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C0720 – May 30, 2007 – Ex 33:12-17 – God Renounces His Withdrawal

Exodus 33:12-17 Then Moses said to the LORD, “See, You say to me, ‘Bring up this people!’ But You Yourself have not let me know whom You will send with me. Moreover, You have said, ‘I have known you by name, and you have also found favor in My sight.’¹³“Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your sight. Consider too, that this nation is Your people.”¹⁴And He said, “My presence shall go *with you*, and I will give you rest.”¹⁵Then he said to Him, “If Your presence does not go *with us*, do not lead us up from here.
¹⁶“For how then can it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we, I and Your people, may be distinguished from all the *other* people who are upon the face of the earth?”¹⁷The LORD said to Moses, “I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight and I have known you by name.”

Apparently these words were spoken between Moses and the Lord in the Tent of Meeting, thus the prior sections placement is designed to explain how and where this dialogue took place. Moses is not satisfied with going up without God's immediate presence. Moses knows he's going up to the Promised Land with an angel (Exod 33:2) but he does not **know** the angel. **Moreover**, Moses argues, **You have said, ‘I have known you by name, and you have also found favor in My sight.’** yet these words are not found anywhere earlier in Exodus. Nevertheless, they must have been said on a prior occasion. The word of God does not record all the words God said in history just as it does not record all the works Christ did in history (John 21:25). There is captured

and un-captured revelation. God providentially ensured that all He wanted to capture was captured, recorded faithfully and sufficiently preserved for our edification. So, God had said to Moses, **I have known you by name.** For God to say **I have known you by name** does not contradict God's omniscience. In that sense God knows everyone by name. But here the Hebrew word *yada* may mean "I chose you by name" (cf Jer 1:5; Amos 3:2). This would look back to Exodus 3:4 when Moses turned aside to see the strange sight of a burning bush that was not being consumed and God said out of the bush "Moses, Moses". By calling out his name He was choosing Moses to deliver Israel from Egypt. Moses had **also found favor in God's sight.** That is, God was pleased with Moses. You can see that Moses is arguing with God again and he's basing his prayer on prior divine revelation. This is always a smart way to pray. Pray on the basis of Scripture. That is the only solid ground to build your prayers on. If you want to be heard by God pray on the basis of God's word. Verse 13, **Now, therefore, I pray you, If I have found favor in Your sight,** if it's really true that I have found favor in your sight then **let me know Your ways, that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your sight.** How is it that Moses will come to know God's ways (even though in one sense they are beyond our finding out...cf Isa 55:8-9)? If God goes up with them Moses will get to see His ways. If only an angel goes up then Moses will not get to know God better. So, the essence of Moses prayer is "God, You go up with us." If He does then Moses will be able to learn more about the ways of God since he will be able to hear the words of God and see the works of God. As Moses learns about the ways of God He will learn more about God Himself. This is a principle of Scripture. How do you learn about a person? You learn about a person through what they do and what they say (words and works). This is why the Bible starts with God's linguistic work of creation. God crafts the universe by the power of His word. And how do you learn about a craftsman? You learn about a craftsman by the craft that the craftsman crafts. In other words we learn about who God is by studying His creation and marveling at what He has done (Ps 111:2; 19:1-6). This is precisely what Moses is asking for. "God, go up with me, for as You go with me I will see Your works and that will tell me who You are." We can learn who God is by learning what God has done. This is not just abstract knowledge. Knowledge is not an end. It's a means to an end. Note how this plays out in verse 13. There are moral implications. What's the ultimate purpose of learning more about who God is? Moses says, **so that I may find favor in Your sight.** It's so our lives will conform to

who God is. So, the bottom line is Moses is praying that God will go with them as a means of knowing Bible doctrine so that he can apply Bible doctrine and be pleasing to God.

