Doctrine of God

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[0:00] One theologian said that what comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.

Now this may not be what you're being told or what you've heard. This is certainly not the most prominent message out there for you. You are likely being told and have heard that the most important thing about you is the number of likes that you have, the number of follows that you have, the popularity you have, the success that you could have in a career, the amount of potential money you could make, maybe your ACT score or your grades.
You are told that maybe life is found in figuring out who you are, know yourself, and then living that self out to its fullest, however that is. And Jesus in the scripture comes along and tells us something different, something better.
Jesus tells us that life is not found in those things, that this is eternal life, that they may know God. And God doesn't want us guessing as to who he is or confused about what to think about when we think about God.
He doesn't want that space when we think about God to be filled with nothing and for it to be filled only with confusion. He fills that up with who he is. God makes himself known to us.
[1:27] And God making himself known to us is done to inform us. It touches the head and the brain. It is telling us about his character and what he's like, his personality, but it's also an invitation into relationship.

It's not just to know data and information. It's to know God personally. This is the sum and substance of your life. You are made to know God.
The most important thing about you is what comes into your mind when you think about God. And to know God is to know both his character and to know him relationally.
And this knowledge of God, this doctrine of God, was never meant to be merely informational, but convictional and a matter of worship.
So if you have a Bible, turn to Exodus chapter 34, where we have this text that tells us much, not all, about who God is.
[2:25] He makes himself known. And in a particular way in Exodus chapter 34. In Exodus chapter 34, Moses is leading the Israelites. They are outside of Egypt.

They have crossed the Red Sea. And they have already gotten into some trouble. They have just a few chapters before Exodus 34. They've received the Ten Commandments, but he came down and the people of Israel were worshiping not the one true living God, but a golden calf.
And after this, God calls Moses back up to the mountain. And Moses audaciously asks God. He says to him, he says, Show me your glory.
And this is where, in Exodus chapter 34, God is going to show Moses his glory. God shows up. And it's like that, if you've watched Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory, read the book, God gave Moses the golden ticket.
You get to come into the factory. And we're like, we are the movie watchers. We are going to watch this thing and see the inner workings of what's going on there. We get to know who this God is by just taking this scene in in Exodus chapter 34.
[3:41] So in verse 5, it says, The Lord descended in the cloud, and he stood with him there. This is God responding to him, asking him to show him his glory.

For he stood with him there, and he proclaimed the name of the Lord. The Lord passed by before him. Now, Moses had asked God to show him his glory, that he wants to see God's glory.

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And God draws near, and he passes by him, and so Moses can see the backside of his glory. He says to Moses when he asked, he said, No one can see my face and live.
If you do, your face will melt. If you've seen Indiana Jones, you know this. Like, your face will melt if you see the Lord's face. So he's going to show Moses the backside of his glory.
And if you're Moses, and if God is passing by, the God who had just pulled the people out of Egypt, this God who had just made, you know, frogs come over everywhere, gnats and darkness and hailstones, and had parted the seas and led them across, the God who's already rained down bread from heaven and given them water from heaven.
[4:51] That God, if he's going to show up, then what you're going to want is like, okay, then describe it to us in detail. Give us precise measurements, as precise as you can get.

How tall is he? Like, what does his hair look like? Like, what's, does he look strong? Like, what's his muscular, you know, kind of situation? Like, give us all the descriptions that we can get.
Draw us a vivid visual picture so that we can kind of take it in and picture him as well. But that is not what Moses does at all. We read through Exodus 34, these few verses, the sight of God is not emphasized at all.
Indeed, the sight of God is not even given a description here. We're not going to get more about the sight of God. Instead, what you see emphasized already is not some sort of visual image.
What is emphasized is a proclamation, proclamation of the name of God. It says that he proclaimed his name twice, and then he's going to actually give that name two different times as well.
[5:58] So God here is responding to Moses' requests to show him his glory, and he is coming, and he is shown up there, and he is making himself known, and he is not doing it in a lasting way with some sort of visual image, but with a proclamation of his name.

