

March 1, 2020

The Great Intercession

Sermon Text: Part 1 - Exodus 32:1-24 & 31-35, Exodus 33:12-19, Exodus 34:6-10, Leviticus 16:15-16 Part 2 - Romans 6:23, 3:10-12, Hebrews 7:24-28, Romans 5:6-11

Sermon Summary

In our history lesson today, we're going to look at people who had seen God work powerfully in their lives to bring them freedom. They should have been grateful, and singing God's praises, but how quickly they forgot what God had done for them! The message is in two parts, then and now! We're going to look at what happened with the Hebrew people back then, under the Old Covenant. This will not be a traditional "Baptist" message with three points and a poem. It will be more of a teaching rather than a sermon as we will go verse by verse with the selections I've chosen from the readings for this week. There will be brief commentary with each section. Here's a summary of the first part of our message: the Israelites rebel against God, Moses intercedes three times, God shares His heart, and then makes a way for them to be forgiven! The second part will be towards the end of the message and will show the amazing parallels of our Old Testament passages with life today, now, and how Jesus was the ultimate fulfillment of the Covenant promise! For the purpose of the small groups, and the discussion guide, I would suggest you read Exodus 32:1-24 and Leviticus 16:15-16 for the **then** section. For the **now** section, I would suggest reading Hebrew 7:24-28 and Romans 5:6-11. Refer to the sermon notes and other passages as needed.

Full Sermon Notes

Intro

"I love Your voice, You have led me through the fire In darkest nights, You are close like no other!" Let me ask you this: Has God led you through any firestorms in life? Has He gotten you through any dark nights in your life? Have you experienced the closeness of God? If not, you need to give God a chance to walk with you in your life! Ask God to help you with what you've got going on in your life and see what He does! And if you have seen God work in your life in times past, then ask yourself how long it's been since you've experienced God at work in your life. If you have to go way back for an example of God working in your life, then you may be in need of recommitting your life to The Lord and allowing Him to help you currently. In our history lesson today, we're going to look at a people who had seen God work in their lives powerfully, and who should have been singing God's praises, but how quickly they forgot! There's powerful and relevant lessons in today's Scripture passages. Let's ask God to teach us!

Prayer - God please open our hearts, our minds, our eyes, and our ears, to Your truth, Your wisdom, Your offer to forgive our sin and rebellion. Help us to learn from the past example of the Hebrew people in the wilderness. Help us see clearly how You've worked in our lives in the past so we can see clearly how to have faith to let You work in our lives in the present! Hide me behind the Cross, as I lift Jesus high today in order to see lives transformed! I pray this prayer believing, in the Sweet Name of Jesus!! Amen!

Today our message will be basically two parts, then and now! We're going to look at what happened with the Hebrew people back then, under the Old Covenant. We will go verse by verse with the selections I've chosen from the readings for this week. The second part will be towards the end of the message and will show the parallels of our Old Testament passages now, under the new covenant! Here's a summary of the first part of our message: the Israelites rebel against God, Moses intercedes three times, God shares His heart, and then makes a way for them to be forgiven! So let's get started.

1. THEN

GOD'S PEOPLE BREAK THE COVENANT

Exo 32:1 When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him."

Exo 32:2 Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me."

Exo 32:3 So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron.

Exo 32:4 He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."

Exo 32:5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the LORD."

Exo 32:6 So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.

Can you believe this? How quickly the people turned their backs on God! According to Exodus 24:18 Moses was on the mountain 40 days and 40 nights. Just a little over a month Moses was gone and the people got impatient and turned back to idol worship. To add insult to injury, they made an idol to resemble one of the animals worshipped by surrounding pagan cultures, a calf, probably a bull, renowned for its strength. Remember that the people had already made a covenant promise to God! Let me remind you of the details. It includes the Covenant Formula...

Exo 19:4 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.

Exo 19:5 Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine,

Exo 19:6 you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."

Exo 19:7 So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the LORD had commanded him to speak.

Exo 19:8 The people all responded together, "We will do everything the LORD has said." So Moses brought their answer back to the LORD.

But now they have totally abandoned their promise. Listen to...

GOD'S PRONOUNCEMENT

Exo 32:7 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt.

Exo 32:8 They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.'

Exo 32:9 "I have seen these people," the LORD said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people.

Exo 32:10 Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation."

Moses was deeply troubled and burdened for the people he had led out of Egypt so we encounter...

THE FIRST INTERCESSION

Exo 32:11 But Moses sought the favor of the LORD his God. "O LORD," he said, "why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?

Exo 32:12 Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people.

Exo 32:13 Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.'"

Exo 32:14 Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.

The fact that God can change His mind is found throughout Scripture. But this is not flippant, indecisive, or vacillating! It goes back to the if/then formula. If we repent, He forgives and forgoes the punishment we deserve! So God can change His mind, but never forget He is unchanging in His character, and His nature! He is Omnipotent(all powerful), Omniscient(all knowing) and Omnipresent(present everywhere), Omnificent(unlimited in creative power)!

