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Exodus 33:1-34:28

- A. **Image:** My refusal to give up the game boy created distance between me and my brother
- B. **Need:** Conflict tends to create distance between people.
 1. Distance can be geographical.
 2. Distance can be relational

(What happens when we get into conflict with God?)

- I. Sin distances us from God (Exod 33:1-6)
 - C. **Text:** Exodus 33:1-34:28
 - D. Israel's sin created distance between them and God (Exod 33:1-6)
 1. God decides to depart from the people of Israel (33:3)
 2. It is also manifested in relational distance (Exod 33:5)
 3. God gives them one instruction as they await his response: take off your ornaments (Exod 33:4, 6)
 - E. Hardened hearts lead to distance between us and God.

(What kind of help do we need to close the distance between us and God?)

- II. We need a mediator (Exod 33:7-11; Heb 7:25)
 - A. Moses served as Israel's mediator (Exod 33:7)
 1. God manifests his presence as a cloud (Exod 33:9)
 2. Moses describes his relationship with God as one that is face to face (Exod 33:11)
 - B. Dad served as mediator between my brother and me.
 - C. Christ serves as our mediator (Heb 7:25)

(What qualifications does the mediator need?)

- III. An apt mediator needs to know God (Exod 33:12-22; Matt 11:27)
 - A. Moses requests to know God's ways (Exod 33:12-13)
 - B. God decided to go with Israel into the promised land (Exod 33:14)
 - C. Moses asks to see God's glory (Exod 33:18)
 - D. Moses receives a revelation (Exod 33:19)
 - E. Christ knows God the Father (Matt 11:27)

(What do we need to do?)

- IV. Rely on God's mediator (Exod 34:1-9; Heb 4:16)
 - A. Israel relied on Moses to serve as their mediator (Exod 34:2)
 - B. God reveals more of his character (Exod 33:6-7)
 1. God forgives sin
 2. God ensures that his people will receive their just deserts for sin.
 - C. Moses requests forgiveness for Israel's sin.
 - D. Christians rely on Christ as their mediator (Heb 4:16)
 1. Relying on Christ requires us to let go of our habit of trying to make up for sins.
 2. Remember what Christ has done
 3. Will you rely on Christ as your mediator? Will you trust in him as your advocate?

(What is the result of mediation?)

- V. God renews a bond with sinners through mediation (Exod 34:10-28)
 - A. God reestablishes covenant with Israel through Moses (Exod 34:10).
 1. The covenant reminds Israel to not adopt the worship practices of its neighbors.
 2. The covenant established worship patterns centered around the calendar
 3. It would also establish different sacrificial practices (Exod 34:25)

4. Israel would bring their first fruits and their best (Exod 34:26)
- B. God reestablishes fellowship with us through Christ (1 John 1:9; Rom 12:1)
 1. There are certain events that we remember how Christ helps us reestablish fellowship with God.
 2. We offer our whole bodies to God (Rom 12:1)
- C. **Closing Image:** I imagine one day one day I will be brought into God's heavenly court room.

MANUSCRIPT

When I was growing up, my brother and I owned a game boy. You know the game boy right? Before the iPad, the iPhone, Nintendo DS, Nintendo Switch, there was a black and white game boy. Since the game boy was expensive, my family owned one. This means that my brother and I had to share it.

Now if you know little boys, you'll know that they have a hard time sharing especially when it comes to a game console. Whenever a new game came out, I would call first dibs. Since I got the Game Boy first, I played the longest. My brother would then ask: "When do I get to play?" I would respond: "When I get to the next save point." Of course, I would get to the save point and play just a little further. Then my brother would ask: "Have you gotten to the save point yet?" I would lie: "Not yet." Eventually, my brother would catch wind that I was hogging the Game Boy. But I would refuse to give it up. My refusal to give up the game boy created conflict. Sometimes, the conflict would erupt into some fist to fist action. Other times, it would be yelling at each other. The argument would then lead to bad blood for the rest of the day. **My refusal to give up the game boy created distance between me and my brother.**

Conflict tends to create distance between people. This distance could be geographical. When an argument erupts between you and friend, the friend, who has had enough stomps off in the opposite direction. Some may slam the door in your face. Others would drive off to blow off some steam. The distance isn't always geographical though. Sometimes, the distance could be relational. When you see your friend next, she may give you the silent treatment. He may even give you the stink eye look: "Don't even think about talking to me". Conflict creates distance.

