

THE RENEWAL OF THE COVENANT BETWEEN GOD AND MAN: THE STEPS TO RENEWAL EXODUS 34:27–35

Introduction: Starting Over, New Beginning

One of man's greatest needs is to know this one truth: he can start all over again; he can make a new beginning; he can have a brand-new life. No matter how terrible the sin or shame, how horrible the failure or devastation, how tragic the suffering or pain, how helpless or hopeless the situation — no matter what the problem or trial — man can start all over again. He can have a new beginning for one simple reason: God loves him and cares for him. God wants to take care of him and look after him, delivering him through the trials that confront him. This is the subject of this great passage, a subject that offers the greatest hope to us all: we can start all over again. This is: *The Renewal of the Covenant Between God and Man: The Steps to Renewal*, Exodus 34:1-35. Here we discuss the last two steps.

- I. Step 1 — responding to God's call to come back into His presence: God called Moses to return to His presence (vv. 1-4).
- II. Step 2 — seeking and experiencing God's presence afresh (vv. 5-9).
- III. Step 3 — making a renewed covenant with God, a renewed commitment to obey God (vv. 10-26).
- IV. Step 4 — knowing the importance of the special commandments of God: The Ten Commandments themselves (vv. 27-28).
- V. Step 5 — going forth to proclaim God's Word (vv. 29-35).

I. Exodus 34:27–28 The Importance of God's Special Commandments

When starting over, the fourth step is to know the importance of the special commandments of God, the Ten Commandments themselves.

1. The Ten Commandments are the basis of God's covenant, of His relationship to man (v. 27). The Ten Commandments are the very basis of civilization, of human life itself. Review the Ten Commandments and note how they are the very foundation of human order, decency and respect. Without the principles and rules of the Ten Commandments, human life and civilization would be utter chaos. Therefore, if a person wishes to start over with God, to establish a renewed relationship with God, he must learn the importance of the Ten Commandments.
 2. The Ten Commandments are so important that Moses did not sleep or eat while receiving the law (v. 28). Note what Scripture says: Moses was up on the mountain for *forty days and forty nights* without eating bread or drinking water. He was in deep
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prayer and communion with God, receiving the Ten Commandments and the civil law that were to govern the Israelites as a nation. God obviously sustained Moses during the forty days and forty nights, miraculously taking care of him during this intense communion and fellowship with God.

3. The Ten Commandments are so important that they are set apart and entitled, *the Ten Commandments* (v. 28). Throughout Scripture God has given many instructions or decrees, but there are ten very specific commandments He has given. These specific Ten Commandments are given this very distinct name in order to set them apart from all other commandments. This is noteworthy and significant: this means that man must pay very special attention to the Ten Commandments. He must obey these Ten Commandments above all others commandments. The Ten Commandments are the very basis of his relationship with God, the very basis of the covenant and agreement between himself and God. Man must, therefore, make a strong commitment throughout life to keep *the Ten Commandments*.

Exo 19:5 *Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine.*

Exo 19:8 *The people all responded together, "We will do everything the LORD has said." So Moses brought their answer back to the LORD.*

Deu 5:29 *Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!*

Mat 7:21 *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."*

Rev 22:14 *"Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city."*

II. **Exodus 34:29–35** *Going Forth to Proclaim God's Word*

When starting over, the fifth step is going forth to proclaim God's Word. God's dear servant Moses had sought the Lord for forty days and forty nights, and God had met his every need. God had given him the Word of God that was to be carried to the people. It was now time for him to go forth and proclaim the great commandments of God to the people. Note these facts about God's servant.

1. God's servant was prepared: he had been in the presence of the Lord — symbolized by the radiance of God's glory upon his face (vv. 29-31). God's dear servant had remained and refused to leave God's presence until he had received God's Word. It was essential — absolutely essential — that he stay in God's presence until he had the message of God, the message that God wanted proclaimed to His dear people. Note an astonishing fact: Moses had stayed in the presence of God so long, waiting for the message of God, that the glory of God had actually permeated his being. The glory of

God was actually *radiated* (garan) as a bright light upon his face. It is critical to note why: because he had spoken with the Lord, actually been in the presence of the Lord, for so long. Note that the radiating light of God's glory upon Moses' face is referred to three times (vv. 29, 30, 35). A fact should be noted about this experience of Moses: he had been spending day after day in intercessory prayer...

- seeking the forgiveness of sins
- seeking the presence of God
- seeking to know and understand the Lord and His ways more and more

Keep in mind that these sessions of intercessory prayer took place prior to Moses' spending forty days and forty nights in God's presence. The point is this: intercessory prayer — spending day after day seeking God — obviously led Moses into a deep, intense communion with God, a communion so intense that God just imparted some of His glory into the very being of Moses. (What a glorious lesson for us: to seek God so much that He has to impart His glory into our very being, so much so that His glory radiates upon our face.) Moses experienced, apparently to a greater degree, just what Scripture says all believers are to experience: he beheld as in a glass the glory of the Lord and was changed into the same image from glory to glory (2 Cor 3:18).

The fact to keep in mind is this: Moses was spiritually prepared to proclaim the message of God to the people. But note the reaction of the people, even of Aaron: when they saw that Moses' face was radiant, they were afraid to come near him (v. 30). But in humility and meekness, Moses called them to come near and receive the message of God (v. 31).

