



# “Open Church – Open Bible”

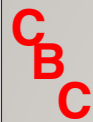
Min. Marossa Davis



# Sunday Church School

November 22, 2020

“ Moses’ Audacious Request ”  
Exodus 33:12-23



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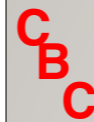
“ Moses’ Audacious Request ”  
Exodus 33:12-23 (KJV)

v. 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.

v. 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.

v. 14 **And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.**

v. 15 And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.”



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“ Moses’ Audacious Request ”  
Exodus 33:12-23

v. 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.

v. 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.

v. 18 **And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.**

v. 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.”

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“Moses’ Audacious Request ”  
Exodus 33:12-23

v. 20 **And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.**

v. 21 And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock:

v. 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:**

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

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“Moses’ Audacious Request ”  
Exodus 33:12-23

**During this year 2020** we have seen many of our plans suddenly change: graduations, weddings, vacation plans, even holiday family dinner plans. Sometimes our plans change because of circumstances- such as with the Coronavirus restrictions and other times it is because we have lost interest or thought our original plans were too costly.

**God’s plans though are very different.** He knows all things, including circumstances we cannot foresee. He does not need to rethink His decisions, for they are the result of perfect knowledge and His holy character. His plans are not derailed by our failures or inconsistencies. While He seems to change His mind at times because of our actions, we understand that His apparent change is really a part of His original plan.

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“Moses’ Audacious Request ”

**This truth gives us** assurance that the Lord’s plans for us are sure and steady and moving forward. Yet, He knows that in our weakness, we sometimes need reassurances. This is also true of godly servants such as Moses. Today, we would like to briefly take a look at 1) God’s Way; 2) God’s Presence; and 3) God’s Glory.

### God’s Way

**Having dealt with the people’s idolatry** at Sinai, the Lord told Moses to take them up into the land He had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their descendants. **However**, the Lord warned that because of the nation’s stubborn sinfulness, He would not ‘go up in the midst’ of the people lest He destroy them (v.3). The people responded by demonstrating a repentant attitude (vs. 4-6) and as we see, the Lord agreed to go up with them on response to Moses’ prayer.

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“Moses’ Audacious Request ”

**Moses knew the Lord had called him** to lead this people, had promised His presence and direction, and had made the people His own. Because of the idolatrous rebellion described in chapter 32, however, it seems Moses needed **assurance** that God’s plan for His people was still in effect. Although the Lord had given assurance that He would give the Promised Land to Israel, Moses was concerned because He had indicated that He would not be in their midst (33:3).

**Moses’ initial request** centered on who actually would be going with him (v.12). He noted that the Lord had told him to take the people up to the Promised Land, but He also stated “Thou hast not let me know whom Thou wilt send with me.” The Lord had said that instead of accompanying them Himself, He would send an angel before them to drive out the inhabitants of

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### “ Moses’ Audacious Request ”

Canaan. Moses’ prayer might have been related to the identity of the angelic being or a veiled request for God’s presence to remain among God’s people as they moved forward.

**Moses reminded the Lord** that he had found **grace**, or undeserved favor, in God’s sight: and that the Lord **‘knew him by name’**, meaning He had chosen him. Since this was the case, Moses asked the Lord to **show him His way** (33:13). He wanted to know more specifically what God had in store for the nation and for their guidance. He wanted to **know God better** and continue to find **grace** before the Lord. Moses entreated the Lord to consider that Israel was His chosen people. **On this basis**, he was asking the Lord to be gracious to them.

**The Lord’s answer was indeed gracious.** The angel that would go before them to drive out their enemies (v.2) would indeed be the angel of His presence,

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for His presence would go with them (v.14). It is likely that the angel was in fact the Angel of the Lord ( v. 3:2) that is God the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity. The Lord’s presence- literally, **His face** would guarantee the people rest and blessing in the land to which God was taking them.

