

The Favoured Mediator

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[0:00] If you have a Bible there in front of you, please do now open it with me to Exodus chapter 33.

If you're using one of the Blue Church Bibles, that can be found on page 73. That's page 73 of the Blue Church Bibles, and we'll be reading the whole chapter together.

Exodus 33, beginning at verse 1. The Lord said to Moses, When the people heard this disastrous word, they mourned, and no one put on his ornaments.

The Lord had said to Moses, Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting.

And everyone who sought the Lord would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp. Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people would rise up, and each would stand at his tent door and watch Moses until he had gone into the tent.

[2:05] When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the Lord would speak with Moses. And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise up and worship each at his tent door.

Thus, the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses turned again into the tent, his assistant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.

Moses said to the Lord, See, you say to me, bring up this people, but you have not let me know whom you will send with me.

Yet you have said, I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight. Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight.

Consider, too, this nation is your people. And he said, My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.

[3:15] And he said to him, If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?

And the Lord said to Moses, This very thing that you have spoken, I will do. For you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name.

Moses said, Please, show me your glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you my name, the Lord. And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

But he said, You cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live. And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me, where you shall stand on the rock.

And while my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back.

[4:26] But my face shall not be seen. Amen. This is God's word. Please do keep that open in front of you, as we work our way through it together. But now, before we begin, let us pray and ask for the Lord's help once again.

Let's pray. Lord, we come as we always come before your word. We come weak, and we come needy, asking that you would please speak to us through it, so that we might be built up and encouraged, and that you would be glorified.

Father, please, by your Spirit, do the work only you can do. In Jesus' precious name. Amen. This morning, as we come to Exodus chapter 33, the air is still thick with suspense.

Because last week, we ended on something of a cliffhanger, didn't we? Because last week, we witnessed the golden betrayal, where God's people had rebelled by building and worshipping a golden calf.

And it looked like God was going to wipe them out and start again. But because of Moses' intercession, he relented. But that didn't mean things had all been resolved, did it?

[5 : 48] The people still faced a temporal judgment. And when Moses had offered to lay his life down in the people's place, the Lord said no.

And the last words we heard from that chapter was verse 35. The Lord sent a plague on the people because they made the calf, the one that Aaron had made.

Moses still lives, and the people's relationship to the Lord is still in question. So how are things going to develop as we hit play once again?

Well, look down with me to verse 1 as the scene kicks off. The Lord said to Moses, Depart. Go up from here, you and the people, whom you have brought up at the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, To your offspring I will give it.

I mean, it sounds good so far, right? Despite the people's sin, the Lord is going to keep his promise, and give the people the land that he had promised to their ancestors. But not only that, verse 2, I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

[7 : 08] He'll defeat the people's enemies and secure them victory so they can enjoy the land flowing with milk and honey. It looks like things are all good, doesn't it?

I mean, the rescue mission, it continues, and God's people are still going to be taken safely to the promised land where they're going to enjoy all its benefits. And then we read the final half of verse 3.

And all that excitement, well, that comes crashing to the floor as we hear these words. Now let's just hit pause.

You remember those blueprints for the garden-like tabernacle that God was going to dwell with humanity again?

Well, throw them in the bin because we're being told here that they're no longer needed. It looks like the tabernacle won't be built.

[8 : 26] I mean, the great end for which the Lord has rescued His people out of slavery in the first place so that He could dwell with them again, well, that's all at stake.

As the Lord says, Land, protection, prosperity, yes.

My presence among you, no. And without the Lord's presence, without getting Him the land, the protection, the prosperity, it's all empty.

Because look how news like that is received by the people. Verse 4, it is a disastrous word. A disastrous word that makes all the people go into mourning.

Land, protection, prosperity, but no God dwelling with us? That sounds awful. Because the whole point of being rescued by God is to enjoy a relationship with Him.

[9 : 32] And if the people don't have that, they have nothing. If you're anything like me, your heart quickly tells you, a spirit of the four, I mean, that doesn't sound too bad.

Land, protection, prosperity, what's not to love? But again, here we see the reality of the situation. You could have all the earthly benefits you could ever imagine, but no real relationship with the Lord.

That is disastrous. That is no life at all. And you see, the people got that. And we need to as well, because we're constantly being bombarded with a narrative that tells us the complete opposite, doesn't it?

