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Exodus: Delivered By God, For God / Grace / Exodus 33:12–17

This sermon reveals that the distinguishing mark of God's people is His gracious presence among them. Through Moses' intercession in Exodus 33, we see that God's grace both separates His people from the world and sustains them in their pilgrimage. Grace is not a sentiment but the sovereign power of God that saves, sanctifies, and secures His elect. The people of God are distinguished not by their works, but by His favor; not by merit, but by mercy. True grace compels us to seek His presence above all else—preferring the wilderness with Him to the promised land without Him.

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## Opening Prayer

Our Father in heaven,  
We come before You in reverence, acknowledging You as the One who rules and reigns over all things. You are holy and righteous in all Your ways, yet merciful and gracious to those who fear You. We approach You not by our merit, but through the finished work of Christ, our Mediator and our Great High Priest.

Grant, O Lord, that Your name would be honored among us this morning. Let every thought that distracts be silenced, every heart humbled beneath Your majesty, and every soul lifted in worship to You alone. May Your kingdom advance in our hearts today, conforming us to the likeness of Your Son and reminding us that You are building a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

We ask that Your will be done in us—that You would teach us submission where pride remains, faith where doubt lingers, and obedience where self still rules. Give us this day our spiritual nourishment in Your Word. Feed us with truth that satisfies and grace that sustains.

Forgive us, Lord, where we have failed You this week. Remind us that we are cleansed by the blood of Christ and restore to us the joy of our salvation and strengthen us by Your Spirit to stand firm in the hour of trial.

And now, O God, open our hearts to receive Your Word. May we not merely

hear it, but be transformed by it. Dwell among us, we pray, for without Your presence, we are empty. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## Introduction

"Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now am found—was blind, but now I see."

Those immortal words from the pen of **John Newton** have echoed through centuries of human history, likely becoming the most familiar words ever written about grace—perhaps even more so than Paul's declaration in **Ephesians 2:8-9**, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." The hymn *Amazing Grace* has been recorded more than **11,000 times** worldwide, and in a 2020 BBC survey it ranked among the five most recognized English hymns ever written. Data from Nielsen SoundScan since 2000 has documented **hundreds of commercial recordings every single year**. Statistically, nearly **nine out of ten people**—many with little or no knowledge of Scripture—can quote its opening line. Yet fewer than one in four Americans can even paraphrase the truth of Ephesians 2:8-9.

That contrast reveals something deeply troubling. Our culture can sing about grace, but it rarely understands it. The word itself has been sentimentalized, commercialized, and stripped of its depth. In the last century alone, an estimated **15,000 books** have been written on the topic of grace—a staggering number by any measure. Undoubtedly, advances in technology have made writing and publishing easier: from the slow rhythm of typewriters to the instantaneous world of digital production, and now to software that can generate entire manuscripts in moments. Yet with all that has been printed, precious little has truly *grasped* what Scripture proclaims about grace.

So much of what bears the name of grace today drifts toward self-help rather than salvation, toward comfort rather than conversion. Titles such as *Abundant Life: Experiencing the Gift of a Satisfying Life*, *Heaven on Earth: Enjoying the Abundant Life*, *Grace Revolution: Experience the Power to Live Above Defeat*, or *Grace Looks Amazing on You* present grace as an accessory to human happiness rather than the sovereign act of God that rescues the undeserving. For many modern writers, grace has become a

marketing slogan rather than the **miracle of divine mercy** that Scripture reveals.

But the Word of God presents grace as something far greater and far more glorious. Grace is not a feeling or a philosophy; it is the favor, the unmerited favor, of the holy God freely bestowed upon the unworthy through the mediation of His Son. It is by grace that we are called, by grace that we are redeemed, and by grace that we are sustained. And it is grace that we now see displayed by God in the life of Moses as he pleads before the Lord in **Exodus 33:12–17**—seeking the assurance of God’s presence, the confirmation of His favor, and ultimately, the revelation of His glory.

Turn with me in your copy of God’s word to Exodus 33 as we read together from verses 12 through 17, having found your place...

## Text

Stand in reverence for the reading of God’s Holy, Inerrant, Infallible, Authoritative, Sufficient, Complete and Certain Word...

### **Exodus 33:12–17 LSB**

Then Moses said to Yahweh, “See, You say to me, ‘Bring up this people!’ But You Yourself have not let me know whom You will send with me. Moreover, You have said, ‘I have known you by name, and you have also found favor in My sight.’

