

## **Dr. John Oswalt, Exodus, Session 15, Exodus 33-34**

© 2024 John Oswalt and Ted Hildebrandt

This is Dr. John Oswalt in his teaching on the book of Exodus. This is session 15, Exodus 33-34.

Well, I believe the hour is here.

So, let's begin. Let's begin with prayer. We know, oh Lord, that we do not need to ask you to come here.

You were here before we arrived. But we do ask you, Lord, to touch each of our hearts and our minds, to make us alert to what you would like to say to each of us. We thank you that you are the God who speaks.

Thank you that you are not the force. Thank you that you are not merely life energy. Thank you that you are the God who spoke the world into existence, who has spoken to us climactically now in Jesus Christ, and who continues to speak to each of us.

We come here because we want to hear you. We want to hear what you would say to each of us through your sacred word. So, we pray that you would open us up to all that you would like to communicate to us through this study tonight.

Thank you for your word. Thank you for every person who was involved in writing it down. Thank you for those who carefully preserved it.

Thank you for those who died in order that we might have it in our own language, our own vulgar language. Thank you, Lord. So help us.

Help us not to take these moments for granted, but help us to recognize that we have a sacred appointment in this hour. In your name, we pray. Amen.

So good to see each of you. Thank you for coming this evening. We're in our next-to-last session.

Next week will be the last unless the Holy Spirit falls or something, and we decide to go further, somehow or other. But at least in terms of human planning, next week we will look at chapters 35 to 40 and conclude our study here. I'll talk to you at that point.

The Francis Asbury Society has asked me to consider going on for another semester or year or whatever. So, I'll talk with you about what we might talk about in the fall. Somebody said Leviticus.

I'm not sure I'm quite up to that. Maybe we could do that. I have done Leviticus in a five-week session, so it's possible we might do that.

But I'll talk with you about that then. All right. We are looking at chapters 33 and 34 tonight.

As I've said to you several times, we are looking at this entire unit from 25 through 40 as, indeed, a unit in which God is revealing his person. What did he reveal in chapters 1 through 15? Do you remember the P that he reveals? His power. That's in 1 through 15.

What does he reveal in 16 through 18? His providence. Give that man a gold star. There is some justification for my existence.

OK. In chapters 19 through 24, what does he reveal? His principles. Thank you very much.

Now, in this section, he is revealing his person. These are all related to the human problem and the need for deliverance. We need deliverance from bondage.

God cares about the bondage in which humans suffer and struggle. The bondage which we subject others to. But that's not the only problem from which God is offering deliverance.

More than that is the problem of theological darkness. We don't know who God is. And so, God revealing his providence and his principles is revealing light to us.

Light about who he is, what kind of a God he is, what he is at work doing. And we might suggest that well then, indeed, the way out, which is, of course, what the book title means, has been fulfilled. They are out of Egypt.

They are out of their theological darkness. But the book isn't over. And the book then tells us what the ultimate human problem is.

The ultimate human problem is alienation. We are alienated from our creator. We are alienated from the source of our life.

And that is the true purpose of the exodus. I, having my devotions at this point in my cycle of biblical reading in Leviticus and Numbers, and I've been struck by how many times God says, I delivered you from Egypt to myself. I delivered you from Egypt that you might be my people and I would be your God.

So, the book is telling us that it is this purpose of the ultimate relationship, a relationship with us, that God desires. We saw then how this segment is divided into three parts. First of all we have in chapters 25 to 31, the instructions.

Not only for the tabernacle but for the priesthood who serve in the tabernacle. Then, in chapters 35 through 40, we have the report of how they, in fact, carried out those instructions. But tragically what stands between is the golden calf.

Chapters 32 to 34. In which the people try to fulfill for themselves the very things God is preparing to deal with. The great irony of this chapter, or excuse me, of this segment, is at the very moment that God is in his foreknowledge, dealing with the problem of alienation, they're down there saying we don't know what happened to that fellow Moses who brought us out of Egypt.

