

God's Grace is Greater

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- [0 : 00] My great privilege to be here. My heart is stirred already and seeing the testimonies, seeing what God is doing. I'm glad there's something more going on than people just coming together for services.
- It's great to see missionaries be sent out and people consumed with the gospel. And I'm encouraged tonight. I want to thank you, church, for your kindness to me, your kindness to our family and to our ministry and your help this past January.
- When I heard from Trent a few months ago that someone was coming up with the prospect of looking to plant a church in New York City, it was my goal to try to be a blessing to your pastor, to John, to offer some encouragement.
- And you in return were a blessing to me. And thank you so much. Thank you for partnering with me, with our church and helping us. And God just miraculously provided for us as a church to be able to buy a building in New York City is certainly something bigger than I could accomplish.
- And to God be the glory. And thank you for, excuse me, being yielded to the Lord. I'll share a portion of our testimony tonight, but I want you to go with me to the book of Exodus.
- [1 : 08] Exodus in chapter number 33. Exodus chapter number 33. This, at the end of this month, our church will be celebrating our nine-year anniversary. We've moved two times.
- We're in the third building that our church has called home. And it's nothing short of amazing what God is doing. The miracle certainly isn't the buildings we're in, but rather the work that God is doing and people being saved and lives being changed.
- And not only people now coming to church and growing in the Lord, but now seeing people in our church being active and sharing the gospel with others. And we certainly praise the Lord for that.
- In Exodus chapter number 33, we're going to begin in verse number 11. The setting of this story is, it's tough. It's sad. It's gut-wrenching.
- God's people rebelled. And as a result of the familiar golden calf incident, and God informed Moses that he was going to withdraw his presence.
- [2 : 13] He said, you go to the promised land, but I'm not going with you. Understand that this broke the heart of Moses. And he knew that it was useless to go anywhere without God's leading.
- And the passage we're going to read for just a few minutes tonight is this special time of prayer that Moses has. Let's go to verse number 11 of our text.
- Exodus chapter 33, verse number 11. And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp.
- But his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man departed not out of the tabernacle. And Moses said unto the Lord, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people.
- And thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name. And thou hast also found grace in my sight. Now therefore I pray thee, for I have found grace in thy sight.

[3 : 11] Show me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight. And consider that this nation is thy people. And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.

Let's pray together. Father, I pray that you would bless your word as it's opened, as it's taught. I pray that you would speak to our hearts tonight. I pray that we would be stirred. I pray that we would be challenged.

In Jesus' name, amen. In my outline that I'll share with you this evening, number one, I want you to notice the plea of Moses. The plea of Moses, as he goes to the Lord in prayer here, we see in verse number 12, he said, Lord, see thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people.

And thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name. And thou hast also found grace in thy sight. Now therefore I pray thee, for I have found grace in thy sight.

Show me now thy way. We see that Moses here is pleading for God's path. As Psalm says, Psalm 25, verse number 4, show me thy ways.

[4 : 18] Teach me thy paths. I'm here tonight to testify that as our church has been started now, established for nine years, that there were many times that I have given God my list of things that I wanted him to do for me instead of saying, God, show me thy way.

God, lead me. God, you show me what you want me to do, not God, here is what I want you to do for me. Notice that the first thing that Moses is praying for is the will of God.

He's praying for God's direction. He's saying, God, I need you to show me which steps I need to take. Jesus reminds us of this in John 15.

He said, I am divine, ye are the branches, for without me ye can do nothing. Boy, I'm thankful tonight for the testimonies, the missionaries that I get to stand with this evening.

And I'm encouraged by people that have said, God, I want to serve you, but I'm also reminded that we are nothing without God. Thank God for his goodness.

[5 : 25] Thank God for his grace in our lives. I could stand here for hour after hour after hour tonight and talk about the complexity of living in New York City. If you want to go to McDonald's right by our church, you get to pay a meter just to park to go to McDonald's.

My wife, every single day, spends \$18 in tolls just taking our kids to and from school. Challenge after challenge, tax after tax. I won't even mention politics tonight, all right?

We'll leave that alone. But yes, there's burdens, and yes, there's heartaches, but realize that it's not my church. It's not Ken's church, but rather it's God's church. As we looked for a location to get our church off the ground, there was plenty of buildings that I wanted that we wished we could call home.

