

My name is Blake Chilton. I am the student minister here. We're going to be in Exodus 33 this morning. Let me give you a little background on what has happened prior to this chapter. God has brought the Israelites out of Egypt, and He's taking them on a course to the Promised Land, a land flowing with milk and honey. It is supposed to be their own land that they can inhabit and take over, and it's going to be great. Along the way, they have fallen into some sin. Moses is the representative, and he has ascended Mount Sinai and is meeting with the Lord and receiving the Ten Commandments from God. In the midst of this dialogue between God and Moses, God says, "Hey, your people down the hill have gotten into a little bit of trouble. They've gotten into a little bit of sin." What they had done was they had gotten frustrated and tired of waiting on Moses, tired of waiting on his revelation from the Lord. He had been up there about forty days, so they say to Aaron, who was Moses' right hand man, "Hey, would you make us a god? We want to worship?" And Aaron is like, "Okay, give me your jewelery." So they throw in their jewelery and they form a golden calf, and the people begin to worship this golden calf. So God is angered by this because they had fallen into idolatry. God is a jealous God and wants us to worship Him and Him alone. So He sends Moses back down to handle that thing. Not only is God mad, but Moses is mad. And Moses takes care of business when he gets down to camp. There is war in the camp, there is death in the camp and it has gone really badly.

So that's where we are starting in verse 1 of Exodus 33. Let's read. "The LORD said to Moses, "Depart; go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'To your offspring I will give it.' I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey.'" This is an interesting text because He's saying, "Hey, I'm going to send an angel before you." Now I know for me, if God were to ever tell me He's going to send an angel before me as I'm starting my day, I'd be pretty stoked about that. That would be good news. Because my understanding of an angel is not our culture's understanding. It's not like baby cupid with a little bow and arrow. It's not the naked baby angel on your family Bible. The biblical angels that we see in Scripture are these huge, massive manly creatures. They're just these huge, ferocious creatures, and they're probably wielding some kind of weapon. So for me, that makes me excited when I'm going, "Oh, God's going to send an angel before me." I can't imagine if I have a tough meeting on a Tuesday and God's going, "Hey, don't worry. I'm sending an angel before you." I'd be stoked. I'd be like, "That's what I'm talkin' about. Yes! That's legit. Thank You, Lord." The people of Israel do not have this response. Check it out. Verse 3, "'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.'" When the people heard this disastrous word, they mourned." As cool as an angel is, they're going, "No God, we want You. We want Your presence. Your presence is better than an angel, than a legion of angels or whatever else You could give us. We want Your presence. We want You to lead us up." But God is upset with them. Did you hear that language? "I'm going to consume you." That's scary. I've never been in a fight with a guy and have the guy go, "I'm about to consume you." I'd get a little nervous. But that's what's going on here.

But what's crazy here is Moses enters in and goes before the Lord. Look at verse 7. "Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp. Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people would rise up, and each would stand at his tent door, and watch Moses until he had gone into the tent. When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the LORD would speak with Moses. And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people

would rise up and worship, each at his tent door. Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend." Now I think this is crazy here because the tent of meeting is a special place. It is a holy place. We see a couple chapters earlier in Exodus 29:42-46 a little bit more vivid description of this. This is where God met with the people. This is where He speaks. This is where He would sanctify them by His glory. There is some amazing stuff going on in this tent of meeting. This is where they saw God face-to-face, where He spoke with them. So Moses knows, "When I enter this tent, I'm going to meet with the Lord." He's not just going out there to take a nap or something. He's going in there to meet with the Lord, which is crazy because that's a little different than Moses' character early on in this book. In chapter 3, you have the story of the burning bush. Moses was just wandering out in the desert and he comes across a bush that is burning but not being consumed. He goes up to the bush and the Lord begins to speak to him and reveal Himself through this burning bush. It's a pretty crazy story. The Lord speaks to Moses and says, "Hey, take off your sandals, because the place you're standing is holy ground." The Bible says that Moses hid himself, hid his face from the Lord. God is not mad at the burning bush. It's just kind of a freaky deal going on. But here in Exodus 33, God is angry. He's angry at His people because they have begun to get into idols and worship things that are not true gods. And here Moses enters in. It's kind of a crazy deal. Growing up, I remember that there were times I would come home from school or from playing with my buddies, and my mom would warn me and go, "Hey, dad had a rough day. Dad's a little upset. Just watch out." Now I was smart enough to know that he probably wasn't that upset, but she was just warning me so that I didn't go make him upset. I was smart enough to know, "Hey, this is not the time to go jump on dad's lap, give him a noogie, mess with him and ask him questions. He's trying to chill out and blow off some steam." I knew that, so I kind of tip-toed around the house and tried to stay out of sight. Because I didn't want to incur my dad's wrath. But here, Moses is totally different. Even though he knows God is upset, he knows God is angered, he enters in. He approaches God.

