

Exodus 33-34 (Part 1): 1-9 • To Glimpse the Majesty of God

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We are in Exodus chapter 33. We're going to, with the Lord's help, we're going to get through this chapter tonight and even dip into chapter 34 just a little bit and you'll see why. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, whenever we get into Your Word, there is a need for us to humble ourselves that we might be given ears to hear. Because Lord, that sinful nature that we continue to struggle with can so easily rise up and cause a blockade of some kind to keep our heart from receiving what's really here.

Lord, we ask You to remove anything that would keep us from hearing Your voice tonight, from You speaking to us, and bringing wisdom, and understanding to our hearts.

We ask You to fill us Lord, with your Holy Spirit and teach us tonight, Lord, for as we say, and have said many times, You are the teacher here, we are the students.

We desire to learn. We sit under Your teaching tonight that the ministry of Your grace might fill hearts. We thank You. We praise You. We worship You, in Jesus precious name, amen.

All right, we're going to get started here. Verse 1. Oh, I guess I should remind you, I think for those of you that may be jumping in to this study without having gone through what we've done previous, but we only covered 1 chapter last week, and that was chapter 32. Which was that terrible backsliding of the people of Israel when they became impatient as Moses was up on the mountain for 40 days.

And they ended up coming to Aaron and saying, make us a God for us to lead us. And Aaron fashioned a golden calf out of the earrings that all the people took off. And the people began to prostitute themselves in some of the most sexually immoral ways, and it was a terrible thing.

And Moses came down the mountain and confronted the people and then has been praying, and prayed so beautifully such a prayer of intercession. And that is going on as we continue chapter 33. This thing is still very much the center of what is happening.

And in chapter 33, it begins with, *“The LORD... (speaking) to Moses (saying), ‘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.’² 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.³ Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; but (and I want you to see this, God says) I will not go up among you, (then He gives the reason why, He says) lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people.” (ESV)*

And so God is saying, I know the kind of people that you are. I know that what we have seen in this terrible backsliding, this terrible rebellion that you've displayed here, is going to continue to happen. And so the Lord says, I'm not going to go up with you.

You're going to be on your own and I'm not going to do it because if I were to be with you in close proximity to this level of sinful activity, I would probably destroy you. And so this is a pretty hard thing, I'm sure for the people to hear.

In fact, in verse 4, it says, *“When the people heard this disastrous word, (it says) they mourned, (and that word is used to describe, like when somebody dies in your family and you're grieving over the loss, they're responding in the same way. It says they mourned) and no one put on his ornaments.”*

And that means, they didn't dress up in the cheerful and festive clothing that they might normally wear. And you're going to see here in just a moment why they didn't do that. But you can see what's going on here. The Lord is still responding to this rebellion that the people have shown.

And in verse 5 and following, 5 and 6, the explanation for them taking off their ornaments is given. *“For the LORD had said to Moses, ‘Say to the people of Israel, ‘You are a stiff-necked people; (that of course means, stubborn, rebellious) 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.’”*

⁶ Therefore the people of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments, from Mount Horeb onward.”

And that means they didn't ever put them back on, so that became just the way, they didn't dress up in their fancy festive clothing anymore because of this situation.

But I think it's important for us to pause here for just a moment and just see what the Lord is saying here. Because the people were so stubborn and so resistant in their obedience to the Lord, that He is saying to them, if I were to stay in close proximity to you people, I would end up destroying you because of your self-willed and obstinate ways.

And what we're hearing here is something that's important for us to hear because it is the heart of the Lord toward a stubborn refusal to obey. And I don't think God's changed. Circumstances have changed, but I don't think God has changed at all.

This is important for you and me to read through the Bible and say, what can I learn here about who God is and about His heart? And can I be stubborn and self-willed and resistant? Oh yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. So how does that make God feel? What's that going to do to my relationship with Him?

I'm not suggesting that it's something that's that it's going to threaten my salvation or yours, but there are other ways that can, we can have that sort of thing can affect us. This is something we learn about God, but at the same time, we have to be careful not to think of God as ill-tempered and quick to anger. Because later on in this very study tonight, I trust we'll get that far, God is going to declare Himself in the hearing of Moses, and He is going to use words like merciful, slow to anger, and forgiving iniquity, or just forgiving. And so we need to understand that is God too. Alright?