So, make us a God who can go before us. And you sort of hear heaven weeping. The angels say oh no, no, no.

No, no, wait just a little longer. No, we can't wait. We're in a hurry.

And so, then we talked last week about the incident itself and then began to talk about some of the ramifications and those ramifications then are dealt with more fully in this section this evening. Then the Lord said to Moses, leave this place. You and the people you brought up out of Egypt.

And go up to the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying I'll give it to your descendant. I will send an angel before you and drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, Jebusites, and Termites. And oh no, Jebusites is the last one.

Yes, all right. What do those two verses tell us about God and his character? They have made the golden calf, but what is God going to do? He's going to keep his promises. God is a promise-keeping God.

Many of us have them on our tables, or we used to have little promise boxes. Karen and I have one. We keep forgetting to pull a promise out.

But there it is. He is the God who makes promises. He's the God who keeps promises.

He's the God of the past, the present, and the future. The idols are the gods of now. There is no past.

There is no future. Now is all that matters. Sounds like television, doesn't it? All right.

Verse 3, go up to the land flowing with milk and honey, but I will not go with you because you are a stiff-necked people. Now, I've illustrated that stiff-necked for you several times, so I hope you've got that. The calf that digs in its hooves and says, no, I'm not going there wherever it is.

You are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way. What does that verse tell us about God? He will not stay in the midst of a sinful people. I don't think most of us believe that.

I think most of us think that we can continue in our little sins and God, the great grandpa in the sky, will say, oh, that's all right, honey. It's still available to us even though we didn't need it. Yes, he's not talking about, in this context, we're talking about our own sinfulness.

And God's personal availability is certainly a reality. But I think many of us, in fact, expect to live in sin and to have fellowship with God. The significant thing about Wesley's view is that he takes sin very seriously, that you cannot live in sin and have fellowship with God at the same time.

Yes? And yet God's saying to the whole collective, you go ahead and go, I'm not going. Yes, yes. And I think that's exactly right.

It is the righteous who suffer with the wicked. Now, the good news is, if you remember Genesis 18 and 19, God says, I'll spare 20,000 wicked if I can find just 10 righteous. And that's a great theme that runs through Jewish thought.

If there are 10 righteous people, then there's hope. But Ezekiel says, I looked for one and didn't find him. So yes, over and over again, you find that running through the Bible, the righteous suffer with the wicked.

I'm confident that when Jerusalem was finally destroyed, there were many righteous people there who saw their children dying of starvation. And yeah, we don't escape it. So, what kind of effect does that have? The famous line that I've heard quoted of about 10 different people, if God doesn't judge America, he's going to have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah.

I think we are looking squarely in the face at judgment. That calls for us, nevertheless, to continue to live righteous lives in terms of our own relationship with the Lord, in terms of our own witness, in terms of what God might do in terms of a national revival. That's not cause for despair, but it is cause for realism.

Yes? It's sad, but true, but sometimes, this probably has been the Bible. Yes. Yes.

The life of a church can be affected in this very same way. It can be vibrant, vital, and something happen that changes the tone of things and tragedy results. Yes.

Yes. Yes. So, God says, you know, given who you are and given who I am, we can't go together.

Now, we want to keep that in mind, because that's going to be a point of discussion as we go further along here. Verses 4 through 6. When the people heard these distressing words, they began to mourn, and no one put on any ornaments. For the Lord had said to Moses, tell the Israelites, you are a stiff-necked people.

If I were to go with you even for a moment, I might destroy you. Now, take off your ornaments, and I'll decide what to do with you. So, the Israelites stripped off their ornaments.

What's that about? Recognition of sin? What do ornaments have to do with sin, though? Self-aggrandizement? Hey, I look pretty good, don't I? You like my nose ring? Maybe it's significant here as compared, well, off the earrings. The earrings were broken off first for the golden hat, and now we see, maybe I better do this myself. Okay, I think.

