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Sermon Notes

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## **The Glory of God Revealed in His Sovereign Freedom**

**Exodus 33 and Romans 9:15**

### **Introduction: A Natural Aversion to God's Sovereignty; an Unnatural Attraction to His Glory**

Jonathan Edwards: Personal Narrative

From my childhood up, my mind had been full of objections against the doctrine of God's sovereignty, in choosing whom he would to eternal life, and rejecting whom he pleased; leaving them eternally to perish, and be everlastingly tormented in hell. It used to appear like a horrible doctrine to me. But I remember the time very well, when I seemed to be convinced, and fully satisfied, as to this sovereignty of God, and his justice in thus eternally disposing of men, according to his sovereign pleasure. ... And there has been a wonderful alteration in my mind, in respect to the doctrine of God's sovereignty, from that day to this; so that I scarce ever have found so much as the rising of an objection against it, in the most absolute sense, in God's showing mercy to whom he will show mercy, and hardening whom he will. God's absolute sovereignty and justice, with respect to salvation and damnation, is what my mind seems to rest assured of, as much as of any thing that I see with my eyes... The doctrine has very often appeared exceeding pleasant, bright, and sweet. Absolute sovereignty is what I love to ascribe to God. But my first conviction was not so.

Spurgeon:

“There is no attribute more comforting to His children than that of God's Sovereignty. Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe trials, they believe that Sovereignty has ordained their afflictions, that Sovereignty overrules them, and that Sovereignty will sanctify them all. There is nothing for which the children ought more earnestly to contend than the doctrine of their Master over all creation—the Kingship of God over all the works of His own hands—the Throne of God and His right to sit upon that Throne. On the other hand, there is no doctrine more hated by worldings, no truth of which they have made such a football, as the great, stupendous, but yet most certain doctrine of the Sovereignty of the infinite Jehovah. Men will allow God to be everywhere except on His throne. They will allow Him to be in His workshop to fashion worlds and make stars. They will allow Him to be in His almonry to dispense His alms and bestow His bounties. They will allow Him to sustain the earth and bear up the pillars thereof, or light the lamps of heaven, or rule the waves of the ever-moving ocean; but when God ascends His throne, His creatures then gnash their teeth, and we proclaim an *enthroned* God, and His right to do as He wills with His own, to dispose of His creatures as *He* thinks well, without consulting them in

the matter; then it is that we are hissed and execrated, and then it is that men turn a deaf ear to us, for God on His throne is not the God they love. But it is God upon the throne that we love to preach. It is God upon His throne whom we trust.”

Similar points: naturally, human hearts have an aversion to God’s sovereignty, especially in the matter of salvation. Yet both men came to delight in God’s absolute sovereignty in the deepest way imaginable...

WHY? We were created to display God’s glory... but we were also created to see God’s glory, to know God’s glory, and to delight in God’s glory

Sin has interfered with our central purpose in the universe... God’s redemption restores God’s glory to its rightful place in our lives

God’s marvelous plan of redemption will not stop until

***Habakkuk 2:14 <sup>14</sup> For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.***

Key question: How does a sinful human being go from his natural state, despising and rejecting God’s sovereignty to the point where He delights in it, loves it, cherishes it, rejoices over it, proclaims it, and sing it?

That is the work of grace going on in all of our hearts by the Spirit-led contemplation of Romans 9:14-16

***Romans 9:14-16 What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! <sup>15</sup> For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." <sup>16</sup> It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.***

## I. Understanding Paul’s Use of Exodus 33 in Romans 9

A. Immense Issue: Has God’s Word Failed?

B. Evidence: Jewish Rejection of Christ

C. Paul’s Answer: “Not all Israel are Israel”

D. Deeper Still: Unconditional Election

1. Not just that some are in “true Israel” and some are not
2. Deeper: how did each get to be there
3. Unconditional election

***Romans 9:11-13 Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad-- in order that God's purpose in election might stand: <sup>12</sup> not by works but by him who calls-- she was told, "The older will serve the younger." <sup>13</sup> Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."***

4. Verse 16 cinches it

***Romans 9:16 It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.***

- a. "It" does not depend... WHAT?? Probably what Paul mentioned in verse 11: "God's purpose in election"
- b. What does it NOT depend on?
  - i. "the one who wills"... NOT ON HUMAN WILL or CHOICE
  - ii. "the one who runs"... NOT ON HUMAN EFFORT or ENERGY

In short, election is not dependent on ANYTHING in man!! Human will does not determine election, nor does human effort in any way!!

God was not looking at the human being in any way to decide who His elect would be!

