

As I write this, another bomb has exploded in Israel, killing fourteen people. Thousands of Islamics have lined up to blast themselves into eternity, just to harass the Israelis. Yet Islam has declared war not only on Israel, but on Christianity. America now lives in utter fear. We're afraid of more suicide bombers, germ warfare, even nuclear attack. A pall of death hangs over the nation.

Where is the church in the midst of this chaos? Most of Christianity is in a state of death. The church is full of religious activity, but it's mostly flesh. God's presence is woefully missing during this time of crisis.

That is tragic, because our Lord always has a remedy for a world in chaos. It's a time-tested remedy He has used for generation after generation, to wake up His dead, backslidden church. This remedy hasn't changed since man's creation. It's simply this: God raises up chosen men and women.

In times such as these, our Lord uses individuals to respond to a world in crisis. He touches His servants in a supernatural way. First, He transforms them. Then, He calls them to a life of total submission to His will. These God-touched servants are best described in Psalm 65:4: *"Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts."*

In short, God calls such a servant apart. His Spirit woos him into intimate communion. And there, in the Lord's awesome presence, the servant is given God's mind. He receives a divine call. Suddenly, his soul is filled with an urgency. He emerges from this communion with a God-given word. And he

The Touch of God

- Moses -

begins to walk with spiritual authority.

Biblical history reveals this pattern again and again. Time after time, God's people rejected Him and turned to idols. They adopted heathen practices, with each generation becoming more vile and corrupt. Their wickedness grieved and angered the Lord. Yet, how were they restored? In every case, God raised up a godly servant: a judge, a prophet, a righteous king.

Samuel is one such example. He chided Israel, *"And when they forgot the LORD their God, He sold them into the hand of (their enemies)... And they cried unto the LORD, and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD... And the LORD sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and ye dwelled safe."* (1.SAM 12:9-11).

Such God-touched servants became God's instruments of deliverance. They were able to discern the times. And because they knew God's heart, the Lord used them as His oracles. They spoke His word both to His people and to the surrounding nations.

There is no doubting God's touch on someone who has been chosen and called. Such a person stands out from all others. So, why did the Lord touch these particular servants? Why did He raise up Abraham, Moses, David and certain

others to bring restoration to His people and to the nations? Did the Lord see something special in them?

No, these figures weren't supermen. Their broken, flawed lives bear this out. Nor were they simply predetermined to do the things they did. Every person has a free will, choosing either to follow or reject God's call.

Consider Saul: he was chosen by God, touched by His hand, filled with His Spirit. The Lord had a marvelous plan for Saul's life. He intended to establish for him an "everlasting" throne. Yet Saul aborted God's call. Despite God's anointing, he rebelled against the Lord. His destiny wasn't determined simply by God's election of him.

When God chooses someone to be set apart for a special, redeeming work, He gives that servant two calls. And how the servant responds to these calls determines the power and intensity of God's touch in his life. First, there is the call to come up. Then, there is the call to come out. Moses' life exemplifies both of these calls.

1. God Calls Us To Come Up

This call summons us out of the busyness of life and into an unshackled pursuit of God's presence. Consider Moses' experience.

When Moses became Israel's leader, suddenly he was a very busy man. No congregation in history was ever as large or as needy. God's people numbered in the millions. Moses' life quickly became hectic, as he judged and ministered to the people from morning till night.

Finally, Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, intervened. He warned Moses that he would wear himself out and weary the people. Jethro advised, "*Be thou for the people to God-ward... And let (others) judge the people at all seasons... so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee.*" (EX 18:19-22). Jethro was saying, in other words, "You're the pastor, Moses. You need to shut yourself in with God. Assign others the jobs of arbitrating and counseling. Then get alone with God. Seek His presence, get His mind, receive His word. This should be your first priority."

Moses heeded this wise counsel. He appointed others to act as judges and counselors. And he determined to accept God's call to "come up." Scripture says, "*...Moses went up unto God,*" (EX 19:3). "*And the LORD came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up.*" (EX 19:20).