And I said, God, this is the one we need, and we could build something great for you here. And God closed that door. And we looked at another building and another building and another building, and literally dozens of buildings that just dead end, closed door, didn't work, wasn't going to happen.

And understand that we came to a place where God was the one that opened the door. God was the one that showed us where he wanted our church to begin. But sadly, if we're not careful, what we'll do is we'll just run through life with our own plans, with our own agenda, and then trying to get God into, here's what I'm going to do.

[6 : 51] Here's how I need you to bless me. And then when things don't go right, it's so easy to just blame somebody else, to fall into victim status and blame a spouse or blame the church or blame our employer or blame the family or blame God even in some cases as some people do.

But notice the Bible says in Psalm 32, verse number 8, I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go. I will guide thee with mine eye.

Hey, I'm thankful today, even though we could all agree that life has its challenges, life has its burdens, that life has obstacles, that we've got a God in heaven that loves us, that wants to guide us.

And would to God our prayer tonight would be, God, show me your will. Show me your path. Lead me and help me to do what you want me to do. Isaiah 42, and I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not.

I will lead them in a path that they have not known. I will make darkness light before them and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them and not forsake them.

[8 : 01] Hey, thank God today that we've got a God in heaven that loves us, that will guide us in truth. John 16, verse number 13, How be it when he, the spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all truth.

I'm here tonight to testify that I'm still a very young pastor, but sadly I've seen mistakes that people have made along the way, that people have wanted God to bless them, but realize we can't expect God to guide us if we aren't following the Lord.

Would to God our desire to be a closer walk with him, to know him, to spend that time with him. We see this plea that Moses had for God's path, but I want us to also notice tonight that there was this plea for this personalness, or oneness, or closeness with the Lord.

Moses said, I want to know you, Lord. It's you who I want to know. Philippians 3, That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, the Bible says, being made conformable unto his death.

Philip, in John 14, 8, saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Hey, would to God tonight, our desire to be that close-knit relationship with God, knowing him, spending time with him, that ought to be our desire, our plea to know him, to be about his business, to be passionate, but our Savior is passionate about.

[9 : 34] Too often, people will say they know God when they know when a service schedule is in a church. Here tonight, I'm not being unkind, or trying to poke jabs in any way whatsoever, but understand, if we're not careful, we can go through the motions of Christianity, instead of having that deep, abiding relationship with our Lord, and Savior, Jesus Christ.

May we all crave, may we all want, may we all long for that close walk with God, that we may know him. The Bible says in verse number 11 of our text, Exodus chapter 33, the Bible says, and the Lord spake to Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.

That's the whole key of this text. God is not some distant figure. Hey, the good news about this, is even though Israel sinned, we see here, that God was Moses' friend.

Hey, I'm encouraged tonight, to know, that not only is he my God, but he's my friend tonight. God wants to be our friend. Moses went to his friend, and he said, show me your path, that you have for my life.

I want to get close to you. That was the prayer of Moses. Hey, let me remind us all of this thought tonight. I shared this with our church recently. Each one of us are as close to God, as we want to be.

[11 : 01] You're not close tonight to God, it's because you don't want to be close to God. I've been there. Bible says, draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Hallelujah for a God, that would want to spend time with me.

Notice also, we see this plea for grace. This plea for grace. Look back at verse number, chapter 33, verse number 13. The Bible says, now therefore I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight, and consider that this nation is thy people.

Understand that it is grace that enables us to endure trials. It is God's grace that helps us to be patient when we want to be impatient. It's God's grace that gives us strength when we are weak, to have joy when we are not happy.

Grace is God's riches at Christ's expense. Through this, the last nine months as we've been going through this, this, this just miracle of purchasing this building, a dream come true, something that I didn't know would ever happen in our ministry in my lifetime that we've seen our church come together and our church sacrifice and our church give thousands of dollars and this door opened up for us to be able to buy our own building that we can call home.

I get frustrated when I think about we've got to pay these \$40,000 in taxes, but then I get really frustrated when I look back at the \$600,000 in rent that I paid over the last eight years. But praise God, the building that we have that we can call home now and our church has gone through a time of celebrating and just lifting up the name of Jesus and rejoicing in the goodness of God.

