



PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

EXODUS 33:12-23

LESSON: THE GLORY OF THE LORD — December 7, 2025

INTRODUCTION:

CHAPTER 33:7-11 Moses still had a close relationship with Yahweh. He still had access to Yahweh's heart. And as we observe, Yahweh was in the midst of deciding whether to or not to consume these stiff-necked (rebellious) people (33:3c). Yahweh's heart was not finally made up. There was something yet to be done. Moses is still communicating with God and He takes the tent and set it up outside of the camp.

POINT:

1. To hear from God you must sometime get away and be alone with God.
2. Also, God does not dwell in the midst of sin.

In the KJV, the place of meeting God where His presence abide was called "***the tabernacle of the congregation***." In other translations, it's called "*the tent of meeting*" or "tent." The Tabernacle was not a tabernacle, or dwelling place, for the congregation of Israel. It was the dwelling place of God; a tabernacle for the Lord. The Tabernacle would remain in one place for a while. The function of the "*tent of meeting*" and the Tabernacle was similar, in that the Tabernacle was also a "*tent of meeting*." They both were used to symbolize God's ultimate plan of salvation now in progress - Christianity! However, The "*tent of meeting*" and "*the tabernacle*" differed in that:

- a. "*The tent of meeting*" was on the outside of the camp. "*The tabernacle*" was to be in the midst of the camp (Numbers 2:2).
 - The ark was not yet made;
 - a priesthood was not yet appointed;
 - Therefore, Joshua became the sole minister who did not depart from the tabernacle Exo.33:11.
- b. The "*tent of meeting*" was temporary until "*the tabernacle*" could be built (Exodus chapters 35 to 40.
- c. The "*tent of meeting*" was served by Moses and Joshua, while "*the tabernacle*" was to be served by the Levites.
- d. The cloud of God's presence came down to the "*tent of meeting*" only when Moses was there, while the cloud hovered over "*the tabernacle*" at all times, except when Israel was to break camp and march.

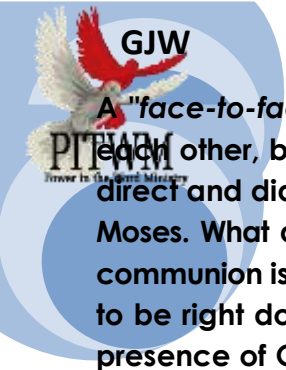
Several things happened in this process:

1. Moses took the tent and pitched it outside the camp (33:7).
2. Whenever Moses went out to the tabernacle, all the people rose (33:8).

The people watched and noticed when Moses worshipped. When Moses worshipped, they also worshipped. Moses prompted the people to draw close to God by his own example.
3. When Moses entered the tent, God's presence would meet him at the "*tent of meeting*" (33:9).

All the people would watch when God's presence descended in the cloudy pillar. When the people would see this, they would all worship at the entrances of their tents (33:10).

 - a. God's presence brings an atmosphere or worship.
 - b. Worship means to bow down or be prostrate.
4. Moses talked with God face to face as a man speaks to his friend (33:11).



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A "face-to-face" meeting—this is an expression showing that Moses and God spoke intimately with each other, but it does not say Moses saw God's face; that the Lord's communication with Moses was direct and didn't come to him in dreams and visions; and that there was something different about this Moses. What a contrast with how God related to the people. Moses speaks as a friend to God. 'Moses' communion is a tangible reminder to the people of God of what they lost, because God's purpose was to be right down in the midst of them, however, in their rebellion they lost that presence. Without the presence of God; without the favor of God; without communion with God, nothing else matters. If we choose the blessings apart from Him, or if we seek the blessings instead of Him, or if we seek the blessings our way, outside of Him, we lose Him and eventually lose all the blessings.

5. Joshua, the son of Nun, did not depart from the tabernacle. It is important as leaders to train others, and have your next leaders nearby (33:11b).

