

EMULATING MOSES

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Date: 06-06-2021

Scripture: Exodus 33:1-17

We'll be looking at the first 17 verses from the 33rd chapter of Exodus with a specific focus on vvs. 12-17

Exodus 33:1-7

Let me just give you a gist of these verses. This is a conversation that God is having with Moses after he has been given the commandments on the two tablets. Then Moses came down and found that they had built a golden calf, and he threw those two tablets down. You can see how disappointed and upset he was with the people, that they couldn't keep the covenant that they had promised to keep, for even a few months or days, as it were.

We catch up in ch. 33:2-3 where God says, *"I'm going to send an angel before you and I will drive out all these people – the Canaanites, the Amorites, etc. and you all go up to the land flowing with milk and honey, for I will not go up in your midst, because you are an obstinate people, lest I destroy you on the way."* God tells Moses to go and tell the children of Israel, *"You are an obstinate people."* Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp a good distance from the camp; and he called it the tent of meeting.

Then we see in vvs. 8-11 how *Moses would go out and he would enter the tent of meeting, and everybody would then come out and they would stand outside their tents as Moses went in. and the beautiful part of this was that the pillar of cloud would then come slowly down and settle over the tent of meeting.* Then we have these beautiful words: *When all the people saw the pillar of cloud, they would arise and worship God at the entrance of the tent. Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend.*

What a beautiful line! How beautiful to see the kind of relationship that God had with Moses, and Moses had with God.

vvs. 12-17 *Then Moses said to the Lord, "See, You say to me, 'Bring up this people!' but You Yourself have not let me know whom You will send with me. Moreover, You have said, 'I have known you by name, and you have also found favor in My sight.' Now then, if I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your ways so that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your sight. Consider too, that this nation is Your people." And He said, "My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest." Then he said to Him, "If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here. For how then can it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we, I and Your people, may be distinguished from all the other people who are on the face of the earth?" The Lord said to Moses, "I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight and I have known you by name."*

Church, I just want you to see this last line that I read, when God, after all of this conversation with Moses, hearing the arguments that he made, says to him, *"I will also do this thing of which you have spoken."* My prayer is that, at the end of our time here, that we will be able to hear from God that He will also do this thing of which you and I, each one of us, have spoken. For we come to the almighty God. We come to one who loves us dearly. So, let's see what it was that Moses said that made God respond and say, *"I will also do this thing,"* and pray that that will be our answer as well.

Let's break down these 17 verses of the 33rd chapter of Exodus. I see probably about four areas initially, that we can pull from, just to get an idea of what has been said.

1. God's indictment of the people, the sons of Israel.

He says, "I will not go with you. I will send an angel. You are an obstinate people." So, God's initial response to what has happened as they built a golden calf and began to worship it, was to call them an obstinate people, to say that He will now send an angel to lead them. They will enter the Promised Land but He will not be going with them. "I will not go with you."

2. The beautiful relationship that Moses had with God.

The bible tells us that Moses and God were friends, that when Moses went into the tent of meeting, God descended. God came down in that pillar of cloud to meet him. And this meeting was such a beautiful meeting that it touched the hearts of the people around. They all came out, stood at their tents and worshipped God. This beautiful encounter that Moses had with God and the sight that the people saw, of the pillar of cloud coming down and settling over the tent of meeting, just drew instant worship and praise from all the people who were around.

3. The conversation that Moses had with God.

What did he say? He reminds God. He says, "You told me to bring these people out. You haven't told me who You're sending with me. You have told me that I have found favor with You, and that You know my name." Then he says, "If all of this is true, let me know Your ways so I may know You." All of this, beloved, this whole conversation kind of comes together for one purpose – that Moses is saying, "Let me know Your ways. Help me to understand the things that You do so that I may then know You better. So let me see the way in which You work so it will help me understand You better."

Then again he says, "These are Your people. If You don't come with us, then don't lead us from here." No angel was going to suffice for Moses. "If You are not going to come with us, don't lead us from here." And then he says, "Your presence is what sets us apart from all the other people. Your presence distinguishes us from the other peoples of the earth." Glorious! This wonderful conversation that he has with God.

4. God's response.

What was God's response to all of this? He says, "Okay. I will do this thing that you are asking."

If you kind of boil it all down, or try and crystallize it, it has to do with intimacy. It has to do with a deep, deep relationship that Moses has developed over the time when God called him from the mountain through the burning bush, as he saw the way God worked to free the children of Israel, to bring them out. All of this Moses has seen, and as he has gone through on this journey, he's come to trust God more and more.

