

Lenten Devotional

2020

Friday, April 3, 2020
Day 33, Exodus 33

The Real Goal

Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here." (Exodus 33:15)

What was Moses so upset about? YHWH said that Israel would still be led to the promised land and that they would inherit that land of milk and honey. What reason did he have for digging his heels in? It was because Moses kept his eye on the real goal of the Exodus—the presence of God.

Think of it as a couple who dream of a life together. They marry and purchase their dream home together. They have spent countless hours filling that home to be with dreams of the future. The activities they would do, how they will arrange the furniture in it, and maybe even dreams of their children to be. Then, suddenly, the relationship fractures. They divorce. One says to the other, "you can have the house." The house hasn't changed, but it is no longer the old home of dreams. It's a nightmare.

That's what Moses knew. The whole goal is the presence of God with his people. Without God's presence, the land of promise would mean nothing. They would be just another people taking up space on the land. They are already experiencing life this way. The tent has to be set up outside of the camp now rather than in the midst of the camp. That is why Israel is mourning.

I fear that we miss this significance in our own lives sometimes. We modern day people have been trained to view God's power as a means to an end. When something goes wrong in our life we pray and expect God to put it right. If there's something we want, like a better job, we pray and expect God to provide it for us. Our relationship with God can devolve into that between Cinderella and her fairy Godmother. I wonder if our continued dissatisfaction with life is a result of pursuing what God can provide apart from a real relationship with him.

Moses knows, what we need to learn; that life without God is empty. But, life with God is everything. I think this is why the apostle Paul was able to say, "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:12b–13). You and I can also be content if we put our relationship with Christ (him who will give us strength) first.

Prayer

Father, thank you for your enduring presence and for your grace and mercy. Help us to seek you (your kingdom) first, knowing that all that we need will be provided by you. May we prize you over anything else. Amen.