

Exodus 33-34

Well last week we saw probably one of the more sad scenes in the history of Israel. After God had delivered the people of Israel from Egypt and after He had supernaturally provided water and bread and after He had defeated the enemies of the Israelites we saw a large failure on their part.

The Lord had been clear with His people that they were to have no other gods before Him, He had let them know that there were to be no idols and yet as Moses was up on the mountain for 40 days and nights the people of Israel had become restless, they had grown discontented and they had come to the point that they had lost confidence in the Lord God who had done so much for them.

And they went to Aaron and they demanded that he would make a god that would go before them that they could worship...and if you remember Aaron instead of being a good leader quickly caved to the demands of the people and ended up fashioning a god of gold...the people then sadly worshipped this idol as they walked away from the One true God.

And then we saw Moses return to the people coming down the mountain and he was righteously angry when he saw what had taken place. He broke the tablets that God had written on and he took the idol and ground it to powder making the people drink it as a testimony against them.

As this took place the Lord God said the following in verse 10 of chapter 32 when He said to Moses this ¹⁰**Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I**

may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation.” We then saw Moses intercede on behalf of the people asking the Lord to please forgive and have mercy...The Lord responded to his prayers and by the end of the chapter Moses is seen looking to bring the people back into a right relationship with God.

This brings us to what we have in chapter 33 verses 1-6 which say the following Then the Lord said to Moses, “Depart and go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, ‘To your descendants I will give it.’² And I will send My Angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanite and the Amorite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite.³ Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people.”

⁴And when the people heard this bad news, they mourned, and no one put on his ornaments.⁵For the Lord had said to Moses, “Say to the children of Israel, ‘You are a stiff-necked people. I could come up into your midst in one moment and consume you. Now therefore, take off your ornaments, that I may know what to do to you.’ ”⁶So the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by Mount Horeb.

More than likely we have had a small amount of time pass between chapters 32 and 33 but at this point the Lord again speaks to Moses and he lets him know that it is time to move on from Mt. Sinai and they were to head towards the promised land that had been given to

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and notice that the Lord again promises that they would have military victories over multiple groups of people.

You might also notice here that the conversation about who's people Israel belonged to continues on as the Lord again let's Moses know these are your people that you brought out of the land of Egypt. So again we see the Lord really letting them know that their decisions have created a great rift in their relationship with Him.

It also becomes apparent as the text develops that God is sending them to the promised land without His presence. If you remember the glory of God was what had led them in the wilderness as the pillar of fire was seen at night and the pillar of cloud by day...Now the Lord says an angel would go with them and I believe when it speaks of an angel here that this time it's not Jesus but another angel and again we'll see that as the text develops...Essentially God is making it clear here that He is sending them out but His presence isn't going with them and that's quite sad because God had said previously that His desire was to dwell with them.

I think we see this loss of closeness with God as evidenced by the fact that the people were sad when they heard this bad news. They didn't wear their ornaments almost as a sign of mourning over the situation.

We even see the Lord remind them again that they are a stiff necked people that are deserving of being consumed by Him in a moments notice.

I have to again just point out the seriousness of sin and its consequences. Sin will break your fellowship with God, it will bring

harm to your earthly relationships and it brings harm to the individual engaged in it.

I'm thankful that the promises of God in His Word that let us know He always forgives us will always stand but we should take note that sometimes sin has consequences that can altar the way God works in us and through us. He is merciful, He will always forgive but we must take sin seriously and to me the Lord is just driving this point home to His people.

I don't know if you have ever done wrong in your life and you have failed in a particular area sinning against the Lord but there is a conviction that comes into your heart when you do so. You can feel distant from God, you can feel bad about your sin, you can have a sorrow in your heart and I believe the people of Israel are experiencing just that as the text is developing.

I want to remind us today that conviction is not a bad thing, in fact it's a positive thing for it means that the God that loves you so much that He went to the cross is disciplining you in your life...It's a hard thing to pass through but the Lord is doing it for our good and we'll see in the narrative here as this develops that God is going to graciously minister to His people...but currently in our narrative the full consequences of their sin are still being seen as God here is making it clear they are going into the promised land but His presence isn't going with them.

Look at how this develops if you look at verses 7-11 which say ⁷**Moses took his tent and pitched it outside the camp, far from the camp, and called it the tabernacle of meeting. And it came to pass that everyone who sought the Lord went out to the tabernacle of meeting which was outside the camp.** ⁸ So it was,

whenever Moses went out to the tabernacle, *that* all the people rose, and each man stood *at* his tent door and watched Moses until he had gone into the tabernacle. ⁹ And it came to pass, when Moses entered the tabernacle, that the pillar of cloud descended and stood *at* the door of the tabernacle, and *the Lord* talked with Moses. ¹⁰ All the people saw the pillar of cloud standing *at* the tabernacle door, and all the people rose and worshiped, each man *in* his tent door. ¹¹ So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle.