So God hears Moses' prayer and responds positively. Moses now heads down the mountain with the Ten Commandments in hand and sees for himself what God had told him was going on.

MOSES'S REACTION

Exo 32:15 Moses turned and went down the mountain with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands. They were inscribed on both sides, front and back.

Exo 32:16 The tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets.

Exo 32:17 When Joshua heard the noise of the people shouting, he said to Moses, "There is the sound of war in the camp."

Exo 32:18 Moses replied: "It is not the sound of victory, it is not the sound of defeat; it is the sound of singing that I hear."

Exo 32:19 When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain.

Exo 32:20 And he took the calf they had made and burned it in the fire; then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it.

There's irony in this passage! When Moses saw God's anger towards the Israelites, he was like, "whoa, wait a minute, please don't be so upset!" But when Moses sees their wickedness first hand, he's ready to bring some judgement of his own! And then to add insult to injury Moses hears...

AARON'S EXCUSE

Exo 32:21 He said to Aaron, "What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin?"

Exo 32:22 "Do not be angry, my lord," Aaron answered. "You know how prone these people are to evil.

Exo 32:23 They said to me, 'Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.'

Exo 32:24 So I told them, 'Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.' Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!"

It's hard to believe Aaron would think Moses would buy such a foolhardy statement. As you will read in your readings, there was a very harsh judgement following this event. Again, I don't have all the answers to why this had to be, but I will pack that in my question suitcase and let God reveal to me the answer in glory one day! Moses has calmed down a bit, and may have struggled with this as well because we see he once again intercedes on behalf of the people...

SECOND INTERCESSION

Exo 32:31 So Moses went back to the LORD and said, "Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold.

Exo 32:32 But now, please forgive their sin--but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written."

Moses offers to take the punishment for the people's sin. It is a very noble offer, but one that could not be done. He couldn't atone for their sins, because he too was a sinner. While God had qualified him to lead the people, Moses was not qualified to be their Savior! Moses was called to lead the people out of their slavery to Egypt, but the choice to come out from under their spiritual slavery and idolotry was a personal choice the people had to make for themselves. Moses could not make it for them and this leads us to...

A HARD TRUTH

Exo 32:33 The LORD replied to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book.

Exo 32:34 Now go, lead the people to the place I spoke of, and my angel will go before you. However, when the time comes for me to punish, I will punish them for their sin."

Exo 32:35 And the LORD struck the people with a plague because of what they did with the calf Aaron had made.

God establishes here that people are responsible for their own actions and sins. Moses realizes their desperate need for God's mercy and His presence in their lives so he once again goes before the Lord in prayer!

A THIRD INTERCESSION

Exo 33:12 Moses said to the LORD, "You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favor with me.'

Exo 33:13 If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people."

If we want to have spiritual revival in our lives, in our church, and in our community, this is a prayer we should pray!

"Teach me Your ways so I may know you!"

GOD MAKES A PROMISE

Exo 33:14 The LORD replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

Anybody in here need to hold on to that promise from God?

MOSES' REPLY

Exo 33:15 Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here.

Exo 33:16 How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?"

This is one of the most powerful passages in the Bible! This passage explains what sets us apart from the world! It gives us the source of our spiritual freedom from bondage, and gives us the power to overcome wickedness and the evil forces that war against our very souls. It's not the clothes we wear, or our hairstyle, I'd be in trouble, or our denominational affiliation, how many times we attend church, or the number of seminary degrees we've earned, it's the presence of God in our attitudes, our actions, our service, our love for others, even when we disagree with them, and they don't like us, we still love. And you don't have to give in to people and let them walk all over you, or enable people in wrongdoing, but you still exhibit God's love through it all! So Moses realizes that it will take more than their religious ritual to show the world they belong to God, it will take God's presence, so Moses petitions God. Here's...

GOD'S ANSWER

Exo 33:17 And the LORD said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name."

Exo 33:18 Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory."

Exo 33:19 And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

And let me give you a little secret here...God has mercy and compassion on those who cry out for it! How do I know? Let's look at our next section of text. Exodus 34:6-7.

GOD REVEALS HIS NATURE

Exo 34:6 And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness,

Exo 34:7 maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation."

We talked about this last week. The bad example of parents can be passed down from generation to generation. Sometimes this is referred to as a generational curse. However, God stated very plainly...

Exo 34:6..."The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness,

Exo 34:7 maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.

Here's the bottom line with this: Sin can be atoned for, if people are willing to repent, turn from their wicked ways and follow God. It's the covenant formula again, the freedom formula, the if/then formula. We saw it last week, but it bears repeating...

2 Chr 7:14 if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Back to our text...

MOSES' RESPONDS AND GOD RENEWS THE COVENANT AGREEMENT

Exo 34:8 Moses bowed to the ground at once and worshiped.

