

Relationship Rescued by His Glorious Grace

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[0:00] Well, please turn with me in your Bible to Exodus chapter 33 on page 74 of the Blue Church Bible.

! We're going to pick up our reading from 33 verse 18 and read through to 34 and verse 28. Exodus chapter 33 from verse 18.

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 cover you, put you in the 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. The Lord said to Moses, cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets which you broke. Be ready by the morning and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai and present yourself there to me on the top of the mountain. No one shall come up with you, and let no one be seen throughout all the mountain.

Let no flocks or herds graze opposite that mountain. So Moses cut two tablets of stone like the first, and he rose early in the morning and went up on Mount Sinai as the Lord had commanded him, and took in his hand two tablets of stone. The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the name of the Lord. The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, the Lord, the Lord, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation. And Moses quickly bowed his head towards the earth and worshiped. And he said, if now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us, for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin and take us for your inheritance.

[3:15] And he said, behold, I am making a covenant. Before all your people, I will do marvels such as have not been created in all the earth or in any nation. And all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the Lord, for it is an awesome thing that I will do with you. Observe what I command you this day. Behold, I will drive out before you the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Take care, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you go, lest it become a snare in your midst. You shall tear down their altars and break their pillars and cut down their ashram, for you shall worship no other God. But the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. Lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and when they whore after their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and you are invited, you eat of his sacrifice, and you take of their daughters for your sons, and their daughters whore after their gods, and make your sons whore after their gods.

You shall not make for yourself any gods of cast metal. You shall keep the feast of unleavened bread. For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in the month of Abib you came out from Egypt. All that open the womb are mine, all your male livestock, the firstborn of cow and sheep, the firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it, you shall break its neck. All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem, and none shall appear before me empty-handed. For six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest. In plowing time and in harvest you shall rest. You shall observe the feast of weeks, the first fruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of in gathering at the

year's end. Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel. For I will cast out the nations before you, and enlarge your borders. No one shall covet your land when you go up to appear before the Lord your God three times in the year. You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with anything leavened, or let the sacrifice of the feast of Passover remain until morning. The best of the firstfruits of your ground you shall bring to the house of the Lord your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk. And the Lord said to Moses, write these words, for in accordance with these words

I have made a covenant with you and with Israel. So he was there with the Lord for forty days and forty nights. He neither ate bread nor drank water, and he wrote on the tablets the word of the covenant, the ten commandments. Amen. This is God's holy word. Please keep that open, and we'll pray for his help as we look at it together. Father, your word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. We pray, Lord, that you would lead us by that light of your word to Jesus Christ this morning, and we pray, Lord, that you would illuminate the way so that we might follow him the closer. Help us, we pray, to see your glory as we hear of your grace together. For we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, I wonder, if you could be famous for one thing, what would it be? I heard about a new Guinness World Record on the radio this week. A man in Hungary, in Budapest, on a scorching hot day, drank a can of energy drink, and the thought came into his head, I could get famous for this. Today, he is the proud owner of 2,000 cans of different energy drinks, all of which he has drank and saved the can. He is now the energy drink man. He worked for 20 years to be known as that, to make a name for himself by drinking and collecting cans of juice. There are always people on there that we wonder, why exactly are they famous?

We see them on our TV screens, people who are just celebrities, you know, one reality TV show leads to the next, and so on. But most of the people that we actually look up to are famous for having done something. We ascribe glory to them because of what they have accomplished.

[8:24] Last Sunday, JT left us on a cliffhanger in chapter 33. Remember, Moses is standing alone between God and his people, pleading with God on behalf of his stubborn people, fresh from their worship of the golden calf, and pleading with his people on behalf of the holy God. It seems at this point as if the whole of the Exodus rescue is hanging on Moses, the one mediator between God and them.

He pled with the Lord not to destroy them, and he didn't. He pled with the Lord to be with them, and he will. But he's still seeking rescue and renewal for their shattered relationship. It's not all quite put back together yet. And now at the climax of these chapters, arguably the climax of the whole book of Exodus, Moses says now to the Lord, verse 18, please show me your glory.

