

**Ex. 33:1** And the LORD said unto Moses, Depart, *and* go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I swore unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it:

**Ex. 33:2** And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite:

**Ex. 33:3** Unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou *art* a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way.

The LORD tells Moses to take the people and go to the land that He swore to give unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their progeny. He again says that He will send an angel before them. The Lord emphasizes that it will be His power that drives out the people who are already occupying the land. The land that God has promised to give the children of Israel is a land flowing with milk and honey. (It's a land of plenty.)

The next statement is interesting—The LORD says that He will not go up in the midst of the children of Israel because they have proven to be stiffnecked (stubborn, obstinate). They might provoke Him to the point that He would decide to destroy them immediately if He were with them.

Again, God is letting us know through His inspired Word that His longsuffering is associated with His mercy and His faithfulness to His promises—but He can be provoked to a point that requires judgment.

**Ex. 33:4** And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned: and no man did put on him his ornaments.

**Ex. 33:5** For the LORD had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye *are* a stiffnecked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee.

**Ex. 33:6** And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by the mount Horeb.

When the people were told of God's decision not to go with them, they mourned. The LORD had told Moses to tell them that He recognized them as a stiffnecked people and that they provoked Him to the point that He could choose to destroy them in a moment. Then He told Moses to have them remove their jewelry until He decided what to do with them. They obeyed. Their location at this time is Mount Horeb (another name for Mt. Sinai).

I just thought of the time in chapter 3, verse 12, where God promised Moses that he would return to serve/worship God at this mountain.

**Ex. 33:7** And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, *that* every one which sought the LORD went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which *was* without the camp.

It's interesting that Moses pitched the tabernacle without the camp—far from the camp. (This is not yet the tabernacle for which God had given such specific instructions. It is yet to be built at this point.) God had said that He would not put Himself in the midst of the people. Those who sought the LORD would have to make concerted effort to approach Him at the tabernacle.

**Ex. 33:8** And it came to pass, when Moses went out unto the tabernacle, *that all the people rose up, and stood every man at his tent door, and looked after Moses, until he was gone into the tabernacle.*

**Ex. 33:9** And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood *at the door of the tabernacle, and the LORD talked with Moses.* Moses went out to the tabernacle with all the people watching him. (They knew he was God's representative and that God was really upset with them.) When Moses went into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar (signifying God's presence) descended and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the LORD talked with Moses.

**Ex. 33:10** And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand *at the tabernacle door: and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent door.*

The people recognized the cloudy pillar as God's presence, so they rose up and worshipped God—each one in the door of his own tent. (I'm sure they are praying for mercy and grace.)

**Ex. 33:11** And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle.

In this verse we are made to realize that Moses had not gone to the tabernacle alone—Joshua, the son of Nun, went with him. The LORD spoke to Moses "face to face" as a friend. We know this doesn't mean eye to eye because of verse 20. I think this is just an expression that means a personal, intimate conversation. Because of Jesus' sacrifice, we have that same privileged position.

**Heb. 4:16** Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

When the LORD had finished His conversation with Moses, he went back to the camp, but his servant Joshua stayed in the tabernacle. (No information is given as to why Joshua was there or if he heard the conversation.) I think the special mention that is made of Joshua going with Moses to wait for Him at these times of meeting with God are just to let us know that he has been the man in training all along as Moses' replacement and to prepare the people to accept him as their leader when Moses is taken from them.

**Ex. 33:12** 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.

**Ex. 33:13** 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.

It would seem that we are now being told more about the conversation between the Lord and Moses.

Moses basically says – You have told me to lead this people, but you haven't told me whom you are going to send with me. You say that we are on a first name basis and that I have found grace in Your sight. If that is true, show me Your plan so that I can understand that I have found favor in Your sight and that You are claiming this people as Your own.

**Ex. 33:14** And he said, My presence shall go *with thee*, and I will give thee rest.

The LORD tells Moses that His presence will go with Him to the place where He intends to settle them (give them rest). In other words, you don't need to know the details; you just need to trust me and know that I am faithful to My Word. I will be your companion.

**Ex. 33:15** And he said unto him, If thy presence go not *with me*, carry us not up hence.

**Ex. 33:16** 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.*

Moses replies that he doesn't want to go on at all if God isn't going to go with them. The only thing that makes them unique among the nations of the earth is that God goes with this people. His protection and provision for His people is what makes the other nations understand that Moses and the children of Israel have a special position of grace (graciousness, kindness, favor) before God.

If we follow God obediently today, we can have that same reputation before those who are not believers in this world.

**Ex. 33:17** 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.

The LORD tells Moses that He will do as he asks because he has found grace in God's sight and has an intimate, first-name association with him.

**Ex. 33:18** And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.

This is a really interesting request by Moses. He has spent more time in God's presence than any other person we will read about in the OT, but He wants to know God even more intimately. I think that is a natural response. The more we know Him, the more we want to know Him more.

**Ex. 33:19** 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.

**Ex. 33:20** And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.

**Ex. 33:21** And the LORD said, Behold, *there is a place by me*, and thou shalt stand upon a rock:

**Ex. 33:22** 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:

**Ex. 33:23** And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.

God doesn't rebuke Moses for wanting to see Him more fully. He desires that response from His children. He agrees to make all His goodness (glory, beauty) pass in front of Moses and declare who He is as He does so. I think the last half of the verse is an indication of why the LORD is granting Moses' request. He can choose to be gracious/kind and show mercy (love, compassion) to whomever He chooses.

The LORD tells Moses that he cannot actually see His face, because no human being can see God's face and live. I think this just means that man's response to God's person would cause him to have a stroke or heart attack and die.

The LORD tells Moses to stand on a rock. When His glory passes by Moses, He will place him in a cleft (crack, opening) in the rock and will cover him with His hand as He passes by. He will remove His hand in time for Moses to see His back; but Moses cannot see His face.

I think these verses are a wonderful depiction of God's desire for intimacy with us. He is making special provision for *one man* to fulfill his desire to know Him as LORD more intimately. I think God will do the same today. The key is our desire as reflected by our service in obedience.