



Exodus 31-33

Shall we turn in our Bibles now to the thirty-first chapter of the book of Exodus.

God has given unto Moses the plan for the tabernacle; a place where God might dwell in the midst of God's people, a place where the people can come and meet God. The tabernacle was to be in the center of the camp. God was to be at the center of the national life. The tabernacle had to be portable, because they were moving through the wilderness; spending awhile in an area, then moving on for awhile, and then camping again, and moving along. Whenever the cloud would move, they would move. Whenever the cloud would stand still, they would set up the tabernacle, and they would stay as long as the cloud stayed, and then ready to move again when the cloud moved.

So it had to be portable; and as you read the design of the tabernacle, you realize how wisely it was constructed as a portable place of worship. The way it was put together, the way it could be dismantled and carried, and then assembled again; and this was to be their sanctuary until the time of David, when the tabernacle was then, in Solomon's time actually, the tabernacle was replaced with the temple.

You remember David said, "It's not right that I dwell in this beautiful palace, and God's still in a tent. I'm going to make a house for the LORD." And it was in the heart of David to make the temple. God did not allow him that privilege because he was a man of blood, he had been in too many battles; and so it was given to Solomon, the son of David, to build the temple.

Now, having given the instructions; the curtains upon which were to be embroidered the cherubim, the various dishes and spoons and shovels and pans and tables and altars that were to be made; we find that the LORD then anointed certain men with His Spirit, and gave to them cunning ability at craftsmanship.

There are many gifts of God to man; many gifted people. I always admire a person who has a gift. There are people who are gifted with the ability to play music. When I tried to play the piano, I had to practice for an hour a day, and it never did come out right. I had to work at it. There are some people that can just sit down and play; I mean, it's just in them, there's a gift; and I believe that it is a gift of God, and I believe that it's given to glorify God. I think that all of the gifts that God has given are basically to glorify God with those gifts. And I think that it is a prostitution of the gift when I use it for something other than glorifying God.

People are gifted with the capacity of mathematics. They really don't have to work hard at the subject, they just have a natural pension towards math, naturally understanding. It's built somewhere into the genes.

Now, these men were gifted by the Holy Spirit.

So the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah;

Going on back, he was the son of Pherez, who was the son of Tamar, from Judah.

I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship,

So God just have this fellow special skills in craftsmanship; the ability to work with his hands, and to figure things out. And again, there are people who are gifted in this area, artisans, those that just have that

natural capacity in furniture making, and in other artistic crafts. And so, God gave to them this gift,

to design the artistic works, to work in silver, gold, and bronze, in the cutting of the jewels for setting, in the carving of the wood, and to work in all manner of workmanship. And I, indeed, I have appointed with him Aholiab, of the tribe of Dan; and I have put wisdom in the hearts of all who are gifted artisans, that they may make all that I have commanded you;

So, the tabernacle needs to be built. God anoints with His Holy Spirit men to do the job.

The tabernacle of meeting, the ark of the testimony, and of the mercy seat that is on it, and all of the furniture of the tabernacle; the table, the utensils, the lamp stand with all it's utensils, the snuffer's and so forth, the altar of incense, the altar of burnt offering with all of it's utensils, the laver, the base, the garments for the ministry, the holy garments for Aaron the priest, the garments for his sons, to minister as priest's, the anointing oil, and all that is necessary for the tabernacle worship.

Having then gifted these men to do the work, the LORD then spoke to Moses concerning the Sabbath law.

Speak also to the children of Israel, saying, Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep; for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generation; that you may know that I am JEHOVAH who sanctifies, or sets you apart.

Now, God gave to Abraham the covenant of circumcision. To Moses He made another covenant, whereby they might be acclaimed always as the people of God; and this is the Sabbath day for their worship, for their holy day.

You shall keep the Sabbath therefore; it is holy to you; every one who profanes it shall surely be put to death;

And so, we think of that as a pretty severe punishment for a person who would violate the Sabbath.

Whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people.

That is, put to death.

Work shall be done for six days; but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on the Sabbath day, will surely be put to death.

