

Show Me Now Thy Way' Exodus 33, 34

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon highlights the difference between Moses, who stood in grace, and Israel, who was put back under law, and emphasizes the blessed confidence of knowing God's presence with us.

Scripture: Exodus 33:12

Topics: "Grace vs. Law", "Intercession and God's Presence"

Description

John Nelson Darby explores the contrast between Moses and Israel in Exodus 33 and 34, emphasizing the grace that Moses found in God's sight compared to Israel's failure under the law after their sin with the golden calf. He highlights how Moses interceded for the people, seeking God's presence and mercy, while Israel was reminded of their accountability under the law. Darby points out that while Moses could not make atonement, Christ has completed this work, allowing believers to stand in grace rather than law. The sermon illustrates the importance of understanding our position in grace and the necessity of God's presence in our lives, especially in the face of our shortcomings. Ultimately, it calls for a deeper relationship with God, rooted in grace and intercession.

Transcript

The study of this passage brings out very clearly the position in which grace sets us with God, and the blessed confidence it gives us in God; and at the same time the effect of a mixture of grace with law, leaving us really under the latter, at any rate as to our state of mind, where the atonement is not applied, though really all exercise of grace depends on it.

To arrive at a clear understanding of both these states, as depicted to us in the passage, we must carefully distinguish between Moses and Israel. Of Moses it is said, "I know thee by name, and thou hast found grace in my sight." He stood in grace. The effect of this I will consider further on; I turn first to Israel. Israel had just made the golden calf. As a formal institution they never came under strict and absolute law. God had spoken to them out of the midst of the fire, and they had undertaken obedience. But before Moses had come down from the mount, they had made the golden calf, and broken that first link of all, "Thou shalt have none other gods but me." Moses consequently never brought the two tables of the law given of God into the camp - how could he place them beside a golden calf? - but broke them at the foot of the mount, and left the camp, setting up anticipatively a tabernacle of the congregation outside the camp; and there God met with Moses, and talked with him face to face, as a man talks with his friend.

But he is told to go up to God again in the mount; and here we may look at the state of Israel. He had told them, "Ye have sinned a great sin, and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin." He does so, "and Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold; yet now if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. And the Lord said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book." They were put fully under law, each man responsible for his sin, which is most righteous, of course, as law and judgment; but atonement was not made, but personal responsibility left everything on the individual. Blessed be God, Christ has not said, "I will go up . . . peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin He has made a perfect atonement (and thus gone down), and sat down on the right hand of God. But this was not so here. Who indeed could do it but He?

180 However, the people are, through the mediation of Moses, in a measure, as to present dealings, put under grace. The people humbled themselves, and they are spared, and God's presence goes with them. God retreats into His own sovereignty to be gracious, and shew mercy. So surely it always is. As Jehovah He then declares His name: not the gospel, founded on accomplished redemption, full forgiveness, and acceptance in Christ, who has wrought it; but the terms of God's forbearing mercy in His government of Israel.* "Jehovah, Jehovah Elohim, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty (just what God does through Christ by the atonement); visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." Such are the terms of God's dealing with Israel, on Moses' intercession, while they were put back under law, and the latter and commandments renewed. It was, as I have said, a mixture of grace and law. Grace that spared and, as a present thing, forgave, but put back under law again, under which, as a strict and absolute rule, Israel had wholly failed.

{*I do not doubt all three, as every mercy is founded on an atonement. See Romans 3:25.}

And such is a vast part of current Christianity: admitted failure under a broken law; mercy that has spared and, as a present thing, forgiven; and then men put back under law as a rule of life to keep it.

But Moses could not make atonement, and Israel was put back under law, though spared in mercy. But Christ has made atonement, we all blessedly know; and "when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." There was no "peradventure" here. He finished the work His Father gave Him to do, and is glorified as Man at the right hand of God, in a glory He had with the Father before the world was. Hence the gospel is a ministration of righteousness - the righteousness of God is revealed in it to faith. Men are not under law, but under grace.

