

Moses as a Man of Prayer

LTBS Magazine article by Rev William McDermott

There are many incidents in the life of Moses which remind us that Moses was certainly a man of prayer. We see Moses with his hands raised high, supported by Aaron and Hur, while in the valley below, Joshua leads Israel in conflict with the forces of Amalek. When Aaron made the golden calf, and judgement threatened, we hear him intercede for Israel, "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." And how many more incidents there are of which we say, "And Moses brought their cause before the LORD."

Think about the power of Moses in prayer.

In Exodus 32, Aaron, egged on by the people of Israel, made the golden calf. When Moses came down from the Mount, he was grieved and offended at how quickly they had turned aside from obedience to the Lord. And yet how gripping and powerful is his intercession before the Lord. And the power is found in the basis of his intercession.

As God threatens to pour forth his judgement on Israel, *Moses pleads before God His glory before the nations.* "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."

And then he pleads God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. "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."

In Numbers 14 when the unbelieving spies returned from viewing Canaan and their report of the ten lead the people into rebellion against God, how is it that Moses intercedes? *He again pleads the glory of the Lord.* "Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness."

And then he pleads the gracious attributes of the Lord. "And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word:"

Moses as a man of prayer knows that the basis of any plea must be found in the Lord and not in any supposed merit of the creature. We are sinners and offenders before God. Our hope is found in the Lord Jesus Christ and all that he is, and in his unmerited grace and mercy toward us. In his grace God has provided us with salvation in the finished work of Christ his Son. We can cry to him to save us for the sake of Christ, and that He might be glorified in the display of his mercy toward us. We can plead his covenant promises.

Think about the passion of Moses in prayer.

Moses was greatly tried by the people he was called to lead. Whenever there was any difficulty to be faced the people turned on Moses. As Psalm 106:32 says, "They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips." He disobeyed God and found himself excluded from the promised land.

And yet for all this, Moses shows us how much he cared for these people by his passionate prayers for them. He has their well being ever before him. On those occasions when God says he will blot them out and make of him a great nation, it seems as if that latter statement has no impact upon him, except to spur him on in an outpouring of earnest intercession.

Listen to how he prays in Exodus chapter 32 verse 31, "And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." You will see how we have a broken sentence here.

John Gill, the commentator, says about this, that it, "this is no other than the book of life of the Lamb... and Moses asks for this, not as a thing either desirable or possible, but to express his great affection for this people, and his great concern for the glory of God; and rather than either should suffer, he chose, if it was possible, to be deprived of that eternal happiness he hoped for, and should enjoy."

Moses had a heart of love for these people, he had a heart like Paul, who could write, "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh..." And better still, had he not a heart like Christ, who became in truth a curse for us? Oh that the Lord would give us such passion and love in our prayers, for the lost and for the glory and vindication of the name of the Lord in their salvation!

Think about the privilege of Moses prayer.

When the life of Moses is summarised for us after his death, the writer of Deuteronomy 34 verse 10 tell us, "and there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, *whom the LORD knew face to face...*"

To Moses was given the privilege of face to face fellowship with the LORD. This is also mentioned in Ex 33:11 where we are told, "And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." And in Numbers chapter 12 we read, "If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. *My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold...*"

And we believe that this was a pre-incarnation appearance of the Son of God. What a gracious privilege the Lord granted this dear child of God, face to face fellowship with the Saviour!

We acknowledge that this was indeed a unique privilege of Moses, in Old Testament times he beheld "the similitude of the LORD," but can we not apply the thought to ourselves? Can we not

ask ourselves if we know what it is to draw near to God in prayer? Or are we content with the mere form of prayer? Do we in truth seek to draw near to the Lord? Hebrews 10 verse 19 tells us that we can have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus..." By virtue of the atonement in the shed blood of Christ and his finished work we can enter into "the holiest." Oh that all of us who claim to be Christ's would know what it is to do so. James chapter 4 verse 8 promises us, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." Some of us have know old saints of God who seemed to pray down the very atmosphere of heaven. But have we know this ourselves?