Moses wants to see him, and he gets a name twice. See, he wants a visual, and he gets a description from God spoken to, over him, and to him. Like, he wanted to see the movie, and he's getting the speech instead.
That's what's going on here. And we can be like Moses, can't we? I mean, I've probably said this. I've certainly heard it. Like, if I could only see God then, you know, then I'd follow him, then I'd believe him, then I'd, you know, all these kind of things.
If I could only see him. Have you ever thought that? And here we have Moses asking the same thing, and God doesn't do that. God descended. He stood with him.
He passed by him, and none of it is described for us. Instead, the revealing of God, God making himself known, comes to us through the word.
[7:03] And it's hard to give a bigger, like, emphasis on the doctrine of scripture than that. And this word is an invitation, again, not to gaze at a thing, but to see him in his word, to hear his voice in his word.

So God descends, he stands, and he's revealing himself by the proclamation of his name. And in verse six, it says, he proclaims his name, and he says it twice.
The Lord, the Lord. Now, this is more than just a proper name, like, hey, I'm Pat, or Bob, or Bill, or whatever. To proclaim his name is the summary of his personhood.
Like, it is saying, this is who I am. This is what I'm like. And that is what God is doing here. This is God defining himself that he may be known. This is him revealing himself to relate to his people.
And he does it in his name. This is how he is revealing himself. And the twice-repeated name he proclaims is Lord. Capital L, capital O, capital R, capital D.
[8:10] All right, Lord. This is I am who I am. This is the name Yahweh, if you've heard that name before. I am who I am. For every single one of us that are here in this room, what is true of us is what is said in Acts 17, verse 28.

That in God, we live and move or have our being. That apart from him, we can do nothing. In him, we live and we move and have our being. For us to live, literally something has to die.
We just ate. Something had to die in order to sustain us. Animals, plants, I mean, I hate to break it to you, something died for you to live tonight.
Right? To sustain us physically. For us, we have to be unconscious. Some of you weren't unconscious enough last night.
But for you to survive, as a human being, you're going to need to be unconscious roughly a third of your life. God never sleeps or slumbers. For each one of us, we have a start date, a birth date, and an end date.

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[9:13] And God himself has no beginning. He is eternal. He is this I am. The Lord, the Lord. I am who I am. He has no beginning. He just is. This name reveals this God who is completely independent.

He is contingent on nothing and no one. He is completely self-existent. Every single one of us, you are all, we are all becoming something. He is just being.
Like, we are all becoming. He is being. He is I am. The revelation, God making himself known as the Lord, the Lord, the I am who I am, alone is mind-blowing.
Like, we just surpassed all of our level of thinking just by him revealing his name to us. One pastor says it this way, by giving us his name, God lets us know who he is. But God's name is so hard to comprehend, so inscrutable.
Love that word. Like, you can't screw it. That's the verb, screw it. that it forces us to admit that there are some things about God that we will never understand.
[10:13] And that's just in the repetition of his name. Like, if you've said, like, man, if I could just see God, like, we can't handle the name repeated twice, much less the sight of the glory of God.

Even his name goes beyond our understanding. And this is really good news. We have in our God, the God of the Scripture, a God who is transcendent. transcendent, we say, beyond our understanding and comprehension.
And yet, he makes himself known in a way that we can understand and know, not only informationally, but relationally. He goes beyond full understanding and makes himself known in a personal way.
He gives us information of who he is and an invitation to begin to get to know him. That's what he's doing when he says, the Lord, the Lord. But he goes further into this, more than just a kind of a name, into a more in-depth definition and introduction to who he is.
In verse 6, he goes on to say, the Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation.
[11:35] Starts out with, the Lord, the Lord of God merciful or compassionate, your translation might say. He's a God who has pity. It's a word that belongs with another word, a word like misery. It's attached to that.