Now what's different from Moses in Exodus 3 when he hid himself and Moses in Exodus 33 when he knows God's angry and enters anyway? The difference is that he understands the grace of God. One of my favorite verses is Hebrews 4:16 that says, "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." You see, one of my greatest fears for us as a church and as a group of people who are trying to follow the Lord is that we misunderstand the grace of God. Because when you misunderstand the grace of God and when you get into, when you get into temptation, when you begin to buy into the lies of the enemy, when you begin to believe those shame messages that are being poured out on you, when you begin to accept that guilt, you don't run to God, rather you run away from God. I see this all the time, from youth to adults, where people get into sin, they fell temptation or they slip up and all of a sudden they feel like they can't go to the Lord anymore. As if your relationship with God is based on what you can do anyways. You see, the grace of God understands that God loves us regardless. Jesus knew exactly what He was getting into when He died on the cross for our sins. Matt often reminds us that God doesn't love some future version of you better. It's almost that we think that God doesn't love us if we fall into sin, but God already knew you were going to fall into the sin. God knows you better than yourself. He knows the exact number of the hairs on your head. He knows your heart, He knows your temptations, He knows your struggles, He knows where your leanings are and He knows where you're going to wander. He knows all those things and still loves you. He still sent Jesus, and Jesus still died for sins. That's understanding the grace of God, that there is nothing I can do that can separate me from that love (Romans 8). No height, no depth, nothing can separate us from the love of God, not you slipping into sin, not you having some bad temptations and really desiring something that's ungodly and unholy. It doesn't matter. That's understanding the grace of God, and that's what allows Moses to enter in, even when he knows God is upset, even when he understands, "God is angry at us, at our people for our idolatrous hearts." That's understanding the grace of God, and it allows us to enter back into God's presence. Because we need God's presence more than we know.

Let's keep going, because Moses doesn't just stop there. He doesn't just enter into the tent of meeting. He actually begins to ask God for stuff and begins to request things of God. Look in verse 12. "Moses said to the LORD, "See, you

say to me, 'Bring up this people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.' Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people." And [God] said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." So let me summarize that real quick. Moses is saying, "Please show us Your favor. Do we still have Your favor? Even though all this has gone on, even though all this sin is going on, do we still have Your favor? And if that's not enough, remember Your people. Remember the Israelites, they bear Your name. People know that they are Yours, they are Yahweh's people from when they came out of Egypt." And God says, "Yes, My presence will go with you."

And I love what Moses says in verse 15. "And [Moses] said to him, "If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here." Moses is saying, "If You're not going before us, I'm not taking another step. If You're not going to lead us, I'm not moving beyond this point right here." That is amazing, because God just said, "Hey, I'm still sending you to the Promised Land. What I promised you way, way back in Egypt, I'm still taking you there." But Moses understood something that I think we tend to forget, that the Promised Land is not the goal. God is the goal. Moses wasn't satisfied just with the Promised Land and the fact that he got to go to the Promised Land. No, he wanted God, and he wanted God's presence more than he wanted that. I wonder with us (myself included), if God were to make this deal and go, "Hey, what is that one thing you desire right now? Is it your education? Is it a job? Is it a spouse? What is that one thing that you want more than anything? I'll give whatever that is to you, but you'll have less of Me if you have it," would you still take it? That's idolatry. Do you see that you're worshiping that thing more than you are God? But Moses got this. He was like, "That's great. You're still going to let us to to the Promised Land. You're not going to consume us, You're not going to kill us, You're not going to wipe us off the face of the earth. That's awesome, because we love to live. That's great. But here's the deal, God. I want You more than I want the Promised Land. And if You're not going before us, then I don't want to go." I love that. "I'm not moving another step unless You're going before me." Is that you? Is that how you live life? Do you go, "I'm not moving another step if You don't go before me"?

