

Hearts Moved by God's Grace

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 18 October 2026

Preacher: Simon Attwood

[0:00] Well, we're continuing in the book of Exodus for the next three weeks.! So please turn to Exodus chapter 35, which you'll find on page 75 of the Blue Church Bibles!

Verse 1, running to 36.7. Moses assembled all the congregation of the people of Israel and said to them, These are the things the Lord has commanded you to do.

Six days' work shall be done, but on the seventh day you are to have a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. You shall kindle no fire in all your dwelling places on the Sabbath day.

Moses said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, This is the thing the Lord has commanded. Take from among you a contribution to the Lord, whoever is of a generous heart. Let it bring the Lord's contribution. Gold, silver, and bronze, blue, purple, and scarlet yarns, fine twined linen, goat's hair, tanned ram skins and goat skins, acacia wood, oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil, and for the fragrant incense, and onyx stones and stones for setting, for the ephod and for the brass piece.

[1:32] Let every skillful craftsman among you come and make all the Lord has commanded. The tabernacle, its tent and its coverings, its hooks, its frames, its bars, its pillars and its bases, the ark of its poles, the mercy seats, the veil of the screen, the table with its poles and all its utensils, the bread of the presence, the lampstand for the light with the utensils and its lamps, and the oil for light, the altar of incense with its poles and the anointing oil and the fragrant incense, and the screen for the door and the door of the tabernacle, the altar of the burnt offering with a grating of bronze, its poles and all its utensils, the basin and its stand, the hangings of the court, its pillars and all its bases, and a screen for the gate of the court, the pegs of the tabernacle and the pegs of the court and their cords, the finely worked garments for ministering in the holy place, the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons for their service as priests.

Then all the congregation of the people of Israel departed from the presence of Moses, and they came, everyone whose heart had stirred him, everyone whose spirit had moved him, and brought the Lord's contribution to be used for the tent of meeting, and for all its service, and for the holy garments.

And so they came, both men and women who were of willing heart, brought brooches and earrings and signet rings, armlets, all sorts of gold objects, every man dedicating an offering of gold to the Lord, and everyone who possessed blue or purple or scarlet yarns or fine linen, goat's hair or tan ram skins and goat skins brought them, everyone who could make a contribution of silver or bronze, brought it for the Lord's contribution, and everyone who possessed acacia wood for any use of work, brought it.

And every skillful woman spun with her hands, and they all brought what they had spun in blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen. All the women whose hearts had stirred them to use the skill, spun the goat's hair.

And the leaders brought onyx stones and stones to be set for the ephod and for the breastpiece, and spices and oil for the light and the anointing oil, and for the fragrant incense.

[3:42] All the men and women for the people of Israel, whose hearts moved them to bring anything for the work the Lord had commanded by Moses to be done, brought it as a freewill offering to the Lord.

Then Moses said to the people, See, the Lord has called by name Bezalel, son of Uri, son of Hur, son of the tribe of Judah, and has filled him with the spirit of God, with skill, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold and silver and bronze, and cutting stones for setting and carving wood, for every work of every skilled craft.

And he has inspired him to teach, both him and Aholiab, the son of Ahizmach, from the tribe of Dan. He has filled them with skill to do every sort of work done by an engraver, or by a designer, or by an embroiderer, in blue and purple and scarlet yarns, fine-twisted linen, or by a weaver, any sort of workman or skilled designer.

Bezalel and Aholiab, and every craftsman in whom the Lord had put skill and intelligence, to know how to do any work in the construction of the sanctuary, shall work in accordance with all the Lord's commanded.

And Moses called Bezalel and Aholiab, and every craftsman in whose mind the Lord had put skill, and everyone whose heart stirred him up to come to do the work.

[5:00] And they received from Moses all the contribution that the people of Israel had brought in doing the work on the sanctuary. They still kept bringing him freewill offerings every morning, so that all the craftsmen were doing every sort of task on the sanctuary, came each from the task that he was doing, and said to Moses, The people bring much more than enough for doing the work that the Lord has commanded us to do.

