

Winning God's Approval - Part 5

by Zac Poonen

The Christian life is a race to know God more and to become like Jesus Christ, and it requires a passion to learn from Him and to avoid loving the world and its treasures.

Duration: 49:30

Scripture: Romans 8:29, Hebrews 12:1

Topics: "Approval", "Pursuing God's Approval", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes that the Christian life is a race towards becoming more like Jesus, highlighting the importance of moving beyond just being saved to actively pursuing spiritual growth. He explains that while many Christians are content with their salvation, they must strive to win God's approval by embodying Christ-like qualities and making choices that reflect their faith. Poonen illustrates this through the life of Moses, who, despite his mistakes, demonstrated a passion for knowing God and a commitment to His ways. He encourages believers to seek a deeper relationship with God, emphasizing that true eternal life is about knowing Him more intimately. Ultimately, Poonen calls for a balance between understanding salvation and actively running the race of faith.

Transcript

The Christian life is like a race, or like a flight. You know, we come to the runway, and that's good, you can't start the flight till you come to the runway. But we're not supposed to stay on the runway forever, even with our seatbelts fastened.

We've got to go on from there because we've got a destination to reach. You know, when the Bible says that we are predestined, it's a word which theologians argue about. Predestination, that means God's already determined a destination for us.

And if you don't know what that destination is, it's written in Romans 8, 29, He predestined, not that we might go to heaven or hell, no, it's not found anywhere in scripture. He predestined that we might become like Jesus Christ, His Son. That's the destination.

And on earth, we're supposed to move towards that destination. That means, I mean, to come to the runway, we could say, or the starting line of a race, is like being born again. You can't just take off from anywhere.

You've got to come to the runway. You can't start the Christian life before you are born again, where you turn your life over to Christ and acknowledge your sin and believe that He died for you and rose from the dead and receive Him as your Savior. But once you get there, many, many Christians are satisfied.

We got this huge crowd of aircraft sitting on the runway. And God's will is that we move constantly towards our destination. Every year should find us closer to our destination, a little more Christ-like, a little more gracious, a little more gentle, a little purer, a little easier to get along with, a little less judgmental of other people, etc., etc.

If it's not like that, we're probably going the other way. And that is the condition of many Christians. And I feel that we don't realize the seriousness of this, and the devil doesn't want us to realize the seriousness of this.

He keeps us satisfied with the fact we're saved. Our sins are forgiven. We're on our way to heaven.

But if that was all there was to salvation, we probably need a Bible of about two pages. There's a lot more in Scripture than that. And most of the exhortations in the New Testament Epistles are, put off the old man, put on the new, and press on to perfection.

Let's run the race. Let's look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Run so that you may win.

And there's a crown waiting for you that Jesus himself says, my reward is with me to those to give to those who are faithful, etc. So, it's this imbalance. You know, there are a lot of people who speak so much about the race that they don't talk about the starting line.

They don't explain clearly how we are justified by faith, without works, that salvation, forgiveness of sins, and becoming a child of God is not on the basis of any works that we can ever do. Not by works of righteousness. We can spend our whole life doing righteousness and never become a child of God.

We've got to come to that initial step where we receive salvation simply by faith. That's one side. The other side is the race.

And so, we find this imbalance very often in Christendom. People mixing up the starting line with the race. But we need both.

And so, we've been talking in these days, this is the fifth in a series of nine messages that I started last weekend, on the subject of winning God's approval. Not getting God to accept us. That's the starting line.

To be accepted by God, but winning His approval, pressing on to perfection. So, that's been our subject, and we've been looking at different characters in the Bible, who either won or lost God's approval. We looked at Adam and Eve, who lost it.

We looked at Job, who got a certificate of approval that God gave to Satan. There's no one on the face of the earth like my servant Job. It's wonderful to get a certificate like that from God Himself.

We looked at Abraham, whom God said, this is my friend, and whom He gave a certificate saying, now you fear me, and I'm going to bless you and make you a blessing to everybody else. And then, we're now going to look at Moses, and we looked at Joseph yesterday evening. It says, the Lord was with him.

