

Greetings in the name of our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ.

CALL – Lord Forgive our sin

Text: Exodus 32:7–14, 30–32

Theme: God is looking for people who will stand before Him in prayer for others, just as Moses did, pointing us to Jesus Christ, our perfect Mediator.

Good morning Church! Praise the Lord! Today we continue our sermon series, CALL – God Hears You. In our first message we learned from Job that we should continue calling upon God even when life is full of pain. Job lost everything, but he did not lose his faith because he trusted the sovereignty of God. Last Sunday we studied the prayer of Jabez. We learned that God delights in blessing those who seek Him with humble hearts and whose desire is to glorify His name. Today we are going to learn another important lesson about prayer. Prayer is not only asking God to bless us. Prayer is also standing before God on behalf of someone else. This kind of prayer is called intercession. Every believer should learn to pray not only for himself, but also for his family, his church, his neighbors, and those who are far from God. Today we will meet a man who stood between a holy God and a sinful people. His name is Moses. But as wonderful as Moses was, this passage will eventually lead us to someone even greater than Moses, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us understand the background before we read the prayer. God had done amazing miracles for the people of Israel. He sent the ten plagues upon Egypt. He opened the Red Sea. He destroyed Pharaoh's army. He fed His people in the wilderness. He brought them safely to Mount Sinai. There God entered into a covenant with them and called them His own people. Moses went up the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments from God. While Moses was enjoying fellowship with God on the mountain, the people at the bottom of the mountain became impatient. They asked Aaron to make them a god they could see. Aaron collected their gold, melted it, and made a golden calf. The people bowed before that idol and said, "This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt." They began to worship, celebrate, and forget the God who had rescued them only a few weeks earlier. Imagine the sadness in the heart of God. The very people He had delivered from slavery had turned away from Him so quickly. Their greatest problem was not the golden calf. Their greatest problem was that they exchanged the glory of the living God for something made by human hands. Church, this reminds us

that the human heart is naturally drawn toward idols. Today our idols may not be made of gold, but they can be money, success, career, comfort, entertainment, relationships, or even ourselves. Anything that takes God's place in our hearts becomes an idol.

I. A Great Sin That Deserved Judgment

The Lord said to Moses, "Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves." God saw everything that was happening in the camp. Nothing was hidden from His eyes. The people may have thought no one noticed their sin, but God saw every action and every motive. Church, we must remember that we may hide our sin from people, but we can never hide it from God. Hebrews 4:13 says, "There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him to whom we must answer." God is holy, and because He is holy, He cannot ignore sin. He told Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people. Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation." These are frightening words. Israel deserved judgment because they had broken the covenant almost immediately after making it. They had experienced God's power, yet they rejected His authority. They had seen His miracles, yet they preferred an idol. They had heard His voice, yet they chose their own way. Before we think too harshly about Israel, we should examine our own hearts. How often has God answered our prayers, protected our families, provided our needs, and shown us His faithfulness, yet we still choose worry instead of trust, pride instead of humility, and sin instead of obedience? The story of Israel is also the story of humanity. Romans 3:23 reminds us, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Every one of us deserves God's judgment because every one of us has sinned against Him. The wages of sin is death. Sin is never a small matter because it is rebellion against a holy God.

Notice something else in this passage. God says, "I will make of you a great nation." This was a real test for Moses. Imagine if God had offered you everything you ever wanted. Moses could have become the father of a new nation. His name could have become greater than Abraham's. Humanly speaking, this seemed like an incredible opportunity. But Moses was not thinking about himself. He was thinking about God's glory and about God's people. Church, this teaches us an important lesson. A true servant of God does not look for personal promotion. A true servant of God cares about God's name and God's people. Before Moses ever opened his mouth to pray, his heart was already broken over the sin of the people. Intercession always begins with a heart that feels what God feels. If sin does not grieve us, our prayers for others will never become passionate. Before God uses us to stand in the gap, He first allows us to see the seriousness of sin through His eyes.

