

Glorifying God

Exodus 34:10-28

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If you have your Bibles, I'd invite you to turn with me to Exodus 34 as we continue to work our way through this great book. We come to the end of a passage which forms the center of the book and focuses on the golden calf incident. Let's hear God's word.

Then God said, "Behold, I am going to make a covenant. Before all your people I will perform miracles which have not been produced in all the earth nor among any of the nations; and all the people among whom you live will see the working of the LORD, for it is a fearful thing that I am going to perform with you. Be sure to observe what I am commanding you this day: behold, I am going to drive out the Amorite before you, and the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. Watch yourself that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, or it will become a snare in your midst. But rather, you are to tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and cut down their Asherim --for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God-- otherwise you might make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they would play the harlot with their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and someone might invite you to eat of his sacrifice, and you might take some of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters might play the harlot with their gods and cause your sons also to play the harlot with their gods. You shall make for yourself no molten gods. You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread. For seven days you are to eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in the month of Abib you came out of Egypt. The first offspring from every womb belongs to Me, and all your male livestock, the first offspring from cattle and sheep. You shall redeem with a lamb the first offspring from a donkey; and if you do not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. You shall redeem all the firstborn of your sons. None shall appear before Me empty-handed. "You shall work six days, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even during plowing time and harvest you shall rest. You shall celebrate the Feast of Weeks, that is, the first fruits of the wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the turn of the year. Three times a year all your males are to

appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel. For I will drive out nations before you and enlarge your borders, and no man shall covet your land when you go up three times a year to appear before the LORD your God. You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread, nor is the sacrifice of the Feast of the Passover to be left over until morning. You shall bring the very first of the first fruits of your soil into the house of the LORD your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk." Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made covenant with you and with Israel." So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

Amen. This is God's word. May He write its eternal truth upon our hearts. Let's pray.

Lord God, this is Your word. As we consider it, open our eyes, that we might behold wonderful things in Your word. We ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

You can tell from the details of this great passage that there is too much to do justice, but I would like to highlight three great themes that are very much apparent in this passage. In verses 10-11, the first section, then 12-26 part two, and in verses 27-28 a third section.

The first section, verses 10-11 is the preamble. It's God's overarching statement about the covenant that He is reinstating, that He is re-inaugurating, that He is reinstating. He's in covenant with this people, He's revealed the covenant to them at Mt. Sinai, but they've broken it. Even before Moses can get down from the mountain with the laws of worship, they've already broken the laws of worship, so in this preamble God indicates that in His great mercy he is going to continue to walk in mercy with them despite the fact of their sin. So in the preamble we see something of the grace of God.

In verses 12-26, we see the terms of that covenant. We see requirements stressed for walking with God. It was very typical for covenants in the ancient near east to have attached with them promises and obligations. But let me suggest to you that these obligations are a little different than you might expect.

Then in verses 27-28 we see an exaltation of Moses the mediator. You remember this section of Exodus began, if you glance back at verses 1-2, with God's own people denigrating Moses. This "guy," this "fellow," they said, who brought us out of Egypt. How could you speak like that? Can you imagine Americans around the time of the war of independence saying at its conclusion, "You know, this guy—old what's his name—the commander of the Continental army." George Washington you mean--the father of our country? This guy? This is the kind of stuff that Israel is doing. This "guy" that brought us up from Egypt is

a denigrating thing. IN other words, they were not appreciative of the significance of this mediator, but this passage in verses 27 and 28 that we've just read, gives us a very different picture of Moses' estimation in God's eyes. And so we see the grace of God and we see worship as the reason for which we live, and we see the necessity of the mediator in this passage. Let's look at just those three things tonight.

I. The emphasis on God's work and obligation.

Let's look at verses 10 and 11, the preamble to this reinstated covenant, and its emphasis is on God's grace and mercy. You see that emphasis made in two ways. First, look at verse 10. "And God said, 'Behold, I am going to make a covenant. Before all your people I will make miracles and I will bring you in to the land.'" God's grace is seen in His reinstating and renewing this violated covenant. Israel has come to Him as it were as an adulteress and He is saying, "Yes, I'll take you back and I'll keep My promises to you and I will walk with you and I will be with you." Now this is grace. There is no way that you can get through this passage and think that Israel was saved by her own works. The last You can't get through this passage and think that Israel was saved and kept by her covenant faithfulness. She wasn't faithful to the covenant. That's what the whole passage is about. She wasn't faithful to the covenant. But the covenant holds. Why? Not because of Israel, but because of God's grace. Furthermore, in verses 10-11, especially in the second half of verse 10 and second half of 11, we see God's grace in His promising to do miracles and works for His people that have never been done for any other nation, and His promise to drive their enemies out of the land that He is going to give them. It's really quite extraordinary. Israel has betrayed Him, Israel has rejected His mediator, Israel has worshiped other gods, and Israel comes on hand and knee begging simply not to be exterminated, simply not to be destroyed, and God says, "I will remain in covenant with you. You will be My people and I will be your God. And I will do for you things that have never been done for any other people." There's no way that anyone in Israel can say, "I'm pretty good. God's doing things for me that He's never done for anyone else, and it's all because I'm pretty good." There's no one in Israel who can think that way. It's the grace of God. So this passage begins by reminding us that salvation is all of grace. And that perseverance is all of grace. And that our faithfulness itself is the result of God's grace.