It's pity in action. It's this idea of taking the misery of others to heart and moving towards it, doing something about it in action, to give relief.
Pity in action is a good way to talk about this merciful God. And he's moving to give relief to that misery, a very real relief, though completely undeserved relief, unearned relief.
It's pity in action and he's full of it. Merciful. Now perhaps the repetition of the name the Lord, the Lord demonstrates this well.
This was the name that was revealed in Exodus chapter 3. If you're familiar with the story in the book of Exodus, this is the burning bush episode where Moses sees a burning bush and he turns aside to see what's going on there.
[12:35] Again, here's a bush that's burning but it's not being consumed. Like the Lord doesn't even need the bush to have fire continue to go because he's the I am. An amazing story. But since that time at the burning bush, here's what God has done just in brief, right?

He's led the people out. There's been an actual Exodus. He's sustained them in the wilderness. He's kept them alive. He's made a covenant with them. He's given them his law. And you know what they've been doing since then?
Almost from the very moments they step out from Egypt and go across the Red Sea, they start complaining. They're whining. They're rebelling. They're sinning against God. In Exodus 32, they're not too far removed from God having delivered them out of slavery and now they are here and saying like, hey, I guess we don't know about Moses where he's at and this Lord that he's been following.
Let's just see what we can make out of the stuff we have and out pops a golden calf, they say. And so they start worshipping that. And so what have they shown over and over again already? Their miserable character.
And the Lord is merciful. That's a word attached to things like misery. More than anything else, in this moment, their moment of misery, here's what he does.

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[13:46] He draws near and he says his name. In other words, these people who have some misery and could be called kind of a miserable people in some ways here in Exodus 34, what they don't need is ten steps how to get out of your misery.

Ten steps to stop complaining. Five steps to a happier existence. What they do need, the Lord gives them and that's the revelation of his name and who he is, his character and an invitation again to know him relationally.
And he comes and he repeats the same name that he gave in Exodus chapter 3 because he's that same covenant-keeping God with the same people that he had planned to remove from their slavery in Exodus chapter 3.
And after all they're complaining and rebelling and worshiping a golden calf, the first thing that God says when he reveals himself to Moses here is merciful. He gives his name and the first thing is merciful.
It's his mercy that hasn't cast them off. It's his pity and action to these miserable people that hasn't annihilated them already to this point. It's his mercy that they crossed the Red Sea and that they didn't drown like the Egyptians.
[14:54] It's his mercy that they're at Sinai after they're worshiping of the golden calf and God's still here with this miserable people because he is merciful. He's poured his mercy out upon them and it's not any closer to running out than when he started.

In Lamentations you get this great description in chapter 3 of Lamentations it says that the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies what do they do?
They never come to an end. They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. No end.
New every morning. It's as if the morning calls us to remember again God's mercies have not run out. Here they are again though I did nothing in the middle of the night to deserve them.
There it shines. This is a God who if one cries out to him for mercy they can have great confidence that he will receive this cry because he is merciful.
[15:51] That if you are calling to him he's drawn to the miserable drawn to the cry of mercy and he won't turn away because he is merciful. The Lord is full of mercy but he's also gracious.

The Lord, the Lord, a God gracious, merciful, and gracious. In other words he freely blesses the undeserving.
Surely you've heard that definition of grace that it's unmerited favor and yet I think we say that with such little excitement. That is not the way to talk about the grace of God.
Unmerited favor is a great way to describe it but it is love from God toward those who deserve the opposite of love. It is life where there is only death deserved.
It is power at work in powerlessness. That's the grace of God. Think of Abraham. Abraham was, you know what he was doing before? He was the father Abraham of many sons.
[16:49] Father Abraham was an idolater. He was serving other gods. That's what he was doing. And what does God do there? He calls Abraham and he makes him great promises.

That's his grace. He's the recipient of God's great promises and blessings that through him even all the nations are going to be blessed. Now what did he do for that?
Serve other gods. That's what got him there. But the Lord is gracious and so Abraham receives a call from the Lord and receives the grace of God and God pours out his blessings on him.
If you remember the story of Jacob later known as Israel for who this nation is named. Israel, Jacob, he's a scalawag. Like he is a deceitful guy.
He is not a great character for almost all of his time in the book of Genesis. He's not a great guy. He's a deceiver. And yet what does God do? Pours his blessings out upon him.
[17:47] Makes promises to him. Through him is going to come the savior. Like that is because God is gracious not because he is awesome. This grace is displayed in how God treats his people over and over and over again.