But now notice with me why the Lord won't dwell amongst the people. I mean, is it because the Lord is giving them the cold shoulder after what we saw last week?

No, it's so that His just wrath doesn't burn hot against them. You see, we can sometimes read that and think this makes God sound like a parent with a bad temper that you always have to be on eggshells around.

[10 : 56] Now that's just not true, and we're going to see all about the Lord's character in the next chapter. But here, it's really important for us to grasp that the reason why God can't go amongst the people is because the Lord is good.

The Lord is good, and the people, they're sinful. He's good, He's merciful, He's slow to anger, faithful, just, and you put a being like that in the middle of so much corruption, and the fact that He is good is the very reason He'll oppose what's wicked.

You see, the Lord is holy, and the people are sinful, so He won't go up amongst them. You see, the fact that God is good is a problem for us.

Now that might sound pretty surprising when you first hear it, because who doesn't want a good God, right? That sounds like great news. He's holy, good, pure, kind, just, loving, but the people aren't, and we aren't either in and of ourselves.

As we saw last week, we see again here, we are naturally sinful, and God is good and holy, so that means He can't make His home amongst people like us.

[12:22] You see, that's the great dilemma here. How can a good God dwell with a sinful people?

That's the big question that we're going to be looking at for the rest of our time together, because it's the question, I believe this passage is set up to answer, and you know, that's good news, because it's an answer.

Every single one of us in this room needs an answer to if we're to have any assurance this morning, any assurance or any hope. How can a good God dwell with sinful people like you and me?

Let's find our answer by working through the narrative, and look down with me to verse 7 as a really striking break in the narrative takes place. I mean, at first, it almost seems like something of a side tangent.

We've just heard the groundbreaking news that God is not going to dwell with the people because of their sin. The tab knuckle appears to be uncalled off, and then all of a sudden, the narrative switches and starts telling us about Moses going outside the camp, and pitching a mini tent.

[13:50] Verse 7, Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the Lord would go out to the tent of the meeting, which was outside the camp.

Did you notice where the tent was? Outside the camp, right? The narrator doesn't want us to miss that fact. And what's so special about this mini tent?

Look down to verse 9. Verse 9, When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the Lord would speak with Moses.

Wait a minute. What does that sound like? A tent where God's presence dwells. It's a mini tabernacle, right?

You see, the tabernacle was a bigger and more sophisticated tent that God's presence was meant to rest upon. But here we see a mini version of it, and notice it's just for Moses.

[14:56] I mean, what's going on here? One minute the tabernacle is being called off because of the people's rebellion, and then the next we're watching Moses walk into a mini tabernacle right outside the camp.

God's making a very clear distinction here, isn't he? He says to the people, I can't dwell with you because of your sin, but then turns around to Moses and says, but I will dwell with you.

All of a sudden, a beacon of hope is shining from outside the sinful camp. I mean, look at how the people respond when they see Moses go in day after day.

Verse 10, and when all the people saw the pillar of clouds standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise up and worship, eat at his tent's door. In and of themselves, they've forfeited the chance to dwell with God, but God's presence isn't totally gone.

It's still outside the camp, dwelling with one man that can go before the Lord in their place. And look how that man is described.

[16:19] Verse 11. It's a beautiful description. The Lord used to speak with Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend. It's a beautiful description, isn't it?

The people's only hope is a favored mediator that enjoys an intimate relationship with the Lord. You see, last week, we saw a similar pattern, didn't we?

When all hope was lost and it looked like God's wrath was going to consume the people. Suddenly, the only beacon of hope was Moses, the zealous mediator who was ready to intercede so that God's wrath would be turned away.

And this week, here we are again in a seemingly hopeless situation, but this time, it's not because of God's wrath that is about to break out against the people.

No, it's because the people have totally ruined their opportunity to have God dwelling with them. And again, what jewel do we see shining through all this darkness?

[17 : 32] well, this time, it's the jewel of a favored mediator. A favored mediator that gets to enjoy a close and intimate relationship with God unlike the people.

One that God is pleased to dwell with. One that can draw near to God while we are stuck at a distance because of our sin. Unable to enter, unable to enjoy friendship with our Creator because we forfeited that in and of ourselves.

And I wonder, does that kind of mediator remind you of anyone? Is there anyone you think Moses here might just merely be a dim shadow of?