181 Remark here that it is the law, here as then added to grace in the ways of God, which the apostle calls the ministration of death and condemnation. The first time Moses came down from the mountain, his face (the circumstance the apostle alludes to) did not shine. When he had all God's goodness pass before him, and came down the second time, it did.

Still, as we have seen, and as is evident, the people, though spared by grace, were put back under law; and this was the ministration of death and condemnation of which the apostle speaks. For, in fact, if atonement be not made, grace only makes transgression worse, at any rate in the revelation of God; even in partial glory, with law it must be condemnation to a sinner. Law after grace, in a word, is what the apostle teaches us is condemnation; law after atonement is worse than absurd. It is putting away the sin,

and then putting under it, or making the law of no authority and no effect. But vague grace - sparing, and then law, is the state of multitudes of souls; and that is what the apostle tells us is death and condemnation in its nature, and indeed the veil is soon over the reflection of grace to the soul (that is, the perception that exists of grace is soon lost).

The difference between Moses and Israel is touchingly alluded to in 2 Corinthians 3, where it is said, "When it shall turn to the Lord the veil shall be taken away." For Moses, when he went into the sanctuary, took it off. But it is done away in Christ.

The people, then, were under law.

Let us now turn to Moses, who had found grace in God's sight. First we find single-eyed desire towards God and His way. It was not, a safe way across the wilderness, but, "Shew me now thy way," and that, "that I might know thee." This is single-eyed and beautiful (chap. 33:12, 13), and this is the way, as in John 14, of finding practically grace or favour in our walk, as Enoch did. But then he can intercede, "This nation is thy people": for he did not separate himself at all from their interests, and wanted God's presence with them. God meets what is in his heart: "My presence shall go, and I will give thee rest." He will not call the people, indeed, "My people," but there will be His presence (through Moses' faith), and then in the way rest.

Moses at once presses on the manifested grace, "If thy presence go not, take us not up hence." He must have God's presence, and he brings the people in. This only (v.16) separates evidently a people to God, a notable point. Thus it is known that favour rests upon them, for Moses is - emboldened by grace, yet just in word and thought in the place of faith, "I and thy people have found grace." It is by his mediation, for that was the true exercise of faith with a heart for God's people; but the same faith will say "Thy people," and that is granted too.

182 Then (for he cannot see the face of God, that for sinners was in atonement, and Christ, the blessed One, alone could do it) the goodness is passed before him, when the glory of his face had passed by, and sovereign mercy, as we have seen, spares. This is the blessed confidence of grace: only we have to say that now we can look at the glory in the unveiled face of Christ, because atonement is made, and the glory is the witness of acceptance and of sin put away.

But there is more as to this grace. We have seen how God is with us in grace in His own way, and knowing Him. But, we shall see, it meets the evil of our nature. This is shewn in the most striking way in this passage. First, God had said, "I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee," "for thou art a stiff-necked people." He could not tolerate sin in His presence, and He would not go at all, though He would not let them go up as spared. This gave occasion to the pleading of Moses, which we have considered, who felt the value of God's presence. It was everything to him in holy desire; he could not do without it: and holy boldness through the grace shewn him (for he had found grace, and was told so) - he claims and obtains it. And now he stood in grace and known goodness; and when all the goodness had passed before him, he says, bowing his head to the earth, "If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord (Adonai, not Jehovah), let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiff-necked people," the very ground God had given for cutting them off! And could we go? could we get the better of our stiff neck, of our flesh, and get safely through the wilderness, if God were not with us?

But, oh, what a change grace has made! Here is the very reason for consuming in just judgment, the motive for asking God to be with us. How complete this grace! God, in whose present grace we stand, is

our resource against the evil in us, which was the just ground in itself of cutting us off. How very perfect and complete this grace is, and the ground of God's relationship with us! Here, too, though it rests on the Mediator, as we know it does, yet Moses brings the people fully in - "go among us; for it is a stiff-necked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin; and take us for thine inheritance." His faith is very beautiful here, and faith knows God and indeed it only.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-nelson-darby/show-me-now-thy-way-exodus-33-34/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net