

Where's the Difference?

When Israel sinned greatly in worshipping the golden calf, God was so infuriated that He wanted to wipe them out, offering Moses to start Israel's history new with him (Ex. 32:9-10). However Moses, according to Numbers 12:3 the most humble man on earth, stood tall in character refusing to take God up on His proposition. Instead he pleaded and argued with the Lord to pursue His original plans with Israel for His own name's sake (Ex. 32:11-13). God relented and eventually commanded Moses and the people to go up to the land He had promised to give them, albeit He wouldn't join in to avoid destroying them in His anger.

"Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?" (Exodus 33:15-16, NIV)

Now we could argue at length about Moses' audacity. Wasn't Israel in the wrong here? After all they were lucky to be still alive and fortunate to still be send into the promised land. So how did Moses dare challenging God?

- Perhaps this is exactly the point. Perhaps this is were we have to review our own position and ask ourselves a couple of key questions: How well do we know God's plans, purposes and promises for us? And, how close is our walk with Him? Because if we don't know His plans, purposes and promises for us, almost anything will do and challenge us to be content. But if we do know, and if we are walking closely with the Lord, then we do have the right to challenge Him to fulfill His promises, just like Moses did. Nothing else and nothing less should make us content then.

But there is even more relevance for us in these statements of Moses: "If your Presence does not go with us, ... what else will distinguish [us] from all the other people on the face of the earth?"

- Don't know about you, but I wonder how different we Christians really are to the world around us today. Many profess Christianity yet conduct their lives no different to unbelievers. So where's the difference? Is it really justified for us to blend in to the general public, buy into traditions and world views of our godless societies, avoid confrontation, look for compromises and become like unbelievers, all under the holy pretense to make a difference and winning them for Christ? Slapping a Christian sticker on worldly behavior doesn't make it holy. Its a contradiction and therefore I dare to question this kind of approach often seen today and gladly justified with Paul's famous statement in 1 Corinthians 9:10, which I believe had more to do with picking those people up at their point of reference to bring them to Christ rather than becoming just like them.
- So lets face up to the challenge here: What kind of Christians are we? Does our life show to the people around us that God is present and with us? I'm not talking about our commitment to midweek home cell meetings or Sunday church attendance. I am talking about our lifestyle, the way we behave and talk, the principles we apply, the hope we express and display, the truth we bring across and put into action, the love and care we give, the way we deliver correction and exhortation, the way we handle family life and relationships, professional life and business, and things like that. Does all this really show a difference to the world around us? Can the people see that the Presence of the Lord is with us? If not, we'd better change! Cause if there is no difference in our lives to the lives of those we interact with, why on earth should they come to Christ then? Why should they want to change? Moreover, why should God bless what we are doing?
- Imagine God's people displaying the powerful Presence of God Almighty again today ...