

STEADFAST LOVE Sunday School- September 26, 2010

Unifying Topic: GOD PROMISES AN AWESOME THING

Lesson Text

I. Replacing The Tables (Exodus 34:1, 4)

II. Revealing Himself (Exodus 34:5-7)

III. Renewing The Covenant (Exodus 34:8-10)

The Main Thought: And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, (Exodus 34:6, KJV).

Unifying Principle: People have different ideas about how their behavior affects relationships. To whom are we accountable for our actions, and what do we expect when we err? In the face of Israel's unfaithfulness, God revealed to Moses that God is steadfast, forgiving, and faithful.

Lesson Aim: To teach students about God's mercy, grace, and steadfast love.

Life aim: To teach believers how God reveals His nature and character through our fellowship and experience with Him.

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- 34 : 1 And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest.
- 32 : 2 And be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto mount Sinai, and present thyself there to me in the top of the mount.
- 32 : 3 And no man shall come up with thee, neither let any man be seen throughout all the mount; neither let the flocks nor herds feed before that mount.
- 32 : 4 And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone.
- 32 : 5 And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord.
- 32 : 6 And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,
- 34 : 7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.
- 34 : 8 And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped.
- 34 : 9 And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance.
- 34 : 10 And he said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the Lord: for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee.

HISTORY:

Exodus 32:11-35

- Moses pleads for the people before God
- He speaks of how this would look before the Egyptians
- He reminds God of His Covenant with Abraham
- God does not destroy Israel
- Moses returns from the mountain and gets the people's attention
- He smashes the tablets of stone
- He tears down the golden calf and throws it into the fire, to melt
- He rebukes Aaron
- He calls the Israelites to declare allegiance/Levites to slay others (3, 000 were killed)
- He grinds golden calf to powder, makes Israelites to drink it
- He returns to the Lord and intercedes for the people
- He says blot me out of the Book if you do not forgive them
- God blots out those that have sinned against Him and brings plague on them

Exodus 33:1-6

The Lord still intends a future for Israel, and commands them to go up to the land promised them. ¹Sin always

¹ <http://bible.org/seriespage/“outside-camp”-exodus-331-11>

creates barriers between men and God. Some barriers are the result of man's withdrawal. The idol of the golden calf did precisely the opposite, for it threatened to cause their God to remove Himself from them and not have His full presence. The very thing Israel tried to promote, they nearly prevented. God's refusal to dwell among them is a concern for their well-being.

²It might be helpful to take another look at Israel's sin. Think of Yahweh in terms of lightening bolts. Incredibly powerful! Completely uncontrollable! Raw electricity! Pure voltage! Straight juice! Israel's sin was that they attempted to reduce Yahweh to a battery. Powerful but controllable! Manageable, diluted juice! Bottled electricity! Safe, usable, disposable voltage. Rather than serve Yahweh and submit to the "*Bolt of Bolts*," they wanted to harness Yahweh and place His power into their own service. But Yahweh cannot be wired. Yahweh blows all circuits, even when those circuits are put in place by Aaronic priests.

We find that there still was no forgiveness. Instead there was divorce. Yahweh told Moses to take the people and leave this place. Yahweh wanted them off of His holy mountain and out of His Presence. He determined to keep His promise of giving Israel the land of Canaan and He would even send an angel ahead of Israel to guide them. But Yahweh Himself would not go with Israel. Yahweh asserted that, "*I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way.*" The Lord decided to keep His distance from them at that point, because they had chosen to become spiritually distant from Him. His anger burned so deeply that He knew the only way He could keep the promise was not to go near Israel, lest He exterminate them. Yahweh would stay at Sinai and send the people out of His Presence. Israel removed their festive clothing and began the work of grieving.

1. ³Removing items of value.
2. Repentance is stripping naked before God.
 - a. You feel sorrow for your sin
 - b. You ask forgiveness.
 - c. When we get intimate we strip ourselves.
 - d. God does not want anything between Him and us.

Exodus 33:7-11

Moses still had a close relationship with Yahweh. He still had access to Yahweh's heart. And as we observe, Yahweh was still trying to decide what to finally do with Israel. Yahweh's heart was not finally made up. There was something yet to be done. Moses is still communicating with God and He takes the tent and set it up outside of the camp.