Now, we think of that as extremely severe; and the Jews did develop, and even to the present day among the orthodox, have developed a very strict adherence to the Sabbath day. There are areas in Jerusalem today where you dare not drive your car through the neighborhood on the Sabbath day; there are barricades, there are little boys with piles of stones near the barricades, and if you dare drive by, evidently there's nothing in the law against throwing stones on the Sabbath day, and they will pelt your car with stones.

They prepare all of their food on Friday. They put a big pot of hot water on with the electric plate under it, and plug it in before the sun goes down Friday night. If they fail to plug it in before the sun goes down, then they can't plug it in. They can't have their coffee over the Sabbath, because you can't light any fires on the Sabbath day. So they prepare all their food on Friday, and then they rest. And they really do rest on the Sabbath day. It's a family day. It's a day of relaxation. It's a day of rest; and I think it's a tremendous idea. I

like it. I only wish I could observe it.

It's a sign between God and the nation of Israel. It is not a sign between God and the church, nor God and the Gentiles.

Notice verse 16;

Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generation, as a perpetual covenant.

It's God's covenant between Him and the nation of Israel. It is not something that was placed upon the Gentile believers, or upon the church.

Now, there are some within the church who seek to put themselves back under the yoke of the law; and there are some churches that insist upon Sabbath day worship. You have the Seventh-day Adventists, you have the Seventh-day Baptists, and you have the World Church of Herbert W. Armstrong, you have even the Jehovah's Witnesses who convene on Saturdays.

But, it is a covenant between God and Israel. When, in the early church, there were certain from Jerusalem who came down to Antioch to spy out the liberty that the Gentile Christians had, they became upset when they saw the liberty of the church of Antioch, and they said, "Unless you keep the law of Moses and are circumcised, you can't be saved." So Paul herded these guys up, and he said, "Let's go up to Jerusalem. We'll settle this thing once and for all."

And so, they came up to Jerusalem. They called a church council. And Peter spoke first and he told how God called him to the Gentiles and how God blessed the Gentiles and poured His Spirit upon them. Peter, I mean, then Paul and Barnabas gave witness of how God had been working among the Gentiles throughout the world in their missionary journeys. Then James finally said, "I suggest that we write them a letter, and tell them to keep themselves from fornication and things offered to idols, and if they do this, they do well."

And so, those were the only restrictions they saw necessary to put upon the Gentile believers. Peter said, "Why should we put on them a yoke of bondage that neither we nor our fathers were able to bear."

It is interesting to note that Jesus was constantly being accused of violating their Sabbath. You weren't to do any labor; any hard type of labor. That was forbidden. But to help to relieve from suffering; that was acceptable. Jesus said, "Hey, if you have an ox that's fallen into a ditch on the Sabbath day, you're going to pull him out of the Sabbath day." You're not going to say, "Sorry ox, you're going to have to stay in there 'til tomorrow, 'til the sun goes down. Then we'll get a crew over here, and we'll pull you out."

They had developed traditions. What constitutes bearing a burden? You're not to bear a burden on the Sabbath day. What constitutes a burden? Well, do you have a glass eye? It's not natural, it's a burden. Can't wear it on the Sabbath day. Do you have false teeth? Can't use them on the Sabbath day. Do you have a wooden leg? Can't use it on the Sabbath day. All of those are bearing burdens, according to the traditions that developed around the Sabbath day. I don't know what they've done with false eyelashes.

It is interesting how they have developed ways of getting around the Sabbath. You can't spend money on the Sabbath day. You can go to restaurant and eat, if you can find a restaurant that'll serve you. When they're here in the states, they will go to a restaurant on the Sabbath day, providing the restaurant will take a

Visa or a Master Card. They can't pay with cash, but they say, "Well, you're not really paying when you use the Visa." My wife has bought that philosophy. She's not here tonight, but she is listening on the radio. Hi, honey.

So, it's to be a sign, notice God said, between Him and the children of Israel forever;

for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed. And when He had made the end of speaking with him on mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.

The ark of the covenant later contained the two tablets. Not these; these were broken by Moses in the next chapter. Then God made two more stones. I would think that one of the greatest archeological discoveries that might be made would be the discovery of the ark of the covenant, because in it are the two tables of stone upon which God Himself wrote the Ten Commandments. That would be awesome to see. There are a lot of people looking for Noah's Ark. That would be a tremendous archeological find; but it seems to me the greatest archeological find would be if someone could find that ark of the covenant, and perhaps see those stones.

