

SERMON NOTES

SERIES: Exodus: Set Free, Live Free
TITLE: The Moses Prayer: Does God Change His Mind

SCRIPTURE: Exodus 32-34

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PASTOR: Charlie Boyd

We are in a series on the Book of Exodus from the Old Testament. Why study this book? Exodus is the Old Testament story of the salvation of God's people that points forward to the great salvation that comes to us by faith in Jesus.

Lead in — God reveals himself to us in the Bible. In Scripture, he shows us his glory (his goodness, greatness, mercy, justice). However, he does not/cannot reveal all of who he is because our finite minds are not able to comprehend all of who God is. And that, can raise questions for us when we study God's Word. There are passages that are hard to understand because they seem to teach truths about God that we cannot fit together, having every "i" dotted and every "t" crossed. One such passage is found in Exodus 32-34.

Passage Summary — What we find in Exodus 32-34—what I'll call **The Moses Prayer**—is a conversation between Moses and God. In the first part of Exodus 32, while Moses is up on Mt Sinai receiving God's instructions for the Tabernacle and priesthood, the people are down below worshipping a golden calf that they have made, breaking the very commandments God had just given them. God tells Moses he is going to destroy the people and start a new nation with Moses and his descendants. But Moses stands in the gap between the people and God and Exodus 32:14 says that God "relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing against the people; that is, he "changed his mind" (NASB). The question is: *Does God change his mind?* ...God said he was going to destroy the people, Moses intercedes, and God doesn't destroy the people. Does God change his mind? As the conversation progresses, there are other instances where God says he will do one thing, Moses intervenes, and God "changes" in response to prayer. Did God change his mind? And, to take the question one step farther: Does it really matter? What difference does it make in our everyday lives? To answer these questions, we will look at four foundational truths about God and how they relate to Moses' Prayer.

READ Exodus 32:7-14; 30-35; 33:1-6, 12-23 —

Four Foundational Truths About God in this Passage

1. God's character is unchanging. (Hebrews 1:10-12; Hebrews 13:8; see also Malachi 3:6, 1 Samuel 15:29 [NIV]; James 1:17)
2. God's purposes are unchanging. (Proverbs 19:21; Isaiah 46:9-10)

3. God's promises are unchanging. (Isaiah 40:6-8; Matthew 24:35; Number 23:19 [NASB]; see also Psalm 89:34-37)

Now, if you bring these three foundational truths about God over to Moses' Prayer in Exodus 32-34, it raises a question—Do these three truths about the unchanging nature of God contradict what it says in Exodus 32:14 that God changed his mind? Is the Bible contradicting itself? ...Absolutely not! In fact, Moses' prayer teaches very clearly that God's character, God's purposes, and God's promises do not change. Huh? As strange as this sounds, Moses appeals for God to "relent" based on the fact that God does not change. Feel a headache coming on? This tension can be resolved in our fourth foundational truth.

4. God's plan is unfolding. God's character, purposes, and promises do not change but his plans unfold. Exodus 32 shows us God's plan unfolding step-by-step. How so?
 - Step 1: God judges people in their sin. (His character does not change.)
The question of Exodus 32 and the question that dominates all three chapters is this: How can a holy and just God bless a people who are sinfully disobedient? The answer is ...
 - Step 2: God provides a mediator. (His purposes do not change.)
 - Step 3: God extends his mercy. (His promises do not change. See Ps 106:23)

So, does God change his mind? —BIG IDEA—

1. God's reign over us does not change, but his relationship to us can change.

What about prayer? ...If God doesn't change, then does he change his mind when we pray? —NO—but—

2. God has ordained that some things happen only through prayer.

***For Discussion* —**

1. Have someone or several people the passages used in today's message.
2. What was your biggest take-away from this message/passage?
3. What's the hardest thing to understand?
4. How should this teaching drive us to pray rather than discourage us from praying?
5. If you had to explain the BIG IDEA of this message to someone who missed the message, how would you paraphrase it?