There are some people that struggle with the balance of that and there are some who are just perpetually afraid of God coming down on them like a sword to chop off their head at the slightest provocation when they enter into sin. And there are others who, frankly, believe so strongly in the patience, mercy, and forgiveness of the Lord, that they tend to take advantage of it. And I don't think we should ever do that.

We do have a knowledge of God's patience and forgiveness, but that is never a reason to take advantage of that. And I say that because there was a time many years ago when I was confronting someone about a particular act of them, a behavior that was going on in their life, and I was, it was one of those difficult times. You don't ever love to confront people, but I had to at this point and I was confronting this person about their actions, which I believed to be sinful.

And this person actually responded to me by saying, well, I guess God's just going to have to forgive me. And I remember hearing that and it was almost like a slap. You ever have that happen? When somebody says something to you, they just might as well have slapped you across the face. It was just, whoa, I guess God's just going to have to forgive me.

In other words, they were saying, well, He's in the forgiving business, so I'm just giving Him something to do. That's what I mean by taking advantage of God's forgiveness. But that's one of the reasons why the apostle Paul wrote what he did in his letter to the Ephesians. Let me show you this on the screen from Ephesians 4. He said,

Ephesians 4:30 (ESV)

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

He says don't grieve Him. Did you know the Holy Spirit can be grieved by our actions? That's an important reminder. But I want you to know something and I want you to know this well. Paul is not saying here, don't grieve the Holy Spirit or you may not make it to heaven. This is not a statement related to salvation. It is a statement related to relationship. Do you understand that?

There are many statements in the Bible, warnings that are given to you and me about how we act toward God. And there are many Christians who read those statements and they assume those are statements of salvation or related to salvation.

And they read something like this, like, “*Do not grieve the Holy Spirit...*,” and they're immediately convicted. Well, I've grieved the Holy Spirit, I know I have. Oh, Lord. Now I'm not going to heaven. And Paul's not talking about heaven here. He's not talking about how you get to heaven.

Guys, heaven is not dependent on whether you sin or not because you do, and there's no getting around it. And if no sinners were allowed into heaven, there would never be anybody in heaven except God. Let's just deal with that right off the get go.

He's not talking about salvation. He's not talking about how you get to heaven. He's talking about your relationship with God. Don't grieve the Holy Spirit with whom you have a relationship.

You might say, well, why is that an important statement to make? Well, grieving any relationship is a bad thing. Anybody who's married, knows that it's a really dangerous thing to grieve the relationship with your spouse. Things don't go well when you do that, even though it does happen.

But any married person in this room can tell you, when you grieve your spouse, there's a break in the relationship, and there isn't the same intimacy or connectedness in the relationship that there was before.

And guys, you think that doesn't happen with your relationship to the Lord? Of course it does. You can grieve the Holy Spirit to the point where your relationship with Him is strained and distant. And pretty soon, Christians are saying, I just, man, I just don't feel any closeness with God. My peace is gone. My joy is gone. I don't know what's going on.

Well, have you gone to Him and asked Him if there's some action on your part that has grieved your relationship? It doesn't mean He doesn't love you. It doesn't mean that you're not a Christian, or that you're no longer heading to heaven. You are and you will. It just means there's a distance in your relationship with God due to sin.

Guys, even as Christians, sin causes distance between you and God. Your sins have separated you from God, Isaiah said, yes, that can mean eternally, but it can also mean relationally. Because as a Christian, you can no longer be separated eternally from God by your sin, because the cross is a perpetual means of forgiveness for you and me. Praise God, right? And I'm so glad about that. So that's not the issue any longer for you and me, but relationally, we have to pay attention.

All right, let's move on. Verse 7. Moses, it says, *"Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp, (so it wasn't among the living area of the people) and he called it the tent of meeting."*

Let me pause here for a moment to tell you that he's not talking here about the tabernacle. The tabernacle hasn't been built yet. It won't be built for a while. This is just a tent where anybody could go and just meet with God, and that's really the only reason that Moses set it up.

