



## Longing for God's Presence

By Jeff Bedwell on March 27, 2024

**TODAY'S READING:** Exodus 33

This chapter follows the well-known rebellion of the people of Israel in the episode of the golden calf while Moses was on the mountaintop receiving instructions and commandments from the Lord. The people break the covenant they had only recently affirmed (see chapter 24) by making an idol and worshipping it instead of the one true God. God's righteous judgement falls upon the people through a plague (32:35) and the hands of the sons of Levi (32:25-29). Moses interceded on their behalf (32:30-32).

Chapter 33 contains some continued intercession and prayer from Moses to God on behalf of the people. There is much to unpack in this chapter, but let's focus on one aspect of Moses' intercession. In response to the rebellion of the people, God still purposed to bring them to the promised land, but He told them, *"Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; but I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people."* (Exodus 33:3, ESV)

In response Moses cries out, *"If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?"* (Exodus 33:15-16, ESV). Moses knew that he needed, and the people needed the power and presence of God to fulfill God's purposes for their lives. God graciously answered Moses' prayer (vs. 17).

Do we sense our desperate need for the presence and power of God in our lives moment by moment, day by day? Does it take a crisis to bring us to a point of holy desperation to cry out to God for His power and presence? Yes, as believers we are sealed with the Holy Spirit and in that sense, we are never totally without the presence and power of God being with us. In another sense, we long for the manifest presence of God in our lives personally, our churches, and in our world.

A.W. Tozer wrote, *"The world is perishing for lack of the knowledge of God and the Church is famishing for want of His presence. The instant cure of most of our religious ills would be to enter the Presence in spiritual experience, to become suddenly aware that we are in God and God is in us. This would lift us out of our pitiful narrowness and cause our hearts to be enlarged. This would burn away the impurities from our lives as the bugs and fungi were burned away by the fire that dwelt in the bush."*

Let us join together to cry out to God for His manifest presence in our lives, our church, and among the nations. Like the Israelites, we do not deserve it, and we cannot earn it, but we so desperately need it. The only thing that will distinguish the people of God, the living church of the Lord Jesus Christ, from the world around us is the manifest presence of God among us. Everything changes in the presence of God!

**PRAYER:** Father, we need Your manifest presence among us. Create in us a holy longing that will be willing to make any adjustments necessary to experience the powerful presence of God among us.

**TOMORROW'S READING:** 2 Samuel 7

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