And in the rest of our passage, he does. So, what is Moses asking to see? What does the Lord's glory consist of? To put it differently, why is he famous? What does the Lord want to be known for? That should be the question that we have this morning, brothers and sisters. When asked to reveal his glory, what is it that the Lord reveals?

Guinness World Record holder for what? Well, let's see in our first point from verse 18 then, praise his glorious grace. In verse 18, the Lord gives us a trailer of what he's going to show Moses.

What is he going to show? 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. We thought about the significance of the Lord's name as we've gone through Exodus at the start. We didn't know what it was. Moses had to ask, when they say, what is his name, what shall I say? The Lord tells him later that previously, he wasn't known by this name, that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob didn't know him in this way.

[11:04] So, in the Exodus then, the Lord has shown himself, revealed himself by this particular name. And we've heard it at points like a drumbeat in the narrative, I am the Lord, I am the Lord.

And always, that has been in close connection with his saving work. It's like his calling card, if you like. When he promises to save, I am the Lord. When he sent the ten plagues, I am the Lord.

When he split the sea, I am the Lord. When he gathered his people at Sinai, I am the Lord. When he promised them that he would be their God, and they would be his people, I am the Lord.

His name in Hebrew, Yahweh, means something like the one who is, I am who I am. But more than having a name, the point is that the Lord is making a name for himself. Like if I was to say to you, Einstein, immediately you would think something like E equals MC squared, or scientist, right?

Or if I said Shakespeare, straight away, you would think Macbeth, Hamlet, Othello. When I say the Lord, what is it we immediately think of in connection with him?

[12 : 42] Well, what does the Lord want that word association to be? What does he want us to think when we hear his name? Listen again to verse 19. I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim to you my name, the Lord. And I will be gracious to whom I'll be gracious, and show mercy on whom I'll show mercy. I'll proclaim my name, and you will see my goodness, mercy, and grace. Now that's the trailer. Now we can't wait to see the real thing, can we?

It will be different this time. There are only restricted view seats. Famously, the Lord told Moses, verse 20, man shall not see me and live. It's interesting that actually before they did, back in chapter 24, when the covenant was signed and sealed, they saw the God of Israel.

So clearly now something has changed. Now even Moses has to be shielded from God's glory by God's hand. There's something very Passover-y about that. Remember in the 10th plague, when the Lord judged his enemies, Moses said the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians, but when he sees the blood on the doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you. So we think about this in slightly the wrong way, don't we? The Passover is not the Lord kind of skipping over the houses that have the blood.

The Passover is the Lord blocking the entrance, passing over the door of the house that has the blood, that his judgment might not fall on the people. So now he puts Moses in a cave and covers him over to shield him from direct exposure to his own glory. But that's actually okay, because it turns out that God revealing his glory isn't so much something to see as it is something to hear. Fast forward to the next day, Moses goes back up Mount Sinai with two fresh stone tablets to replace the ones that he smashed so that the Lord can graciously renew the smashed covenant that he had made with them. And the Lord comes down and reveals his glory.

And it's worth us listening to this again and just letting it sink in. After their doubting, their grumbling, their full fat idolatry, their adultery, what is it that the Lord wants to put on record at this high point of history so that the world will know and history will remember exactly who he is?

[15 : 47] The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the name of the Lord. The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, the Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving, iniquity, transgression, and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children.

What is it? It's the parent stooping down to the toddler after the tantrum, the husband sitting down next to his cheating wife, the mentor going over to visit the stumbling young Christian and saying, before I say anything else, I have to say this, I love you.

I love you. And that's never going to change. That's what I need you to know. These words will go down in history. They're repeated like a creed throughout the Old Testament.

We've heard some of them so far in our service. Psalm 145. They're repeated by Nehemiah, by Jonah, and Joel. They're precious words for God's people.

Even to this day, we find them in prayers and songs that we sing in church. And that is just how the Lord would have it. That is exactly how he wants us to know him.

[17 : 23] Friends, I wonder, what do you picture in your head when you think of God's glory? For many of us, I just think it's this kind of blinding light somewhere up there that is separated from us in a really radical way.

