



DEVOTION FOR THE WEEK

The Presence of God

Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; but I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people.... (Exodus 33:3)

And he said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." (Exodus 33:14)

In Exodus 33:3, God ordered Moses to move into the Promised Land, but He would not go with them. The people had earlier taken to idolatry with the golden calf while Moses was away meeting God at Mount Sinai. However, as we advance to verse 14, we read that God made a different decision and went with the people.

When I was meditating on Exodus 33, I found myself struggling to understand what it means to be in the presence of God. What's more, the presence of God comes with a reward. The reward is ***"...and I will give you rest."*** Who doesn't want true rest?

As I wrestled with God for an answer to what it means to be in His presence, He gave me a picture of an elderly couple who were in love with one another. Unfortunately, the wife fell sick and passed away. The husband was despaired by the loss of his beloved wife. He missed so much of the good time that they had spent together. Then a thought came to his mind. To relive the memory of their good times together, he travelled to the places that his wife loved to visit. Whenever he was at a place that his wife loved to be, he could feel her presence.

When the picture disappeared from my mind, I knew what God was telling me. Like the lovesick husband, if I want to experience the presence of God, I would have to keep doing what God wants me to do – to love my neighbours, to have compassion for the poor, to be humble, not be judgmental, to be thankful, not to worry, and so on. I began to see how the presence of God and His teachings are connected. Praise the Lord!

One probable reason why God decided to go with the people in verse 14 could be due to the setting up of the Tent of Meeting. The tent was set up to inquire of the Lord. It was a place where the people could bring their needs before God. Compared to their previous sin of the golden calf, the people were actively seeking God's presence to solve their problems. Indeed, God desires to have a personal relationship with us and if we do the same, His presence will be with us.

My dear friends, the presence of God is not based on our feelings and emotions. Jesus said in John 4:34 ***“My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.”*** Let us walk the talk by doing the will of God, and you will experience the presence of God. And He will give you rest. God bless you.

Revd Kelvin