

Exodus 32-34

1. Introduction

“I can’t change the past”

The cry of Simba in Lion King – after he has inadvertently caused the death of his father

The Christian - Lord Taylor of Warwick – after he was convicted of expenses fraud.

Of course this is amply witnessed in the bible

The past has some irreversible consequences

Sometimes just the brute reality of facts

Sometimes the specific decision of God – David’s baby died.

But here’s a most extraordinary truth of the gospel: the mistakes of our past need not hinder our present relationship with God

A central message of the last 10 chapters of Exodus

God has delivered them from Egypt

God has established his covenant with them

God has given instructions for the tabernacle to enable him to dwell amongst them.

AND BEFORE IT IS BUILT THEY MESS UP

Not just a bit – dramatically – we will see today.

What will God do?

Amazingly we are going to see how

The tabernacle still gets built exactly as it was planned to be built – despite their sin

God comes to dwell in it



Exodus 40:34-35

This is of enormous importance to us

Past regrets are perhaps one of the biggest inhibitors of Christian joy, confidence and service

Some sin, some circumstance, some loss

We think “my relationship with God will never be the same”

True if your relationship with him was based on your own self-righteousness.

True if your relationship with him was based upon a particular view of your future

True if your relationship with him was based upon anything other than the gospel

The gospel says God saw
all your sins, past present and future,
he saw all the circumstances of your life past present and future
and he said “I will forgive all their sins, and through every
circumstance that they will face I will still do good to them, and
love them with an ineradicable love.”

2. Why did they go wrong?

Impatience

Moses on the mountain 40 days. Exo 24:18

- Following Christ requires patience

Weak leadership

“gathered around” ambiguity – to follow or to threaten – used both
ways in bible

Aaron complies

Note he seems to be trying to keep them worshipping Yahweh v5

But fatally compromised

- Parents – courageously lead your children
- Husbands courageously lead your wives, wives courageously stand up for Christ with your husbands.
- Homegroup leaders, CU leaders,
- Elders – thank God you have a group of elders who seek God.

A desire to have God in their control

“gods who will go before us”

go before us – the cloud and fire went where it willed and they
followed, now they want to be in the driving seat.

- Do you worship God because he satisfies your felt needs or do you come to him because he is the Lord of your whole life and you must bow your knee before him and worship him?
 - A God who satisfies felt needs is an idol – we are centre he is there for us
- We teach through Bible books – in part because it keeps God in control.

A desire to behave as they wished

Note that they engaged in relatively orthodox worship – v6

Eat drink indulge in revelry

- God is not against having fun – NT specifically against asceticism
- But enjoying the good things of life can easily slip over.

3. What saved them from judgment?

The patience of God



Exo 32:9-10

He displays his anger and his judgment – very real

But he is speaking to Moses – daring him to intervene

A bit irreverent – “hold me back”

A skilled intercessor

Appeals to:

His purpose



Exo 32:11

His reputation



Exo 32:12

His promises



Exo 32:13

- All of that applies to you Christian
 - God’s purpose

Philippians 1:6 (NIV)

⁶ being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

- Holy Spirit – seal, down payment, first fruits

- God’s reputation

1 Timothy 1:16 (NIV)

¹⁶ But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.

- God displays his glory by forgiving sinners
- TRUE – to those who reject him completely he displays his glory through judging.
- BUT FOR THOSE WHO COME TO HIM – he loves to display his mercy

John Wesley the eighteenth century founder of Methodism used to visit condemned men in prison, including in Oxford at the Castle Prison, Gloucester Green Prison (a stone from which was symbolically used as a foundation stone for our church building) and the Bocardo which was in Cornmarket Street. He visited them because of their dire need, but also because their conversion displayed the glory of Christ more fully. There are numerous stories of condemned prisoners going to the gallows singing hymns because they had found God’s forgiveness in Christ.

- My question to you: Do you think Jesus Christ is ashamed to be associated with you? – He is if you continue in your sin and rebellion, but if you are sorry for your sins he lifts you up “so that in you the worst of sinners Christ Jesus might display his immense patience”

- God’s promises

Hebrews 6:13–18 (NIV)

¹³ When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, ¹⁴ saying, “I will surely bless you and give you many descendants.” ... ¹⁶ People swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. ¹⁷ Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. ¹⁸ God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged.

- God has made eternal promises concerning you!
- God looks for intercessors – who is going to intercede?
 - We need people who pray – God’s purpose, reputation, promises
 - We have a great intercessor – Jesus

Romans 8:34 (NIV)

³⁴ Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

Hebrews 7:25 (NIV)

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

4. What did they need to get to the Promised Land?

An angel?



Exo 33:1-3

Not good enough – “distressing” v4

- Many believers feel they must simply endure a lonely plod to heaven
 - NOT GOOD ENOUGH!

His Presence?



Exo 33:12-14

This is good



Exo 33:15

But it is not good enough!!

A glimpse of his glory!



Exo 33:18

It is not enough to know that you are there I want to see who you are!

God promises to show him his goodness

V19 I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you

God promises to declare his name to him

I will proclaim my name in your presence

God promises to expand on these two – his goodness and his name/character

I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

His mercy, his compassion, his sovereignty – “I will ... upon whom I have ...”

But he will not reveal himself fully



Exo 33:20

God does this.



Exo 33:21-23

Moses goes up the mountain to meet God



Exo 34:5-7

- God shows us his glory in the FACE of Jesus.
2 Corinthians 4:6 (NIV)
⁶ For God, ... made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.
- God shows his glory in Jesus on the cross – John 12
 - That is God's revelation of his glory for you... after you have sinned
 - He doesn't stand aloof from you now
 - The last time God was horrified by our sin was in Gethsemane – take this cup from me, was on the cross – My God my God why have you forsaken me – he is simply not shocked.
 - “Now you have seen a little more of your sinfulness, now you have seen what I had to do for you on the cross, be shocked at yourself – that is right – but don't think I am shocked. I endured that 2000 years ago – and at the end I said “It is finished”