E. Burning Question: GOD IS NOT UNJUST IS HE???

F. Paul's Mysterious Answer: Romans 9:15 = Exodus 33:19

1. Paul: the second greatest interpreter of the Old Testament in history
2. His eye searched over the span of the Old Testament and found this one verse... Exodus 33:19
3. As usual, Paul assumes the reader knows the context and discerns his meaning

## II. The Context of Exodus 33:19

### A. The Ten Commandments Given

1. God had already spoken the words in chapter 20
2. The covenant had been established very clearly
3. Conditions had been laid down for Israel to be God's treasured possession

***Exodus 19:5-6*** Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, <sup>6</sup> you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. *These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.* <sup>7</sup> *So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the LORD had commanded him to speak.* <sup>8</sup> *The people all responded together, "We will do everything the LORD has said." So Moses brought their answer back to the LORD.*

4. The Ten Commandments Spoken by God Himself

5. Central were the first two commandments

***Exodus 20:2-6*** *I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.* <sup>3</sup> *"You shall have no other gods before me.* <sup>4</sup> *"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.* <sup>5</sup> *You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,* <sup>6</sup> *but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.*

6. The Covenant was CONDITIONAL!!

a. If the people obeyed God's laws, they would be His treasured possession

b. If the people disobeyed God's laws, God had every right to reject them

B. The Golden Calf Idolatry

1. The People IMMEDIATELY disobeyed!!

2. While Moses was up on Mount Sinai for forty days, receiving the written Ten Commandments, the tablets of stone, the people were making an exchange

3. Impatient for Moses to come down, the exchanged the glory of God for an idol, a golden calf

***Psalm 106:19-21*** *At Horeb they made a calf and worshiped an idol cast from metal.* <sup>20</sup> *They exchanged their Glory for an image of a bull, which eats grass.* <sup>21</sup> *They forgot the God who saved them, who had done great things in Egypt*

4. This is the essence of sin: exchanging the glory of God for something created

C. God's First Shocking Pronouncement: Let Me Slaughter Them

***Exodus 32:9-10 "I have seen these people," the LORD said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people. <sup>10</sup> Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation."***

1. Israel has broken the covenant and deserves to die
2. The basis of God's threat: their nature as a stick-necked people
3. Amazing offer to Moses: "I will make YOU into a great nation"
4. Moses refuses and pleads with God based on two factors
  - a. First, Egypt would hear of the slaughter of Israel and would assume God wasn't able to bring them into the promised land
  - b. Second, what about God's promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel:

***"I will make your descendents as numerous as the stars in the sky"***

#### D. God's Shocking Pronouncement: I Will No Longer Go With You

1. After the Golden Calf incident, God shocked Moses and Israel with this pronouncement:

***Exodus 33:3-4 Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way."***

2. This was devastating! God was no longer going to go with Israel to the Promised Land
3. God would keep His promise to Abraham, but He would send an angel in His place

#### E. Moses' Passionate Intercession

1. This brings about Moses' passionate intercession for the people
2. Moses' is pleading with God to forgive Israel's sin completely and to go with Israel as before, revealing His glory to them
3. In the midst of that intercession, Moses makes the astonishing request that is our focus in Romans 9

***Exodus 33:18 Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory."***

4. It was God's response to that request that Paul quotes in Romans 9 to prove there is no injustice with God

***Exodus 33:19 And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.***

### III. How God Was Gracious to Moses and to Israel

#### A. Standing in Grace

***ESV Exodus 33:12 Moses said to the LORD, "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.'***

1. Moses begins his intercession with God's prior grace to him
  - a. "You have already said, 'I know you by name and you have also found favor in my sight'"
  - b. This is a clear declaration of grace on God's part
  - c. No prior statement of Moses' achievements or righteousness
2. Moses' boldness depends on God's prior grace to him
3. God had elevated Moses to a position no human had experienced up to that point

***Exodus 33:11 The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend.***

#### B. Grace Upon Grace

***ESV Exodus 33:13 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.***

1. Further revelations of God's grace are conditional
2. God's grace enables sinners to meet those conditions
3. Moses is pleading for grace upon grace
  - a. First grace: a right standing with God, with all his sins forgiven
  - b. Second grace: Revelation of God's ways
  - c. Third grace: Knowledge of God Himself
  - d. Final grace: increased standing of favor in God's sight