What happens when we get into conflict with God? Conflict with God occurs when we fail to follow what he commanded. We call this conflict sin. But conflict with God is not just the failure to follow his commands. It's also valuing something more than him. This too is sin. **Sin distances us from God.** Let's say you and someone get into an argument. It leads to you saying something that you regret. But your anger clouds your ability to think. Although you know what you said is wrong, you try to justify what you said. The Spirit may be prompting you to apologize and seek reconciliation. But you try your best to ignore him. It results in distance between you and God. But valuing something more than God leads to distance from God as well. For instance, if you value your time on media more than God. You find yourself spending more time binging on Netflix, Youtube, or Facebook. This leads to you feeling that God is a lot more distant than usual. It could be that you value work more than God. Since you spend so much time at work, it leads to lack of intimacy with God because you have little time to pray or even be with Christian community. **Sin distances us from God.**

In the Bible, we also see a case when sin distanced a people from God. It wasn't the church, but the nation of Israel. They had just left the nation of Egypt and slavery. They pledged their allegiance to God at Mt. Sinai. As they awaited a more detailed description of their relationship with God from Moses, they decided to create a god out of gold. They fashioned their gold into a calf like the gods of Egypt and began to worship. They broke the covenant. When Moses came down, he broke the two tablets containing the covenant stipulations symbolizing a broken relationship between Israel and God. Imagine the formation of a crack in a wedding band when a spouse breaks their marriage covenant. Israel's sin

created distance between them and God. We see this in Exodus 33. Please turn there with me. Exodus 33 follows the aftermath of the golden calf incident. Exodus 33.

How is this distance manifested? First, we see that **God would no longer accompany Israel into the promised land.** God decides to depart from the people Israel. Look with me at verse 3: *“Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey, but I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people.”* Now you may say: “Is that even possible?” Yes. It is possible. We see in many instances that God’s spirit departs from his people in the Old Testament. The spirit departs from Samson. The spirit departs from Saul. The spirit even departs from the temple before Babylon destroys it. This is why David writes in Psalm 51: *“Take not your Holy Spirit from me.”* Distance manifests itself in God departing from Israel.

It is also manifested in relational distance. Israel doesn’t know what God will do next. Read with me in verse 5: *“For the Lord had said to Moses, “Say to the people of Israel, You are a stiff-necked people, if for a single moment I should go up among you, I would consume you. So now take off your ornaments, that I may know what do with you.”* God gives them one instruction as they await his response: *“take off your ornaments.”*

If you look at the text, then you’ll see the word mentioned in verse 4: *“no one put on his ornaments”* and also verse 6: *“Therefore, the people of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments, from Mount Horeb onward.”* What is the deal with the ornaments? Well, it’s an allusion to the golden calf incident. Recall how Israel took off earrings to craft the golden calf. The first removal of ornaments led to the creation of an idol. This second removal would be sign of repentance. The very thing that created distance between God and Israel needed to be

removed. Some believe that these ornaments be amulets or spiritual in nature. Taking them off would be a sign that they would seek God instead. But Israel doesn't know if such repentance is enough.

Now you may be wondering: "Does that mean the Holy Spirit leaves us when we sin?" I don't think that the Spirit leaves a believer. **Hardened hearts lead to distance between us and God.** We harden our hearts when we refuse to follow the Spirit's leading. Such hardness can lead to a feeling of distance between us and God. When we are in sin, we feel as though that God is quite far away. Much like a friendship that grows distant when you talk with them less and less. There is a friendship that exists but it's nowhere as vibrant as it once was.

What kind of help do we need to close the distance between us and God? What would aid us in restoring a relationship with God? What help should we look for?

