

The LORD passed by before him

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[0 : 00] Exodus 34, on verse 6. The Lord passed by before him and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means fear the guilty.

The earth owes a great deal to interceding hearts. Great harvests of blessings have been reaped from the small seed of interceding grace.

Heaven alone will reveal what passing age is all to the prayers of godly men and women.

The Bible makes it clear that God bends his ears, and after the thinking of man, changes his ways out to please and prayers of his kittens.

It pleases him to do so. Abraham, we remember, made intercession for cities against which God had pronounced judgment.

[1 : 42] Abraham, we remember, and here, what a lot we owe to the prayer of this man of God, Moses.

We owe a wonderful exposition of the name and character of God to the fact that Moses once was bold enough to pray that amazing prayer.

I beseech thee, show me thy glory. This morning we were thinking about how God had revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush.

Not only to his eyes, but to his ears, proclaiming himself by his name. I am that I am.

Proclaiming his personality and his eternity and his immutability proclaiming his Godhood.

[3 : 02] And to the supplicant Moses, and we now felt much further on in the life story of Moses than we were this morning. To the supplicant Moses, there is there is a further unveiling by God of himself.

A further unveiling of the earlier revelation of the at heart of God as the one who is, who ever is and ever was and ever shall be.

And this gives us an even clearer insight into God's character and God's ways and God's dealings with us as sinners than what we were thinking about this morning.

And I thought it fitting that we should just go on and look at it this evening. I remember still the first time that I really noticed this text or this revelation of God just about, I think, two years after I was confessed way back in 1957.

And I can remember how overwhelmed I was when God impressed upon me how deep and how real his mercy is to the unbeserving.

[4 : 39] Moses had seen much and yet with the boldness of grace he asked for more. And really if you are a Christian tonight your experience I think tells you why.

To know God is to burn to know more of God. It's to be like Moses and to feel discontented until God slams not only in the midst of Abush nor proclaims himself as the everlasting God but until God makes known to you something more of the riches of his gracious heart.

That's how it was with Paul of an old and experienced Christian imprisoned for Jesus he still prayed that I may know him.

The very fact that we were thinking this morning of a God who is changeless and is from everlasting to everlasting and who cannot be bounded in any way the very fact of such a God an infinite and eternal God opens up the possibility of infinitely of infinite increase in our knowledge of him.

We can never know God fully but we can always know God better than we do just now. for a large petition but large petition said one Puritan writer large petitions honor the giver and are honored by the giver and this large petition of Moses Lord I beseech thee show me thy glory was answered.

[6 : 44] God had to take precautions even in answering it lest his servant should be destroyed. He stood him upon a rock and he told him that he would put him into a cleft of the rock and even that

was not enough in the cleft of the rock he would put his hand over him to shield him and then his glory would pass by and Moses would look not upon his face but he could as it were glimpse only the passing of God in his glory and as God passed by Moses he proclaimed himself this is God's proclamation of himself and he begins with his name and the name with which he begins is very close to the name which we were looking at this morning I am that I am let's just look at our text as it comes to us because it's almost as though

God were passing by in this text and he reveals he unfolds various layers of his particular glory to us and he begins the unfolding by again announcing his name many scholars think that in fact he is announcing the name I am that I am we have it in our translation here as the Lord but you know that wherever you see the Lord in capital letters in the authorized version the Hebrew spells out the word Jehovah or as it has been thought more fitting in recent years to pronounce the name Yahweh there is something very mysterious and almost hidden in the wisdom of God about that name there were four

Hebrew consonants that through time became so holy and terrible in the eyes of God's people that they did not pronounce it properly but they took the vowel sound of another name for God Adonai and they put them onto the the the vowels for the consonants for Yahweh and strangely enough Hebrew was written only in consonants while there was a spoken language that was fine because people could put the vowel sounds in as they should be said but it came to be that it was no longer a spoken language and it was the ninth and tenth century before a vowel system was adopted for it and by then this name which had been not pronounced in the proper way because it was so holy named of which the vowels of another name for

God had been added by the ninth century when vowels were devised they no longer knew how to pronounce it properly and so we got the transliteration of Adonai transferred into the continent to give us the word Jehovah and it is in fact from early Greek translations of the books of Genesis and Exodus that scholars now believe that it should be pronounced Yahweh that's kind of by the way but it just shows how this holy name has a hiddenness about it so that even the most profound Hebrew scholars are not sure exactly how it should be said nor do they know exactly what it means or proclaim they tell us that it is a proper noun but that it relates to the word we have this morning the there to be

