

• *The story so far...*

• *Praying in stages*

Moses has been interceding for the people of Israel. God had spoken of exterminating Israel<sup>□1</sup>, but Moses prayed for the people<sup>□2</sup> and the threat was withdrawn<sup>□3</sup>. Then Moses prayed that the people might be forgiven<sup>□4</sup>. What he had in mind is that God should resume the promises that He had given to Israel. Now Moses reaches the third part of his prayer.

□1 32:10  
□2 32:11-13  
□3 32:14  
□4 32:31-34

### 1. Answers to prayer should encourage us to grow in prayer

• *Moses is ready to pray that the glory of God will come on the tabernacle*

1. **Answers to prayer should encourage us to grow in prayer.** Moses goes further still in his praying. Our prayers should grow. One answer to prayer should encourage us to persist in prayer, and to ask in faith for even greater things. So far Moses' prayers have been largely answered. So he is encouraged to go further. God had relented from His threat to exterminate the people<sup>□1</sup> but God seems to have withdrawn the promise that He would reside with the people. The instructions about the tabernacle seem to have come to a halt. God now has no plans to shine in glory in the midst of His people. God has said to Moses 'You lead the people ...' <sup>□2</sup>, and He has said 'I will not go with you'<sup>□3</sup>. His special presence in the pillar of fire has been withdrawn. There is at the moment no hope of His glory coming down upon the tabernacle. But Moses is ready to make this too a matter for prayer.

□1 32:14

□2 32:34  
□3 33:3

### 2. God's general guidance leads us to pray for detailed guidance

• *Exploring God's will in prayer*

• *Greater blessing still*

• *Asking for greater and greater things*

• *He wants detailed guidance*

2. **God's general guidance leads us to pray for His more detailed guidance.** Moses had not given up his hopes of what God would do for the nation. He still did not know precisely **who** would lead the people. God's words 'You lead the people ...' were not enough for him. He wanted more. He feels that he needs more detailed guidance than God has given him so far. There is such a thing as **exploring** God's will in prayer. We move from step to step. One answer is the starting point of the next request. We could call it **exploratory** prayer. We pray for the first part of something; then we pray over the next step, and so on. We get things from God one piece at a time. God likes us to keep coming to Him.

So Moses is asking for greater blessings still. It is like Abraham's prayer in Genesis 18, where Abraham moved from praying about fifty righteous people, and about forty-five, and then about forty, and eventually about ten<sup>□1</sup>. Moses (like Abraham) did not rest content with one answer. He goes higher and higher until eventually he prays 'Show me your glory'<sup>□2</sup>.

□1  
Gen.18: 22-33  
□2 33:18

Do you know anything of 'rising' in prayer? Do you ask for greater and greater things from God, not little self-centred matters, but what is needed for your part in kingdom? Do you pray to see God's glory, and to know His presence? Moses' requests are not selfish prayers. He is interceding for others. Even what he prays for himself is connected with his work for God. What do you want to do for God?

Moses is praying for detailed guidance. 'You have not let me know whom you will send with me'<sup>□1</sup>. He knows now **in general** that he and the people will go up towards Canaan, but he wants

□1 33:12

details. He is asking for an intimate knowledge of God's will. It is not enough for him to have a rough idea; he wants God to help him and be more precise.

**3. We need to pray to know the 'ways' of God**

3. **We need to pray to know the 'ways' of God.** Moses says to God. 'I know you. You have let me know that you have set your love on me; you know me by name. And you have told me that you are dealing with me in pure grace and mercy. I have found favour with you, and I know it. You have let me have an assurance of your grace. . . ' <sup>1</sup>. Now, says Moses, 'If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so that I may know you and continue to find favour with you' <sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> 33:12  
<sup>2</sup> 33:13

• *God's ways – He deals with us very personally – testing - delays*

God has 'ways' of doing things. He has certain habits, procedures and methods that He likes to follow. God likes us to get to know His 'ways'. For example, He has habits of testing us, and of dealing with us very personally. He can delay before He hears our prayers. He can be vexed with us. He can be grieved. He is pleased when we pray with boldness. God has His own character. And He likes it when we get to know Him and His ways.

• *Deeper knowledge of God*

God reveals His ways to those who please Him. 'If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways ...', says Moses.

Knowing God's ways leads to a deeper knowledge of God. 'Teach me your ways so that I may know you...'

• *Developing trust as we learn and remember His ways*

It is necessary to know God's ways if we are to continue to please Him. 'Teach me your ways so that I may ... continue to find favour with you.' God gets displeased with us if we do not learn His ways. It shows that we are rebelling against what He is showing us and the way He is leading us. Remember Hebrews 3:10 God got angry with the people and said 'They have not known my ways.' We should learn from what happens to us. When God is faithful to us on one occasion we should learn that He will be faithful to us on all similar occasions. When we are in trouble and God steps in at the very last moment, we should learn that He has a 'way', a habit, of doing things that way. The next time something similar happens we remember that we have got to know God. And we trust Him, more than we trusted Him before. We are getting to know His ways.



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