

“The Character of God”  
Exodus 34:5-7  
(Preached at Trinity, June 21, 2009)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In **Chapter 32** we read the account of Israel’s tragic fall into idolatry. They stood up against Aaron and demanded gods like they had in Egypt.  
**Exodus 32:1** Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for *as for* this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.
2. Aaron succumbed to their demands and fashioned a golden calf. When Moses came down and saw Israel dancing and singing around their idol he was enraged. He was zealous for the honor of God and the site of this blasphemy caused his anger to burn. In a fury he cast the stone tablets containing the Ten Commandments to the ground shattering them to pieces.  
**Exodus 32:19** – “And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses’ anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.”
3. It would appear that this was the end of the Law but, as we saw last time, the Law is perpetual, everlasting.  
God wrote the Law with His own finger upon stone tablets.  
**Exodus 31:18** – “And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.”
  - a. God wrote the Law with His finger to stress the authority of the Law. The Ten Commandments were not devised by man. They were written by God.
  - b. God wrote the Law upon stone stressing the permanence.
  - c. We also see in **Verse 27** that Moses wrote down the Law stressing our responsibility to maintain the Law.
4. In **Verses 5-7** we find the ultimate fulfillment of Moses request in the previous chapter.  
**Exodus 33:18** – “And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.”
5. As I pointed out then, God’s glory refers to His excellence, brightness, splendor – the fullness of all that God is, the fulness of His Divine being, the sum of all that God is. Moses was asking to see all of God.  
Moses was saying, “Oh God, show me the fullness of your divine essence.
6. In **Verses 5-7** God declares the essence of His glory – His divine character.

## I. He proclaims His name

**Exodus 34:5** – “And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.”

## A. Grammatical issues

1. There is a question as to the proper subject of the word “proclaimed”
  - a. Who is proclaiming “the name of the Lord?”
  - b. Grammatically it could be either Moses or God. Only the context will determine.
  - c. The ESV and KJV leave the answer open  
The NAS interprets it as Moses calling upon the name of God  
**Exodus 34:5** – “And the LORD descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the LORD.”  
The NIV interprets it as God proclaiming His name  
NIV **Exodus 34:5** – “Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD.”  
The CSB also puts God proclaiming His name  
CSB **Exodus 34:5** – “The LORD came down in a cloud, stood with him there, and proclaimed *His* name Yahweh.”
2. Contextually with the whole passage (**Chapter 33 and Verses 6-7**) it would seem to fit best that God is proclaiming His great name to Moses. Matthew Henry – “God now was performing what he had promised Moses, the day before, that his glory should pass by. He *proclaimed the name of the Lord*, by which he would make himself known.

## B. God’s name is synonymous with His divine essence

1. The Hebrew word for name is **שֵׁם** {shame} can also be translated “reputation”
2. A Hebrew name defined the character or nature of the person  
We’ve seen it over and over in the OT  
**Genesis 17:5** – “Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.”  
Abram - "exalted father"  
Abraham - "father of a multitude"  
**Genesis 25:26** – “And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them.”  
Jacob = "heel holder" or "supplanter"
3. God’s name is the essence of His being  
His name is synonymous with His being  
**Genesis 4:26** – “And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the LORD.”  
**Proverbs 18:10** – “The name of the LORD *is* a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.”

4. God had already revealed much to Moses in the essence of His name  
**Exodus 3:13-14** – “And Moses said unto God, Behold, *when* I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What *is* his name? what shall I say unto them? <sup>14</sup> And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.”
- a. In **Exodus 3:14** God declared His chief name – יהוה  
 This is referred to as the tetragrammaton – four letters  
 LORD or Jehovah or Yaweh  
**Exodus 15:3** – “The LORD *is* a man of war: the LORD *is* his name.”
  - b. From a form of יהי יהי hayah – The Hebrew form of “to be”  
 which is translated in Exodus 3:14 – I AM THAT I AM – God is “The Existing One”
  - c. In the Hebrew the tense is not definite  
 God has no past, present, or future – God is the One that always is.  
 He is self-existing, no beginning – God is the source of all being
  - d. God reiterates this great name in **Verse 6** but magnifies it by repeating it twice.  
**Exodus 34:6** – “The LORD, The LORD God”
5. Now God is blessing Moses with a fuller revelation of Himself