[12 : 45] But on this journey of joy and rejoicing and giving praise, we've also had a number of people that have gone through painful challenges. One of my best friends in our church, a man with the name of James, a guy that we've fished together on a number of occasions and he's not just a church member but a buddy, a friend, a pal.

He got cancer and spent some time in the hospital last fall and James progressively got worse and worse and worse and worse and it soon was pretty clear that James didn't have much time left.

When James was down to his final days back in December, James' mom was sitting in his hospital room. We had shared the gospel with her.

She listened but didn't respond to the gospel and listened and didn't respond to the gospel and then a newer Christian in our church sat by James' bedside, held his hand, looked his mom square in the eyes and told her her need for salvation and right there with tears running down her face on her son's dying bedside, she bowed her head and trusted Jesus Christ to save her.

You say, what is that? It's grace. It's the grace of God. Well, why would James have to go through that? It's not, why would James, it's God is so good that he provided an opportunity for his mom to be saved.

[14 : 09] James is all healed today. James is in heaven but understand now his mom is spiritually healed as well. That's grace. We're praying for James to get out of the hospital and God's saying, no, I need him to stay in there because that's the place where his mom is going to trust me as her savior.

God is so good. What's Moses pleading for here? He's pleading for God's grace. The Lord is a sun and shield, Psalm 84. The Lord will give grace and glory. It's only by God's grace tonight that we get to serve him.

Boy, I could stand here and open up the New York Post and just, this is frustrating and political nonsense this and financial that and economic this and gas prices and milk prices and housing prices and everything else.

Hey, hallelujah, I get to serve God. God has made a way. God has met every single need that we have. God has blessed our family. God has given me a wonderful wife and four children that are growing and serving and please tonight if you would pray for my son, Kate.

He's five years old and he's beginning to ask questions about salvation and we're excited about it but please keep him in prayers as we see him listening and the Holy Spirit softening and working in this heart but what a privilege it is that we get to serve God.

[15 : 24] I've got a brother-in-law that's a church planter in Oahu. Somehow he gets Hawaii and I get the Bronx but praise the Lord I get to serve God in the Bronx.

I wouldn't have it any other way. The Bible says the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. God has been good to us. Thank him tonight for his grace but then I want you to notice the plea for the people of God.

The plea for the people of God. Look again at verse number 13. The Bible, it says that I may find grace in thy sight and consider that this nation is thy people.

See, it would be super easy tonight for us to spend the evening poking cheap jabs at politicians. It would be super fun tonight poking cheap jabs at sports figures and celebrities coming out of New York.

Can I say tonight they need the gospel. They don't need my criticism. They got enough ugly. They got enough nasty going on. What they need is the truth that we have. It is the truth not my political view that's going to set them free but it's the truth of the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

[16 : 35] Hey, thank God tonight for a church that is coming together not just saying there's a problem in the world but doing something about it. Let's send a missionary to this country and send a missionary to that country and send a missionary to that country and let's all do our part and let's send missionaries here and support missionaries there and make a difference for the cause of Christ.

Hey, I'm thankful that we understand that it's not for us to complain about the problems but rather share the truth. That's what Moses is doing. He's saying, God, you're the answer. The answer is you.

We need you. Then we see as a result of this prayer the promise of God's presence. Look at verse number 14. The Bible says, And he said, My presence shall go with thee and I will give thee rest.

And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. Think about that. God said, My presence will go with you. That right there just blows me away.

I'm convicted when I read this every time I see this passage and the question I have to look in the mirror and ask myself, Ken, why don't you pray more? Why don't we as God's people go before his throne?

[17 : 41] God answers prayer. Hallelujah for that. Matthew chapter 7. Jesus is teaching on prayer. Ask and it shall be given you. Seek and you shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you.

The Bible is over and over again showing us for everyone that asketh and receiveth. He that seeketh findeth to him that knocketh shall be opened. Or what man is there of you whom he asketh his son bread? Will he give him a stone? Or if he ask of fish, will he give him a servant?

If ye then be in evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father, which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him.

Jesus is saying, I know what you need. But more than you need fish, you need God. Hey, I spend a lot of my time as a young church planter praying for provisions, praying for things, praying for buildings, praying for stuff, praying for needs.

And by the way, I need to pray. But God is showing us here in this text, more than I need fish, I need God. More than I need provisions, I need God. More than I need a building, I need God. More than I need healing, I need God.

