

# **Moses' Prayer When Things are Bad**

**EXODUS 33: 12-23**

---

# The book of Exodus ...

- an encounter with the character of God

---

- about the mercy, justice, holiness, sovereignty, and glory of almighty God ...
  
- Who rules history by His sovereign power
- Who saves the people of His covenant
- Who delivers His people from bondage

# Exodus at a glance

Focus	Redemption from Egypt				Revelation from God	
Divisions	Need for Redemption	Preparation for Redemption	Redemption of Israel	Preservation of Israel	Revelation of the Covenant	Response to the Covenant
	Ch. 1	Chs. 2 - 4	5: 1 – 15:21 15:22 – 18:27		Chs. 19 - 31	Chs. 32-40
Place	Egypt		Wilderness		Mount Sinai	
Time	430 years		2 months		10 months	

# **God appeared to them and said ...**

---

“You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself.<sup>5</sup> 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,<sup>6</sup> you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” (Exodus 19: 4-6)

# **High point in Israel's history**

---

- we would expect the people to fully obey God
- But ... what actually happened?

# High point in Israel's history ?

---

- Giving the Ten Commandments (chs. 19 – 24)
- Instructions on the Tabernacle (chs. 25 – 31:11)
- God's Holy Day (31: 12-18)
- Unholy Cow – the Golden Calf (32:1-6)
- Go down, Moses (32: 7-14)
- Oh, Brother! (32: 15-24)
- Who's on the Lord's Side? (32: 25-35)

# High point in Israel's history ?

- Giving the Ten Commandments (ch. 19 – 24)

---

- Instructions re Tabernacle (ch. 25 – 31:11)
- God's Holy Day (31: 12-18)
- Unholy Cow (32:1-6)
- Go down, Moses (32: 7-14)
- Oh, Brother! (32: 15-24)
- Who's on the Lord's Side? (32: 25-35)
- Moses' Three Requests (33: 1-23)
- When God Passes By (34: 1-7)

# Things look really bad !

- Then the LORD said to Moses, “Leave this place, you and the people you brought up out of Egypt, and go up to the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’<sup>2</sup> I will send an angel before you and drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.<sup>3</sup> Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way.” (Exod. 33: 1-3)

# Moses' first request

Moses said to the LORD, “You have been telling me, ‘Lead these people,’ but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, ‘I know you by name and you have found favor with me.’ <sup>13</sup> If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people.” (Exod. 33: 12-13)

# Moses' first request

Moses said to the LORD, “You have been telling me, ‘Lead these people,’ but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, ‘I know you by name and you have found favor with me.’ <sup>13</sup> If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people.” (Exod. 33: 12-13)

# **know someone ≠ know about that person**

---

- Read a lengthy biography?
- Arrange to meet the person?
- person chooses to be friends with us

You are my friends if you do what I command.  
I no longer call you servants, because a servant  
does not know his master's business. Instead, I  
have called you friends, for everything that I  
learned from my Father I have made known to  
you. (John 15: 14-15)

## **Moses' 2<sup>nd</sup> request**

---

Then Moses said to him, “If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?”  
(Exod. 33: 15-16)

## Moses' 2<sup>nd</sup> request

---

Then Moses said to him, “If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?” (Exod. 33: 15-16)

# **Can have everything you want ... except my Presence**

**“The critical question for our generation—and for every generation—is this: If you could have heaven, with no sickness, and with all the friends you ever had on earth, and all the food you ever liked, and all the leisure activities you ever enjoyed, and all the natural beauties you ever saw, all the physical pleasures you ever tasted, and no human conflict or any natural disasters, could you be satisfied with heaven, if Christ were not there?”**

**- John Piper**

# Satisfied with heaven if Christ not there?

---

- “I would rather live in this desert in a tent than to go to the promised land and live in a permanent home without You” – Moses
  
- “How will anyone know that you look favorably on me—on me and on your people—if you don’t go with us? For your presence among us sets your people and me apart from all other people on the earth.” (Exod. 33: 16; NLT)

# Moses' audacious\* requests

I want to know You.

---

I want You to live with us.

\* audacious: having the bravery to do something that could offend others. This word has both a +ve (brave, bold) connotation and a –ve (rude, disrespectful) connotation

# Moses' audacious\* requests

- I want to know You

---

  - I want You to live with us
  - I want to see Your glory
- 
- \* audacious: having the bravery to do something that could offend others. This word has both a +ve (brave, bold) connotation and a –ve (rude, disrespectful) connotation

# Prayer during hard times

- I want to know You

---

- I want You to live with us
- I want to see Your glory
  
- Not prayer we think we need ... but prayer that focuses on what we need the most
- Not only what we need ... but what God wants for us

# Moses' 3<sup>rd</sup> request

---

Then Moses said, “Now show me your glory.”

(Exod. 33: 18)

- God’s glory is “... the infinite beauty and greatness of His manifold perfections” – John Piper

# We're “glory junkies”

---

Human beings are hardwired by God for glory, for awe, to have our minds blown, our hearts expanded, to be taken beyond the normal, the mundane, to be absorbed into what is wonderful and beautiful and satisfying.

... That is why we like the triple overtime NBA game or the seven layer mousse cake or the movie that just keeps us on the edge of our seats. Those are a created sort of glories. ...

# We're “glory junkies”

Here is the role of created glory: It is one big finger to point me to the only glory that will ever satisfy my heart. Earth will never satisfy me. ... It will never give my heart peace or life or hope or meaning or satisfaction or contentment. And so, as long as there is sin inside of me, there will be that war for what kind of glory will rule my heart. Will my heart be ruled and my life be shaped by an anxious pursuit of created glory, or will my heart find its rest in the glory of God?

<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/life-is-one-big-glory-war>

# God grants Moses' 3<sup>rd</sup> request

---

And the LORD said, “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.”

(Exod. 33: 19-20)

# God's 3-part response

---

- ❑ I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you
- ❑ I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence
- ❑ I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion
- ❑ (But you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live)

# God's response to Moses' 3<sup>rd</sup> request

*I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you*  
– covenant between God & Israel being renewed

I will proclaim **my name**,

**the LORD**, in your presence

God said to Moses, “**I AM WHO I AM**. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

**God also** said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘The **LORD**, the God of your fathers ... has sent me to you.’” (Exod. 3: 14-15)

# God's response to 3<sup>rd</sup> request

- *I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you*  
– covenant being renewed
- *I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence*  
– God calls upon Moses again to lead His people
- *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion*
- (But you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live)

# God's sovereignty and God's grace

- ❑ I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion (NIV)
  
- ❑ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy (ESV)
  
- ❑ I'll treat well whomever I want to treat well and I'll be kind to whomever I want to be kind. (MSG)

# **God's sovereignty and God's grace**

- Nothing Israel could do to earn God's favor

---

- Nothing Moses could say or do to persuade God be gracious to sinful, stiff-necked Israel
- God's sovereignty and grace always together
- Whenever grace is shown, it is God exercising His sovereign will
- Either grace or merit ... and no one can ever be saved based on personal merit before God

# **God's absolute sovereignty - one aspect of His “glory”**

---

- Free to do anything He chooses and it will always be consistent with His character
- In His holiness, He could have destroyed sinful Israel
- In His mercy, He could choose to forgive Israel – provided that their sins were atoned for

# For us today ...

- Jesus Christ is our Mediator
- Jesus Christ is the final sacrifice offered to atone for our sins
- The path to forgiveness and restoration is before us

Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off.

(Rom. 11: 22; ESV)