So Moses gave the command, and the word was proclaimed throughout the camp, Let no man or woman do anything more for the contribution for the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing.

The material they had was sufficient to do all the work and more. Father, we thank you for the wonderful story of the Exodus, the story of your rescue of your people, for how it shows us who you are.

God, who is gracious, merciful, and kind, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. Lord, may we see you again this morning, and see your grace to us in Christ we pray.

Amen. Well, the question we find ourselves asking, not just here in the church, but everyone in our society asking at some point, What am I for?

[6:29] What is the purpose of my days on earth? Why did the Lord make me? Now, the world so often answers that question with, I am for me. I am the center of my own little universe.

I do what I want. As the ancient Sheryl Crow lyric goes, If it makes you happy, it can't be that bad. But we are just so good at the, me at the center of the universe thought.

The problem is that we are not very good at being at the center of the universe. As we said before in the catechism discussion, when I put myself in the middle, I can't do the things that God can do, because I'm not God.

I can't sustain the universe, and I can't make anything good. The purpose of my life isn't to be in the center of everything. Because the God of the Bible so clearly wants us to have him at the center of our universe, and at the center of each of our individual lives.

Well, the question we often ask is, Well, what does that look like? How do I respond to a God who reveals himself to me? What does it look like, ultimately, to hear and respond to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ?

[7:46] Because God is already fully worthy of worship as creator, even before Jesus comes. And then how much more so in his work of redemption? We're not just drawn to him by the bare fact of his godhood, but our hearts are drawn for the truth of the gospel.

What the Lord calls us to is to live a whole life in response to that gospel, to the truth about our God. But as we get back into Exodus, we've got to remember that we've come into an interesting chapter, lots of stuff about building materials, but in chapter 32 to 34, the whole story could have fallen fully apart.

It's so many times in the Old Testament, people rebel against God and his goodness, and that could have been the end of them. Right from Genesis 3, a repeating pattern of sinners rebelling against a good God and his kindness.

The crowning example in Exodus of that really was the golden calf episode that JT led us through a few weeks ago. Israel, Israel, chosen as God's people, rescued and redeemed from slavery in Egypt, from all their oppression, brought out to freedom, led through the Red Sea, seeing the wonders of God, at the foot of a fiery mountain, worshiping the Lord, have to wait for Moses to come back, and instead they build an idol, worship it, and ruin themselves in sin.

So let's be honest, if I was God, enough of that. Let's just start again. Why would I take these people with me? Why would I go with them? And whilst in what we've read, there is a terrible aftermath to the golden calf, covenant-breaking Israel come frighteningly close to God departing from them.

[9:48] Yet the people do mourn their sin, and through the intercession of Moses, God shows amazing, unfathomable grace to these sinners.

And God gives an even deeper revelation of his character as we saw last time. If you turn back to Exodus 34, verses 6 and 7, God says of himself, revealing his glory, 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 and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty.

The Lord reveals himself even more to be a saving God of mercy and grace, but also a God of clear justice.

Because he is like that, Israel are not consumed. By the grace of God, forgiven sinners are invited back into his presence.

And that is our first point this morning. By the grace of God, forgiven sinners are invited back into his presence. Now, you'll have no doubt noticed, if you've been following through the Exodus series, that these chapters, and you can just turn forward in your Bibles and see with the headings of chapters 35 through to 40, it is almost verbatim a repeat of chapters 25 to 30.

[11:21] The tabernacle furnishings listed in full once again. And so we have to ask why. Why essentially get an Old Testament set of Ikea instructions for a load of tabernacle furnishings twice?

Why are 10 of the 40 chapters of Exodus given to describing a tent? Well, 25 to 30 were the how?

How do you make this? And 36 to 39 are going to be the actual making of the tabernacle. Again, we've got to ask the question, why not just say, and they made everything to God's design?

If you said that, you could cut out four chapters of Exodus. You're just going to have to read back.

But often, the structure of a book of the Bible tells as much of a story as the words of that story.

So what story is the structure of Exodus giving us here? Well, wonderfully, that sin has not gotten in the way of God's plan to dwell with his people.