The Lord has been pressing upon me lately about my time in the morning, just to get up out of bed, to beat everybody up out of bed and spend time with Him. Because the house is quiet, nobody is calling my phone at 6:00 in the morning. There is not good TV on at 6:00AM. It's just good and quiet. And the Lord has really been pressing me going, "Hey, you need to be in My presence. You need to meet with Me." It has been this reoccurring theme for years now. Some mornings I'm great at it. Some mornings I get up and I meet with Him, it's awesome and I love being there. And some mornings that bed feels so good, especially in the Winter. But a couple weeks ago, it was a Saturday morning and I'm like, "Hey, this is my half-day off. I want to sleep in." I didn't really communicate that to my wife, so we're having this competition of who's going to get up first because we've got kids running around the house. I hear them downstairs, and I know I should get up. It's already late and the kids are up. But in my mind I'm going, "Well, maybe the oldest one has gotten up and fixed everybody breakfast and is reading a story to the younger ones. Maybe it's sweet, serene and perfect down there. And then that idea was quickly thrown away when I heard screaming taking place. So I jump up, run downstairs and I come around the corner and I step on broken pieces of a light bulb with my bare feet. At first I was worried, like, "Oh no, is somebody in trouble? Is somebody hurt?" And then all of a sudden, as I began to step on those broken pieces, my look changed. My kids are starting to go, "Oh no, dad is going to consume us!" So they're starting to get worried. My feet are bleeding and I'm not in a great mood at this point. I'm not in the mood to greet them with a holy kiss. I'm not about to pastor them well and go, "Children, let's open up the Bible with our Cheerios." That's not about to happen. Somebody is about to get a whopping. . . maybe two.

I'm ticked at this point. As I'm sitting there doctoring my foot with blood all over the kitchen, I'm starting to think and the Lord is like, "Hey bud, remember I need you to be up in the morning to meet with Me." And I don't think that was God's judgment on me for sleeping in. I think He's a little more gracious than that. But it was just another good reminder

of going, "Hey, I need the Lord." Because I had so quickly gotten to that way of thinking of just going, "Hey, I can get up and do my morning. I don't need the Lord for breakfast." And that idea can continue to permeate your day. "I don't really need the Lord to get out of the house. I've driven this road to work every day for X amount of years. I don't really need the Lord. Maybe I can spend some time with Him on my commute. For this next meeting, I don't really need the Lord right here because I've had this meeting so many times, I know how it goes." And it becomes just this familiarity where we're just like, "I don't really need the Lord." Is that you? Have you gotten to that point where you can just do life without Him, without the presence of God? Or can we learn something from Moses here where he goes, "I'm not moving another step without You"? Because that's the humility that God requires of us. That's the dependence that God is asking from us, that we roll out of bed and, before we even take a step, before we get dressed, before we take a shower or eat some breakfast, before we have a conversation with our wife, before anything happens in your day, you just roll out of bed, get on your face and go, "God, I need You. I need Your presence today because I will mess this thing up royally." Or have we gotten so far from dependence on God that we've bought into this American individualism of "We can do it. Pull up our bootstraps, roll up our sleeves and we can do this thing." Or maybe it's the fact that we've just done life so much and we've gotten into this routine to where we've just got things down. And maybe we're not taking a step of faith anywhere in our lives. Maybe we're not being extended, we're not being stretched anywhere in our lives. You see, in order for that to happen, you've got to have an intimacy with the Lord where He's whispering things into your ear going, "Hey, come jump on mission with Me. I've got an assignment. I've got something I want you to do. I've got something here I'd love for you to do." It's one of those things, when God whispers those things into your ear, much like our boy Moses here, "Hey, I want you to take these people out of Egypt and lead them to the Promised Land." He's like, "Uh, yeah you've got the wrong Moses. I don't have the skills. I can't talk. I'm not a good leader. Yeah, that's probably not going to happen." The Lord is like, "No, that's you." Is there anything in your life right now that you so desperately need God, you're so dependent on His presence and you moving forward with Him that, if He doesn't show up, you are miserably going to fail? Because that's the kind of crazy stuff God calls us to. He is a wild, crazy God. Just read the Scriptures. He calls people to do some crazy stuff, stuff that is well beyond them. He calls us to stuff that we have to take a step of faith and we have to roll out of bed and go, "God, I'm not going to make it, this is not going to work unless You go before me." That was our boy Moses here. "I'm not going to take another step unless You go before me."

