

“Don’t Miss Him”

Exodus 33

INTRO: **Warning Sign in the Smoky Mountains/DANGER**. I think what we have in Exodus 33 is a warning sign. Not about getting too close to something, but rather not being close enough. See because as a Christian you know that you should be close to God, and if you are a Christian then you are already tied to Jesus Christ forever. You have the presence of God with you in his Holy Spirit.

FN: Every Christian has the “presence of God” in them because they are in Christ, but so many Christians go through their day without ever really experiencing the real affects and influence of the presence of God. I love how Dr. Jim Shaddix put it, “It is possible that you as a Christian could go throughout your entire life indwelled with the Holy Spirit, but never experiencing the powerful affects and influence of the presence of God”.¹ But I think Jesus wants more for his disciples. I think when Jesus says he has abundant life if we are with him, he means we have abundant life with him. However, if we are honest sometimes that is just not our experience.

For instance, you open your Bible to read it and by the time you get done you don’t remember what was said and you certainly didn’t hear God speak to you. Or you are going through a trial in life and instead of knowing the peace of God you feel defeated as if God has abandoned you. Maybe you go to church and by the time you leave nothing has happened instead of leaving encouraged and empowered. It looks like living chained to addictions when Christ has already opened the prison doors for you to walk right out as a free man.

If that sounds like any of your experiences then it could be the case that you are in **danger** of having the indwelling of the presence of God, but not the real affects and influences of the presence of God. We are coming to a text today that I think will be helpful for you. I think Exodus 33 is going to help us understand more about the presence of God in our lives. In fact, we are going to see in this text that...

MPT/S: Moses wanted the Israelites to know that God’s affective and influential presence was what they were going to need if they were going to make it. I want you to know that God’s affective and influential presence in your life is what you need if you are going to make it.

KW: 3 desires God has for you concerning his presence or 3 truths that change the way you experience God’s presence

- Read 33:1-14, Pray

¹ Dr. Shaddix preached on the presence of God from Haggai 1 on February 16, 2016, during chapel at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. I particularly found his distinction between being indwelled with the Holy Spirit and experiencing the powerful affects and influence of the presence of God helpful in this sermon on Exodus 33. In this sermon I use this distinction and give him credit for helping me think through it. You can view his sermon here: <https://youtu.be/5fr37BOsin4?si=BZy5gqqQzLWiGytI>

Context: Golden Calf, Breaking 1st and 2nd commandments, 3000 killed by Levites. Rough start to being a people for his own possession, a holy nation, and a kingdom of priests. They were to meet with God and become the people he saved them to be at Sinai, but that didn't happen.

1-4: Now it is time for Israel to go to the land of Canaan. This was the land that was promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God tells them that an angel will go before and drive out the inhabitants. However, God sends them anyway, but he does so with an astonishing statement. He tells them that he is not going to go with them because of their stubborn and sinful hearts. He calls them a stiff-necked people. Moses even tells us that the people received this as bad news. So much so that they mourn. They don't put their jewelry on because they have lost hope in what is to come.

5-6: In fact, God actually tells Moses to say that to the people. **Read 5.** Call out their stubbornness and tell them the reason that I can't go with them. He explains that if God went with Israel even for a single moment, they would be destroyed. God's wrath would be brought to bear on the sinful and rebellious Israelite nation. So, he tells them to take off their jewelry and wait until he can figure out what to do with them.

You see the Israelites are learning a lot about the LORD God. They know he is awesome, all-powerful, and mighty. They saw that firsthand in the 10 plagues and the crossing of the Red Sea. They also know he is good to them. They saw that through the provision of water from the rock and manna from heaven. He guides them with a pillar of fire at night and cloud by day. If it wasn't for the LORD God, then they would still be enslaved in Egypt. And though they have messed up by making for themselves other gods to go with them, they have been punished and mostly are still standing as his people. They know they don't deserve this all powerful and good God, but yet they know they won't make it without him.

1. **God wants you to be broken for his presence. (1-6)**

Clarify: NT Believer always has God's presence (The HS), but there is a difference between being indwelt with the Holy Spirit and experiencing the regular affects and influence of the presence of God where we hear his voice and obey him, where we find rest in him. But the whole thrust of this passage is that the people weren't desperate for God's presence.

- a. People broken for God's presence:
 - i. Listen to his word. Savannah speaking when I am on my phone. Israel was given God's Word, but they didn't hear and obey (If you wonder why God is distant in your life have you ever thought it could be because there is **dust on your Bible?**)
 - ii. Repent of their sin. This is exactly what not putting on jewelry symbolizes. A heartfelt sorrow and mourning for their sin. Eph. 4:30 your sin grieves the Holy Spirit (**Repent**)

- iii. Belong to his community. (Discipleship, LCG, Honest conversations, confession of sin)

Israel realized that they weren't going to make it far at all without God's presence being with them.

2. **God wants your faith in the promise of his presence.** (7-17)

7-11: As we pick back up in the story at verse 7 we get a new setting. Moses makes a tent of meeting, not the Tabernacle, but another tent outside the camp where he can figure out what the plan is. After all, Moses knows that the success of God's people is completely dependent on the presence of God and God just said he was out. So verses 7-11 record for us what it looked like from the outside looking in on these conversations. Every time Moses met with God a pillar of cloud would come down signifying Moses meeting with God himself.

Look at what the people are doing. **Read 10.** Heartbroken over their sin, realizing how much they need God's presence, they bow in worship and reverential awe to the God of all creation when he comes to speak with Moses. They are desperate for God's presence to stay with them. All the while Moses met with God.