1. To hear from God you must get away and be alone with God.
2. Also, God does not dwell in the midst of sin.

It became "*the tent of meeting*" or in the KJV "*the tabernacle of the congregation*." It was often called, "*tent*" or "*tabernacle*" from its external appearance. Then it would be taken down and be carried a bit farther toward Canaan. The "*tent of meeting*" and "*the tabernacle*" differed in that:

- a. The tent of meeting was on the outside of the camp. The tabernacle was to be in the midst of the camp Numbers 2:2.
 - a. The ark was not yet made;
 - b. a priesthood was not yet appointed;
 - c. Joshua was the sole minister Exo.33:11
- b. The "*tent*" was not yet the tabernacle. It was a large tent set up in the wilderness region between Egypt and Canaan.
- c. The "*tent of meeting*" was temporary until the tabernacle could be built (Exodus chapters 35 to 40).
- d. The "*tent of meeting*" was served by Moses and Joshua, while the Tabernacle was to be served by the Levites.
- e. The cloud of God's presence came down to the "*tent of meeting*" only when Moses was there, while the cloud hovered over the Tabernacle at all times, except when Israel was to break camp and march.

The Tabernacle was not a tabernacle, or dwelling place, for the congregation of Israel. It was the dwelling place of God, a tabernacle for the Lord. The Tabernacle would remain in one place for a while. The function of the "*tent of meeting*" and the Tabernacle was similar, in that the Tabernacle was also a "*tent of meeting*." They both were used to symbolize God's ultimate plan of salvation now in progress - Christianity!

[The sacrifices represented the later ultimate Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and the Most Holy Place represented God's throne in heaven where the high priest (a Levite descendant of Aaron on earth, Jesus Christ in heaven) entered to make Atonement for the people before God (Hebrews 9:1-28)].

² <http://www.crivoice.org/biblestudy/exodus/bbex42.html>

³ <http://www.earnestandroline.com/Resource/Files/facetoface.pdf>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

Several things happened in this process:

1. Moses took the tent and pitched it outside the camp.
2. Whenever Moses went out to the tabernacle, all the people rose.
The people watched and noticed when Moses worshipped. When Moses worshipped, they also worshipped. Moses prompted the people to draw close to God by his own example.
3. When Moses entered the tent, God's presence would meet him at the tent of meeting.
All the people would watch when God's presence descended in the cloudy pillar. When the people would see this, they would all worship at the entrances of their tents.
 - a. God's presence brings an atmosphere of worship.
 - b. Worship means to bow down or be prostrate.
4. Moses talked with God face to face as a man speaks to his friend.
A "*face-to-face*" meeting—this is an expression showing that Moses and God spoke intimately with each other, but it does not say Moses saw God's face; that the Lord's communication with Moses was direct and didn't come to him in dreams and visions; and that there was something different about this Moses. What a contrast with how God related to the people. Moses speaks as a friend to God. 'Moses' communion is a tangible reminder to the people of God of what they lost, because God's purpose was to be right down in the midst of them, however, in their rebellion they lost that presence. Without the presence of God; without the favor of God; without communion with God, nothing else matters. If we choose the blessings apart from Him, or if we seek the blessings instead of Him, or if we seek the blessings our way, outside of Him, we lose Him and eventually lose all the blessings.
5. Joshua the son of Nun, did not depart from the tabernacle. It is important as leaders to train others and have your next leaders near by.

Exodus 33:12-17

Moses, taking note of the task the Lord has given him, knows that he cannot lead the nation entirely on his own; that it will require help and guidance. He is going to God on the basis of his own relationship; he is going to God and quoting God's Word back to Him: "You say to me, *bring up this people* (meaning *lead the people*). It wasn't enough to know that he and the Israelites would make it to the Promised Land, but who was God going to send with him? Moreover, you have said, I know you by name (meaning—*He knows him intimately*)...I have also found grace in Your sight (favored by Him)." Moses believes that the Lord knows him intimately and favors him highly. As Moses intercedes for Israel and desires God's actual presence, not an angel (v2) to go with them to Canaan, he responds with such earnest freedom in prayer to God. It seems strange that Moses would pray to find favor in the Lord's sight when he has already recognized that he has found favor. "*The Lord replied, My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.*" What a promise!