“So now, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your sight. See also, that this nation is Your people.”

And He said, “My presence shall go *with you*, and I will give you rest.”

Then he said to Him, “If Your presence does not go *with us*, do not lead us up from here.

“Indeed, how then can it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we, I and Your people, may be distinguished from all the *other* people who are upon the

face of the earth?"

Then Yahweh said to Moses, "I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight, and I have known you by name."

Our prayer this morning is adapted from "The Valley of Vision: The Grace of the Cross"

Our Most Gracious Savior,

We thank You from the depths of our beings for Your wondrous grace and love in bearing our sins in Your body on the cross. May that cross be to us as the tree that sweetens our bitter Marahs, as the rod that blossoms with life and beauty and as the brazen serpent that healed only through a look of faith. By Your cross, oh Lord, crucify our every sin; use it to increase our intimacy with You. Make it the ground of all our comforts, the liveliness of all of our duties, the sum of the promises of Your gospel, the comfort in our every affliction, the vigour of our love, our thankfulness, our grace, and the very essence of our faith. By the grace of Your cross may we receive that rest without rest, the rest of ceaseless praise of You. Our Lord and Savior, You have also appointed each of us a cross to take up and follow You, a cross that we must bear before we receive our crown. You have given it as our portion, our self love hates this cross, our carnal reason is unreconciled to it, without You granting us the grace of patience we cannot bear it, we cannot walk with it and we cannot profit from it. Remind us oh Lord of the mercies that this cross brings to each of us. That cross, which is hated by our rebel will and heavy because we seek to shirk our load. Gracious Lord and Savior, teach us, teach us that with our cross You sent the promised grace in the form of the Holy Spirit so that we may bear it patiently; that because of the work of the Holy Spirit our cross is Your yoke which is easy and Your burden which is light. Precious Lord we ask all of these things in the name of the Lord Jesus, Amen.

## Before the Throne of God

In order to properly study our text for today it is necessary that we consider all of the events that have taken place here at the foot of mountain. While Moses had been meeting with the Lord God on the top of Sinai, the people

at the base of the mountain had grown weary and restless. They approached Aaron and demanded that he make for them an idol that would be their god because in their words, Exodus 32:1 "... as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."" As we study this first portion of this passage we saw not only the speed at which the covenant had been broken by the people as they deliberately shattered the first two commandments, but we also see a small glimpse showing us the true desire of human nature, rebellion against the holy and just God. As a result of the people's sin, God sends Moses down to them to take them out of His sight, out of His presence, the light that was to shine in the darkness of the lives of these people was to be removed.

We understand that this removal was a twofold action, one it was a punishment to the people for their sin, but that it was also a tremendous act of mercy. This merciful action of God, the same action displayed in the garden when in mercy God spared Adam and Eve, the same action which spares each human, was that rather than consume them God removes His presence from among them. As we saw last week, Moses, desiring the presence of God, understanding that the mercy of God had been displayed, takes the tent of meeting, sets it up outside the camp, and enjoys the presence of God.

As the people witness these events, they not only began to show remorse and sorrow, we finally see that give God His rightful place in their lives as the bow and worship Him in the doorway of their tents. Now we see here in these verses what AW Pink describes as:

#### **Gleanings in Exodus Chapter 64: Grace Abounding**

Jehovah's response to this action of His servant: He speaks "face to face" with Moses. Such amazing condescension, such wondrous grace, was only manifested after sin had been owned and separation from it had been evidenced.

Although scripture does not clearly state it is likely that this interaction with God took place in the tent of meeting, while Yahweh met with Moses, "face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend..." If you are reading from the KJV bible you will note that the word "pray" used in verse 13 and while this is not classified as a "prayer" in the sense that we would understand prayer today where we go to God, give Him a list of demands, maybe make a few

real petitions, it should teach us something of the true nature of prayer, in that it is a time of communing with God. The difference between this prayer of Moses and the prayer of believers today is that Moses is receiving audible responses from God. More about this as we approach this particular verse. For now, Moses has likely entered the tent of meeting, the pillar cloud has descended and Moses stands before the throne of God as the mediator between the people of the nation and God, Himself. This is a fact that we need to keep in the forefront of our mind as we look at this encounter.

