

“Moses' Prayer” – Exodus 32:1-14

28/6/2020 Steve Christian

Welcome to church online. You might be sitting alone watching this. You might be with a few other people. You might be a part of our church family at Toowoomba North. You might associate with another church family. You might not be a part of a church family at all. But “Welcome”.

We meet together in this way and together we seek to worship our loving Heavenly Father and our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Once again, we'll have an opportunity to share in communion a little later.

Let us Pray.



It's now been 15 weeks since we met together in person. We began the year looking at the Exodus of God's people from slavery in Egypt. Today we conclude an eight week series on prayer that takes us back into the book of Exodus, and we'll spend a few more weeks following God's deliverance of His people into the Promised Land. What a wonderful God we serve and what a wonderful friend we have in Jesus.

Song: What a friend we have in Jesus

He's our friend; our faithful friend; forgiving friend; in whom we can be encouraged, comforted and strengthened; he is still our refuge when we are tempted, or in trouble and facing trials; he will always be our shield and place of solace. When you take things to the Lord in prayer; in facing some of your great struggles, would you like to think that you could change the mind of God? Would you like to see how your prayers can make a real difference? Then I invite you to turn with me in your Bibles to Exodus 32, where we see how Moses appears to change the mind of God. He was on Mount Sinai, receiving the Law from God Himself, when terrible things started happening down in the valley below.

Exodus 32:1-4 **“When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, “Come, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.” So Aaron said to them, “Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.” So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!”**

Moses was with God receiving the Law for a period of 40 days. Little wonder the people said they didn't know what had come of Moses; many perhaps presumed him dead. And so they turn to Aaron; led by the people, who were led by their religious experiences in Egypt, Aaron fashions a calf from the gold that was brought to him.

One would think that Aaron should have known better, but perhaps he too believes Moses to be dead, and so now under pressure he comes up with his own plan – because God always spoke to Moses first. But that calf was actually a young bull and in its day, was a symbol of fertility and sexual strength.

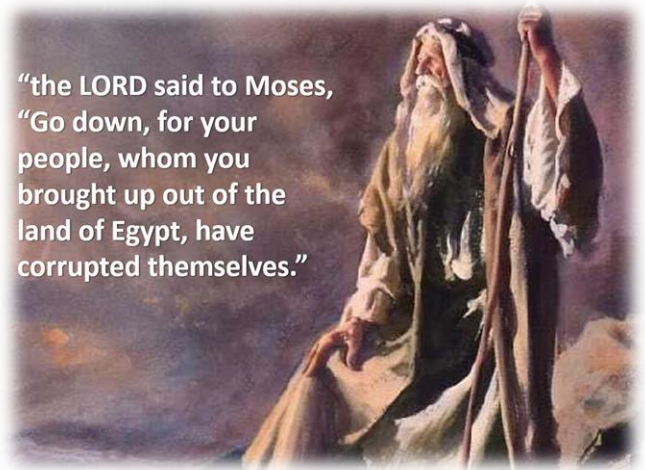
Verse 5, **“When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, “Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD”** (That is to YHWH). Aaron has the audacity to call this bull by God's personal name, YHWH! Little wonder the very first of the ten words from the Lord would be, “You shall have no other gods before me.”

Verse 6, **“And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink and then got up to indulge in revelry.”** The ESV puts it, **“they rose up to play.”** That is, to engage in sex games. This was a drunken orgy in the name of worship. God's chosen people are involved in gross immorality. And as a result, they have invited the wrath of God. God's anger is burning against them; gross immorality and idolatry (worshipping an idol).

Verse 7, And so, **“the LORD said to Moses, “Go down, for YOUR people, whom YOU brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves.”**

“Go down Moses.” Moses has just been enjoying a splendid time in the presence of God, and would naturally want to stay, but God says “Go down. Go and see just how far the people have so quickly fallen.”

