

Just as small children value the presence of their parents, we, as children of our heavenly Father, should highly value the presence of our God. Israel was visibly reminded of God's presence by the pillar of fire and cloud, and Moses pled with God to keep that presence, when it was threatened because of their sin. Believers today should value God's presence with them and can be challenged to do so by considering the plea of Moses for the Lord to maintain His Presence among them.

I. *The Presence of the Lord in the midst of His people happens by His sovereign grace.*

1. The Lord being pleased with Moses and Israel (v 16) is not an expression of God's satisfaction with the people, but of His mercy and grace toward them. They "found grace" (KJV) in His sight. (Verse 19 uses the verb and is translated "show mercy." The people were not "pleasing", but a stiff-necked, rebellious people.)
2. The sinfulness of the people argued against the Lord's Presence being with them.
3. Because God was gracious and merciful, He was willing to be present among His people. (Moses pleased God because of his faith according to Hebrews 11:6, 24–28. God acted because of His mercy and compassion. See 32:19.)

The Presence of the Lord in the midst of His people today is also solely dependent upon His sovereign grace. By grace Jesus promised to always be with His followers (Matthew 28:20) and to send another Comforter to live with and be in His followers (John 14:16–17). As a result both the bodies of believers and the Body of Christ are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19; 3:16). As a gift, it should cause praise and thanksgiving toward God.

II. *The Presence of the Lord in the midst of His people distinguishes them from all other peoples.*

1. The Presence of the Lord demonstrated visually the grace that God had shown Israel and that Israel was His people. Israel belonged to the Lord and the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire declared that visibly. That Israel belonged to God was clearly in Moses' mind (vv 13, 16). No other nation had such a sign of the Lord's presence.
2. The Presence of the Lord among the people brought glory to God for what He did for the people. The glory of God was a concern of Moses (32:12). The visible Presence of the Lord showed that Israel had not fled from Him but had received mercy.

The Presence of the Lord in the midst of Israel marked them as different than all other peoples, as having received His grace. In the same way God's presence in and among believers, distinguishes the Church from all other people. Lives should visibly display the difference, e.g. our love for one another (John 13:35) and our function as light (Ephesians 5:8).

III. *The Presence of the Lord in the midst of His people resulted from the intercession of an approved mediator.*

1. Moses, as a good mediator, desired to know the Lord better. He wanted to understand God's purposes and manner of carrying them out (v 13; cf Isaiah 55:8).
2. Moses desired to see the glory of God (v 18). His previous experience with the glory of God (16:10; 24:16–17) had given him affirmation and assurance, something which he needed if he were to continue to lead Israel.
3. The Lord offered Moses something even better, to see all His goodness and hear His name, i.e. His very character, proclaimed. That included His especially needed mercy and compassion. But he would be shielded from seeing God's face, which would bring death.

Moses pled successfully for the Presence of the Lord to go with Israel. The Presence of the Lord in the midst of His people today also has resulted from the intercession of a Mediator, the one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. He was both the presence of God on earth (John 1:14, 18) and the Mediator who requested the Spirit to be with believers (John 14:16–17).

Moses understood the value and importance of having the Presence of the Lord with them as the Lord's people. The Tabernacle was to be His dwelling place (Exodus 25:8). Going to the promised land was not worth it, if the Lord wasn't with them. Though imperfect, they were the Lord's chosen people, distinguished from all others.

The Lord's presence is important for us, as His people. Value it, and do not ignore it, as Israel would do. Grumbling, a lack of submission, sin in general grieves the Spirit who is present in believers. Instead thank and praise God for His provision, His presence, His plan. Ask God to instruct, as did Moses, to better grasp His ways. Rejoice in His forgiveness. Live in a manner believing and valuing His presence.