It's the kind of thing, grace, that doesn't just like cancel a debt. Abraham is serving other gods. We're going to cancel it out and not do anything to him. It's the kind of thing that then supplies an infinite line of credit in the other direction.
That's God's grace. He is merciful and he is gracious. And these are the first two words after the Lord, the Lord. Merciful and gracious are the first words.
And these are the first two words that every single human being needs after the Lord reveals himself. Apart from these two words, starting this out, all of us are like Abraham apart from his

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grace.
We're serving and worshiping other gods. We're like Israel going after the golden calf. But with these words and God is these things, we can know much more.
[18:53] God is merciful. He is gracious. And this is a God who, one theologian said it this way, he distributes his blessings where he might shoot his thunders.

God is merciful and he is gracious. These blessings of his mercy and his grace, they're like the sun. It's ready every morning to come up again. I know it doesn't come up. We spin around all that stuff. You know that. But they're ready, ever ready. The thunder, the storms, they gotta build. They take some time, they take some development, they take some energy, the sun is ready.
It's there, it's present, it's shining. That's the mercy and grace of God. The thunder is what is found next in the text. The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger.
So he's first, after he's revealed himself and is making himself known, he first wants to be known as God who is merciful and gracious, and then he brings up anger after he brings those up, but only to bring it up to say that he's slow to it.
[19:56] In other words, he's willing to defer that anger. He's willing to be slow in it. He has to be provoked to anger, the scripture says. He has to be stirred to anger.

You never see that about the mercy and grace of God, that he has to be stirred to it. He has to be stirred to his anger. He doesn't have to be stirred to be merciful and gracious. You think of Exodus chapter three, and Moses is at this burning bush, and this is quite, the episode.
Like, Moses is this great hero of the faith in the Old Testament, but have you heard what he said and thought through what he did in Exodus chapter three at the burning bush? Let's listen to Moses. In Exodus chapter three, God makes him these great promises. He's seen the affliction of his people, and he's going to use him to bring him out, but Moses said, well, chapter three, verse 11, who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?
He said, but I'll be with you, and this shall be the sign for you that I've sent you. When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain. So he makes this great promise. He gives him assurance. He gives him promises. I'm going to use you.
[21:01] I'm going to be with you. You're going to come here, and you're going to worship me. And then Moses, you know, they continue, and Moses answers back in chapter four, verse one, but behold, they won't believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, the Lord did not appear to you.

And so he says, hey, you know what, I'll give you a few signs, and he does the hand thing, the staff thing, like, these are amazing, again, sight even, attached to these assurances from God of his presence and of his power, going with Moses as he goes to take on this task.
And listen to what Moses says in verse 10, but Moses said to the Lord, oh, my Lord, Lord, I'm not eloquent, either in the past or since you've spoken to your servant, but I'm slow of speech and tongue.
Okay, like, you can see, like, maybe some of it's building, right? But look what the Lord does. The Lord said to him, who made your mouth? Who makes him mute or deaf or seeing or blind?
Is it not I, the Lord? Now, therefore, go and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak. Like, that's, again, man, what a gracious, merciful God to say, hey, you know what?
[22:03] I get that your mouth is bad, but I made that mouth and I'll make it say what it needs to say, all right? We'll be all right. And hear Moses again, but he said, oh, my Lord, please send someone else. All right, then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses.

He's slow the whole time of thinking, Moses, you're such a punk. Like, the Lord has shown you these things. He's given you promises and signs and you're like, just believe him and go do the thing. And yet, he doesn't do that and God is what with him?
He doesn't do what we would do. He's slow to anger. He had to be stirred to it. In the Exodus story, you see Pharaoh who gets sign after sign after sign.
God is slow to cast his judgment upon them. You think about the story in Joshua where there's a promised land given to Israel there to go into, but there's people there there to root them out.
And this is some of the harder parts of scripture. Like, what are we to think about the massacre of all these places? Well, one of the things we read in the scripture is that God has waited for them for a long time and they've continued in their rebellion and sin and idol worship the whole time when they've heard of this great God.

