

MOSES' PLEA FOR GOD'S PRESENCE

BIBLE TEXT : Exodus 33:1-23

LESSON 68 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee" (Isaiah 26:3).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Exodus 33:1-23

¹ And the LORD said unto Moses, Depart, *and* go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I swore unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it:

² And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite:

³ Unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou *art* a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way.

⁴ And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned: and no man did put on him his ornaments.

⁵ For the LORD had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye *are* a stiffnecked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee.

⁶ And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by the mount Horeb.

⁷ And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, *that* every one which sought the LORD went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which *was* without the camp.

⁸ And it came to pass, when Moses went out unto the tabernacle, *that* all the people rose up, and stood every man *at* his tent door, and looked after Moses, until he was gone into the tabernacle.

⁹ And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood *at* the door of the tabernacle, and *the LORD* talked with Moses.

¹⁰ And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand *at* the tabernacle door: and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man *in* his tent door.

¹¹ And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Helpless without God

When the great company of Israelites started their trek to the Promised Land, they did not know the way. They did not know where to find food for themselves and their cattle, nor where there was water to drink. Without God to guide them they would soon have perished in the wilderness.

From the beginning of their journey God had gone before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. They knew God was there because He had spoken to Moses from the cloud, and they had all beheld His glory (**Exodus 16:10-12** ¹⁰ And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.¹¹ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, ¹² I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD your God).

The Glory of God in the Mount

The pillar had led them right up to Mount Sinai, where the Israelites camped for a while. There God appeared in majesty and power, amid thunder and lightning and earthquake; and there the trumpet of God sounded long and loud, calling the people near to the mount to listen to His divine commands. They had heard His voice and understood the words He spoke; yet, within forty days they had made themselves a calf of gold to represent the omnipotent God of Heaven! Surely God was justified in wanting to destroy such an idolatrous and ungrateful people. Think of His great mercy in sparing them. in answer to the prayers of Moses!

God Disowns His People

When God told Moses in the mount that the Israelites were sinning, He said: "Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves" (Exodus 32:7). God would not claim those sinful people as His own, and in speaking of them to Moses called them "thy people."

We cannot be the children of God if we have sin in our lives. When we confess our sins and repent of them, and we receive Jesus' pardon, we are born into the family of God; but if we commit sin again, we are no longer His children. Jesus told the Jews when they sinned that the devil was their father (**John 8:44** ⁴⁴ Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it). God directed John to write: "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother" (I John 3:10). We see that even what we might consider little sins, like not loving our brother, will sever us from the family of God and make us children of Satan.

friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle.

¹² And Moses said unto the LORD, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight.

¹³ Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation *is* thy people.

¹⁴ And he said, My presence shall go *with thee*, and I will give thee rest.

¹⁵ And he said unto him, If thy presence go not *with me*, carry us not up hence.

¹⁶ For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? *is it* not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that *are* upon the face of the earth.

¹⁷ And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.

¹⁸ And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.

¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.

²¹ And the LORD said, Behold, *there is* a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock:

²² And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by:

²³ And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.

The Tabernacle Moved from the Camp

God had mercy upon Israel when they repented, and did not destroy them all; but He said He could not dwell among such a stubborn people. Moses had a tent where he met God and worshiped, which he now moved far outside the camp. He called it the Tabernacle of the Congregation. There Moses went to plead for the people, and there God met with him in the pillar of cloud. Any of the Children of Israel who longed to worship God were free to go with him. When the people who remained in their tents saw the pillar descend upon the tent, as a token of His returning favor, they rose up to worship.

God's Offer of an Angel as Guide

God had had mercy upon Israel, but He knew they were likely to sin again, and perhaps the next time He would not have mercy and they would all be destroyed. For that reason He said He would send an angel to lead the way, since He Himself would not abide with them.

We shall learn later that one time when the Israelites sinned, God sent poisonous serpents among them to bite them; and all who were bitten died. At another time fire from the Lord broke out in the camp and burned up many people for their sins (Numbers 11).

Moses' Plea

Moses was brokenhearted at the thought that God would not go with them. Moses simply did not feel that he could lead that great nation to the Promised Land unless God was right there beside him to help. When Moses had first felt a desire to help his people in Egypt, he tried in his own strength to be of service, but found he had done the wrong thing. When he had tried to make peace between two Hebrews, they cried, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?" Moses had learned that he could do nothing without the help of God, so he requested that the presence of God go with him, or he would not try to lead the people any farther.

Our Need of God's Presence

Some people who start out to be Christians lean hard upon the Lord in the beginning, but after a while they think they can get along pretty well by themselves. They do not pray as much as when they were first saved, and they do not spend much time in reading the Bible, God's guide to Christian living. Gradually they drift away from God. Then when trouble comes to them, they suddenly realize they are all alone, and they feel their desperate need of the Lord's help — but He is far away. Moses did not want to find himself in a hard place with his God afar off. He said: "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence."

That should be the purpose of every Christian. We should never go anyplace that we cannot take the Lord with us; we should never say anything we do not want Him to hear. We should study God's Word and pray to Jesus so much that we always feel His presence right beside us.

Moses reasoned with God: How would the strange nations know that these were God's people if His presence were not with them? How do people today know who are God's children? They can recognize the true Christian by the Spirit of God that abides with him. A congregation may gather in the name of Jesus, but if there is sin in their hearts the Spirit of God will not be with them. Their worship is an empty form. The atheist can look at such people and say that he lives as acceptably as they do.

Where the Spirit Dwells

How different is a congregation where the Spirit of God dwells! There is love and fellowship among the brethren because the Blood of Jesus has made them one; there is power to pray the prayer of faith that will heal the sick; the Holy Spirit speaks conviction upon the honest sinner and makes him want to get saved.

God is there! His sacred presence can be felt. The songs of praise are inspired, rising from hearts that know God. The message of God's Word is given in a manner that uncovers sin and teaches men the way to Heaven. And Bible signs follow those who believe (**Mark 16:17-18** ¹⁷ And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; ¹⁸ They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover).

How important it is to have the presence of God with us! His Spirit abides in His born-again children; when they become sanctified, the Spirit is there in greater fulness; and when they receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost, their beings overflow with that oil of joy, His fire of love. They receive power with the baptism for fruitful service for the Lord. That Spirit remains with us as long as we continue to live for God and commune daily with our Lord.

The Light of the World

The world is growing darker because of the sins of the people. Jesus is its only Light. Thus the Spirit in His children, the light containers, is the light that leads men to the Savior. That is why it is so important that we have as much of the Spirit of God in our hearts as we can possibly get that we may light the way for sinful men to find the path to Glory.

Moses Prevails

God answered the prayer of Moses and consented to go with him. Then Moses asked for even greater blessings: he wanted to see the glory of God. Now, no man can see the face of God and live in this mortal body. He hid Moses in the cleft of a rock and covered him with His hand. Then He passed by and let just His back be seen by Moses. The heart of the true Christian longs for a vision of Jesus; and we rejoice in the amount of His glory He allows us to behold. When we get to Heaven we shall see Him as He is. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:2).

QUESTIONS

- 1 Who led the Children of Israel out of Egypt to Sinai? How?
- 2 Why did God refuse to call the Israelites His children?
- 3 When are we the children of God?
- 4 How were the strange nations to know that Israel was God's chosen people?
- 5 How do people know that we are the children of God?