You'll notice I stopped in the middle of verse 7. The rest of verse 7 says, *“And everyone who sought the Lord would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp.”*

This wasn't just a place for Moses to go out and talk with God. It says anybody could go out and use it. Isn't that cool? Moses erected a tent outside of the living region of the camp and he said, guys, if you want to meet with God and get away from all of the noise and clamor of all of the people. Remember we said there's maybe like 2.5 million people in this camp. That's a big campground, and there's got to be constant noise because there's animals, and there's this and that, and all that, and the children, and so on, and so forth.

And so you want to go off and just get with the Lord, here's a tent. We're going to call it, The Tent of Meeting, and it's where you can go and you can meet with the Lord. Now later on, and I've told you this before, when they did build the tabernacle in the wilderness, they called it also, The Tent of Meeting, because it took over for The Tent of Meeting. And so it used the same name, so don't get confused by that.

Again, so here's this tent that's set up for anybody to seek the Lord, and anybody could, but when Moses went into that tent, something special happened. Look at verse 8, it says, *“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.”*⁹ *When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend...*

And so you get the idea that the pillar of cloud was elevated above the camp normally during the day. Of course, it was a pillar of fire at night, but it says that *“pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, (and that means The Tent of Meeting) and the LORD would speak with Moses.”*¹⁰ *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.*¹¹ *Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.”*

And so you can see that there was something very special about when Moses would enter the tent, the entire camp would stand at attention at the door of their own tent. And when the pillar of cloud would descend, they would all begin to worship the Lord. And I assume that means they would all fall down upon their knees, probably face to the ground and begin to worship YAHWEH.

And then we're told there at the end of verse 11 that God would *“speak to Moses face to face.”* Now you got to be careful when you read that, that should

not be misconstrued as if you think he's saying that Moses saw the Lord. That's not what face to face means. The term face to face, means that God simply spoke directly to Moses not by dream, not by vision, not through a prophet. Which is how He typically speaks to people.

Now in the new Testament, God speaks to us through His Word and through our spirit, because remember, the Holy spirit now lives within us. And He communicates His will through His Word and through the Spirit who indwells us. But in the Old Testament, particularly because people were not indwelt by the Holy Spirit, God spoke through dreams, visions, and of course, those things can still happen and through prophets. But it's saying about Moses that there was no intermediary when God spoke to Moses. He simply spoke directly to Moses, right? It doesn't mean Moses saw God.

And then finally at the end of verse 11, we're told that, *“When Moses turned again into the camp, his assistant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.”* In other words, he tarried, he stayed there.

And this is a, I think an insightful statement that is preparing us to get to know Joshua, to get to know Joshua's heart. Because he's, I think this is a revealing statement about the person of Joshua. Even after Moses left, and we assume the presence of the Lord lifted from the tent, Joshua would stay there and just spend time seeking the Lord's face.

And so we can see that even at this early stage, that Joshua was a man who had a heart to seek God, and some people just do. And that was Joshua. He wanted to spend time in the presence of the Lord.

Verse 12, *“Moses said to the LORD, (now this is, see we've been told that Moses and the Lord spoke often in the tent of meeting, and so now we're getting an insight on one of those conversations that went on. I'm assuming in The Tent of Meeting, and Moses said...) ‘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.’”*

Here's what Moses is saying. He had earlier said, the Lord had earlier said to Moses, I'm not going to go up with you and this people. I'm not going to be with you on the rest of the journey because you guys are so stiff necked, I would probably just kill you on the way. Right? Moses is very troubled about that and he's talking to the Lord about what he's troubled about.

Can I just tell you that's what you ought to be doing too? Talk to the Lord about what you're troubled about. Bring your troubles.

Anyway, he's saying to Him, listen Lord, on the one hand, You're telling me that I've found favor in Your sight, which I'm very glad about that. Thank You for saying that. That's very cool. But on the other hand, You're not telling me, You're not giving me the information that I really want. Because You've told me that You're not going to go with us, but You haven't told me what's going to happen. You haven't, we've got a journey ahead of us.

And all You've said to me essentially is You're not going to be with us so I need to know what's going on here. If I'm going to lead this people, I need to know what's going on. And this is what Moses is doing. He's confronting the Lord and he's saying, I need more information if I'm going to carry this out.

