

## The Critical Need For God's Presence

Ponder: What if God doesn't go with you?

The Israelites heard the voice of God Himself giving them the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17). Commandment number two strictly forbade the worship of images (vv. 4-6). In 24:3, "all the people answered with one voice and said, 'All the words which the Lord has said we will do.'" Nevertheless, fewer than six weeks later they were sacrificing to a golden calf and dancing around it!

When he saw this, Moses threw down the two stone tablets upon which the Lord had written the Ten Commandments. The tablets broke, symbolizing the broken covenant. Understandably, God was furious! Thanks to the intercession of Moses, He didn't utterly destroy Israel. He did, however, inform them that as they went into Canaan, the promised land of milk and honey, "I will not go up in your midst, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people" (33:3).

Moses once again interceded for his people, and the Lord relented, mercifully granting his request. "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest" (v. 14). At this point Moses said something that further demonstrates the greatness of his character and understanding. "Then he said to Him, 'If Your presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here'" (v. 15). Moses knew that staying in the desert with God was infinitely better than living in a land of milk and honey without Him!

I wonder how many of us understand that scratching out a day-to-day existence while in fellowship with God surpasses the greatest material luxury while alienated from Him. Paul knew from experience, as well as by inspiration, that "godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content" (1 Timothy 6:6-8).

Milk and honey are great, and there is nothing wrong with enjoying them. But we can also get along without them. Let us "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33). The Lord will supply us with everything we really need.

Song: "If Jesus Goes With Me I'll Go Anywhere"

Prayer: Father, we marvel at the longsuffering You have demonstrated toward people past and present, including ourselves. Help us, we pray, to realize how important it is that we stay in fellowship with You, regardless of our outward circumstances. As long as we are with You, and You are with us, nothing else really matters. We humble ourselves before You, offering our praise and thanksgiving in Jesus' name, Amen.