4. To know God's ways = to search out the unsearchable

***Romans 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!***

5. This is nothing less than "grace upon grace"

***ESV John 1:16 And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.***

### C. Still Deeply Concerned About His People

1. Moses wants to know God's ways so that he and his people can be pleasing to God
2. Moses is just like Paul in Romans 9: Pleading for the grace of God to be poured out on all Israel
3. Notice that both Moses and Paul are confident of their own right standing with God, but that is not enough for either of them
4. They are both in anguish over the state of Israel, that stiff-necked people
5. So Moses intercedes that God will continue to go with them

***Exodus 33:14 And he said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." God has assured Moses that He will go with HIM and give HIM rest (the Hebrew is singular)***

- a. BUT this is not satisfying to Moses... his heart is for the people!!
- b. So he expands to include them with him

***<sup>15</sup> And he said to him, "If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. <sup>16</sup> 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?"***

6. Notice that he in no way pleads the righteousness of the people... they have not a leg to stand on!!!!
7. Later, after God has revealed His glory to Moses, he openly acknowledged that Israel is a stiff-necked people who do not deserve His presence or to see His glory

***Exodus 34:8-9 And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped. <sup>9</sup> 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."***

- a. It's as if God will find His greatest glory in saving such a stiff-necked people
  - b. Their righteousness is non-existent... they have no claim on God's justice
  - c. It would be an act of pure grace for God to do anything at all for them
8. God graciously grants Moses' persistence and faith what it wants

***Exodus 33:17 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."***

9. BUT Moses is not yet finished!!

#### D. The Boldest Request in History: "Now Show Me Your Glory"

1. In the midst of all this, Moses makes the boldest request in history

***ESV Exodus 33:18 Moses said, "Please show me your glory."***

- 2. God's glory was the very thing that Israel had despised by their golden calf idol
- 3. They had exchanged their glory for the image of a bull which eats grass
- 4. Moses is so close to God here, and the closer he gets the more he wants!!

### IV. God's Goodness, Name, and Sovereign Mercy

#### A. Moses' Request Goes to the Heart of All History

- 1. Sinners have despised the most valuable thing in the universe: God's glory
- 2. Augustine in his *Confessions*

"Everlasting God, in whom we live and move and have our being: You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You."

3. This is the ultimate end of our existence and our salvation: to see God's glory

***Genesis 15:1 After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."***

- 4. Moses asks for a foretaste of that glory while on the Mountain in prayer
- 5. He is asking God to show him, a sinner, what is most perfect, most precious, most intimate, most delightful
- 6. The very thing Moses had despised whenever he sinned, now he wanted to see

B. God's Multifaceted Answer

***Exodus 33:19 And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.***

1. A Display of God's Goodness
2. A Proclamation of God's Name
3. An Act of God's Sovereign Mercy

C. A Display of God's Goodness

1. A Sense of Some Kind of Flow of Goodness

***And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you***

- a. God's goodness = the perfections of all His attributes
- b. He will in some way put these on display for Moses
2. Like the constantly changing colors of a prism... a mysterious display of all God's perfections... His goodness

D. A Proclamation of God's Name

1. In addition, God would speak His personal covenant name into Moses' ears
2. God's name is the revelation of all His nature in His actions in history
3. A "good name" is a good reputation
4. God "made a name for Himself" when He brought Israel out of Egypt
5. And... God's name means salvation

***Romans 10:13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."***

E. The Gift of Grace Given

***Exodus 34:5-8 Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. <sup>6</sup> And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, <sup>7</sup> maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of***

*the fathers to the third and fourth generation." <sup>8</sup> Moses bowed to the ground at once and worshiped.*

## V. God's Name and God's Sovereign Freedom

### A. God's Name: A Declaration of Self-Existence

1. God first revealed His name to Moses in Exodus 3

***Exodus 3:13-14*** *Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" <sup>14</sup> God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"*

2. The Essence of God's Name: Self-existence, self-determination
3. All creation derives its existence from God, but God derives His existence from Himself, and from nothing outside Himself

***Colossians 1:16-17*** *For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. <sup>17</sup> He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

All creation totally and constantly depends on God for existence

- The sun is constantly held together and caused to burn by God's command
- The moon is constantly held together and caused to glow at night by God's sustaining power
- Every rock and river and cloud and beetle and gazelle and whale and mountain derives its original existence and its continued existence from God
- So also all angels and devils derive their constant existence from God
- And every human being derives its original existence and its continued existence from God

Were God to stop willing their existence, they would cease to exist

***Acts 17:28*** *'For in him we live and move and have our being.'*

However, God says to Moses

**I AM THAT I AM** or perhaps **I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE**

This is the total independence of God... He is free from His creation and high and lifted above it... He doesn't need anything from us

***Acts 17:24-25 "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. <sup>25</sup> And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.***

***Job 41:11 Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to me.***

***Psalm 50:9-12 have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, <sup>10</sup> for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. <sup>11</sup> I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine. <sup>12</sup> If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it.***

God is free in His essence... YAHWEH, I AM THAT I AM!!!

