NEW FOCUS

Seeing God's Glory

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Exodus 33:19 And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.

A Daring Request

Have you ever thought what an daring request Moses made when he asked God, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory"? What would possess a man to ask such a thing? Was he merely curious? Was he presumptuous? Was be being foolish or bold?

Have you considered that Moses might be desperate? If he was, it was with good reason. Moses' confidence in God had been shaken. He no longer knew whether God was with the Children of Israel, or against them. There had been sin in the camp; corruption of the most heinous and despicable sort. In Moses' absence on Mt. Sinai, a golden calf had been cast and worshipped. Idolatry, immorality and open revolt against God had burst forth. Aaron, Moses' brother, was at the head of the rebellion.

Three things then happened. The pillar of cloud the symbol of God's presence was removed from the camp. God informed Moses that from now on a created angel would guide the people. God appeared to distance Himself from Israel by referring to them as Moses' people rather than His own people. The implication was clear. God was no longer going to bless Israel with His presence (Exodus 32, 33).

Is God With Us?

Today we sometimes wonder the same thing. Is God with us? If we are God's people, His chosen people, how are we to know? Often we do not see the evidence of His presence. If God is with us, might He condescend to demonstrate it to be so and give a sign of His glory?

When it seems the Lord has stepped back and the cause of God is weak, a token of His interest and continuing presence would be most comforting. We are so few. The people are languid, cold. We are tempted, like Moses to cry out, "Lord show Thyself!" "Come down. Rend the heavens, bare thine arm." "This is what we need to reignite our passion and spur us on. It

will comfort our troubled hearts."

"Let not your heart be troubled"

There is a striking parallel in the life of our Saviour. The Lord Jesus has just announced, at the end of John 13, that He is going away to leave His disciples. Where He is going they cannot come. The disciples are perplexed, confused. He comforts them. He tells them, "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me."

As the realisation of Christ's imminent departure begins to dawn, Philip makes a request in terms similar to Moses' own request many years before. Philip says, "Lord show us the Father and it sufficeth us" (John 14:8). Just a glimpse of the glory of God will make us content.

And do we not often feel like this, too. Would not a glimpse of the glory of God the Father be just the comfort and inspiration we need? Well then, do you want to see the Lord's glory? Moses did. Philip did. The disciples did. What about you? Dare we, like Moses, beseech the Lord, "Show me thy glory"? Observe the wonderful condescension of God. "Alright", He says, "I will."

God's Goodness Is His Glory

"I will make all my goodness pass before thee". No, Lord, it was your glory we desired to see. "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live" (Exodus 33:20). Observe, Moses! If you would see my glory observe my goodness. Therein is demonstrated the perfection of God in all His ways.

I will show you ... my goodness in:

· my creation – because God is good, all He does is good. All God has created is very good. Heaven and earth, stars, plants & animals, angels and men were all created good. I dare say much of the account of creation written by Moses in the early chapters of Genesis was revealed to him at this time, for it was here he saw the goodness of God. "And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31).

Well might the psalmist declare, "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works" (Psalm 139:14). "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord" (Psalm 33:5).

I will show you ... my goodness in:

· my providential care of all I have created, and especially of my people, my darlings and the apple of my eye. "Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing" (Psalm 145:16). "Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings" (Psalm 17:8).

The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him (Nahum 1:7).

I will show you ... my goodness in:

· my decrees, my will and my purpose of salvation, of justification, redemption and deliverance of my own elect and chosen people. I "will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy". Men tell us God's predestinating purpose is a hard doctrine and distinguishing grace a monstrous teaching. Our God calls it good! "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" (Matthew 20:15). "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth" (Romans 9:18).

I will show you ... my goodness in:

· my grace, that some, even of this wicked, stiffnecked race have found grace in my sight, and to them I have gifted salvation. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). Wickedness deserves judgment and because of Aaron's sin, and the people's wickedness, blood would be spilled and the nation plagued. Yet, Moses had a word of hope, "thou hast found grace in my sight". God's goodness shone through judgment.

