

The Hand of God and the Body of Christ

by Richard E. Bieber

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of seeking God's presence and authority to prevent spiritual burn-out and to effectively serve as His hands in the world.

Scripture: Exodus 33:12, Exodus 34:5, Matthew 5:13, Matthew 11:28, Acts 10:38

Topics: "Burnout Recovery", "Gods Authority"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches about the burn-out syndrome in our walk with the Lord, using Moses as an example of a servant of God on the verge of burning out. Moses, feeling exhausted, urgently asks God for a vision of who He really is, seeking His presence and glory. To avoid burn-out, believers need a vision of God and His authority in their lives to deal with pressures and problems. Just like Moses, we must humble ourselves under the hand of God, seeking His glory and allowing His authority to rest upon us.

Transcript

Who of us hasn't at one time or another reached a point where it seems certain we're about to burn out.

"One more day of this pressure will finish me for sure".

"I simply can't go on another mile. My strength is gone."

This "burn-out syndrome" makes its appearance in our walk with the Lord. And it is underscored by the heaps of burned-out lives that line the ditches beside the road to the City of God.

"Will I be able to make it to the end, or will I be lying in that ditch too some day?"

The clearest example of a servant of God living under the threat of a burn-out was Moses. By the time Moses had led the Israelites out of Egypt. . .

- lived through their complaining about the lack of water,
- given them water. . .
- their complaining about the lack of food,
- given them food. . .

- come down from the mountain and found them dancing around the golden calf. . . .

- stood between them and the wrath of God. . . .

By the time Moses had gone through all that, he was tired. You might say that Moses was on the verge of burning out.

Knowing that he was getting to the burn-out stage, Moses turns to God with an urgent request. He doesn't ask for a vacation,

a raise in pay,

a shorter work week,

a sick leave,

a bonus, or a company car. He says,

"Lord, I just can't go any farther unless you show yourself to me . . . unless you give me a vision of who you really are."

Moses said to the Lord, "See, thou sayest to me, 'Bring up this people'; but thou has not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.' Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found favor in thy sight, show me now thy ways, that I may know thee and find favor in thy sight. Consider too that this nation is thy people." And he said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." And he said to him, "If thy presence will not go with me, do not carry us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favor in thy sight, I and thy people? Is it not in thy going with us, so that we are distinct, I and thy people, from all other people that are upon the face of the earth?"

And the Lord said to Moses, "This very thing that you have spoken I will do for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name." Moses said, "I pray thee, show me thy glory." And he said,

"I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you my name, 'The Lord'; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But, he said, "you cannot see my face; for man shall not see me and live." And the Lord said, "Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand upon the rock; and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen." Exodus 33:12-23

And God brought Moses up on the mountain and covered him with his hand. And when God lifted his hand Moses was given to see as much glory as a human can see without losing his mind. And Moses worshiped and bowed his head. And as God spoke to Moses, Moses was taken into that glory so that when he came down from the mountain his face shone with such brightness the people couldn't bear to look at him.

You could say that from that point on the hand of God which had covered Moses was now joined to Moses in such a way that for the rest of his life it was as if Moses was the hand of God in the midst of the Israelites.

And the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." And Moses made haste to bow his head toward the earth, and worshiped. And he said, "If now I have found favor in thy sight, O Lord, let the Lord, I pray thee, go in the midst of us, although it is a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thy inheritance."

Exodus 34:5-10

We may not be a Moses, but if we have been following Jesus for a while, if we've been experiencing some of the hard things. . .tasting a little suffering,

a little loneliness,

some bad days, perhaps feeling the pressure of too many people angry with us at the same time and not enough strength within to take it in its stride. . . then it may be time for us to do what Moses did.

If we're going to keep from being burn-outs, we're going to need two things:

1. We're going to need a vision of who God is.
2. We're going to need the authority of God upon and in our lives so that we can deal with these pressures and problems and not burn out.

