

THE PRESENCE OF GOD

TEXT: EXODUS 33:12-17

Introduction:

1. Referring to the intercessory prayers of Moses, EM Bounds said, “No mission was more majestic in purpose and results than that of Moses, and none was more responsible, diligent and difficult. In it we are taught the sublime ministry and rule of prayer. Not only is it the medium of supply and support, but it is a compassionate agency through which the pitying long-suffering of God has an outflow. Prayer is a medium to restrain God’s wrath, that mercy might rejoice against judgment” (*Prayer and Praying Men*).
2. Moses and his ministry were the direct result of prayer. First Samuel 12:8 says, “When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place.”
3. As we study the intercessory prayers of Moses, we see that prayer always affects God; that prayer influences God; that God hears and answers prayer; and that God even changes His conduct and reverses His action in response to prayer.
4. “Stronger than all other laws, and more inflexible than any other decree, is the decree, ‘Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not’ (Jer. 33:3)” (EM Bounds).
5. During the rebellion of Korah, the LORD was getting ready to destroy the entire nation of Israel. The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment” (Numbers 16:21).
6. Moses and Aaron “fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?” (Num. 16:22).
7. In this Moses and Aaron remind us of Abraham interceding for the wicked sinners of Sodom and Gomorrah.
8. Moses, the mediator, is presented in Scripture as a picture and type of the Lord Jesus Christ.
9. And so is his brother Aaron, the high priest (cf. Numbers 16:44-48).
10. Isaiah 53:12 says, “he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

11. Romans 8:34 says Christ is seated at the right hand of God, making intercession for us.
12. Hebrews 7:25 says the Lord Jesus “ever liveth to make intercession” for us.
13. First Timothy 2:5 says, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”
14. When Moses prayed, God answered his prayers because Moses’ prayers were not motivated by self.
15. Moses prayed for others (cf. Ex. 32:30-33).
16. As God answered Moses’ prayers, Moses’ faith increased and he prayed more earnestly and asked God for more.
17. God delighted in answering Moses’ prayer, and He delights in answering our prayers.
18. Our Lord said in John 14:13 and 14, “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.”
19. God is looking for men like Moses who will intercede for others.
20. The LORD says in Ezekiel 22:30, “And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.”
21. Moses enjoyed the presence of God (Ex. 33:11a, 14, 15).
22. There are three key words in Moses’ prayer:
 - I. GOD’S GUIDANCE**
 - II. GOD’S PRESENCE**
 - III. GOD’S GLORY**

I. GOD’S GUIDANCE (EX. 13:21, 22; 15:13; DEUT. 8:2).

1. Back at the burning bush, the LORD said to Moses, “I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt” (Ex. 3:10).
2. Then Moses said unto God, “Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?” (Ex. 3:11).
3. To this, the LORD answered Moses, “Certainly I will be with thee” (Ex. 3:12).
4. However, because of the continual murmuring and complaining of the people, the LORD told them, “I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way” (Ex. 33:3).

5. Moses' prayers not only averted the fierce wrath of God (cf. 32:11-14), they also secured His continued guidance and presence (33:4-14).
6. Israel's terrible sin had necessitated the judgment of God. God is a holy God, and He had to punish them for their idolatry (32:1-10) and for their immorality (32:25).
7. Repentant Israelites had to go outside the camp to get right with God (Ex. 33:7).
8. For God to have remained among them there in the camp would have required their total destruction.
9. Habakkuk 1:13 says, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity."
10. But the intercessory prayers of Moses averted the threatened storm of God's wrath.
11. The LORD could not come in among them again until Israel repented. The same principle holds good today. While gross sin is allowed in the church, the Lord will not manifest Himself.
12. James 4:8 says, "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded."
13. Moses prayed, "Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way..." (Ex. 33:13).
14. This reminds us of David, when he prayed, "Show me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths" (Psalm 25:4).
15. And again in Psalm 27:11, "Teach me Thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path."
16. And Psalm 25:9 says, "The meek will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way."
17. Numbers 12:3 says, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth."
18. Therefore, Moses knew the LORD would answer his prayer: "Shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight" (Ex. 33:13).
19. Moses was not praying for himself. He was praying on behalf of the nation of Israel – "and consider that this nation is thy people" (Ex. 33:13b).
20. Daniel prayed the same way (Daniel 9).
21. Amos prayed the same way (Amos 7:2-6).
22. Nehemiah prayed the same way (Nehemiah 1).

23. The apostle Paul prayed the same way (Romans 9:1-4; cf. Ex. 32:30-33; Rom. 10:1).
24. Andrew Murray said, intercessory prayer is the act of,
- First, putting yourself sacrificially in someone else's situation by having compassion on their physical and spiritual conditions
 - Second, laying claim to the Promises of God.
 - Third, persevering in faith until the petition is answered.
 - Fourth, being led by the Spirit of God.

II. GOD'S PRESENCE (EX. 33:12-15).

2. After Moses prayed to God, the LORD agreed to send an Angel to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land (32:34; 33:2).
3. But Moses kept praying. He was not satisfied with an angel. He wanted the presence of God Himself (33:12-15).
4. Note the repetition – in verses 12, 13, 16, 17 we see the same phrase – the words “found grace in Thy sight” or “found grace in my sight” are found five times.
5. We see the phrase again in the next chapter (34:9).
6. When Moses prayed about finding grace in the eyes of God, he was referring specifically to the LORD's continual presence as well as His guidance (33:15-17).
7. The first time we see this phrase is in Genesis 6:8. “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.” This means the LORD promised to be with Noah.
8. This means that Noah enjoyed the presence of God.
9. Genesis 7:1 says, “And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.”
10. This means that as the rain poured from the skies for 40 days and 40 nights, Noah and his family enjoyed the presence of God. They were safe inside the ark. Though the storm raged outside the ark, all was well inside the ark.
11. Friend, all is not well in this world today. But you can enjoy the presence of God if you are in Christ.
12. Psalm 16:11 says, “Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy”
13. Being in the presence of God means being “separated” (Ex. 33:16) from the ungodly.

14. There are two spheres operating in this world – there is the sphere of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, and the sphere of the action and power of Satan.

III. GOD’S GLORY (EX. 33:18)

1. Moses asked the LORD, “Shew me thy glory” (33:18).
2. Moses had already seen the glory of God up on Mount Sinai (Ex. 24:16-18).
3. Moses spent 40 days with God up on Mount Sinai, but Moses kept asking God for more.
4. “And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend” (Ex. 33:11), but Moses still wanted more.
5. Many people associate the glory of God with the physical manifestation of His Divine presence (Ex. 33:22).
6. Consider the LORD’s response to Moses’ prayer.
 - “And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee.”
 - “And I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee.”
 - “And will be gracious to whom I will be gracious.”
 - “And will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy” (33:19).
7. The goodness of God (His beauty and splendor) reveals His glory.
8. The proclamation of His name declares His glory.
9. The manifestation of His grace and mercy demonstrate His glory.
10. Hebrews 1:3 says the Lord Jesus Christ is the “brightness” of God’s glory.
11. Therefore, we glorify God when we follow Christ, and proclaim His Gospel.

CONCLUSION:

1. In Exodus 33:15, Moses prayed, “If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.”
2. In other words, Moses would rather stay in the wilderness than continue without the presence of God.
3. Is that your prayer?