

I Will Pray

I Will Pray Like Moses

Exodus 32-33

January 15, 2023

HDBC

This morning we are beginning a new sermon series that will lay the foundation for a year-long emphasis on prayer. Last year our focus was ***I will serve***. We reinforced the need for each of us to have a ministry, to serve Christ and his church. This year the emphasis is ***I will pray***. Our purpose is to re-focus our attention on the all-important discipline of prayer. The hope is that it will spark a renewal of prayer in our church that will extend beyond one year. It starts with a sermon series on prayer. We will be looking at the prayers of several men & women in the Bible. We can learn from each one.

Today, I want to challenge you to join me in learning to pray like Moses. He was a courageous leader who faced some extremely difficult challenges. **He answered the call** of God to a task that seemed impossible. **He stayed the course** when opposition came. **He finished strong** even though he was not privileged to enter the promised land with his people. **And through it all, he prayed**. His prayer life was the foundation of his life and ministry. We would do well to learn to pray like Moses.

Exodus 32-33. In these two chapters we see three specific prayers of Moses. Taken together they paint a good picture of how Moses prayed. We learn one principle of prayer from each one. I think it will be helpful for me to provide some context. Here is a simple timeline leading to these prayers.

Moses leads people out of Egypt.

They cross the Red Sea and see Egyptian army drowned.

Lord provides water from rock (2 times).

The Lord provides manna for breakfast and quail for dinner.

The fight a battle against Amalekites. (Arms of Moses – Aaron/Hur)

Jethro recommends leadership organization for Moses.

They arrive at Mt. Sinai. Things get crazy, so Moses prays!

Moses is summoned to the mountain to meet with God. Chapter 19-31

While there he receives from God the Ten Commandments and other laws.

He stays longer than the people expected him to stay; 40 days.

The people get antsy, go crazy and rebel against God (32:1-6)

Thought Moses was not coming back. If Moses was no longer going to lead them, maybe God was not going to do so either. So, they convinced Aaron to make them a new god. That's how the golden calf came to be. They worshipped it and committed all kinds of immorality in their expressions of worship.

God threatens to kill them all. Offers to start over with Moses. Moses intercedes for his people, asking him not to kill them. Moses saying, ***Whoa, can we slow down a bit!*** Let me go down and see what I can do. This leads to the first prayer of Moses and the first principle of how he prayed. **Read 32:11-14**

1. He prayed with a high view of the glory of God (32:11-14)

Notice how Moses focuses on the reputation of God among the nations. ***If you destroy your own people what will the other nations think of you?*** In other words, *consider your name, your reputation, your glory.* Now, let's be clear. God has nothing to worry about when it comes to His name or His reputation. That's not the point.

The point was that Moses was concerned about those things and prayed with them in mind. He had a **high view of the glory of God.** To pray like Moses, I need to pray with a high view of God's glory.

How much of my praying is about me and how much is about God? When I'm praying, how much focus do I place on His name, reputation, and glory? I can do better, and I need to do better. My prayers need to be more God focused than people focused. **Now, back to the timeline.**

Moses came down, broke the tablets & called the people to repentance. Moses broke the stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments were written, signifying that Israel had broken her covenant with God. He also smashed the idol, burned it, and then ground it into fine powder, which he made the people consume (32:15-20). Aaron was rebuked and a bunch of people died under the judgment of God.

The next day Moses reminded the people that they had committed a great sin against God and that he was going back up the mountain to intercede for them. This prayer of Moses was short, but powerful. It illustrates the second way that Moses prayed. **Read 32:31-32**

2. He prayed with a passionate love for his people (32:31-32)

This is a specific kind of intercessory prayer. Not for healing or spiritual growth. It is for forgiveness and mercy for others. Can you pray for the forgiveness of others? Sure. Can you pray for the forgiveness of a nation? Yes. This is what Moses was doing. In doing so, there are some specific things we can learn. Note three things in this prayer of intercession.

1) He acknowledged their sin

More than that, he admitted that it was a great sin. He was specific about the sin they had committed. No sugar-coating here. They were guilty!

2) He asked that they be forgiven

He understood their greatest need at that moment. It was forgiveness. Nothing else mattered. Nothing was more important. When someone you love has sinned against God this is their greatest need.

3) He offered to be under judgement with them

This is one of the most amazing prayers in the Bible. If you won't forgive them, blot me from your book. I don't have time to deal with all the theological implications of this statement. The key is that Moses was standing with his people, even in the face of the judgment of God. It was a deep, passionate expression of love. And it moved the heart of God.