First, we need a vision of God. And to get that vision we do what Moses did. We stop everything we're doing, turn to God and say,

"O God, I'm tired. I can't go on unless you show yourself to me. I can't take another step unless you renew my vision. Show me your glory, Lord."

And the Lord said, "Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand upon the rock; and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen."

To have vision we need to come under the hand of God. We have to let God put us in the cleft of the rock and cover us with his hand. Then, when he has passed by and lifts his hand, we will see as much of God's glory as is safe for us.

This is exactly what Jesus is talking about when he says,

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Matthew 11:28-30

. . . "You're burdened, heavy laden. You're running around and you don't know where you're going. . . come to me."

Jesus is the rock where God hides us as his goodness passes by.

"Rock of ages, cleft for me. Let me hide myself in thee."

"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me;. . ."

To be under that yoke, walking side-by-side with Jesus, is to be under the hand of God.

"Humble yourself, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."

You want a vision of God? Let God cover you with his hand by humbling yourself under the yoke of the Lamb.

- Cut away the clutter.
- Turn from the distractions.
- Remove the vanity,
- and submit to his yoke.

A lot of us are saying,

"Lord, I want to see you more clearly,"

but we want to sit in the theatre and have Jesus walk across the stage. That's not how it works. The only ones who see Jesus are those who get under his yoke. . . doing the things he commands in the midst of daily life. It's as we practice his presence, day after day, working at his side, washing feet, serving, spending ourselves, that God begins to pull back his hand and we begin to see glory. His goodness passes before us and all the weariness of a lifetime vanishes.

We also need the authority of God upon our lives, so that the problems and the persecution and the threats which wearied us and ground us down will never again drain us as they once did. So that instead of these problems being on top of us we'll be on top of them.

When Moses came down from the mountain, his face was shining like the sun. It was a sign that the authority of God had come to rest upon him and to dwell within him. In other words, the hand of God that covered him had now made itself part of Moses' very life. Now he could face the overwhelming problems of these stiff-necked Israelites and their needs and stay on top of things.

But Moses with that shining face was but a sign pointing to the one who was in fact the hand of God dwelling on earth: Jesus. What Moses pointed to, Jesus was.

". . .how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him;"

Acts 10:38

- Jesus was God's hand.
- Jesus was God doing good on this earth.

- Jesus was God breaking the chains of evil and setting the captives free.

- God laying down his own life,

And what Jesus was in his days of flesh and blood we are now to be. What else does it mean to be the Body of Christ but to be the hand of God upon this earth?

"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men."

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house."

Matthew 5:13-15

Is it too much to expect that we should come down from the mountain and be the light of the world and let our light so shine before men that they see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven?

"The eyes of all wait upon thee, O Lord. Thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing."

God satisfies the desire of his creatures on earth by causing his sun to shine and his rain to fall. He waters the earth and makes it fruitful.

But the hand of God that opens and satisfies the desire of the weary, frightened, troubled, lonely sons and daughters of this earth . . . the hand that heals their broken hearts and breaks their chains, opens their blind eyes, binds up their wounds, and leads them out of darkness into light- -that hand is Jesus and his Body on earth. He is that hand and so are we.

It is in us, his Body, that Jesus now goes about doing good and healing all who are oppressed by the devil. But before we can be, in fact, the hand of God we have to come under that hand. We have to let him cover us with that hand until we see glory.

Moses said, "I pray thee, show me thy glory." And the Lord said, "Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand upon the rock; and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen."

And the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children, to the third and fourth generation." And Moses made haste to bow his head toward the earth, and worshiped. And he said, "If now I have found favor in thy sight, O Lord, let the Lord, I pray thee, go in the midst of us, although it is a stiff-necked people. . ."

If we feel like we're heading for a burn-out . . . if we're afraid we can't go any farther on this pilgrimage, God help us to follow the example of Moses and submit ourselves to the covering of his hand.

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."

If we will humble ourselves under that hand, we will see glory. And when we come down from the mountain we will be the hand of God in this world.

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