This is not the conversation that Moses was having at the start. At the burning bush it was: "No, no. I can't do this. How will I say this? How will people know that You have sent me?" And so on. But here is the man who trusts God implicitly, a man who has a deep personal relationship with God. And he says all of these things which reveals the intimacy that he has with God.

I think it would be good for us to go deeper into his conversation with God because intimacy with God is what we are all after – to know His ways, to know Him. Because the better we know Him, the more we will trust Him. The more we know someone, the better we are able to take them at their word, to put our hope and our faith and our trust in them. That's needed as we look at growing in our relationship with God.

A DEEPER LOOK AT MOSES' CONVERSATION WITH GOD

What are the components that were part of this conversation?

1. He reminds God of the things that God has done.
 - You told me to bring these people out.
 - You haven't told me who You're sending with me.
 - You told me that You know me by name.
 - You told me that I have found favor in Your sight.
 - These people are Your people.

All of these things that God knows and has said over the span of time that they've been together. Moses now reminds God about all of that .
2. He hears from God. He gives space to hear what God is saying. And God says, "My presence shall go with you and I will give you rest."
3. He contends with God. He says, "If Your presence does not accompany us, do not lead us from here." He's really pushing God here, because God has just said, "I will give you My presence. My presence will be with you." And he says, "If Your presence does not accompany us, do not lead us from here. Because me having favor with You means that You will accompany us. Because Your presence distinguishes us from all other people." And he's pushing this argument towards God and saying, "Your presence is so needed in our midst." So needed. It's almost like he didn't hear God saying, "Yes, MY presence is there." He's just pushing through and saying, "I want to make doubly sure God, that You are going to there with us."
4. God's response. "I will do this thing which you have spoken. You have found favor in My sight. I know you by name."

So we see the intimacy that has developed between God and Moses. But I want to mine this even further because there were four "somethings" that came out of this passage that lead to God responding: "I will do this thing." four things that ended with God saying, "I will do this thing." And remember that's our prayer. Even as I am speaking, I wonder whether there are things surfacing in your heart, things that you are praying for maybe, things that you are contending with God, with asking Him for it. You've been doing it for long and your prayer is that you will also hear His word saying, "I will do this thing that you are asking."

FOUR "SOMETHINGS"!

1. Something to avoid.

What is that something to avoid? It's God's wrath. Here is the obstinacy of the people. They made an idol, a golden calf and began to worship it. This is so soon after seeing the plagues that God had brought on Egypt. So soon after finding themselves freed, reaching the sea, seeing the sea part. So soon after getting water from a place that was bitter and seeing Moses throw a branch in and making it sweet water. So soon after seeing him strike a rock to bring water so that they could drink. All of these wonderful miracles including food that they received in the wilderness. How easily they forgot all these things. And God calls them an obstinate people.

Paul reminds us in Romans: "But God's angry displeasure erupts as acts of human mistrust and wrongdoing and lying accumulate, as people try to put a shroud over truth. but the basic reality of God is plain enough. Open your eyes and there it is, by taking a long and thoughtful look at what

God has created. People have always been able to see what their eyes as such can't see – eternal power for instance, and the mystery of His divine being. So nobody has an excuse, or a good excuse. What happened was this – people knew God perfectly well. But when they didn't treat Him like God, refusing to worship Him, they trivialized themselves into silliness and confusion, so that there was neither sense nor direction left in their lives. they pretended to know it all but were illiterate regarding life." And that's exactly how Eugene Peterson puts it in the message, but exactly what happened. They trivialized themselves into silliness in building that idol for them to worship.

2. Something to aspire for.

What is it? Moses' friendship with God and God's friendship with Moses. When Moses went to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent. That led the people also to worship. And God spoke to Moses face to face just as a man speaks to a friend.

Israel Houghton wrote this song that has become quite popular.

I am a friend of God
I am a friend of God
I am a friend of God He calls me friend
Who am I that You are mindful of me?
That You hear me when I call
Is it true that You are thinking of me?
How You love me it's amazing
Who am I Lord? I am a friend of God.

That beloved is who we are, and we need to aspire to the kind of beautiful friendship, intimate friendship that Moses had with God.

3. Something to emulate.

What can we emulate from this passage? The conversation that Moses had with God. That we too can begin to have those kinds of intimate conversations that have depth, that have great meaning, that has a bearing on the lives of thousands of people. We can move from being shallow in our prayer life to having depth in our prayer life.

Let's look at some of the things that Moses had in his prayer, in his conversation with God.

