

OUTSIDE THE CAMP

For Moses, it was an absolute crisis. Undoubtedly, his heart was overwhelmed with the seriousness, the direness, of the situation. God's presence had departed from their midst. For more than 80 years, God had prepared him to lead this massive host of Israelites but nothing had prepared him for this.

Many of you will remember the story of Moses climbing the mountain to commune with the Almighty while below the people, under Aaron's timid and/or misguided leadership, built an idol of gold and parted wildly before it. Of course, when Moses saw it for himself, he was disgusted, ashamed and angry. He chastised the people – how could they do such a thing. God had delivered them from slavery, given them the wealth of the Egyptians and was leading them to a new prosperous land.

But then the real catastrophe came - *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Depart and go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'To your descendants I will give it.' And I will send My Angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanite and the Amorite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people."*

This was the crisis. Moses and the people of Israel were in a place, a situation, much as we are today. *"This was a challenge to Moses and the nation as a whole. God told them they could have the Promised Land, but He would not remain with them in a close, personal way. If they were satisfied with that arrangement, it*

would prove they only loved God's blessings and not God Himself. If they challenged God - pleading with Him for His presence, not only His blessings - it would show a genuine heart for God Himself. This was the first step towards revival in Israel." (D. Guzik)

"To be given every other blessing is of no value if God is not with you. What is the value of Canaan? What is the value of milk and honey? What is the value of having possessions, if God was not with them? They saw that the realization of the presence of God, having this fellowship and company, was infinitely more important than everything else." (Lloyd-Jones)

Sitting in his tent, Moses knew what he had to do. He called for his helpers, including Joshua, and instructed them to pack up his tent. In all likelihood, it was unnerving for the people to watch. With all Israel looking on, he hiked away from their midst to a place way outside the camp – still visible, but quite far away. There, he set up his tent. *"This was not something that Moses organized or planned or strategized. He sought God, radically and spontaneously."* (D. Guzik)

Exodus 33 records this event - *Moses took his tent and pitched it outside the camp, far from the camp, and called it the tabernacle of meeting. And it came to pass that everyone who sought the LORD went out to the tabernacle of meeting which was outside the camp.*

"When the Holy Spirit of God begins to deal with any one of us, there will be this separation. It will not be paraded, it will not be the Pharisees' 'I am holier than thou' attitude. No, once a man begins to be burdened for the glory of God and the state of the Church, he immediately feels the call to consecration, he 'goes out' as it were." (Lloyd-Jones)

It was there, outside the camp, that God met with and spoke to Moses "face to face", that is, intimately, as a friend.

The point was, and is, the camp with all its blessings, blessings of Egypt which God had bestowed were insufficient. The promise that God would guide them to the promised land was insufficient. Guaranteed angelic defense and miraculous obtaining of prosperity were insufficient. Stardom, celebrity among the chosen people was insufficient. *"For Moses, it wasn't enough to know that he and Israel would make it to the Promised Land. In his estimation, the Promised Land was nothing special without the special presence of the LORD."* (D. Guzik)

Many scriptures speak of doing certain things outside the camp. In the Law of God, we find verses such as:

And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. (Exo 19:17) And...

But the flesh of the bull, with its skin and its offal, you shall burn with fire outside the camp. It is a sin offering. (Exo 29:14)

Along with about a dozen or so other instances where, if you think about it, the fundamental question is not necessarily about the actions associated with cleanliness or purification or atonement but rather – where is God's presence?

Perhaps, the most powerful example of this is from the writer of Hebrews who says, *For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.* (Heb 13:11-14)

True salvation requires each one of us to leave the camp of mere religion, to follow our Savior. Then, in

graciously obtaining it -- His life, His Spirit indwells us. Hallelujah! And He has promised, *Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you.* (Heb 13:5) So you can be assured that once you are genuinely saved, His presence will abide with you – He will never leave.

He has also promised to the true believers, *For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.* (Mat 18:20) So for the sincere individual or ardent small group of believers, the presence of God is more readily realized and we, like Moses in the tabernacle of meeting, can speak directly with our Lord.

But the larger congregation, the church at large, has a dire problem and one that, like Moses, each person must face and decide what to do.

"The camp" to those Hebrew believers whom [the writer] is addressing, of course meant apostate Judaism that had crucified their Messiah. But the term "camp" includes all those "religious" developments, by whatever name called, which, though professing to be Christian, are Judeo-pagan. You must choose between earthly "religion" and heavenly reality. You must know a heavenly Christ or not know Christ at all.

For if there is anyone despised or reproached on earth, it is one openly holding a hope of Heaven, yet having no connection with human "religion". Of course, all this makes him "different" from the world. Unless your only hope is not "religion," not being a "church member," not so-called Christian activity, but – the blood of Christ...your hope is a damning delusion, whatever your "priest," "pastor," or "spiritual adviser" may tell you.– William Newell

Is God outside our camp?

Having obtained deliverance and great blessing, has the church today failed to appreciate His presence?

Once purely motivated movements have lost their bearing. Pulpits are used to sell rather than save. 'Churches' are handled like businesses; some are even franchised! Ministers are going through motions within the 'confines of the camp'. Ministerial celebrity, being the idol of this age has alienated many and corrupted many. As a consequence, enormous numbers of believers are looking for the Lord, so to speak, in home churches and other small groups. They are looking for His presence outside the camp.

Of course, not all are of a pure heart in this – there is much haughtiness, self-righteousness and some plain ole' self-centeredness in it. But many are truly, like Moses, wanting more than the blessings and promises. They want to know the Lord and His divine presence. They want to experience His glory. *"Have you ever read of Jonathan Edwards describing his experience of it in a forest while he was there kneeling in prayer for about an hour? Have you read of David Brainerd, the great apostle to the American Indians, experiencing the glory of God, and literally sweating, though it was cold, and though it was freezing round and about him? What was causing the sweating? Oh, it was the glory, the character and the transcendence of the glory. And to give you a man who is much nearer to ourselves, D. L. Moody, a very strong man physically, a very sturdy man. And yet when God gave him a glimpse of his glory, he had to ask him to desist and to hold back his hand, because he felt it was killing him. He is not the only one who has felt that."* (Lloyd-Jones)

In a sense, these people want to abide in the 'tabernacle' like Joshua did, even when Moses had left. They simply are not going to ride the band wagon of popular Laodicean

Christianity. They want the real deal, not the rote and dead. How about you?

Is the Lord in your camp? Is He really? How do you know? By the blessings and promises alone? With Moses, God guaranteed to get them to the promised land – He had not departed altogether. But for the man of God, that was still crisis time. So Moses went outside the camp to meet with God and thus did each sincere worshipper.

For many, perhaps a great many today, Jesus is outside our churchianity. In fact, it is a characteristic of the Last Days church. In the book of Revelation, He says to this group, *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.* (Rev 3:20) *"The idea of Jesus at the door applies to the sinner and to the saint just the same. Jesus wants to come in to us, and dine with us, in the sense of having a deep, intimate relationship. Sadly, Jesus stands on the outside, knocking to get in. If the church at Philadelphia was 'The Church of the Open Door,' then the church at Laodicea is 'The Church of the Shut Out Jesus.'"* (D. Guzik)

Can I challenge each of us to do as Moses? Why? Because as the writer of Hebrews concluded above, *Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.* It is clear in the Bible that the distinction of this continuing city – New Jerusalem – the heavenly city, is the abiding presence of God. Do you want that in your church? Like Jesus, like Moses, like Paul, like St. Francis, like Luther, Wesley, Smith and every deeply dedicated disciple, you may have to go outside the camp.

I'm packing up.