Here we can see Moses going outside of the people and he sets up his tent away from them and he called his tent the tabernacle of meeting. Now this is not the tabernacle the Lord had spoken of for we won't see that made until later on in the scriptures but here is the place that God is meeting with Moses.

Now I think as God is meeting with Moses it is again reinforcing to the people that Moses is the one that God has chosen as the leader of the people. It's really elevating Moses in their eyes...Moses is no better than anyone else it was simply the grace of God that chose him.

I also appreciate here that when God and Moses were meeting the people were rising and worshipping as they would go to the door of their tents...This shows us that the people have really kind of turned from their rebelliousness at this point. This shows reverence from the people towards the Lord.

I believe we can see a godly sorrow in the people of Israel at this point. We are told in the word that Godly sorrow produces repentance and I

think we can see a change in the position of the people's hearts as they are seen worshipping before the Lord.

And then we can see here that the Lord had an incredible closeness with Moses as God spoke with him face to face as a man speaks with a friend. That's just amazing to think about. I believe that God has spoken to me many times in my life and I believe He clearly speaks through His Word to our hearts...but this relationship shows a closeness that I envy as we can see that God and Moses just had this incredible closeness. Perhaps we all should strive towards a greater relationship with God in our lives.

We also see here that Joshua the son of Nun stayed behind when Moses left. It is interesting that this is the man that will step into leadership when Moses dies. Perhaps Joshua was learning much from Moses as this took place.

Look with me at verses 12-16 which say ²Then 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 grace in My sight.' ¹³ Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people."

¹⁴And He said, "My Presence will go *with you*, and I will give you rest."

¹⁵Then he said to Him, "If Your Presence does not go *with us*, do not bring us up from here. ¹⁶ For how then will it be known that Your

people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us? So we shall be separate, Your people and I, from all the people who are upon the face of the earth.”

We can see again a little more here when it comes to the Lord letting the people of Israel know that His presence was not going to go with them as it had before. Moses is seen asking the Lord about this and it would seem that Moses is saying “Lord I see that you are calling me to do this but I’m not able to and don’t want to if you don’t go with me...

I can appreciate here that Moses is saying that if the Lord’s presence doesn’t go with them then please don’t send us at all. It’s like Moses is saying Lord I’ll go anywhere as long as you are with us...if you aren’t with us Lord then we don’t want to go. And I think we should have that same attitude. Lord you can take me wherever you want as long as you are the One leading my life and You are going to be with me.

In verse 14 I want to point out to you that when the Lord says **My presence will go with you and I will give you rest** that the idea here is that this is in the singular not plural. In English we have a weakness when it comes to the word you. It can mean an individual or a group of people. In the Spanish version of the Bible it makes it clear that the you being spoken of here is just Moses.

Then in verse 15 we see Moses saying Lord WE ALL need You to go with Us...We then see Moses again tell the Lord that the world around them essentially needed to see that He was with them and so Moses again interceding and hoping the Lord will be with all of them.

Verses 17-23 say ¹⁷ So the Lord said to Moses, “I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name.”

¹⁸ And he said, “Please, show me Your glory.”

¹⁹ Then He said, “I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” ²⁰ But He said, “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.” ²¹ And the Lord said, “Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. ²² So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. ²³ Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen.”

Notice that here the Lord responds positively to the prayers of Moses as he says that He will do the things Moses has spoken. You know I’m thankful that God responds to us as we go through life. I’m thankful the Lord wants to give us the desires of our hearts. I’m thankful that when we pray according to His will He responds to us...and I think Moses was relieved here that the Lord had not left them and that His presence would be with them in some way.

And then I think we see Moses just wanting to see more of God in his life. He has seen the Lord do so much, the Lord has been so gracious to him and responded to so many petitions and so Moses boldly asks the Lord to let him see His glory...It’s like Moses is saying Lord I want to see more of you in my life.

I can appreciate the heart of Moses here, just being bold to ask the Lord for more. Perhaps his mentality was “well it doesn’t hurt to ask” and I think that’s a good mentality to have when it comes to your relationship with God. Don’t be afraid to ask for big things as you go through life...We can’t demand anything of God but why not think BIG in our prayers and why not go all out that the Lord might bless if He so chooses to do so. Perhaps we think too small at times.

And the Lord here responds to Moses saying “you can’t handle my glory” but I’ll put you in the cleft of a rock and after I have passed by you can see my back but no man shall see my face and live.

Often in the scriptures God’s glory is seen as the sun and if you have ever looked at the sun and I don’t recommend it but if you have even looked to the sides of the sun you know that it will blind you as its brilliance comes at you.