- He was very direct. "You told me to bring these people. You haven't told me..." He was very direct about what he wanted, and what he wanted to do. There was no beating around the bush. He came to the point. It was like Jesus asking Bartimæus: "What do you want Me to do for you? Clear. Be specific. What do you want Me to do? Moses was direct.
- He longed to know God more. Part of his conversation with God was: "Let me know Your ways so that I may know You." How many times beloved, have we incorporated that prayer in our lives and made that a part of our conversation with God. Lord, help me to know Your ways so that I can get to know You better.
- He reminded God of what he has been told. That's a strange one! He's reminding God. God doesn't forget. And yet, when we look at the Old Testament, Isaiah 62:6 says this, "Put the Lord in remembrance of His promises, keep not silence." Of course, you have to know His promises to remind the Lord. And then he goes on, and I like this in the amplified version: "Jerusalem, on your walls, I have stationed guards whose duty it is to speak out day and night without resting. They must remind the Lord and not let Him rest till He makes Jerusalem strong and famous everywhere.

Promises, beloved, that God has given to you. What is it that you need to go back and say, "Lord, I'm reminding You that You told me that Your grace will be sufficient for me. Lord, I am being stretched. I'm reminding You that I need Your grace and that You said it will be sufficient. Lord, I'm reminding You that this weakness that I am going through – You said that You would make Your strength perfect. Lord, this is the time that I really need for You to make it perfect. Lord, You said come unto me, that You will give me rest, that Your yoke is easy but Your burden is light. Lord, I'm weighed down right now, and I need something from You, Lord. And may I remind You Lord, You said that if we lack wisdom, we only had to ask You. Lord, I'm at crossroads right now. I need Your wisdom. I need that direction. O Lord, I'm reminding You about it.

And so beloved, to be able to bring to remembrance the things that God has spoken to you is quite okay to do.

4. Something to ensure.

Ensure what? God's presence with us. God's presence with you and with me. As the old hymn that we sang this last Sunday "In the Garden" goes:

And He walks with me
And He talks with me
And He tells me that I am His own.
And the joy we share
As we tarry there,
None other has ever known.

To be able to aspire for His continued presence in our lives. Regardless of our condition or circumstance, beloved, God is with us. Our situations don't change God. He is still with us.

Gladys Aylword, in her harrowing journey out of war-torn Yancheng, as she was trying to reach safety, had a 13-year-old girl with her who reminded her saying, "Don't forget! You told us about Moses in the wilderness," referring to God's promise of His continued presence with them. And Gladys then replied and said, "Yes my dear. But I'm not Moses," to which the little girl replied, "Yes, but God is still God." God is still God of your situation or your circumstance.

What does God's presence do?

- God's presence provides direction. The Psalmist says, "He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake." Then in Isaiah 30, "Your ears shall hear a word behind you saying, 'This is the way, walk in it.'" When you turn to the right or to the left. God gives you direction.

I wonder if there's somebody out there listening – if you're seeking guidance today regarding work, or a decision to be made. Maybe finances, or a relationship, or career change, or even choosing a career path, that you need God's direction

- God's presence promises rest. "My presence shall go with you and I will give you rest." (vs 14). Then in Mark 6:31 When so many people came to Jesus, He told them, "Come with Me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."
Psalm 127:2 "In vain you rise early and stay up late toiling for food to eat, for He grants sleep to those He loves."

I wonder if you're striving, beloved. I wonder whether you're burning the midnight oil, stressed out, tired, worn out. I wonder if it's time to ask God for rest that comes with His presence.

- God's presence sets us apart. It distinguishes us from all other people. "Is it not by Thy going with us, so that we, I and Thy people, may be distinguished from all the other people who are upon the face of the earth?" We are a unique people, people that God has called and chosen. Peter reminds us – "But you are God's chosen and special people; you are a group of royal priests and a holy nation. God has brought you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Now you must tell all the wonderful things that He has done."

What distinguishes us from other people? Our integrity, our joy, our love for people, the peace that we have in our lives, honesty, kindness – the fruit of the Spirit! Love, joy, long-suffering, patience, a witness to the world in the midst of trials and difficult situations. All of this makes us a 'set apart' people.

Oh that even today, we might hear God say to us, "I will do this thing that you are asking." So what are you asking beloved? As we come to the table, what needs do you bring before Him? What entanglements do you want to be rid of? What wise words do you need to hear?

Corri Ten Boom once remarked, "Don't wrestle with God; nestle with God." Maybe that's what you need. Will you bring it to Him and hear Him say, "I will do this thing of which you have spoken." May it be so Lord. Amen.