

Time Alone with God

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[0 : 00] I'm reminded just recently here that our brother Gary Howard and his wife CJ, CJ's been having some problems.

Gary intended to be with us last night at the men's prayer meeting and he texted saying CJ's struggling tonight, I won't be able to make it, but I will be there tomorrow. And now seeing them absent this morning is telling me that obviously she's dealing with something that's continuing, so continue to remember them in prayer.

That would be Gary and CJ Howard. They come over here from Simi Valley. So let's begin our sermon today. Find Exodus chapter 34 and we're going to finish this chapter.

The last time we were in this book, we saw that the relationship has been restored after their great sin of worshiping that golden calf. And things are back on track and the only thing that could derail this train from headed to the promised land was the people themselves.

And so God gave Moses a few pointers that's going to help keep them on track and helping them to fulfill his will for them. And it's a formula that we brought out of the chapter 34 that I think would help us fulfill what God has saved us for and has called us to do in this life.

[1 : 21] And those three things we studied was number one, to understand God's will. It's hard to do something if you don't even know what you're doing. And if you understand what the purpose and point is, that can help you do it. The second thing was to identify your weaknesses and the things that are going to keep you from fulfilling that will.

Identify them. And then thirdly and very most importantly is to observe God's words. That's going to be the difference in everything. So today, let's close this chapter out and we'll begin reading in verse 28.

And it's a most unusual situation that's happening. Now Moses is scaring away all of the people. So let's read what's happening here.

Exodus 34 and let's begin in verse 28. And he was there with the Lord 40 days and 40 nights. Speaking of being up in the mountain.

He did neither eat bread nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments. And it came to pass when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hands, when he came down from the mount that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him.

[2 : 35] When Aaron and the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone. And they were afraid to come nigh him. And Moses called unto them. And Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him.

And Moses talked with them. And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh. And he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him in Mount Sinai. Until Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil over his face.

But when Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he took the veil off until he came out.

And he came out and spake unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded. And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone.

And Moses put the veil upon his face again until he went in to speak with him. Now this is the second trip, I should say the second extended trip up onto Mount Sinai where Moses goes and visits with God.

It's similar to the first one in the sense that it was both times it was 40 days and 40 nights. You can see that in chapter 24 and verse 18. And then here again in 34 and verse 28.

[3 : 52] They were both 40 days, 40 nights. Both times he returns to the people with two tables of stones written with the commandments of God. The Ten Commandments, it says in verse 28.

But something is very, very different about this return trip than the previous. This time, his face is shining.

Why is his face shining this time? The last time he was spending time with God in the presence of God, the Lord called him to come up into the cloud where he was. But this time now Moses' face is shining.

And why would that be? The only thing I can surmise is that he had asked God, Behold our Lord, I beseech thee, show me thy glory. And the Lord said, I'll put thee in a cliff to the rock and I'll cover thee and I'll pass by.

And the Lord did that. He passed by before him. And back in chapter 34 verse 8, Moses made haste, bowed his head toward the earth and worshipped. And that's the difference in the experiences from the first 40 to the second 40 that we can note from the passage.

[5 : 01] And this second experience, as different as it was, had a visible effect upon the man Moses. In chapter 34, the first verse we read in verse 28, it says, He was there with the Lord 40 days and 40 nights.

When you think about Moses going up on that mountain, I want you to consider that he spent more time, as far as I can tell, more time than any other human being in history, spent time with God in the presence of God.

This is not the Lord walking and speaking to Adam and Eve in the cool of the day in the Garden of Eden. This is not him coming by Abraham where he sat at the tent door and having a meal with him and a chat.

This is 40 days and 40 nights uninterrupted. And then a few days down in the valley below, but then going back up for another 40 days and 40 nights, just back to back.

I don't think anybody else has ever spent that kind of time in the presence of God. Now, I know that God is not going to call us up to the top of a mountain to meet with him.

[6 : 13] And I know that the glory of God is not literally going to pass by us and generate a glow upon our faces either that would frighten others to look at us.

But, if you're a born-again Christian, because of Jesus Christ and because of the Spirit of God, the Bible says we have access unto the Father.

And because of the position that we have in Christ and the condition of our sin and our souls before God, we have the privilege of spending time with him too.

Whether it's in the fellowship of the Word of God, whether it's in private time of prayer, whether it's in walking with him in ministry, or serving him in his work, we can spend time with God just the same.

