

## THE SECOND TABLES OF STONE

Moses - Part 15

Exodus 34

**Intro:** It is a well-known fact that originally God gave Moses the ten commandments on two tables of stone. These tables are first mentioned in Scripture in Exodus 24:12 where we read,

12 And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them.

Three parts of this statement from the Lord to Moses indicate their importance: (1) They were given to Moses by the Lord. Anything that the Lord gives has to be of the greatest importance. (2) They were written in stone, indicating that they were permanent. (3) Moses was to teach them. And this has to mean, to teach them to the people of Israel.

The next time they are mentioned is in Exodus 31:18:

18 And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.

At this point they were in Moses' hands, "written with the finger of God.

Then we learn that when the Lord revealed to Moses that the children of Israel had made a golden calf and were worshiping it, and that Moses was to go down immediately to see how the people had corrupted themselves with their idolatry. Then we read this:

15 And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written.

16 And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables (Ex. 32:15-16).

But when Moses got down from the mount and saw what the people were doing, their idolatry and the ungodliness that always seems to accompany idolatry, we are told this in Exodus 32:19:

19 And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.

Moses understood immediately the dire consequences which surely were

to follow this terrible sinfulness on the part of the children of Israel, and that there was no point in talking to them about obeying the Lord when they were guilty of such a sin. Moses knew immediately that there was no hope for the people of Israel – unless God would extend His mercy toward them. And this is what drove him to pray as we have seen that he did, for the people in chapter 32, and then for himself in chapter 33. It would be good if we could take the time right now to re-read chapter 32 anyway, and chapter 33 if we had the time, so the what took place as recorded for us in chapter 34 would really impress us the way it should. From a purely human point of view, Moses realized that the children of Israel could have destroyed everything having to do with their relationship with the Lord. And so he smashed the tables of stone. This ought to make a great impression upon everyone who reads Exodus chapters 32 and 33. And it ought to make the first time reader ask, Is there anything that could possibly be done to restore the people of Israel to God. Moses knew that there was nothing that the children of Israel could do to right the wrong that they had committed. He must not have been surprised when the Lord said that He would destroy the whole nation, and raise up another nation of Moses' descendants. It is impossible to describe how terrible the sin of Israel was. This was the time when they surely had stepped over the line with God.

Now I know that we are not reading here about a nation in which every person knew the Lord. But the picture that God has drawn for us here is of a nation redeemed at least in a physical sense from the bondage of Egypt, and now they have turned away from the God Who delivered them to a golden calf of their own making. But beyond that, they were giving to that golden calf the glory for having delivered them from the land of Egypt. This was utter blasphemy!

But this raises a greater question. It is this: what hope is there for any child of God who sins against the Lord? The children of Israel surely were aware that what they were doing was sinful, totally sinful. The Law really made no provision for intentional sin, just for sins of ignorance. And yet we have example after example in the OT of those who were truly the Lord's people, and yet who knowingly sinned against God. We even come to a time in Moses' life when in anger against the Lord's people, he sinned against the Lord.

And what about us? Have we ever faced the seriousness of even a single sin? Have we ever doubted the Lord, or questioned what He has done in

our lives. We sometimes sin by what we do, but there are other ways in which we sin because we don't do what we should? Those who think we can lose our salvation have a point if we are just considering what we deserve when we do sin. But what answer does the Bible give us as the people of God when we sin? Well, Exodus 34 has some words of encouragement for us.

First, note:

### **I. HOW THE CHAPTER STARTS (Ex. 34:1-4).**

In thinking back over chapters 32 and 33 *I don't remember even one instance in which Moses spoke about the tables of stone after he smashed them when he came down for Mt. Sinai.* Can you produce a single time when he spoke to the Lord about getting a second set of the tables of stone? There is none. But here, at the beginning of chapter 34, we find the two tables of stone mentioned again. But it was not by Moses; *it was by the Lord!*

We have seen how Moses prayed for the people. He was so burdened for them that he was willing for the Lord to cast him away if we could not forgive the people of Israel. He knew that the future of Israel was in the Lord's hands, and that everything depended upon how much God was bound by His own promises. The Lord had not told Abraham all that He would do for him IF Abraham did his part. It was not a conditional covenant, but unconditional.

(Read verses 1 through 4.)

The Lord brought up the subject. He told what He wanted Moses to do, and the Lord told him when He wanted it all to be done: "Be ready in the morning . . ." (v. 2).

And so what did Moses do? He did exactly what the Lord told him to do, and in the morning he was up on Mt. Sinai, ready to meet the Lord, "and took in his hand the two tables of stone." The Bible doesn't always tell us the emotional state of the Lord's people when they are told to do something by the Lord, and the state they were in when they did it. But I can imagine that Moses' heart was pounding in anticipation of the blessing of the Lord. Evidently he hadn't mentioned the tables of stone to the Lord because he felt that there would be no point in saying anything.

The next point is:

## **II. WHAT THE LORD DID (Ex. 34:5-7).**

And it was not only what the Lord did (v. 5), but what the Lord said (vv. 6-7).

What a picture we have in verse 5. The Lord descended in the cloud, and then we are told that the Lord “stood with him there.” Here it was not Moses who went up and stood with the Lord. He had gone as far as he could go when he went up on the mountain. But it was the Lord Who came and stood with Moses. What a picture this gives us! The Lord had called Moses into the mount, away from the people, because the Lord wanted to stand with him.