Now, I want you to really pay close attention to what Moses goes on to say in verse 13, okay. Check this out. *"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."* All right.

I want you to see what he's saying here, because we've been hearing tonight about the heart of various characters in this study. We're getting the heart of God. We've learned that the heart of God toward rebellion and stubbornness is a serious matter. We've learned quite a bit here, already in a very short couple of verses about the heart of Joshua.

But now we're learning something about the heart of Moses because you see, the Lord had already told Moses that He'd found favor in His sight. And by the way, when God tells you that He's found favor, or you've found favor in His sight, why reach for anything else? I mean, you don't care now what anybody else thinks of you, right? Because the God of the universe, the Creator of all things told you, you're okay. And now you don't really care what anybody else says, because He's the final word on everything, right?

If God goes, hey Mo, you're okay. You're okay. Well, that's, yeah, it's a good thing to hear from the Lord. And I don't know how you would feel if the Lord said that to you, if you'd just go, oh, well, I guess I got it made. I can cruise from here on out.

I want you to notice what Moses goes on to say because he says two things, basically. He says, now, *"please show me now,..."* He says, since this is the

case that You like me, and I found favor in Your eyes, here's the deal, here's my request, Lord, *"please show me now your ways."*

And then he tells the Lord why he's asking, *"that I may know you."* In other words, that I may know what to expect or what You expect from me. Right? And then he tells God the goal of this request, *"in order to find favor in your sight."* Did you catch that you guys?

He begins this request by saying, *"...if I have found favor in your sight,..."* Now I want you to do something for me so that I might find favor in your sight. In other words, what Moses is doing here is he is not standing back, sitting back, resting on his laurels and thinking, I've made it because I've already found favor in God's sight. He's yearning for more.

He says, show me your ways, I want to know. And that's simply a way when you say to God, show me Your ways. You're saying, teach me to know You. I want to know how You tick. I want to know what moves You. I want to know what tickles Your heart and I want to know what causes You to burn with anger.

I want to know You so that I might live my life in conjunction with what I know. In other words, that I might adopt a lifestyle that is consistent with You and what You have shown me. Why? So that I may continue to find favor in your sight. Wow. This is why I was telling you I wanted you to pay attention to what Moses is saying here because it reveals a lot about Moses's heart. He yearns for more of God. He wants more.

In other words, and when God, the God of the universe says, I know you by name. I talk to you directly without vision, dream, or prophecy. I speak to you as a man face to face. You are my friend. Moses says, great, now show me more, more. I want more.

I love it. I love the attitude. I really do. He doesn't just walk out among the people and just go, yeah, well, there you are. I guess I got something you guys don't. There is a humility and a yearning for more.

And when we get to the New Testament, we see the same thing with a different character of the Bible. A man who says that he was taken up to the third heaven and saw and heard things that man is not permitted to repeat. And you'd think to yourself, wow, a trip to the third heaven. Wow. We don't even know what the third heaven is. Seriously, we don't even know. We think, some people think they do, but they don't.

You might think to yourself, boy, you've heard and seen things that aren't lawful for people to even talk about. You probably, you got it made, man, you know more than all of us. You've heard and seen things that we will never hear and see until we are in the presence of the Lord ourselves one day. Wow, what an incredible guy you are.

What was Paul's attitude? Same as Moses. Let me show you what he wrote to the Philippians. He said,

Philippians 3:7-10 (NIV84)

...whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death...

...whatever was to my profit (I was a Pharisee and on, and on, and on, and all those things) I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the (simple) surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. (in fact he says) I consider them rubbish, that I may (simply) gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. (and then look what Paul goes on to say) I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, (I want to become) becoming like him in his death...

And so somehow to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Isn't that incredible? Isn't that just bizarre for a man to have been taken to the third heaven and come away saying I want more, more, give me more. I want to know Christ. I want to know the power of His resurrection. I want to even know Him in His death. I want my death to be like His. It blows me away. It really does. The attitude just puts me to shame.