And that time spent should have an effect on us too. An effect that other people might see. And I want to show you three things here in this passage that we just read.

[7 : 21] Three things that time with God will affect in your life, just like it did Moses'. In verse 28, we read these words.

Refer back to verse 28. He was there with the Lord 40 days and 40 nights. He did neither eat bread nor drink water. That's a strange thing. I suppose it happened the first time too, that he didn't have any bread with him or water.

But this time it certainly declares no bread, no water. This is physically impossible, except that Moses was with the Lord.

That's the only clue that makes any sense of this at all. And so the first thought I have this morning is that spending time in God's presence will sustain you.

It'll sustain you. The presence of God sustained Moses' physical and his bodily needs. It's miraculous. There's no other explanation for it.

[8 : 23] There's no plausible, no relatable, no believable explanation, but that being with the Lord was what was keeping Moses alive without food and without water.

The presence of God allowed him to survive such a prolonged period of time. If it were even possible for Moses to go up on a mountain and not actually be in the presence of God like this, but if it were possible that he just went up there and was gone for 40 days and 40 nights, if it were even possible for him to live physically that long without any bread or water, his body would be dwindled to nothing, his strength would be drained, his face would be sunken in, his skeletal frame would be showing under his skin, his mind would not be clear, he would be going crazy, he'd be in great pain and confusion, but that is not the image or the description that this passage gives of Moses at all.

Why? Because being in the presence of God sustained him for those 40 days and 40 nights. Well, what does this have to do with you and I? Well, I think the same thing's true in the life of a believer that'll spend some time with God.

Because when situations come at you in life that seem impossible to survive, things that are bearing on you too great or they're emotionally overwhelming or humanly speaking, you don't have the ability to cope with them, you don't have the ability to contend with these circumstances, there is an experience that you and I can have, miraculous, supernatural, one that's outside of the realm and laws of physics and nature, something that you and I have that doesn't have to do with pills, that doesn't have to do with a bottle, that doesn't have to do with anything that would harm us, an experience that can sustain us, an experience that enables us to get up, no matter what the thing we face is, to get up in the morning and face our problems and face the world, an experience we could have with God that we could just be still and know.

All the problems are insanely all around you, but you could still in that presence be still and know your God. The Bible promises us, in thy presence is fullness of joy.

[11:06] The Bible says that when we take our request to our God, when we get to His throne, that He offers us the peace that passeth all understanding, such a peace that will keep your hearts and minds, when the burdens would overwhelm you and crush you, the Bible says we could cast our burdens upon the Lord and you know what He'll do?

He will sustain you. Spending time in God's presence will sustain you, while the natural man without Christ would be weakened. The natural man would be helpless, would have nowhere to turn.

We have a helper. We have a refuge. We have a fortress. The Bible says in Psalm 46, God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

He's very present, so it's up to us to climb that mountain and to get into His presence. What we have as children of God is the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is, in fact, the lifter up of our heads. The Lord Jesus Christ is a shepherd that knows His sheep by name. He careth for you. The Bible describes Him as a balm, a balm for the brokenhearted, as a light in a dark night, as a strong rock, a solid rock that can withstand any tempest and any storm.

[12:33] The Bible says that the name of the Lord is a strong tower. The righteous runneth into it and is safe. You ever found yourself in a condition or in a situation overwhelming your spirit and bearing down upon you and holding you back, crushing you, spending time with God is sustaining.

There's things in this life, there's things in your personal life that you can't fix. There's things that you just, you're human, you can't do things on your own.

And there's problems that you can't overcome. And such things could be likened to a mountain that you can't pass over or a river that you cannot cross or a famine that you can't endure.

Maybe a burden that you alone cannot bear. So you've got to climb that mountain a second time.

You've got to get back in His presence and allow His peace to calm your spirit, to calm your nerves.

Allow His glory to radiate inside and penetrate to warm your cold heart. There's a song, and I don't know the words exactly, this is the way I remember the words.

[13:51] It says that in times when you feel that He's all you have, you'll find He's all you need.

Because our God can sustain us.

When we otherwise can't survive, being in the presence of God will sustain you. There's something else. Let's look back in our passage, chapter 34. Look at verse 30.

It says, When Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, they first laid eyes upon him. Behold, something's different. The skin of his face shone, they're afraid.

In verse 31, it says He calls them to come. Verse 29, it was that He wished not that the skin of his face shone. That's what I want, 29 and 30.