[12:31] He will still dwell with them. That was his plan all along, and he has not given up on it.

And sin has proved not to be an obstacle to the God of the universe dwelling with his people.

Because he rescued them from slavery so that they might dwell with him. Lives in relationship with their creator. Because we could imagine a version of this story where it simply stops.

Where God goes with his people, but he doesn't give them the tabernacle. Where he withholds that gift because of their sin. He'll go with them, but he won't give them his dwelling place.

But what we're learning here is wonderfully of God's character. That his plans will not be thwarted by the sin of mankind. Even when it's those sinners that he intends to bless, they will not get in the way.

He is intent on redeeming them and bringing them with him. So the last six chapters of this story are a huge picture of grace through and through.

[13:39] And what we need to ask as readers is what kind of God would do this? Even though his people have so thoroughly disgraced his name, what kind of God dwells with people like that?

Doesn't he even care about his own glory? But his glory is seen not just in his rescue of his people, but in his gracious forgiveness of them.

He is glorified as the God who is able to forgive sinners in a way that still maintains full and perfect justice. A God who has real love for real failures.

Because if we are only fictional sinners, if our sin doesn't matter, then God's grace is fictional too and does not matter. But if we are real sinners, then God is showing us real costly grace.

I think we sometimes forget that God is like that. Where we can be slow to forgive, hesitant to love, apathetic to serve, if we're honest, God is totally faithful, totally compassionate.

[14:53] Forgiving, holy, righteous, and just all at the same time. He actually is the God of second chances because his grace is far bigger than human sin.

We don't see that any more clearly anywhere than at the cross. The length that God would go to to buy a people back for himself, to buy them back from the consequences of their sin to him, tell us that the very worst of sinners really is welcome home because the highest possible cost has been paid.

Jesus' own parable of the prodigal son tells us that so well. The father loves to see the son return.

And so here in Exodus, the people, even though the calf has just happened, are invited once again to make a place for God to dwell with them because they are actually welcome.

So God, for us, through the death of Christ, invites us back to dwell with him because we are actually welcome. Even on the other side of terrible, grievous sin, the Lord can forgive and bring repentant sinners home.

It is not an obstacle to him. And we'll see more of that in the tabernacle in the next few weeks. But for now, we'll move on to our second point.

[16 : 21] By the grace of God, forgiven sinners are rested before being called to serve. Now, as if there wasn't enough repetition in these chapters, there is another Sabbath command.

If you've been going through the whole Exodus series, this has appeared time and time again. You think the Lord cares about the Sabbath, he really cares about the Sabbath. Interestingly, this is the seventh instruction about the Sabbath, the seventh instruction about the seventh day.

It's like Exodus couldn't highlight more that this is important to God. But interestingly, what was the last thing we heard before the golden calf happened?

Well, the end of chapter 31 was a Sabbath command. So why is it here again? Isn't it interesting after the golden calf, God doesn't say, okay, I've forgiven you, now get on with it.

It's just not what he does at all. We're saved not just by his grace, but into his grace. Because don't forget that this story started with Israel as slaves who never had any rest, building up cities for a tyrannical king.

[17 : 41] And God says, just as they're about to be called into another building project, rest first. You are not slaves. I have freed you and I am not like Pharaoh.

Here they are, the free, chosen people of God being called to serve, but rested first. Now, if you look at verse 3, the prohibition on fires specifically might seem odd.

It is different to previous Sabbath commands to be pointed out. But think, if you're about to build a tabernacle, you're going to be making a lot of fires to melt down a lot of metal.

And so, notice what God's saying here. Not, not even the tabernacle, not even my house, my dwelling place, with all of its glory and importance, not even that work can you do on the Sabbath. You must rest. These people are not slaves. The Lord will not treat them like slaves. But we so quickly forget, again, the character of our God.

[18 : 50] We start serving from a place of frustration and duty without remembering the grace of God to us. As if what God really wants is my time and my energy and my stuff, not my heart.

