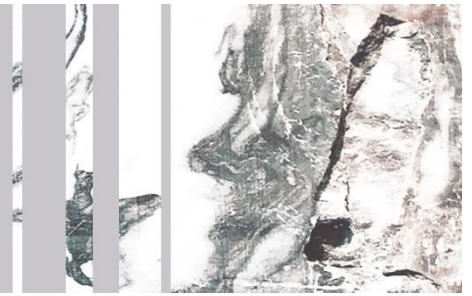


EXODUS

Daily Devotions Week 10



DAY 1

Covenant may not be a word we use on a regular basis in our western context. But in Old Testament terminology, a covenant often serves as the focal point of a biblical story. The Noahic Covenant in Genesis 9, The Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis 12, and now The Mosaic Covenant here in Exodus 19. A covenant, at its core, is a chosen relationship between two parties in which both make a binding commitment to each other. An example we might be familiar with would be the marriage covenant, in which a man and a woman commit to a life-long, loving, and faithful relationship for the glory of God. There are many kinds of covenants in the New and Old Testaments, but at the heart of each is commitment. The Mosaic Covenant is no different.

In Exodus 19, we see a covenant made between God and the people of Israel. **Read Exodus 19:1-5.** It is crucial we see God as the initiator of this covenant. As if He has not already done enough! Let's think back to the works of God in the preceding chapters. He delivered His people from Egypt, parted the Red Sea, sustained them on manna and quail, supplied water from a rock, and defeated the Amalekites.

But now God—in His infinite love—is calling them to something more, an even deeper relationship. The language God uses is beautiful: He says in verse 4, “how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.” Then in verse 5, “you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples.” God—knowing that the children of Israel would struggle, fail and rebel—still desired a loving relationship with them.

We are part of this story. Don't mistake God's loving invitation as ONLY extending to the Israelite people 3,000 years ago. This is in many ways our story. This covenant reveals to us a universal principle about God's nature. He desires a loving, committed relationship with us. Paul says in Ephesians 2:19, “So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens *along with* all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family.”

How about you? Have you thought about the invitation that God extends to you? His deliverance, His provision and His treasuring of you?

- **What is your understanding of the word “covenant”?**
- **As the initiator of this covenant, what does this reveal to you about God's nature?**
- **What does it look like to live in a covenant relationship with God?**

DAY 2

In Exodus 19:1-5, we see God initiating a loving covenant relationship with His people and drawing them to Himself. **Now take a moment to read Exodus 19:6-12.** Not only has God called the people of Israel to be His treasure among the peoples, He has called them for a specific role: to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

The priesthood in an ancient Middle eastern context would have been a significant office within the community. The role of a priest was that of dedication and active service to God. It was historically seen as a specific calling for a select few, but here we see God calling an entire nation to the office of priesthood. Later, God would include additional roles within that nation, but this is the first time in Scripture we see God calling an entire people group to be His representatives and ambassadors to the world. This calling is not simply one of favoritism, but a commissioning.

The Lord also communicates to Moses that if the people are to be in covenant relationship with Him, they are to be a holy nation. The Hebrew word for “holy” means sacred, consecrated and set apart. In calling the people of Israel to be holy, God is setting them apart for Himself and for His glory.

For us to be in close, intimate relationship with God we need to be a holy people. Later in the Old Testament, Leviticus 11:45 says, 'For I am the LORD who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God; thus, you shall be holy, for I am holy.'"

It is true that God is calling us into a loving relationship with Himself, but He doesn't stop there. Theologian John Piper says this, “We are not merely the passive building where God dwells; we are also the active participants in worship. And not just participants, but a special kind of participant, the priests. All of you.” This is a calling to participate in the sacred role of representing our God to the world. We are to be set apart to and for Him. To stand out from the world around us as salt and light in our homes, neighborhoods, country, and beyond. We are to be holy because our God is holy.

- **How do you see yourself as a priest?**
- **What does it mean for us to be a holy people?**
- **What are some ways we can set ourselves apart to and for God?**

DAY 3

God's holiness is serious. He is infinitely "other." There is no one and nothing like Him. He is supreme and valuable beyond comprehension. When speaking of the holiness of God, the prophet Isaiah says that the angels cover their faces and cry out "holy, holy, holy." Think about that: God's holiness is the only attribute of God that we see spoken of in triplicate! If it's repeated, it's important. God is love, God is sovereign, God is faithful, and God is good. These things come together to make up the holiness of God. Holiness is God's unique and sacred supremacy over all. He is in every way, perfect.

Our holiness is that we are set apart by Him, to Him, and for Him. **Look at Exodus 19:12-18.** God's holiness in Exodus 19 meant that the people had to be kept away. In verse 12, God says "Be careful that you do not approach the mountain or touch the foot of it. Whoever touches the mountain is to be put to death."