Because again, we saw last week, didn't we, we can't just stop and focus on Moses because he's merely just a shadow of the ultimate mediator that was to come.

One that knew what it really was to enjoy communion with God face to face. As John, in the opening of his gospel, puts it, one that was with God and was God in the beginning.

[18 : 52] One that had the Father speak these words over him in the water. This is my beloved Son and with him I am well pleased.

If you're here today and you're looking for hope because you know you don't deserve to have a relationship with the Lord. You know you have done nothing but deserve to be cut off from him and remain at a distance for the rest of your life.

You need to know there is a favored mediator that has been provided, the Lord Jesus Christ. So whoever you are, don't despair.

All hope is not gone. No, there is a beacon of light shining out to us all this morning, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And in verse 12 onwards, it's like the narrative takes us inside this mini tabernacle to listen in to what the mediator and the Lord are talking about.

[20 : 10] I mean, is Moses just relishing his privileges and quite happy to leave the sinful people in the state they're in? Is he happy to enjoy intimacy with God while the people remain cut off and unable to enter in?

Well, let's listen in and find out. Verse 12, Moses said to the Lord, see, you say to me, bring up this people, but you have not let me know whom you will send with me.

That you have said, I know you by name and you have also found favor in my sight. Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me your ways that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight.

Consider too that this nation is your people. Far from just relishing his privileges and ignoring the people's state, we see Moses, the mediator, is pleading for the people.

He's not happy to just let them remain in the situation that their sin has put them in. No. He asks to know more of the Lord and not only that, but for the Lord to consider the people as his own again.

[21 : 29] You see, throughout chapter 32 and 33, the Lord hasn't referred to the people as his people. And previously in chapter 32, when Moses interceded for the people the first time, him and the Lord kept going back and forth.

The Lord would say, you're people, Moses. Moses would say, no, they're yours. It was kind of like a hot potato thing going on. But here, Moses, the one that gets to enjoy relationship and intimacy with God, again, is pleading for the very people that did nothing but treat him with contempt.

The very people that we saw in chapter 32 were quite happy to give up on him and leave him for dead at the top of the mountain.

And yet, here he is pleading with the Lord on their behalf. Here is a favored mediator pleading for a guilty people asking the Lord to call these rebels his own.

Again, can you see Christ's reflection? He had every right to leave us in our sin, enjoying perfect communion with the Father and Spirit in overflowing love.

[22 : 59] But yet, as Philippians puts it, even though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but instead emptied himself by taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of man.

You see, Jesus Christ, the favored mediator, came down to earth. Why? Yes, to pay the penalty for all our sins and so God's wrath could be turned away, but he also came to restore our relationship with God.

He came so that we could enjoy God's presence, becoming God's children and then again enjoying friendship with him. You see, Jesus came so that criminals and lawbreakers like you and me could be called God's people.

Could be people that the Father looks at and says, you're mine. You're mine. If you're a Christian here today, God looks at you and says, mine.

She's mine. He's mine. And it's all, it's all because of Jesus.

[24 : 35] Jesus. If you're here and you know you've spent your life treating Jesus with contempt, maybe you've grown up in church and you've rebelled or maybe you only know the name of Jesus as a curse word, the amazing thing is that the favoured mediator came for people like you.

You see, when we were treating Jesus with nothing but contempt, he pitied us. When we walked away, he never walked away from us.

He could have left us, but he chose to intervene. He intervened so that undeserving people like you and undeserving people like me could be called God's people.

And notice with me the mediator's persistence as it continues. Look at how Moses responds to the Lord's words in verse 14.

And the Lord said, my presence will go with you and I will give you rest. And he said to him, if your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favour in your sight, I and your people?

[26 : 10] Is it not in your going with us so we are distinct, I and your people from every other people on the face of the earth? Now, it can sound like Moses is bad of hearing as he responds back to the Lord in verse 15.

But you see, when the Lord says my presence will go with you and I will give you rest, the you in those verses, I'm told by far smarter guys than me, is in the singular.

Meaning the Lord is saying to Moses, Moses, I will go with you, Moses. But Moses wants him to say, in other words, I will go with y'all.

You see, the Lord dwelling with them is what will set them apart from all the other people on the earth. It's what everything we've been looking at in Exodus has been building to.