CHAPTER 32

Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain,

He was up there a total of forty days. And so after, probable thirty, thirty-five days, the people started getting restless. About a month had gone by, Moses had been gone,

the people gathered together to Aaron, and they said, Come and make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we don't know what's become of him. So Aaron said to them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me. So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron.

There are some commentators who believe that Aaron thought that they wouldn't do it. He put upon them a very tough thing; I mean, their earrings were valued very highly to them, and he figured that they wouldn't do it. But they were so anxious to have a representative of their god; some representation, some visible representation; that they took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron.

And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt. So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation, and said, Tomorrow is a feast to JEHOVAH.

Now this calf that they made was to be to the people a visible representation of their god. It is interesting how that people like something visible that they can worship. They want a representation of some sort. And thus, man is always, it seems, seeking to make some kind of a representation of their god, that they might worship that representation; a statue, an image, an idol; because within us, we have this desire to worship, but there also seems to be that desire to see the object of worship.

Now, God had strictly forbidden this. In the Ten Commandments, God said, "You're not to make any graven image of any likeness of things in heaven and earth, to bow down to them or worship them." You're not to try to make a representation of God.

When a man makes an idol, it first declares that that man has lost the consciousness of the presence of God in his life, and he seeks something that would remind him of God's presence. If you really live with the consciousness of God's presence, you don't need some kind of a visible representation. That desire for visible representation testifies that you've lost your consciousness of God's presence in your life.

The second thing it indicates is that inwardly, you are desiring somehow to regain that which you've lost. Your desire is for God, and your desire is to have some kind of a reminder, or representation that will bring to you the awareness of God's presence, or God's work.

We are told that when Hezekiah became the king, the people had made many images throughout the land. They had built altars, worship centers; and they were worshipping the various gods of the Canaanites. And so, one of the first orders of business for Hezekiah was breaking down all of these altars and idols that had been made by the people.

And it says he took also the brass serpent that Moses had made in the wilderness, and he broke it in pieces, saying, "Nohooshtan." In time, that brass serpent that Moses had made in the wilderness and placed on the pole, had become an object of worship for the people. They had made an idol out of it, and they were worshipping it. They would stand there and revere this brass serpent that Moses had made, looking upon it, because it reminded them of that work of God in their midst. They had lost the consciousness of God. They needed something to remind them. There was a longing inside for God.

So the people here come to Aaron; "Make us a god to go before us. A representation, something that we can carry in front of the people when go, so that we can be reminded of God, God leading us."

So he made a mold, took their gold, poured it into the mold, and took out the golden calf, and said, "This is the god that brought you out of Egypt. Tomorrow will be a feast to JEHOVAH."

The people rose early the next day, excited, they offered burnt offerings, they brought peace offerings; and they sat down to eat and to drink, and they rose up to play.

So, the burnt offerings were consecration offerings, the peace offerings were fellowship offerings; and with the peace offering, you roasted part of it, and you ate it, and the priest ate part of it. Part was for God, part was for you; part was burned as a sacrifice to God, and the rest you ate; and as you sat down to eat, it was a time of fellowshiping with God, but then they rose up to play.

And the LORD said to Moses, who was up on mount Sinai, Go down; for your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves; they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them; they have made themselves a molded calf, and worshipped it, and sacrificed to it, and said, This is your God, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt. And the LORD said to Moses, I have seen this people, and indeed, it is a stiff-necked people.

Like a horse, where you try and move his head to turn him to the right or left, he just stiffens his neck, and goes where he wants. So the people, a stiff-necked people.

God said,

Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them, and I may consume them; and I will make you a great nation. Then Moses pleaded with the LORD his God, and said, LORD,

why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people, who You brought out of the land of Egypt.

Notice how he tosses the ball right back to God. Verse 7;

God, get down; for your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves,

the LORD said to Moses. Moses said,

LORD, why are you angry with Your people who You brought out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?

Now, there are some difficulties with our text. The difficulties lie in what we view to be an apparent angry God being conciliated by Moses. In a sense, it looks like God is the hot head, and Moses is the cool head. God is wanting to wipe them out, and Moses is interceding for them; and that through Moses perseverance, God's mind was changed, and God then did not wipe them out as the result of Moses' intercession.

