

SS-Exodus 33:12-23-Moses Audacious Request Lesson Text-11/22/20

Intro: "Spending time with God helps us pray more in line with His will. "

I GOD'S WAY—Ex. 33:12-14

A Moses' request (Ex. 33:12-13)

- a **Disheartening**-Having dealt with the people's idolatry at Sinai, the Lord told Moses to take them up into the land He had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their descendants. However, the Lord warned that because of the nation's stubborn sinfulness, He would not "go up in the midst" of the people lest He destroy them (vs. 3). The people responded by demonstrating a repentant attitude (vss. 4-6) and, as we shall see, the Lord agreed to go up with them in response to Moses' prayer.
- b **Discourse**-Exodus 33:7-11 describes the tabernacle or tent of meeting Moses set up outside the camp. The official, moveable tabernacle had not yet been erected. It would reside in the midst of the camp wherever the Israelites were encamped. The tent mentioned here was a temporary structure where Moses met with the Lord, who spoke to him from the pillar of cloud. Apparently this information is given here because this is where Moses met with the Lord to offer his petitions in verses 12-23.
- c **Disappointing**-Moses knew the Lord had called him to lead this people, had promised His presence and direction, and had made the people His own. Because of the idolatrous rebellion described in chapter 32, however, it seems Moses needed assurance that God's plan for His people was still in effect. Although the Lord had given assurance that He would give the Promised Land to Israel, Moses was concerned because He had indicated He would not be in their midst (33:3).
- d **Disclosure**-Moses' initial request centered on who actually would be going with him (vs. 12). He noted that the Lord had told him to take the people up to the Promised Land, but he also stated, "Thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me." The Lord had said that instead of accompanying them Himself, He would send an angel before them to drive out the inhabitants of Canaan (vs. 2).
- e **Distress**-Apparently, this was not the "angel of his presence" (Isa. 63:9) promised earlier (Ex. 23:20-23), but another angelic being. Moses' prayer, then, may have related to the identity of this angel. However, it may have been a somewhat veiled request for God's presence to remain among the people as they moved forward.
- f **Distinction**-Moses also reminded the Lord that he had found grace, or undeserved favor, in God's sight: the Lord knew him "by name," meaning He had chosen him. Since this was the case, Moses asked the Lord to show him His way (33:13). He wanted to know more specifically what God had in store for the nation and for their guidance. He wanted to know God better and continue to find grace before the Lord.
- g **Details**- Since this was the case, Moses asked the Lord to show him His way (33:13). He wanted to know more specifically what God had in store for the nation and for their guidance. He wanted to know God better and continue to find grace before the Lord.
- i **Debate**-Moses also entreated the Lord to consider that Israel was His chosen people. On this basis, he was asking the Lord to be gracious to them.

B God's reply (Ex. 33:14)

- a **Presence**-The Lord's answer was indeed gracious. The angel that would go before them to drive out their enemies (vs. 2) would indeed be the angel of His presence, for His presence would go with them (vs. 14).
- b **Princarnate**-It is likely the angel was in fact the Angel of the Lord (cf. 3:2), that is, God the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity. The Lord's presence—literally, His face—would guarantee the people rest and blessing in the land to which God was taking them.

II GOD'S PRESENCE—Ex. 33:15-17

A Moses' request (Ex. 33:15-16)

- a **Promise**-The Lord's promised presence with His people initiated another request from Moses. "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence" may appear to express doubt or sound demanding. However, Moses was not pleading for God to do what He had already promised but rather was seeking confirmation of God's promised presence with him as Israel's chosen leader.
- b **Proof**-He also wanted confirmation that Israel was still God's chosen people, distinct from all others. Moses understood that God's presence and favor were manifested outwardly to the world. By the time they had endured the ten plagues, the Egyptians were convinced that the Lord was with the Israelites. Moses wanted all to know that the Lord favored Israel as His own people. He sought reassurance of God's presence with both him and Israel as they set out from Sinai, such that it would be evident both to Israel and to Israel's enemies that the Lord's favor rested upon His people.
- c **Power**-Moses understood from past experience the kinds of challenges that lay ahead. Only if the Lord manifested His power in and through Israel would His reputation be preserved and His people be encouraged to continue on toward the Land of Promise.
- d **Pigheaded**-We might find it easy to fault Moses for seeking confirmation of God's promise, but we must understand his situation. He was leading a people who had repeatedly challenged both His leadership and the Lord Himself. They were by God's own estimation a "stiffnecked people" (vs. 3).
- e **Petitions**-We can certainly grasp why Moses sought reassurance from the Lord. But was this wrong? We must not miss the fact that the Lord did not rebuke Moses for his request but graciously answered him. In fact, it appears the Lord invited his petitions and was pleased to grant them.
- f **Prayer**-Prayer is a reflection of one's relationship with the Lord. Moses' relationship with the Lord was like that of friend to friend (cf. vs. 11). When we know God, walk by faith, and live in purity before Him, we can speak to Him intimately, without fear of rebuke or rejection. This does not mean all our requests will be granted, but it does mean we come honestly before Him, even with our weaknesses and doubts, and know that He welcomes us into His presence.