We need a mediator. We need someone who can advocate for us. Someone needs to represent us before God. We need a go between. A mediator. **We need a mediator.**

Who would represent Israel before God? Moses. **Moses served as God's mediator.** He served as the go between. He represented Israel before God. **Moses served as God's mediator.**

Look with me at 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 meeting, which was outside of the camp."* This should cause you to pause. If you've been following along with us in the book of Exodus, then you would know that the tent of meeting is also called the tabernacle. The tabernacle according to earlier

chapters of Exodus should have been located inside Israel's camp. But Moses has to meet with God outside of the camp at another tent of meeting.

How do we know that God met with Moses at the tent? Look with me at 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."* Throughout the book of Exodus, God's presence manifests itself as a cloud. The presence of the pillar of cloud would indicate God's here and Moses communes with him. In fact, Moses describes his relationship with God as one that is face to face. Look with me at verse 11: *"Thus the Lord used to speak with Moses face to face, as a man speaks to a friend."* There is a difference between knowing a person and having a face to face relationship. You may be able to read a text or email, but nothing compares to a face to face conversation. After all, much of communication is nonverbal. It's not just what is said but how it is said through facial cues and postures. The text says that Moses served as Israel's mediator because he had a close relationship with God.

When my brother and I would fight over the use of our Game Boy, my brother recognized that he would need help. He couldn't out argue me, so he would call for help. He needed someone whom he could trust to advocate for him. **My brother needed a mediator.** He would call my dad. When the argument escalated on whose turn it was to use the Game Boy, my brother would call: "DAaaaad!". Inside, my heart would sink because justice would be meted out soon. When my dad arrived on the scene. He would simply grab the Game Boy without concern of how much progress I made and listen to our case. Typically, my dad rendered the judgment that I had spent too much time on the Game Boy and hand it over to my brother. **My brother needed a mediator.** We need a mediator.

Who mediates for us as believers? Who serves as mediator between us and God when we mess up? Who defends us when we sin?

Jesus Christ serves as our mediator. He serves as our go between. He's the one who pleads our case before God the Father. He intervenes on our behalf. **Jesus serves as our mediator.**

If you would turn with me to Hebrews, chapter 7, then we'll look at this text together. Keep your thumb in Exodus. Turn to Hebrews, chapter 7. Let's look at verse 25. Hebrews chapter 7, verse 25. It says: *"Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them."* In essence, the author of Hebrews is writing this idea of Jesus always interceding for us. He asks for the Father to overlook our sins because he has paid for our sins on the cross. We have a mediator that is always on call. His beeper is always on. He never tires. He never sleeps. He makes intercession for you and me when we mess up.

What qualifications does the mediator need to have? After all, how do we know that he will do a good job? What are his references? What qualifications does the mediator need?

An apt mediator needs to know God. A qualified mediator needs to know the character of God. He or she needs to know how God operates – what is his standard practice? **An apt mediator needs to know God.**

We see that **Moses requests to know God's ways.** He wants to know God's game plan. What is God going to do next? Moses ask God to disclose his plans to him. **Moses requests to know God's ways.**

Look with me back in Exodus 33. Let's look at Moses's request for knowledge. Look with me at 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. 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 that this nation is your people."* Did you hear the request? Moses says: "Please show me your ways."

What does God plan on doing? God decides to go with Israel into the promised land. Read with me in verse 14: *"And he said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."* One would think: "Now that God has spoken, Moses can return home to his tent. The day's work is done." But Moses requires assurance. Moses then asks in verse 18: *"Show me your glory."*

The word: glory is the Hebrew word: "kabod" which means heaviness. It also carries the idea of worth. Demonstrate to me that you are worthy. If you are a Marvel fan, then you would know that a hero is worthy when he or she can lift the hammer of Thor. Now Moses isn't asking God to lift a hammer. But he is asking for a revelation. Show me your worthiness.

And Moses receives a revelation. See verse 19: *"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 will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."* One may think that from this revelation that God seems rather arbitrary. But this verse reinforces the idea that God will care for his covenant people. In this case, it refers to the nation of Israel.

