

TO LIVE FOR HIS GLORY Exodus 33:12-23

INTRODUCTION: Weak people do foolish things when they find themselves in the dark. The majority of our failures come when we think we are alone or that no one will see—then we fall prey to our weaknesses and give in to temptations that would never appeal to us in the light of day.

Under the cover of darkness and with the excuse of human weakness, many have made life-altering choices that they would never have made had they known that others could see and that the light of day was shining upon them.

But what if light always shone on our way? What if strength and power were always available to stand strong in the battles of life?

Moses saw how easily the Israelites fell into old, destructive habits when they found themselves without the light of godly leadership. The golden calf they had made to serve as their god came out of time of spiritual darkness and weakness. After that tragic rebellion against the Lord, Moses now comes to plead with the Lord for more light, more strength, so that he and the people might remain strong and true.

Living in the light of the constant presence of the Lord and walking in the brilliant light of His glory will always produce greater faithfulness and more profound diligence in how we live. So Moses prays that God might show more glory that will illuminate the way and give assurance of His sustaining power and grace.

THESIS: Even though we cannot see it now, through Christ we can now know the glory of God and live our lives in the radiant light of that glory—heaven came down and glory filled our souls!

I. THE PRAYER OF A TRUSTING HEART

--For all of the problems associated with the Israelites and their constant battles with unbelief and distrust of the God who saved them, Moses had learned to trust the Lord at a whole new level.

--In the aftermath of their bizarre bout with idolatry and the golden calf, and in the face of God's judgment against them for being so stubborn in their rebellion against Him, Moses turned to God, the only One to whom He could go with confidence.

--Although there was much conversation about what would happen to Israel because of their idolatry, Moses chose to focus on what mattered most—the glory of the name of the Lord.

--So he prayed and laid out his heart to the Lord with these three petitions:

A. "I WILL NOT GO ON WITHOUT YOU"

Exodus 33:15 Then he said to Him, "If Thy presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here.

--In His righteous wrath at the idolatry and unbelief of Israel, the Lord told Moses that He would send them to the land, but that He would not go with them (33:3).

Note: Prior to now, God's presence had been known among the people, and especially in His meetings with Moses. But as a result of their demand for a visible, confirmed presence of deity among them (hence the manufacture of the golden calf), the Lord told them that now they would know even less of His presence but not be any less sent to inhabit the land.

As a consequence of their demands, the Lord punished them with even less than before!

--Moses knows that as hard as it has been leading Israel with the Lord's presence, how impossible the task would become if left alone to do it, so he pleads with the Lord—as much for his own sake as for Israel's.

--We dare not attempt to do your will without the assurance of your personal presence...as much as we appreciate the promise of an angel (33:2), we desperately need you!

Application: As we have recently noted, much of what the church in our day does can be accomplished without the Lord going with us. Low sights and limited vision allow us to operate quite contentedly with no need for prayer...no need for the power of the Spirit...no need for divine direction...no need for supernatural resources and provisions.

Rather than have to rely on the Lord, most modern Christians want to follow an easier, less stressful course which does not demand His presence among us.

B. "I WANT TO KNOW YOU AND YOUR WAYS"

Exodus 33:13 *"Now therefore, I pray Thee, if I have found favor in Thy sight, let me know Thy ways, that I may know Thee, so that I may find favor in Thy sight. Consider too, that this*

--Rather than expecting some kind of mystical experience, or some kind of adventure into the spiritual realm, Moses had a more practical way of thinking about knowing the Lord.

--When the presence of the Lord was with him, he would know it...not by supernatural sightings and other-worldly encounters...but by the simple, wonderful knowledge of the ways of God.

--"Lord, I want to know you and your ways...what delights you and pleases you...what meets your standards and conforms to your expectations."

Note: Many who would pray to know Him and His ways are not so interested in the mundane interests of daily life as they are in extraordinary visions and miraculous manifestations. For the Lord, to know Him is to be satisfied with learning from Him, listening to Him and leading a life that is all for Him.

C. "I WANT TO SEE YOUR GLORY"

Exodus 33:18 *Then Moses said, "I pray Thee, show me Thy glory!"*

--But Moses was not entirely without interest in the revelations of heaven on earth...a view of the invisible, a look at the brightness of the radiant splendor of the Lord.

--This request of Moses must be understood in the light of what he already had seen and known of the Lord—miracles unlike any others had ever seen, conversations that others had never had, a relationship that others could only dream about.

--But the desire of his heart appears now in this simple, brief request—"Show me your glory!"

--In other words, *"I have seen evidence of it, and have witnessed the power behind it, and have heard what is necessary to 'glorify' you, but what my heart truly longs for more than anything else is to see your glory revealed not in part but the whole."*

--For Moses, the presence of God with Him, the knowledge of God and His ways were important to him, but what his heart longed for was the see the glory of God in all its fullness.