LESSON:

I. EXODUS 33:12-13

33:12 And Moses said unto the Lord, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight. Moses is taking note of the task the Lord has given him, and knows that he cannot lead the nation entirely on his own, for it will require God's help and guidance. He is going to God on the basis of his own relationship; he is going to God and quoting God's Word back to Him: "You say to me, bring up this people (meaning lead the people). Moreover, you have said, I know you by name (meaning—He knows him intimately)...I have also found grace in Your sight (meaning—favored by Him)." It wasn't enough to know that he and the Israelites would make it to the Promised Land, but he just wanted to know "who was God going to send with him?"

33:13 Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people. Moses continues to pray one on one in God's presence with such earnest freedom. ²He believes that the Lord knows him intimately and favors him highly. *So, if we had been given the task of leading the people, how might we have prayed?* Moses could have prayed that the Lord straighten out these rebellious people. He could have prayed that the Lord would destroy the people's enemies. He could have prayed for success. He could have prayed that he be made an effective leader. He could have prayed for personal strength. Yet, he prays for none of these things. Instead, he prays, "... let me know your ways that I may know you, and consider that this nation is Your people." He's praying for intimacy with the LORD. As the Lord has known Moses, Moses wants to know the LORD.

II. EXODUS 33:14-16

33:14 And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. God answers, and makes it very clear by assuring Moses that His actual presence will go with him. It will not be an angel (v2) this time to go with them, but His presence is also able to give Moses rest! What a promise!

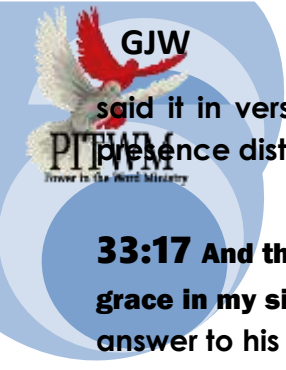
33:15 And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. Well, I know that God was quite clear about what He said, but now Moses is still referring to the same question. *"If God doesn't go with him then don't let us move a step from this place; not a step farther."* Did Moses not hear?

33:16 For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth. It seems strange, but Moses is trying to get his point over by asking how can it be known by anyone if His people have found grace in His sight? It wasn't enough that God had already

¹ <http://www.fpcjackson.org/resources/sermons/exodus/Exodus%20Vol%205%20&%206/39bExo.htm>

² <http://www.pbc.org/files/messages/10451/exo027.html>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sunday-school.html>



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said it in verse 14, but other nations have got to see this too. Then others would know that God's presence distinguishes them; separates them from all the other nations of the earth.

III. EXODUS 33:17-19

33:17 And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name. Once again God reassures Moses and tells gives him the answer to his questions again. The Lord is still saying that He will do what Moses has asked. His answer hasn't changed. What He has spoken He will do. **Why? Because Moses has found grace; found favor in God's sight, and God knows Moses by name!** Moses should have discovered this at the Burning Bush when God called him by name, and told him to take off his shoes, for he was standing on holy ground! God don't mind us asking for what we want. And He doesn't mind us asking questions. He is true to His Word!

33:18 And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. Now, Moses gets down to what he really wants to ask. Moses wants to see God's glory; His essence; His core, His Spirit! ³Moses had been so encouraged by God's answer to his prayer that he sought for the ultimate. The one desire that burned within Moses was to know God better. There is a tremendous need for each believer to have this same desire. Moses petitions God: "*shew me thy glory*." Having only heard a voice out of a burning bush, a pillar of cloud or fire; he desired to see some representation of the Divine glory of God; a full disclosure of the Lord's essential character. Be careful for what you ask for, for you will be accountable when not following!

33:19 And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy. God says, "*I will make all 'My goodness' pass before thee (which reveals who I am and what I do), and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee.*" God's response to Moses' petition included a third element, a declaration of His Sovereignty: "... I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show compassion on whom I will show compassion." In fact, He's saying, "*You would never survive seeing all that you asked for, instead I'll show you the kind of God that I am—a God that is both gracious and merciful; a God that will proclaim His name, and still allow His goodness to pass before him.*" God favored Moses so much that He was going to reveal Himself to him by showing His grace and mercy to him.