But the Sabbath command here is a powerful reminder to us that when we are saved, we are at peace with God first before we ever serve. You are never, ever justified by what you do to serve in church.

You are justified by Christ and that always and only ever comes first. And then we serve, knowing that because we are at peace with God, we are free to serve and are not slaves like those before Pharaoh.

By putting the Sabbath command on either side of the golden calf episode, it's as if God is removing the golden calf from the picture, as if it never happened. Saying to his people, you are just as welcome now as you were before.

Your sin was significant, but it has not got it in the way of my grace. Get back on track, my people. This place in which I will dwell among you is for you.

[20 : 07] And again, in this we see such a clear reflection of what Christ does for us. that in Christ's death our sin is truly wiped away as if it had not happened.

And Christ's perfect righteousness is credited to us that by God's grace we really have been brought to peace with him. Forgiven sinners called to rest before a God that loves us.

And that's the next place the grace of God takes us. As one commentator puts it, a tabernacle is a holy place fulfilled by Christ's spirit dwelling with us.

And the Sabbath is a holy time fulfilled by Jesus in whom we find rest. And so now, welcomed back and rested, the people of God can finally get on with this building project.

Forgiven sinners are called to contribute to his kingdom. That is our third point that forgiven sinners are called to contribute to his kingdom. Look at verse 4.

[21 : 15] Moses said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, this is the thing the Lord has commanded, take from among you the contribution of the Lord. Whoever is of a generous heart, let him bring the Lord's contribution.

And then, we got a list of all the things that are to be contributed. Then in verse 10, that every skillful craftsman among you come and make all the Lord has commanded. And a list from verses 11 to 19

of every single thing that would be crafted for this tabernacle from the top of the tent all the way down to the pegs in the ground.

Now, we're not going to talk about any of that because we've got five chapters of it next week, so I'm sure you'll be whetting your appetites for all that to come. But isn't it interesting when we watch Israel, what do they do with this command?

Well, if we're honest, Israel have shown a slightly unfiltered attitude towards building projects.

Aaron demanded before, in chapter 32, that the people give to the building of the golden calf.

Yet now, welcome back, at peace with God, they are called voluntarily to contribute to the building of the tabernacle. God is saying, now that I have bought you, come and join in, join my building project, join in with what I am doing in this world.

[22 : 40] And God makes something far better, far more beautiful, and far more impressive with his design than the people did with theirs. It's a good reminder that God's design for worship is far better than ours.

And the people respond wonderfully with willing hearts. And the repeating refrain through this whole section from verse 20 onwards, whoever is of a generous heart, whoever's heart is responding to God, notice how many times it's repeated, 21, they came, everyone whose heart stirred him, everyone whose spirit moved him.

22, they came, both men and women, all who were of a willing heart. 24, everyone who could make a contribution. 26, all the women whose heart stirred them to use their skill.

29, and the men and the women, the people of Israel, whose heart moved them to bring anything for the work the Lord had commanded for Moses to be done, brought it as a free will offering to the Lord.

not coerced, just invited. I notice the vastness of the response, hearts drawn to freely give to the God of grace who has rescued and redeemed them already.

[23 : 58] The call is to join in. Now, given the shopping list, the variety of items and tasks is kind of immense, but big or small are called to give what they can.

The men called to contribute with their skills, the women to contribute with their skills. And just imagine all the things in the background that need to happen. The shepherds, tanners, metal workers, weavers, builders, spinners, woodcutters, carvers, engravers, tailors, everybody is needed to contribute to this work.

I want you just to imagine an older lady in Israel. All she's able to contribute is some scarlet yarn.

She's put the fibers together, took real time and care to produce this scarlet yarn, spun it carefully, and she has a spool of scarlet thread to take to the temple, and it doesn't look like much.

But her contribution is absolutely meaningful. Because when she sees the completed tabernacle, she knows, my thread helped build up this wonderful place.

[25 : 10] How amazing that the Lord would ever use my small offering to build up his house. And that is the right response to the grace of God, to bring what we can and do what we can to build up his house.