Or maybe it's that guy's face in Raiders of the Lost Ark that just gets kind of melted off by the glory of God. But why that blazing glory? Yes, because he is uncompromisingly good.

He says that, doesn't he? He won't casually clear the guilty. It's not a God who is blind to wrongdoing. But the headline is, he is most glorious because of his amazing grace.

Isn't it astonishing that the revelation of his glory is a proclamation of his grace?

It's as surprising as John in Revelation turning to see the mighty lion of the tribe of Judah and seeing there instead a lamb standing as though it had been slain.

[18 : 35] Friends, do you know, can you just take this in about God? Can you take this in this morning? That to know that he is gracious is to behold his glory, is to see him as he is.

God says there is nothing more glorious about him than that he is patient, slow to anger, overflowing with unchanging love and faithfulness, than that he forgives sins and wrongdoing.

Of all the things for God to want to be famous for, for all his great works and wonders of history, for all the perfections of his character and of his being, the thing he wants to be known for in all the world is showing grace to his enemies, forgiving idol worshipers, saving sinners. friends, that's still true today. If you think of God as someone who's just waiting to slap you down or tell you you've got it wrong again, you've got him so wrong.

If you think of God as somebody who, I could never come to him because I will never be good enough for him. You've heard him wrong. He holds the world record in all history and eternity for most sins forgiven, worst enemy welcomed, longest search for his missing bride, most costly rescue mission.

[20:17] Those are the things he's famous for. That is the content of his glory. How do we know that? Well, where did he, the great I am who I am, put his name up in lights in the long history of our world, but a filthy stable, a cross, and a tomb?

For the word became flesh, wrote John, and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

No one has ever seen God, but the only God who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. What did we hear him say last Sunday night on earth?

I came not to call the righteous, but sinners. I came to seek and save the lost. When Moses hears this, he quickly bows his head and worships.

Brothers and sisters, how much quicker should our hearts bow before the Lord Jesus in awe that he has made his name by coming to us in his grace?

[21:37] It's easy to wish, isn't it, that we'd been up there with Moses on the mountain, but think about it. What did he see that we haven't seen? We're not actually told he saw anything.

He heard what God proclaimed. And what did he hear that we haven't heard? Nothing. Nothing. He worshipped the Lord, for he beheld God's glory when he heard the good news of his grace. So again, can we take this in as we sit here this morning? Nothing. And as we sit here this morning, we are no less exposed to God's glory than Moses was on Mount Sinai.

And in fact, even more so because the good news that God proclaimed on the mountain so long ago, he is now confirmed in the death and resurrection of his son.

And so with unveiled face this morning, we behold the glory of the Lord as we look to Christ and hear the ancient word that he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.

[23:01] Brothers and sisters, praise his glorious name. By beholding his glorious grace. And into our week, let us praise his glorious name by displaying his glorious grace.

It's our second point from 34 verse 10. Display his glorious grace. Verse 10, the Lord says, behold, I'm making a covenant.

Before all your people I will do marvels such as has not been created in the earth or any nation. If you thought, as we read from verse 10 onwards, that this covenant sounds very similar to the first one, that's because it is.

It's the same covenant. It's not a different relationship with different rules. It's the same relationship which is people broke by worshiping the golden calf that he is now putting back together by renewing the covenant.

Having said he wouldn't go up with them, he now promises that he will. He will drive out the nations before them. He also restates some of the commands he gave before, but quite pointedly, only the ones that stress their identity as non-idol worshipers, people who belong to the real God.

[24:28] So, he says, don't get into bed with idol worshipers in the land by making covenants with them, verse 12 to 16. Otherwise, you will get sucked in as well. Look at verse 17 and win a bit.

You shall not make for yourselves any gods of cast metal. That is exactly the way that the golden calf was described back in chapter 32. It's the kind of thing that we might think might not need to be said, but the Lord knows better.

They need to hear that. The Lord's about commemorating the Exodus rescue, verses 18 to 20, the feast of unleavened bread, redeeming the firstborn, both of which God commanded them in Egypt so that they would never forget his redemption from slavery.

