

**Distinguished– Sunday February 10<sup>th</sup> 2013.**

***Then he said to Him, “If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here. <sup>16</sup> For how then can it be known that I have found favour in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we, I and Your people, may be distinguished from all the other people who are upon the face of the earth?” (Exodus 33:15-16)***

Beloved in the Lord,

What distinguishes a Christian from a non-Christian; a believer from a non-believer? The simple answer is who they follow. Under whose Lordship they find themselves. A Christian lives his or her life under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. A non-Christian thinks that they are lord over their own life but do not realise that they are under the lordship of the devil – Satan. This is why I love the hymn: Take Thou my hand and lead me.” This is such an important prayer. Only when we are under the leadership and Lordship of God through Jesus Christ are we blessed.

Our text today is part of a conversation between God and Moses. God has just told Moses that he has to get up and lead the people to the promised land. Moses rightly discerned that without the presence of, without the leadership of God Himself, this was an impossible task and it would fail. Moses did not even know the way.

Moses says to God: <sup>12</sup> ***Then Moses said to the Lord, “See, You say to me, ‘Bring up this people!’ But You Yourself have not let me know whom You will send with me. Moreover, You have said, ‘I have known you by name, and you have also found favour in My sight.’ <sup>13</sup> Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favour in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favour in Your sight. Consider too, that this nation is Your people.” <sup>14</sup> And He said, “My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.” <sup>15</sup> Then he said to Him, “If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here. <sup>16</sup> For how then can it be known that I have found favour in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we, I and Your people, may be distinguished from all the other people who are upon the face of the earth?”” (Exodus 33:12-16)***

This conversation gives us a great insight into Moses and we can see why God was able to use this man so mightily for His Kingdom. Moses had learnt that the only blessed way was God’s way. The only way was to completely trust in God. The only way was to say to God: “If you won’t go with me then I am not going.”

I often dream and wonder where we would be if we trusted God in such a way. If you have not prescribed this for me I don’t want it. If you do not send me I am not going. If you will not go with me, I will stay where I am. How many people live life like this? Sadly very few.

The usual scenario is that we figure out what we want and then ask God to bless our plans. Then when things do not work out as expected we are upset. Too often we try to

manipulate God and want Him to fit our plans. This is so wrong. We should come before God humbly and ask Him what His plan is, what He wants us to do.

God's plan, God's way is the true way. It is the only blessed way. His plans are so much greater than ours. We read in Isaiah chapter 55:

***"For My thoughts are not your thoughts,  
Nor are your ways My ways," declares the Lord.  
<sup>9</sup> "For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
So are My ways higher than your ways  
And My thoughts than your thoughts.  
<sup>10</sup> "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,  
And do not return there without watering the earth  
And making it bear and sprout,  
And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;  
<sup>11</sup> So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth;  
It will not return to Me empty,  
Without accomplishing what I desire,  
And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it." (Isaiah 55:8-11)***

This word is so important. This Word of God remind us that God is God. His ways, His thoughts are supreme. If we want to experience life at it's very best here and in eternity then we need to submit to Him fully.

Every time we do not, we raise ourselves above God. We are saying that we know better than Him. We may not think that way, but that is in essence what we are doing.

That is why when Jesus disciples asked how to pray he taught them a model prayer that we know as The Lord's prayer:

***'Our Father who is in heaven,  
Hallowed be Your name.  
<sup>10</sup> 'Your kingdom come.  
Your will be done,  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
<sup>11</sup> 'Give us this day our daily bread.  
<sup>12</sup> 'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
<sup>13</sup> 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom  
and the power and the glory forever. Amen.'](Matthew 6:9-13)***

Total and absolute trust in God the Father – that is what distinguished Jesus from all others. He was totally in the Father's Will. He lived to do His Father's Will. We read in John 4:34:

***“Jesus \*said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.”***

***and in John 8:28-29***

***“So Jesus said, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. <sup>29</sup> And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.”***

Some will say: “Oh, but I am not Jesus. This doesn’t apply to me. What does Paul say:

***“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11)***

Clearly Paul is telling us to have the same attitude that Jesus had. We are to take Jesus as our role model. Paul wrote about himself:

***“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” Galatians 2:20***

You see what distinguishes a Christian from all others is that a Christian does not live for himself, but for Christ. Martin Luther emphasised that we must daily put off the old man and be clothed with Christ.

It is only when we do, that God’s perfect plan for us is realised in our life. Only then do we reach our God ordained potential.

To trust in God requires faith. Faith that God’s plan is right, it is the best. Faith that knows that God will do exactly as He has promised. He will not fail because He cannot fail. Faith that God’s motivation is love.

How do we get such faith? From His Word! We read in Romans 10:17 ***“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”***

Faith comes from God’s Word. That is why I emphasise over and over again the importance of reading, studying, listening to God’s Word. God’s Word is our daily bread, our sustenance for the soul.

What distinguished Israel from all other nations? \_ They had God's Word. What distinguishes Christians from all others? We have God's Word. Where Christians and Churches have neglected God's Word, there is little that distinguishes them from the world. Many Churches are nothing more than a social club.

Let us take a leaf from Moses book and learn to rely totally upon God in faith. Let us stay true to His Word Alone.

As we start each day let us hand the reins to Him and say "Lord, You lead and I will follow. If you do not go ahead of me, I will not go."

May God help us.

Amen.

Pastor Colvin S. MacPherson Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sydney.

All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.