His skin of his face shone. It says it's three times. Verse 35 again. The face of Moses, the skin of Moses' face shone. Something else that can happen, spending time in God's presence, is that it will change you.

[14:56] It will change you. Here, the people saw it. This is not the same man that went up the mountain 40 days and 40 nights ago. As a matter of fact, the last time they were spending time with Moses, his wrath waxed hot against what they had done.

And He's commanding them to gird their swords upon them, to go and slay their brother that was guilty. He's commanding them to grind up that golden calf into powder and making him drink of it.

This Moses earlier was somebody else, but this guy just came down from the mountain. His face isn't red with wrath. His face is glowing with glory.

Why? Because he was in the presence of God. Spending time in God's presence will sustain you and time in God's presence will change you.

I can say the same thing is true about the child of God. I can say the same thing is true when you spend real time with the Lord. That fellowship with Him changes you. You won't be the same person.

[16:05] You won't be the same person after spending time with God, real time with God.

Preachers say things, I think this is stupid, but they say it a lot. They say, if you're really saved, if you're truly saved, then I'm going to see change in your life.

And I know why they say that. What they mean is they believe people aren't saved because they're not seeing fruit. They're not seeing evidence, so they want to say you're not truly saved and then they try to get you to come forward and do it again.

And I'm not a fan of that preaching. I disagree with why they say it and what they mean. I believe you can get saved and be born again and go right back to your old life and never grow and never gain understanding in any of it and still be born again and have eternal life.

but if you spend time with the Lord, if you, as a child of God, then spend time with that God, that's when you're going to see the change because that's where the change comes from, a personal relationship with God.

The change doesn't take place the moment you got saved. Now everything in my life is different.

Nothing really changed in your personal life. It's not until you walk with God, till He reveals His Word to you, till His Spirit begins to work on your heart and change the way you think and you're renewed in your mind.

[17:33] If you spend time with God, it'll show up in your life. Your spirit, your demeanor, your attitude will reflect that you spend time with God. Your faithfulness and your commitment will reflect that you walk with the Lord.

the things that you prioritize in your life. What's most important to you, if you spend time with God, it will be reflected in the choices that you make. The Bible says, but we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Lord, if you spend time with God, it will change you. But let me also say, if you're not spending time with God, that'll also show in your spirit, in your demeanor, in your attitude.

It'll also show in your faithfulness and in your commitment. It'll also show in what you prioritize in your life if you're not spending time with God.

I could take you through some illustrations of this in the Bible. For instance, those that show real change in their life because of a time spent sitting at the feet of Jesus or learning from the Lord and revelation from God.

[19:01] The Apostle Paul is a very clear one to show from darkness to light. The man that was possessed with the devil in Mark chapter 5, boy, what a difference in his life that the Lord Jesus Christ made.

The Apostles of the Lord, just normal guys, but then the next thing you know, after Christ is gone, they have boldness in their preaching and the others take knowledge of them and say, oh, they've been with Jesus because there's a change in them.

They have something they didn't have before. But I want to show you one guy, just one person that was struggling until he got alone with God. Would you find Psalm 73?

This man's name is Asaph. Asaph was a songwriter and a musician and a choir director in very close with the king.

And Asaph started to struggle. And I won't go through all the details of this passage, but there's a few things I want to point out about him. This is his own testimony. Verse number 2 and 3.

[20:11] He says, But as for me, my feet were almost gone. My steps had well nigh slipped. Why is that, Asaph?

For I was envious at the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. And he couldn't stand to see that they're fine, they're secure, there's no trouble, they're not plagued.

They're wicked, they're full of violence, they're full of pride, and they're doing okay. They're doing better than me and that bothered him. And a little bit later, he goes and gets with God in verse 17.

Verse 16, he says, When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me. Then verse 17, Until I went into the sanctuary of God. Asaph, well, he wasn't called to go up on top of the mountain to meet with God, but he went to the place that's called a house of prayer, a place that Jesus called his father's house.

Asaph went to a place where he was confronted with the Lord, spent some time there, and it changed his mind. It turned some things over.

[21 : 26] In verse 22, he says, So foolish was I and ignorant. I was as a beast before thee. This is what he admits now after getting alone with God.

In verse 25, he comes out with this statement, Whom have I in heaven but thee? There is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

And he closes this by saying in verse 28, but it is good for me to draw near to God. I have put my trust in the Lord God that I may declare all thy works.