#### God’s Presence

**God’s promised presence** with His people initiated another request from Moses. “ If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence” may appear to express doubt or sound demanding. However, Moses was not pleading for God to do what He had already promised but rather was seeking confirmation of God’s promised presence with him as Israel’s chosen leader.

**Moses wanted confirmation** that Israel was still God’s chosen people, distinct from all others. Moses understood that **God’s presence and favor**

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were manifested outwardly to the world. By the time they had endured the ten plagues, the Egyptians were **convinced** that the Lord was with the Israelites. Moses wanted all to know that the Lord favored Israel as His own people. He sought **reassurance** of God’s presence with both him and Israel and to Israel’s enemies that the Lord’s favor rested upon His people.

**Moses understood from past** experiences the kinds of challenges that lay ahead. Only if the Lord manifested His power in and through Israel would His reputation be preserved and His people be encouraged to continue on to the **Land of Promise**. We might find fault with Moses seeking **confirmation** of God’s promise but we must understand his situation. He was leading a people who had repeatedly challenged both his leadership and the Lord Himself. They were by God’s own estimation ‘ **a stiffnecked people**’. (v.3)

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### “ Moses’ Audacious Request ”

We must not miss the fact that the Lord did not rebuke Moses for his request but graciously answered him. It appears the Lord **invited his petitions** and was pleased to grant them.

**Prayer is a reflection** of one’s relationship with the Lord. Moses’ relationship with the Lord was like that of friend to friend ( v. 11) when we know God, walk by faith, and try to live in purity before Him, we can speak to Him intimately **without fear of rebuke or rejection**. This does not mean that all of our requests will be granted, but it does mean we come honestly before Him, even with our weaknesses and doubts and know that He welcomes us into His presence. The Lord answered Moses affirmatively and promised to do exactly as His servant had requested. The Lord assured him that he was indeed the recipient of His grace and that **He knew Moses by name**.

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### “ Moses’ Audacious Request ”

Moses enjoyed a very special relationship with the Lord, and it was because of this, not because of the Israelites as a whole, that He granted the request.

**Israel benefitted immensely** from the faithful intercession of Moses. Indeed, their continued existence as a nation was the result of his prayers (32:9-14) God’s mercy works together with our prayers to accomplish great things for others, even if those people are unaware that we are praying for them.

#### God’s Glory

**Moses’ third request** is described as almost without human parallel in human history up to this point. **He asked God to show him His glory.** God’s glory usually refers to a physical manifestation of His presence. Moses had seen God’s glory in the cloud ( 16:7,10), he had entered into the glory cloud

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on the mountain ( 19:9, 24: 15-18), and the Lord spoke to him from the cloud of His glory ( 33:9-11). He and others had seen some form of the Lord previously (24:10) ( sapphire pavement under His feet).

**Clearly Moses was seeking a deeper revelation** of God that went beyond anything he had witnessed before. Moses now sought something more and personal- a greater perception of God’s essential being. Such a revelation would confirm God’s continuing presence and work in his life and encourage him as he led the people on to the Promised Land.

**Again, God said that He would grant Moses’ request.** He would do so by making His **goodness** pass before Moses. Goodness refers to the moral perfection of God. ( Psalms 119:68 tells us God is good and does good. His very character is summed up in His goodness, which in some way

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would be manifested visibly so that the splendor of His presence would be known to Moses.

**This visible revelation** would be accompanied by the Lord’s own proclamation of His name. The name of the Lord refers to His character or nature. So God’s character would be expressed visibly by His goodness passing on before Moses and described verbally in terms of His grace and mercy.

**To be gracious** is to show **favor**, and to show **mercy** is to have a deep, tender feeling of compassion or love for another. The Hebrew terms both generally speak of the actions of a superior to an inferior.

**The combination of this powerful** visible revelation and the words of the Lord would give Moses a unique vision and understanding of God.