So Lord, if you don't go with us, what's the point of even going at all? Verse 17, and the Lord said to Moses, this very thing that you have spoken I will do.

[27 : 23] In other words, I will go amongst the people, Moses, I will dwell with them again. Now why? Why will God dwell with this sinful people?

For you have found favor in my sight and I know you by name. stop there because here we find the answer we have been looking for.

How can a good God dwell with a sinful people? Well, it's because there is a favored mediator.

Notice, it's not because of the people's merit that the assurance is given. sin. No, it's based off the mediator's merit. The mediator is favored, therefore the Lord will show favor to them.

You see, this group of rescued sinners could have assurance that the Lord would dwell amongst them because of the favored mediator that they follow.

[28 : 40] And you see, it's the same for us today. If you're a Christian here today, let me ask you, why on earth can you have confidence that the Lord will never leave you or forsake you?

Why can you be confident that you can enjoy friendship with God throughout all the ups and downs of this life? Through all your inconsistency and sin?

Why can you? What is your assurance based on? Well, here we see it's because of the favored mediator that we follow, the Lord Jesus Christ.

You know, our hearts and the devil are so quick to accuse us and condemn us for all our inconsistencies.

Really, you? Really, you think God dwells with you? I mean, look at you all. We're a mess.

[29 : 58] Here we are gathered together having done thoughts, said things, this week, that we would cringe at the person next to us finding out about. And then we have the audacity to believe that the Lord dwells amongst us by his spirit.

Really? If this relationship with the Lord that we've got going on is based on us, we can have no hope. We can have no confidence, no assurance.

And you see, that's when we can boldly reply to those types of condemning voices. You know what? You're right. I am inconsistent.

I am messy. But you know what? My relationship with God doesn't depend on me. It depends on him.

It depends on Christ. God so condemning heart, listen up. As long as he's favored, I'm favored.

[31:03] As long as he's welcomed, I'm welcomed because I'm safe and secure in him. So yes, I have confidence that God dwells with me by his spirit day by day.

Yes, I have confidence I can know the Lord as my friend because I follow a favored mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ. Brothers and sisters, be assured.

Be assured of your relationship with the Lord this morning. Be assured, no matter the week that you leave behind because you can tell your condemning heart to look to the mediator you follow.

You're right. I don't deserve this. I don't deserve friendship and relationship with my creator. I prove that every single day.

But guess what? Jesus has won that for me and nobody can take that from me.

[32:27] So brothers and sisters, be assured. And if you're not a Christian here this morning, that's what's offered to you in Jesus.

you can have a relationship with your creator. You can know he dwells with you by your spirit and you can become a part of his people.

You can have all that because there is a favored mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ, that pitied you when you treated him with nothing but contempt.

And he is one for you on the cross, what you could never gain for yourself. So come to the favored mediator this morning.

Come so that God's wrath will be turned away from your sin. Come so you can have a relationship with God again.

[33:34] Don't think it's too good to be true. Because as verse 19 tells us, the Lord is both gracious and merciful and he really does have mercy on whoever he wills.

And you know, it's there that we would normally close, but you probably noticed there's a couple of verses we haven't gone into much. Because I want to leave them as a little teaser for why you should come back next week.

Because today, we have seen how God can dwell with his people again, and it's because of the favored mediator that they follow. In other words, the tabernacle, it's back on.

And next week, we are going to see the full answer to Moses' request in verse 19 to see the Lord's glory.

As God is going to make all his goodness pass before him, which will be a sight so immense that Moses is going to have to be hid behind a rock and a sight so revealing.

[34:58] It is going to take us to the very heart of who God is. So if that's whetted your appetite, make sure you come back next week, because this section of Exodus, well, it is far from over.

Let me just pray as we close together. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we give thanks that you are the favored mediator that we follow.

Jesus, it's because of you that we can have confidence that God dwells with us by his spirit. And it's because of you that we really can be sure that we are children of the king.

We are your people. and Father, you promise you are never, never going to turn us away because you love us and we are safe and secure in your son, Jesus Christ.

So would you please help us look away from ourselves and on to the mediator we follow. help us do that now as we share in the bread and the wine and if there are any here amongst us that haven't come to Christ, would today be the day they come into relationship with you through him?

[36:37] All for your glory and our good in Jesus' precious name. Amen. Amen. Amen.