

Reformation Fellowship Notes • February 25, 2018
Teacher: David Crabtree
Handout #30
Exodus 33:1-23

I. Introduction

- A. We will be finishing Exodus over the next five weeks.
- B. Quick recap
 - 1. Slavery
 - 2. Exodus
 - 3. Journey to Sinai
 - 4. Covenant at Sinai
 - 5. Golden calf
 - 6. Moses tries to reconcile.
 - a) Approached God three times
 - (1) We have already looked at the first two.
 - (2) I will be talking about this more at the conclusion.

II. Exodus 33:1-6

- A. God gives the command for the people of Israel to proceed with their journey.
 - 1. They are to head for the promised land.
 - a) Those who God brought out of Egypt
 - b) To the land which God promised to give to the patriarchs
 - (1) God is keeping his promise.
 - 2. God reiterates his offer to provide help.
 - a) He will send an angel.
 - (1) Compare with 23:20-23.
 - (a) There it says, “my angel”; this may hint at the difference.
 - b) God will drive out the Canaanites.
 - 3. It is a good land.
 - a) Both pasturage and forest
 - 4. But God will not be actually with them as they drive out the Canaanites like he would have been (“I will not go up in your midst”).
 - a) His assistance will be less direct, less personal
 - (1) Because they are obstinate.
 - (a) God in his righteousness can’t tolerate obstinace.
 - (b) There has to be distance (a buffer zone).
 - (2) They would inevitably get destroyed.
 - 5. The people were sad to hear this.

- B. God had told them to take off their ornaments (finery).
1. Removing their jewelry was a sign of mourning.
 - a) A fitting symbol of mourning
 2. It could have been more than a generic sign of mourning.
 - a) Maybe because it was the “cause” of their rebellion.
 - (1) They made the calf from ear rings.
 - (a) The ear rings came from Egypt.
 - b) Their jewelry could have been a sign of their covenant with God.
 - (1) That covenant was broken.
 - (a) They don’t deserve to enjoy that symbol of the covenant.
 - (2) It is like a woman who gets married and then commits adultery.
 - (a) She no longer deserves to enjoy the symbol of that joyous wedding (the wedding dress).
 - (b) You can’t continue to celebrate the wedding and despise the wedding at the same time.
 - c) Their true repentance could have some impact on how God chooses to relate to them now.
 - d) They stopped wearing jewelry from that time on.

III. Exodus 33:7-11

- A. Moses continued to have a unique relationship to YHWH.
1. This chapter and the next make this very clear.
 2. Moses had a tent “a good distance” from camp,
 - a) Separate from the people who had so badly violated the covenant.
 - (1) It was called the “tent of meeting.”
 - (a) Where Moses met with God
 - (2) Later, the tabernacle comes to be called this.
 - b) Anyone who wanted to seek the Lord would go to this tent.
 - (1) They had a means by which they could take their concerns to God.
 - c) When Moses would go to this tent, everyone would stand in front of their own tent and watch Moses.
 - (1) A sign of respect from a chastened people.
 - d) The cloud would descend and stand at the entrance.
 - (1) YHWH would speak to Moses.
 - (a) God’s presence was made apparent to all.
 - (b) This appears to be new.
 - e) The people would worship YHWH.
 - (1) Another indication of repentance
 - f) YHWH would speak to Moses like a man speaks to his friend.
 - (1) Face-to-face means person-to-person or heart-to-heart.
 - (2) This is unique; no one else is described as having this kind of relationship with God.
 - (a) Deuteronomy 34:10
 3. It is not clear for what time period this tent arrangement was in effect.

- a) It probably started after the incident with the golden calf.

Since Moses saw that for the present the Lord would not permit the building of the Tabernacle in accordance with His original plan, because of the unworthiness of the children of Israel, he thought of the idea of establishing a temporary surrogate for the Tabernacle, ‘until the wrath be past’. It was not possible for him to commune with the Divine Presence in the midst of Israel’s camp because it had become defiled by the iniquity of idolatry, and the Lord did not want to let His Presence dwell there; hence Moses took his tent and pitched it without the camp so that it might serve as a place of meeting between himself and the Lord.” (Cassuto, p. 429)

- b) God’s presence was distant and not continuous as it would have been were it not for the incident with the golden calf.