The Sabbath, which we saw only a few weeks ago, is a marker of their identity as people set free by the Lord from their slavery and the feasts that were also key times of worship and sacrifice to their Savior.

Laws, again, about a Passover meal, they were told to remember their salvation. And something else to do with boiling a young goat in its mother's milk, which is probably to do with avoiding pagan worship practices, but no one really knows.

[25 : 52] The fact that all these laws cluster around the first four of the Ten Commandments, what we call the first table of the law to do with loving the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, suggests that these commandments are not the whole covenant, but a kind of restatement of what they most needed to hear about the covenant God was restoring, renewing, a bit like if you get into trouble at work and you're sent away to do some training, you can bet that the training is going to be about the thing that you allegedly got wrong at work.

So here the Lord singles out the commandments to do with loving and worshipping him rightly, because that is where they dramatically failed with their idolatry.

But there are also commands which stress the importance of remembering who they are now. They're not slaves, not pagans, as they seem to forget sometimes, but the redeemed people of the one true God.

They need to remember that they are the much-loved recipients of the very grace, goodness, and mercy which the Lord has just proclaimed to them on the mountain.

And so now the Lord says they are to live like it. they are, if you like, to be who they are in relationship with the Lord. In other words, they are to display his glorious grace.

[27 : 30] One of the things I hope our time in Exodus has done has made us a bit less squeamish when it comes to Old Testament law. Very often, we as Christians speak about it as if it was just a kind of rod that God used to beat people over the head with.

The Lord does tell us that we don't meet his standard because his law is perfect and every day we show that we are not perfect. But it was given to his saved people, not people who still needed saving.

So it was never if you don't obey well enough, I won't save you. It was now I've saved you and made you my people, live distinctively for me in the world so that the world will know who I am and who ye belong to.

And so, for us, if our trust is in Christ, we belong to him, we are part of his kingdom and so he calls us now to live for him in the world so that everyone might see who he is, this God of grace.

And as you hear that, perhaps like me, your thoughts go straight to kind of the loving your neighbor stuff. You're showing Christ's love by the way that we're kind to people or help people.

[28 : 46] That's true. But the Lord is actually saying here, you show me off to the world by the way you treat me. Is our love for the Lord clear and obvious where it really matters and people see?

Sometimes you hear people talking about dating as an evangelistic opportunity and a flirt to convert. Does the Lord say that making covenants with the people of the land glorifies him or does it lead to compromise and idolatry?

Is getting entangled with idol worshipers how we show the world who Christ is? Friends, when the choice is between a relationship, sex, romance, and the Lord, which do we show the world is the most important to us?

Richard Dawkins famously condemned God for being jealous and proud of it. The Lord owns it quite openly here. The Lord, whose name is jealous, is a jealous God. To say that that's a bad thing would be like admonishing a wife for being jealous for her husband's affections.

If she didn't care who he spent his free time with, who he got close to, who he slept with, we would think that there's something profoundly wrong in that marriage. If the Lord was not bothered when we get entangled with harmful non-entities which idols are, well, he wouldn't be a very good God.

[30 : 28] No, not a God who truly loves us, certainly not a God who staped his reputation and glory on our salvation. What about the Sabbath?

There are so many invites on a Sunday. To be honest, I think other families are getting bored of the weekend by Sunday afternoon. In come the WhatsApps. We're going to the park.

Do you want to come with us? And because I love them, what I want to reply is sorry, we can't. But then as I read this this week, I thought, why am I sorry for wanting to keep the Lord's day for the Lord?

And why would I tell them that I'm sorry for doing that? That's not really very loving, ultimately, is it? Because I'm lying about who the Lord is. Sorry that my Lord and Savior has set aside a day for himself.

brackets, he's so demanding, so inflexible. I wish I could go to the park, but that's God for you. Does that reflect the God who reveals himself in verse 21?

[31 : 39] In six days you shall work, but the seventh you shall rest. In plowing time and harvest you shall rest. surely we display his goodness not by joining in with the activity of the world on a Sunday, but by showing what a great thing it is that God has freed us from the idolatry of work, of family, of recreation, of chores, to rest without distraction in who he is and what he's done for us every week.