[18 : 41] My greatest need in my life is God. More than I need my bills paid, I need God. Why? Because I have the promise already that my God shall supply all your need according to his riches and glory by Christ Jesus.

More than I need good health, I need God. Understand, God's presence was not only with Israel, but it's with you and I tonight. And that presence is what gives us the courage.

David talked about it in Psalm 23. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. God's presence gives us comfort.

I love it. Psalm, or Isaiah 43, when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee. Through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned.

Neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. The Bible says in Hebrews 13, for he has said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. Hey, thank God tonight for his presence.

[19 : 38] That's what we need tonight, the presence of God. Then I want us to notice the prophet's dependence. The prophet's dependence. Look at verse number 15 again. He said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.

For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in it that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.

Moses is telling the Lord, we cannot make it without you. If you're not with us, we absolutely, positively won't, we won't make it.

We need you, God. We're desperate for you, God. Hey, we're just a few weeks away as a young church from celebrating our nine-year anniversary and celebrating what God has done.

But understand, it's not a testimony of Ken at all. It's a testimony of the goodness of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We, three years ago or four years ago now, moved into the building that we're in.

[20 : 43] And again, it's gorgeous, it's beautiful, it's just amazing how God has provided and given us our own home. But in the journey, these last eight, nine years, there was times that I explored the possibility of purchasing and I went to bank after bank and banks would close the doors and someone would say, well, this person specializes in helping churches get mortgages and that seemed to be a closed door and this person can help you and this private individual can help you and just closed door after closed door after closed door.

Even in the last year or so, we explored that kind of stuff and it just didn't work at all. Last fall now, a year ago last fall, my wife and I were growing in the Lord.

The church was growing. We were just enjoying God's blessings and seeing people saved and enjoying a season of growth and my wife, she looked at me and she said, I just want you to know what we're expecting.

And this was in the end of 2017. We were so excited about it and it was just a sweet time as we have at the time a 14-year-old, a 13-year-old, a 10-year-old and Cade was three and we just began to prepare and I'd get in the baby crib and getting stuff and she carried the baby for six months and then on that next doctor's appointment, she went to the doctor and the doctor said, there's no heartbeat and it was heartbreaking and it was tough and it was just a big challenge for my wife.

But I saw God's grace in her life as she just still had a peace, a joy that could only come from God that while she was grieving, I saw her minister to so many people and love so many people and I tried to shield her and guard her and protect her but even while she was grieving that she would, people would take their burdens and their needs at church and just kind of pour them on her and she would lovingly pray for them and love them and care for them.

[22 : 55] God was real. God's presence was amazing during that time. Three months passed by. In those three months we explored again the idea of financial institutions, banks and someone had given us another tip on somebody that could help us only for it to turn out to be a dead end to the point that I just gave up and said, God, we're going to trust you but when this lease is up unless you open another door what we're going to do is we're just going to sign the lease and renew this extension for five more years and just keep paying the rent on this expensive building.

Well, last spring in 2018 my wife came back to me and she said, babe, we're expecting. How sweet that was and how tender that was and how special that was is once again we got the crib out that started to stockpile the diapers started to get the baby clothes it was is it a pink Yankee outfit or a blue Yankee outfit I mean, there was no other options and just the joy and the family going through only to this past June to get the same news from the doctor there's no heartbeat and it was tough.

My sister was getting married in Illinois and my daughters were in the wedding and so we went ahead and flew my daughters to the wedding and my wife and I and my son and my wife and I were home alone and we went to the doctor and she delivered and we came home and we cried and we cried and God was with us.

His presence was amazing. It was about 4 o'clock June 12th Denise had just gone to bed trying to get some rest from an emotional week.

I'm sitting on the couch and my phone rings and I really didn't feel like talking to anybody. I really didn't feel like anybody else's problems were my problem and it didn't really matter what it was but I looked at the phone and I recognized the number and I'm the kind of guy that if I don't take it I'm going to worry about what it is so I might as well take the phone call as opposed to let it weigh on my mind.

[25 : 06] I took the phone call and it was the owner of our building and I'm like what did we do now? and before I could say anything before I could respond he said Ken I just want you to know that I'm getting a little bit older and the time has come for me to sell the building and I want to sell it to you guys and I thought that's great but I've talked to enough banks I'm just I'm not going to go there again.