This is stripping themselves, I think, of their arrogance and pride and whatever. I think that's very probably correct, especially regarding the connection between the ornaments and the earrings. The earrings that were used to make the golden calf, and now it's as though the people are saying, I'm going to take off the rest of these ornaments in mourning over what has happened here, in grief over my sin.

Yes. Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Mm-hmm. Yeah. Yes.

Although I think it's fair to say, they're not told why. Yes. Yes.

Yes. Is this for me? And I think there again is the profound issue that runs all through our lives. If God has given me stuff, who's it for? If God has given me abilities, talents, if God has given me wealth, who's it for? Is it for me to use to satisfy my needs? And the answer is no.

No, it isn't. It's given to me by God to be used for His purposes. Now, indeed, His purposes may involve blessing, where, yes, you and I do enjoy these things He gives, but we may never, ever forget they're a gift.

They're a gift. And so, there's this sense in which they, I think, have been sort of parading around in all this Egyptian jewelry saying, ha, look at me. I'm something else.

And now they're saying, oh, I'm nothing else. Yes. Yes.

These ornaments were Egyptian. And so, you've got snakes, beetles, and other kinds of things that were worshipped by the Egyptians. So, there are a lot of implications here that go into this sense of mourning.

This is the first indication that they have now begun to recognize what they've done. Wait a minute. Oh, dear.

We're not in a very good situation here, are we? Moses has smashed our golden calf, so that can't lead us and guide us and protect us. And the Lord says he's not going to lead us and guide us and protect us. We're in big trouble here.

Yes. Yes, we are. All right.

Good. Let's push on. 33.7 to 11.

Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the tent of meeting. Anyone inquiring about the Lord would go to the tent to meet outside the camp. Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose and stood at the entrances to their tents, watching Moses till he entered the tent.

As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance while the Lord spoke with Moses. Whenever the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance to the tent, they all stood and worshipped at the entrance to their tents. The Lord would speak to Moses face to face as one speaks to a friend. Then Moses would return to the camp. But his young aide, Joshua, son of Nun, did not leave the tent. Now, in the background here, I comment on an interpretive problem in the Old Testament in this passage.

Where is this tent? Outside the camp. Where was the tabernacle going to be? Inside the camp. The tabernacle is going to be located right in the middle, with all of the tribes camping around it.

Who goes into the tent of the meeting? Moses and Joshua. Who goes into the tabernacle? The priests, Aaron, and the Levites. What happens in the Tent of Meeting? God speaks face to face.

What happens in the tabernacle? Several things. What's one thing that happens in the tabernacle? Offering sacrifices, yes. Intercession, worship, and the various practices associated with it.

Renewing the loaves on the table every week. Replenishing the oil in the lamps every day. Keeping the incense burning on the incense burner there before the veil.

And, of course, once a year, the high priest goes into the Holy of Holies and makes atonement for the people. So, a good deal more happening there. The tabernacle, it looks like the Golden Calf episode and everything is pretty much settled by five months after Passover.

And two months, excuse me, six months. It took three months to get to Sinai, and then it's about three months till the whole issue is settled. But the tabernacle was not set up until the first day of the first month of the second year.

So, in other words, there is a six month interlude here between when chapters 33 and 34 close and when the tabernacle is actually built. So it's during that interim time. Moses doesn't have to keep running up and down the mountain to find out what God has to say.

During this six-month interim, he is meeting God in the tent of meeting. Then, in the first day of the first month of the second year, just about 40 days before they're going to leave, the tabernacle is set up. Now the problem is this.

Clearly, these two are not the same thing. The problem is that there are a number of times when the tabernacle is called the tent of meeting. And so, the scholars have said, well, obviously there are two different legends here written by different people, and somebody in the time of Ezra has combined the two of them to put them together and hasn't done a very good job of it.

You might guess I don't buy that. I think, in fact, you are saying that the tabernacle has taken over everything that the tent of meeting was doing during the interim time. And so, it can be called both the Tabernacle and the Tent of Meeting.