Thanks for the invite, but we're having a great Sunday with our church and enjoying what Jesus has done for us. We'll see you later in the week.

We display his glorious grace to the world, brothers and sisters, by first loving the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and showing a lost world what a wonderful thing it is to know our God in Christ and his salvation.

So please don't go back out through these doors and forget who you are. in Jesus you're not a slave and you're not a pagan, but loved and a redeemed child of the one true and living God. And God says, let us then go about our week as his redeemed people for him, out of our first and highest love for him, because we want the world to see through our lives and our decisions who the Lord is that we worship, and how amazing is his glorious grace towards us who believe.

[33 : 24] Praise his glorious grace, display his glorious grace, but before we finish, there is a reminder of our privilege as new covenant believers, that is to say, a reminder that since Jesus, we've got it better than Moses and the Israelites, because finally we behold God's glory in Christ.

We've got a really intriguing heading there, haven't we, at verse 29, the shining face of Moses. You can read up about that later on. The short version is that after having beheld God's glory, Moses' face had a sort of afterglow.

He spoke to the people and told them what God had said, and then he covered his face with a veil, and he would take it off again next time he spoke with God, and so on.

It's hard to know what's going on there. Did Moses' face shine permanently? Did it fade and get topped up? Was the veil to stop people gawping at his shining skin, or to stop people seeing that it wore off?

It's not clear. However, what is clear is what Paul told us from our earlier reading in 2 Corinthians 3, that Moses put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end.

[34 : 50] Whatever the specifics then, the point is that Moses knew, as we know, that he is not the answer, and his ministry was not the final answer, but that there would be a still more glorious ministry to come, for the law came through Moses.

Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. And so, as we close, friends, Moses invites us through his veil to look past him to the Lord Jesus, the one in whom the seemingly to us incompatible grace and judgment of God met together perfectly upon the cross, as the Lord did not clear the guilty, but heaped our guilt upon his one and only Son and counted it against him in his death so that he might pay it in full.

And thus, through his death, we might never know that anger, but only ever know the grace and mercy of God, his slowness to anger, the abundance of his steadfast love and faithfulness, and the forgiveness of our iniquity, transgression, and sin.

Perhaps you've struggled to kind of get a hold of all of this this morning. It's a lot to think about. Is God really like this? Is that really the true God, gracious and merciful?

How could I reflect his glory in my life without my life getting worse? Is it not better to live apart from him than to live with him? There's much for us to learn, but if you're not yet a Christian, Paul says that it's as if you're reading the Bible through Moses' veil, kind of half seeing it, if it's not all clear to ye, what does he say?

[36 : 41] Only through Christ is it taken away. To this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts, but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Friends, if you're not a believer in the Lord Jesus today, you cannot make sense of God until you come to Jesus.

It's Jesus who makes sense of God to us. If you want to know what God's really like, you've got to turn to Christ and his cross. All that confusion and that veil and fog will always be there.

Only then will the veil be lifted and you'll see his glory because you'll have truly heard and properly taken in his grace. And so whoever you are this morning, let me tell you, turn to Jesus.

Jesus, trust in his death, and there in the unlikeliest of places, at the foot of a Roman cross, smeared with blood, behold his glory as you take in his grace.

Let's pray for that for each other together now. Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray. Father, we thank you that we have beheld your glory in the glory of your son, Jesus.

[38:11] Father, we marvel that you, the creator of heaven and earth, the eternal and infinite God, would be pleased to be known as the one who takes away sins. Lord, we marvel that you would take us as your people, people like us, Lord, full of failing and wrongdoing.

And Lord, that that would not be a cloud over your glory, but it would only brighten your glory, because you are pleased to be known as our savior, the savior of sinners.

And Lord, as you add to the number of your people and your kingdom grows, your glory only grows with it. It never diminishes or fades. And so we praise your glorious name for what you have done for us in Christ.

We thank you, Father, for his grace and truth. And we do pray, Lord, as we go from here, you would equip us by your spirit to display that glorious grace to our watching world.

Help us, Lord, to live for you in what ways you have given us to live this week. For we pray and ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.