And then the Lord spoke to Moses. This has to be in part an answer to Moses’ prayers in chapter 33 where he wanted to know the Lord’s way and to see the Lord’s glory.

What did the Lord say? He spoke about Himself, His way, and His glory.

Notice how the Lord repeated His own Name – Jehovah, Jehovah God, the ever-living, unchanging, and all powerful God. He is a covenant-keeping God.

And note how the Lord went over His glorious attributes, or characteristics. But He showed not only His one side that we enjoy so much, but that he was also holy, and would not tolerate persistent and unrepentant sinning. We all need to remember that it is a serious thing to sin, and even more serious if we keep sinning. The best thing we do can for our children is to walk with the Lord so that the Lord’s blessing will rest upon them.

So God doesn’t overlook our sin, but He chooses to forgive it. And sin is forgiven, even in OT times, only because of the coming of the Messiah and His death for His people on Calvary’s Cross. Let us remember that as we come to the Lord’s Table this morning.

How did Moses respond?

## **III. MOSES’ RESPONSE (Ex. 34:8-9).**

Moses characteristically made haste in doing what the Lord wanted Him to do. Here he made haste in worshipping the Lord.

And then notice what Moses did. He spoke about finding grace in God's sight. And only by God's grace could he believe that the Lord would go with them, among them, realizing how stiffnecked they had been, forgiving their sin, and even going beyond that he asked the Lord to "take us for thine inheritance."

This sounds like the way the Apostle Paul prayed for the believers at Ephesus. He thanked the Lord for the inheritance that we have in Christ, but then he prayed that they might know "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." This is amazing truth, that the Lord has His inheritance in us! Moses may be remembered as the law-giver, but his language shows over and over again that he was well instructed in the grace of God. It was only by grace that the Lord could say what He said here to his stiffnecked people and to His delight in them.

But then as we move into verse 10 we see:

#### **IV. WHAT THE LORD CONTINUED TO SAY (Ex. 34:10-28).**

##### **A. He promised the blessings greater than anything that they had seen thus far (vv. 10-11).**

This would have to do with the conquering of the Canaanite nations, people who were more numerous and stronger than they were.

##### **B. He warned them about compromising with the idolatrous Canaanites (vv. 12-17).**

I think here why the Lord was so displeased with the people of Israel. He was jealous for their love. His Name is Jealous. He wanted to be the sole object of their love, because His people are the sole objects of His love. If we would only keep in mind how great His love is for us, that would keep us from doing anything that would grieve Him. And this, too, needs to be in our minds and hearts as we come to the communion Table.

##### **C. He reminded them of the importance of maintaining their fellowship with Him (vv. 18-26).**

This was done through the special days that they were to observe:

- 1) The Feast of Unleavened Bread (vv. 18-20) which was introduced by the Passover, and then observed for seven days. Leaven in Scripture is always a type of sin. This was a special time each year in which they were reminded to separate themselves from any and everything that is displeasing to the Lord.
- 2) The Sabbath Day (v. 21) which was to be observed on the seventh day of the week throughout the year. It was to be a time when no one worked that they might find rest from their labors, and rest in the Lord. Failure to observe the Sabbath was evidence that they were forgetting the Lord and all that He had done for them.
- 3) The three times in the year (vv. 22-26) that all of the men were to appear before the Lord. The point is that if the men were careful about their relationship with the Lord, then the women and children would follow. The men were to be careful that they observe the specified days, but that they were observed in every way just as the Lord has declared that they should be observed. Pleasing the Lord was to be everyone's priority.

And then we come to the Lord's concluding words during those wonderful forty days and forty nights that Moses was again with the Lord, days in which he was so occupied with the Lord, and writing out what the Lord had told him to write, that he neither ate bread nor drank water during the whole time.

Now we come to the final section. And you might make a note to read 2 Corinthians 3 in connection with this passage because there are many lessons connected with this experience in Moses' life.

The last seven verses of the chapter have to do with:

## **V. MOSES' SHINING FACE (Ex. 34:29-35).**

When Moses came down after forty days and nights of fellowship with the Lord, his face had a glow about it that the people could not look at, a glow that made them afraid of Moses. But the Scriptures tell us that Moses did not know that his face was shining.

There was no golden calf this time, just a godly leader who in his person showed the effect of the days that he had spent in the presence of the Lord. I have never seen anything like this even though I have known

many men and women who walked closely with the Lord. But there is something about the very presence of a person who walks with the Lord, that that person may not be aware of, but the evidence is unmistakable. The people's fear of Moses probably speaks of the manifestation of the fear of the Lord.

**Concl:** We don't know how long this lasted with Moses. But we do know that by this unusual manifestation of glory, the Lord God, Jehovah El, was manifesting Himself through His servant. And this is a clear manifestation of the very thing that will happen to us in a grander and eternal way when our Lord returns for us. "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). But even now, if we are really walking in daily fellowship with the Lord, the evidence will be seen in our lives.

The application of this time in Moses' life for us was probably best explained by our Lord when He told His disciples,

14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil (Matt. 5:14-17).

I hope that you agree that this chapter on the second tables of stone, is rich in its lessons which can be of great practical benefit for all of us who are seeking to walk with the Lord, pleasing Him, in our day and generation.