He helped Moses understand that it did not work that way. Each person is responsible for their own sin and God will deal with each person for their own sin. But what an incredible expression of love! Reminds me of a similar statement written by Paul.

For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites. Paul was expressing a willingness to go to hell if it meant the salvation of his people. Like Moses, Paul knew that it did not work that way. But in both cases, it expressed a great love for other people.

So, if I am going to pray like Moses, I need to pray with a passionate love for other people. Again, my praying needs to be less about me and more about others. Do I really care? Do I really love? Do my prayers show it?

Back to the timeline . . .

God told Moses that it was time to leave the mountain. It was time to travel. So, Moses led the people further into the wilderness but in the direction of the land that God had promised to give them. Sometime, probably within a few days or weeks, we read of a third prayer of Moses. Read 33:12-18

3. **He prayed with a deep hunger for God** (33:13-18)

In my Bible there is an added heading written not under the inspiration of God but by the publishers of this particular Bible. ***Moses Intercedes.*** Honestly, I don't think this is accurate. He has already interceded, twice. This prayer is less about interceding for others & more about a deep hunger for God, Himself. **In his hunger for God . . .**

1) **He wanted to please God** (13)

Moses wanted to know the **ways** of God, that he might know **God**, that he might **find favor with God**.

The goal was to please God.

The way to please God was to know him more intimately.

One of the ways to know Him more intimately was to know His ways.

Let me know your ways

What we do reflects who we are. The same is true of God. He acts in concert with His nature. We can learn a lot about God by looking what He does. Note Moses reason for knowing the ways of God.

That I may know you

Moses is seeking to know God even more intimately than he already knew Him. This is more than knowing about God, it is know God. God is a relational God. He doesn't want us to know him in an intellectual way, but to know him in a relational way. That happens in prayer.

So that I may find favor in Your sight

Moses' ultimate desire was that he would find favor with God. That he would be pleasing to God. He had a hunger to please God. But also . . .

2) **He wanted the presence of God** (15-17)

Moses was convinced that without God's presence in his life, it was useless for him to attempt anything. He was saying, "Lord if your

presence is not with me, then I'm not going anywhere. I won't take a single step unless I'm assured, you're with me!"

Moses knew it was God's presence in Israel that set the people apart from all other nations. The same is true of the church today. The only thing that sets us apart from nonbelievers is God's presence.

Moses didn't care what motivated other nations, how they made decisions, what things they cared most about. But he had a laser focus on what was important to his nation. The thing of most importance was the presence of God. Without that, it did not matter what they did or how they thought. Without God's presence they would be in deep trouble.

Let all the nations of this world trust in their mighty armies, their iron chariots, their skilled soldiers, their new weapons. Let them trust in their wise men, their intellectuals, their skilled workmen. ***We will trust in the manifest presence of our God!***

Think about this: If a church has the manifest presence of God there will be a calming peace, a quiet rest - and everyone who walks through the doors will sense it!

The same is true for every individual Christian. If you have Jesus' presence in your life, you will experience God's divine order. You'll have a peace and a calm, even in the presence of chaos. You'll be at rest, knowing God has everything under control and that He is in your life. **In his hunger for God . . .**

3) **He wanted to see the glory of God (18)**

He asked to be able to see the Glory of God. Moses not only wanted God to be present with him, He wanted to see the effects of God's presence. He desired to go beyond the surface to see the greatness of God, the holiness of God, the glory of God.

Moses was saying to God, "don't hold anything back." I want to experience everything there is to know of God. Here, God had to draw a line. Notice the interesting response.

In answer to the request, God would reveal his *goodness*, and his *graciousness*. The way to experience my glory is to experience my goodness and graciousness.

God then devised a way for Moses to see a bit of his glory. He would hide Moses in the rock and cover his eyes. Moses would not be allowed to see the face of God but would see the glory that remained after the Lord moved beside Moses.

That is all we are able to see. We see His glory when we see the positive results that remain after He has been on the scene working in lives. We see the aftermath, the results of His work in us and in others.

Do you want to see the glory of God? Seek the work of God. His glory will remain in the aftermath of His great work.

Pastor and writer A. W. Tozer wrote:

Come near to the holy men and women of the past, and you will soon feel the heat of their desire after God. They mourned for Him, they prayed and wrestled and sought for Him day and night, in season and out, and when they had found Him, the finding was all the sweeter for the long seeking. Moses used the fact that he knew God as an argument for knowing Him better.

If you know God, and many of you do, that personal relationship is a motivation for knowing Him better. To know Him better is to pray like Moses, with . . .

With a high view of the glory of God
With a passionate love for other people
With a deep hunger for God