Exodus 33:18-23

Moses still prays. Now, if we had been given the task of leading the people, how might we have prayed? Moses could have prayed that the Lord straighten out these rebellious people. He could have prayed that the Lord would destroy the people's enemies. He could have prayed for success. He could have prayed that he would be an effective leader. He could have prayed for personal strength. Yet he prays for none of these things. Instead, he prays, "... *let me know your ways that I may know you, so that I may find favor in your sight: and consider that this nation is thy people.*" He's praying for intimacy with the Lord. As the Lord has known Moses, Moses wants to know the Lord.

⁶Moses had been so encouraged by God's answer to his prayer that he sought for the ultimate. The one desire that burned within Moses was to know God better. There is a tremendous need for each believer to have this same desire. Moses petitions God, "*shew me thy glory.*" Having only heard a voice out of a burning bush, a pillar of cloud or fire; he desired to see some representation of the divine glory of God; a full disclosure of the Lord's essential character. He couldn't see God's face, because if he did, he would not live. But, God says, "I will make all 'My goodness' pass before thee (which reveals who I am and what I do), and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee." God values Moses' request, however, it also suggests that there are limits to what God will reveal to Moses—only His back parts, not His face. God's response to Moses' petition included a third element, a declaration of His Sovereignty: "... I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion."

⁴ <http://www.fpcjackson.org/resources/sermons/exodus/Exodus%20Vol%205%20&%206/39bExo.htm>

⁵ <http://www.pbc.org/files/messages/10451/exo027.html>

⁶ http://www.backtothebible.org/index.php/component/option,com_devotion/qid,4/task,show/resource_no,295/Itemid,75/
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

In fact He's saying, "You would never survive seeing all that you asked for; instead I'll show you the kind of God that I am—a God that is both gracious and merciful; a God that will proclaim His name, and still allow My goodness to pass before you." God was going to reveal Himself to Moses by showing His grace and mercy to him. All this was about to happen in the next chapter. God gave specific instruction as to what was to happen. Stand on the rock; stand in the cleft of the rock so God's glory could pass by while God's hand would shield and cover him because neither Moses nor any could see God's face and live.

There on Mt. Sinai, God will pass by Him in all of His goodness. A portion of His glory—His back side will only be seen. As a believer walks in close communion with God, there is always the desire to know God better. If this is not the desire of the believer, something is seriously lacking in his spiritual life. Through Moses' sheer tenacity, he basically gets what he's after—assurance of God's commitment to both Moses and the nation of Israel, and a deeper knowledge of who God really is. All he had to do was ask! What if he hadn't been so persistent? What if he had considered that he was not worthy enough? The only restriction God placed on Moses' request was really for Moses' protection.⁷ Thus, God covers him. It would be too much for Moses' eyes to handle. Oftentimes we want to know more of God's plan or more of God's glory than is good for us to know. There are things that would likely harm us were we to know them. Thus we must recognize that sometimes God closes our eyes to some of these truths for our own protection.

LESSON:

Exodus 34:1, 4 Replacing The Tables

Exodus 34:1-4 Moses has to prepare himself for this awesome presence that he had never seen before. God says, "Be ready in the morning to come up into Mount Sinai and present yourself to me." Do you know I couldn't have slept that night? Moses was to hew the two tables of stone like the first, so God could write on them. God had written The Ten Commandments on the stones before, however, Moses had broken these "*tablets of stone*" or "*the tablets of testimony*" after coming down from the mountain and seeing Israel's disobedience by making a golden calf as their god (Exo.31:18). Now, God is ready to make covenant with the people again after He gave judgment and sent a plague upon them because of the calf Aaron had made. And Moses was allowed to make atonement for this great sin of the people (Exo.33:26-35).

Moses is to meet God again on the mountain so with the finger of God, the Ten Commandments could be written again like the first. The people couldn't deal with God directly because of sin and rebellion, so Moses bridged the gap between the people and God. The people are told to keep their distance from the holy mountain; neither their flocks nor their herds are to feed close to the mountain. You know how disruptions come. Well, God's plan will still flourish no matter how many disruptions and He will not alter His plans. Therefore, the tablets were to be written again for the people. Moses was to come alone and God is about to fulfill Moses request—to see God's glory! Moses did as the Lord commanded. God's promise is an awesome thing.

Exodus 34:5-7 Revealing Himself

After Moses had gotten to the top of the mount,

"The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "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" ESV.

