wants it for everyone. Moses wants the people of Israel to have that same relationship with God that he had established back in chapter 19 when God said, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples.

For all the earth is mine and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Moses wants the people to be that treasured possession out of all the peoples, that one people that God has set a special affection on.

That's just his own. Called by his name. And notice how the Lord responds to Moses' request in verse 17. 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. Now the Lord agrees to this request also.

He just keeps saying yes. The Lord agrees not only to be present with Moses, but to be present with the people of Israel once again.

[27 : 16] And why does he do it? Notice the reason he does it. It is not because he says, well, you know, the people have mourned enough, they've done penance, they're feeling guilty and bad enough, so I guess I'll come back.

He's not saying, well, the people have done enough good things to earn my presence back with them again. No.

They aren't worthy. They never will be. They've broken the covenant. They deserve to die. The Lord is not bound by that covenant to them anymore. He's already showing them kindness they don't deserve by offering them the promised land.

The Lord doesn't have to do any of this. None of it. Everything that he is doing is out of his own grace.

It is out of this favor that the Lord is showing to Moses. This very thing that you have spoken, I will do. Why? Because you, Moses, have found favor in my sight and I know you by name.

[28 : 22] This favor that he is showing to Moses, and this is favor that Moses himself hasn't even earned. Moses hasn't earned this either. The Lord reveals his motive there in verse 17, and he tells him his very heart.

This very thing you have spoken, I will do because you have found favor in my sight. I know you by name. He's doing it because he loves Moses. He's doing it because of that affection, that favor, that joy that he finds in Moses.

That's amazing. How amazing is that? The Lord has this unique relationship with Moses that he has with no one else on earth.

And it's this unique relationship that brings hope once again to the people of God. Though the Lord shows kindness to everyone, his people long for his presence.

So his mediator whom he loves secures his grace toward them. His mediator whom he loves secures his grace toward them.

[29 : 29] Don't you wish you had someone like that? Who could secure God's grace toward you? Who had this absolute favor of God?

Who could just speak to the Lord and he would listen to him and plead on your behalf? You do. You have a man like this too.

We have a man whom the Lord God loves. Someone who has a unique relationship with the Lord that no other human being has. A unique relationship surpassing the relationship God had with Moses.

We have a man who has found favor in the sight of God. A man who stands as a mediator on our behalf with God the Father. In Mark chapter 1 we read about this man. In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

And when he came up out of the water immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven.

[30 : 35] You are my beloved son. With you I am well pleased. I favor you.

I love you. And in John chapter 5 Jesus tells us himself about his relationship with God his Father.

The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him so that you may marvel.

For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life so also the Son gives life to whom he will. Just as Moses longed for the people to marvel at his relationship with God.

So Jesus our mediator he longs for us to marvel at his relationship with God his father. Just as Moses longed to know the ways of the Lord.

[31 : 41] So Jesus knows the ways of his father because the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. He shows him his ways.

And just as Moses secured new life with God for the people of Israel so also Jesus gives life to whom he will. To whoever he wants to.

And Jesus promises you and me. Truly truly I say to you. Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life.

He does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life. And oh that you would all hear this good news of Jesus.

That you would believe that God sent Jesus. And so find eternal life because Jesus gives you eternal life as you believe in him.

[32 : 45] Oh that you would escape the judgment, the coming wrath of God. That instead you would find the favor of a loving God, the God who shows grace. Because even Moses knew that he was speaking to the God who shows grace.

When he said in Exodus chapter 33 verse 18, please show me your glory. That is a bold request.

One of the most bold requests you're ever going to see in all of the Bible. Moses doesn't want to see in a mirror dimly any longer. Moses is like a man who has just been, he's been watching that, you know, watching that solar eclipse through a pinhole.

He's seeing the image of the sun cast dimly on the ground below. And he wants to just sweep that all away and look right at the sun. He wants that face-to-face relationship with God as he is in all of his glory.

He wants to see the God who loves him in his full, radiant majesty, in his unbearable beauty, to see him as he is. And so he asked, he spoke wildly and boldly to the Lord, please show me your glory.

- [34 : 08] Matthew Henry writes in his famous commentary, all that are effectually called to the knowledge of God and fellowship with him. Though they desire nothing more than God, are nevertheless still coveting more and more of him.

They want, crave more and more of him till they come to see as they are seen. Moses had wonderfully prevailed with God for one favor after another, and the success of his prayers emboldened him to go on still to seek God.

The more he had, the more he asked. I know how true that is. The more you know God, the more you will ask to know God.

The more you will long to know him. The more you see his beauty, the more you will crave it. The more you will long to know him. And so the Lord replied to Moses with a grace that absolutely overflows in verse 19.

I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name, the Lord, Yahweh, the I am, who I am.

- [35 : 25] Now, to reveal the full glory of God, that would be a problem because that would completely destroy Moses, a little counterproductive.

It's just like, you know, staring at the full glory of the sun, you know, you sweep away that pinhole camera, you look right up at it, and you just stare at it, and you're blind. Now you can't see anything anymore.

It's like that, except you're totally destroyed. You're dead. So the Lord's plan to protect Moses was to hide him.

He's going to take him, set him on the top of Mount Sinai, but then hide him in this cleft, this fissure in the rock, so that Moses is only seeing through what John Calvin calls a narrow and oblique window.

It's just like that little tiny strip window in which like the light comes blazing through, and then the Lord is going to say, okay, well, that's not quite enough, so I'm going to cover you up.

- [36 : 28] He's going to cover him up with his hand, and then as he passes by, after most of his glory is passed by, he's going to take away his hand and only show him just the fading glory, the remnants, the leftovers, as the presence of the Lord passes away, what the Lord calls my back rather than my face.