God gave his certificate of approval to Joseph by being with him, in wherever he was. When he was in the pit, God was with him. And when he was in Pottfurs house, God was with him.

When he was in the jail, God was with him. And when he was on the throne next to Pharaoh, God was with him there. Today, we look at Moses.

I want to show you a verse in Psalm 103, in verse 7. Where there's something written about Moses, which distinguished him from all the other 600,000 Israelites, whom he led in the wilderness. Distinguished him even from Aaron, who was his brother and co-worker. And it's, I always think of Moses as a new covenant person, living in old covenant times.

Just like we have a lot of old covenant people today, living in new covenant times, unfortunately. But Moses was one of those people who lived beyond his time. And we'll look at that, we'll see that in some of the things we look at today.

But in Psalm 103, verse 7, it says, God made known his ways to Moses, but his acts, or actions, to the sons of Israel. That means the sons of Israel could only see, the children of Israel who came out of Egypt, could only see the external actions of God. The manna dropping from heaven every day, and they got excited about that.

The water gushing out of the split rock. The healing from the serpent bites. And numerous miracles that they experienced.

For example, their clothes never wore out for 40 years. Their sandals never wore out for 40 years. These were the external actions of God.

That they were excited by. But in spite of all that, they perished in the wilderness. God does a lot of miracles for people with whom he's not always very happy.

And the clearest proof of that is those Israelites in the wilderness. He did miracles for them for 40 years, but he wasn't happy with them. God can do a miracle for you and not be happy with you.

The important thing is not whether God blesses us, but is he happy with us? And Moses, God could show something to Moses, which he couldn't show to the other Israelites, because they didn't want more. You know, every one of us will know God to the extent we want to. If you're happy with what you already have, that's all you'll know God.

But if you have a passion like the Apostle Paul, I want to know him more. Towards the end of his life, after knowing the Lord so much, he says in Philippians 3, I want to know him more. I want to know the power of his resurrection much more than I've already experienced.

I want to know the fellowship of his sufferings, he says. So Moses had a passion to know God, and so God could reveal his ways to Moses. There was a time when Moses said, Lord, will you show me your glory? I want to see that.

I've seen all your miracles, but that doesn't satisfy me. I want to see you. I want to see your glory.

And he got a little glimpse into God's glory. One of the things we see in Moses' life is that if you have a passion to know God more than you already know, he'll show you things which a lot of other believers never see. He made known his ways to Moses.

That means the inner reasons with which God did certain things. In other words, he took God, he took Moses into his mind and revealed his thoughts and plans to Moses. The others only saw the external actions.

You know, it's like the difference between talking to a 3-year-old child and a 25-year-old son. You can share your plans and goals with an adult son, but with a little child, what can you do? You can just give chocolates and take him out for a picnic or something like that. That's all God can do with many of his children.

When he wants them to grow up to the place where God can reveal to them his ways. So, I want to encourage all of you this morning, if you're a child of God, to have a passion to know more of God. The Bible says, the people who know their God will be strong and do exploits for him.

That's Daniel 11.32. That's an amazing verse. You've got to know God and God wants us to know him. In fact, Jesus defined eternal life, not as living forever, which is how many people understand it.

Jesus said in John 17 and verse 3, eternal life is actually to know God, to know him more. And when Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 6.12, lay hold of eternal life. What does that mean? How can we lay hold of something? We already have it.

Eternal life is not something we can just say, I've got it. It's something I have to constantly lay hold of, according to that verse. It's to know God more.

That is this pursuit, this race that I spoke about. You come to the starting line and you run this race, knowing God more and more. And Moses knew him.

So, when we look at his life, I want to show you, first of all, in Hebrews 11, certain choices that he made. He was tested. God never uses a man before he tests him.

And you and I are being tested so that we can be useful to God. And the more he wants to use us, the more he's going to test us. In little, little things on earth, he keeps us on earth, allows us to face certain situations, encounter certain types of people.

And all the time we're being tested. You can encounter an enemy and you could be being tested there to see whether you love that enemy, like Jesus told you to. You can be tempted with temptations and you're being tested there, just like Adam was.