And it's not an indication of different texts. I see a question rising here. Yeah, I was thinking, is that due to perhaps a revival, spiritual revival, where, just like with us, we can go on a Sunday and worship, but not necessarily face-to-face.

And then there are times in which, you know... Yes, I think that's possible, that the Tent of Meeting could be used when there's more of a sense of vitality. Unfortunately, that doesn't work all the time. But it may be one factor in what's going on here.

But I do think that one of the things it says is, don't ever forget what the ultimate purpose of the tabernacle is. It's not to offer cheap on an altar. It's not to put new bread on the table every week.

It's not to keep putting oil in these lamps or incense on the incense burner. The purpose of it all is to meet God. And if you forget that, then you've forgotten everything.

And this is what the prophets are constantly after the people about. I don't want your dead sheep, for pity's sake. I want you.

Oh, no, no, no, you can't have me. But here's my best sheep. If you'll bless me, Lord, and let me keep my hands on the steering wheel, the accelerator, and the brake, I'm your man.

And God says, no, I don't want that. Several people have commented recently, the famous bumper sticker that's been around ever since the Second World War, God is my co-pilot. I like the one that says, if God is your co-pilot, change seats.

God's not going to be a co-pilot. He's going to be a pilot, or he's not going to be on the plane. So, I think that's what's going on, that it is this reminder.

What that was about is ultimately what this is about. Okay. What is the response of the people to all this? When Moses goes out headed toward the tent, what do the people do? They stand up.

Where? In the entrance of their tents. And what do they do? What's the word that's used? Verse 10. They worship.

I think, and I have to say, this is not specific in the text. Well, let me ask you. What are they feeling when they see Moses going out there? Glad it's not me.

Okay. Well, that's not the answer I had in mind, but it could well be. It could well be.

It's dangerous out there. No question of that. As he's going out to God.

Okay. Okay. Is there a growing hunger in their hearts? I wish.

I wish. I could talk to God like that. What do you think he does in there? How do you think God appears to him? How does God talk to him, do you think? Could that ever happen to me? I've told this story ever and ever since I first heard it, so you may have heard me tell it, but I'm up here.



One of our missionaries from the town of Wilmore, Maurice Culver, spent many years in what is now Zimbabwe, and he tells about an opportunity that he had to visit a paramount chieftain. Now, that's chief of chiefs. That's top dog.

That's the big banana. So, this is a very, very special moment. So, he said, I went into the home of the paramount chieftain, dirt floor, but had been swept so many times, he said, it was like black granite.

The chief was sitting in his throne, and Maurice sat down cross-legged on the floor. They began to talk. Maurice said, Father, do you know God? No God? Who can know God? I know the gods, of course, but God? Who can know him? Do you know him? Yes, Father, I do.

You do? Tell me about him. He began to talk about God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Maurice said, do you ever speak to God? Speak to God? Who can speak to God? Do you speak to God? Maurice said, yes, Father, I do.

Do it now. So, he said, I closed my eyes and began to pray. He said, somewhere in the middle of my prayer, I had this very eerie feeling, and opened my eyes and nearly died, because there, three inches from my face, was his face with his eyes peering into me as he was on his hands and knees looking into my face.

He said, you are talking to God. He said, you are. Yes, Father, I am.

Would you like to? I? I could speak to God. Yes. And he explained how, through Jesus Christ, we have access into the throne room of heaven that Paramount Chieftain understood all about.

And he asked him if he would like to accept Christ. And he said, yes, yes. He said, then, Father, you may speak to God.

He said he sat down beside me, cross-legged, folded his hands just as I had, and got this very pious look on his face, which must have been the look on my face, and began to pray, slowly, haltingly. But he said there was a moment when the wheels left the runway, and he launched out into prayer. And all of a sudden, his eyes flew open, and he said, I'm talking to God! I'm talking to God! And went back.

I wonder if something of that sort is going on here. A longing, a longing. Could we ever know God like that? Mourning for their sin.

A longing for intimacy with God. And so, we come, then, to verses 12 to 17. Moses said to the Lord, you've been telling me, lead these people, but you haven't let me know whom you will send with me.