That language of hand and back and face, that's what we call anthropomorphic language. That's the fancy word of the day. Anthropomorphic language. It's language that describes God in human terms, as though he's a human being, and he's not, but there's just no other way to make us understand what Moses is about to see and about to experience.

All of the goodness of the Lord, his great name spoken, so that Moses is going to see something of him, and he's going to know him by name in a way that he didn't before.

But not even Moses can come close to what Jesus has seen, what Jesus has experienced of his father. In John chapter one, we read, no one has ever seen God.

So lest you think that Moses is going to see all of who God is, nope, not even close. No one has ever seen God. The only God, that's Jesus, the only God who is at the father's side, he has made him known.

- [37 : 53] So Jesus, God the son, he has seen the father in all of his glory. He has looked straight at him for all eternity.

He has seen him face to face. He knows him. He's seen everything of what it means for God to be God. Oh, the happiness. Oh, the joy, the satisfaction that Jesus must have to always know and see his father, to always understand the grace of God in all its fullness.

When the Lord made this promise to Moses, he told him in verse 19 what it means to be the God who shows grace. What is this grace?

This amazing, marvelous grace. He says to Moses in verse 19, I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

You know what's so amazing about the grace of God? What's so beautiful, what's so marvelous about it is that God's grace is totally free.

[39 : 05] It's free in the sense that you and I don't merit it, don't deserve it, don't earn it, and he gives it anyway. And it's free in the sense that the Lord is totally free to show his grace.

The Lord is the one who has absolute freedom. He doesn't have to do any of it. He can do whatever he wants. He doesn't have to show kindness, but he does.

He shows favor to whoever he wants. He didn't have to choose the people of Israel to be his treasured possession. He didn't have to choose Moses to speak to him face to face.

He didn't have to choose to save you and to have a relationship with you. He didn't have to choose me. He didn't have to save me and have a relationship with me. He didn't have to do any of this.

As Moses pointed out in verse 16, there is nothing that distinguishes him, nothing that distinguishes the people of Israel, nothing that distinguishes you, nothing that distinguishes me, nothing that we have done to earn or to merit God with us.

[40 : 11] God's presence with us. That kindness, even the kindness that he shows to every man and woman on earth, all of that is unearned grace as well. This special kindness that God shows to everyone he's chosen as his people, that's unearned.

We don't deserve a bit of it. God doesn't owe anybody that. But this favor, this grace, it runs deep. It runs so deep in his divine plan for the world, so deep that you and I, we can't pry into it.

Why did God save me? I don't know. Why did God bring us here as a church, rescue us? I don't know. He loves us.

Why me? This is what brings us to our final point to consider this question that was raised last week. There's a deep question about the plans and the purposes of God. That question that we raised last week and didn't answer, this question, does God change his mind?

Does God change his mind? And there are many scriptures. You could do a survey of the Bible. You'd find many scriptures that tell us things that God, you know, he works all things according to the counsel of his will.

[41 : 27] You'll find that in the book of Ephesians. God's plans and purposes for the world, they're established in eternity before time began. Everything that happens happens exactly as God purposed it and yet here in chapters 32 and 33 of Exodus, we see a God who is listening to Moses and he is changing his intentions and his actions in response to what Moses says.

God first says, I'm going to destroy the people of Israel in my anger and Moses says, don't do it and God says, I won't. God says, I will send them to the promised land but I won't go with you.

Moses says, please go with me. God says, I will. And he says, please go with the people of Israel. Oh, I will. So does God change his mind?

Well, no and yes. When God says, I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy, God is telling Moses, everything that happens in Exodus 32 and 33, all of the grace of God that is shown, this is God's will and his choice.

It is God who appointed Moses. It is God who determined that Moses would speak up on behalf of the people. It is God who determined that all of these things would take place from the beginning of time.

[42 : 57] God determined, you know, wrap your mind around this. God determined that Moses would change God's mind. If that leaves your brain in a pile of mush for the rest of the day, well, great.

That's what it should be. That should turn us to mush because the Lord is operating on it. He's operating with an intelligence. He's operating with a knowledge. He's operating with a power that is orders of magnitude beyond our own.

It's like alien to us. so beyond our understanding. Somehow God is entirely sovereign. He's got this fixed and determined plan for all things.

Everything in these chapters is going according to that plan. He listens to Moses according to that plan. He listens to Jesus now according to that plan.

He listens to you and to me when we pray according to that plan. And he responds and he changes his mind. He listens to you and he does something different because you asked.

[44 : 02] And this is good news. What grace God is showing in all this. What grace that we have a God who goes before Moses and proclaims his name, Yahweh, the God who is, who has told Moses, I am who I am.

He is who he is. He is what he is. You can't change him. He's eternal. He's unchanging. He's unchangeable. Which is good because he's faithful.

It means he's faithful and reliable and he won't change and you can always count on his good character. And yet at the same time he chooses you and me for his grace and favor and love and that purpose is not going to change.

He's not going to go back on his word because he's unchanging and then at the same time we have a God who listens to us when we pray. A God who answers our request. A God who forgives our sins. A God who turns his wrath away from us and welcomes us into a deep and amazing relationship with him.

A God that you can know and a God who knows you. There is no God like this God. The God who shows grace.

[45 : 17] Oh, turn from your sin and believe in him. He is great and he is good and he is with us. Pray to him.

You can pray to him because Jesus, your savior who is favored and loved by God is standing before a father and speaking to him on your behalf and if the father will listen to him then he will listen to you.

So you can speak with renewed confidence and trust in the Lord. The Lord shows kindness to everyone and his people long for his presence so his mediator whom he loves he secures his grace toward you.

And so we are fully assured that the God who is great, the God who is good, he is also the God who is with us. Let's give thanks to the Lord for that.