In Hebrews 11, we read about Moses, that when he was born, verse 23, he was hidden for three months, as we know. Because the king had passed an edict that all male children in Israel should be killed. He was afraid of all these male children in Israel multiplying and causing a rebellion in Egypt.

And so, all the male children were being killed, but Moses' parents hid him. And then, I want you to notice three choices that he made when he grew up. When he was a small child, Pharaoh's daughter picked him up from the bulrushes and the basket.

Moses' sister was there to bring a nurse, which just happened to be Moses' mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said, look after him for a little while, until he's grown up, and then send him to the palace. So, Moses' mother knew, I've got this son of mine with me, only for a few years, and then he'll be gone.

I've got to do all that I can to teach him God's ways. You know where Moses learned God's ways? First from his mother. I tell you that, you mothers don't realize how important your ministry is.

Timothy had a father who was probably a godless businessman, but he had a mother who made up for that and did such a fantastic work that Timothy, by the time he was 18 or 19 years old, qualified for Paul to select him and grew up to be an apostle. Well, Moses' mother was like that. And he, I don't know how long, the Bible doesn't tell us how long little Moses was in his mother's, with his parents, probably six or seven years at the most.

But in those seven years, his mother had drilled certain truths into Moses' little head and told him, you're not an Egyptian. Don't ever think you're an Egyptian. You're not part of this country.

I know you're going to live in the palace in a little while, but when you live there, remember what I told you. You are one of God's people. You're not part of Egypt.

You're not part of Egypt. And you must live in the fear of God. And, you know, that was a time when all they knew was about Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.

There was nothing much. There was no law, nothing there. But he, she drilled into her, his little head, the fact that they had an inheritance, that God had chosen them with a particular purpose.

You know, this is the message we need to drill into our little children's minds when they're small. They're all going to be with us only for a short while. And one day they leave home.

And the Bible says, train up a child in the way he should go. Proverbs 22, when he is old, he will not depart from it. Now, that's almost like a promise that if I do my part, God will do his part.

That if I bring up my children in a certain way, God says, when they're old, they will not depart from it. And if I bring them up in the wrong way, it's going to be the same. When they're old, they will not depart from that either, unfortunately.

So, it's very important. I mean, Moses' mother did that even before that verse was written in Proverbs. She knew, I've got this son, little child with me just for a few years.

So, you who have little sons and daughters, remember, you have them with you just for a few years. And what you put into their minds, the values that you put into their mind is going to determine the choices they're going to make when they grow up. So, a lot depends on parents.

So, that's what we see here. When Moses grew up, and that's when he was 40 years old. Here, let's assume that he went into Pharaoh's palace as a young 7-year-old child.

And for the next 33 years, not a short time, 33 years, he never saw his mother. Had no, nothing to do with the Israeli people who were all slaves. Grew up in luxury, corruption, sin, the pleasures of sin all around him, wickedness.

And some of the best education in the academies of Egypt. All of that, surrounded by people who had no interest in God, idol worshippers. And at the end of these 33 years, when he was 40 years old, look at the choices he makes.

Number one, he says in verse 25, I reject the passing pleasures of sin. He had to be tested before he could be a leader. And so, God allowed him to be surrounded by the pleasures of sin.

This is the one verse in the Bible which says that there is pleasure in sin, by the way. Everybody knows that, and the Bible doesn't ignore that. But the Bible says it's a passing pleasure.

As everyone who has enjoyed any pleasure of sin knows, it's a passing pleasure. Whether it's drugs or sex or alcohol or anything, there's a pleasure in it. But it's a passing pleasure, it's over in a little while.

That's the thing we shouldn't forget. Moses recognized that. Now how in the world did he know that? Nobody in the palace told him all that.

It was that instruction that he got way back when he was a little child that kept on ringing in his mind. Oh, remember what mommy told me. The pleasures of sin are passing.

It's amazing how that kept him. He didn't have the Holy Spirit. He didn't have the Bible.

He didn't have any fellowship. But the instruction that his mother drilled into his little mind kept him for 33 years. That's a tremendous encouragement for us.

The second thing he says here is verse 26. He rejected the riches and the treasures of Egypt. There's nothing wrong with money.

But there's everything wrong in loving it and living for it. Money is a good servant, if you keep it as a servant. It's a terrible master.