PRINCIPLE: To please God you must know God. Knowledge precedes pleasing God. You can't bypass knowledge of God and please God. Christians are always coming up with some scheme to bypass knowledge; instant sanctification, second works of the Holy Spirit, emotionalism. The fact that none of these schemes are biblical is why we don't practice them here. We stress the importance of knowing Bible doctrine and applying Bible doctrine. There are no shortcuts to sanctification. It is a process. The doctrinal construct here is "Know God then Please God". Logically, if you don't know Him how can you know what pleases Him? Many Christians do sincere things to please God but it is scandalous because they don't know who the God of the Bible is. Nor can you assume anymore that people are worshipping the God of the Bible. There are many conceptions of God floating around out there. Moses knew that and he wanted to know more about YHWH so he could know how to please Him. Just because someone says "I believe in God" or "God exists" does not mean they are talking about the God of the Bible. Words are defined by context and the word God must also be defined by context. "What God are you talking about?" "What has your god done?" What if they say, "My God brought about everything by natural causes." In other words, they are saying, "My god is the universe, my god is part and parcel of the universe, an impersonal force." Well, that's a very different god than the transcendent, personal God of the Bible and it will radically effect how you live. The God of the Bible is defined by His historical works and His verbally revealed words recorded in the 66 books of the Protestant Canon. What has historically been known as "The Divine Library". The bottom line is you can't live a God-pleasing life if you don't know Him. He's not going to accept blind sincerity. "My people die for lack of knowledge", He says (Prov 5:23; 10:21). Knowledge of God is the missing link today. Few people are willing to put themselves through the mental sweat necessary to know Him and abide by His ways (James 1:25). But this is the only way you're going to please Him! I tire of hearing people say "Oh, we love you Jesus" or when you're talking to someone about another professing believer who has strayed far from the truth and someone defends them by saying, "Oh, but they really love Jesus". Don't tell me they love Jesus when they're way out in the tuley's. If you really love Jesus show Him by obeying Him (John 14:21-24). Actions speak louder

than words! Most modern Christians have been duped into modern contemplative worship schemes and marketing techniques that pass off as true spirituality. Yet they are nothing more than carnal emotionalism and secular techniques. What ever happened to “Love the Lord your God with all your mind”? What ever happened to “Love the Lord your God with all your strength”? the application of the mind to obedience. Whatever happened to doing things God’s way and trusting Him for the results? Instead, what do we get? The worship leader dims the lights to create a sensuous mood, gets everyone swaying back and forth, raising their hands and then he says between songs, “Oh we love you Jesus.” 99% of Christendom is concerned about the “mood” and I’m all about “mood”. We’ve got “imperative mood”, “subjunctive mood”, “indicative mood” but that’s not the kind of “mood” they’re interested in. They’re not interested in the word of God! Think about that for a minute. We’re studying the word of God. Don’t take that for granted. What you have in your hands is not just another book. This is God’s eternal speech. This is the sound of God’s voice! Put in that light it sounds kind of stupid for Christians to go to church just to feel good. Jesus doesn’t need dimmed lights or sensuous music. He doesn’t ask you to tell Him you love Him. He asks you to listen to His word and abide by it. “Show Me you love Me”. “Show Me in every area of your life that you love Me”. That’s what Christians don’t want to hear today. I find it remarkable that we are united to the Lord of knowledge and yet when Christians in College come to their classes they barely pass or they take easy classes or do the least amount of work possible (i.e. they don’t do their work heartily unto the Lord (Col 3:23-25)). Few engage the secular culture and secular methodologies submitting each area to the Lordship of Christ and challenging the secularists with the truth. Most scoot by, find another emotional Christian, marry them and get a divorce five years later because they had no doctrine to begin with and this person just didn’t make them feel good. Well, that wasn’t Moses. He wanted God to go with them so he could learn who God is and please Him.

He prays also, **Consider too, that this nation is Your people**, not my people. They are Your covenanted people; Your people by virtue of the Abrahamic Covenant that you alone promised to fulfill. How does the Lord reply to this fine example of a biblical prayer? In the affirmative, **My presence shall go with you**. In effect these words are magnanimous since they are a re-instatement to build the Tabernacle. God had withdrawn His presence after the sin of the golden calf but now He is re-instating His

presence and He will dwell in the tabernacle (Exod 25:8). **and I will give you rest.** Allusion is made here by the promise of **rest** to the Abrahamic Covenant. Israel has never enjoyed this rest. God will fulfill this promise in the Messianic Kingdom. Verse 15, then Moses **said to Him, “If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here.**

PRINCIPLE: This should be the attitude of every believer in every decision. Lord, if you don't go with Me on this then I don't want to do it. Unfortunately, far too often we do not have this mentality. We want to go up regardless of what God wants for our lives. That's a formula for chaos. Not surprisingly, when we look forward in Israel's history when the Lord went up with Israel they enjoyed victory but when He did not they suffered defeat.