## II. God’s great revelation of Himself – **Verse 6**

- A. **Verse 6** is the essence of God’s divine character
  1. Its repeated many times
    - a. David repeated it in **Psalm 86:15; 103:8; 145:8**
    - b. The prophet Joel used these words to describe God  
**Joel 2:13** – “And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he *is* gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.”
    - c. Jonah applied these words to God  
**Jonah 4:2** – “And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou *art* a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.”
- B. God is merciful and gracious
  1. There are two Hebrew words for mercy – both pointing to God’s compassion & love
    - a. רַחֲמִים which literally means “loving kindness”  
 This word is used in each of the 26 verses of **Psalm 136** –  
 “for his mercy *endureth* for ever.”

- b. It is often translated loving kindness  
**Psalm 36:7** – "How excellent *is* thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings."
    - c. We find this word translated "goodness" in this verse and "mercy" in **Verse 7**
    - d. The other word is רַחֲמִים which we find a form of here in **Verse 6**. It means compassion, pity, or tender love  
**Psalm 103:13** – "Like as a father pitieth *his* children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him."
  - 2. Grace and mercy naturally go together  
Both are based on God's rich compassion  
Grace describes God's rich unmerited favor  
Mercy describes God's rich pity in withholding judgment  
God giving us what we do not deserve and withholding what we do deserve
  - 3. God's mercy and grace are acts of His sovereignty
    - a. Remember, God is showing Moses His glory – His divine essence. Grace and mercy are divine attributes, yet they are sovereignly administered.
    - b. God grants great mercy and grace to all men in a general sense  
**Psalm 145:9** – "The LORD *is* good to all: and his tender mercies *are* over all his works.  
General mercy is temporal in nature. God is demonstrating His goodness and mercy upon fallen humanity
    - c. God has demonstrated grace and mercy particularly upon His elect in sending forth His Son for their redemption.
    - d. The Tabernacle would foreshadow God's rich mercy in Christ. The cover of the Ark of the Covenant was called the Mercy Seat – it was a place of forgiveness and mercy reflecting God's compassion upon His people
- B. Longsuffering
  - 1. God is administering mercy upon the earth because He is longsuffering
  - 2. There are actually two words here. Literally it should read "slow to anger."
  - 3. God's wrath is kindled upon the sin of men and it is not diminished but He is patient in administering it.
  - 4. He is also forgiving for those who turn to Him in repentance  
**Exodus 34:7** – "forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin"  
God can forgive any and all types of sin to those who turn to Him.
  - 5. But God will not overlook sin - God states this plainly in **Verse 7**  
God will not, cannot overlook sin in the unrepentant and rebellious
    - a. His mercy is combined with His attributes of holiness and justice. Justice demands punishment
    - b. Divine mercy does not deny the wrath of God – it only delays it  
God's sword is in its sheath but can quickly and easily be withdrawn

**Nahum 1:3** – "The LORD *is* slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit *the wicked*: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds *are* the dust of his feet.

- C. Abundant in goodness and truth
1. As I stated before, the word for goodness here is רַחֲמִים which is “mercy”
  2. God links His mercy here with truth. Our iniquities are not hid from God. God’s knowledge is infinite  
God’s justice is perfect with His Law being the perfect standard.

**Conclusion:**

1. The glory of the Gospel is that this God who is glorious in mercy, grace, and forgiveness has sent forth His Son. Jesus is the glory of God revealed.  
Jesus is full of compassion, full of grace and mercy and truth  
**John 1:14** – “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”
2. Jesus is full of forgiveness. He invites all men to forsake their sins and come to Him. The rebellious in Israel perished in their sins. Those who turned to God were spared.
3. Do you know Christ? Have you turned to Him? The warning of **Verse 7** shouts loud and clear.  
**Exodus 34:7** – “Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear *the guilty*; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth *generation*.”
4. God is a God of mercy but He is a God of justice. Have you rested upon Christ who bore our guilt and carried our sorrows?