You know, there's gold in heaven. We know that. But you know where it is? Under our feet.

Not on top of our heads like it is here on earth. That's the difference. Heaven is prepared for those who have learned to put gold under their feet now.

You don't know how to get rid of it, but you've got to keep it under your feet. The streets are made of gold in heaven. And so Moses had to make that choice.

The lusts of the flesh is the first area we have to make a choice. And that's where God tests us. The passing pleasures of sin.

The second is what is going to be your attitude towards money. You can have very little money and be a lover of it. Or you can be a millionaire and not love it.

It's not a question of how much you have or what your salary is. It's a question of your attitude towards it. And Moses was surrounded by the greatest wealth that the world had ever seen up until then.

Pharaoh's palace. And he saw all that. He saw all the advantages that plenty of money could buy.

And he said, I'm not going to live for that. It's amazing. Where did he learn that? Nobody in the palace taught him that.

It was the instruction he got as a little child from his mother. Money isn't everything. Don't live for that.

Keep it. Keep it as a servant. But don't be taken up with it.

Great. Wonderful. Parents who can give such instructions to their little children.

And number three. It says in verse 24. He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

The pleasures of sin. The snare of riches. And third is the empty honor of this world.

Those are the three areas where we are tested by God even today. Imagine. Here was Pharaoh, the greatest dictator in the whole world.

The most powerful person in the whole world. And to be known as his daughter's son. And to reject that.

Say, it doesn't mean anything to me. Again, because of his mother's instructions from childhood. Remember, you belong with God's people.

So, that's the first thing we see about Moses. That when he came to that age, he made those choices. But then, at that same age, he made a mistake as well.

I praise the Lord for the honesty of scripture. The biographies in scripture are unlike most of the biographies that you read. Written nowadays.

Because, I remember as a young Christian, I read the biographies of some of missionaries and others. Which painted them as marble saints without any flaw or mistake. And I used to get discouraged reading them.

I said, boy, I'm not like that and I'll never be like that. And then I read the Bible. And I was encouraged.

Because I saw that Abraham made mistakes and Noah made mistakes. And after delivering the whole, his family from that flood. He just got drunk and lay naked in a tent.

Can you imagine doing something like that? And I tell you, God forgave him. And Abraham, the mistakes he made. Telling lies about his wife.

And you know, getting her into so much trouble because of that. And Peter denying the Lord. And Paul shaving his head for some Jewish vow.

And all types of stupid things these people did. And that encouraged me tremendously. That, oh, then there's hope for me.

I want to tell you there's hope for you too. And these folks did not just make one mistake. They made many mistakes.

Abraham told a lie about his wife twice. Not just once. They didn't all learn it by making a mistake once.

So, it says about Moses too, that he made certain mistakes. And I'll show you one of them. Again, at the age of 40.

It says in Acts chapter 7, verse 23. Where Stephen is describing the life of Moses. He says, when he was approaching the age of 40.

It entered into his mind to visit his brethren. The sons of Israel. He recognized, I don't belong to Egypt.

I belong with those slaves. My parents are among them. And he went down and he saw one of them being treated unjustly.

He saw an Egyptian whipping one of his fellow Israelis. And he got a hold of that Egyptian and gave him a blow and killed him. He must have been, Moses must have been a very strong man.

To kill a man just with his bare hands. And he thought, I hope these Israelis. I hope word will get around that God has sent them a deliverer.

And it says, he thought in verse 25. That his brothers would understand. That I am the man.

Whom God has given this high position. In Pharaoh's palace. In order to deliver them from this bondage.

He hadn't yet understood God's ways. It's pretty clear. Because God's ways were not like this.

Where you take each Egyptian and kill them one by one. And then gradually deliver the Israelites out of Egypt. He'd have spent all his life.

And never accomplished anything. Wasn't God's way much better? When finally Moses would just lift up his rod. And the whole Egyptian army got buried under the Red Sea.

That was a much better way. Than killing them one by one. Like Moses was planning to do here.

But that was the difference between Moses at 40. And Moses at 80. You know, God allowed this blunder that Moses did.