IV. Exodus 33:12-16

A. Moses seeks full reconciliation.

1. Moses begins by listing three observations.
 - a) God told them to go, but God has not done everything he said he would do to help them on their way.
 - (1) God had said he would send his angel to go before them,
 - (a) But he has not done this yet.
 - (2) God is indicating some hesitancy; Moses sees this as an opportunity.
 - b) Moses has a unique relationship with God; he wants to use this to benefit his people
 - (1) God has known Moses by name.
 - (2) Moses has found favor in God’s eyes.
 - (a) Moses asks for God to let him know his ways—
 - (i) So that he can continue to find favor in God’s eyes.
 - (ii) Genuine request; not just schmoozing
 - (iii) He follows up on it after he gets what he wants.
 - c) Remember that this people is your people.
2. God responds positively.
 - a) God will be with Moses personally.
 - b) He will give him peace; he will settle him in the land.
 - (1) The pronoun “you” is masculine singular.
 - (2) Some argue that the masculine singular is sometimes used in reference to Israel as a whole.
3. Moses presses his point.
 - a) If you do not lead the whole people personally, don’t make us go at all.
 - (1) Otherwise, how can it be known that I have found favor in your sight?
 - (2) And how can it be known that your people have found favor in your sight?
 - (a) How can it be known that you keep your promises?
 - (b) You need to go before us so that the whole world can see what it means to be the people chosen by YHWH.

V. Exodus 33:17-23

- A. God seems to recognize the significance of Moses' concern.
 - 1. God will also act in such a way that it is clear that his people are distinguished by his presence in their midst.
 - a) God will do this because of Moses.
 - (1) Moses has found favor in God's sight.
 - (2) Moses is known to God by name.
- B. God's graciousness to Moses causes him to want to know God more fully.
 - 1. Earlier he had asked to know God's ways.
 - 2. Now he wants to see God's glory.
 - a) Motivated by gratitude
- C. God agrees to do this.
 - 1. God will cause his "goodness" to pass before him.
 - 2. He will proclaim the name of God before him.
 - a) One of the key distinctives of God is that he is compassionate and merciful to whomever he chooses to be.
 - 3. But Moses will not be allowed to see his face.
 - a) No man can see God's full glory and survive.
 - (1) Not capable?
 - (a) Cassuto argues that this does not mean if someone sees God he will die but rather seeing God is incompatible with this existence (p. 436).
 - (2) Not allowed?
 - (a) I am inclined to think this is the greater issue.
 - (b) Sinful, mortal man can't bear to face directly a righteous and holy God.
 - 4. God has a way Moses can see his glory and not die.
 - a) God will hide him in the cleft of a rock.
 - b) Cover him with his hand
 - c) Moses will only be allowed to see God's back.
 - (1) Not his face

"Here it is obvious that figurative expressions are being used: you will be able to perceive only My works and to discern from them some of My attributes, but you will be unable to comprehend My essential nature." (Cassuto, p. 437)

VI. Conclusion

- A. Moses' mediation
 - 1. Moses asks three times for full reconciliation.

- a) Don't destroy them.
 - (1) God wanted to destroy the Israelites (Ex. 32:9-10).
 - (2) Remember your promises to the patriarchs.
 - b) Forgive their sin.
 - (1) Moses sought for atonement.
 - (2) Moses so identified with his people that he asked God to damn him if he damned them.
 - c) Be personally present with them.
 - (1) Don't just send an angel to guide us; be present with us.
 - (2) If you don't, it will appear that you did not stand by your chosen people.
2. Three observations
- a) Moses was willing to lay down his life for his people—
 - (1) Even though the people had always resisted Moses' authority.
 - b) Moses never argued that the Israelites deserved to be spared.
 - (1) He does appeal to his own standing with God as a reason God should spare the Israelites.
 - c) Moses was determined to get full reconciliation for all his people.
- B. God's self-revelation
1. God's revelation to Moses bears a resemblance to another OT event.
 - a) Elijah in I Kings 19:9-14
 - (1) Drought
 - (2) Contest on Mount Carmel
 - (3) Ran to Jezreel expecting repentance
 - (4) Jezebel defiantly sought to kill Elijah.
 - (5) Elijah ran away and wanted to die.
 - (6) God led him to Mount Sinai.
 - (7) God shows himself to Elijah.
 - (a) The same place where he showed himself to Moses
 2. The two revelations build on one another.
 - a) When God shows himself to Moses, he is saying that he will only be seen obliquely; not straight on.
 - b) When God shows himself to Elijah, he is saying that he is not characterized by acts of power; he is more typically seen in his gentle prodding.
- C. God's graciousness elicits from us a desire to know him.
1. God had been very good to Moses.
 - a) It had not been easy.
 - b) But God had taught Moses and developed his character.
 - (1) Humility
 - (2) Patience
 - (3) Love for his people
 - c) Moses had experienced God's graciousness.
 2. Moses is very intrigued by this and wants to know this God better.