Let's keep going. Look in verse 16. "For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?" Chew on that. We are a distinct people because the Lord dwells within us, because of what God did when He sent His son Jesus Christ down to earth to die on the cross for our sins, raise from the dead and send His Spirit. No other people on the face of the earth have the Spirit of the Living God living inside of them. We are a distinct people because we follow a distinct God. That's a cool thing. Look in verse 17. "And the LORD said to Moses, "This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name." He has told Moses over and over again, "Hey, I'm going with you. . .I'm going with you. . .I'm going with you. . ." Look at Moses' reply. What a bold request. "Moses said, "Please show me your glory." Now this is a famous text. If you've spent any time in church, you've probably heard this before. Moses goes, "Show me Your glory." What he's saying here is, "God, prove to me Your presence. Prove to me that You're really here, that You're really going before me. I know You've told me that and You're not a God who lies, but I have to know. With these next steps, with the thing that are going to take place now, I don't know how to lead these people. They're idolatrous. My heart is wicked. I don't know how to do this. Please prove to me Your presence. Prove to me that You're really truly here, that You're really going before me." Have you ever been there? Have you ever been like, "God, I don't know that I can make it another day. I don't know that I can make it this next hour. This is too much on me. I'm caving in." That's got to be your cry. "God, show me Your glory. Prove to me Your presence. Prove to me that You love me. Prove to me that You're here, that I have Your favor." That's what Moses is saying.

And God answers in an amazing way. Look in verse 19. "And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." And the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen." What an amazing experience. Moses gets to see God's back. I don't even know what that looks like or what that means, but that's really cool. That's an amazing deal, and I don't want to discount this at all with what I'm about to say because that's amazing. Moses got to behold the glory of God pass by him, but the truth of the matter is that we here today get to behold God's glory in a totally new, totally fresh and totally full way in Jesus Christ. Because the Scriptures teach us that Jesus Christ is the glory of God. And Moses, as the representative of the Israelites, of the people of God, got to see Him, and he runs back the hill and goes, "Hey guys, guess what." They're like, "What's wrong with your face? It's shining." He's like, "I just got to meet with God." He had to put a veil over his face because his face was shining so much. He has this amazing experience. We don't have to do that today. Because Jesus Christ is the glory of God.

I want to show you a couple passages. Turn to John 1:14. "And the Word [Jesus] became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." Now take a right and go to Hebrews 1. Starting in verse 3, "[Jesus] is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power." We also see this in 2 Corinthians 4:4. "In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." We see it in several other places that Jesus is the glory of God. That's an amazing deal, that we get to see, we get to behold the glory of God in Jesus Christ.

I know some of you may be going, "Well, that's great and all, Blake. I don't know how your quiet times or your time with the Lord goes, but Jesus didn't walk through my kitchen this morning in all His glory during my time with the Lord. That didn't really happen." And that's never happened to me. I've never seen Jesus visually. But here's the key. This is not so much about the visual as it is about the presence. You see, these people back in this day had the presence of God in the tent of meeting. But today, because of what God has done by sending His Son Jesus Christ down on the cross for our sins, creating an access way for us to God, now all of a sudden we don't need a tent of meeting. So God doesn't dwell in a tent, He doesn't dwell in a tabernacle, He doesn't dwell in a temple and He doesn't dwell here at the Village Church or any other church. He dwells in His people. If you're a believer in Jesus Christ and you've been saved, then you have God's Spirit dwelling inside of you. And that is a powerful, powerful thing. That means you can leave this place, walk out these doors, go to your house and spend time with God, and God can speak to you, you can speak to Him and He can reveal things to you simply through His Spirit. It's why Jesus tells His disciples in John 14, "Hey guys, I'm leaving. I'm going to prepare a place for you, but don't worry. Something better than Me is coming." I can only imagine the looks on the Disciples' faces as they're going, "What do You mean something better than You is coming? You're God. What do You mean something better? How could something better than You come?" And Jesus says, "Because I'm sending My Spirit, and it will dwell in each one of your hearts." That's better because that's presence. God's presence is all over. As believers in Christ, we get to walk in that presence, but my fear is that we've become so accustomed, so familiar with God just being around and that we can have this talk with Him at any time that we don't actually take advantage of that presence and we don't actually meet with God. We just kind of assume, "Oh yeah, I've got God's presence." But how often do we just do life without engaging His presence saying, "God, I want to invite You into this place. I need You here." We just assume. You're right to assume and He is here, but you could invite more of Him. You could put Him back on that throne in your life and go, "God, all this is Yours. I want Your presence to fill my relationships, the way I father, the way I parent, the way I'm a friend to these people, the way I play sports, the way I go to school, the way I do my work. I want Your presence to completely invade everything I do." Because I am a distinct person and I follow a distinct God. And

people should know. When I walk into work, when I go into different places, when I go in to get my hair cut, when I walk in to a restaurant, when I interact with my barista, when I do all these things, people should know there's a difference about me. And it's not me, it's not my personality, it's not my charm and it's not my looks. It's none of that. It's the presence of God in our lives. Do people feel that from you? Because you are a distinct people, they should feel that presence.