Moses' here stands as a type, pointing us once again forward towards Christ, the one true mediator between God and man, who just as Moses is doing here for the people of Israel, does now for all believers, stands before the throne of God. Before it was revitalized by Sovereign Grace Music, the hymn "Before the Throne of God Above" was written in 1863 by Charitie Lees Bancroft. This hymn reminds us of the truth of our mediator and His work with these words:

Before the throne of God above  
I have a strong and perfect plea:  
A great High Priest whose name is Love,  
Who ever lives and pleads for me.  
My name is graven on his hands,  
My name is written on his heart.  
I know that while in Heav'n he stands  
No tongue can bid me thence depart,  
No tongue can bid me thence depart.

- Charitie Lees Bancroft, *Before the Throne of God Above*

It is by this mediation of Christ alone, attainable by grace through faith alone, that we are declared just and can therefore stand before Him on that final day.

## The Petition

The substance of the petition of Moses here is one that, while it is for a specific people at a specific time, demonstrates much to us, here, now as the people of God. When we look carefully at the words of Moses we should note that he begins, not on the basis of the people, but on the basis

of himself. See the words of verses Exodus 33:12–13 “Then Moses said to Yahweh, “See, You say to me, ‘Bring up this people!’ But You Yourself have not let me know whom You will send with me. Moreover, You have said, ‘I have known you by name, and you have also found favor in My sight.’ “So now, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your sight...”” Matthew Henry writes in regards to the way Moses begins with himself verses the people:

**Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume Exodus 33:12–23**

What favour God had expressed to the people they had forfeited the benefit of, there was no insisting upon that; and therefore Moses lays the stress of his plea upon what God had said to him, which, though he owns himself unworthy of, yet he hopes he has not thrown himself out of the benefit of.

If you take a moment and count in those two verses the number of personal pronouns in our English translation you will see 8 occasions where either Moses refers to himself directly or where he is quoting God’s words in which God directly spoke of Moses. It is not that Moses thought himself more worthy, we this in the use of the term “if” in verse 13, but rather that he is simply basing his petition on the God’s own words. How true this should be of us, as we approach the throne of God, we do so in reverence and awe, and we recall the words of God to God, not in an effort to remind Him of His own words, but in a demonstration of our faith. For example, if we take to heart the words of Hebrews 4:16 “Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” and we pray using these words or the words of Psalm 100:4 “Enter His gates with thanksgiving And His courts with praise...” our boldness, our thanksgiving, our praise are all demonstrative actions based on our faith in His word. We pray the word of God to God to demonstrate our faith and reliance on those truths and on Him. Moses, here is doing the same thing, he is communicating with God that his requests are not based off of himself or anything he has to offer but on the words of God.

It should also not escape our attention that as Moses brings this request, He not only reminds God of His word, bases the petition on God’s words, but also asks for understanding of God’s will and God’s plan, see here in

verse 13 "let me know Your ways that I may know You." The word translated as ways can also be translated as direction or journey, it can mean directions in the sense of a person going on a journey and needing directions, but more importantly, it can mean directions in the sense of an overall guide. As we have been reading a Psalm each Sunday as part of our worship, we spent 22 weeks reading through Psalm 119, a Psalm which focuses in its entirety on the centrality of the Word of God to the people of God. Repeatedly we see in that Psalm this admonition in delighting in and understanding God's words to us. Moses, although he received the law of God, has recorded the words God has given him, he desires more, he craves more, he yearns for more of God's word because to know God's word, to know God's way, to know God's will, is to know God.

If it was vital for this person to whom God is speaking face to face, how much more vital is it for God's people today. Peter writes in 2 Peter 1:19 "And we have as more sure the prophetic word, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts." Take a moment and consider what Peter is saying here. The context of this particular verse, if by chance you are not familiar with it, is Peter has been talking about the great and precious promises of God, then relays the encounter that he, James and John experienced on the mount of transfiguration, then he says these words. This is the sustenance of the people of God, the very word of God, to know God, we consume His word, to understand God, we consume His word. Unfortunately the people of God are far too often too busy to truly get to know God, to spend time in the whole counsel of God. Paul, as he was departing Ephesus, turns to the elders of that church and says to them in Acts 20:26-27 "Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all. For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God." The primary purpose of these two verses is to show Paul's innocence of any that do not come to faith, showing that it was not because he failed in his duty to declare the whole purpose or counsel of God. The secondary purpose, however, is to provide instruction to those elders and the elders of the church to come and indeed to the entirety of Christendom that it is necessary to understand the entirety, not merely the portions we like, but the whole of God's word and in so doing and understanding His word, we come as close as possible to understanding God himself.