Our problems lie in language. God is infinite, and yet, we must describe God in human, finite terminology; words that we know, words that we understand. We have to explain the actions of God with words that we understand. And so, we read, "It repented God," or God repented, and did not slay them. And we say, "Well, God changed His mind. Moses was successful in his intercession. Changed the mind of God." Yet we read that God is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent, or change. Hath He not spoken, and shall He not do it? God said, "Behold, I am God. I change not."

As we get into this interchange with Moses and God, and we see Moses interceding for the people, it is important that we remember where the inspiration came from that inspired Moses to pray for the people. Who was it that inspired Moses to pray? Where does true prayer begin? True prayer begins with God, the heart of God. Moses was inspired by God to pray for these people.

Now, what had happened is that the people had indeed violated the law of God seriously, and whoever broke this law was to be cut off, they were to be slain. The wages of sin is death. From a technical standpoint, they had brought upon themselves the sentence of death, and God, in being just and righteous, was, in a sense, bound to put them to death, but He didn't want to. He needed an excuse not to.

And so, He lays it upon the heart of Moses to intercede for the people, that through that intercession, God might have an out. And He retreats into His grace, and in His mercy; and He said, "I will show mercy upon whom I will have mercy, and grace upon whom I will have grace," and He just retreated into His sovereignty and didn't wipe them out.

But, as we read it, it would appear, and that's because we have to use human language, it would appear that God had changed, that Moses was successful, that Moses had used the logic and reasoning, and had argued God out of what God was wanting to do; which really is not the case, because Moses was inspired by God for his prayers.

So Moses pleaded with the LORD. And he said,

Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth?

You know, if you wipe them out here, then the Egyptians are going to say, "Man, their God is really a mean one. He just took them out there so that He can wipe them out in the wilderness."

So turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, I will multiply you're descendants as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever. So the LORD repented from the harm which He said He would do to His people.

So Moses reminds God of His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and to Jacob. And, as I say, it would appear that Moses, using this logic and all, was able to intervene, change God's mind; but the inspiration came from God Himself.

Moses turned, went down from the mountain with the two tables of the testimony in his hand; the tables were written on both sides; the one side and on the other they were written.

God had placed the law upon these two tables of stones.

Now, the tablets were the work of God, the writing was the writing of God engraved on the tablets. And when Joshua heard the noise,

Evidently, Joshua was waiting halfway up in the mountain. He was the minister of Moses; a young man who was a servant to Moses, attended on his needs; and was waiting up in the mountain for Moses. He had journeyed a certain distance up into the mountain, and then waited as Moses went on to the top and talked with God.

And so, Joshua heard the noise of the people. Now, Joshua had not heard what God told Moses concerning what was going on. He heard the shout, and said to Moses,

There's the noise of war in he camp. Moses said, No, it's not the voice of those who are shouting in victory, or those who are crying in defeat that you hear, but it's the voice of those who sing. And so it was as soon as they came near the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing; and Moses' anger became hot, he cast the tablets out of his hands, and broke them at the foot of the mountain.

Thou shalt have not other gods beside Me. Thou shalt not make any graven image of any likeness of things in heaven and earth to bow down and worship. They were guilty of violating the first two basic commands. The law was broken. And so, Moses threw the tables of stone down in his anger, and they were broken. Symbolic of the actions of the people.

And then he took the calf which they had made, he burned it in the fire, ground it to powder, scattered it on the water, and then he made the people drink the water. And Moses said to Aaron, What did the people do to you, that you've brought such a great sin upon them? And Aaron said, Do not let the anger of my lord become hot; you know the people, they are set on evil. For they said to me, Make us gods that shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we don't know what's become of him. And I said to them, Whoever has any gold, let him break it off. So they gave it to me; I cast it in the fire, and this calf came out.

Pretty lame, Aaron. Boy, isn't it amazing how we can rationalize and explain ourselves where we sound so innocent? "You know, I just threw the gold in the fire, and this thing came out, man." Yet, we read where he had fashioned it with an engraving tool.