Of killing an Egyptian. To be known to Pharaoh. And it says here, Moses had to flee for his life.

Because Pharaoh was out to kill him. Hey, this guy is killing Egyptians. He's on the other side.

Now we would think that if we make a blunder or a mistake. Well, God's perfect plan for my life is all finished now. I made that terrible blunder.

And now of course I can never fulfill God's plan for my life. Wrong. God is so almighty.

This is, I mean, human understanding can't grasp this. But it's one thing I've seen in scripture. And I've seen it in my life.

It's unbelievable but true. That God factors in even the mistakes you make. To fulfill his plan for your life.

It's wonderful to know that. You see, I mean the clearest example of that. Is, let me ask you a question.

Was the crucifixion of Christ known to God from all eternity? Of course it was. It says the Lamb was slain before the foundation of the earth. In the book of Revelation.

There was something in God's mind. Christ's death on Calvary. I mean before he created anything.

Christ's death on Calvary was there. In God's mind. Was that part of God's perfect plan? I believe it was.

But, it happened because Adam made a mistake in the Garden of Eden. Now how do you work that out? That man sins. And then God's perfect plan is fulfilled.

You can't figure that out. But that's how man's logic can't reason out God's perfect will. And that's the thing that encourages me.

That even if I blunder. God can still work out his perfect plan for my life. It's wonderful.

I mean it really encourages me. Because so many people. Who is there among Christians who can say I never made a mistake? There isn't anyone.

Jesus is the only one who walked this earth without ever making a mistake. All the rest of us. Even the ones who pretend they haven't.

Have all made mistakes. And the ones who pretend they haven't. Have usually made more mistakes than the others.

But the wonderful thing in scripture. Is that God can use that. And here's an example of that.

God needed to train Moses. And break him. He arranged a circumstance.

Where he went and killed somebody. And that got known. And he had to flee for his life.

And that was part of God's plan. Because all the training of Egypt. Would not equip Moses to be God's servant.

That was only intellectual knowledge. Physical ability to kill people. And all that type of training that the world can give.

That doesn't equip a man to know God's ways. To know God's ways. Your human strength and wisdom has to be broken.

That's a message that comes from Genesis to Revelation. And how did God do it? He took this wonderful prince of Egypt. Into the wilderness.

And made him look after sheep. The Bible says that the Egyptians despised shepherds. Okay.

You go and do the thing which makes you despised in the eyes of others. And not just for one or two years. Forty years.

And as if that was not enough to break him. God also told him you got to live with your father-in-law for forty years as well. Well that was it.

That completed the job. Of breaking Moses completely. And at the end of those forty years.

This man who once upon a time thought all of Israel is waiting for me to deliver them from the Egyptians. God says now you are ready Moses. And he says no Lord not me.

And I want to tell you that wasn't false humility. You know sometimes when you ask a person to take a position in a church. He says oh well I'm not so worthy and all that.

It's all nonsense. He doesn't really mean it. He's just acting humble.

And Moses wasn't like that. He really meant it. God said no you're the man.

He said no no no no Lord not me. I'm not fit for this. I'm totally incapable.

Do you know that that's the most important qualification to do God's work? To recognize your total unfitness for God's work. The man who desires to be a leader among God's people. Is totally unfit to be a leader.

But the one who recognizes his total inability. Really recognizes it. Doesn't just talk about it with false humility.

But deep down in the recesses of his heart. He recognizes I am unfit to do God's work. That's the man who's fit.

And God had to break him. And that's why he made him look after sheep for 40 years. And that's why he made him live with his father-in-law for 40 years.

To break this proud man. Till he became a zero. In his own eyes.

And then God could fill him with his power. That's God's way. You know many a times.

God's called me to stand before people to preach his word. Which is to present God and his message to people. And you don't realize what an awesome task it is.

When Paul said I preach with fear and trembling. I can fully understand that. There are times when I've sat out at night.

And looked at the stars in the sky. And seen. You know I've studied something about geography.

And I know how big this universe is. And our earth is such a small little speck. Like a grain of sand.

In this vast universe. And I look at the universe and say. God.

How almighty you are. And here I am. Trying to represent you.