If it amazes us that sinners like this in Exodus could join in building up the tabernacle, it should amaze us far more that sinners like us can join in building up God's kingdom through the church. But hearts changed by the grace of God are ready to give. And we in Christ, at peace with our God, are called and invited to contribute to the building of his church.

to give whatever we can joyfully and generously to the building of God's kingdom. Jesus says of our wealth, of our earthly treasures, these words in Matthew 6, 21, for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Where your heart goes, says Jesus, is where your money is. What you give to ultimately is what you will love. And these people's hearts are with the Lord, so that is where their money goes.

[26 : 29] I wonder what it would look like for us to do the same. As we hear and understand the gospel, as we see God's mercy and grace displayed to us in Jesus' death for our forgiveness, his resurrection for our life with him, our welcome into his kingdom, and our eternal life forever, grace upon grace upon grace upon grace.

The natural response of our hearts warned of the truth of the gospel should be that we give of ourselves, our wealth and our lives to him. And that is wonderfully the right response.

That forgiven sinners are called to contribute to his kingdom. That God makes you useful in his building project. that by his grace our contributions, no matter how small they may seem to us, are

valuable in his kingdom.

Now, of course, this impacts our financial giving. Where we invest our treasure really matters. But it's not about how much you give, is it?

The woman with the scarlet thread looks like she hasn't given very much and it is given in the right place, given willingly and joyfully. And so it's not about the amount that we give, but our response to the Lord's grace that whatever he has given to us, we can freely give back to him.

[27 : 58] Playing your part as a living stone in God's house. And trusting that God uses whatever your gifts and service are. If you give your time to serve on a rota, if you give money to fund ministry or mission, if you give your energy to building relationships at the well or a little lands or a small group, or if you take time and care to pray with a struggling friend.

These things don't always seem huge, but they are wonderful, joyful responses to the grace of God. Whatever we can give, however we can serve.

Isn't it wonderful that we get to join in? Not coerced or forced to, but invited to. And that just changes the tone of all Christian life and service. I get to join in.

What a magnificent thing that I can actually play a meaningful part in this whole kingdom that he is building on earth. And so, finally, knowing all of that, our final point, forgiven sinners are gifted abundantly with everything they need to serve him.

As we come to our final point, let's just take a moment for a small, weird piece of Bible trivia because we all love that. What is the first time in the Bible's history that the Holy Spirit is given to an individual to do a task?

[29 : 21] Because mostly, it's prophecy or going out in battle or a king ruling. That's most of the ways in the Old Testament the Spirit is given. The very first time that we're told that someone is invested with the Spirit for a task, is to make a fancy tent.

And that should probably stand out to us, shouldn't it? Look at verse 30. Moses said, to the people of Israel, see the Lord has called by name Bezalel, son of Uri, son of Hur, the tribe of Judah, has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship.

He also goes on to say that Bezalel and Aholiab will teach other craftsmen that the Lord will invest through these men many other people with skill for the tasks. Because when the Lord invites people in to serve him, he gives them what they need to serve.

The Lord does not give them an impossible task or leave these people alone to invent a tent to serve him in the wilderness, which in the end would be no better than the calf. But instead, his Spirit is given that these people might serve to build up his house.

And it's hard to miss the new creation narrative in all of this. Remember, Genesis 1, verse 2, the Spirit of God is hovering over the waters before God creates everything.

[30 : 48] And now the Spirit of God is there with these craftsmen before they create everything in the tabernacle. As Joe said a few weeks ago, it is a new creation under canvas.

And the real obstacle to this work, this tent being put together, isn't it kind of wonderful that the biggest obstacle is not how hard the work is, it's that the people are giving too much to the work. Look at verse 3 of chapter 36, they still kept bringing him free will offerings every morning so that the craftsmen who were doing every sort of task on the sanctuary came, each for the task that he was doing and said to Moses, the people bring much more than enough for doing the work that the Lord has commanded us to do.

It's more that they can possibly use. Lads, enough bronze, we've got it. Ladies, please, enough yarn, we're done. They actively have to halt the contribution because, verse 7, the material they had was sufficient to do all the work and more.