II. A Great Prayer That Pleaded for Mercy

Instead of accepting God's offer, Moses immediately fell on his face and began to pray. Exodus 32:11 says, "Then Moses pleaded with the Lord his God." Church, this is one of the most beautiful prayers in the entire Old Testament. Moses did not stand before God to defend the people's sin because their sin could not be defended. He did not say, "Lord, they are innocent." He did not say, "Lord, they did not mean it." Moses knew they were guilty. Biblical intercession never minimizes sin, but it magnifies the mercy of God. Moses understood that if Israel was going to survive, it would not be because they deserved another chance; it would be because God is gracious and merciful.

Notice how Moses prayed. First, he appealed to God's glory. He said, "Lord, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?" Moses reminds God of His own work. He is not informing God of something He has forgotten. Instead, Moses is praying according to God's character and God's purposes. He is saying, "Lord, these are Your people. You delivered them. You displayed Your mighty power before Egypt. Please continue Your work among them." Church, this teaches us a wonderful lesson. Effective prayer is not trying to persuade God to become loving. Effective prayer is reminding ourselves of who God already is. When we pray, we should remember His faithfulness, His promises, His holiness, His mercy, and His love. Our confidence in prayer is never based on our goodness; it is always based on God's character.

Second, Moses appealed to God's reputation among the nations. He prayed, "Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, 'With evil intent He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and destroy them from the face of the earth?'" Moses was concerned that if Israel were destroyed, the surrounding nations would misunderstand the character of God. Moses desired that God's name would be honored above everything else. Church, this is a challenge for all of us. Many of our prayers begin with ourselves. "Lord, bless me. Lord, help me. Lord, provide for me." Those prayers are good, but Moses teaches us to pray something even greater. "Lord, may Your name be glorified through my life. Lord, may people see Your goodness. Lord, may my family, my neighbors, and my community know that You are the true and living God." The highest purpose of prayer is not our comfort; it is God's glory. Jesus taught the same truth when He said, "Hallowed be Your name." Every prayer should begin with a desire to honor the Lord.

Third, Moses appealed to God's promises. He said, "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself." Moses remembered the covenant God had made with the patriarchs. God had promised to make their descendants into a great nation and to bless all nations through them. Moses knew that God never breaks His promises. Church, this is one of the greatest principles of prayer in the Bible. We

should pray according to the promises of God. That is why reading Scripture is so important. The more we know God's Word, the more confidently we can pray. When we know what God has promised, we can pray with boldness because we are praying according to His will. The promises of God become the foundation of the prayers of God's people.

Verse 14 says, "So the Lord relented concerning the harm which He said He would do to His people." This verse often raises a question. Did God change His mind? Did Moses convince God to do something He did not want to do? The answer is no. The Bible clearly teaches that God is perfect and does not make mistakes. God did not discover new information because of Moses' prayer. Instead, God chose to accomplish His purpose through the intercession of Moses. God had already raised Moses up to be the shepherd and mediator of Israel. By inviting Moses to pray, God was teaching him what it means to shepherd God's people with compassion. In His sovereign plan, God ordained not only the outcome but also the means by which that outcome would come. Prayer was part of His plan from the beginning. Church, this should encourage us. Our prayers matter because God has chosen to work through the prayers of His people. James 5:16 says, "The effective prayer of a righteous person can accomplish much." God invites us to participate in His work through prayer.

Application: Let me ask you a question this morning. When someone disappoints you, what is your first response? Do you criticize them? Do you become angry? Do you talk about them to others? Or do you pray for them? Moses teaches us that mature believers do not simply point out people's failures; they bring those people before the throne of God's grace. Think about your family. Think about your church. Think about those who have wandered away from the Lord. Instead of giving up on them, stand in the gap for them. Pray for them. Ask God to show mercy. Ask God to restore them. Ask God to draw them back to Himself. This is the heart of intercessory prayer. God is still looking for men and women who will stand before Him and faithfully pray for others.