A man spent some time with the Lord and it changed him. It changed his attitude. It changed his outlook. It changed his demeanor. The same thing can be true of you if you and I will get into God's presence.

It will change you. It will change you. I would go so far as to say, like Moses, it will change you in such a way that people will see it. I'm not saying they'll be afraid of you, but they'll see it.

[22 : 34] They'll see a difference in you. Has that not happened yet in your life? Have you not experienced somebody in your family or somebody at work saying, there's something different about you?

Maybe a friend that you used to run around with or grew up with, they say, you're not the same person that you used to be. What is it? You can tell them, I'm a born again Christian.

I am saved. I know Jesus Christ. And then, I'd like you to know him too. I wonder if you've experienced that change, the change that spending time with God will bring.

Spending time with God will sustain you. Spending time with God will also change you. And there's a third thing if you come back in Exodus chapter 34.

Another thing that we must understand is that spending time with God will enable you. Meaning it'll empower you to do something.

[23 : 36] Not just to sit and to absorb. But it'll prick you to action. So let's notice this. In verse 31, Moses, after the people are afraid to come nigh, he's not letting that happen.

He's, no, no, I'm here for a reason. He calls the people unto him. And the rulers, they returned and he talked with them. Verse 32, all the children of Israel came nigh.

He gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him in Mount Sinai. And he mentions at the end of 34, he came out and spake unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded.

And now in chapter 35, let's just run a few verses continuing this. Moses gathered all the congregation of the children of Israel together and said unto them, these are the words which the Lord hath commanded that ye should do them.

Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you a holy day and Sabbath of rest to the Lord. Whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death.

[24 : 42] He shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the Sabbath day. And Moses spake unto all the congregation of the children of Israel saying, this is the thing which the Lord commanded saying, take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord.

Whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord, gold, silver, brass, and on he goes to get the ball rolling on making God the sanctuary that he had called for, the tabernacle.

Moses is back in the driver's seat. He's back where he belongs commanding the people in the words of God, leading those people into the work that God had called them to do.

This is going, this is going pretty far back in our study. We're here in chapter 35 and just to give you the reference here, it's chapter 25 when God first called Moses up into that mount and he gave him this instruction.

It took a while till we got to this point. But spending those next 40 days and 40 nights in the mount, Moses comes back down and he's all business.

[25 : 56] He's ready to go. He's enabled and he's empowered. You can't sit around and do nothing. He's not griping about the golden calf anymore. He's not attacking the people and

punishing the people but no, he's moving forward because Moses has a job to do for God and it is that job that he intends to see accomplished.

And it's time with God, Christian, that'll move you to action. It's time, it's your personal relationship with God one-on-one that'll make you say, I need to witness to somebody.

I need to tell them. I need to do this or I need to be more faithful. I need to get to church this morning or I need to commit to this weekend or so forth. When you're with the Lord, He'll impress you with something to do.

When God does that, that's that time that enables you, that puts that spark in you. God forbid that it would be me in the pulpit chiding you and pricking you and saying, you don't ever do nothing.

But let it be God inside of your heart that speaks to you and warms and opens your heart to say, I want to serve Him. And then you come and say, what can I do?

[27 : 19] That's the way it ought to happen. Spending time with God is what'll turn that spark on. It's what'll warm that heart and put that fire in you to say, I want to do something for God with my life.

I don't want this life to be all about me. I don't want it to be all about what I do in my day as a vocation and earn a paycheck and then spend that paycheck and do it all again.

It's time with God you start to see the relationship with Him exceeds the other relationships in your life. Neglecting that relationship though will lead you to giving yourself over to other things.

Should you neglect your fellowship with God and the Word and your private time when communion with Him and any service you would give and commitment to Him, your faithfulness to your relationship, if you neglect that and set it aside, you will give yourself to things that they just don't matter really.

They're things that don't pertain to the kingdom of God. They'd be temporal. They'd be carnal. Probably worldly. Men that spend time with God are men that don't seek fame or fortune or success.

[28 : 37] They seek to make Jesus known. The Bible says, the Apostle Paul said this, we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

Life's not going to be about Him. When you spend time with God, things become about Him. Life becomes about Him.

And that clarity and that focus is generated from fellowship with the Lord. you come out of prayer and you come out of the Word of God with a peace inside of you and an understanding that it's just, Lord, I just want to please you.

That happens when you spend time with Him. When you're not with Him, you're thinking, self, I just want to please you. I just want to do what you want to do.