#### B. God's Sovereign Freedom in Action: A Declaration of Self-Determination

1. God is also free in His actions... including mercy
2. God does not consult human wisdom, nor does He follow passively after human choices... He chooses, then we choose
3. God WILL BE WHAT GOD WILL BE, but GOD WILL ALSO DO WHAT GOD WILL DO

***Exodus 33:19 And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.***

4. God is not unjust in unconditional election for it is TOTALLY in His nature as a free and sovereign God to have mercy on whom He will have mercy and to harden whom He will harden
5. Moses' amazingly bold request will be granted or it will not... and God is free wither way
6. The same is true for the nation as a whole... God will show His glory to the nation or He will not
7. The essence of being God is this: I am free to do what I will do

## VI. Connection to Romans 9: Both Foretaste and Fulfillment Given As God Wills

### A. A Universally Stiff-Necked People

1. Israel was called a stiff-necked people; God said they deserved wrath

***Exodus 32:9-10 "I have seen these people," the LORD said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people. <sup>10</sup> Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation."***

2. Israel was called a stiff-necked people, and God said He would not go with them

***Exodus 33:3 Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way."***

3. Israel was called a stiff-necked people, and none of them deserved to see God's glory
4. Romans 1-3 teaches the clear doctrine: universally stiff-necked

***Romans 3:10-12 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; <sup>11</sup> there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. <sup>12</sup> All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."***

5. God is free to show mercy to us or free not to show mercy

### B. Foretaste: Moses' Experience a Foretaste of Heaven

1. Moses' experience with God a foretaste of heaven
2. For God to grant Moses' request is to show great mercy to Him
3. His mercy to Moses is the paradigm of His mercy to all the elect in Romans 9
4. If God shows His intimate mercy to ANY SINNER, it is an act of infinite mercy

### C. Fulfillment: Full View of God's Glory Promised

1. Seeing God's glory in heaven is the very issue Paul is dealing with in Romans 9

***Romans 9:23-24 What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory-- <sup>24</sup> even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?***

2. Salvation is to see God's glory face to face in heaven
3. God's personal glory is our "very great reward"
4. Better even than Moses experienced on Mt. Sinai

***Exodus 33:19-23 And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. <sup>20</sup> But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." <sup>21</sup> Then the LORD said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. <sup>22</sup> When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. <sup>23</sup> Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen."***

God is mindful of Moses' weak condition as a flesh and blood man... Moses would have been incinerated by the full display of God's glory!

Therefore Paul says we must be changed to see God

***1 Corinthians 15:50 I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.***

5. Heaven is face to face!!!

***1 Corinthians 13:12 Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.***

***Revelation 22:3-5 No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. <sup>4</sup> They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup> There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.***

#### D. God's Sovereign Freedom in Dispensing this Gift

1. The question of Romans 9: Who will see this glory? Who will see His face?
2. Answer is simple: Those to whom God chooses to show it, and no one else!!

***For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."***

3. God is free in this incredible intimacy, free in His sovereignty, free to do what He wants with His own glory... He can give it, or He can withhold it!
4. All of us have sinned and exchanged the glory of God for created things

5. God is free to save none of us, one of us, ten of us, thousands of us, half of us, most of us, or all of us! And none can call Him unjust!

## VII. "Show Me Your Glory": Is This the Cry of Your Heart?

### A. Do You Want This? Is This the Cry of Your Heart?

1. Then God has already shown you great grace and mercy... the natural human heart despises God's glory

***Romans 3:10-12 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; <sup>11</sup> there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. <sup>12</sup> All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."***

***Romans 10:20 And Isaiah boldly says, "I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me."***

2. Ask Him to show you more... more... still more

### B. The Better You Know God, The Bolder You Are to Ask

1. Moses was treading on dangerous ground
2. YET note Moses' amazing boldness... to ask for the very best God had to offer
3. The better you know God, the bolder you are to ask
4. BUT understand: He gives it by stripping your heart of the idols that took His place

***<sup>NAU</sup> John 14:21 "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."***

### C. Anyone Who Makes this Cry Will Get What They Seek!!

***John 4:10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."***

***Romans 10:13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."***

### D. Romans 9: Only The Elect Will Make This Cry

1. The only ones whose hearts are transformed and made into flesh are the elect
2. And Romans 9 says God chooses who they will be...

*Romans 9:15-16 For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." <sup>16</sup> It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.*