Too many closed doors too much pain it's just the timing's not right it can't happen we don't have the down payment no one wants to finance us it's not going to work all those thoughts of faithlessness went through my mind in that moment as we're grieving and before I say anything outside of a few pleasantries the owner comes back and he says not only do I want to sell you the building it's that I want to sell it to you at 70% of its value but I also want to be the bank and I want to finance the building we're going to take care of this and we're going to make sure that your church has this building and I just began to weep and to cry as we look back and realize that this was no longer something that I was trying to force this was a door that God had opened and he knew what he was doing all along and it was his plan and it was a reminder that God was saying this is his church and those are his people and we're part of his family we can look back and the time of us losing these two precious babies are no longer a time of pain and a time of hurt but rather seeing the goodness of God in a way that we've never experienced before in our lives and I like as we look at this text that Moses is saying

God I'm not going without you as good as the promised land looks if you're not with us we're not going there and would to God that be our desire regardless of what life presents in front of us may we say God I'm not going to take a step without you I'm going to trust you I'm going to trust you with my life I'm going to trust you with my finances I'm going to trust you with my schedule I'm going to trust you in my relationships I'm going to trust you in all we do that's what we see Moses doing here saying God we depend upon you not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything of ourselves 2 Corinthians 3 but our sufficiency is of God we see the prophets dependence very quickly I want you to notice a prayer for God's glory a prayer for God's glory look down at verse number 18 and he said I beseech thee show me thy glory show me thy glory hey the closer we get to God the more we want to know him the more we realize just how little we are John said it best he must increase but I must decrease hey thank God for the blessings

I need to decrease thank God for his goodness he needs to increase thank God for his provision may we trust him more may we think less of ourselves may we think more of him Moses said God we need to see you show us your glory and the Bible says Exodus chapter 40 verse number 34 then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle Moses said this is not my highlight reel this is not about my leadership this is not about me making a bigger name for myself all the glory God belongs to you Moses prayed for the glory of God hey can I say today whether we're serving on a foreign mission field whether we're sending missionaries however we may be doing it may our prayer be God may I glorify you in my offering may I glorify you in my service may I bring glory to you in all that I do hey tomorrow morning when we go to work may we bring glory to almighty God in the workplace may God be seen in our lives then we see the promises of God verse number 19 the Bible says and he said

I will make all my goodness pass before thee and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy we see four beautiful promises pictured here a connection a parallel to the New Testament passage in Ephesians chapter 3 and verse number 20 now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think according to his power that worketh in us hey thank God today we can dream big we can plan big and yet God wants to do more through us than we can even think of ourselves may we trust him tonight for his promises as he continues to bless and then finally and we're done notice the provision for protection verse number 20 and he said thou canst not see my face for there shall no man see me and live and the Lord said verse 21 of Exodus 33 behold there is a place by me and thou shalt stand upon a rock and it shall come to pass while my glory passeth by that I will put thee in a cliff of the rock and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by and I will take away mine hand and thou shalt see my back parts but my face shall not be seen

[30 : 14] God told Moses you can't see my face and live but there is a place by me you can stand upon a rock when my glory passes by he said I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by I will remove my hand the Bible says that you can see my back I want us to notice as we close this evening for us for sinful mankind to have access into God's holy presence it is necessary that we be put in that place of security and peace that place of security is found in the rock of ages our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who is pictured here in this passage and because of our Lord Jesus Christ we have fellowship with God the Father Ephesians chapter 2 for by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is a gift of God not of work lest any man should boast the setting of this story is as I said a moment ago is gut wrenching it's heartbreaking it's sad

Israel had sinned gross sin idolatrous sin wicked sin they greatly sinned the reality is that that's the story of the Bronx tonight great sin I could tell you story after story of painful heartache of troubling things that I've seen my kids have seen or churches seen you've seen it all over the news gross sin but that's not just the story of the Bronx that's also the story of my life great sin that's the story of your life great sin but aren't you glad the Bible says in Romans chapter 5 in verse number 20 but where sin abounded grace did much more abound I'm glad tonight that God's grace grace is greater than all my sin what a great picture in Exodus 33 of the amazing grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ what a privilege we get to serve Him what a privilege that we get to be a part of His great work in getting the gospel to the entire earth