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### “ Moses’ Audacious Request ”

This divine revelation would sustain him through the many years to come as he led the people from Sinai to the brink of the Promised Land.

**While Moses was assured** that his request to see God’s glory would be granted shortly, he was told that this amazing **revelation would be limited.**

“ Thou canst not see my face,” the Lord said, “for there shall no man see me and live” ( Ex: 33:20) . While Moses would see that which no one else saw, he would not see God’s face- **that is God in His fullness.**

**One commentator offers a helpful illustration,** “ As our bodily eye is dazzled, and it’s power of vision destroyed by looking directly at the brightness of the sun, so would our whole nature be destroyed by the unveiled sight of the **brilliance** of the glory of God. Only when we are **transformed** into the perfect likeness of Christ will we see the Lord in the fullness of His glory.

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**The Lord went on to explain** exactly what would happen. At a certain place on the mountain, Moses would stand upon a rock, and when the Lord’s glory passed by, He would put Moses in a cleft, or crevice. There the Lord would shield him from seeing His face but would allow him to see His back parts. The image of God covering and then uncovering Moses eyes is a figurative way of saying the Lord would control what Moses saw and did not see.

**God would graciously protect** Moses from the instant death that would come from seeing the face of God in all His glory. However, Moses would see the “ back” of God’s manifested glory. This could be translated as the **after effects** of His radiant glory, which had just passed by. ( Gaebelein, ed. The Expositors Bible Commentary, Zondervan).

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### “ Moses’ Audacious Request ”

**The fulfillment of Moses’ request** is described in Exodus 34 just as the Lord described in Chapter 33, as the Lord passed by Moses and the Lord proclaimed His name. Interestingly, the text does not tell us what Moses saw, but only what he heard.

**What he saw** probably could not be adequately described. But what he heard could and was put into words - words we can grasp and meditate on. God identified Himself as compassionate, gracious, patient, faithful, truthful, forgiving, and just (34:5-7) Moses had seen these aspects of God’s character already. Now he was assured the same God with the same character would carry forth His plan to take the Israelites into their land under his leadership.

**We would do well to meditate** on the mercy and Grace of God

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as well as His other attributes. As we do so, we will be motivated to follow Him fully, we will be assured that He can and will use us regardless of past failures, and we will look with great anticipation to the day when we will see Him face to face.

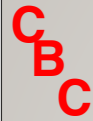
**Although, we cannot see God’s face now**, we should desire to see more and more of His glory in Jesus Christ. If God calls you to a task as He did Moses, He will be with you in it. He will **give you help** directly and from others in your life. Our prayer for you is that you will **catch a glimpse** of the glory of God’s presence; that glimpse will drive you to seek His face forever. As Moses spent time in God’s presence, human ambition lost its grip on his life. May this be true of us as we embrace **what God has planned for us**. The Apostle Paul desired to “press toward the mark” (Phil 3:14). He wanted to know Christ more closely and **become more like Him**. Let that be our ambition too.

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### Practical Points

1. God reveals His plans in His way and on His schedule ( Ex. 33:12 )
2. Prayer is more about seeking God who blesses us than about seeking His blessings ( v. 13 ).
3. God’s presence with believers identifies them as His own people ( vs. 14-16 )
4. God’s plan for each of His people is that they seek His glory and His presence in their daily lives ( vs. 17-18 ).
5. God reveals His goodness through His works in and around His people ( vs. 19-20 ).
6. At present, sin blocks people from seeing God as He really is ( vs. 21-23 ).



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### For Further Discussion

1. What did Moses' prayer for the Israelites reveal about his relationship with God and with God's people?
2. Why do you think Moses was so determined that God personally accompany His people into the Promised Land? What would God's presence demonstrate to other nations who do not know the Lord?
3. What do you think Moses expected to see when he made such an audacious request? v. 18. Why might this have been so important to him at this point in his journey? How did God's answer reveal His special love for Moses?

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