Exo 34:9 "O Lord, if I have found favor in your eyes," he said, "then let the Lord go with us. Although this is a stiff-necked people, forgive our wickedness and our sin, and take us as your inheritance."

Exo 34:10 Then the LORD said: "I am making a covenant with you. Before all your people I will do wonders never before done in any nation in all the world. The people you live among will see how awesome is the work that I, the LORD, will do for you.

Exo 34:11 Obey what I command you today. I will drive out before you the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.

Did you catch the Covenant Formula again? It's just backwards. The LORD tells Moses what He will do, but tags His covenant promise with the stipulation of obedience! However, God knows the people have made mistakes and do not have the ability to be perfect, so...

GOD PROVIDES A PATH FOR ATONEMENT

Lev 16:15 "He (The High Priest) shall then slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people and take its blood behind the curtain and do with it as he did with the bull's blood: He shall sprinkle it on the atonement cover and in front of it.

Lev 16:16 In this way he will make atonement for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been. He is to do the same for the Tent of Meeting, which is among them in the midst of their uncleanness.

The words behind the curtain are significant! This meant going from the Holy Place to the Holy of Holies where the actual presence of God dwelled. The High Priest would only enter there once a year on the Day of Atonement! The High Priest would have already sacrificed a Bull for his own sin and his family, so that he could enter into the Most Holy Place to sacrifice for the people's sins. Why was blood so central to the atonement and forgiveness of sins? We find the answer to this question in Leviticus 17:11...

Lev 17:11 For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.

As we've seen throughout our reading through Scripture, from the very beginning of humankind's rebellion against God, as seen in Adam and Eve, the consequences of sin were death and the atonement for sin required a life. Thus the animal skins instead of the fig leaves, and then the ram, which God provided for Abraham so that Isaac could be spared. And now the sacrificial system of the Old Covenant is put into place as an annual reminder of the cost of sin! But that was THEN! The sacrificial system back then was also a type or foreshadowing of the sacrifice that would someday be made once for all by the Lamb of God! And this takes us to the

2. NOW

GOD'S PEOPLE STILL BREAK THE COVENANT

Rom 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

So we've all broken God's laws at some point. Whether literally or by breaking the spirit of the law! We talked about that last week. We all need a Savior!

GOD'S PRONOUNCEMENT

Rom 3:10 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one;

Rom 3:11 there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God.

Rom 3:12 All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

LIKE MOSES, PAUL INTERCEDES

Rom 9:1 I speak the truth in Christ--I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit--

Rom 9:2 I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.

Rom 9:3 For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race,

Rom 9:4 the people of Israel...

And then in chapter 10, Paul again intercedes...

Rom 10:1 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.

Rom 10:2 For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.

Rom 10:3 Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

Rom 10:4 Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

Like Moses, Paul had to face the fact he could not take the place of his unbelieving fellow Jewish people. He could share the gospel with them, but he could not make them accept the gospel and he couldn't be their Savior. He wanted so badly for them to be saved. Fortunately, the book of Romans states that there was hope for those Jewish people who had previously rejected Jesus as the Messiah...

Rom 11:23 And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

And how would that miracle happen? Well, that miracle is possible because there is another intercessor! The greatest intercessor who ever lived!

JESUS INTERCEDES

Luke 23:33 When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals--one on his right, the other on his left.

Luke 23:34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

Jesus prayed for the Jewish religious leaders who had falsely accused Him and had Him arrested and He prayed for the Roman soldiers who had driven the nails into His hands and feet! Jesus not only interceded for these people, He took their place, their punishment, their sin, and gave His life as a sacrifice so He could be their Savior! Something Moses or Paul could not do and something Aaron the High Priest could not do! In fact, at the time of Jesus' death, something amazing happened at the temple!

Mark 15:37 With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

Mark 15:38 The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

The Book of Hebrews tells us why Jesus was able to be our Savior and why the curtain that had separated us from God was torn in half...

Heb 7:24 but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood.

Heb 7:25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

Heb 7:26 Such a high priest meets our need--one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

Heb 7:27 Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.

Heb 7:28 For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

And what made Jesus perfect forever?

THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR JESUS AS AN INTERCESSOR

Rom 5:6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

Rom 5:7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die.

Rom 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Rom 5:9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

Rom 5:10 For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

Rom 5:11 Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

His blood represented His life! The Hebrews called blood "life blood!" Here's the tie with our Old Testament Passage...

Lev 17:11 For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.

Jesus lived a perfect life so His life blood could atone for our imperfect lives. The Book of Hebrews states it perfectly...

Heb 9:12 He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.

HOW TO HAVE THE LIFE BLOOD OF JESUS APPLIED TO YOUR PERSONAL ACCOUNT

Rom 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Rom 10:10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

Rom 10:11 As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

Rom 10:12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile--the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him,

Rom 10:13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Let's pray!