All right, so notice how the Lord responds to Moses in verse 14 in your Bible. He says, *“And he said, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”* Here's God responding to Moses intercession, and his heart, and his desire to know the Lord better. And He says, all right, here's the deal. *“My presence will go with you.”* Oh, and by the way, *“...I will give you rest.”*

And you might say, why do He tack that there on the end? And the reason is, because that's one of the wonderful benefits of the presence of God. To live in God's presence is to know His rest. To live outside His presence, and by the way, yes, it is possible for a Christian to live outside His presence. Do you hear me?

Yes, it is possible for a born again, washed in the blood, headed to heaven Christian, to live outside the presence of the Lord. People do it all the time. But to live in His presence is to experience rest. Here's how the psalmist put it. Psalm chapter 4, verse 8.

Psalm 4:8 (ESV)

In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

You're the one who gives me that sense of safety and peace, and it comes from Your presence. And that's why I'm able to lay down and rest, even in the midst of my enemies, even in the midst of difficulties and trials. All right.

Moses is going to get even more bold. You're ready for this? ¹⁵ *And he said to him, "If your presence will not go with me, (it's funny he says this because the Lord just got done saying, all right, 'My presence will go with you.' But Moses said, listen, If your presence will not go with me,) do not bring us up from here."*

And this is a fancy way of simply saying, if You're not going to go with us, we're not moving from this spot. That's what he's saying to the Lord. I'm really glad to hear that Your presence is going with us because if You didn't, if You were saying, if You were going to stay on that particular point that you're not going to go with us, I'm not going either. In other words, this is Moses's way of saying, I don't go if You don't go.

And I think that this is an attitude that we should have about life. I don't want to go where God isn't there. I want to go with His presence. You got decisions that you need to be made. You got plans that need to be made. Pray that you go in the presence of God. You tell God what Moses said. If You don't go with me, I'm not going.

Oh man, wouldn't that change some of our plans? Would change some of mine from years past. I'll never forget one time. My brother, this is many years ago. But my brother, who's two years older than me, was really convicted at one point in his life about having made some decisions career wise that he didn't pray about, didn't seek the Lord about. And just made a decision for worldly reasons, it seemed like a good job offer, the money was okay, yeah, I'll accept the job. And later on he was convicted that he may have walked outside of the will of God. And he actually came to me and said, I'm concerned that I may be outside of the will of God. I said, well, yeah, it's possible that your decision was outside of the will of God.

Here's the good part. You can repent right now and get back into the will of God right here, right now, right where you are, right where you are. You can be back in the will of God by simply humbling yourself and saying, Lord, that was a decision that I made without You, but I repent. And I ask You to forgive me and from here forward, I want to be in Your will. And at that point, you're good to go. You just now start following the Lord from this day onward. That's really the cool part about our God.

I love Moses's attitude here. Verse 16, he says, *“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?”*

In other words, he's saying, the distinction of who we are as a people is not the fact that we wear, Jewish style clothing, or we have our cultural, traditional differences from other people groups in the Middle East. It's You. The distinctiveness that we have is You, right?

Isn't that true of us today? There are some Christian groups that try to be distinctive by the clothes that they wear, by outward adornment. And you know what? They succeed. At least in that outward distinction you see them in, and you probably, you know what I'm talking about.

There are people who have the women wear special dresses and this, and they all dress the same, and they are very distinctive from that standpoint. But the clothing is merely external, isn't it? Who knows what's in the heart.

And one of the things we learned from the new Testament is that God looks at the heart, right? Not the outside. He's not looking at what you're wearing necessarily. He's looking at your heart. He wants to know your heart.

So what is the distinctiveness in our lives related to the people of this world? Well, it's Jesus in our hearts. It's the same thing. It's the presence of God in our lives that is the distinctiveness that sets us apart from the world. And not just...

And so you say, well pastor Paul, what do you mean about the distinctiveness of the presence of God in our hearts? I'm talking about how He influences your heart and how when you go to work, you don't talk about the boss like they do. And you don't sit around complaining like they do, even though you might want to.

And you believe all the same things, and you know that it's just as rough for you as it is for them, but you've just decided to hold your tongue. And when you talk, you don't use expletives and coarse and obscene language at work, because you believe that it's wrong. That's a distinctiveness in your life that comes from the fact that Jesus lives in your heart, and you know that's wrong!