And talk about you. Help me to realize. How small I am.

How little I know about you. Help me to have that humility. Concerning myself.

So that I can represent you adequately. Instead of trying to. Convince people with my cleverness.

Or something like that. To crush Moses. And I say.

There are many many people. Who don't allow God to crush them. Through the circumstances of life.

God has to just put them on the shelf. And say I can't use you. I wanted to use you.

But I can't. Because you don't allow me to break you. Every time I put you into difficult circumstances.

You complain and you grumble. And say God why have you allowed all this. Instead of submitting.

And accepting those circumstances. Well that's what happened. And finally you find.

When God gave this. Pattern of the tabernacle to Moses. Very interesting to see this.

In Exodus chapter 39. We read about. How the tabernacle.
Which was God's dwelling place. The first. Of God's dwelling places.
Described in the Bible. Later on there was a temple. And today of course it's the church.
You and me. Whose midst God dwells. But the first.
Dwelling place. That man was called to construct for God. Was the tabernacle.
And in chapter 25. God said to Moses. Let them make me a tabernacle.
Make a tabernacle that I may dwell. In the midst of my people. And then you read in chapter 25.
Onwards of Exodus. Detailed instructions. Concerning how long.
Each board should be. What the curtain should be made of. Etc.
Exact details. The length and width and everything. Was all given to Moses.
And if you've seen pictures of the tabernacle. Compare. It's a very simple structure.
The walls were made of white curtain. Cloth. And there was one little gate.
Made of colored material. And inside this compound. Was this.
Little tent. With some. Animal skins.
As a roof for the tent. Most unimpressive. And see a picture of that.
And see a picture of the pyramids. That Moses had seen built in Egypt. In his time.
Boy. What a difference. And.
It says here in Exodus 39. That when God gave Moses. The pattern of the tabernacle.
He did it. Exactly. As the Lord commanded him.
I want you to notice this expression. In Exodus 39 verse 5. The last part. You find a little expression.
Just. As the Lord commanded. Moses.
You find that expression repeated. In verse 7 at the end. Just as the Lord commanded Moses.
And further down in verse 21. At the end. At the end of verse 26.
At the end of verse 29. At the end of verse 31. I won't take time to go through it.
But if you check up. I counted it once. In chapter 39 and chapter 40.
18 times. You find that expression. Moses did it.
Just as the Lord commanded him. He didn't make the slightest change. Just as the Lord commanded.

Just as the Lord commanded. He wouldn't have done that. When he was 40.

Leave it to me God. I've been trained in the academies of Egypt. I built pyramids.

Are you trying to tell me how to build something? I know how to do it. Look at the degrees I've got. From the colleges I've studied in.

Leave it to me. I'll make a fantastic thing. And he would have made a fantastic structure.

The only thing is the glory of God would not have rested on it. That's how some people build churches. According to their cleverness.

God is not there. That's the only one missing. But here it says.

As the Lord commanded Moses. As the Lord commanded Moses. Chapter 40 verse 27.

As the Lord commanded Moses. As the Lord commanded Moses. Verse 29.

And then you come to chapter 40 and verse 33. Where it says thus. That's a very important word.

Thus. Moses finished the work and immediately. Verse 34.

The glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. A lot of Christian work today is done with human wisdom. According to the principles of the corporate world.

The business world. Looks great. God's not there.

The glory of God is not there. Christian preachers. Many Christian preachers today.

I've heard lots of them. Adopt the principles of psychology. Make people feel nice.

Instead of preaching God's word to them. Do you know that faith does not come by listening to psychology? Faith comes by hearing. And hearing by the word of Christ.

If you want real faith. You got to know what God's word says. You got to do exactly as God's word says.

It must be written at the end of your life. That's why the glory of God rested upon your life. And your ministry.

You know when I read this and I studied it. I said Lord. That is what I want all my life.

I want your glory to be upon my life and my ministry. All the time. What's the way? Do it God's way.

Do it exactly as it's written in scripture. And don't modify it. Do you know the number of things that Christians are modifying these days? And once you go down that path of modification.

There's no end to it. You don't know where you'll finally end up. I'll tell you where you end up.

