

Series: Persistence in Prayer

THE MAN WHO CAUSED GOD TO REPENT

EXODUS 32:11-14

Text: Exodus 32:14

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¹⁴ And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

Introduction:

When you think of the word “repent,” you often think of a sinner turning to God from sin.

But I want us to look at a man whose prayer was so powerful that he cause God to repent.

When we consider this we understand that there must be something to learn about prayer from a man whose prayer had such a powerful effect on God.

There is a great difference, of course, between man’s repentance and God’s repentance.

Man’s repentance involves turning to God from sin. But when the Bible speaks of God repenting, sin is not in the picture because God cannot sin.

There is no hint of God wavering.

God is unchanging or immutable.

So you may be asking how can we explain so many Old Testament references to God repenting.

By the way - most OT references to repentance refer to God, not to man.

When we consider the thought of God repenting we view it with human eyes and minds.

From man's viewpoint it seems as if God is changing His mind.

Understand God doesn't change but deals differently with changed people.

Illustration:

We often refer to the sun setting, but the truth is the sun didn't move the earth revolved, but we speak from our viewpoint.

I want us to consider what kind of person does it take to get God, from our viewpoint, to "change His mind" in response to that persons' prayers?

How can we move God through our prayers?

We will consider Moses a Godly Intercessor who besought the Lord and the Bible tells us the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto His people.

Note:

Sermon Content:

To Move God In Prayer We Must Desire To See:

1. GOD'S PERSON EXALTED (VSS. 7-12)

Exodus 32:7-12

⁷ And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: ⁸ They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. ⁹ And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: ¹⁰ Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.

¹¹ And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt

with great power, and with a mighty hand?

¹² Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

The background of this passage is the story of the golden calf.

Shortly after their exodus from Egypt, Moses had left the people and had gone up on the mountain to meet alone with God.

When he didn't return quickly, the people grew restless and persuaded Aaron to make this golden calf and they fell into pagan worship in worshiping this idol.

God told Moses what was going on and said, "Let Me alone ... that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation"

Exodus 32:10

¹⁰ Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.

In response, Moses prays on behalf of the people, basing his prayer, in part, on God's reputation with the Egyptians.

Moses wasn't so concerned about the people called by his name, but he was concerned for God's name.

He wanted God's person to be exalted.

The Lord taught this as the first requirement of prayer, when He instructed us to pray:

Matthew 6:9

*⁹ After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, **Hallowed** be thy name.*

Hallowed means to regard as Holy.

Our main aim in our prayers should be that God would be exalted above all else.

It is interesting to note how that God stated this:

Exodus 32:7

*⁷ And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; **for thy people**, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves:*

Moses knew that these people weren't his and he hadn't delivered them; God had.

So he prayed:

Exodus 32:11

¹¹ *And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against **thy people**, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?*

If God abandoned Israel now, the Egyptians would have a good laugh and God would be dishonored. So he boldly asks God to “repent,” to change His mind. A basic lesson in prayer is that our focus always should be:

Psalm 115:1

¹ *Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.*

Thought:

Think about your prayers this past week and answer this question: How much did God’s glory motivate and direct your prayers?

Rather than just asking for what you wanted, were you consumed with the burden that God’s person would be exalted, that His name would be hallowed, that His glory would be revealed?

James 4:3

³ *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*

As with Paul our aim should be that Christ would be exalted through us, whether we live or die.

Philippians 1:20

²⁰ According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

To Move God In Prayer We Must Desire To See God's Person Exalted but also:

2. GOD'S PROMISES ESTEEMED (VSS. 13)

Exodus 32:13

¹³ Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.

Moses reminds God of His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel (Jacob's name of promise) and pleads with God to remember that promise.

We need to be careful to interpret God's promises in their context and in the full revelation of Scripture or we'll fall into serious error.

Illustration:

Those who take certain verses and argue that it is always God's will to heal us if we have the faith, are misusing the promises of God, since many other Scriptures show that faithful Christians are not exempt from suffering and death.

We also need to remember that just because God has promised something does not mean that He has promised to do it the instant we ask.

Moses did not live to see the fulfillment of this promise about the Israelites inheriting the land of Canaan.

God's promises will be fulfilled and so we can and should pray accordingly even though they might not be fulfilled in our lifetime.

Like Moses, we may have to expend much time and energy in working toward the fulfillment of God's promises.

Just because we pray doesn't mean that we are free to sit back effortlessly and watch God do it.

He usually involves our extended labor in the process.

Illustration:

In the 19th century, God raised up a man named George Muller who was concerned for God's glory.

He thought, "People don't believe that God is the living and true God who answers prayer.

I'd like my life to give evidence of the reality of God."

As he looked around Bristol, England, where he lived, he saw a number of orphaned children.

He realized from Scripture that God has a special concern for orphans.

At that point, Muller could have just prayed, "God bless all the orphans in Bristol and meet their needs."

But he went much further than that.