“Go down Moses!” So often we want to stay in the glorious presence of God – enjoying the mountaintop experience, when there is a world of people around us heading toward destruction. Go down people (church) – you are in the world but not of the world – point people back to God.



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Verses 8-10 **“They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’ ” And the LORD said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you.”**

God is angry! God has just threatened to disown his own people. Notice, He says to Moses, they’re YOUR people. It sounds like God doesn’t want them anymore. God threatens to do as He did with Noah, and start all over again – this time with Moses.

But what a temptation for Moses? I wonder did Moses think, “Oh wow! I could be the father of God’s own people. I could be somebody!”

We’re often drawn to something because we want to be somebody; and pride drives us. But as we’ll see, Moses heart is for this people, and we’ll notice that Moses doesn’t pray for himself; but rather prays for the salvation of his people. Be careful the motivation that drives you.

At this point however, all looks grim for this multitude of people. God wants to destroy them and start over with Moses. Frankly, these people don’t have a leg to stand on; they don’t have a prayer.

And perhaps some of you find yourselves in a similar situation. Either because of your own doing or someone else’s, you find yourself in dire straits. Your situation is desperate, and you see no way out. Somebody once said, “You know it’s going to be a bad day when: Your twin sister forgets your birthday. Or you put both contact lenses in the same eye. Or you arrive at work to see a “Current Affair” news team in your office. Or you call Suicide Prevention and they put you on hold.”

Maybe you’ve had some bad days like that recently; you’re desperate and you see no way out. You’re at the end of your rope, and you don’t know what to do. Maybe you see how tough it is for someone else that you love and you desperately want things to turn around for them. The only hope you do have is that God might intervene. So how do you pray when you’re desperate? How do you pray when the situation seems hopeless? May I suggest that you pray like Moses. And we can learn from this story – particularly when it comes to the purpose of prayer.

Verse 11, And so, **“Moses implored the LORD his God and said, “O LORD, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?”**

You see what Moses is doing here? He is reminding God that they are HIS people. God had told Moses (vs.7), “They’re YOUR people, whom YOU brought up out of Egypt.” And Moses says, “Oh no, they’re not! Lord, they’re YOUR people, and YOU brought them out of Egypt.” Moses is not avoiding responsibility or shifting the blame, but rather appealing to God on the basis of His heart toward His people; he asks God to remember that they are His children.

We too, must ask God to remember His people – for everyone is made by the hand of God. The Apostle Peter wrote, **“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”** (2 Pet 3:9)

God’s heart is for people; that’s why He has made us; that’s why He made you; that’s why He sent Jesus – that none may perish. God’s heart is for people.

And God paid a huge price for our redemption. He paid a high price to set us free from slavery to sin and Satan. God paid a great price so He could adopt us into His family. He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Communion

Praise God that His wrath has not burnt hot against us, but rather He has revealed Himself to us, calling us into His family, forgiving us of our sin. Praise God, for the sacrificial death of His Son, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. As we take of the bread this morning let us think for a moment on Jesus death, and, the Life that He has brought for us. Take and eat.

And as we take the cup, we also thank you, Lord, that You don’t want for anyone to perish, but desire that all come to repentance. We take this now in grateful adoration, and we commit to living in obedience, seeking to bring honour to You.



God has indeed paid a great price for our redemption. Now, He certainly didn’t save us at such a high cost just to let us go, just to let us perish. And that’s the basis for our appeal as we come to Him in prayer. We have no merit of our own, only that God chose us to be His children. And so in prayer we appeal to God on the basis of our relationship with Him, and we remind God that His interests, His creation, His people, are at stake. Please God, don’t forget us Lord, and reveal yourself to the lost.

Thus, Moses appeal... **“O LORD, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?”** “These are your people Lord! May Your wrath not burn against those who don’t follow You, but remember Your great love for all people.”

And so, secondly, Moses appeals to God to remember His purposes. And His primary purpose is that He will be honoured and glorified above all else. God’s glory is at stake.