You have said, I know you by name, and you have found favor with me. That's one of the things God says when he talks to people face to face. I've been fascinated at the number of people that I have encountered over the years who have talked about a moment when they were aware of God, and of God speaking to them, and how often his words are, I love you.

I know you by name, and you found favor with me. If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so that I may, what? Know. Have we encountered that word before in this book? Yes, over and over again.

Then they will know that I am Yahweh. Oh Lord, I want to know your ways so that I can know you and continue to find favor. How rarely is that true in our lives.

Lord, I want your blessings for the very minimum investment I can possibly make. Lord, I want to know what you like, and what you don't like. I want to know what pleases you, I want to know what angers you.

I want to know how you operate with human beings. Why? Because I want to know you. That's really what love is about.

I wanted to know everything there was to know about Karen Kennedy, because I was in love with her. Still am, as a matter of fact. I want to know your ways, I want to know about you, I want to know, because I want to know you.

Now, look at the very last sentence in verse 13. What does he say? Yes, now look back at verse 1. You and the people, what? That you brought up out of Egypt. God's giving Moses this test again, and Moses is passing it again.

These aren't my people, God. These are your people, whom you've asked me to lead, and I can't do it unless I know you. I think one of the reasons we stand up is to draw attention to ourselves.

I think these people, as you said, knew they were in real trouble. They knew that Moses was going to talk to God. I think the reason they stood up was to say, Don't forget us.

And Moses realized that and said, These are your people. That's right, that's right. This is not about me, God.

It's about your people and who I am in relation to you for them. There's a whole pastor's conference right there. Verse 14, then.

The Lord replied, My face. As I comment in the background, there is no actual word for presence in Hebrew. Every time you see presence in English, it's actually the Hebrew word face. My face will go with you, and I'll give you rest.

Now, wait a minute. If God knew all along he was going to go with them, why did he say he wasn't going to go with them? Well, they're still pretty stiff-necked. Here we see, I think, a more intimate relationship between God and Moses since God has taken himself and alienated himself away from the camp, so to speak, from the people as a whole.

And that's why I think we have such an intimate interchange here between God and Moses. They're working out that relationship. We're talking about that who Moses was in relationship to God and to the people and all of that.

Here we see that, I think, culminated there. I think you're right. This is the other side of the coin that we were talking about earlier.

If the righteous suffer with the wicked, it is possible for one righteous man to meet the minimum conditions for God to go with them. And that says an awful lot to you and me. How can my life leaven this lump of this world? How can we, in our intimate relationship with God, have a beneficial effect upon the world around us? We may never know.

It's not ours to know. But the question is, can you and I have such an intimate relationship with God that it changes the flavor of the world around us? And the answer is yes. What she was talking about was that Moses and God and everybody else were in the other place. Isn't that why Jesus came? Ultimately, yes.

Ultimately, God doesn't want to be outside the camp. He wants to be right in the middle of the camp. He wants to be in every person's heart.

But there's this sense that unless Moses is willing to go to the depths with God, the opportunity is not going to be there. So, Moses says, verse 15, if your face does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know you're pleased with me and 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? Now, my question is, what does this say about the nature of Christian life? Now notice what Moses is saying.

He's saying, God, I don't want your angel. And I talk in the background a little bit about the problem of the angel of the Lord in the Old Testament, that it gets tangled up with the Lord himself. And there have been some interesting Trinitarian discussions about all that.

But Moses is saying, I don't want anything other than your personal face. I know you face to face. You know me face to face.

So, what's he saying in verse 15? Would it be said, but would it be with God? Would it have that relationship? We've been talking about this. And that's the only way you can think. Mm-hmm.

You're called into that relationship. What else do you think he's saying here? I don't think I'm repeating, but the impression I get is that he's saying, in essence, we are the people we are because the thing that distinguishes us from everybody else is your face with us. He's saying, Canaan without your face is no good.