You end up in hell. That's where you finally end up if you keep modifying scripture. But just as the Lord commanded Moses.

This is the result of brokenness. How do you know whether you're broken or not? You'll do everything exactly as God commanded. You won't put your wisdom above God's wisdom.

I mean it's foolish to put our wisdom above God's. But it's amazing how many Christians seek to do that. Just as the Lord commanded Moses.

The wisdom of Egypt had been thrashed out of his mind. All that chaff had been removed. And replaced with the wheat of God's wisdom.

And that's what God wants to do. You don't realize perhaps how much of chaff there is in our minds. Because we're exposed to the media.

We watch television. We read newspapers. We read magazines.

We read books. We listen to the input from unconverted people who don't know God. In our office.

In our surroundings. Our neighbors. Our relatives.

And our mind is bombarded with all types of information which is not God's will. And sometimes we are influenced by that. And if we don't keep on checking what God's word says.

Over a period of time without knowing it. We'll be doing things according to our wisdom. According to what is pragmatic.

What is good for this current situation. And then we miss God's will completely. And I believe this is the reason why the glory of God does not come upon many, many Christians.

And their work. Now I want to go further from there. In Exodus in chapter 32 and 33.

We see an amazing example of the Christ-likeness of Moses. Another area where he was being tested. This is.

We already saw a number of areas where he was tested. And he passed the test. He refused the pleasures of sin.

He refused the honor of the world. He refused the wealth of the world. He refused to act according to his human wisdom.

Built exactly as God had told him to. And here we see a time when the Israelites worshipped this golden calf. And God said to Moses.

Let me destroy these people. And I will make you a great nation. The Lord said in Exodus chapter 32 and verse 9 and 10.

I have seen these people. They are obstinate. Just leave me alone Moses.

Let my anger burn against them. That I will destroy all these 600,000 men and their families. And I will make you a great nation.

I planned God says to start with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And the 12 tribes of Israel. But I am fed up with them.

I will start again with you Moses. It will be the tribes of Moses. Boy.

What a temptation when God himself tells you that. But he was being tested. And he passed the test.

He said no, no Lord. No, no, no. Not me.

Not me. He was a broken man. He said I don't want any honor.

What will the Egyptians say? What will they say about your name? If they hear that you delivered the people and destroyed them in the wilderness. See this man's concern was for God's name. Not for his own.

And that's the thing that God will test you in many, many a circumstance. To see in a particular situation whether you are more concerned about what people think about you. Or what people think about Jesus Christ.

I want to ask you honestly. I have asked this question in India. To the Christians in India.

And ask you the same thing. Are you more concerned in some situation where some dishonor has come to your name? Or are you concerned that the name of Jesus Christ is so dishonored in this country? Or my country? A true disciple of Christ would not be concerned about his own name. Would say Lord what people say about me, that's unimportant.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. This is the first prayer that Jesus taught us to pray. But if you look at the way many Christians live.

Their prayer is hallowed be my name. Oh Lord. Look what they are saying about me.

It doesn't matter brother. It doesn't matter. What do those people think about Jesus? That's the only thing that matters.

And that was the test that came to Moses here. And I hope we will pass the test next time. And every time.

In future. Lord it doesn't matter what people say about me. You know I have been in the service of the Lord now for 40 years.

And anyone who serves the Lord. And seeks to uphold the standards of scripture. Is the target of Satan.

And one way Satan targets his servants. Is by spreading all types of false stories. And dishonoring that person.

And he did that with Jesus. He did that with Paul. He did that with all the servants of God in 2000 years.

And he does it even today. And this is the test that comes to me. Am I bothered what people say about me? And I say Lord I want to follow Moses.

I want to follow Jesus. I want to follow Paul. It's unimportant.

Hallowed be your name. Say that to God. Every time.

Or the next time. You find somebody dishonors your name. Say Lord it doesn't matter.

What will the Egyptians say? That they will dishonor your name. And you know further. I don't have time to go into all that.

It says Moses turned around to the Lord and said. Lord kill me. But spare their lives.

Blot me out of your book. Blot me out of your book. He was saying Lord send me to hell.

But save them. And he said. Amazing.