As Christians, we have a mediator in Christ. And he certainly knows the ways of God the Father. **Christ knows God the Father.** In fact, he says so in Matthew, chapter 11, verse 27. Please turn there with me. Again, keep your thumb here in Exodus 33. Matthew, chapter 11, verse 27. Jesus says: *“All things have been handed over to me by my father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”* It says that Jesus is a mediator who knows God well that’s why we can find rest in him. This qualifies him to be an apt mediator between God and us.

Now that we know that we have a mediator. What do we need to do? What is our response? What is our action?

Rely on God’s mediator. Depend on the one that God has appointed to serve as our mediator. Trust him. Allow him to do his work. **Rely on God’s mediator.**

Israel had only one hope if things were going to be made right with God: Moses. **Israel relied on Moses to serve as their mediator.** He was their representative. He would go and receive the covenant from God at Mount Sinai.

Look with me at chapter 34, verse 2: *“Be ready by the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself to me on the top of the mountain. No one shall come up with you, and let no one be seen throughout all the mountain. Let no flocks or herds graze opposite that mountain.”* These verses should sound familiar because it’s almost exactly the same instructions when Moses came up to receive the covenant the first time. Why is it so similar? The similarity communicates to Israel that they are receiving the same covenant. It’s not going to be easier or more difficult. It will be exactly the same.

What happens when God reveals himself to Moses? God reveals more of his character in verse 6: *“The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and children’s children, to the third and fourth generation.”* There’s a lot here in God’s revelation. Instead of going through each of these attributes, I want to focus on the phrase: “steadfast love.” The phrase occurs twice. The Hebrew word is *Hesed*. It connotes a committed love. God will not break his word. What he says he will do.

What does God swear to do? Well, we see two ideas. First, God forgives sin. Second, God ensures that people will receive their just deserts for sin regardless of their age.

This then prompts Moses response. Moses requests the forgiveness for Israel’s sin and that God’s presence would continue with them. Israel trusted that Moses would plead their case and he did. But he pled his case not based upon any merit of Israel, but on God’s character. His defense rested upon who God is.

Moses doesn’t serve as our mediator as Christians. Hence, we don’t rely on him. Instead we rely on the greater Moses: Jesus. **Christians rely on Christ as their mediator.** We depend on the person and work of Jesus Christ. He serves as our defendant. He represents us. Believers rely on Christ. **Christians rely on Christ as their mediator.**

Look with me at Hebrews, chapter 4, verse 16. Hebrews, chapter 4, verse 16. Again, keep your thumb at Exodus 34. Hebrews, chapter 4, verse 16 says this: *“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help*

in time of need.” When we find ourselves in trouble we need to draw near to the throne, where Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father. We need to turn to him.

Relying on Christ requires us to let go of our habit of trying to make up for our sins. Some of us believe that when we sin we can do things that can repair our relationship with God. We may not say this, but it may be unconscious. We start attending church again. We try attending small group. We may read the Bible more. These may be positive things we do to try and make up for our wrongdoing. Others of us may beat ourselves over the head. Man, I messed up again. I’ll never be able to do enough. I’m such a loser. Both point to you trying to do or not doing enough to restore favor with God.

To let go of these tendencies, we need to remember what Jesus Christ has done. Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. When he did this, he also gave us his righteousness before God.

For those of us who are trying our hardest to make up for our sin, we need to pray: God, I know that I messed up. Nothing I ever can do will ever make up for my mistake. But I don’t need to because Christ has already paid the penalty that I deserve. Help me rest in your grace.

For those of us who beat ourselves up over the head. We need to pray: God, sin reminds me that I can never do enough to be worthy in your eyes. But I don’t have to because Christ has done all that’s needed to be worthy in your eyes. Help me trust in that. Will you rely on Christ as your mediator? Will you trust in him as your advocate?

What is a result of mediation? What happens when a mediator represents us? What comes out of this mediation?

God renews a bond with sinners through mediation. The relationship with God is restored. Things begin anew. The covenant is restored. Fellowship is experienced once more.

God renews a bond with sinners through mediation.