So, when Moses saw that the people were unrestrained, or naked (for Aaron had not restrained them, to their shame among their enemies;)

Their dancing became quite sensuous, as was the case in most of the ancient culture. The dances were quite often fertility type dances, and they ended in a big sexual orgy. And so, Moses saw this whole scene.

And Moses stood in the entrance of the camp, and said, Whoever is on the LORD's side let him come to me. Come out of the camp. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him. And he said to them, Thus says the LORD God of Israel, Let every man put his sword in his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every man kill his brother, his companion, his neighbor. So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses; and about three thousand men of the people fell that day.

The men of Levi were used as the executioners to go in and to destroy those who were the ring leaders in this movement away from the LORD. Very severe punishment and penalty.

Then Moses said, Consecrate yourselves today to the LORD, that He may bestow upon you a blessing this day, for every man has opposed his son, and his brother. And so it came to pass the next day, Moses said to the people, You have sinned a great sin; so now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement, or a covering, for your sin. So Moses returned to the LORD, and said, Oh, these people have sinned a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold. Yet, now, if you will forgive their sin---

And then you notice the dash there. That indicates that there was a pause. There was a hesitation. How long, we don't know. Could have been five minutes, ten minutes, maybe an hour that Moses just waited. And if you will forgive their sin--- Waiting for God to respond, waiting for God to answer, and when there was no answer forthcoming from God. Then Moses added,

but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written.

I don't think that we, on our level of dedication or commitment can really understand this prayer of Moses; how he could request God to blot his name out of the book of life if God was unwilling to forgive the people. Surely, Moses had the heart of a leader, and the heart for the people such as is rare in history.

I know of only one other man who made a statement somewhat equal to that, and that was Paul in Romans, where he said, "I could wish myself accursed for my brethren according to the flesh, for Israel, for their salvation. I could wish myself accursed if they would only be saved."

How much of a burden do we have for the lost. How much of a burden do you have for the lost around you? God help us; we hardly have enough burden to even tell them of Jesus Christ. We so often just sort of say, "Well, isn't that too bad?" And we don't even have enough of a burden to share with them, much less to be so concerned that we say, "God, I wish that I myself could be accursed if they could only be saved."

Now, it can't be. God said, "Whoever sins, I will hold him responsible. The son will not suffer for his dad's sin, nor the dad's for the son, but every man's sins will be upon himself, and every man must bear the responsibility for his own sin.

There is only one who bore the responsibility for sin that is really valid, and that's Jesus Christ, and He bore the responsibility for your and my sin. He died in our place, and that is valid. He tasted of death for us.

Therein is, of course, love; God's love manifested.

Here is Moses' tremendous prayer of intercession.

And the Lord said to Moses, Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book. Now, therefore go, and lead the people to the place of which I have spoken to you; behold, My angel shall go before you; nevertheless in the day when I visit for punishment, I will visit punishment upon them for their sin.

Go ahead, take them. I'll let My angel go. Lead them into the land. But when the day comes for punishment, I'll take care of them.

Now, it could be that God is making reference here to the fact that they are not going to be able to go into the promised land, but the punishment was the forty years that they wandered in the wilderness, until that whole generation died. They didn't inherit the promise because of their unbelief.

So the LORD plagued the people, because of what they did with the calf which Aaron had made.

CHAPTER 33

Then the LORD said to Moses, Now depart, and go up from here, you and the people who you've brought out of the land of Egypt, to the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying to your descendant, I'll give it you. And I'll send My angel before you; and I'll drive out the inhabitants, so go up to the land that's flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in Your midst lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people.

Now, herein is interesting. God is declaring the reason for not going up is; knowing the character of these people, stiff-necked, sinful, God's presence in their midst could be a destroying presence. Our God is a consuming fire. The presence of God can be a dangerous thing. It can be a destructive thing.

When Sennacherib, the Assyrian king, had come against the city of Jerusalem, and had besieged the city, cutting off the supplies; he had sent Rabshakeh up to the wall to demand that the people surrender, telling them not to trust in the words of their prophets, who told them that the Lord will deliver them; for what god is able to deliver from the powerful king, Sennacherib. All of the rest of the countries, their gods were insufficient. No god was as great as Sennacherib; and so, don't trust in your king, but go ahead and surrender, and we'll treat you well if you'll just surrender.