We've got your face here. So, if leaving here means we leave your face behind, we're not leaving. Better the desert with your face than Canaan without it.

And if God hadn't been in love with Moses before now, he's in love with him now. You got it, Moses. You got it.

That's what he asked for. Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, mm-hmm. So, Christian life is ultimately not about going to heaven.

Now, don't run out here saying, Well, it's a heretic. I may be, but not on this score. Heaven without God wouldn't be heaven.

Heaven is not about pearl gates and gold streets and mansions, using King James language. Heaven's about the face of God. And that's what will make hell, hell.

God isn't there. Probably you've said it already, but so for God to be seen by the unbeliever, he or she has to see him in us, his presence in us. His face.

His face. Yeah, yeah. Which will draw them to him.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. And that line, what else will distinguish us from everybody else on the face of the earth? Sacrifices? They got sacrifices. Temples? They got temples.

His face. The reality of his presence in our lives changes everything. And as has been said, Jesus Christ has purchased that possibility for all of us.

It's not just for the Moses' anymore. Or the Aarons, if we can include Aaron in this thing. I'm not sure Aaron ever did see God face to face, but anyway.

Now, we've got to rush on here—verse 18. Moses said, Now show me your glory.

And what does God say he will show him in verse 19? My goodness. Moses, and again, you just have to love the Bible. Moses says, God, God, I'm really special to you, aren't I? God says, yes, you are.

God, God, could you show me your divine essence? And God says no. I'm confident that's what's going on here. It says he spoke with him face to face.

But now he says, no man can see my face and live. No, I will not show you my glory, but I will show you my goodness. That is his character.

You can't see my holy essence and live. Nobody can. Not because I hate you, but simply because hay doesn't survive very well in a blast furnace.

But you can indeed see my holy character. You can see the nature that separates my nature from every other nature in this world. So, he says, you can see my back.

So, he chiseled out the two stone tablets, and the Lord came down, this is 34-5, the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name. And he passed in front of Moses. So, what does God's back look like, according to this passage? We don't have one description of what he saw, do we? Not one.

It's the same thing we talked about earlier. Moses, excuse me, Isaiah, all he can talk about is how big the hem of God's garment was. And the elders who ate with God on the mountain and saw him, the only thing they can say is, man, you should have seen the pavement beneath his feet.

It was like heaven. Words disappear. There are no words.

What do we have? And we have words. We do have a report of what Moses heard. No report of what he saw, but a very full report of what he heard.

Now, as I mentioned here in the background, these verses, 6 and 7a, are the most quoted Old Testament verses in the Old Testament. The references that you have here are direct quotes. Then there are probably another 20 allusions where you don't have a direct quote, but it's clear this is what they're talking about.

So, if you ask a Hebrew, what is your God like? This is what he'll answer. The compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin. That's why Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh.

He said, God, I know what kind of a God you are. I knew it back there at home. That's why I tried to go east, excuse me, west.

Because I knew what kind of a dirty forgiver you are, God says, I'm glad you knew that, Jonah. But you didn't take it to heart, did you? When the Hebrews have come to Kadesh Barnea after all the preparation, and they say, no, we're afraid.

We're afraid that the Canaanites are bigger than you are, Yahweh. And we say, what? What? Weren't you in Egypt? Didn't you follow God on the road to Sinai? Didn't you hear his voice on Sinai? And you're afraid of the Canaanites? And this verse is the verse that comes back, explaining to us why the Hebrew people were not suddenly extinguished, because of who God is. These are key words.

The compassionate, tender, gracious, pitying, slow to anger. I've quoted this one to you before, because it's so great. He has a really, really long nose.

That's literally what the Hebrew says there. You see, when you get mad, your nose gets red. God has a nose like Pinocchio.

It takes a long time for the red to get all the way out to the end. He is abounding in hesed. We've talked about that before.

He maintains hesed to thousands. And forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin.

That's what kind of a God he is. Now think what has just happened here. The golden calf has just happened.