But that relationship with God changes you. It empowers you to serve Him. And you start to say, God, you deserve it.

[29 : 47] You're worthy of it. And I'm nothing. But time spent on yourself will deceive you into thinking, oh, I deserve it.

I'm worthy of it. And how quickly you forget that Christ is all. Christian, we need to be spending time with God because it will empower us to do what we're supposed to be doing, to live a life of righteousness and faithfulness and commitment, to have fruits, the fruits of righteousness just coming forth from the branch and from the vine.

spending time with God will enable that and empower that in your life. The focus, the drive, the appetite to serve Jesus Christ, that's all developed from a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. You cannot serve Him strictly out of duty. You can't do it. that won't sustain you for very long. You can't serve Him because somebody's squeezed you or put pressure on you.

That won't sustain you for very long. You can't serve Him out of routine either. One of the reasons is, is He won't accept it. You can just keep on, keep on, keep on, but He's not interested if the relationship isn't what it's supposed to be.

[31 : 17] It's vanity to Him. You'll fail. You'll fall. But it's your relationship with Him that cultivates your desire and your understanding that I must submit to Him, that I must put His will before mine, and this is right, and this is well-pleasing in His sight.

So this morning, church, Moses went up to the mountain a second time. He got an experience like none other. When He returned, the people saw it.

They feared, but He got right to work. It was spending that kind of time with God that can do the same in your life and mine.

It can sustain us through anything that comes our way. We can survive anything, and I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

His presence will sustain us. It'll hold us up. It'll put the peace inside of us when the world has got nothing but fear and anxiety and problems.

[32 : 28] Time with God will change you, and that change with God is always better. You'll always come down better than you went up, and the time with God will enable you to fulfill what God has called you to do.

It'll empower you to think that way, to look for that opportunity, and to have the courage to take those steps. Spending time with God this morning, is that what we're doing?

Is that what we're doing in our lives? You're busy. This time of year makes things even busier. More things get put up on the calendar than ever before.

but you cannot continue on. You cannot maintain, you cannot be right with God if you're not spending time with God.

And so the challenge to you is if that's slipping, join the crowd. If that's slipping, you're human.

You've got problems.

[33 : 34] You've got things that have distracted you. So God this morning said, hey, let's get back. Let's recommit to it. Let's get the walk back where it belongs. That's what God's doing for you this morning.

Why would He do it? Because He loves you. Because He doesn't want to see you walk away to your own world and get so consumed with it and watch it rip you away. And nothing gets done for eternity while you're distracted.

So God this morning is calling you back to Him. To spending time with Him. To reigniting that fire. It once burned.

Do you remember it? Do you remember how it consumed you and stirred you and gave you joy inside your heart that nothing around you mattered because the joy and the peace was inside of you?

Do you remember that? It's still there for the taking. But you're going to have to get alone with God. Let's bow our heads this morning and before we take off we're all in the same boat.

[34 : 43] We all live in the same world. We all have problems and burdens and voices to call and distract us.

And there's absolutely things that will take us away from spending time with our God. This morning maybe the Lord's just pricking you a little bit and saying your foot's starting to slip.

Let's get back. Maybe it's been a while. Maybe it's been weeks or even months and you've just been going through the motions. Nobody needs to know that but you know God knows that already. So why don't you make a decision this morning while he's pressing on you while he's moving in your heart why don't you decide I'm going to get back to my Bible reading and it's going to start today.

I'm going to get back to my time of prayer and it's going to start today. Would you commit that to the Lord? Would you commit to him this morning that wherever you've been slipping that you want to get straightened out?

[35 : 55] You're the one that's going to get better from this. There's nothing embarrassing about it. You're going to probably end up doing things like this the rest of your Christian life is slipping and getting back up and slipping and getting back up.

So I want to call you this morning to a relationship with God to making sure it's being fulfilled that you're not the problem.

So may God deal with our hearts. Father, please move in each person's heart. Get what you deserve from each one of us. Help us to be honest. Help us to be courageous. Lord, please shut down our flesh and the unclean spirits that would be on us and be holding us back.

Give us victory. Give us strength and courage in the inner man. Lord, give us resolve to walk with you and to love you.

Please change us. please sustain us through our hardships. Lord, prick us to do something in this life for you.

[37 : 06] Before we leave, let's sing a hymn together. Let's sing this song. for you. Thank you.