**BCM Bible Study: February 24/25, 2021**

**Exodus 33:1-34:26: Golden Calf Part 2**

Introduction: Follow up on last week’s challenge: “As an act of surrender, spend some time writing down the things that bring you anxiety. Pray about these things, asking for and surrendering to God’s help.”

Give a brief overview of last week’s material before diving in.

God’s Presence: **Read Exodus 33:1-6**

* What is the problem presented in this section?
* Why is it so problematic that God would not be with the Israelites?
  + “The whole purpose of the Exodus was for God and his people to be together…This is not merely a setback; it means the end of the road.” (Enns)

**Read Exodus 33:7-17** (Note: We will address the idea of God meeting Moses face to face next week. For now, just note that God is intimately present with Moses in a unique way.)

* What is Moses’ plea in verses 12-16? How does he bolster his plea in v.16?
  + It is tempting to get wrapped around the details of what Moses is saying here, but avoid that temptation! (Many have tried to understand vv. 12-14…don’t get stuck!) The main point is that it is God’s presence with his people that makes them distinct and allows them to accomplish God’s purpose for them (Ex. 19:4-6.) “The Lord delivered Israel from Egypt so that He might dwell in Israel’s midst…In order that they constitute a priestly kingdom, they shall prepare a place appropriate to His being, so that He could dwell in their midst as their king.” (Ross Blackburn)
* **Read Matthew 28:18-20**. How is God’s presence related to Jesus’ instruction in these verses?
  + How would you describe your purpose/calling in life? Do you have a sense that you need God to accomplish this purpose/calling? Why or why not?
  + What does it look like practically to live a life that is dependent on God’s presence (Ex. 33:15)?

God’s Glory: **Read Exodus 33:18-23**

* What does is Moses asking for in v.18?
  + To ask to see God’s glory is somewhat mysterious. But we can say a couple of things with certainty. First, Moses wants to know God. Someone’s “glory” is the full manifestation of who they are. To see God in his full glory is to gaze upon him and know him completely. Second, Moses is looking for some kind of concrete sign that God will accompany his people. See the notes for more.
* God promises that he will allow his “goodness” to pass in front of Moses. What exactly this means is unclear, but this section is full of covenant language, meaning that this event served as an assurance that God was committed to what he said he would do. We can see the cross and resurrection in the same way. These are signs of God’s goodness, promises that we too will overcome sin and death. **Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-23**.
  + In addition to the cross and resurrection, God is gracious to show us his goodness throughout our lives. How have you experienced God’s goodness in your life this past week? How do these moments serve as a sign of assurance of his love for you and presence with you?

**Read Exodus 34:1-7**

You may recall from Exodus 3, that God revealed his name to the Israelites – Yahweh. This name and the accompanying aspects of rescue from Egypt were meant to tell the people what God is like. In Ex. 33:19 God tells Moses that he is going to proclaim his name; in other words, he is going to tell Moses who he is and what he is like. This revelation comes in Ex. 34:6-7. What does God reveal about himself in these verses? What does God say he is like?

* Last week, we talked about God’s situation: “Consider God’s choices at this point in time. He has a people who are prone to disobey, and thus will not show the world what he is like. On the other hand, if he destroys them, this will also mar his glory.” How does God resolve this dilemma in these verses?
* Why does God mention the punishment in v.9? Why is this important?

These verses are the resolution to the golden calf incident. God is saying, “You have sinned and there will be punishment, but I am having mercy on you by not giving you the full punishment you deserve, and we are moving forward.”

* Do you think this fully resolves the tension of the episode? Is God’s justice fully satisfied?
* In reality, God’s justice isn’t satisfied. In a sense, God is “unjust” by not giving sin its due punishment. This is why God’s justice is only fully and finally satisfied on the cross. “The moment when God is most completely made known…is the moment when, simultaneously, mercy is extended and judgment is executed.” (Blackburn)

**Read Romans 3:21-26.** What is the message of these verses? (especially v.25)

* Do you feel like you fully appreciate God’s mercy for you? Or do you struggle with either shame or feeling self-righteous?

The Way to Obedience: **Read Exodus 34:8-14**

* Glance down at verses 15-26. What happens in these verses?
* Why is it significant that God focuses on the law right after reinstating his promise?
  + “Israel’s faithful obedience depends upon knowing the Lord’s presence in her midst. Indeed, as Israel’s idolatry stemmed from believing the Lord to be absent, so does unfaithfulness throughout the Scriptures.” How have you experienced how a feeling of God’s absence can impact you in this way?
  + Look at how God’s nearness is tied to Christlike behavior in the New Testament: **Read** **Colossians 3:1-4,** **Philippians 4:4-7.** Why is obedience important for Christians? How can we grow in obedience?

Challenge: This week, be honest with yourself or an accountability partner abouts ways that you continue to walk in disobedience to God. Instead of stewing in shame and self-contempt, bring these requests to God and praise him for his mercy. **Read Psalm 51** out loud as a prayer. Do this multiple times if you can!

Notes

* It is curious that the people would be upset by an angel accompanying them, sine this didn’t seem to present a problem in 23:20. It is clear that the angel in ch. 23 represented God’s presence in some way while the angel in ch. 33 is something other than that.
* If time allowed, I would take you on a biblical tour of the phrase “stiff-necked.” Look it up! And consider how the image of being “stiff-necked” or unable to turn side to side relates to your relationship with God.
* We see in vv.1-6 another very human portrait of God, one who is not sure how he will act. We discussed this “human” side of God last week, so look back for any questions.
* Verses 32:7-11 have made people wonder what this tent of meeting is. In some places, “tent of meeting” is parallel to tabernacle. But this cannot be here, since the tabernacle is not yet built. Instead, it is evidently some intermediate way that Moses meets with God. Its presence in this chapter is somewhat of an aside, but its purpose is to explain how Moses will intercede for the people (meet with God) when he is not on the mountain.
* We should be used to the idea that no one can see God after reading the tabernacle section. It is shocking that Moses may be allowed to see a glimpse of God’s back. We shouldn’t dive too deeply into questioning the details of Moses’ encounter with God. It is mysterious and we aren’t sure exactly what he saw or what it means that God covered Moses with his hand. The study above tries to focus on the main points.
* When God promises rest in 33:14, he is talking about entering the land and resting from war. But look at how Hebrews uses this term to talk about Heaven!
* God’s act of passing his goodness is not just covenant language, it mirrors Moses’ call narrative in Ex. 3:14-15. This event serves as something of a re-start.