Moses learns something of God's attributes especially His mercy (compassion) and forgiveness, as well as His holiness, righteousness, and judgment. God points out that He is a loving God, but He will not tolerate sin.

- a. He is so compassionate that when we sin and ask for forgiveness, He forgives us.
- b. He is so compassionate that He heals our illnesses.
- c. He is so compassionate that He blesses us with food, shelter, and jobs.

As God passes by Moses, He describes Himself with seven attributes:

1. **Compassionate:** He is the God of mercy. Although the entire human race has broken His law, He does not punish us as we deserve. He knows we are frail (Psalms 103:14).
2. **Gracious:** He is the God of grace. We deserve nothing, have no redeeming qualities, but He generously

⁷ <http://preacherwin.wordpress.com/2008/03/22/show-me-your-glory-part-19-the-hand-of-god-and-the-cleft-of-the-rock/>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

- gives us what we do not deserve. He bends down protectively, shows mercy, and cares for those in misery.
3. Slow To Anger: He holds back His wrath by the reigns of His love. Humans can love and hate alternately from instant to instant. God is not like us. He may grow angry, but He does not hate people. He hates evil. The reason God is slow to anger is not that He doesn't notice our sin but that He forgives it. He is long-suffering and He is extraordinarily patient.
 4. Abounding in Steadfast Love: When God uses the word "*abounding*" He wants us to understand that the resources of His love are not limited in any way. When God says that He keeps steadfast love, the focus is on the durability of His love. It lasts, it perseveres, and it keeps on flowing!
 5. Abounding in Faithfulness/Truth: God's love and faithfulness is unchanging, constant and overflowing. The surrender of His love is not only inexhaustible, but reliable and indestructible.
 6. Maintaining Steadfast Love for Thousands: Thousands of generations, as long as the people do not violate the covenant and thus invoke the covenant penalties. Even then, the previous attributes delay and reduce the penalties.
 7. Forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin: It is God's nature to forgive sin, and these three terms mean He forgives all kind of sin one can commit, except blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, as in Matt 12:31.

This was God's own declaration of who He is, which is why these words are quoted many times in Scripture (see Joel 2:12-14).

There are two kinds of people:

1. One who is blind to the magnificence of God's mercy;
2. The other who is blind to the magnitude of his own misery.

God used all three Hebrew words for sin here (v7) to show that all sorts and degrees of sin are forgivable. He forgives iniquity and transgression and sin. He piles them up to make plain what he means.

- **Iniquity** is the desire to sin; the tendency to do wrong while sin is the wrong itself. It's always there because of human imperfection.
- **Transgression** is the moment your will sins; deliberate revolt; defiant disobedience.
- **Sin** is walking out in the iniquity; the deed itself.

When we repent, ⁸The Lord says He "*forgives iniquity, transgression and sin.*" However, He also says that He will "not clear the guilty." Yet all sinners are guilty. So which guilty ones will He forgive? And which guilty ones will He not forgive? The answer is clear He will forgive the guilty who turn from their sin and turn to God with their whole heart. And the guilty who reject His offer of mercy, He will by no means clear. There is a difference between punishment and suffering. When God visits the sins of the fathers on the children he doesn't punish sinless children for the sins of their fathers. He simply lets or allows the effects of the fathers' sins take their natural course, infecting and corrupting the hearts of the children. In other words, the children share in the father's punishment because they share in the father's sins. This means that the children and grandchildren will repeat many of the same sins. The more we let sin get the upper hand in our own lives, the more our children will suffer for it. Sin is like a contagious disease. My children don't suffer because I have it. They catch it from me and, then suffer because they have it. Any child that goes on sinning like his father will share the father's punishment. However, Ezekiel 18:19 says, "*When the son has done what is lawful and right, and has been careful to observe all my statutes, he shall surely live.*" In other words, he won't die for his father's sins because he is not following in his father's footsteps.

⁹But even though God is patient, and slow to anger, there are limits, and those who do not repent will be punished, and will perish. This brings us back to opportunities. If God calls you to repent today, then today is a good day to repent, for tomorrow may be too late. For it is one thing to bear our own sin. It is quite another to know that our sin may effect the lives of our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren, and because of our sin, they also may lead miserable lives. It may not seem fair, but that's not the point. The point is: sin will keep us from telling our children about the way of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. And if we don't tell our children, then how can they, in turn, tell their children? And if we are silent, who will reach out to the rest of the world?—And what of the generations yet to come? God's attributes can only be seen in a yielded life; can only be encountered in a repentant vessel; can only shine in a humble and teachable spirit for even later generations.