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[23:15] Or Jonah. What a great story Jonah is, right? Look at the story of Jonah. Jonah actually gets mad at the Lord for being slow to anger. He's sent to this place that's full of his enemies.

And listen to what happens in Jonah chapter 4. I'll start in chapter 3 verse 10. When he saw what God did, and he delivers the message, you know, repent or God's going to overthrow the city. When he saw what God did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them and he didn't do it. Man, what a blessing, right?
This is what God's people want. This is what prophets of the Lord should want, right? But it displeased Jonah exceedingly and he was angry. How quick was his anger here? And he prayed to the Lord and said, Oh Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country that this is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish?
For I knew that you are a, interesting words here, gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and relenting from disaster. And Jonah gets angry with the Lord for being so slow to his anger here to pounce on these enemies of Jonah.
[24:31] Or think of the person of Jesus who is taunted by the very people he created. We see in all these places like this is a God willing to delay the thunder of his anger and so quick to shine his mercy and his grace.

That those are the unstirred things, they take no building up, but the anger is like a storm it takes building up. He needs to be provoked to it, stirred to it, but not his mercy and his grace and not his love.
And that's the next thing we see in Exodus chapter 34 that the Lord is slow to anger, but he's abounding in steadfast love. This is the word that the Jesus storybook Bible, which I'm sure you may not have read.
I've read it like a hundred times because we have young kids and it's called the never ending, never stopping, never giving up, unbreaking, always, and forever love. That's a great way to translate it. It's this covenant keeping love, this sturdy, steadfast, dependable love. That's the kind of love that he's abounding in. It's not a love that's fickle or like some passing feeling, like sometimes he's all warm and fuzzy and he's loving and then other times he's very cold and distant and he's not loving.
[25:44] It's not that kind of love. It's a reliable love. It's not unreliable because it's not based on the loveliness of an object or anything outside of himself. This is just who the Lord most truly is.

If you were to again, you get a look inside the factory, this is who God is. He's this God who's pumping and abounding in love and that is why he doesn't look to the loveliness of the object to be loving.
He just is abounding in love. In almost every relationship it's natural for us and even probably taught to us, you always have to put your best foot forward. But if we continue to put our best foot forward to the Lord, that best foot is still pretty unlovely before him.
Not good enough before him, right? But that's not what draws his love. He is a God who is abounding in love. To the Israelites, he tells them in Deuteronomy chapter 7, he's like, I chose you because I chose you.
I love you because I love you. Not because you're a great nation, not because you do awesome things, I love you because I love you. That's just who God is. He's abounding in love and he loves them not to necessarily because they've deserved it or because they're lovely but because he is this God who's abounding in love.
[26:52] He doesn't go after them and love them for their love but from his love he moves towards them. He abounds in love and there's plenty to go around. Notice the comparison in verse 7.

He keeps steadfast love for thousands, one way to say that is thousands of generations, compared to this iniquity that he's going to visit on the third or fourth generations. Like you could see maybe the end of this visiting of iniquity, you're never going to see the end of his abounding love.
It could swallow up the other. There's no end date to this love of God and it issues forth in one particular that he's steadfast love that he keeps for thousands of generations forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.
It comes out in this comprehensive forgiving of sin. In other words, he's going to say the cost of sin I'm going to transfer somewhere else because I'm abounding in love.
What kind of God forgives sin? A God who's abounding in his love. This is a reliable love because again, this is who God is.

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[27:55] It's not based on the object of love. He is abounding in love. Next thing it says of him is that he's also abounding in faithfulness.