2. God's servant declared God's commandments *to the leaders* (v. 31).
3. God's servant faithfully declared God's commandments *to the people* (v. 32). Note that Moses declared all the commandments the Lord had given him on Mount Sinai. God's servant must always proclaim God's Word to the people.

2 Chr 17:9 *They taught throughout Judah, taking with them the Book of the Law of the LORD; they went around to all the towns of Judah and taught the people.*

Acts 4:20 *For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.*

Acts 5:20 *“Go, stand in the temple courts,” he said, “and tell the people the full message of this new life.”*

2 Cor 4:13 *It is written: “I believed; therefore I have spoken.” With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak,*

2 Tim 2:2 *And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.*

Titus 2:15 *These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.*

4. God's servant covered his face with a veil after declaring God's commandments (v. 33). There is a hint as to why God allowed His glory to be radiated upon Moses' face. The people needed such a miraculous event in order to strengthen their faith in God and His commandments. When Moses declared the commandments of God to the people, they knew that the commandments were the Word of God. They knew because of the miraculous glory that was radiating from Moses' face. Their faith in God and in His Word was thereby strengthened.

Thought 1. Moses' experience with the glory of God was the very opposite experience of Christ. Jesus Christ experienced the glory of God upon the mount of transfiguration (Mt. 17:2). Scripture declares that the whole body of Jesus Christ radiated the glory of God as brightly as the sun itself, that His clothing was white and glistening (Lk. 9:29). But when Christ came down from the mount, He laid aside that glory. His face did not shine nor radiate the glory of God. He willingly laid aside the glory, made sure that the glory was not radiating through His being. Why? Because it is necessary that believers walk by faith not by sight (2 Cor 5:7).

5. God's servant removed the veil when he entered God's presence (v. 34). Note that the veil was removed from Moses' face only on two occasions: when he was proclaiming the Word of God and when he was praying and seeking the face of the Lord. This is the picture of a great truth: when a person seeks the face of God or proclaims the Word of God, there is to be nothing — no mask, no counterfeit, no deception — between him and God. There is to be nothing, absolutely nothing, covering his face or the truth of his heart from God. The person is to approach God with an open face and heart, approach Him in truth and spirit.
6. God's servant received a new radiance from God every time he entered God's presence (vv. 34-35). The picture being painted is this: before proclaiming the Word of God to the people, Moses prepared himself. He sought the face of the Lord every time he was to address the people. And God gave him more and more of His glory to radiate upon his face. When Moses walked before the people to proclaim the Word of God, they saw that his face was radiating the glory of God, that he had been in the presence of God and was ready to present God's message to them.

Thought 1. When starting over, when making a new beginning, the last step in our journey is to go forth and proclaim God's Holy Word to a lost and dying world, to a world that is reeling under the heavy weight of terrible need and suffering.

Psa 66:16 Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me.

Isa 43:10-11 "You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no saviour. I have revealed and saved and proclaimed.

Isa 63:7 *I will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the LORD has done for us — yes, the many good things he has done for the house of Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses.*

Mal 3:16 *Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honoured his name.*

Acts 4:20 *For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.*

Acts 5:20-21 *“Go, stand in the temple courts,” he said, “and tell the people the full message of this new life.” At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people. When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin — the full assembly of the elders of Israel — and sent to the jail for the apostles.*

Acts 22:14-15 *“Then he said: ‘The God of our fathers has chosen you [Paul], to know his will, and see the Righteous One, and to hear words from his mouth. You will be his witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.’”*

2 Cor 4:13 *It is written: “I believed; therefore I have spoken.” With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak.*

Titus 2:15 *These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.*

Thought 2. Paul uses the veil that covered Moses’ face to illustrate two great truths.

(1) Scripture declares that Moses wore the veil so the Israelites would not see the glory of the law fading away (2 Cor 3:7-18). This means that the dispensation of law was to pass and fade away, that it was to be replaced by the greater splendour of the dispensation of the Spirit. The point is simply this: the work of Jesus Christ was a far greater and more glorious work than the work of the law. Through the work of Christ, His death and resurrection, we are saved and given life eternal. Our sins are forgiven and we are given the inheritance of living with God forever and ever.

John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

Heb 2:14-15 *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

Heb 7:25 *Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.*

Heb 9:28 *So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.*

1 Pet 2:24-25 *“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.”*

1 Pet 3:18 *For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.*

(2) Scripture declares that the veil of Moses symbolizes the blindness of Israel in reading the Scriptures (2 Cor 3:7- 18). When Israel reads the Scripture, they are spiritually blind: they do not see the true glory of God that He has given to the world, that is, His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The veil of spiritual blindness that covers their eyes can be removed only through Christ, the Son of God Himself, the true Messiah and Saviour of the world. Jesus Christ alone is the Light of the world; His Light alone can remove the veil of blindness that covers men’s eyes.

Isa 9:2 *The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.*

John 1:4 *In him was life, and that life was the light of men.*

John 8:12 *When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*

John 12:35 *Then Jesus told them, “You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going.”*

2 Cor 4:6 *For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.*

Eph 5:14 *This is why it is said: “Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”*

Rev 21:23 *The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb [Jesus Christ] is its lamp. ■*