Deuteronomy 1:6-8 “The LORD our God spoke to us at Horeb, saying, ‘You have stayed long enough at this mountain. 7“Turn and set your journey, and go to the hill country of the Amorites, and to all their neighbors in the Arabah, in the hill country and in the lowland and in the Negev and by the seacoast, the land of the Canaanites, and Lebanon, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates. 8“See, I have placed the land before you; go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to give to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to them and their descendants after them.’

19“Then we set out from Horeb, and went through all that great and terrible wilderness which you saw on the way to the hill country of the Amorites, just as the LORD our God had commanded us; and we came to Kadesh-barnea. 20“I said to you, ‘You have come to the hill country of the Amorites which the LORD our God is about to give us. 21‘See, the LORD your God has placed the land before you; go up, take possession, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has spoken to you. Do not fear or be dismayed.’ 22“Then all of you approached me and said, ‘Let us send men before us, that they may search out the land for us, and bring back to us word of the way by which we should go up and the cities which we shall enter.’ 23“The thing pleased me and I took twelve of your men, one man for each tribe.

26“Yet you were not willing to go up, but rebelled against the command of the LORD your God; 27and you grumbled in your tents and said, ‘Because the LORD hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us.

³⁴“Then the LORD heard the sound of your words, and He was angry and took an oath, saying, ³⁵‘Not one of these men, this evil generation, shall see the good land which I swore to give your fathers, ³⁶except Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him and to his sons I will give the land on which he has set foot, because he has followed the LORD fully.’ ³⁷“The LORD was angry with me also on your account, saying, ‘Not even you shall enter there. ³⁸Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall enter there; encourage him, for he will cause Israel to inherit it. ³⁹Moreover, your little ones who you said would become a prey, and your sons, who this day have no knowledge of good or evil, shall enter there, and I will give it to them and they shall possess it. ⁴⁰But as for you, turn around and set out for the wilderness by the way to the Red Sea.’ ⁴¹“Then you said to me, ‘We have sinned against the LORD; we will indeed go up and fight, just as the LORD our God commanded us.’ And every man of you girded on his weapons of war, and regarded it as easy to go up into the hill country. ⁴²“And the LORD said to me, ‘Say to them, “Do not go up nor fight, for I am not among you; otherwise you will be defeated before your enemies.”’ ⁴³“So I spoke to you, but you would not listen. Instead you rebelled against the command of the LORD, and acted presumptuously and went up into the hill country. ⁴⁴“The Amorites who lived in that hill country came out against you and chased you as bees do, and crushed you from Seir to Hormah. ⁴⁵“Then you returned and wept before the LORD; but the LORD did not listen to your voice nor give ear to you.

You should never, never go up without the Lord. You do what the Lord says to do. You obey His commandments under the filling of the Spirit and you will enjoy victory. But if you go up without Him you will suffer defeat. That is the bottom line. That is Christianity 101.

Verse 16. Here's Moses' argument. This is another reason Moses wants God to go up with them. Not only does he want to know His ways so he can know Him and please Him but he also wants to know that they are in God's favor. They've seen what happens to a people who were not in God's favor. Moses saw the 10 plague judgments fall upon Egypt one after another like hammer blows. Moses does not want that to happen to them. By going up with them they will be assured they are in the favor of God and they will **be distinguished from all the other people who are upon the face of the**

earth. Israel is a distinct people by virtue of God's choosing them and dwelling among them uniquely. The nations perceived that Israel was unique by virtue of the visible Shechinah Glory and their miraculous preservation. Israel will not and cannot be destroyed (Jer 31:31-34; Matt 24:34). No amount of military might or terror can destroy Israel. The Church is not Israel or spiritual Israel or the new Israel. Israel is a distinct entity composed of all physical descendants of Jacob. True Israel is the believing remnant within Israel (Rom 2:28-29; 9:6).

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