Let’s see what happens here in chapter 34 if you look at verses 1-4 which say **And the Lord said to Moses, “Cut two tablets of stone like the first ones, and I will write on these tablets the words that were on the first tablets which you broke. ² So be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself to Me there on the top of the mountain. ³ And no man shall come up with you, and let no man be seen throughout all the mountain; let neither flocks nor herds feed before that mountain.”**

⁴ So he cut two tablets of stone like the first ones. Then Moses rose early in the morning and went up Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him; and he took in his hand the two tablets of stone.

Moses had broken the first two tablets. Now the Lord says Moses you do the work and cut out two new ones and you bring those up the mountain in the morning and present yourself to me...and notice again that there were to be no flocks or herds feeding near the mountain. The idea is that this time only Moses is going up. Previously the elders had gone up but only to a certain point. Now it's just Moses. The idea is that God is unapproachable, that you cannot come near Him.

Verses 5-9 say Now the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. ⁶ And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, ⁷ keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."

⁸ So Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped. ⁹ Then he said, "If now I have found grace in Your sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray, go among us, even though we are a stiff-necked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your inheritance."

So Moses is there before the Lord and the glory of God here passes before him and the name of the Lord was proclaimed in that place...but what I want you to see is that there were some things said about the character of God.

Have you ever run into people that say the God of the OT is a God of wrath and the God of the NT is a God of grace? Not true. Even here

after all this trouble that the Israelites have brought upon themselves the Lord reminds them that His character is to be gracious and longsuffering and full of truth. We even see that mercy was kept for thousands and that forgiveness is found in Him.

I think we should keep these things in mind. That the very nature of God is to want to forgive, the very nature of God is to be longsuffering towards humanity. The very nature of God is that not one person would perish but that all would come to repentance.

It is only after the grace of God is exhausted that God delivers a righteous judgment. You know when it's all said and done and people find themselves being judged for their sins the reality is it won't be God's fault. God must be just and punishment for sins must come but He has also provided a way of escape as seen in Jesus Christ. God's first instinct is forgiveness and ministry towards us and He has taken the steps that were necessary to right the ship so to say when it comes to the sinfulness of humanity.

There are some that look at this passage of scripture and they begin to teach that there are generational sins that follow you and I...and while I do believe there can be a generational struggle with particular sins I also believe that God has set us free from those strongholds. Jesus breaks the bonds of generational faults and failures.

As we come to this next section of scripture here that begins in verse 10 and ends all the way in verse 28 we'll see the Lord giving to Moses a condensed version of many of the things He had already said to him...so we'll move through this quickly and really we'll do a lot of this as we move through the rest of the book of Exodus.

Look with me here at verses 10-11 which say ¹⁰ And He said:

“Behold, I make a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation; and all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the Lord. For it is an awesome thing that I will do with you. ¹¹ Observe what I command you this day. Behold, I am driving out from before you the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite.

So now that Moses has interceded on behalf of the people of Israel and the Lord has responded and graciously allowed His presence to remain with them the Lord again reaffirms the promises He had made to His people. Nations would be driven out from before them and marvels would be done through them that had been done with no other nation and all the nations would see the great work of God on their behalf.

Verses 12-17 say ¹² Take heed to yourself, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land where you are going, lest it be a snare in your midst. ¹³ But you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images ¹⁴ (for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God), ¹⁵ lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they play the harlot with their gods and make sacrifice to their gods, and one of them invites you and you eat of his sacrifice, ¹⁶ and you take of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters play the harlot with their gods and make your sons play the harlot with their gods.

¹⁷ “You shall make no molded gods for yourselves.

Now I do want to take just a minute or two here and point out that God again is making it clear that there is not to be any kind of mixing of the people of Israel with other nations around them.

They were not to make any kind of agreements with them and really the reason why is pretty simple. If you make agreements with them or you allow your daughters and sons to join with them then you are inevitably going to end up leaving the Lord and serving other gods.

I mean once you enter into a peace treaty with someone then you know that both sides come closer together most of the time and not further apart. God wants for Himself to be the only One the people worship and as such He knows the nature of humanity and how humans are prone to falling away when they are surrounded by those that don't have the same beliefs.

I believe this applies to our lives as believers also. We must be set apart as unto the Lord and we must be very careful about who we hang out with. Believers should not be marrying unbelievers as it will simply pull the believer away from the Lord.

God wants His people to be set apart and remember that God is a jealous God. He won't share you with anyone else.

Now let's quickly look here at verses 18-28 which say this

¹⁸ “The Feast of Unleavened Bread you shall keep. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, in the appointed time of the month of Abib; for in the month of Abib you came out from Egypt.

