

Exodus 40:16-38
When the Glory Falls

Everyone right now at this moment is longing for something. We have a precious lady here this morning that has been battling cancer for many years - she is longing for something. We have another who has had a period of ill health, they are longing for something. We have others who from the outside everything seems to be going just fine but still there is an anxiousness in their hearts, a restlessness.

What is the deepest longing of your heart? Have you discovered yet that the deepest longing of your heart, no matter what it is, is met not with any program or superficial provision, but a person? A person who himself is:

... The image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Colossians 1:15-20 ESV

Such a longing is realized especially for those of us who have by faith embraced this Jesus, our Lord and our God! Right now as believers we live in the period between, I am with you always, and I am coming again. Both of these truths are true for us as we seek to live in this world of desperation. And isn't this world in desperate need? We who know Jesus know the need and see the answer to the need. We are desperate for Jesus and we want the world to know Him who is their hope - Jesus.

Today is the culmination of work that has been going on in the life of Oxford Baptist Church for almost a year. On this day after we hear a word from the Lord through preaching, we will hear a report from our Revitalization team, our [RE]new Team, who has been diligently listening to the Lord by seeking His face.

But before we get there, we want to ensure that we are seeing our face in the right way, to ensure that we are seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and not all these things. To do that I want us to turn to Exodus to see the way that it ends so that we will know the way that we are to begin.

Here is a hint going forward: The way forward for us is not a program but His presence.

READ TEXT

Did you catch it? The account doesn't end with verse 33 but keeps going to verse 34 with the glory of the Lord filling the tabernacle! The pursuit of our hearts must be His presence. Nothing

else will do for us. Can we agree here? Can this be the place that we all agree upon - that the pursuit of our hearts is God Himself?

1. Salvation is Bringing Us Near to God

Exodus is the salvation event of the OT. It becomes the paradigm for which all of salvation would be compared with - even ours today. Exodus begins with telling the story of desperation and then we read these words:

During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.
Exodus 2:23-25

The people of Exodus may have been unaware of how near he was because of their oppression. Their slavery becomes the paradigm by which we understand the bondage that separates us from God - sin. Isaiah says that our iniquities have made a separation between us and God (59:2). We are not to understand the Egyptians as the ones whom the children of Israel need salvation from - not in a total sense.

In Exodus 32 a significant moment comes that pulls back the curtain to reveal the heart of the children of Israel. After seeing God do some awesome deeds to save they turn their hearts from God by doing exactly what he commanded them not to do in the first commandment of Exodus 20 - they make a golden calf and bow down before it. They proclaimed: *These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!* (Ex 32:4) But God, who intended to save, reconfirms his covenant with His people and chooses to continue to carry them in hope of the day that their sins would be made white as snow.

How will he do this? The Tabernacle gives us a hint. When Moses is told to build the tabernacle he is told to do so in order that God might dwell in their midst (Ex. 25:8). In the same way we open to the Gospel of John concerning the life of Jesus and learn that this Jesus was and is the second person of the Trinity - the one who was both with God and is God. John tells us in John 1:14 that the Word who was in the beginning with God, who was God, became flesh and dwelt (literally tabernacled) amongst us.

The way that God has brought us near to Himself is by coming to us to save. The whole heartbeat of God's desire to save can be summed up in Ezekiel 37:27-28:

My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore."

2. Salvation Enables us to Obey the Lord

Look how careful Moses was to do according to the word of the Lord. God had brought them safely through many dangers and from the hands of those who oppressed them all so that they could be set apart as his people who display his salvation in the way that we live. Because of His grace, our lives are now not only aware of his grace but quickened by his grace that enables us to live.

When we obey, when we walk according to his ways we are living. When we disregard or rebel against his ways we are choosing to go back to death. God saves his people with his might in order that they may live. Just as Moses will later tell the Israelites that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God (Deut. 8:3).

So we order our ways according to His every word because this is life. We want to obey. We want to order ourselves according to his commands - we want to have right doctrine. But why do we want these things? It is good to order ourselves according to his ways but why do we do these things? So that we may know Him, so that He will be our God and we His people.

Our obedience is for one reason - Himself. We are not content with programs, we want Himself. We are not satisfied until the glory falls. We are taught this because of this text. The text doesn't end with, "so Moses obeyed", and we are so grateful. The text ends with the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle

3. Salvation's End is Himself

Salvation is about fellowship - keeping eternal festival at the feet of God. We get a foretaste of that salvation here now by the filling of the Spirit - the very person of God poured out into our hearts.

Notice what happens in the text. Look at what is repeated: *The glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle*. The people of God moved under his direction, when God said move they moved, when he said stay they stayed. The people of God were right in step with God doing all that He desired. This is the perfect picture of fellowship, the fellowship that just as they had a taste we too now even more of a taste as we are filled and sealed with the Holy Spirit of God until the day of redemption.

Exodus ends with a journey yet to come, a longing a looking ahead to even more journeys where the people of God are led by the very presence of God. Exodus creates a longing in our hearts just like the book of Revelation does when it says:

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:3-4 ESV)

And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light,

and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life. (Revelation 21:22-27 ESV)

We are left with a longing but not left alone in our longing. The same God that said I am coming, is the same God that said he would be with us always. Don't settle for anything less than glory!