And the prophet Isaiah was saying to the king, "Look, just stand still. See the salvation of the Lord. The battle isn't yours, but God's."

One morning when the children of Israel woke up, and the guards looked out over the wall at the Assyrian camp, they saw the entire Assyrian army lying dead on the ground. Hundred and eighty-five thousand slain in one night by the angel of the LORD.

And upon this occasion, Isaiah tells us that fear gripped the hearts of the sinners in Zion. Those that were in the city, who weren't walking right with God, when they saw the effect of God's power and presence in the Assyrian camp, fear gripped their heart. They said, "Who amongst us can dwell in the midst of this devouring fire?"

That word "dwell" in Hebrew is an interesting word. It can be translated, "approach this devouring fire." Who amongst us can dwell, or who amongst us can approach, this devouring fire? Who amongst us can approach God, or dwell with God? The presence of God as a devouring fire against sin and unrighteousness.

And so, God said, "I won't go up with you, lest My presence destroy the people. I'll send My angel."

And so, when Moses told the people these grave tidings, they mourned, and no one put on his ornaments. For the LORD had said to Moses, Say to the children of Israel, You are a stiff-necked people. I could come up into your midst in one moment, and consume you. Now, therefore, take off your ornaments, that I may know what to do to you. So the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by mount Horeb.

It is indicated in the Hebrew text that they did not put them on again. In other words, they stripped them off for good, as a sign of their commitment unto God.

So Moses took his tent, and he pitched it outside of the camp;

Picked up his tent, and he moved it outside of the camp; far from the camp;

and he called it the tabernacle of meeting.

So the tabernacle had not yet been constructed, we're going to get to that next week; but he took a tent, and pitched it far outside of the camp, and he said, "This is the place where you're going to meet God."

And so it was, whenever Moses went out to this tent, that all the people rose,

Probably in respect to this man of God.

and each man stood at his tent door, and he watched Moses, until he had gone into the tent. And it came to pass when Moses entered the tent, that the pillar of cloud descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the LORD talked with Moses. And the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the tent door; and all the people rose and they worshipped; each man in his tent door. So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp; but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle.

So Joshua just stayed out there. Moses would come back to the camp, probably at another tent in the camp in which he slept; but Joshua stayed out there at this tent of meeting, where Moses would go out and meet with God, and talk with God.

Interesting thing; he talked with God face to face, as a man speaks with a friend. What kind of communion, or communication do you have with God? "Oh, eternal God, creator of the universe, Thou who sittest in the glory of the heavens, Thou who stretchest forth the stars as a canopy above the earth, most holy God..." How do you communicate with Him? In a very formal, stilted way? Or do you communicate with God as friend with friend?

How do you think God wants to communicate with you? How do you want your kids to communicate with you? "Oh, most noble father, thou who providest a bed for me to sleep in, and places food upon the table for me to eat. How wonderful and noble are your ways, oh father." I'd think, "Man, these kids have gone wacky." "Hey, Dad, need the car tonight. How about it, Dad?"

How do you communicate with God? What kind of a relationship do you have with Him? How wonderful it is when a person has that beautiful, neat, relaxed kind of a relationship with God.

Paul declares to the Ephesians, "That Christ might settle down and make Himself at home in your heart." Do you feel all stiff and formal when you get around the Lord, or do you feel relaxed? Is it a friend, or is it a...? God wants to be a friend to you. Jesus said, "Henceforth, I no longer call you servants. They don't know what they're master does. I call you friends." The Lord wants a close, intimate, informal kind of a fellowship with you. Talk to Him as a friend.

A lot of time we've got prayer all confused, because we think that; we confuse it with form. I can't really pray unless I'm kneeling down with my eyes closed and my hands folded. Now I'm going to pray. And we don't have that kind of a warm, intimate relationship with God where I can just pour out my heart, I can just share my feelings, and know that as a friend, He will understand what I'm trying to say, even though I may not express it too well. And He'll just cast off the chaff, and keep the wheat, and ignore those wrong things that I may say, and just hold to that which is good. That's what a friend is all about. He listens to you without judgment. You can open your heart to them. You can open your heart to God.

Moses had this kind of a relationship with the Lord; the kind God wants you to have.

