

Changing God's Mind

Have you ever had an experience where someone had determined a set course of action you didn't agree with, and you were able to convince the person to change his or her mind? Moses had a similar encounter with God, and we'll look at the essential elements of such a negotiation in today's Templates of Truth.

Let me say at the onset, that God is not generally One to be challenged and negotiated with. That doesn't mean we should never approach Him in this context, but we must always be mindful that He is holy, sovereign and His dictates are preeminent over every aspect of our lives. Before we call into question that which He has determined, we best be assured we have a just and right cause for doing so. Seeing the elements of the encounter of Moses with God will help us know whether our challenge is appropriate or not.

First of all, a standard had been raised. God had given His people the Ten Commandments and the laws He expected them to obey. Included in those commands was, *you shall have no other gods before Me; you shall not make for yourself an idol* (Exodus 20:3-4). Secondly, a breach had occurred. Moses was a long time coming down from the mountain, and the people concluded that he was missing in action and might never come back. So, Aaron helped the people to take their gold jewelry, melt it down, and fashion it into an idol. He built an altar to it and proclaimed it as their Lord (Exodus 32:1-8)! That act of rebellion created the third element – a course of action had been set. God was angry! He told Moses, *Let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them, and that I may destroy them* (Exodus 32:10). In the name of grace, love and mercy, we often forget that God is a holy, just and righteous God who expects us to be holy even as He is holy. When we choose to rebel against His expectations of us, we eventually incur His wrath of judgment.

At this point we see Moses instituting the fourth element – an advocate stands in the gap. This passage tells us that *Moses entreated the Lord his God* (Exodus 32:11). The Hebrew word means that Moses sought God's grace and favor, rather than His wrath and judgment. In His argument, Moses raised three definitive issues: (1) the fact that God had delivered them out of bondage; (2) to destroy them now would only cause the Egyptians to doubt God's love for His people; and, (3) God had made a covenant promise with their forefathers that such an act against them would compromise (Exodus 32:11-13). The result was – *the Lord changed His mind about the harm which He said he would do to His people* (Exodus 32:14). We must be careful we don't draw any erroneous conclusions here. God is not fickle. He is not indecisive, naïve or easily swayed by man's arguments. He is all-powerful and all-knowing, and He knew that He and Moses would have this conversation before the people ever sinned against Him.

The story is not included in Scripture to teach us that God's intent can be manipulated and redirected. It is included to help us understand the importance of standing in the gap. God offered Moses the opportunity to wipe out these rebellious Israelites and start over with just him

and his descendants (32:10). But Moses declined the offer and intervened on behalf of his people. He became their intercessor to God the Father, pleading on their behalf for divine mercy, forgiveness and restoration. Moses was the earthly example of that which Jesus is doing right now as He sits in heaven at the right hand of the Father. He is making intercession for you and me! His Holy Spirit is praying on our behalf with words we cannot even begin to express. If it were not for these two divine advocates standing in the gap between a holy God and our unholy behavior, we would be as destroyed as the Israelites were destined to become.

Would you like to be instrumental in changing God's mind? You not likely to succeed if it is an effort to convince Him you need more money, a bigger house, a newer car, a better job or some other luxury & comfort in life. But if you know a brother living mindlessly and recklessly in sin, God wants you to be his advocate; to stand in the gap and intercede on his behalf for God's mercy and grace. Who knows? It just might be your prayer that God honors to bring that brother back into a forgiven, restored and proper relationship with God and man.

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide in Christ. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in the Lord Jesus.

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