What a joyful conclusion in this part of Exodus after reading chapters 32 to 34. Look at what the grace of God inspires in forgiven sinners.

[32 : 10] Tumbling to realize that even with all this generosity, they aren't giving God anything he hasn't already given them. Because, ask yourself the question, where are a load of wandering nomads in the Middle East getting all this gold, all these precious stones, all this wood?

It's still the plunder from Egypt. Even after the calf, there's still more gold, there's still more stones, there's still more wood to use.

Because, think, the God of the universe could click his fingers and have the tabernacle just appear among them. If he's created all the stars in space, it probably wouldn't be hard to make a tent. But,

in his wisdom and grace, he wants his people to build this tabernacle so that they may know that it is his place and theirs.

That they will be his people and he will be their God as the covenant said. And so, when God gives the church the task of building up his kingdom, he is not giving us an impossible task.

The Spirit is given to equip each and every one of us for that task. It's something that we can only do in dependence on him. But as the Ephesians passage that Callum read for us earlier says so clearly, we are equipped with everything we need for the work of service.

[33 : 40] All the saints to build up the body of Christ. Which means you you can do it. However you think of yourself, think of yourself in a way that Exodus is telling you that having responded to the grace of God, you have been made useful.

Having known and responded to the gospel of Christ, you can serve. And I've been given enough to serve and never need to worry that you're going to run out of the things you need to serve the Lord. You are freely invited to do what you can. He gives us more than we need. The creator of the universe is storehouses never run dry.

There's always more grace, more provision. As his word says, his mercies are new every morning. Even more reasons for our hearts to be warmed by the truth of who this God is.

Because what what do you need to serve him that he has not provided? Do you need courage?

Friends, pray for it. The spirit is with you. Do you need training?

[34 : 51] Friends, come and ask. The church has been provided for you that you might be taught to take the word out. Do you need an opportunity? You have one. Just join in.

You don't need permission to serve the Lord. Imagine the Lord God so stirred our hearts here at Bon Accord that we had to start turning volunteers away from little lambs because too many people were being helpful.

Why shouldn't that happen? Because our motivation is always the grace of God and the more we know him, the more joyfully our hearts will lead us to serving him.

And so, to bring all this to a close, we are living in response to the grace of God, living in response to the call of the gospel.

In Exodus, invited, rested, called and gifted, or as our first song said, ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven. However, we want to think of God's grace to us today that he's been given in full, given abundantly and will not be taken from us.

[35 : 57] Our whole lives are called to be in response to the gospel. And so, to answer the question from the very start of this sermon, what is the purpose and point of your life?

It is to respond to the grace of God in the building up of his church and kingdom on earth. And if you haven't yet responded to that grace, know that when a good God calls you, you must respond to his call.

But don't think, I'm such a sinner, I couldn't. Look at the sinners in this passage and look how welcome they are through God's careful, wonderful mercy and grace.

And for all of us here, we must think once again, how do I give myself to this work? How do I give of my wealth, of my time, of my care, of the things I love to serve God in his kingdom?

We're motivated by grace, not fear. Now we fear the Lord rightly for who he is, but when we see the cross and the resurrection, we receive that grace and respond to it in joy and it changes the whole tone of Christian life.

[37 : 10] So that we can say as the Lord's prayer ends, your kingdom, your power, your glory are central to my life. So brothers and sisters, the grace of our God once again, the God who saves you through the death and resurrection of Christ, who invites you back to himself that you may rest and makes you useful in his kingdom and gives you all that you need to serve.

He is worthy of our worship and praise always. Let's pray. Father, you have so wonderfully and graciously gifted us with everything thing we have.

You are a God of such abundant mercy and grace that we can never, Lord, sin too much that we might not be forgiven. Lord, you will never withhold your grace from us in Christ or take your spirit from us.

Lord, as you are redeemed and forgiven people, those who have repented and put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are absolutely sure that you are with us and ask, Lord, that you would show us how to contribute to your kingdom as you build up your church on earth and glorify your name. Yes, we pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and for your glory. Amen. Amen.