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Sermon preached by our Pastor
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Lesson. Exodus 33.

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

We have here recorded in these verses the sacred language used by the Lord and Moses in an amazing season of communion in a time of unprecedented anxiety and distress and trouble occasioned by an act of idolatry by God's own chosen people. It was an act we could hardly give credit to if it were not recorded in the Book of God. Let us briefly recount it as we find it in the table of Bible history.

Moses was on the holy Mount receiving from God the tables of the Law in stone, beholding the glory of God in His justice, majesty and holiness and in his absence this people of all people made a golden calf and were worshipping it. It seems absolutely incredible, knowing God as the One who had emancipated them from bondage in Egypt, that they should sink so low as to make a golden calf. When that prince Moses descended from the holy Mount he viewed the heart-rending scene: the Israelites had debased themselves to the lowest level of idolatrous practice to worship a golden calf. Obviously spiritual people to day, and those in this Sanctuary will find a direct line to the chamber of imagery in their own hearts. For a long time, through many decades, the Lord has led me in this course. I have read of monstrous, vile things, idolatrous practices. I have seen the world in all its wickedness and depravity, and the Holy Spirit has seen fit to show me the complete replica in my own heart. From my teens I have been well aware of this. Everything that fills you with horror and disgust you see in your own heart when the Lord exposes to you the foul dungeon with all its cells.

"The dungeon, opening foul as hell, - is the language too strong? Certainly not.

Its loathsome stench emits;
And, brooding in each secret cell,

Some hideous monster sits." (310)

Now there is a straight line from this idolatrous practice to one's own heart. What a blessing to be plagued! Your heart is a plague to you. You know the plague of your own heart. There are those who are not in this trouble because they are dead. You will be plagued and chastened. That is why I feel, and it was sweet in prayer to thank God that things are infinitely better than I feared because I thought I was going to hell. I am in union with my Saviour: there is mercy all along the line.

We see in what is antecedent to the Scripture read God manifesting His sore displeasure, and we see what is so amazing and emphasises the importance of the words of our blessed Lord when He lovingly and tenderly reproved the two sorrowful disciples on the Emmaus road. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? - Why are you so dismayed at what has happened? Ought not Christ to have suffered these things? Are you ignorant of the prophets? - And beginning at Moses-" Moses had one of the clearest views and the deepest knowledge of the Messiah. I am to name this to you, and it is my and your hope. We have to consider God; glorious, infinite, majestic, sin-hating, sin-condemning, sin-punishing, and the whole human race from Adam fallen. O the wickedness of man since the days of the Adam fall! I have often thought, we may shudder at the violence in the world: it could be no greater than in the first family,- for a brother to murder a brother. Imagine if it was in your family, one brother murders another God in all His holiness, majesty, justice, and the fallen race, polluted alien, vile;- and what hope have we? Is there any hope for mankind? This is translated to personal terms. Is there any hope for this congregation Is there any hope for me? I love ^{the} concept in the hymn;

"For who of mercy needs despair,
Since I have mercy found?" (775)

I have found mercy, so who need despair?

There is an amazing thing emerges. Moses occupied an important position. Do you see his stance? He is a mediator; one who stood between. There ^{is} is

our hope. There is no other hope, only in a Mediator. "There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Tim. 2.5) Moses said to God; "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made their gods of gold." What a cursed thing this metal often is! We are told that the love of money is the root of all evil. (1 Tim. 6.10) Now we have his mediatorial address to God. "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin-;" and this is one of the most amazing statements ever to be emitted from the heart and lips of a great leader of God's people. He said; "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin-; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.." which means, to spell it out; "Lord, if this people are to be banished, I will be banished too. If they sink, I sink with them. If the ship of state is going down, I am going too." Some of us know this in measure with some of our family. I know it is far too deep for many. If God has brought you in it you will understand. "Lord, blot my name out. If they are banished and sink I am going with them." What a leader! Some of you in years to come who fear God may understand,- in another decade or so, if the Lord is pleased to spare you

I am going to suggest to you that this a statement God honoured. What a leader! I dwell on this because it is one of the most remarkable Scriptures in the Bible. It wonderfully analyses and spreads out before you the meaning of God-given loyalty. I am not to stay on this, but if God has given you in your heart a poor soul to cling to, and that one is a reckless sinner you will know the meaning of what has been preached. The preacher knows. These are not superficial or exaggerated statements. He has known what it is to feel if one sank into the pit we should go too. This is more than you understand probably. If God has done any binding up in your soul as He has in mine, these will be some of the deep places you come into. - Here is a mediator, and it is an amazing revelation. How it points to the great Antitype, our Saviour! Here we are, base sinners and the glorious Being of Jehovah. Is there hope for us? O yes! there is a Mediator, and He is able to put His hands on both of us; on the holy Father as co-equal, eternal in person, work and glory with Him, and on us as the Son of God incarnate. You go to God through the Mediator; you will find you get a sweet experience. See what boldness the Lord gives to poor sinners to come through the Mediator! So

Moses stood as a mediator. I could come to the Amen here, because it fills my spirit with hope, joy and expectation. There is no gloom, misery or despair; there is a Mediator. You may come; you are welcome; you may come near. O the wonder of His mediation!