I am it's the there to be in noun form they think being and it is the name which right through the Old Testament is used of Jehovah the Lord to speak of the Lordship of God in relation to his people it speaks of his covenant faithfulness his faithfulness to his own character and to all the promises he has made it is in fact a name they say that relates and probably carried in it in its original carried in it the idea of a saving Lord and we know that the name Jesus given from heaven for the incarnate son the name Jesus relates very closely to this name that we'll just call Jehovah for convenience sake Jesus

[12:10] Jehovah saves or Jehovah goes in front in order to save there's a little hymn I was trying to remember this afternoon but I haven't had a very good memory for him but I was remembering two lines of it when you call him saviour you call him by his name my friend when you call Jesus saviour you are calling him by his name and the same is true of the triune God who revealed himself in Old Testament times as Jehovah when you call him saviour you call him by his name also he is the saviour and the leader of his people and his name has in it also the idea of immaculate perfection holiness this is why this came through so strongly in the original word that gradually

God's people were afraid to take it upon their sinful lips and as I said when they were reading the scriptures they put the vowel sound of Adonai onto it until its correct pronunciation has been lost altogether and here you see the name as God proclaims it is doubled remember this morning I was telling you how the doubling of the there to be that terrific intensification of it spoke of the fullness of the fountain of life and here the name Jehovah is doubled Jehovah Jehovah the Lord the Lord the one who is sovereign over all the one who is in a great high throne from the beginning the one who does as he pleases in the midst of the armies of heaven and among the children of men and that's something we need to get back to remember my Christian friend today because we see the gospel and the church of

Christ assaulted by all kinds of weapons and we begin to fear and tremble for the ark of God and we forget that he is the one who doeth as seem as good unto himself not only in heaven but in earth remember the night Dr. Lloyd John preached to us here in this church for the last time on Psalm 2

do you remember how he spoke of the forces that were arrayed against us in our Christian witness and how he came to that terrific verse in Psalm 2 and said ah but remember he that in heaven sits shall last the Lord the Lord shall have them all in derision it is not just my friend that if God breathes on them they should disappear but let me put it like this if God withhold the power of his breath from him not only their antagonism and their assaults must cease but they themselves must cease the Lord the Lord and then he conjoins another name for himself to that name

Jehovah Jehovah Elohim and Elohim is a Hebrew Hebrew plural and speaks again of the intensity and immensity and the sovereignty of God Elohim is the one who created all things by the word of his power and although modern critical scholars hesitate to read out all of the plural means I personally believe that it speaks of a plurality of being within the Godhead God could have used a singular noun of course he could the one which provided for it but he used a plural noun from the very beginning and although he proclaimed himself as one God because he is one God yet within the name of God that he gave to man from the beginning there was room for the doctrine of the trinity the reality of father son and holy spirit and Elohim speaks of great might and great power Elohim is the power above all powers it is the name of the almighty taken and again intensified to speak of the grandeur and sovereignty of this throne on which he alone belongs it speaks of one who yields universal wills universal power sway the scepter of might and of dominion is in the hand of Elohim our God this is the one who is proclaiming himself to Moses show me thy glory and he begins with his name and do you notice something else way back in the previous chapter that's why

[18:15] I wanted to read it in detail verse 19 God had promised this he said I will make all my goodness pass before thee Moses had prayed to see his glory and God had said I'll make my goodness pass before thee his glory is his goodness and his goodness is his glory they cannot be separated and his name Yahweh Elohim his name is the bright beam in which his goodness and his glory shine out to the children of men and then he goes on to define what his name really means now unlike ourselves it's quite clear all through the Old

Testament scriptures that for the Hebrew people for the people of God the name spelled out the character and the personality of the one who bore it very very often we see in our reading of the Old Testament that the name was given perhaps because of something that happened at birth but always the name has the significance of spelling out the type of passion and character that bears the name this is true of God what kind of God is Yahweh Elohim Jehovah Elohim and he he tabulates he unfolds his character to us unfolds what his name means and the first thing is this he is merciful ungracious and they are not the same merciful and yet the original

Hebrew word could perhaps be better translated pitiful because the Hebrew word has the sense of a heart that pities the miserable or the needy I don't know if you have Gaelic or not but the Gaelic word that's used here is not it's pitiful a sense of a heart bowing down because of the need and the misery imagine that in this glorious all powerful God one who sees misery and need and whose heart bows down in order to meet it God who is merciful and pitiful and of course it has the sense of mercy in it as we know it too although probably now when we think of mercy we think of God having compassion upon us even although we are sinners the thought is not necessarily there it is God having compassion upon us merely because we are needy and had we never sinned at all there would still be in this heart of this God that compassion which is pity and which is spoken of here in our English translation as mercy my friend our Bible tells us that God the Father is all mercy have you ever read Ezekiel chapter 16 when there was no eye to pity and when there was no arm to help I passed by you he says in that chapter when you were cast out in the field as a child cast out when you were in your blood when