And you go to work, and you've got, and your marriage is stable, and there's all kinds of other things that are going on in your life because of this distinctiveness of the presence of God in your life, and in your heart. It shows, right? And that's really what Moses is saying to God here. What is it that makes us distinct from all the other people of the earth? It's You! It's You, Lord!

Verse 17. *"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.'"* And now He, so He says it again to Moses. And again, this would be an opportunity for any other person on the earth to become rather conceited in vain. God just told me that He knows me by name. I'm a cool guy. I found favor in His sight.

But you know what? Moses is a humble man, and he's going to get even more bold. And in verse 18, this is it. *"Moses said, 'Please show me your glory.'"* And I want you to know what Moses is saying here, and please make no mistake. Moses is asking to see God in all of His glory and majesty. He is literally asking to behold the face of God. Okay? It's important that you know that.

The Hebrew word is, believe it or not, kavod, and it refers to the manifested glory of YAHWEH. Moses is saying, I want to see your unbridled splendor. There's a bold request, if I ever heard one. He's saying, I want to see God as He is.

Here's God's reply. Verse 19. *"And he said, 'I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' (YAHWEH)*

And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. ²⁰ But,” he said, (I’m sorry Moses) “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.””

And this isn't because God is like that man behind the curtain in the Wizard of Oz that just doesn't want to be seen because he's afraid we might be disappointed. The answer is, Moses, you can't see Me because you see in your fallen human form, you cannot endure My unbridled glory and live to tell about it. You just can't. Moses isn't going to get to see God like he wants, and in fact, nobody ever has. Look at 1 Timothy chapter 6 on the screen,

1 Timothy 6:15-16 (ESV)

...the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see.

...the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, (look at this) whom no one has ever seen or can see.

Look at John chapter 1, verse 18.

John 1:18 (ESV)

No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

And that means Jesus is the one who reveals the Father, so there you go. Oh, those statements are pretty conclusive, aren't they? I mean, I just showed you two New Testament passages that says no one's ever seen God or can, and yet there are people who write me from time to time, and they'll even bring up passages from right here in Exodus and elsewhere and they'll say oh, yeah pastor Paul, well, what about this?

Let me show you, from like Exodus chapter 24. We read this here just here a couple of weeks ago.

Exodus 24:9-10 (ESV)

Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel.

Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel.

And people will quote that and they'll say, what about that? Says, “*they saw the God of Israel*” and now you're telling me in fact the New Testament says no one has ever seen God. I think we got a contradiction on our hands.

No, we don't, because you'll remember what Moses asked to see was the glory of God. What those people saw was a theophany and that's a fancy theological word that simply means, a vision of God. They saw a vision of God. They saw an appearance of God that He allowed them to see that wouldn't kill them.

But they did not see the glory of God because as God said to Moses, no man can see my glory and live. It's just not possible. Don't get me wrong. What they saw was amazing and it caused their knees to knock together, and for them to grow pale, and want to get out of there quickly. But they didn't, they still didn't see the glory of God. They wouldn't have lived had they seen Him.

Let's keep reading, verse 21. “*And the LORD said, “Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock,²² and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft (or a crevice if you will) of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by.”*”

And so He says to Moses, you next time you go up on the mountain, there's this place where I'm going to have you stand. And while I pass by, I'm going to put My hand over you so that you can't accidentally gaze on the glory of God and be killed. So I'm going to do that to protect you.

But then he says in verse 23, “*Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back,...*” And what He means by that, is the trailing edge of My glory. I will let you see the trails. Like when you and I see a jet going through the sky. The best I can come up with, sorry. And you can see that jet stream and you know that a jet was there. It's the trailing edge of the fact that, it's like, oh, there's a jet. I don't see the jet, but I can see that trailing edge in the sky.

He said, I'll let you see that, and that was enough to make Moses shine like a lightbulb when he came down off the mountain. And we'll read about that here.

But we're going to look at the first few verses of chapter 34, and then we're going to be done tonight.

Look at chapter 34. *“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, (those ones) which you broke.” Remember buddy?*

It's almost, it's like, it's almost like the Lord's going, you remember the ones you broke? Well, there was a reason he broke them. Remember it's because the people broke the law. And so he threw them down and broke them in a symbolic sort of a way.