That everything he is and everything he says is absolutely reliable. I mean, what a refreshing thought in our day when you can count on another's word and commitment just a little bit, right? We have all these like your fear of missing out and so you won't commit to anything and you're really unreliable. That may be not true of you but possibly, right?
There's no commitment and God says in the midst of that kind of situation like, I'm in. I'm reliable. I am faithful. When I say these things, you can count on them.
You can depend upon them because I'm abounding in faithfulness. God didn't just make a covenant with Israel and then like, man, but this nation over here is developing really strongly.
[28:55] Maybe I want to jump over there. Nope. He is this God who's abounding in faithfulness. He's not waiting for some sort of better nation to come along so then he's out. Nope. He's faithful and abounding in his faithfulness.

Other so-called gods at this time and of our time, I mean just of all time, any false gods can be very frightening. Read some Greek gods. Those are frightening gods and they're really, really unreliable. I mean like, because they're based on whatever, like they can be like, all of a sudden the weather goes bad and the gods are mad and they don't know what they've done to make God mad and so they figure out and make some sacrifice, do something to make God happy again, like try to appease their God and they have no idea what will do that because again, this God hasn't revealed himself as what kind of God he is and what he wants and likes and all these kinds of things and that is really frightening scenario and this God, the God of the scripture, our God is a God who is abounding in faithfulness.
If God were like those other gods, he would be unreliable, frightening and unpredictable but he's abounding in faithfulness. He made a promise to Abraham when Abraham was way too old to have children and his wife had been barren and too old to have children.
He said, I'm going to give you a son and he kept his promise. When Moses in Exodus chapter 3 comes to the burning bush, he says, I'm going to bring you out and you guys are going to be worshiping on this mountain. He brought them out.
[30:12] They worship on the mountain. When he tells them, I'm going to take you into the promised land, he delivers them into the promised land because he's true to every single promise. He's made every single word of his will prove true because God is faithful.

He's abounding in faithfulness. So when God makes a promise, that's a promise you can take. It's true and reliable. You can stake everything on it. He's not going to let you down because he's abounding in faithfulness.
He's dependable, completely reliable. Even when all of his people prove themselves to be completely unfaithful or repetitively unfaithful, he remains faithful because he doesn't deny who he is.
He can't go back on this. This is who he is. He's abounding in faithfulness. And so God's nature and character as this merciful, gracious, abounding, and steadfast love, slow to anger, and abounding in faithfulness can be counted on.
All those things we see in this passage can be counted on because he's abounding in faithfulness. And verse 7, that comparison shows us the greatness of this faithfulness. He's keeping steadfast love for thousands.
[31:18] He's forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation.

The comparison is showing the greatness of his faithfulness and love, that it far outmeasures other things. This comparison draws out, though, another attribute of God that we dare not go around.
If you look at verse 7, the reality of who God is underlying verse 7 is the truth that God is just. He's just. God was patient with Pharaoh in Egypt saying, let my people go or these things are going to be visited upon you, and he was slow to anger, but he had visited their iniquity.
The same with this wilderness generation who Moses is walking around at this time. He told them to follow him, he makes this covenant with them, but they continue to rebel against him, and he says, not one of them is going to make it into the promised land, because he's this God who is just.

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This is part of who God is, his character, and it's part then of what we would worship and celebrate. It's part of his holiness, an expression of his goodness, and it is a good and holy thing for him to be just, because not just anyone gets away with whatever they want.
[32:45] Now, it sounds maybe harsh when we read it in the scripture, but think about it this way. If a couple kids get in a fight, or let's say it's not really a fair fight, one kid just comes up to the other kid and just smashes his face as hard as he can, and I come along, and I'm like, well, that was bad, but you know what, kind of in the end, it's going to be alright anyway, so I'm just going to forgive this kid for doing that.