I passed by I said live for your time was a time of love and then we know this that the father is merciful because he sent someone to share our condition and take us out of our misery and not someone a savior Jehovah is our savior yes even the father is our savior for he sent the son to redeem a savior called and a savior sent and a savior accepted my friend that speaks of the large mercy of god do you doubt and hesitate and disbelieve his mercy what a wrong you doing what a sin it is to disbelieve the pity and the compassion that's in the heart of god for you need and mine and he doesn't stop with mercy he goes on merciful and gracious and what a lovely word this is because we are not only dependent creatures who know need and misery but we are sinful creatures and now god says that his nature is such that he can meet us in our sins that is what grace is the view is changing another aspect of his nature is revealed and while compassion or pity

is help for the miserable grace is help for the unworthy it is mercy in the sense in which we use mercy today only it is mercy for the totally undeserving where mercy views our needs grace views our sinfulness and comes to deal with us in order to save us from our sinfulness grace comes and aids demerit mercy or compassion or pity was drawn out of the heart of god because of something in its object it's very need you need and my need as dependent creatures who know misery of soul god's heart was drawn out to us in compassion but it is not so with grace there is nothing in the object of grace to draw it out of the heart of god it has its spring and its source not in the object which its eye is on but it has its spring and source in the heart of god himself jehovah elohim acting graciously handing out his undeserved love to undeserving and unlovely objects why is god gracious why does god love you as a sinner listen to him i love because i love and it's the only answer he gives why does god save i will save because i will save why does god redeem i will redeem because i will redeem and then

[26 : 44] he tells us that it's all tied up with the glory of his name for my name sake psalm 107 he led them by a way that is right that they might go to a city where they might abide and he did it why for his name sake the name jehovah elohim that's the name that's shining bright in his own vision when he purposes to save those who do not even want to be saved and who will not save and who will damn down to hell if they're left to the freedom of their own will what a god stepped in between you and the hell which is your desert understand for me let me say that again if this god did not will it with all the purpose of his divine love my friend none would be saved for you yourself and your sin are your greatest barrier against his grace and we have to overcome it in order to save you if god leaves you alone and if he leaves me alone we shall utterly but surely perish how wonderful my friend how surpassing wonderful is our god the lord the lord god merciful and gracious isn't it a blessing is our gracious god or none at all would be saved and then long suffering very very very patient you and

I who know him and who know his grace one of the things that troubles us is that again and again we sin even against that grace the other night one night last weekend I walked in the middle of the night and I took out my bible and I began to read my garlic bible one thing I can't even I don't even know which chapter it was that I would tell you it was in Deuteronomy and that chapter was a list of god's patience and forbearance with us sinning people it spoke of what he had done with these Israelites through 40 years in the wilderness I redeemed you in my love it said and I led you through the waters and you rebelled against me and I hardened my heart and then you saw it in my face and I forgive you do you know how many times that was reiterated seven times in that chapter how long suffering and patient

God is with us let me say this his patience and his long suffering are as eternal and unchangeable as himself or there would be not one sin in the glory of heaven oh my friend he puts up with you and he puts up with me despite our sins because he is long suffering in a comment on the very same word used in the New Testament used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 love he said suffers long one commentator has said that means that love that's love that was God at work in the Christian heart love goes on and on and on forgiving and forgiving and forgiving and the love that does that flowing in the

Christian heart my friend that love has its source in God and it's because he is long suffering and has been long suffering with each one of us but tonight we cherish still the hope of glory and then he says abundant in goodness and truth goodness and truth go along with his mercy and his grace and his patience not goodness alone but goodness hardness to truth and not merely goodness and truth but abundant goodness and truth what is it to have an abundance of something just to have a sheer overflow of it so much of it that you can hardly cope with it one commentator talking about the word used he said it's the word that the Hebrew would use of a cup that's really brimming over and brimming over so that you can hardly hold it and its content