And Moses knew this way back then, and he needed the presence of God to go into the Promised Land. There were some things that he knew about. There were some things that were coming up. He knew there were people in the land they were promised who weren't just going to hand over the keys without a fight. He knew, "There would be tough days. My people keep falling into sin and straying from the Lord. I continue to have to come back in and pastor them, correct them and help them. I'm not that good of a leader. I've got all these issues." There were some known things, some known troubles that Moses was going to have to face, but there were also a lot of unknowns. He didn't know what was going to happen along the way. He didn't know what difficulties he was going to face. So that's why he was going, "I am not moving another step until You promise me Your presence is going before me." That's us today. Some of you are sitting in here and you know what your week looks like. You know you've got a tough meeting on Tuesday, you've got this to deal with and you've got all these things that you're struggling with going, "How am I going to do this?" Are you just going to try to do this thing on your own and go, "Hey, I can do this, because I'm an American"? No, you can't. You're dependent on God for even your life and your breath, according to Acts 17:25. Let's live like we're a dependent people, not just on God for life and breath, but dependent for His Spirit to invade every area of our lives.

So I've got a couple of questions I just want to ask you. Are you desperate for God's presence? Are you prone to move forward without it? Are you just okay? Do you come into this room expecting to meet God? Do you spend your time with the Lord in the mornings so expecting to meet God that you've given Him time and have gone, "Hey, if it takes thirty minutes for God to show up and speak to me and the Scriptures are bouncing off the page, praise the Lord. But if it takes Him an hour, that's okay I don't want to move forward without Him"?

Have you become so self-sufficient that His presence is an additive rather than a necessity? Do you feel like you don't really need God, that you can do life, you can do your thing, you can go to work, you can do family, you can just do life without His presence? Do you feel, "If God shows up, cool. I've got something to talk about at home group this week. But if He doesn't, no big deal. It's just kind of an added bonus"? Because here is the truth about God. He is a personal God. I love the fact that even today, if I could poll each one of you, you would all leave here with a different message. You'd go, "God really spoke to me about this." I pray that that would happen. He is a personal God. I love that. Would you rather have more of Him or more of His stuff? Back to what Moses did when he went, "Hey, that's great. You're still going to give me the Promised Land. That's cool. I'm looking forward to that, because I'm tired of living in a tent. But I want You. I want God. I want Your presence." My last question is this. Does the thought of a day without Him, without His presence grieve you? Have you gone through one of those days where you have been so busy, had so much going on, laid your head down and started going through your day in your mind and realized, "Huh, I didn't read my Bible. I didn't pray one time today. I never felt like God was even near me"? Does that grieve your soul?

Here's the deal. We're a distinct people because of the presence of God. God didn't just give you that grace of His presence so that you could just enjoy. He has given you that grace, that blessing of His presence so that you might be on mission with Him. We are a distinct people because we follow a distinct God. May our lives be filled with His presence. Our greatest prayer as a pastoral staff is that God's presence would be felt here in this place. We pray that, when people come through those doors, they feel something different, they feel the Spirit of God moving. And that's not something we just conjure up. It's not something that we're working up in our offices. It starts with stuff like Wednesday night prayer where we're in here begging God to move in our people. It starts with you. It starts with a people who are begging God

for His presence in their lives. That's what will make a church filled with the presence of God. May we be those kind of people and not just abuse the presence but take advantage of the presence.

Let's pray. "Father, I thank You that You are a distinct God. I thank You that Your presence does fill us, that You can convict us, encourage us and call us to mission and that we can meet You anywhere and everywhere. We could fly to the other side of the earth and meet with You there. That is an amazing blessing. May we not take that for granted. May we be a desperate people for the presence of God. May we realize today how desperate we are. May we be like Moses where we go, 'Hey, I'm not moving another step unless You prove to me that You're here.' And that's going to flesh itself out in different ways. God, may we be a people who practice the presence of God. God, help us. May we approach Your throne of grace with confidence and enter in. We love You. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen."

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