As he waited on God in prayer, he purposed that, in dependence upon God alone, he would establish an orphanage to care for these dear children.

By making his own needs and the needs of the children known only to God in prayer, he would, by published reports after the fact, demonstrate to the world that

God is faithful and that He answers the prayers of His children for His own glory.

For over 60 years Muller saw God do just that.

In reading his life you see that God will answer when His children pray that His promises would be enacted so that His person might be exalted.

To Move God In Prayer We Must Desire To See God's Person Exalted, and God's Promises Esteemed but also:

3. GOD'S PEOPLE EXONERATED (VSS. 30-33)

When Moses prayed in verses 11-13, he knew that the people had sinned by making this golden calf and worshipping it.

Exodus 32:11-13

¹¹ And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?

¹² Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. ¹³ Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine

own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.

God had told him in verse 8, but he didn't understand the extent of their sin.

When Moses and Joshua arrived at the campo and saw the idolatry, he exploded in righteous anger and smashed the tablets containing the Ten Commandments, took the calf, burned it, ground it to powder, scattered it on the water, and made the Israelites drink it.

Then he confronted Aaron and called whoever was for the Lord to come over to him. He commanded those who came over to go out and execute those who had not come over, even if it meant killing their brother, friend, or neighbor.

Three thousand died that day.

Then Moses said to the people:

Exodus 32:30

³⁰ *And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, **Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.***

Then Moses returned to the Lord and prayed:

Exodus 32:31-32

³¹ And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. ³² Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.

Much could be said about this not note just a couple of observations:

- We cannot and must not gloss over sin

Moses first heard about the condition of the people from God.

But when he saw it with his own eyes, he was so appalled and enraged that he ordered this execution squad to go out and kill even their own friends and relatives!

Then he mentions, both to the people and to God, their great sin.

He didn't shrug it off.

He confronted their sin and confessed it in prayer to God.

The second observation is:

- We Must Have a Tender Heart for Sinners

After Moses saw the appalling sinfulness of these people, it would have been easy for Moses to say, "Forget it."

You all can just stay in the wilderness until rot, I'm out of here.

It is easy to get disgusted with people in sin.

Instead Moses was so burdened for these people that he prayed for them.

His prayer wasn't theologically correct, as he prayed if God wouldn't forgive their sin that God would blot out his name out of His book.

! He either means he would rather die if God won't forgive this people, or that he would rather be eternally condemned!

Paul, in a similar way, exclaimed that he could wish that he were cut off from Christ if it meant the salvation of the Jews.

Note Romans 9:3

Romans 9:3

³ For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

While Moses stood firmly against the people's sin, he had such deep concern for them that he was willing to sacrifice himself so that they might be exonerated.

To Move God In Prayer We Must Desire To See God's Person Exalted, God's Promises Esteemed and God's People Exonerated but lastly:

4. GOD'S PRESENCE EXPERIENCED (VSS. 33:1-6, 12-17)

Exodus 33:1-6

¹ And the LORD said unto Moses, Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I swear unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it: ² And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite: ³ Unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way. ⁴ And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned: and no man did put on him his ornaments. ⁵ For the LORD had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiffnecked people: I will come up into the midst of

thee in a moment, and consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee. ⁶ And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by the mount Horeb.

Exodus 33:12-17

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. 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. ¹⁴ And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. ¹⁵ And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. 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. 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.

God instructed Moses to go and lead the people, but an angel would go with them instead of the Lord.

God explained that if He went up in their midst that He would destroy them because of their sin.

Exodus 33:2-3

² And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite: ³ Unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way.

Exodus 33:5

⁵ For the LORD had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiffnecked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee.

You would think that God's promise to send His angel and to drive out the inhabitants of the land and give the land to Israel would have satisfied Moses.

But he was not satisfied. So he sought the Lord until He promised that His presence would go with them:

Exodus 33:12-17

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. 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. ¹⁴ And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. ¹⁵ And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. 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. 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.

For Moses, the blessing of the land were nothing were nothing if God Himself were not with him.

One of the reasons our prayers often fall flat is that we are satisfied with God's blessings apart from the very presence of God Himself.

Are we satisfied with where we are at with the Lord?

The church today is so caught up with methods and techniques.

On the personal level, people flock to the latest seminars or go to support groups or buy the latest self-help books to try to find relief from their problems.

On the church level, successful pastors put on seminars on how to increase the size of your church.

But what we need, both individually and corporately, more than anything else, is a vital, ongoing, deepening experience of the presence of the living God.

To be effective in prayer, we've got to desire to know God Himself.

Close:

There are times that I haven't prayed as fervently or faithfully as I ought.

But my prayer for this church and our people is that He would do a work that would be not be humanly possible, so that the people would know that the living God has and continues to dwell in our midst.

I would like for you to pray as well that God's Person Exalted, God's Promises Esteemed, God's People Exonerated and God's Presence is Experienced in this church.