Verse 12, **“Why should the Egyptians say, ‘With evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth’? Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people.”** In other words Moses is saying, “Lord, if you destroy YOUR people, the Egyptians will think you’re an evil God. You’ll be discredited among them. Lord, YOUR glory is at stake here.” Moses asks God to remember His purpose, and that’s what we must do if our prayers are to be heard by God.

God is not some kind of ego maniac, who needs to have His ego stroked; God doesn’t need us; He doesn’t need our praise and adoration! We need Him, and we need to recognise that He deserves our praise and adoration; He deserves all the honour and glory that can be given; and those who are lost need to know that God exists and deserves their praise and adoration.

So, as we pray, are we praying first and foremost that God will be glorified – no matter how that might be affected? God was glorified through Jesus suffering and death. God was glorified through Pauls enduring a thorn in the flesh. God was glorified through the grief and loss that Job had to suffer and endure. Are we praying that God will be glorified, even though we can’t see how? Let us pray that God be glorified!

And so if we follow Moses example then as we pray we ask God to remember His people, His purposes, and His promise.

Verses 13-14, **“Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.’ ” And the LORD relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people.”**

Moses asks God to remember His promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; that He would take their offspring into the Promised Land. Now, I’m sure that God could have started over again with Moses, and technically the family group that would have followed would have been descendants of Abraham, but Moses sought to remind God of His promises before. And Moses demonstrates a faith in God to take these stiff-necked people and make them into a faithful God honouring people, and demonstrates too that he is not keen to promote Himself, but rather seeks again that God be glorified.

Thus Moses prays for the salvation of his people and verse 14 says that the Lord relented and did not bring disaster upon His people. God is faithful and true to His word. He can indeed be trusted. When King Solomon was dedicating the temple and the ark of the covenant had been brought in – included in King Solomon’s prayer are these words, **“Praise be to the LORD, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses.”** (1 Kings 8:56)

Not one word of His promises has failed! You and I can trust the promises of God.

So, when we consider this story this morning, we might think that we can change the mind of God. But I wonder, did God want Moses to intervene on behalf of his people? He asks Moses to go down; to leave His glorious presence, and see how far the people have deteriorated. Did God want Moses to stand in the gap and plead on their behalf to give us an example to follow, and give us confidence in the heart of our gracious God, that He too wants people to be saved? Was Moses changing God’s mind, or was he agreeing with God?

You see, somehow we have to balance the sovereignty of God (that he is in control of all things and can do all things) with the free will of humanity, and the idea that God also goes about achieving His purposes through human intervention; human prayer. He uses us as His agents.

R C Sproul wrote, “The mind of God does not change for God does not change. Things change, and they change according to His sovereign will, which He exercises through secondary means and secondary activities. The prayer of His people is one of the means He uses to bring things to pass in this world. And it is impossible to know how much of human history reflects God’s immediate intervention and how much reveals God working through human agents.” Like you and I.

You see, prayer is not your tool for manipulating God or forcing His hand, or attempting to change His mind. Prayer is not provided for you so that you will inform God of the most excellent way; your way. Prayer however appears to be one of the ways through which God accomplishes His plans. God has determined that He will work through the prayers of His people. Why, because it again demonstrates our dependence upon Him, and faith in Him. Our prayers are meaningful and effective. Prayer is God’s way of drawing us into the web of His work. When he says, “Who will stand in the gap for Toowoomba, or for our nation?” We should say, “We will.” “Who should stand in the gap for your loved, your lost family member, neighbour or work colleague?”

Sproul went on to say, “All that God does is for His glory first and for our benefit second. We pray because God commands us to pray, because it glorifies Him, and because it benefits us.” We pray because it glorifies God, and it benefits us.

Can we pray like Moses? Let us pray for the salvation of the lost; reminding God that they are His people; reminding God of His purposes and His promises.