Moses prized the presence of God in his life. And this determined the intensity of God's touch on his life. Note how the Lord singled out Moses from the other Israelites, to approach him: "*And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.*" (EX 20:21).

Moses represents the blessed man spoken of by David: "*Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts:*" (PSA 65:4). The word for "causeth" here means to be moved upon, to be urged by God to come up.

Many Christians have experienced this call, this divine urge to commune with the Lord. The Holy Spirit calls them to the mount of intimacy often, saying, "I desire to change you, to give you a greater anointing. I want to take you deeper and further in me. I want to reveal my ways to you as never before."

Yet, not all who are called respond. As a result, God doesn't touch them with His fire and unction. At first they may have answered, "Lord, I won't let you down. I'll seek your face continually." And for a season, they shut themselves up in prayer. But they didn't set their hearts to go all the way in prayer. After a while, they ignored God's voice and went their own way. They cut short His call to come up to where He is.

Most Who Are Called and Chosen Stop Halfway Up the Mount

Halfway is where many believers end up. The Bible tells us, "*And He said unto Moses, Come up unto the LORD, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off. And Moses alone shall come near the LORD: but they shall not come nigh; neither shall the people go up with him.*" (EX 24:1-2).

God had chosen a handful of men He wanted to touch. He had wonderful plans for these men, especially for Aaron and his sons. They were to be Israel's priestly leaders. The Lord had told Moses, "*...I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar; I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office.*" (EX 29:44). Likewise, the Lord had told the elders, "*...ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.*" (EX 19:6).

So, why did God tell these men to their faces, "Worship me afar off. Don't come near to me. Only Moses shall come up to me at the top of the mount..." (see EX 24:1-2) The fact is, God knew the sins brewing in these men's hearts. And they had to be dealt with. He wanted to touch their lives. But He couldn't do that as long as they were hiding sin.

So, God allowed them to come only halfway up the mount. Yet, even so, He appeared to them supernaturally, as a cloud of darkness: "*And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under His feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in His clearness.*" (EX 24:10). These men now stood in the incredible, revelatory presence of God. They even ate and drank

there, at a table in His presence. But they were still "afar off" from Him.

Israel's elders were being exposed to the utter, shattering holiness of God. It was as if He were saying, "Sin has a hold on your heart. And it's keeping you from the full revelation I want to give you. Your besetting lust is robbing you of close communion with me. You can't be intimate with me as long as you have hidden sin."

Try to picture these men as they heard this word:

* Aaron had been told by God, "I'm going to sanctify you as high priest. I'll clothe you in purple and gold. And I'll set you before Israel as an example." Yet Aaron's heart was tainted by jealousy over Moses. He also had a sensual streak, and he feared man more than God.

* God had told Nadab and Abihu He would reveal His holiness to them. Yet these two men were hardened in an addiction to adultery. They didn't possess an ounce of the fear of God. Now the Lord was telling them, "I'm a merciful God. My desire is that when you come into my presence, you'll allow yourselves to be broken."

* God had told the seventy elders He wanted to exalt them before the world. Yet these same men refused to be under anyone's authority. They considered themselves to be as gifted and holy as Moses. (This would later manifest itself in a rebellious uprising.) But God was urging them into His presence. He wanted to deal with their deadly pride.

God Was Warning These Chosen Men, Giving Them a Mercy Call

The Lord so desired to use all these men. He wanted them to be broken, so He could bring them higher. So He gave them an incredible mercy call, to come up.

Saul received the same kind of mercy call. This man's heart was bound by demonic strongholds. He had marched into Ramah seeking to kill David. But the Holy Spirit moved on Saul. All night long, the king lay in God's presence, smitten. Yet even this merciful, supernatural intervention didn't change Saul's heart.

Now Israel's leaders were at a similar crossroads. They were halfway up the mount, halfway to God's touch, halfway to His consuming presence. *"Then went up Moses, and Aaron, and Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel... And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand..."* (EX 24:9-11). Note the last verse: the Lord didn't judge them. In truth, these men deserved to be slain, because of their sin. But God's only desire was to redeem.

