



The Lord is My Strength

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Exodus 32

- Last week we talked about how Moses was an advocate for Israel
- We talked about how that testing and trials always have a purpose in our lives, and always accomplish something good
- We realized that the behavior of Israel is easier to understand when we think about our own hearts and minds
- The same hearts and same lips that speak praise to God can speak words of cursing and discouragement to those around us
- We are only sinners saved by grace
- When we accept the fact that Jesus Christ died for our sins, we don't immediately become perfect
- We don't immediately lose all of our tendency to sin
- We are still sinners saved by grace, and Israel is a perfect picture of that
- Israel had their eyes on a man, and when they could not have their eyes on that man because he was up on the mountain, then they had to have their eyes on something
- One of the things which we need to be cautiously alert in our own lives is being able to see something, being able to put our hands on something spiritually
- There is a real tendency to demand that God give us a sign
- Remember, Faith is the evidence of things not seen
- You do not have to see something physically happen in your life in order to say that you have a real experience with God
- We saw how Moses the Advocate didn't yield to the temptation to have the nation formed from him, but instead saves the lives of the rebellious sinners in Israel

- Moses not only calls God to remember that the Egyptians would have cause to ridicule God if He were to destroy the people now, but He also reminds God about the promises He made to Abraham
- Exodus 32:13 KJV
 - 13) 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.
- Moses remembers the promises... Even to his own hurt
- The promises are THAT important!
- Our salvation is centered on these promises
- Our hope is based on these promises
- We should remember them at all times also
- And look what happens...
- Exodus 32:14
 - 14) And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.
- This is a very important verse
- We need to think very carefully about what is being said here because the way that we have the verse translated, it could be very easily misunderstood, particularly if we take it out of its context
- First, we need to understand what the word *repent* means
- The word *repent* is a translation of a Hebrew word, in this case, but there is a Greek word in the New Testament that is translated by our English word *repent* also
- Both of those words mean simply ``to turn around"
- To repent does not mean moaning and crying and beating yourself on the chest and saying, ``Oh, God, please if you can find it within your heart, forgive me," and tarrying before God for hours and all of those kinds of things that we sometimes associate with the idea of repentance
- It simply means to change your mind
- It simply means to turn around, and this verse tells us that God turned around. God changed His mind

- The second word that is very important for us to notice in verse 14 is the word *evil*
- Here we would seem to have a contradiction because the Scripture tells us in the book of Habakkuk and many other places that God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity and cannot look upon sin
- But the Hebrew word that is translated to our English word *evil* has no connotation of sin and wrong-doing
- It has the idea of terrible destruction or of complete judgment, but it carries no connotation of wrong-doing
- This verse is saying that God had intended to destroy a certain group of people and God turned from that purpose
- But, that raises another difficulty, doesn't it?
- Doesn't the Scripture tell us that God is never changing and that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever?
- Theologians have argued for years about the meaning of verse 14
- The fact is, that there are several places where God changes his mind in Scriptures
- The point is that He didn't intend to change his plan about bringing a great nation out of one of the descendants of Abraham, but simply change the way He went about it
- God doesn't change the plan, but He is able to change the details
- That is why our prayers have strength, otherwise they would be useless
- God may choose from your request to do something in the details that He would not have done had we not asked Him
- God's will is going to be done, but God may choose to allow you to have some part in it that He wouldn't choose to let you have if you had not asked Him
- God's will doesn't change, but sometimes those day-to-day activities that are used in the accomplishing of His will are changed at the request of His people, not a change in His nature, not a change in His essence, but here is the God of the universe willing to us men who are dependent upon Him
- It is possible - and there is no way to know for sure - that all of this was just a test of Moses' character - that God never intended to wipe out His people, that He was saying this to see what Moses would do
- But whatever God's intentions were, Moses passed the test

- Moses was one of the most mature men of God who ever lived and here is the proof
- He was willing to say, ``No, God. Don't use me. Use this people that You have already begun to use. Follow the plan that You have laid out. God, don't destroy this people."
 - And then Moses returns to the people that he just saved...
 - Exodus 32:15-20 KJV
 - 15) And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony *were* in his hand: the tables *were* written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other *were* they written.
 - 16) And the tables *were* the work of God, and the writing *was* the writing of God, graven upon the tables.
 - 17) And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, *There is* a noise of war in the camp.
 - 18) And he said, *It is* not the voice of *them that* shout for mastery, neither *is it* the voice of *them that* cry for being overcome: *but* the noise of *them that* sing do I hear.
 - 19) And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.
 - 20) And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt *it* in the fire, and ground *it* to powder, and strawed *it* upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink *of it*.
- You parents who are looking for a novel and effective way to punish your children might take a few lessons from Moses
- He went down there and he broke that thing up and ground it up and mixed it in water and made them drink the stuff
- It's interesting to see that even though Moses had been praying for the people, had been confronting God on their behalf, that didn't keep him from being severe in his discipline and in his confrontation with them
- We sometimes have the idea in our own dealings with people that if we are going to pray for people, then we have got to be willing to put up with anything from them, and if someone falls into sin, then the thing for us to do is to pray for them and put up with the sin - just let it go on because, after all, we are praying for them
- That is not the approach that Moses took
- There should be no question in our minds by this time that Moses loved these people
- Moses would do anything for them, but he wasn't going to tolerate their sin

- There is a lesson in that for us
- We must be careful, even though we are willing to pray for our brother or sister and hold them up before God and plead before God for them, that we must not tolerate the sin in their life
- Now, Moses has to deal with Aaron
- Exodus 32:21 KJV
 - 21) And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?
- What's impressive to me is that he doesn't launch right into him - He gives him a chance to explain himself
- Unfortunately, Aaron doesn't do a very good job
- Exodus 32:22-24 KJV
 - 22) And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they *are set* on mischief.
 - 23) For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for *as for* this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.
 - 24) And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break *it* off. So they gave *it* me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.
- Here's the question...
- Do you really think that Aaron thought that Moses would buy that explanation?
- They lived in a day of miracles
- Maybe he thought that Moses would think that God was busy down at the bottom while He was busy up at the top, but the thing that is important for us to recognize here is another very important principle of Scripture and that is that the man of God is the man who will not rationalize with the facts and he will not twist the truth
- You see, Aaron was dealing with truth here
- There was a lot of truth in what Aaron said, wasn't there? ``The people came to me and they said, `We don't know what has happened to Moses. Do something for us'."
 - That was the truth
 - Then Aaron said, ``I asked them for gold and I put it in the fire," and that was true

- But the purpose in telling this truth was to rationalize
- Here is a perfect example of the mark of a lack of repentance
- The man who rationalizes his sin, the man who continually explains away his sin (He is always willing to admit he sinned, but he always has a reason for it. He is willing to say that he did the action but he is not quite willing to call it *sin*.) is the man whom God cannot use
- Why is it that we only hear of Aaron as Moses' brother?
- Have you ever thought of that?
- Aaron's main claim to fame is that he was Moses' brother and spokesman
- Why is he never referred to as a man of God?
- Here is the answer right here in these few verses
- Moses was a man who was truly right with God
- Oh, Moses had his sins and his faults and his failings
- It was a long journey that took Moses from being the proud, confident young man in Egypt to being the humble and meek man living out in the desert
- But Moses was willing to be obedient to God and Aaron wasn't
- Moses was a man who was able to change
- He was able to be changed by the power of God working in his life
- Moses was able to be humbled, and to come to realize that no matter how strong a man is, he will only truly succeed if he opens himself up to God and allows God to work in his life
- Moses truly felt that THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH
- Let's pray that we can learn that same lesson