

**August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020**  
**Slow to Anger, Abounding in Steadfast Love**  
**Exodus 33 – 34**

**BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN**

August 23 Jer. 38-41	August 27 Jer. 51-52
August 24 Jer. 42-45	August 28 Lam 1:1-3:36
August 25 Jer. 46-48	August 29 Lam 3:37-5:22
August 26 Jer. 49-50	August 30 Ezekiel 1-4

**Lesson Introduction:** Our lesson this week finds the Israelites in the most tragic of situations. Even as the LORD was speaking with Moses on the mountain and writing down His law for them, they had worshiped a graven image, and had defiled the LORD their God (Ch. 32). In chapter 33 we see the catastrophic result of their actions, as the LORD tells them to go into the promised land, but that He will not go with them. As we study this week, we will be reminded that the greatest need we have, and the greatest reward of salvation is the LORD Himself. We will also consider the incredible glory of God, and how it is seen in His steadfast love and mercy. Finally, we will consider how we are transformed as we gaze upon God's glory day by day through the power of His Spirit.

**FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS:**

- ***Our greatest need is God Himself (33:1-17)***
- ***The glory of God is overwhelming (Ch. 33:18-23)***
- ***The LORD our God is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love (34:6)***
- ***God's glory is transformative (34:29-35)***

**Read Exodus 33 – 34**

**Discussion Section 1: A Disastrous Word (33:1-17)**

- How do we see God's grace at work in 33:1-4?
- What was so disastrous about the word that the LORD had spoken?
- What is the greatest benefit of salvation in your mind?

**Excerpt from Exalting Jesus in Exodus by Tony Merida, pg. 198-200:**

*“Israel realized that their greatest need was to have God. If you think about it, what God said to them is actually what a lot of people want. They want the benefits of God but do not care about having God Himself. They want the blessings but not necessarily the Blessor. They want to go to the promised land, heaven, but it does not really matter if God is there. Sometimes people even present the gospel like this: “Pray this prayer, and you can be forgiven and go to heaven when you die.” While there are wonderful benefits in the gospel, do not forget that the greatest gift you receive when you become a Christian is that you get God Himself! You enter a relationship with God. Knowing God is better than anything else. How sweet it is to have communion with God! The psalmist asked, “Who do I have in heaven but You?” (Ps 73:25). Let me ask you, do you want the promised land without a personal relationship with God? Consider your desire, my friend. To Israel’s credit, they said no. We have a need we cannot overlook...*

*In our lives, we need God to go with us as well. We must have God’s presence to fulfill His mission. What distinguished Israel was not their land (they did not have it yet). It was not their wealth (they had been slaves). It was not their culture (it was not fully developed yet). It was not their righteousness (they had just bowed down to a calf). What distinguished them? It was their relationship with God. Now, too, what distinguishes Christians from others is our relationship with God.*

*We must not rely on methods, money, or marketing (which can be good things), but rather on God’s mighty presence to accomplish our mission. We need God’s presence to reach other nations, plant churches, care for orphans, parent our kids, live as godly husbands and wives, and everything else. We must have God! Perhaps the greatest problem with the church today is the attempt to do the work of God apart from the presence and power of God. We can get so good at “doing church” that the ministry becomes mechanical and mundane. We must say, “Lord, we do not want to go another step without You!” What made the early church so powerful? It was God’s Spirit working through them (Acts 4:29-31). Let it be true of us as well.*

*In verse 17 we learn why God decided to be with them: the mediator. Israel was blessed because of their mediator. Our salvation and God’s abiding presence is a result of our mediator, Jesus Christ. God the Father was pleased with His Son (Matt 3:17). He confirmed His pleasure in the Son by raising Him from the dead.*

*If you are not yet a Christian, trust in Christ. Through Christ, you can experience a relationship with God. What distinguishes Christians from others is their belief in Christ and God's indwelling presence. Perhaps you think, "God could never be pleased with me." It is not about you. If you trust in Christ, you are united with Christ, and God is pleased with you because He is pleased with His Son."*

#### **Discussion Section 2: Show Me Your Glory (33:18-34:9)**

- Why did Moses ask to see God's glory?
- Why did Moses' face have to be hidden?
- Why did God emphasize His Sovereign freedom in 33:19
- What does 34:6-7 tell us about the nature and character of God? How do we see His glory in these verses?

**Excerpt from *Exalting Jesus in Exodus* by Tony Merida, pg. 202-204:**

*God responded in verses 19-23. He responded with a yes and a no. He would show Moses a glimpse of His glory, but He could not show him it fully or else Moses would die. He first gave Moses a gracious manifestation (v. 19). He said that He would make His goodness pass before him. It is interesting that He chose "goodness." He said that He would give Moses a glimpse of the brightness and loveliness of Himself. Then He said that He would manifest His glory by preaching a sermon to Moses. He said, "I will proclaim the name Yahweh before you" (v. 19). We will see how He does this in the next chapter (34:6-7).*

*Next He manifested to Moses His sovereign grace. God said that He was bound to no one and was absolutely free to show mercy and grace to whomever He pleased (33:19). He was not obligated to do what Moses asked. Paul quoted this verse in Romans 9:15 in explaining the doctrine of election. God is God. If we know God, it is because of His free grace, and we should bow down and glorify His holy name.*

*In verses 20-23 God gave Moses a gracious covering. God told Moses that he could see His "back," that is, a glimpse of His glory, and that He would protect Moses by placing him in the cleft of the rock. "Moses was protected from God by God," as Ryken says (Exodus, 1035).*