II. THE PROMISES OF A FAITHFUL GOD

--How did the Lord answer these requests, and what did He say in response to these prayers?

--Seven assurances and promises were given to Moses that can also be made to us:

A. MY PRESENCE WILL GO WITH YOU

Exodus 33:14 *And He said, "My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest."*

--In a direct answer to Moses' prayer, the Lord responds affirmatively and lets him know that He will not leave him alone to fend for himself, but that He will remain with him.

--Not only that, the draining and exhausting task of leading an obstinant people has not gone unnoticed by the Lord so as a part of the promise, He assures Moses that He will give him rest.

--The truth is that without the presence of the Lord, we cannot find rest because the weariness of life weighs in upon us with such heaviness that we collapse under the load.

--Jesus offers to be with each of us if we will but come to Him and bring our burdens to Him:

Matt. 11:28-30 *"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. ³⁰ "For My yoke is easy, and My load is light."*

--Moses declined to move one step further until the Lord agreed to go with him, and now we have a Savior who invites us to come to Him so that He can go with us and never leave us by ourselves again!

B. MY FAVOR IS UPON YOU

Exodus 33:17 *And the LORD said to Moses, "I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight, and I have known you by name."*

--As relieved as Moses must have been to know that the Lord would not leave or forsake him, this sweet promise of God must have stirred his emotions as well.

--Yes, I will do what you asked...but more than that, I am very pleased with you!

ILLUS. Once in a while, people will consent to do what you ask them to do but you get the impression that they are not very happy about it!

But what a wonderful thing when they agree to what you ask and then express their delight in you as a person...that you hold a place of special favor in their hearts! That is what the Lord communicated to Moses..."*I'll do it, and what's more, I am delighted in you!*"

When life is over on earth, one of the greatest moments ever will be to hear the Lord say to us on that day, *"Well done, good and faithful servant...enter the joy of your master!"*

C. MY NAME SHALL BE KNOWN BY YOU

Exodus 33:17, 19 *And the LORD said to Moses, "I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight, and I have known you by name..." ¹⁹ And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you;*

--God has long ago told Moses His name...Yahweh (I am that I am), but now goes further and in addition to making His name known to Moses, He tells him that not only has he found favor with the Lord but that God is on a first name basis with Moses!

--*"I know you by name...I will proclaim My name to you,"* so that we may continue to speak to one another as friend to friend.

ILLUS. When someone you admire greatly knows your name, what a wonderful feeling that brings! How much more when the Lord God knows you by name...not just as one more stone in the dwelling place, not just another sheep in the pasture...but God knows you by name and calls you personally by that name.

And you can know Him...know His voice...and be ready to respond when He calls your name, to speak to you personally!

D. MY GOODNESS SHALL PASS BEFORE YOU

Exodus 33:19 *And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you..."*

--Although He would not answer the request to show His glory to Moses, the Lord promised to make all His "goodness pass before him."

--What does it mean for the Lord's goodness to pass before Moses?

--The Hebrew word, "goodness" translates as "the best of what a place or person has" so that when God causes His goodness to pass before Moses, He is making His best known to him.

--The Old Testament does not speak of the character of God in abstract or philosophical terms as much as showing His character in action—and so the idea here is not that Moses' eyes beheld some mysterious "cloud of good things" but that the Lord caused him to be aware of His great and awesome works on behalf of His people.

--The goodness of God that would pass before Moses, then was likely intended to be "*an even fuller sense of who I am than you have thus far been able to grasp.*"

--Proclaiming His name to Moses along with making all His goodness pass before Him is the Lord's way of letting him know as much as possible about who He is...but not yet opening his eyes to see all of His glory.

--Therefore, since God is essentially and perfectly good, and His name is above all names in excellence and splendor, the Lord promises Moses that He is going to open his eyes to new levels of wonder at who He is.

--In so doing, He reassures Moses that He has indeed heard his prayer and will not abandon him, but will instead by His presence show him even more than he has seen and known before.

E. MY GRACE AND COMPASSION WILL BE UPON YOU

Exodus 33:19 ... and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion."

--When God's goodness and His name are made known, His power and authority and rule over all creation give us confidence and comfort.

--He can and will do whatever He pleases just because He is the omnipotent, all-powerful God, but instead of frightening us, that truth encourages us and settles our hearts to rest securely in His hands.

Psa. 115:3 *But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.*

--There is nothing that He does that brings Him displeasure...all that He does pleases Him.

Psa. 119:68 *You are good, and what you do is good; teach me your decrees.*

--His power to do whatever He pleases brings delight to us because all that it pleases Him to do is good.

--Therefore, He promises Moses that His goodness and power will always work for what is best, even in the way He demonstrates His grace and compassion.

--He will be gracious when it is right and good—always!