I must fulfil my pledge, as helped. We find as in the Lesson the Lord gave directives. A mortifying title He gave to the people, namely; a stiffnecked people, and also He greatly reproveth them by the removal of the tabernacle so it was pitched without the camp. But the directives as already named,- you will have noticed in the Lesson what they are, and where there is an exhortation of this nature it means there is hope. One is, they should put off their ornaments. What is the meaning? They should strip themselves of such things and stand in the place of penitents. They should appear before God in repentance. Here is mercy; and having such an exhortation and obeying it, what a hope! The point is if it can be established that God's dispensations are chastenings it is in love; and if it is in love there will be a blessed issue. This is something all spiritual persons are made aware of: they are brought to discernment. There is a point in time when they are able to recognise it as chastening. And how? Because of the love of Christ in it that flows into their souls and because it synchronises with the sweetest repentance and humility of spirit. You fall under and into the hand of God and your heart is broken, "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." (Job 23.10) "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons." (Heb.12. 5-7)

"The lash is steeped He on thee lays,
And softened in His blood." (871)

So you see if it can be established that the dispensations of God are chastenings, and you have the background in your soul and lot. There are many things that cannot be named publicly, but I can stand and praise and bless God for some of the sharpest, bitterest things I have known because He has sanctified them.

Let us follow up this point. Is it established in your soul that the

dispensations of God are chastening? This is a preparation for heaven: it is to fit you for Himself; for fruitfulness, as the branch bearing fruit is purged that it may bring forth more fruit. (John 15.2) He prunes and cleanses and strips the bark off. You may be in a condition where you think this is what the Lord is doing to this nation, but if it is in mercy and judgment what hope there is! So before I go further, is it established in your soul that over the past few years His dispensations have been in love? You are full of hope: He dealeth with you as with sons and daughters. It is for your spiritual blessing and edification to bring you nearer to Him; to purge you of idolatry and all that clogs your soul.

Another point is if it is established,- and I quote; "With mercy and with judgment." "I will sing of mercy and judgment." (Psa.104.1) - I have no intention to speak on the nation but I am bound to say I am positive in the last few weeks not only have we seen judgment but we have experienced much mercy: this fills me with hope. O the mercy of God! I have had to thank God.- Think of the beginning of the emergency. I thought 50% of the people would be unable to get to the Dicker and there would be no petrol: everything seemed gloomy. It has been vastly different. There is much mercy mingled with the Lord's judgments and this means there is some expectation ~~of~~ that God has a divine purpose.

So we follow the course of the people as ^{they} stood as penitents. "And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments." Then another thing emerges to day. The cloudy pillar stood at the tabernacle door, and we have this to day, or it is something greater in these times of our Lord. We have, (as we had on Christmas morning,) the Shekinah light of His glory in Jehovah Jesus, full of grace and truth. It is not repellent; it is not to destroy but to save us. Let us thank God that He has filled this House with His glory, and we have many times enjoyed the special Presence of our blessed Redeemer. Does this fill you with hope? Look at the effect. Moses went to the tabernacle,- and this is one of the beautiful words of Scripture. "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...And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face." Do you know it? How does it harmonise with the vers

at the end of the chapter? Perfectly. The Lord said; "My face shall not be seen." - that is, out of Christ, but it is face to face here. Do you know what it is to see the face of your Saviour when He lifts on you the light of His countenance? You see the reconciled ~~face~~ countenance of God in the face of Jesus Christ. I ventured to refer at Worthing to the time I first saw the face of Christ. Have you seen His dear face? The first time I saw His lovely face I was still at school, and I saw His face as He hung on the cross and He looked at me in love and compassion. His eyes spoke to me. I very reverently name it. He said to me: "I have loved you with an everlasting love." It was face to face. The Lord gave me the face of faith to respond,- the face of a penitent sinner and a loving, believing soul. I know some of you are in the secret. You know something of 'face to face.' What a hope! - So I am preaching the sermon on the introduction.

The Lord gave Moses a wonderful promise; "My presence shall go with thee. You can concentrate on this point; "My presence." You have had it in the Tabernacle; at the Communion. The special, loving, saving, sanctifying Presence of the Lord would go with them. This may be for a child, for older friends, for the congregation. "My presence shall go with thee." This is a good word for 1974. "My presence shall go with thee." Is not this being fulfilled? Has not His Presence gone with us? You know it has. Here in this place His Presence has gone with you. We have taken a journey and His Presence has gone with us, and He has been with us when we reached our destination. O the internal joy which the saints are unable to contain -the joy is so great! "My presence." To feel you have got Christ: you can look forward and believe His Presence will be with you.

"and I will give thee rest." Shall we be immunised now? No: but there is the Land of Promise. "Ye are travelling home to God." (267) Expect the way to be rough: what of this if His Presence is with us? and over there is the rest remaining. Moses said in response; "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." - I have a few basic, tremendous truths in mind I hope I shall be assisted to deliver later.- What does this show? His Presence is of greater value to you than all beside. "Thy presence." This was sweet to me last night; this point of vital union with Christ,

seeing Him on the cross, and I felt there was a moment in time when I felt to be in union with Him experimentally, and I have been in union with Him ever since, and so have you, and the sap flows. His Presence is the chief thing with you. Amen.