# Your People

As Moses concludes this first portion of the petition, notice that he then brings in the people, reminding God, again not that God needing reminding, but demonstrating his faith and understanding, that these people are God's chosen people. The people through whom God would demonstrate to the entirety of the world His glory. Again we recall back to the progression of these events. As the people commit this gross violation of the commands of God, God gives them over to Moses with the words we find in Exodus 32:7 "Then Yahweh spoke to Moses, "Go! Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves." In Moses first supplication to God on behalf of these people he attempts to hand them back to God, then as Moses comes down from the mountain, he says to Aaron "What did this people do to you" desiring not to claim them for himself or for God. Now we have arrived here and Moses, after petitioning God on the basis of God's word to Moses about Moses, seeks to mediate a full reconciliation between God and the people.

We see that mercy has been demonstrated in the simple action of God staying His hand of destruction against the people, now Moses' request is for not just mercy, but grace. You may have noted that the word occurs 5 times in this passage. This is the Hebrew word *khen*, which is commonly used as the word for grace. Beginning at verse 12 we see Moses entreat God first regarding grace to Moses himself and secondly to the people. Notice first, however God's initial response to Moses in verse 14. A quick reading of this passage misses the truth of what transpires because of the way that our brain typically processes reading. We read the last line of verse 13, then we read verse 14 and we may initially think that Moses has been fully successful, but a closer inspection sees that God's response to Moses in verse 14 is limited to Moses... He says Exodus 33:14 "And He said, "My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest."" In the original Hebrew this verse does not actually contain the first with you but the grammatical structure of the sentence shows that although it only appears at the end of the sentence, it applies to the each of the two clauses. This is not different that the way we structure language today if we were to day "Bob, Ted and Susan brought their Bibles today." even though the action only follows Susan, we understand that because of the structure of the

sentence that we could re-write it and say "Bob brought his bible, Ted brought his bible, and Susan brought her bible today." What is important is the emphasis on the second-person personal pronoun of you. It is Moses, here that God says He will go with and it is Moses here that God says he will grant rest.

In Hebrews 11 Moses is described for us in this way, Hebrews 11:23-29

**Hebrews 11:23–29 LSB**

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,

choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,

regarding the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.

By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the rage of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen.

By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them.

By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though *they were passing* through dry land, and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.

It is by faith that Moses did these things and it is as a result of faith that God promised Moses that He would go with him and give him rest. If you are familiar with the end of the life of Moses, you will know that he died before entering the promised land, that he was allowed to see it, but not enter it. This is cause for some to say, what did God mean then, give him rest if he was to go through all of this only to not be allowed to enter, it is here, brothers and sisters that we must take heart. It is here that our understanding of Hebrews 11 and the faith of Moses that we begin to

understand that the rest that Moses received is the rest that we each, by faith, receive, eternal rest in the hands of the Father by the work of the Son.

If we do not take the time to understand verse 14 as we have, verse 15 becomes difficult. If we perform a cursory reading and believe that 14 included all of people then we may wonder why Moses continues in the manner in which he does. See his response in verse 15 to God's statement Exodus 33:15 "Then he said to Him, "If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here." How bold this entreat of Moses to God... God has promised to go with Moses, to give him rest, but Moses says, if you do not go with us, leave us here... us, not them, us.

Moses' words here are similar to those of his forefather Jacob as he cries out to God in Genesis 32:26–28 "Then he said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking." But he said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." Then He said, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed."" The name Israel is a compound word which literally means "he who strives with God". Moses here, says to God if Your personal presence is not with us, among us, then leave us here. Earlier God had promised to send His angel, here Moses tells God that nothing less than His real, true presence will be sufficient and he does so based on the very glory of God. His stance is that how can we be known as the truly separated people, distinguishable from all other people, if it is not for Your grace, to which God replies that He will do this... because of His grace.

## The Grace of God

This brings us to the heart of the matter—the marvelous, magnificent, and matchless grace of God poured out upon His people. Look again at verses 16–17. There is great richness here, but let's focus on two central truths.