--He will show compassion when it is right and good—always!

--God is the Sovereign Lord and we cannot improve on how or what He does so that we will always know—even when we cannot understand—that what He does is consistent with all that is good and right, what is gracious and compassionate.

F. MY GLORY WILL BE HIDDEN FROM YOU – 33:20

Exodus 33:20 *But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!"*

--What God sees and knows is that sinful man cannot see His face and live, no matter how much we ask for that privilege or demand that honor.

--So out of protection, He keeps us from seeing His face until the time is right—when we are in His eternal home in heaven and will see Him perfectly as He is.

--So the Lord's answer to Moses' prayer, "Show me your glory," is simply, "*Not yet...but I will show you all that you can handle for now!!*"

--And even though the fullness of glory will remain hidden, there will be plenty of revelation in just seeing my goodness and knowing my name to sustain you and bring you joy!

G. MY GRACE WILL BE SUFFICIENT FOR YOU – 33:21-23

Exodus 33:21-23 Then the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock; ²² and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. ²³ "Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen."

--What you think you need and what God knows you need are different...

- *My Rock to hide you from seeing the "unsee-able"*
- *My Hand to protect you during fearful times*
- *My Back to reassure you of presence of power and glory*

ILLUS. Sometimes when storms come in our lives, we need to know that God is there for us. The fact of the presence of His power and glory calm our hearts and comfort our minds.

We may cry out to God as Moses did, "Show me your glory!" but in different words—"Show your healing power!" or we may cry out, "Take me out of this devastating trial!" What we want is for God to prove that He is the glorious and all-powerful Lord.

But the Lord's answer may surprise us and not be at all what we expected. For Moses, He hid him in the cleft of a rock so that his eyes were kept from seeing the glory. He placed His hand over the place to prevent him from knowing what He was doing during the time His glory was passing by. He then showed him the back of His presence as a reassurance that He was indeed there, at work, being the God He is, even when Moses could not actually see everything he wanted to see.

It was God's way of reminding Moses and us that He is glorious beyond our comprehension...but by giving us a glimpse of the backside of that glory, we are made confident that He was there all along for our good!

--God made His promises known to Moses as a way of affirming him in His love and expressing His delight in His servant.

--While Israel was denied closer access to God through their defiance and rebellion, Moses stood firm in the Lord and enjoyed the favor of his heavenly Father!

--But now, something better than Moses has come! Moses was great in the Lord, but Jesus is better...greater...the One in whom the Father is well-pleased in all things.

III. THE PRESENCE OF A GLORIOUS KING

--The glory of God was kept from view, even from Moses, for a time until God would make it known in full through His Son, Jesus Christ.

A. GLORY CAME DOWN IN PERSON THROUGH THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

--The glory of the God of heaven now found its place on earth in the person of Jesus Christ.

--It was still not fully revealed but was cloaked in His humanity, glimpses of it visible only on occasion (as at the Transfiguration in Luke 9:29-32).

--But by faith, the promise in Christ is that through Him we will one day see perfectly what we now see only in part.

B. GLORY SHINES FORTH IN SPLENDOR IN THE FACE OF CHRIST

2Cor. 4:6 For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

--When we come to know Christ, and see Him as Savior and Lord, our eyes are opened to this glorious light, shining in our hearts.

C. GLORY ARRIVES WITH THE PRESENCE OF THE KING OF GLORY

Psa. 24:7-10 Lift up your heads, O gates, And be lifted up, O ancient doors, That the King of glory may come in! ⁸ Who is the King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, The LORD mighty in battle. ⁹ Lift up your heads, O gates, And lift them up, O ancient doors, That the King of glory may come in! ¹⁰ Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory.

--In this great psalm, the future coming of the King of Glory is foretold, when Jesus Christ will come and take the hosts of those who believed in His name into the place He has prepared for them.

--We shall then behold Him in matchless glory forever and ever and that glory of the Lord which Moses longed to see will be the radiant light of heaven in the person of Jesus Christ, our eternal King of glory!

Rev. 21:22-23 And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple. ²³ And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.

CONCLUSION: Do you find yourself tempted because you have lost your sense of the light of His presence? Do you feel powerless to stand strong in the Lord because your weakness is exaggerated by your sense that you are all alone?

Take heart and pray for the Lord to show you His glory...or as much as you can handle of the perception of His goodness and the promise of His power. Moses found much favor with the Lord and the Lord promised to be sufficient for him in all things. He will do the same for each of us.

Embrace His promises and walk in the light of His glory. As you do, the strength that comes from His power and the confidence that comes from His glorious presence and light will hold you in His heart as one who is most favored and who gladly bears the name He writes on your heart.

See His glory and walk in the light of it. You will then become steadfast in the power of His might—never left alone, never to remain powerless in the darkness again. Come to Jesus and abide in the light of His glorious presence!

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