B God's reply (Ex. 33:17)

- a **Insured**-The Lord again answered Moses affirmatively. He promised to do exactly what His servant had requested: He would indeed go with Moses and His people and manifest His power and guidance.

b	Idea —The basis for granting the request was that Moses had found grace in His sight and that the Lord knew him by name . Moses' plea earlier had been on the basis of these same two blessings (vss. 12-13). Now the Lord assured him that he was indeed the recipient of His grace and that He knew Moses by name . Moses enjoyed a very special relationship with the Lord, and it was because of this, not because of the Israelites as a whole, that He granted the request.
c	Intercession —Israel benefited immensely from the faithful intercession of Moses . Indeed, their continued existence as a nation was the result of his prayers (cf. 32:9-14). God's mercy works together with our prayers to accomplish great things for others, even if those people are unaware that we are praying for them.

III GOD'S GLORY—Ex. 33:18-23

A	Moses' request (Ex. 33:18)
a	Request —Moses' third request is described by John Davis as <i>"almost without parallel in human history up to this point"</i> (Moses and the Gods of Egypt, Baker). He asked God to show him His glory . This was a very personal request, but what exactly was Moses requesting? God's glory usually refers to a physical manifestation of His presence. Moses had seen God's glory in the cloud (16:7, 10), he had entered into the glory cloud on the mountain (19:9; 24:15-18), and the Lord spoke to him from the cloud of His glory (33:9-11). He and others had even seen some form of the Lord previously (24:10).
b	Revelation —Clearly Moses was seeking a deeper revelation of God that went beyond anything he had witnessed before . The previous manifestations of God's glory had been witnessed by others and were given by God apart from any requests. Now Moses sought something more and personal —"a greater perception of God's essential being" (Constable, Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible, Tyndale Seminary Press). Such a revelation would confirm God's continuing presence and work in his life and encourage him as he led the people on to the Promised Land.
B	God's reply (Ex. 33:19-20).
a	Granted —Again, God said He would grant Moses' request . He would do so by making His <i>"goodness pass before"</i> Moses. <i>"Goodness" refers to the moral perfection of God</i> . Psalm 119:68 tells us God is good and does good. His very character is summed up in His goodness, which in some way would be manifested visibly so that the splendor of His presence would be known to Moses.
b	Goodness —This visible revelation would be accompanied by the Lord's own proclamation of His name. The name of the Lord refers to His character or nature. So God's character would be expressed visibly by His goodness passing before Moses and described verbally in terms of His grace and mercy .
c	Gracious —To be <i>"gracious"</i> is to show favor, and to show "mercy" is to have a deep, tender feeling of compassion or love for another . The Hebrew terms both generally speak of the actions of a superior toward an inferior (Harris, Archer, and Waltke, eds., Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Moody).
d	Grasp —The combination of this powerful visible revelation and the words of the Lord would give Moses a unique vision and understanding of God . This divine revelation would sustain him through the many years to come as he led the people from Sinai to the brink of the Promised Land.
e	Glory —While Moses was assured that his request to see God's glory would be granted shortly, he was told that this amazing revelation would be limited. <i>"Thou canst not see my face,"</i> the Lord said, <i>"for there shall no man see me, and live"</i> (Ex. 33:20). While Moses would see that which no one else saw, he would not see God's face—that is, God in His fullness.
f	Glow —One commentator offers a helpful illustration: <i>"As our bodily eye is dazzled, and its power of vision destroyed, by looking directly at the brightness of the sun, so would our whole nature be destroyed by an unveiled sight of the brilliancy of the glory of God"</i> (Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, Eerdmans). Only when we are transformed into the perfect likeness of Christ will we see the Lord in the fullness of His glory.
C	God's explanation (Ex. 33:21-23)
a	Shielded —The Lord went on to explain to Moses exactly what would happen. At a certain place on the mountain Moses would stand upon a rock, and when the Lord's glory passed by, He would put Moses in a cleft, or crevice. There the Lord would shield him from seeing His face but would allow him to see His "back parts." The image of God's hand covering and then uncovering Moses' eyes is simply a figurative way of saying the Lord would control what Moses saw and did not see.
b	Seeing —God would graciously protect Moses from the instant death that would come from seeing the face of God in all His glory. However, Moses would see the "back" of God's manifested glory . This could be translated as <i>"the after-effects"</i> of his radiant glory, which had just passed by" (Gaebelein, ed., The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Zondervan).
c	Senses —The fulfillment of Moses' request is described in Exodus 34, and it follows precisely the manner the Lord described in chapter 33, as the Lord's glory passed by Moses and the Lord proclaimed His name . Interestingly, the text, which was penned by Moses, does not tell what Moses saw but only what he heard .
d	Surety —What he saw probably could not be adequately described. But what he heard could and was put into words—words we can grasp and meditate on . God identified Himself as compassionate, gracious, patient, faithful, truthful, forgiving, and just (34:5-7). Moses had seen these aspects of God's character already. Now he was assured the same God with the same character would carry forth His plan to take the Israelites into their land under his leadership .
e	Sovereign —We would do well to meditate on the mercy and grace of God as well as His other attributes . As we do so, we will be motivated to follow Him wholeheartedly and love Him fully , we will be assured that He can and will use us regardless of past failures , and we will look with great anticipation to the day when we will see Him face to face.

Conclusion: "Seeing God's glory should be the driving ambition of our life."