God's nature brimming over in goodness and in truth just think for example of his goodness in giving us all the promises that his word contains and yet every single one of these promises and there are thousands of them in scripture every one of them is given not only in his goodness but in his truth he is God who cannot lie it was Robert Murray McChain who said if I had a thousand souls I'd hand them on one promise of God but he said the case is the very opposite I only have one soul and I've got ten thousand promises why be afraid when God is such a goddesses keeping mercy for thousands keeping the compassion of grace for thousands because we've got a different word now keeping that compassion which looks upon us as we really are sinners and which deals with us as

we really are sinners under his wrath keeping mercy for thousands are you afraid there's not mercy for you strangely in the last month I have talked with three people who've come to me after my preaching in various places where I've been three people and they have said to me [33 : 50] I'm afraid Mr. McMillan that there's no mercy for me and they've dusted off with a terrible story about what they did and I took the terrible story of what they did in each case and put it beside the cross of Calvary or tried to and I used this text there he is treasuring up mercy for thousands and you're only one and my friend if he has mercy for thousands and when it's used in the Hebrew the commentators tell us thousands is a big round number it's really a number that can't be calculated and the book of Revelation confirms that the mercy of God will go out to a great multitude which no man can number there will be hundreds and hundreds of thousands and myriads of millions standing before the throne of God and of the Lamb and every one of them will have been drinking deep of his mercy my friend will you be among them will you are you afraid tonight there's no mercy there surely there's enough in that fountain flow even for a sinner like you or a sinner like me keeping mercy preserving it holding it in readiness for them treasuring it up and he's been doing it since the first sinner sinned against him

Adam where art thou why did he ever call that because he was treasuring up mercy for Adam and for a multitude of the children of Adam and all down through the running centuries my Christian friend he was holding in reserve still mercy that would cover the multitude of you and of mine keeping mercy for thousands and do you know this if Christ does not come back and if the world goes on he will have in reserve mountains of mercy for years and centuries to come he will have mercy until the last of his redeemed in Christ are brought into the fold he will have mercy for the last sinner that calls upon his name before the mountains remove and the isles flee from the face of a coming judge the very last one that calls

God be merciful to me the sinner will obtain mercy because it's treasured up and reserved for him and it's reserved the Bible says for all who call upon his name you say I am being too free with his mercy oh my friend I'm not being as free with it as he is himself for he says whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved keeping mercy and keeping mercy for you tonight and he's been keeping it all down the years of your life when you sinned against him and rebelled against him and fumbled his mercy underfoot and he's still keeping it for you and he may yet it may please him such a long suffering

God he is to hold it in reserve for days to come I don't know but my friend I wouldn't presume on that if you need mercy tonight now is the time to obtain it he has it for you now and that mercy forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin and when he comes to talk of forgiveness he gathers together does this God the three great words that the scripture uses to indicate what sin really is iniquity sheer rebellion against God transgression a crossing of his path wandering away and missing the mark and sin the root from which it all flows that which dwells deep in our heart well God can forgive it all not only the acts of transgression and the iniquity that they leave behind them but the sin from which the ox and cells flow freely forgiven keeping mercy for thousands forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin and then he closes up with words that warn him he says and that will by no means clear the guilty now the guilty are words introduced by our translators to make the verse run more smoothly they're in italics in your authorized version and they're not really in the Hebrew text but he will by no means clear and I think we do have to read something like guilty in there he will by no means clear any who are outside of Christ you see mercy for thousands is treasured up in Christ forgiveness of iniquity transgression and sin is available in Christ as the gospel so clearly tells us but then it's available in Christ because Christ himself was not cleared he was the innocent one and God visited him with wrath and anger and punishment for our sins he suffered for all the sins of all his people now it's why they are cleared because another was charged in their place what is the gospel it is simply this that Christ came and stood in the sinner's place and whenever a sinner goes and stands in

[41 : 17] Christ's place he is saved where I see the blood said God to Moses of the exodus the institution of the Passover where I see the blood I will pass over you that is the gospel we are saved not by anything we do ourselves but by something which has already been accomplished for us such is God's saving name the Lord the Lord God merciful and gracious long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth keeping mercy for thousands forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin and that will by no means clear the guilty on this saving name is had in heaven and it is had still on earth but it is never had in heaven this God does not visit hell in his mercy he visits it only in

his love so today if you if I if we will hear his voice let us harden not at heart but let us bow before the wonder of his love and its place on his pity and his compassion on his forgiveness and his mercy on his ability to save to the uttermost all that come to him in

Christ's peace let us please we bless thee o lord for what thou hast revealed thyself to be that which to us in our sin and darkness would be totally unimaginable that at which we would never arrive hadst not thou proclaimed it may we o lord be as thy servant moises of old walls may we say even as this service closes lord if thou go not with us carry us not at him but come thou with us o lord of god and coming with us dwell with us and be the glory in our hearts and in our homes and in our midst as our people for jesus redeemer's sake amen