IV. EXODUS 33:20-23

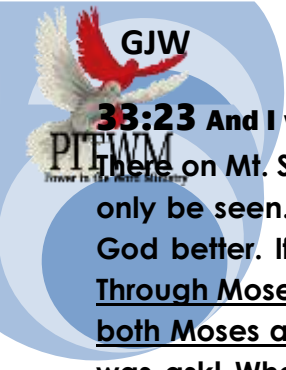
33:20 And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. God values Moses' request, however, it also suggests that there are limits to what God will reveal to Moses—not His face because if he did, he would not live, for no one has seen God's face and lived.

33:21 And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock:— All this was about to happen in the next chapter. God gave specific instructions to Moses as to what was to happen. "*Stand on the rock, for behold there is a place, a spot by Me that you would be able to see Me.*" The rock is solid, unshakeable, and if God tells us to stand on the solid Rock of Jesus, we shall not be moved! And if God chooses to hide and not answer He's still working in the background! So when God tells Moses to stand upon the rock, that Rock is Jesus, and that place in Him God chose to show, meant that Moses as a human couldn't receive all of His glory at one time! We can only bow down to Him in honor and reverence!

33:22 And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by:— As Moses stood in the cleff (crevice or narrow opening) of the rock, it would be his hiding place as God's glory passed by, while God's hand shielded and covered him, providing protection over and around him, hiding him so he could live.

³ http://www.backtothebible.org/index.php/component?option=com_devotion/qid,4/task,show/resource_no,295/Itemid,75/
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sunday-school.html>





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33:23 And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.

There on Mt. Sinai, God will pass by Him in all of His goodness. A portion of His glory—His back side will only be seen. As a believer walks in close communion with God, there is always the desire to know God better. If this is not the desire of the believer, something is seriously lacking in his spiritual life. Through Moses' sheer tenacity, he basically gets what he's after—assurance of God's commitment to both Moses and the nation of Israel, and a deeper knowledge of who God really is. All he had to do was ask! What if he hadn't been so persistent? What if he had considered that he was not worthy enough? The only restriction God placed on Moses' request was really for Moses' protection. ⁴Thus, God covers him. It would be too much for Moses' eyes to handle. Oftentimes we want to know more of God's plan instead of more of God's glory! God knows us, but do we know Him? it's good for us to also know Him! There are things that would likely harm us if we were to know them from God. Thus, we must recognize that sometimes God closes our eyes to some of these truths for our own protection. We're only privy to some of His power because we haven't handled what He's given, and might not be able to handle the rest! It's really up to us because God desires to give it!

SUMMARY:

Moses takes note of the task the Lord has given him and all he knows is that he is to bring up the people God has given him to lead, but he doesn't know who God is sending with him. And he knows that God knows him by name; he's found grace in God's sight, but he still has questions that needed explaining—show me Your way, and consider that this nation is Your people. **(33:12-13).**

God reassures Moses by declaring that His presence will go with him and He will give him rest, but Moses is still referring to the same question. It's all about God's presence and if His presence doesn't go with Moses, then don't carry them any farther. However, again Moses is still praying to find favor/grace in the Lord's sight when God has already recognized that Moses has found grace in His sight. He's just not recognizing it **(33:14-16).**

The Lord still tells Moses that He will do this, for he's found grace in His sight, and He knows him by name. Now, Moses gets down to what he really wants to ask. Moses wants to see God's glory; His essence; His core, His Spirit—the full disclosure of God! God says, *"I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy"* **(33:17-19).**

God values Moses' request, however, it also suggests that there are limits to what God will reveal to Moses—only His back parts, not His face because if he did, he would not live, for no one has seen God's face and lived. God gave specific instructions as to what was to happen: Stand on the rock, for behold there was a providential place by Him Moses would be able to see God: God will put him in the cleft of the rock to hide him; preserving him, so God's glory could pass by while God's hand shielded and covered him, providing purposeful protection because neither Moses nor anyone could see God face and live. But then God would remove His hand, and Moses would only see God's back parts: but His face shall not be seen **33:20-23).**

⁴ <http://preacherwin.wordpress.com/2008/03/22/show-me-your-glory-part-19-the-hand-of-god-and-the-cleft-of-the-rock/>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sunday-school.html>