Next we read, *"...Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went up into the mount of God. And he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you;"* (EX 24:13-14). The elders were to stay and wait for Moses' return. But almost immediately, their hearts were pulled by the Israelite camp below. Soon they weren't willing to wait on the Lord anymore.

I picture Nadab and Abihu as the first to leave this halfway camp. They itched to get back to the restless crowd and their own lustful ways. So they followed the tug of their flesh. Despite God's appearance to them in the dark cloud, despite being allowed to eat and drink in His presence, they left that place untouched.

These two men represent Christian leaders today who freely indulge in lust, pornography, adultery. They're so hardened by their sin, nothing can reach them. They reject every mercy call from the Holy Spirit, every convicting message from His prophets, every encounter with the Lord Himself. They abort all His attempts to deliver them.

The next men to be tempted were Aaron and the other pious leaders. One after another, they whispered, "We don't know what's happened to Moses. He may have abandoned us." Soon the whole body of elders repeated this faithless chant. These were men who had been called by God to a life of prayer and communion. But now, one by one, they left His presence untouched. They didn't repent or yield to His holiness. Instead, they turned back to a religion of abominable flesh.

Yet, further up on the mount, Moses experienced God's touch in full. How? He was obedient to the Lord's voice. He had followed His call to come up: *"And the LORD*

said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there:" (EX 24:12). God was saying, in other words, "Come into my presence. Just be there for me."

For six days, Moses waited outside the glory cloud. I believe it was during these six days that the elders left the halfway camp. They were convinced God had nothing more to say to them. But Moses obeyed the Lord by waiting. Then we read, *"...the seventh day He called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud... And Moses went into the midst of the cloud... and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights."* (EX 24:16-18).

Moses received an incredible revelation of the Lord during those forty days. And just as God called Moses then, He's calling His servants to the mount today. His Spirit is urging us to come up to a place higher and deeper in Him than we've ever known. He's calling us to communion, to intimacy, to talk with Him face to face, as Moses did.

Indeed, the Lord has given us the same commandment to wait on Him: *"...on thee do I wait all the day."* (PSA 25:5). *"...they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength;"* (ISA 40:31). *"...they shall not be ashamed that wait for me."* (ISA 49:23). Passage after passage calls us to wait on God. Yet, how many of us quickly turn back to our old ways? How many of us are pulled back by our flesh, to a dead form of religion?

The Holy Spirit spoke this to my heart: "David, those who wait in my presence feed me. Their quiet worship, their waiting to hear my voice, are my food." Such God-touched servants have determined, "I'm going to wait on the Lord. I won't settle for anything less than face-to-face communion with Him. It doesn't matter what others do in their walk. I want God to take me places in Him where others refuse to go."

2. God Calls Us To Come Out

"...Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation. And... every one which sought the LORD went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation..." (EX 33:7).

This wasn't the wilderness tabernacle; that hadn't been constructed yet. Rather, this tabernacle was the "tent of meeting." It served as Moses' prayer closet when he went to meet with the Lord. So, why did Moses move this tent far off from the camp? He did so because Israel had defiled themselves. They had rejected God's authority. And they'd turned instead to gross wickedness of all kinds: idolatry, sensuality, adultery, nudity.

God finally had to remove His presence from Israel. He declared, "I can't walk in the midst of a defiled people. You're stiff-necked, worthy to be destroyed. Now, take off all your ornaments and stop strutting around proudly. I'm going to decide what to do with you..." (see EX 33:5).

A pall of death hung over the camp. God had removed the pillar of fire, and His presence was nowhere to be found. Likewise today, an atmosphere of death hangs over churches where God has removed His presence. It doesn't matter how loudly the congregation sings, what new method of worship has been introduced, or how hard the pastor tries to work up people's emotions. The place is dead, devoid of God's presence. The sermons are lifeless, lacking conviction. And the sheep are left hungry and wanting.