Verse 2, *“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. ³ 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.”* In other words, they're not to even be on some of the nearby mountains for what's going to take place there.

“⁴ 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. ⁵ The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.”

Okay, here we go. *“⁶ The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, (and you'll notice again, that is in either all caps or small caps in your Bible, so He means, He's saying YAHWEH, YAHWEH) a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷ 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.”* Stop there, please.

Let's pause for a moment because obviously, we could spend a long time dissecting, analyzing, and talking about these statements, because, this is and we probably should.

This is a declaration by God of who He is. What He is, how He is. I mean, this is an amazing statement and it wouldn't hurt you to meditate on this for a year or two. But for our purposes, let's just say that God is giving Moses a verbal picture of what he wanted to see with his eyes.

He said, I want to see your glory and God said, you can't see My glory, but I'll describe it to you. Let Me describe My glory for you. And how's that glory articulated? Well, it's articulated in some of the things that we sang about tonight.

He says here that His glory is seen in His acts of mercy. His glory is seen in His forgiveness but His glory is also seen, you guys, in His justice. And those are some of the most difficult attributes of God for many Christians to embrace altogether.

We love talking about God's love, and mercy, and forgiveness. We don't, we become uncomfortable when we have to start talking about His justice, meaning that He holds people responsible for their sin.

Usually we do that, we feel that way because we tend to look at God's mercy and forgiveness as good things. Those are the good things about God. Let's talk about His good things, shall we? The things that make us feel good. And then we tend to see God's justice as troubling and disturbing.

I mean, who of you likes to talk about hell? Have you ever had an unbeliever ask you questions about hell? I mean, that'll make you sweat and that'll make you uncomfortable. Especially when they start off like, so, do you believe in this God who throws people in hell? And they love to word it in such a way as to get you off to an embarrassing start to the whole conversation.

And it's a disturbing, troubling topic to discuss with people, this whole idea of God's justice. And especially when we read things here in this passage, like God saying, by no means, am I going to clear the guilt. The guilty are guilty. There's a fun topic, by no means. And then He goes on to even make it worse.

He says, in fact, not only am I not going to clear the guilty, I'm going to visit it upon them and their children's children. Wow. So God reveals all these troubling things. Well, troubling to you and me, but can I suggest something to you once again. Or not suggested, I'm going to say, I'm going to repeat what I've said already.

This is His glory. He has just described His glory. And what I am suggesting to you is that when you and I find troubling, He calls his glory. It is to God's glory, not to overlook sin. It is to God's glory to be just. It is to God's glory to be merciful. It is to His glory to forgive sin. He is describing His glory all in the same thing.

By the way, I better, I always have to do this. Whenever I come to these passages to talk about visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation, I got to explain that, I got to talk about it a little bit because there's a lot of people that really get hung up on this.

This is basically referred to, not in the Bible, but elsewhere as a generational curse. Okay. And the term that He uses here saying “*to the third and fourth generation,*” that's not to be taken literally. Yeah. It was, that was simply a Semitic idiom to describe continuance to the third and fourth generation.

If I would say to you, we're going to be poor to the third and fourth generation of our family, I just know it. I'm not telling you that it's literally going to only go that long. And then suddenly my kids down the line are going to get rich. And God isn't saying here, literally, that the fifth generation is off the hook. Again, it's just an idiom, means ongoingly, I will visit this sin upon the families ongoingly.

Well, what exactly does He mean by that? Well, first of all, I've come to learn over the years that in certain parts of the continent of Africa, I know this doesn't necessarily affect you. But there are certain places in Africa where this whole idea of generational curses has become a belief system with a life of its own. And it dominates the cultures in Africa.

And I know that because I've gotten many, many notes from people over the years who live there and they tell me about it to the point that the threat and just the discussion, the constant discussion in the churches, I'm telling you, they preach this in their churches. It is so pervasive that it literally hangs over their heads and it becomes this means of great despair and hopelessness among the people.

And they write to people like me and say, would you please explain this to me? Well, here's what's interesting, and this is what I enjoy telling people. First of all, God isn't giving the whole message here to Moses because He already did. He already explained what he meant by this generational visitation of the iniquity of the fathers upon the children back during when He gave the Ten Commandments.