¹⁹ “All that open the womb are Mine, and every male firstborn among your livestock, whether ox or sheep. ²⁰ But the firstborn of a

donkey you shall redeem with a lamb. And if you will not redeem *him*, then you shall break his neck. All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem.

“And none shall appear before Me empty-handed.

²¹ “Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; in plowing time and in harvest you shall rest.

²² “And you shall observe the Feast of Weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the year’s end.

²³ “Three times in the year all your men shall appear before the Lord, the Lord God of Israel. ²⁴ For I will cast out the nations before you and enlarge your borders; neither will any man covet your land when you go up to appear before the Lord your God three times in the year.

²⁵ “You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leaven, nor shall the sacrifice of the Feast of the Passover be left until morning.

²⁶ “The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring to the house of the Lord your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk.”

²⁷ Then the Lord said to Moses, “Write these words, for according to the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.” ²⁸ So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

As I said before this is really a repeat of what we had several chapters ago. I suppose God has to repeat Himself often doesn't He? How many times does God have to tell us that He loves us before we get it? How many times does God have to lay out the way that He wants to be worshipped to His people Israel.

So here we have again the need to keep the Feast of Unleavened bread, and how the firstborn of both human and livestock were the Lord's, the Sabbath day is once again spoken of, and the Feast of Weeks and Ingathering were to be observed and they were reminded again that three times each year the males were to appear before the Lord and we even have a promise that while they go before the Lord these three times that the Lord would protect them from others coming in and wanting to take their land...and we have a few other things mentioned as well.

Then the Lord let's Moses know that he was to write these words down and we see that he was with the Lord for another 40 days and nights. Supernaturally Moses had neither water nor food while he was there...So the Lord is just sustaining this man...perhaps its similar to how the sandals of the Israelites did not wear out while they were in the wilderness all those years.

Look with me at verses 29-31 which say this ²⁹ **Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses' hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him. ³⁰ So when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. ³¹ Then Moses called to them, and**

Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned to him; and Moses talked with them.

So Moses has been in the presence of God for some 40 days and now he comes back down to the people and when he arrives he doesn't realize this but his face is shining and I'm not sure why but Aaron and those with him were a little creeped out by it and Moses actually had to call for the people to come near and he then talked with them.

I'm not sure if you have ever had a friend or known someone that was near to God but often times there is just a way about them or even a glow to their life that is seen. I especially see this when I go door to door doing evangelism and I happen to knock on someone's door and we quickly connect over Jesus and how great He is.

I wonder today can people see that we are different because we have been with Jesus? Can people tell that you are a person that knows God when they talk to you? And I think also that sometimes when you are the real deal in your relationship with the Lord, that you will personally find that people just don't understand you. Your love for Jesus should be so radical that people can really and truly tell that God is doing something in and through your life.

Verses 32-35 say this ³² **Afterward all the children of Israel came near, and he gave them as commandments all that the Lord had spoken with him on Mount Sinai. ³³ And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face. ³⁴ But whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with Him, he would take the veil off until he came out; and he would come out and speak to the children of Israel whatever he had been commanded. ³⁵ And whenever the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the**

skin of Moses' face shone, then Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with Him.

Moses kind of had an odd thing going on when you think about it. He would go into the presence of God and take off the veil and when he came out he would essentially mask up that the people might not be afraid of him.

When his face was seen there was a glow about him. Now in the New Testament as we wrap this up we get a little more insight into this veil and really Moses would wear that veil to hide the simple fact that the glory was actually fading away if you listen to what we have in 2

Corinthians 3:7-9 which say ⁷But if the ministry of death, written *and* engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which *glory* was passing away, ⁸how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? ⁹For if the ministry of condemnation *had* glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory.

And then listen to verses 12-18 of the same chapter which say ²Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech— ¹³unlike Moses, *who* put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. ¹⁴But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the *veil* is taken away in Christ. ¹⁵But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. ¹⁶Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty. ¹⁸But we

all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

The point the writer is making is that there was a certain glory that came with the receiving of the Old Testament but that glory we are told was fading...today as we walk and talk with Jesus as we have a real and unfading relationship with the Father that is based on the finished work of our Lord upon the cross we are being transformed from glory to glory meaning we are becoming more and more like our Lord.

However those that have rejected Jesus, those that relate to God based on the Old Testament law that cannot bring life still have a veil that is over their hearts, they simply cannot see the glory that is found in the Lord.

Today as we close do you know Jesus? Do you have a relationship like Moses did with God? Moses came near to the Lord, He heard from God, He interceded on behalf of the people and as he simply served the Lord he was able to see the backside of God's glory...You and I in our natural bodies cannot comprehend the glory of God but one day when we are in our glorified bodies we will see Him face to face.

Let me pray for us as we close.