If we're not careful, we can focus so much on the love and mercy of God we forget that in Scripture God is also described as a Warrior. In the book *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*, C.S. Lewis writes of an interaction between Lucy and Mr. Beaver: she asks Mr. Beaver if Aslan [the lion who represents Jesus] is safe, Mr. Beaver replies, "Safe? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King."

God is our Father (Matthew 6:9), He is near to the brokenhearted (Psalm 34:18), He rescues us when we need Him (Hebrews 13:6), and He loved us enough to allow His own Son to be murdered (Isaiah 53:5). But He is also the God whose holiness made Mt. Sinai in Exodus 19 shake violently, the same God who sent 10 plagues on Egypt, the same God who created the universe without a reference point, the same God who breathed new life into us and drew us to Himself. We serve a great and powerful God who is also able to draw close to us.

- **What does God's holiness mean to you?**
- **Take some time today to read Psalm 8 and reflect on the greatness of our God.**

DAY 4

God longs to be in relationship with us, but it is always on His terms. **Take a look at Exodus 19:20-25.** God descends to the top of Mt. Sinai and calls for Moses to meet with Him. But as in the previous verses, God has set parameters to protect the people from danger and make a way for intimacy with Him. It is part of our human nature to resist and push against boundaries. Isaiah 53:6 says “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way...” Part of the human condition is that we are all prone to wander after our own desires. This is a tale as old as time itself, from Adam and Eve to you and me. We want our own way. One key for us to remember is that God is seriously interested in our good and His glory. In every boundary God sets, He is thinking of two things: His glory and our good.

Psalms 106 tells the story of God rescuing the people of Israel, saying He rescued them for His namesake and so they would make His mighty power known. But in order to be rescued, the people needed to follow His commands. Those are the conditions of the covenant. Many people are trapped between two desires: a desire to follow God and a desire to follow their own desires. In Exodus, God made a way for the people of Israel to know Him and to be in a deep covenantal relationship with Him, but that offer had conditions. To be close to God they had to consecrate themselves (verse 14). Light and dark cannot dwell together, holy and unholy cannot dwell together. In order to be in full relationship with God, we need to be all in. Many of us want the benefits of a relationship with God—peace, freedom from guilt and shame, healthy families, better marriages, etc.—but we balk at the idea of giving up some of the pleasures we have grown to love even though the very boundaries that God sets are the guides to a fuller relationship with Him.

God is our Creator and is seriously invested in our good, our joy, and our relationship with Him. Every restriction, parameter, and boundary are leading us to the relationship with Him that we should ultimately desire.

- **What is your reaction to the boundaries God has set in His Word?**
- **What boundaries have you set in your life to guard your relationship with God?**
- **In what ways do you consecrate yourself before God?**

DAY 5

Over the past week, we've seen how God led His people out of Egypt into a covenantal relationship with Him. Not only to be His treasured people, but to make His name great among the nations. We've read about the holiness of God and His desire for us to be as holy as well. We explored the paradox that God is awesome in power and majesty, yet is able to draw near to us in the quiet stillness. We've looked at the boundaries God has in place to ensure our goodness and safety, His desire for relationship with us, and His guides into that relationship.

Now let's look at Exodus 19:23-25. God and Moses clearly have a close relationship. From the burning bush in Exodus 3 to God descending to speak to Moses in Exodus 19, God has chosen Moses to be His mouthpiece to the people of Israel. Throughout Scripture we see God choosing men and women to carry His message to His people. Why not you and me? Maybe upon hearing this, your reaction is like the reaction of Moses in Exodus 3 when he said, "who am I that I should go...?" or later when he asks, "what should I say?" Let's be honest; those are fair questions. Moses is a shepherd living in exile being asked to approach one of the most powerful nations in the world to demand that they release their primary workforce. There was a good chance Pharaoh would have just killed the messenger. But remember what God said in Exodus 3:12, "I will be with you."

In Exodus 19:25, God sends Moses down from Mount Sinai with a message to the people of Israel. This is not the first or the last time God will send Moses with a message to His people. Again, why not you or me? What message has God given to us? What objections have we raised? Throughout history, God has used fallen and sinful people just like us with a message for the world. Think of David, Jonah, Rahab, Saul, Peter, and Moses. In this short list, we have murderers, a racist, a prostitute, a denier of Jesus, and more.

When God calls us into relationship with Him, He calls us to be His ambassadors. What has God done for you and how do you plan to share it?

- **What message has God given you/us to share?**
- **What is holding you back?**
- **In what ways can you share that message?**