II. The requirements stressed here are, remarkably, all about worship.

Then in verse 12-26, there are these interesting terms of covenant. Normally in a near eastern covenant, you would have expected a list of demands to be made, whether it might be military service, or faithful payment of taxes or other sorts of loyalty and fealty to the particular king with whom the covenant is being made, but isn't it interesting to you that this whole section is about worship. The section

breaks down into three parts. Verses 12-26 deal with covenant loyalty, right worship and approved festivals. Think about this. What had Israel done when they went after the golden calf? They had shown betrayal to God. Disloyalty to God. They had worshiped other gods. What had Israel done? They had worshiped God, not in accordance with His commands? What had Israel done? They had appointed for themselves a festival that God had not commanded. Notice what God does here: worship only Me; worship Me according to My command; and worship at the festivals that I have appointed. The Ten Commandments aren't repeated. All the other moral directives that Moses had heard from the Lord for so many days are not repeated here. What's repeated? Worship Me, the first commandment. Worship Me My Way, second commandment. Worship Me at My appointed feasts, second commandment. It's all about the worship of God. What is God saying to Israel but that you were created to worship Me. Do you recall the early theme of the book of Exodus when He told the people that He was going to bring them out of Egypt to do what? To worship Him. And here we are again. Do you recall Jesus with the woman at the well in John 4? God is seeking what? Worshipers. That's an Old Testament theme. God reveals that in Exodus. And doesn't He show us that here again, when He graciously reinstates the covenant and says this, "Worship Me. Worship Me alone. Worship Me My way. Worship Me at My appointed times according to My appointed feasts." Isn't that amazing. God has created us to worship. Worship is central. It's not peripheral to life, but it's what we are made for. Are you a worshiper of God in all of life? That's what God is calling you to be, a worshiper of God, in all of life. He's first. He's the thing you go after. He's the thing you want. He's your desire. He's your great end. He's your goal.

III. The hope of Israel is utterly dependent upon God's covenant with the mediator.

Finally, in verses 27 and 28, God stresses something beautiful. The passage begins stressing the grace of God in the salvation of Israel, but the passage continues by reminding Israel that she is made to worship. The passage ends by reminding Israel that she would not have God's grace and that she could not worship God were it not for the mediator. Then the Lord said to Moses, write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you." He's speaking to Moses, "I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." God makes this covenant with Moses and with Israel in him, this Moses with whom they had started Exodus 32 by saying, "This 'guy' who brought us out of Egypt." Now God is saying, "Moses, I'm reinstating this covenant with you, and Israel in you." Just to make it clear to Israel that Israel without My mediator, you don't exist. Without My mediator, you're finished in the wilderness. Without My mediator interceding for you, you're judged. Without My mediator petitioning for you, you're condemned. Without My mediator supplicating for you, My wrath comes down on you. The mediator that you denigrated is the one thing between you and destruction. Isn't it an amazing thing, God in His mercy exalted Moses in

the eyes of the people. Do you recall in the end of Exodus 33 how the people learned their lesson? When Moses went out to the tent of meeting with God, the people would stand up and would stand at their tents and look out there to see Moses communing with God. God was sending a message, "You need My mediator." And of course, Moses was just a shadow, a foreshadow of Jesus Christ, and this passage is reminding us that we need God's Mediator, Jesus Christ. Without Him, there is judgment. Without Him, there is punishment. There is condemnation, there is wrath. In Him, there is covenant grace and mercy. In Him, we can love and sing and wonder, because He has quenched Mt. Sinai's flame.

And then in verse 27, did you notice, "He was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights." He did not eat bread or drink water. We have a few physicians here. You know what happens to people that go forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water? Right. They die. And there are two things going on here, aren't there. Moses is miraculously sustained in that encounter with God for forty days without physical sustenance. Only God can do that. But it's pointing forward to someone else, isn't it. Because I seem to remember someone else once, who was in the wilderness for forty days without bread and water, but He wasn't communing with God in the wilderness. He was in hand to hand combat with Satan, and He was your Mediator, Jesus Christ, and your salvation hung in the balance as He, without bread and water, lived righteously so that He could die righteously in your place. And His living righteousness and dying righteousness could be credited to you, so that you could be stood before the throne of grace clothed in that living and dying righteousness and not in the filthy rags of your own righteousness, and so be accepted in Him. Yes, Moses is exalted in this passage, but Moses is exalted so that we as Christians can see the exaltation of the Savior in whose name and by whose merits we are saved. Hallelujah, what a Savior.

O Lord God, there is absolutely no hope without or apart from the Mediator, Jesus Christ. Grant that we would all trust in Him, we dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock we stand, all other ground is sinking sand. We praise You for the e one Mediator of all God's people, and we lift up this prayer to You in His name, Amen.

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