*Do you want to see His glory? I believe this is the cry of every human heart, either consciously felt or not. We are made for glory. Unfortunately, many substitute created things for the glory of God. Jesus said, "The pure in heart are blessed, for they will see God" (Matt 5:8). We see Him now through the eyes of faith, but later, we shall see Christ. I love how Stephen saw glory in Acts 7. The psalmist said, "But I will see Your face in righteousness; when I awake, I will be satisfied with Your presence" (17:15). To see Christ is to behold God. Jesus told Philip, "The one who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). Paul spoke of "God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor 4:6). And "now we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face" (1 Cor 13:12). John said, "we will see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). In longing to see God's glory, we are saying that we want to know Him intimately."*

*"It is no exaggeration to say that Exodus 34:6 is one of the most important verses in the Bible. It is repeated numerous times in Scripture (Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2). When someone wanted to know what God was like, they could quote this verse. After saying His sacred name "Yahweh," which God revealed to Moses at the burning bush—denoting His self-sufficiency and self-existence—He explained the meaning of that name more fully by highlighting several attributes of Himself. This could be a sermon in itself, but just consider them briefly for now.*

*To those in need, God is compassionate (or merciful). God cares about His children. David said, "As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him" (Ps 103:13). Like Israel, we need a compassionate God. It is no surprise that when Jesus came along, Matthew said He looked at the crowds, and "He felt compassion for them, because they were weary and worn out, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt 9:36). Praise Him for His compassion.*

*To those who cannot measure up, God is gracious. This means undeserved favor. Sometimes students who do not have their assignments finished ask, "Dr. Merida, can I get some grace?" I want to say, "That is really not grace. Grace would be more like me saying, 'I will write your paper for you, and you will get an A+ as a result.' But that is not happening in my class!" See, grace is not you doing your part, earning favor, and then asking God to do the other part. It is not a 50/50 deal. Grace is*

**one hundred percent God's favor on the undeserved. Praise God that Jesus, full of grace and truth, has done the work for us and made us right with God—not because we deserved it, or because we did part of it and He agreed to do the other part, but because of His grace.**

**To those who are rebellious, God is slow to anger. This speaks of the patience of God. Are you glad that God is slow to anger? Israel needed a patient God. They murmured and complained and rebelled, but God was patient. He has not changed either. We need a patient God. Praise God we have one.**

**To the unfaithful, God abounds in faithful love and loyalty. This speaks of the covenant nature of God's love. God is loyal. God always follows through. His faithful love is boundless. Israel needed a covenant-keeping God! In their fickleness, God remained faithful and loving to them. Exodus 34:7 repeats "faithful love." This is the same word in verse 6 (chesed), which we really do not have a good English word for. Some translate it as "steadfast love"; some "loyal love"; some "loving-kindness." Notice how His covenant love goes on "to a thousand generations."**

**To the guilty, God is forgiving. This word means "lift" or "carry." This is what God does with our sins; He lifts the guilt off our shoulders and carries it away. Of course Israel needed a forgiving God, just as we do. Notice three things God forgives: (1) wrongdoing (turning aside from what is good and right); (2) rebellion (betraying the covenant with the King); (3) sin (any type of moral failure). Moses earlier prayed, "forgive their sin" (32:32). When the paralytic came to Jesus, He could look and say, "Son, your sins are forgiven" (Mark 2:5). Jesus has the authority and compassion to lift your wrongdoing, your rebellion, your sin, your guilt off of you. But we cannot stop with these attributes.**

**To the unrepentant, God is just. This reminds us of the second commandment (Exod 20:5). We cannot pick and choose which attributes of God we want, as if we were at a buffet. Those who choose to reject God will be held accountable. Just because God is compassionate and gracious does not mean the guilty who remain unrepentant get a free pass. The mention of God's consequences on several generations does not mean that grandchildren will be punished for something their grandparents have done. It means that as sin continues, God's justice continues. How do you**

**reconcile His justice and His love? It is reconciled at the cross. There, God poured out justice and at the same time displayed love. He was the just One and the justifier (Rom 3:26). God will judge and punish sin. Either Jesus received your judgment at the cross, or you will face God's just judgment on your own."**

### **Discussion Section 3: Transformed by God's Glory (34:29-34)**

-Why did Moses' face shine?

-What do the Scriptures tell us is God's means of transformation? (**2 Corinthians 3:18**)

-How have we experienced an even greater glory than Moses? (**2 Corinthians 3:7-19**)

**Note: Our youth group's theme verse is 2 Corinthians 3:18, which says: "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."**

The idea being that, as we behold God's glory by the power of His Spirit through His word, we will see transformation in our lives. In Exodus 34, we see this spiritual reality being physically displayed to us in the shining face of Moses as he comes down off the mountain. When he had been with God, it showed... there was something different about him, and everyone could tell. It was not that Moses was some superhero, rather, it was the glory of God that people could see all over Moses. God's glory had transformed his appearance.

Earlier in 2 Cor. 3, we see Paul telling the church in Corinth that the glory of God we experience now through the ministry of Christ and by the power of the Spirit is a greater glory than what Moses and the Israelites experienced when the law was given (**2 Corinthians 3:3-17**)! Back then, Moses had to wear a veil over his face, for it was too much for the people to gaze upon, but now by God's Spirit our hearts have been unveiled, and we can gaze upon the glory of the Gospel of Jesus Christ! If there was glory in the bringing of the law, how much more glory is there in the reconciling power of Christ? When we become intimately acquainted with Jesus, there will be no doubt that it is Him we have been spending time with (**Acts 4:13**). As we close out our lesson may we consider ways that we can gaze upon God's glory daily, that we may experience the transformation that comes from Him alone.