12-14: What we get in these verses is what I think a record of just what God and Moses were saying in the tent. I can hear how this conversation went. Moses says, look, you have told me to lead this people, but you promised me your presence. However, you just said that you weren't going with us. You told me that you found favor with me and you promised you would go with us (**Exodus 3:12**). What is Moses doing? He is appealing to the promises that the God of all creation has constrained himself to. Moses has also been learning about who the LORD God is and he knows that he is holy, just, and good. But, for him to continue to be holy, just, and good he must keep his promises. His promises to Adam to crush the head of the serpent, to Noah to never judge humanity at large again, to Abraham to bless his name and all his descendants so that they become a great nation and through them bless all humanity, and now to Israel to be with them as their God and they his people. Moses concludes with the appeal to this God and his promises to his people. God responds the only way he can: by saying that he will go with them and give them rest.

15-16: Moses wants to make sure God goes. He goes on, If your presence does not go with us God, then don't make us go up from here. He continues, how God will these people whom you made covenant promises to make it if you don't continue to be with them? How will the nations see your glory God if the people you saved don't make it out of the desert?

17: This tension is exactly what God was waiting for.² A second time the LORD God tells Moses that he will be with them.

² Walter C. Kaiser Jr. *Expositors Bible Commentary*, Exodus, Volume 2 (1990, Zondervan), 483.

- a. Believe God is working for his glory. (Because God has constrained himself to all of the promises in the Bible, he must come through on them or he will cease to be God. He will not let himself become a liar. So,)
- b. Believe God is working for your good. (Because God's promises to you are for your salvation and he will come through on them, then they must be you're your good! Know that your dysfunctional marriage is not out of reach of God's perfect plan. Your financial struggle in hasn't taken God by surprise to the point where he is sitting on the throne wondering what are we going to do? Funny image but we do this all the time. It comes down to faith. Sometimes God lets you go through seasons of wandering and trying to do it on your own so that you get to the end of your own strength and finally come back to his.)

So, God wants you to display active belief in who he is and what he has done. And, he has promised his very presence to you. He will never leave you. He is working all things out for his glory and your good. That is a God you can trust.

3. **God wants your relentless pursuit of his presence.** (18-23)

18: The last scene in chapter 33 is an interesting one. Moses concludes the conversation with a request. He asks God to show him his glory.

19-23: There is a lot going on here but I want you to notice three things. First, God wants to show Moses his glory.

Second, Moses' sin is still great. God reminds him that he can't just show all of his glory to Moses or any other human for that matter. Because of sin they would die in his complete presence. Something would have to happen for Moses to live. God has a place near him where he can live.

Third, there is a place near God that he could go and that was on and in the Rock. Later in Deuteronomy Moses is going to tell Israel that the God is their Rock. Paul will go on to clarify in 1 Corinthians that the Rock that gave life to Israel was Christ. It has always been faith in the salvation of God, though they didn't quite see it yet, the way that life was going to come to the people.

Question: why go through that rollercoaster of emotion for God just to do what he said he would do in the first place? God went through all of that so that his covenant people, Israel, would know exactly what God is after and what he is about and that is this: redeeming all humanity back to himself. **He has made promises to do this and will continue to act even if it costs him everything.**

Turns out that is exactly what it cost him. God knew that in order to crush the head of the serpent his heel must be bruised. In order to never judge humanity as a whole again a representative for humanity would have to be judged. God knew that in order for Abram to be blessed and the rest of the world along with it he would have to be torn in two. God knew in

order for humanity to obey the 10 commands, he would have to become humanity and do it for them. In order for Moses, Israel, and the rest of humanity to ultimately find favor with God then it would cost him everything. He knew that he would step down from heaven and into our humanity. He knew that he would suffer and die the penalty for our sin so that we could live abundant and free lives. He knew that he would rise triumphantly from the grave with the keys to death in hand. He knew.

- a. Ask God to show you his glory and accept his answer he gives you. (Stop looking for another answer other than the one that has been given. God has given you everything you need to get through life: He has given you himself. You don't need a raise more than you need the presence of God. You don't need a spouse more than you need the presence of God. You don't need a child more than you need the presence of God. You see Christians are infamous for asking God to work and not realizing that he already has. I am not saying that you should not pray for your marriage that is on the rocks to improve. But I am saying that God through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus and the giving of his Spirit has done so much more. How do you accept that? How do you make your salvation the only thing you need? Well, you...)
- b. Go regularly to the answer God has given you. John 15: Jesus is teaching on this very issue. He says that he is the true vine and apart from him you can do nothing. (If salvation through Christ is God's answer to everything you need in life, then you need to be near him. When was the last time you spent time with God not trying to get something from him, but to simply be with him? What about the last time you read your Bible not to check the daily box off, but instead to gain his presence? What if you set aside a time every day to read your Bible until you clearly heard God speak to you? Not audibly, of course. But we know God's word is what he is speaking to us and every day when I get up in the morning, I open my Bible and read until he speaks to me through a verse. I don't stop until a verse stops me in my tracks. Sometimes it is the first verse I read, other times it is the 100th. Stop, think about what he is saying to you and actually respond. I like to journal because it forces me to collect my thoughts in response to God. That slight change to your time in the Word could result in you actually abiding in the presence of God on a daily basis. I'm at the point now where I couldn't imagine not hearing the voice of God and spending time with him in his presence on a daily basis.)

CONC:

- Believer: Don't go through life never experiencing the real affects and influence of the presence of God in your life. Instead, pursue him with all that you are and find the abundant life he promises here and now.
- Unbeliever: Understand that if you are not in Christ then you have no chance of being in the presence of God because of your sin. Again, man cannot see God and live. BUT, in the Rock of Jesus Christ you can. Repent of your sin and enter into God's presence through faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.