We see this in the experience of Israel. **God reestablishes a covenant with Israel through Moses.** Look with me at verse 10: *“And he said, “Behold, I am making a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels, such as have not been created in all the earth or in any nation. And all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the Lord, for it is an awesome thing that I will do this with you.”* The covenant that is outlined in the following verses resembles the earlier description in Exodus. **The covenant reminds Israel not to adopt the worship practices of its neighbors.**

The covenant established new worship patterns centered around the calendar. They will have the feast of the unleavened bread when the barley harvest begins around April. When the wheat harvest begins, the feast of weeks is celebrated. This occurs around June. The feast of the ingathering occurs in September when the harvest is completed. The feast of the ingathering is also known as the feast of the tabernacles. This also includes a regular Sabbath rest on the seventh day.

It will also establish different sacrificial practices. Sacrifices in Israel would be free from leaven. Read with me in verse 25: *“You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with anything leavened or let the sacrifice of the Feast of the Passover remain until the morning.”* The omission of the leaven in sacrifice hearkens back to the Exodus when they had to make bread without leaven reminding them of their hasty exit. Leaven also symbolizes a type of corruption. Just as a little leaven proofs dough, a little sin can corrupt much.

Israel would also bring their first fruits and their best. Whatever was gathered first from the harvest would be offered to God. Israel would be known for offering the good stuff and not just the leftovers. Verse 26 says: “The best of the first fruits of your ground you shall bring to the house of the Lord your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk.” You may be wondering what is deal with the young goat. During this time, Canaanites would boil a young goat in its mother’s milk to increase their harvest out. It was ritual to bring about prosperity. But Israel should not practice such rituals. They would depend on God to provide for them rather than pagan rituals.

The covenant renewal reminds Moses that this covenant was between God and Israel. Verse 27 says: “*And the LORD said to Moses, “Write these words for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.”*” This covenant would describe the special relationship between God and Israel.

As Christians, we don’t rely on the old covenant stipulations to reestablish fellowship with God. **God reestablishes fellowship with us through Christ.** The means by which we experienced a renewed bond with God is through Christ. For 1 John, chapter 1, verse 9 says: “*if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and purify us from all unrighteousness.*” The means by which we reestablish fellowship with God is through confession. When we agree with God that we have messed up then we experience the purity that comes from Christ.

Although we don’t follow a church calendar, **there are certain events that we remember** that remind us of the fellowship we have through Christ. We celebrate Easter in March or April which coincides with the festival of unleavened bread. Now we don’t celebrate

an event that coincides with the feast of weeks. But the feast of weeks is also known as Pentecost. Now we recognize that on Pentecost, the Spirit came upon believers, empowering them to be witnesses to the world. We experience baptisms, when believers make their public declaration of faith to the world. We may not celebrate the fest of the ingathering. But the feast of the ingathering is also known as the fest of the tabernacles where Israel awaited the return of the king. We celebrate Christmas where we recall the coming of the king and we await his return. Just as Israel had events to remind them of their relationship with God, so do we as believers. We also gather together every Sunday to worship and remember our redemption in Christ.

We don't offer sacrifices. **Instead we offer our whole bodies.** As Paul writes in Romans chapter 12, verse 1: We present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God. Everything that we are we offer to God for his service. It could be our money, skill, time, or talents. We avail everything for God's use.

What do we do when have sinned against God? What do we do when we have failed to value him more than the things of the world? **Rely on God's mediator Jesus Christ.** When you depend upon him rather than your works and striving, you will experience a **renewed bond with God.**

I've shared with my small group a fearsome image I have. I imagine that one day I will be brought into God's heavenly court room. God sits in his seat as judge. Satan of course sits in the prosecution area. As the plaintiff brings me into the court room, I discover an empty defense area. No one has decided to represent me before God. I'm going to be in so much trouble.

But this text reminds me that this image in my mind is so untrue. It's false. Before I even walk into this heavenly courtroom, Jesus has already taken his seat in my defense area. He has decided to take my case pro bono. He will be there by my side not only as my defense but as my savior. How comforting that is to know that Jesus is there to serve as my intercessor. Jesus serves as mediator to all who believe in his saving work and submit their lives to him.