**First**, the people of God are *distinguishable* from the world.

We live in an age obsessed with inclusivity—where every distinction is blurred and every boundary questioned. Over the past century, this spirit of equality has evolved into a culture that elevates self-esteem and self-definition above all else. The result is a society that tells its children they can "be whatever they want to be," and a church that has too often adopted the same philosophy—shaping its worship and witness to attract

rather than to transform. Under the banner of “doing whatever it takes to get them in the door,” the church has confused evangelistic zeal with compromise.

Many even invoke Paul’s words in *1 Corinthians 9:22*—“I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some”—as justification for conforming to the world. Yet Paul’s concern was never to *change* the gospel but to *communicate* it faithfully across barriers. He made truth accessible, not negotiable. As he declared elsewhere, “*I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes*” (*Romans 1:16*).

By the grace of God, those who believe are set apart. They are no longer of this world but belong to Christ, walking as pilgrims and sojourners until faith becomes sight. The people of God are marked—not by cultural conformity, but by covenant identity.

**Second**, this distinction rests solely upon the *grace of God alone*. We are not distinguished because of merit, wisdom, or will, but because of divine mercy. In the Reformed and Particular Baptist understanding, salvation is *monergistic*—the work of God from beginning to end. It is by grace alone (*sola gratia*), through faith alone (*sola fide*), in Christ alone (*solus Christus*). God’s people are His people not because they sought Him, but because He sovereignly set His love upon them, redeemed them by His Son, and sealed them by His Spirit.

Therefore, the church must resist the temptation to erase the distinction between the redeemed and the world. That distinction is not manmade—it is the fruit of God’s gracious election, the evidence of His sanctifying work, and the display of His glory among those He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light.

## Conclusion

As we bring our time in this passage to a close, we are left standing where Moses stood—before the throne of God, dependent upon His grace alone. The conversation between Moses and Yahweh in Exodus 33 reminds us that the distinguishing mark of the people of God has never been their strength, their wisdom, or their achievements. It has always been, and will forever remain, the gracious presence of God among them.

When Moses pleaded, "If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here," he was confessing that a people without the presence of God are no people at all. Israel could have inherited the land, but without the Lord, it would have been an empty possession. In the same way, the church today may have buildings, programs, and followers—but without the gracious presence of God, it possesses nothing of eternal worth. The true church is marked not by its popularity, but by the presence of the Holy Spirit; not by human ingenuity, but by divine indwelling.

Grace, as revealed in this passage, is not an abstract concept or a sentimental idea—it is the living reality of God's favor poured out upon His undeserving people. It was grace that spared Israel from destruction, grace that restored them to fellowship, and grace that distinguished them as God's own. It is that same sovereign grace that calls sinners from darkness to light, that justifies the ungodly, and that sustains the saints to the end.

We do not speak of grace as a possibility but as a power—God's effective, redeeming action toward His elect in Christ. Grace does not merely offer salvation; it accomplishes it. It does not plead for man's permission; it triumphs in God's purpose. This is why Moses could stand before the Lord and speak with confidence—not because of who he was, but because of whom he belonged to.

And so the question stands before us: *Have you known this grace?* Not the grace you sing about, or admire from afar, but the grace that transforms a heart, humbles a soul, and draws you into communion with the living God. For to know grace is to know Christ—and to be known by Him.

Oh, that we would be a people who, like Moses, will not move an inch without the presence of God. That we would cry out, "Lord, if You do not go with us, leave us here," preferring the wilderness with Him to the promised land without Him. May the distinguishing mark of Christ Reformed Baptist Church be not our name or our labor, but the abiding presence of His marvelous, magnificent, matchless grace.

## Closing Prayer

Our gracious and sovereign Lord,  
We bow before You in humble gratitude, confessing that every mercy we possess is the fruit of Your grace. You have called us out of darkness into

Your marvelous light; You have written our names upon the hands of Christ and sealed us with Your Spirit. Truly, it is grace from first to last.

Father, we confess that apart from Your presence, we are nothing. We could labor, preach, and sing—but without You, our work is vain and our worship hollow. So, O Lord, go with us. Lead us by Your Word, sustain us by Your Spirit, and fix our eyes upon Your Son. May the grace that saved us continue to sanctify us until we are conformed to His image.

Forgive us for when we have sought to blend in with the world rather than be set apart for Your glory. Renew in us a holy resolve to walk as pilgrims and sojourners whose citizenship is in heaven.

And now, as we depart from this place, may Your presence rest upon us, distinguishing us as Your people—redeemed, beloved, and upheld by grace alone. Through Jesus Christ our Lord we pray, Amen.