III. A Great Mediator Who Stood in the Gap

After Moses came down from the mountain, he saw the people worshiping the golden calf. His heart was broken. He destroyed the idol, called the people to repentance, and judgment fell upon those who continued in rebellion. But Moses was still not satisfied. He loved the people too much to leave them under God's judgment. The next day he said, "You yourselves have committed a great sin; and now I am going up to the Lord, perhaps I can make atonement for your sin." Moses returned to the presence of God, not to ask for anything for himself, but to plead for the people once again. This is the heart of a true shepherd. A shepherd does not run away when the sheep fail. He lovingly seeks their

restoration. Church, this is the kind of heart God desires in every believer. Instead of giving up on people, we should pray for them. Instead of condemning them, we should ask God to restore them. Galatians 6:1 says, "If anyone is caught in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual are to restore such a person in a spirit of gentleness." We are called to restore, not to reject.

Listen to Moses' amazing prayer in Exodus 32:31–32: "Oh, this people has committed a great sin, and they have made a god of gold for themselves. But now, if You will, forgive their sin—and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!" What incredible love! Moses was willing to sacrifice himself for the people he was leading. He was saying, "Lord, if they cannot be forgiven, then let me bear the cost." Moses understood that sin deserved punishment, yet his love for the people moved him to stand in their place. This is one of the greatest pictures of intercession in the Old Testament. However, as great as Moses was, he could not actually pay for their sins. God answered, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book." Every person is responsible for his own sin. Moses could offer himself, but he could not become the sacrifice for Israel. He was a faithful servant, but he was not the Savior. His willingness was admirable, but his life was not sufficient to remove the guilt of sin. This leaves us waiting for someone greater than Moses, someone who could truly stand in the gap and fully satisfy God's justice.

IV. A Greater Mediator Than Moses—Jesus Christ

The entire story of Moses points us to Jesus Christ. Moses was willing to give his life, but Jesus actually gave His life. Moses stood before God for one nation, but Jesus died for people from every tribe, every language, every nation, and every generation. Moses prayed for guilty people, but Jesus took the punishment that guilty people deserved. Moses could only ask God to forgive; Jesus made forgiveness possible through His death on the cross. Isaiah 53:5 says, "But He was pierced for our offenses, He was crushed for our wrongdoings; the punishment for our well-being was laid upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed." On the cross, Jesus became the perfect sacrifice for our sins. He did what no one else could ever do. He satisfied the justice of God and demonstrated the love of God at the same time.

The Bible tells us in Hebrews 7:25, "Therefore He is also able to save forever those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." Think about that wonderful promise. Jesus not only died for us; He also lives for us. Even today He is at the right hand of the Father, praying for His children. When we fail, He intercedes for us. When we are weak, He intercedes for us. When Satan accuses us, Jesus stands as our Advocate. Romans 8:34 says, "Christ Jesus is He who died, but rather, was

raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us." What an amazing Savior we have! We never stand before God alone because Jesus stands before the Father on our behalf.

Church, this passage calls every one of us to respond. First, if you have never trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, today is the day to come to Him. Your good works cannot save you. Your religion cannot save you. Only Jesus can forgive your sins because only Jesus is the perfect Mediator between God and man. Second, if you are already a believer, ask yourself this question: Who am I standing in the gap for? Are you praying for your spouse? Are you praying for your children? Are you praying for your church? Are you praying for your pastor? Are you praying for your neighbors who do not know Christ? Are you praying for missionaries around the world? God is still looking for people who will faithfully stand in the gap through prayer.

As we close today's message, let us remember what God has taught us throughout this series. In the life of Job, we learned to call upon God in the middle of suffering because He hears the cries of His children. In the prayer of Jabez, we learned to call upon God with faith, trusting Him to bless us for His glory. Today, through Moses, we have learned to call upon God for others by standing in the gap through intercessory prayer. Above all, we have seen Jesus Christ, our perfect Mediator, who stood in our place, died for our sins, rose again in victory, and now lives forever to intercede for us. Therefore, let us become a church that prays. Let us become families that pray. Let us become believers who stand in the gap for a lost world. May our lives bring glory to God, and may many people come to know Jesus Christ because we faithfully answered His call to pray. Amen.