And it's important that we go back and read that and He actually repeats this fuller definition in the Book of Deuteronomy. Let me put it on the screen. This wasn't that long ago from Exodus chapter 20. He said,

Exodus 20:5 (ESV)

You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me,

You shall not bow down to them (meaning pagan idols, foreign gods) *or (to) serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation* (Look at this, these last 5 words are critical) *of those who hate me,*

And you can't leave that out. And see the reason He left it out when He revealed himself to Moses here in chapter 34, is that He had already explained it back in chapter 20. The generational curse thing is for those who hate me. In other words, for those who continue on in their rebellion and sin.

Listen, and this is the part I love to tell Christians, generational curses don't and can't apply to believers in any way, shape, or form. And the reason they can't apply is firstly because you are loved by God and you now love God. And it says that this is passed along to those who hate me.

But secondly, it's because of what the apostle Paul declared his truth in 2 Corinthians 5, you all know this.

2 Corinthians 5:17-18 (ESV)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself...

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. (and look what Paul says) *The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.* (and he says) *All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself...*

Do you understand what it means to be reconciled to God? How could there be a generational curse on you if you've been reconciled? It's not possible. That's a ridiculous notion. And the reason the whole belief in generational curses continues on in Christian churches in the continent of Africa, and I assume probably some places even here in the United States, is because they're not paying attention to the Word of God and what it has to say. And they're not embracing and truly accepting the reality of the fact that when you come to Christ, the old is broken away and you are a new creation. New creation.

Listen, a new creation that is still under a generational curse, a new creation that has been reconciled to God, but is still under a generational curse, it is just the most ridiculous notion in the world. In other words any generational connection that you might have to your earthly relatives has been washed clean for you by the Blood of Jesus Christ.

And that's the other reason generational curses continue to be taught in some parts of the church is because people don't understand the power of the Blood of the Lamb, and its ability to set us free and they don't get it. And they don't acknowledge it. And so things like generational curses still become an issue.

Finally we end with verses 8 and 9. *“And Moses quickly bowed his head toward 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.”*

I love this. I got to tell you this is one of the most beautiful, tender prayers of intercession that Moses is making after just having received a verbal revelation of the glory of God, he ends with this beautiful prayer of intercession saying, you Lord, I know you're right. We are stiff necked, we are rebellious, and we don't deserve to have You go with us but please Lord go with us. And not only that, make us Your people. Make us Your people.

I wish we could understand the full implication of what that means. If we could I dare say you wouldn't be able to hold yourself in your seat right now. You'd probably jump up and start cheering like somebody who just watched their favorite football team score the last minute touchdown to win the Super Bowl. You think that's exciting, this is better.

This is better because you know what? He has made you His people. He has made you His people. We're told in in the first chapter of the Book of John. *“... to all who...receive him, (to those) who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,”* (John 1:12) Children, family, His people.

He has made you His people. Why? Because you deserved it? No. Because He's ignored the fact that you're a stiff necked people? No. Because you have been given the righteousness of Christ.

He has forgiven you because you asked Him to and because you have put your faith in what Jesus did on the cross. What a beautiful reality is ours in Christ Jesus, amen?

Let's pray.

Father we thank You so much for the power. Just the power of Your Word to reveal and transform. And Lord we want to be transformed.

We've seen Your heart tonight. We've seen the heart of Joshua. We've seen the heart of the people and we've seen the heart of Moses. And our hearts, we've seen the heart of Paul the apostle and our hearts long to be like that. Not to sit back on our laurels and to say, God has made me righteous in His sight, and now I can just cruise.

But instead to say, Lord let my heart beat for You. I want to know You and the power of Your resurrection, and I want to become like You. And I want to bring glory to Your Name.

Thank You Lord for pouring out Your Holy Spirit on an undeserving people. Thank You Lord for gifting us tonight with the ministry of grace to share that glory with others. That lost and dying world that we are living in the middle of.

Father help us while the time is still here to share with who we may. To bring others to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and what He has done.

We thank You, we praise You, we worship You, in the name of Jesus, and all God's people said, amen.

God bless you, have a good rest of your evening