Does that strike you as off? No, what if you were the one who got attacked, like you're just hanging out, mind your own business, and you're the one that now comes up and you get smashed in the face, and now you can't see anymore and you're blind, and like your life is completely altered from that point on, and I'm the judge, and I'm like, well, you know, kind of in the end we all just need to be okay with everything, and you know, let's be gracious where we can be gracious, and we're just going to let this off the hook.
Like if you were the person whose sight had been transformed and your life had been altered, you might think, man, it's not okay for the judge to just let this person off, and that's getting at the idea of what God is saying in verse 7, that he's not just going to let everything off.
I mean, with only verse 6, you might think that God is this all lenient God, where we can kind of do whatever we want, and in the end God's going to be merciful and gracious, so what difference does it make? But God is not simply some sort of softy, like some sort of happy grandfather in the sky that always just wants to give people treats, and you know, kind of like, I'm sad about that, but like at the end I'm just your grandfather anyway, I'm not really going to do anything about it, some sort of Santa that's like, well, there's a naughty list, but no one's really on it, everyone's really getting Christmas presents anyway, no one wants that kind of God in the end.
That's not good, and this is, verse 7 is saying that God is not just letting everyone off the hook, because he is a God who is also just, that no sin is ignored, and the guilty will get what they, deserve, and yet, in verse 7, this creates attention.
[34:49] In verse 7, it says that he's forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and he will also by no means clear the guilty, visiting their iniquity.

So God forgives sin, and he punishes sin. How can both of those things be? There's no mention in this verse of how forgiveness is given, sin, but just that it is.
And then he says, but I'm not clearing the guilty. The original generation that heard that was a guilty generation. They just worshipped a golden calf. Every generation that followed that generation, also a guilty generation.
And this guilt is not unique to Israel. This guilt is not unique to a certain time period. This is part of every single human story. This is part of our story that we come in with guilt.
No one is righteous, not even one. And so a vital question for all of us sinful, guilty people is how can a God forgive sin and not clear the guilty?
[35:56] How can those go together? We know that he gave us in this law, he says, well here's how, it's through sacrifice. It's through sacrifice that this tension is relieved.

He gave his people some sacrifices, blood sacrifices to make in order to continue in the covenant, continue in loving relationship with him as a guilty people.
But all along the way, they are slaughtering lambs and bulls. They should know like this is my sin being cast on them and they are dying in my place. That's what I deserve for my sin.
And at the same time with this great realization that a bull certainly could not pay for me. That a lamb certainly is not of equal value to me. And so hopefully they're thinking all along the way that these sacrifices for sin for which I get to receive this loving relationship with God and continual relationship with him is pointing forward to something else.
You see the tension of verse 7 of how God can clear the guilt or how can God forgive sin and not clear the guilty is a tension that is not really fully relieved until the coming of the God-man Jesus Christ.
[37:02] It's in Jesus that we see the fullest display of God. He's the radiance of the glory of God. In him the fullness of God dwells bodily and in him we see the fullest display of all the attributes of God.

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Because what is happening when Jesus comes is he is all of these things perfectly because this is not some sort of new revelation of God and like who he is and what he's like.
This is the radiance of it. He is showing the character of God because this is who he is. He's the greatest display of mercy and grace. He is the one who came to seek and save the miserable, the lost.
He's the one who's the greatest display of God's mercy and grace. So that when we have the miserable, blind Bartimaeus crying out, have mercy on me, he's drawn to him and heals him and forgives him.
When we have a bleeding woman coming up to him who couldn't be healed by any other doctors around though spent all her life and money trying to find relief, she just touches the hem of his garment and she's healed and he doesn't just leave it at healing because he's full of mercy and grace.
[38:09] He heals her and then he calls to her and he says, daughter, your faith has healed you. Daughter, he heals and he forgives and he welcomes into the family.

He's the greatest display of being slow to anger. Here's a man that the scripture calls, describes him as a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. There's grief from the hands of people, men and women he created.
And he's slow to anger with him. He doesn't call down legions of angels to defend him though he could have, but he willingly suffers at their hands because he's slow to anger.
He's the greatest display of the love of God. God demonstrates his love for us in this that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Or 1 John 4.10 says, this is love, not that we love God, but that he loved us and gave his son as a propitiation for sin.
Like he didn't see something lovely in the world. He is love and out of that love he sends his son and he makes him a propitiation for sin. This thing that turns away the anger and the wrath of God.
[39:21] He does that in his son Jesus. Jesus is the greatest display of the faithfulness of God. He kept all of God's word. Not one part did he skip over or not completely fulfill.