Then Moses said to the LORD, Now look, You say to me, Bring up his people; but You haven't introduced me to the one that You're going to send with me. Yet You have said that you know me by name, and that I have found grace in Your sight. Now therefore, I pray, if I have really found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You, and that I might indeed find grace in Your sight; and consider that this nation is really Your people. And so God said, My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.

So, Moses said, "Look, You say You're going to send an angel. I don't know the angel; never met the angel. I know You. You say you know me, You know me by my name. I don't want Your angel. I want you. If I've found grace in Your sight; now remember, these are Your people. They don't want a substitute." Why settle for an angel when you can have the Lord? A lot of people willing to. Sad, they're looking for angels.

And the LORD said, My presence will go with you, I will give you rest. Then he said to Him, If Your presence does not go with us, don't even bring us up from here.

Let us just stay right here and die right here. Lord, we don't want to go on without You. Progress without God is impossible. "Lord, without You, we don't want to move. We'll die right here. Don't lead us on."

Moses had come to appreciate so much the presence of God, because he'd come to know Him as a God of power as he saw the works of God against the Egyptians. He knew Him as a God of resourcefulness as he saw Him give them water out of the rock and manna to eat, and sweeten the bitter waters of Marah. He knew Him as a God of gifts, as He was the anointing on Bezaleel. He knew Him as a God of love. "Don't want to go without You."

And so Moses said, How then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight unless you go with us?

Lord, if You don't go with us, then don't send us up. And how are they going to really know that they've found grace unless You're with us?

So we shall separate, Your people and I, from the people who are upon the face of the earth. And the LORD said to Moses, I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name.

Moses is on a roll, so he says, "Lord, how about showing me Your glory?" Please, Lord, I'd like to see Your glory."

You know, God says, "I know you by your name, and I will have grace," and all; and he says, "Well then, hey, I'd like to see Your glory."

And so God said, I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of JEHOVAH before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion upon whom I will have compassion.

So, God just retreated into His grace and compassion, grace and love; His sovereignty. "And I will be compassionate, and I will be graceful."

But God said to him, You cannot see my face; for no man shall see me, and live. And the LORD said, here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock; and so it shall be while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with My hand while I pass by; and then I will take My hand away, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen.

And so, this tremendous experience of seeing God; not His face, but the back. And there is a hint in the Hebrew language that actually, it was just sort of the afterglow. In other words, God would pass by, and you would just sort of see the afterglow, the radiation of the afterglow.

"No man can look at Me and live, but I'll put My hand over the rock, and then I'll pass by, and then I'll remove My hand, and you'll see the afterglow."

And even that was so remarkable that in the next chapter, we read that when Moses came down to talk to the people from this experience, his face was shining; where they said, "Hey, put a veil over your face. We can't stand to look at it." Having seen God. What an experience.

Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." One day we shall see Him; beholding. What will it be like? Whew, powerful. But you see, you've got to have a new body before you can do that. Never work in this body. I mean, it would just destroy you. You just couldn't handle it.

And so, the redeemed bodies, we will dwell with the Lord, and we shall see Him. Oh, what a day that will be! Shall we pray.

Father, we thank You that the administration of the law was such a glorious thing that Moses' face did shine to the extent it was necessary to veil it. And yet, Lord, the law was something that was to pass away, and it ministered death, judgments, condemnation. Oh, Lord, what a glory is revealed to us in Christ Jesus, in the new covenant that shall not pass away, but shall abide forever; the covenant that ministers life to the people. Oh, help us, Lord, with unveiled faces to behold the glory of the Lord, as You have revealed Yourself to us through the Spirit; and may we thus be changed from glory to glory into the same image, by the power of Your Spirit in us. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

May the Lord work His work in your heart and in your life this week, as He, by His Spirit conforms you

into the image of Jesus Christ, His Son, our Lord. May you have a beautiful week as you experience the presence and the power of God working in your life; smoothing out those rough edges, filling you with His love, and anointing you with His Spirit; gifting you with those various gifts of the Spirit, whereby your life can be an effective witness for Him. Oh, My you be enriched in your walk with Jesus. May you seek the Lord diligently with your whole heart, and may you find that sweet communion dwelling there in His presence. In Jesus' name.