Exodus 34:8-10 Renewing The Covenant

⁸ <http://www.soundofgrace.com/piper84/100784m.htm>

⁹ <http://www.richardajordan.com/Sermons/951119.htm>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

Moses' natural response to God's revelation of His glory and attributes was to bow down and worship. And this humbling of himself and exalting of God in worship came before Moses' appeal for God to continue to take Israel as His own people. When we don't have a compelling drive to worship God, it is clear evidence we don't really appreciate who He is. Moses is still bargaining with God. He asks for the goodness, grace, and mercy of God to be extended to himself and the nation. When we as a people have felt the goodness, grace, and mercy of God, we always want others to know about it or even feel it in some way. If we know God is good, we should ask Him to be good to others. If we know He is forgiving, we should ask Him to forgive others. That's what Moses did. He went a step further before the Lord, asking on behalf of the nation, for the Lord to go among them, although they were a stiff-necked people. By going among the people, would mean forgiveness of their iniquity and sin; and that the Lord would accept them as His own—giving them an inheritance. Moses has worshipped and prayed and it is only by the grace of God that God honors this. Moses successfully intercedes for the people of Israel.

God responds in 34:10, "*Behold, I make a covenant.*" A covenant is God's solemn promise that He will give the covenant people certain benefits if they will obey the terms of the covenant. So a covenant involves three things:

1. promises, which God will perform if the people keep the covenant;
2. commandments or terms, which the people must keep in order to receive the promises;
3. warnings, of what will happen if the covenant is broken.

God didn't leave anything out the second time that was in the first. Renewing the broken to its' original existence was the goal. Bringing His people to the original inheritance as promised was the commitment of the "*I Am God!*"

SUMMARY:

¹⁰In order for God to show Moses "*His glory*", God's requirements were: Take two "*blank*" tablets of stone with you. Go back up Mt. Sinai. Why? The "*tablets*" are associated with the law. Moses had to carve out the stones again. They represent the law. The people were to keep the commandments of God and Moses was to enforce it. God Himself was going to write the words on the tablets again. The application is simple and also applies to us. God provides the law (The Ten Commandments). Our job is to keep them. This second set of stone-tablets never gets broken. It is a "*word-picture*" of the law being preserved. This set gets put inside the Ark of the Covenant for safekeeping. Remember Jesus said He did not come to break the law but to fulfill it. (Matthew 5:17). The law had to be given again from Mt. Sinai. This mountain will forever be associated with the source—location of the law.

God described "*His glory*", by describing His attributes. God's description of Himself falls into two categories: The "*positives*" & the "*negatives*." The "*positives*" include His name itself. It is repeated twice in a row in Verse 6 for emphasis. (Just like Jesus would often say "*verily verily*" for emphasis). The "*positives*" include God's loyalty, which is given to those who trust in Him. Others promises include God's commitment to be "*slow to anger*", etc. Praise God for that, when it comes to my faults, and for God's willingness to continually forgive us of our sins when we ask Him to do so, is God's longsuffering. The "*negatives*" is that He won't let the guilty go unpunished. God is a God-of-love, but He is also a God-of-justice. The reference to "*3rd and 4th generation*" does not mean God punishes children for the sins of their parents. (See Ezekiel 18:20). The reference is that sins of the parents have effects upon the next generations.

God's answer did drive Moses to his knees. He quickly bowed to the ground, and worshiped. That is what the glory of God should do for us, out of gratefulness to Him. So when Moses' second request for God's presence to go among them, God teaches the principal of when we break a law, we have broken our relationship with Him. By simply confessing our sins does not give us a license to act in every sinful matter. This is why God restates the summary principals of the law in these verses, and many successive verses. Notice the first words out of God's mouth after this declaration, is a promise: "*I Make A Covenant!*"

APPLICATION:

The unwavering commitment of God's love should always lead us to bow and worship; to un-stiff our necks!

¹⁰ http://www.biblestudyemail.com/karmelich_exodus/exodus_chapter_33-34.pdf
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>