And yet it says of him in the scriptures that he's the yes and the amen to all of the promises of God. He's the seed of the woman that was promised in Genesis chapter 3. He's the offspring of Abraham that through him he's going to have many sons and the blessings is going to flow through the nations.
He's the true and better temple that he is the one who made his tabernacle among the people and then as he is lifted up sends his spirit so that his people could be a temple.
He's the true and better rest that all of the promised land and the rest of Sabbath is pointing to. He's the true and better lamb where we have these sacrificial lambs but they're still just animals. Here's one who is fully God and fully man and without blemish and he is a sacrifice for sins.
He's this greater king that comes from the line of David who far surpasses the righteousness of David and anyone come after him and far surpasses them in glory as he is the king who can reign not just a little while over his people but eternally over his people.
[40:31] Here in Jesus we see the yes and amen. This is the savior king. He's the greatest display of God's justice. In Jesus we see not that like you know God the father in the old testament is kind of mean but Jesus is really soft and loving and he just cares about everyone just kind of knowing that he loves him.

Like Jesus is not soft on sin. He is upset about sin as his father is upset about sin. He's so against sin that he's willing to be crucified for it. That's how much he hates sin.
Like the cross says to us like your sin is this bad that Jesus had to die and yet we see in here such great news that at the cross he also says yeah but God is this good that he was willing to do this so that there could be forgiveness.
You see in Jesus it's the tension of verse 7 that's relieved. Jesus is the one who comes and he's this atoning sacrifice for sin the only place for forgiveness the only sacrifice that can take away the sin of the world and in him we see God as both just and justifier.
That is he upholds his righteousness perfectly completely and yet he can still justify he can still make sinners right with him and have relationship with him through Jesus. If you want to know who God is he has revealed himself.
[41:48] He has made himself known. Jesus says this is eternal life. It is found in knowing God and in his son Jesus Christ and in Jesus we can know God as our Lord capital L O R D in him we can know God as merciful and gracious and slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and

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faithfulness but by no means clear the guilty of God who is just because in him we can now have this God who is for us in Jesus.

In Jesus we can have life with this transcendent God through our connection to Jesus by our faith in him we can not only know God but then we can start reflecting who God is.
we can be true image bearers pouring out the reflection of the image of the one true living God. In Jesus we can be merciful because we've received mercy.
In Jesus we can be gracious because we've received the grace of God. We ought to be the most gracious people on the planet because we know life in our lifelessness like power in our powerlessness.
That's what we know in Jesus. In Jesus we can be people who are slow to anger because the worst thing that could happen to us has already happened to us on the cross as Jesus was crucified. In Jesus we can be abounding in love because Jesus was abounding in love for us and poured his love in our hearts that we no longer need love outside of him.
[43:21] We have all that we need so now we can abound in it toward him and toward others. In him we can be abounding in faithfulness because he has been faithful to us. Now we can say because of how good you've been I'll do anything you want me to do.

How can I obey and serve you? And in Jesus we can be just always looking for what is right and good because we know that there is a God who cares about taking things into right account in the end.
There will be no injustice in the end either in the cross or in hell. No injustice remains in the end. All of this is what we should be thinking about when we think about God and more.
What you think about when you think about God is the most important thing about you. And God makes himself known. It is for our information yes but also an invitation to know him personally in relationship.
relationship and the response is left to us but may we take our cue from Moses in Exodus chapter 34. In verse 8 it says, And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and he worshiped.
[44:40] Let's pray together. God we have just begun to explore the outskirts of who you are in this short time tonight.

But I pray that it would change us and shape us and that we would be people that are continually people who can't help but bow our heads and worship you for who you are and what you have done.
Grow our awe and our wonder and our worship of you for you are certainly worthy of it. Now where we need to understand you more would you help us grow in our depth of knowledge but would you also grow us in our depth of relationship with you.
Thank you for sending your son that we might know you as this merciful gracious God slow to anger abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness who is also not going to clear the guilty is completely just.
Help us worship you in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.

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