Moses knew that only God's presence brings life. So he went to the tent of meeting continually, praying, "Lord, only one thing makes Israel different from the other nations: your presence. Without you in our midst, we're no better than the heathen. We're powerless against our enemies. If we don't have your presence, we've got no reason to exist. We might as well quit right now. I won't go on without you."

The Lord told Moses He wouldn't come back into the defiled camp. But He did agree to send an angel to lead Israel: *"...go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken... behold, mine Angel shall go before thee:"* (EX 32:34). Then He promised, *"...I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out (your enemies)...[and lead you] Unto a land flowing with milk and honey: (but) I will not go up in the midst of thee;"* (EX 33:2,3).

I had to reread this last verse several times before I understood what God was saying. In short, He was telling His people, "Go ahead, move forward, fight your battles. You'll defeat your enemies. And you'll obtain their houses, vineyards and possessions. I will uphold all my promises to you. But my presence won't be with you."

This passage explains much of what has happened to God's church in our day. Untold numbers of pastors and congregations have moved on without God's presence. They're building huge churches, drawing large numbers, bringing in a wealth of funds. Some even cast out demons or heal the sick. But the Lord Himself isn't in their midst. The manifest presence of Christ is nowhere to be found among them.

Jesus predicted such things would happen in the last days. Flesh-driven ministers would do great works, unconcerned whether the Lord is with them. All they care about is that their bills are paid and that thousands flock to their churches. Some pastors actually fear God's presence. They won't allow visiting ministers to preach, afraid that a convicting message will scare away their parishioners.

God is telling them in these passages, "Go ahead, get your prosperity. But be ready for my wrath to break out on you at any time. Your fleshly pursuits and defilement have driven my presence from you."

A true shepherd of God, however, has one overriding concern: "Is the Lord among us? Is His presence here in our midst?"

Moses Knew What It Would Take to Bring Back God's Presence

God's presence will not return to any congregation until the minister and people leave behind all defilement. They must forsake all lusts and separate themselves to a place of heart-purity.

Israel had been completely defiled, including Aaron and the priesthood. So, Moses left the camp and set Himself apart to the Lord. Immediately, God filled the tent of meeting with His presence: *"...as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the LORD talked with Moses... and the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend."* (EX 33:9-11).

Moses is a shining example of what it takes to bring back Christ's manifest presence to a congregation. First, the minister must separate himself to God and shut himself up in intercession. Then a holy remnant must follow their pastor, leaving behind all defilement. A spirit of repentance will pervade that new camp. Soon pure worship will break forth among them. And the people will know the Lord has returned.

This is the only way to bring back God's presence: to refuse to stay in the place of defilement. You may say, "That's Old Testament theology. You can't apply it in New Testament times." But Paul warns us clearly: *"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."* (1.COR 3:16-17).

In short, God is telling us, "Remove yourself from all lusts: pornography, covetousness, adultery. Get away from the bitterness growing inside you. Separate yourself from the place of defile-

ment." Such talk of separation may not sound like "normal" Christianity. A normal walk with Jesus today means reading a Bible chapter, praying on your way to work, and going to church on Sunday. But, beloved, we aren't living in normal times. God is calling His people today to radical Christianity.

Right now, multiple thousands of Muslims are lined up, begging, "Let me die for my faith." They pray devoutly six times a day. Yet, all the while, tens of thousands of American Christians sit lazily in front of their TV sets, drinking in filth. As I mentioned earlier, our society is sitting on edge, awaiting more destruction. We tremble at the thought of the next terrorist attack. Yet the Christianity that the world sees is weak, powerless, flesh-saturated, prayerless.

It's going to take a supernatural infusion of God's presence for His church to come alive again. And that means radical measures among His people. God isn't asking you to pray six times a day, or to fast for weeks at a time. He simply wants communion.

The Lord is asking you to meet Him on the mount. He wants you to come up, to remove yourself from the place of defilement. His great desire is to take you ever deeper and further into His heart. That's how He responds to a world in crisis. He causes His servants to take Him more seriously than ever before. And He fills them with His presence. Then the masses of humanity will see and know that Jesus Christ is Lord.

by David Wilkerson
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