That is the spirit of Christ. Because that's what Jesus underwent on the cross. To save us.

This was the man. Whom God chose. To serve him.

I want to show you another thing. In Numbers chapter 14. The other area where God tests us.

Is our reaction to criticism. That's another area where Moses example has been a tremendous challenge to me. And I hope it will be a challenge to you as well.

In Numbers 14. We read that the whole congregation of the people lifted up their voices. And they grumbled verse 2 against Moses and Aaron.

If you are going to be a leader among God's people. Expect to have people grumble against you. Sure.

You can't escape that. If you serve the Lord. That's one of the occupational hazards of serving the Lord.

That people will grumble and complain. Even when you never did anything wrong. They will blame you for their own mistakes.

And that's what they did. And what did Moses do? It says in verse 5. Moses and Aaron fell on their face before the Lord. They said.

We won't say anything. They questioned his authority. Who made you a leader? He would fall on his face and say.

I'm not going to say anything. If God doesn't defend me. And prove to you that he appointed me as your leader.

I'm not going to say anything. That's a mark of a man of God. He doesn't defend himself and say.

Hey God appointed me as your leader. What are you fellas saying? Keep your mouth shut. None of that.

He fell on his face and allowed God to defend him. And boy. How mightily God defended him so many times.

Do you know what God did once when some people questioned his leadership? You read in number 16. God opened up the earth and swallowed up 250 of them. And sent them straight to hell.

To prove that this is the man whom I chose. God will do that. For a broken man.

Who seeks his glory and his honor. But he will test you. Many a time when people have attacked me.

And the Lord has said to me. Do you want to handle that yourself? Or do you want me to handle that? I said Lord I think I'll let you handle that. Do that next time.

When you're attacked. When your sincerity is questioned. That's the way God's leaders have gone.

Say Lord. You deal with that. Vengeance belongs to God.

It doesn't belong to us. He can take care of his servants. So that's the other thing we see here.

And finally. Let me conclude with. Another mistake that Moses made.

Towards the end of his life. Numbers chapter 20. As long as we live on this earth.

We will not be saved. We'll make mistakes. Paul shouted at the high priest in anger.

Towards the end of his life. But he was quick to apologize. And that's the mark of a godly man.

As soon as he realizes his mistake. He says I'm sorry. That was my mistake.

He doesn't blame anybody else. And we're encouraged by that. Towards the end of his life.

For 40 years. Moses had been looking forward. To entering the land of Canaan.

And just before he reached there. He missed it. For one mistake he made.

God told him in Numbers chapter 20. When the people complained for lack of water. He said now.

Go to that rock. And speak to the rock. That's what he said in verse 8. Numbers 20 verse 8. There was no need to smite that rock.

Because the rock was already smitten once. In Exodus 17. Picturing that Christ is crucified.

Not just once. You don't crucify Christ a second time. That was the symbolism here.

So now you don't hit the rock. You speak to it. But Moses got so upset.

He took the rod. And said in verse 10. You rebels.

You're still crying out for water. And he hit the rock not just once. Verse 11 but twice.

Total disobedience. You'd say it's a small thing. A man was upset.

But you know God said no. No allowance. Moses.

You dishonored me. Before these people. We read in Numbers chapter 20.

Verse 12. Because you did not believe me. You did not treat me holy.

You shall not enter Canaan. Boy. What a punishment.

For a man who. Was so faithful for 40 years. You'd think God is hard.

He isn't. But he's very strict with his leaders. To the Israelites.

The other Israelites. He gave them 10 chances before he told them. In Numbers 14.

10 times you provoked me. Now you will not enter. But Moses he didn't even give one chance.

Why? To whom more is given. More is. Required.

Remember this. The more the higher you go. Into leadership.

The less chance you are given. That's what we see here. But.

Let me conclude by saying God is good. He. You know what God did.

1500 years later. He told Moses okay I'll let you enter Canaan. On the Mount of Transfiguration.

He brought him there. Oh God doesn't forget the faithfulness of his servants. Even if he's strict with them.

Behold the severity of God. And his kindness. And his kindness far exceeds his severity.

That's our encouragement. Let's pray.

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