Do you want to see who I am, Moses? Get this fixed in your head, Moses. This is what kind of a God I am. I'm not a hair-trigger-short-tempered guy.

Who the instant you look at him cross-eyed, fries you alive. No, I'm not. I'm a different kind of being altogether than anything you've ever imagined.

Now, almost everybody who reads this verse immediately lands on 7B. But he does not leave the guilty unpunished. He punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and the fourth generation.

Uh-huh. What kind of a God is that? We slide right over everything that's said about him before and say, What kind of a God is it who says, If you sin, I'm going to get your kids? Context. Context.

Context. Oh. He's gracious and compassionate.

He's slow to anger. He abounds in love and faithfulness. He maintains love to thousands, forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin.

I guess I'll sin and he'll forgive me. And God says, Yeah. Yeah, it's possible.

But remember this. There are consequences for sin. That forgiveness cannot change.

If I decide to be a drunk, and when I am 65, find the Lord, and he forgives me and washes me clean, my children will bear the effects of my drunkenness all their lives, even though I've been forgiven. What this is saying is, for heaven's sake, don't presume on God's forgiveness as though there were no effects of sin. The Bible is very clear in other passages that people are not direct.

A son cannot be killed because his father murdered somebody. You cannot visit the punishment of the father on the son. The Bible is very clear about that.

That's not what we're talking about here. We're not talking about the children, the father getting off scot-free, and the children being arbitrarily punished by God. We're talking about the impact of sin.

So, this great, great passage, verse 8, Moses bowed to the ground at once and worshipped. Lord, he said, if I have found favor in your eyes, 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.

Here's the place where Moses is truly, if you will, making atonement. I don't think he was making atonement in chapter 33 when he says, Now, God, if you're going to kill these people, you're going to kill me, too. I don't think he's not saying take my life in place of theirs.

But here, here with this vision of God, he's saying, oh, Lord, oh, Lord, if you can. We are stiff-necked, but if you can forgive our wickedness and our sin and take us as your. And we've talked a bit before about the difficulty of this word inheritance.

How can God inherit anything? The word does mean that in several places. But it's like, as I've said so many times, Hebrew words are so much bigger than most English words. So it helps if you spell it right.

I think the New Living Translation is quite correct when it says your special possession. Oh, God, in spite of what we've done. In spite of how we've broken our covenant.

Please forgive us and take us to be what you said you would be back there in Exodus 19. If you will obey my covenant, you will be my special possession. God, we've broken your covenant.

Would you still take us as your special possession? And what happens next in the rest of the chapter is God saying yes. God unilaterally renews the covenant. The Sinai covenant in chapters 20 to 24 is a bilateral covenant.

The people say we'll do this, and God says, I'll do that. Here, it is unilateral. God says I will do this.

Okay. The last thing in chapter 34 is the radiant face. And again, I think that runs right back to this theme that we've been talking about all the way through here.

He saw God's face, and as a result, his face became radiant. He saw God's face and something of that translated to his face. I always think of the New Testament passage.

They took notice of them that they had been with Jesus. I'm told that when two people love each other for a long time, they begin to look like each other. That's bad news for Karen, but good news for me.

I don't know whether that's true in human life or not, but I'm confident it's true in the spiritual life. To live with him face to face for years and years and years is to begin to look like him. It's to begin to share the radiance of his face. That's the good news.

Let's pray. Lord Jesus, thank you.

Thank you for making it possible for us to enter the Holy of Holies and to speak with you face to face, as once it was only possible for Moses to do. Oh God, forgive us that so often our religion is simply that, a religion where we perform certain duties and carry out certain forms, but the reality of your presence is so uncommon among us. Change that, Lord.

Give us that longing of Moses. Show me your ways because I want to know you. Thank you for these brothers and sisters, for their faithfulness in this effort across these last months.

As we come next week to our last session, would you again grace us with your presence. Write your word upon our hearts, we pray. In your name. Amen.

This is Dr. John Oswalt in his teaching on the book of Exodus. This is session 15, Exodus 33-34.