I will show you ... my goodness in:

· my sovereignty, and that I am holy, faithful, merciful, and patient with my people, even when they sin. This was Moses' great burden. Would God cast off His people? Was their rebellion and idolatry the final straw? God had every right to punish, indeed justice demanded it. "I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee". "But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared" (Psalm 130:4). Moses had his answer. "And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth (Exodus 34:6).

God's Glory Is His Gospel

Did you notice the repeated use of the word "proclaim" in this passage?

God spoke. We should not pass over this too lightly. The fact that God spoke then to sinners, and continues to speak today to sinners, is a great blessing and privilege. We should listen to what God says!

God spoke. He declared Himself by His attributes and thereby revealed His purpose in salvation. He said "I will proclaim", and then "he proclaimed". When the Lord passed by Moses, hidden in the cleft of the rock ... He proclaimed, "The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" and what is this but the

grand old gospel theme of every age.

This was our Saviour's claim. This gospel, He said, "shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations" (Matthew 24:14). And Paul could say that by this gospel, God would "make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory" (Romans 9:23). Paul's calling was "to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).

Hence we see the nature of the gospel. It is a declaration or proclamation of the nature and character of God. The gospel is not an offer for men to take or leave. It was not an appeal to Moses, or to the Children of Israel, for obedience, and it does not come to men today as a command to do their duty. The gospel is not a proposition for acceptance, or rejection, according to the creature's will, but a declaration of who the Lord God is, what He has done and what He continues to do to save His people, gather His sheep, and build His church. Only by this definition can the gospel genuinely be described as "good news".

God's statement in Exodus 33:19 "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy", is the heart of the gospel and the glorious subject of sovereign grace preaching. Paul knew that the glory of God and the goodness of God is revealed in the gospel. He taught it in his own ministry, as did the other apostles. He wrote, "despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Romans 2:4). "Wherefore also we pray ..., that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power" (2 Thessalonians 1:11).

God's Glory Is His Son

Note this, too, it was the LORD who passed by. And who was this that Moses saw? It was the Lord Jesus Christ. Not the Father, but the Son of God. Jesus told us this. "And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time nor seen his shape" (John 5:37).

There are many Old Testament, pre-incarnation appearances of the Saviour. Abram saw the Lord at Mamre; Jacob at Peniel wrestled with a man with the face of God; Manoah and his wife bowed before the Lord, and the three friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego walked with Him in Babylon's fiery furnace. But here perhaps is the greatest pre-incarnate manifestation of all.

Moses met the Lord Jesus Christ of whom it is written, "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person (Hebrews 1:3) and "we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father" (John 1:16). Christ the Son, the eternal Word, the promised Messiah,

Redeemer and Saviour, in whom is displayed all the glory of Divine perfection.

Philip sought to see the Father that they all might be comforted, "Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father (John 14:9). The Lord Jesus Christ is the personification of the goodness and glory of God.

A Sight That Satisfies

Today there are some like those Jews of old who require a sign (1 Corinthians 1:22). They foolishly look for signs and wonders and conjuring something up find their comfort in the sign and not in the substance. But Christ is Himself the comfort of His people. His coming to and "passing by" a poor sinner in saving grace manifests the goodness and glory of the Triune God. Christ's entrance into the world was in itself, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14).

Christ was the "goodness and truth" Moses saw. I do not say that the hand that covered Moses' face on Mt. Sinai bore the mark of a nail in its palm. But I know this, Moses saw and recognised His Saviour – "He wrote of me" (John 5:46).

Philip said, "Lord show us the Father and it sufficeth us" (John 14:8). Every Blind Bartimaeus who discerns Christ passing by, who hears the name of the Lord proclaimed in saving power, or who is brought by the goodness of God to repentance and faith, all, I say, are satisfied with Christ. For they have seen the glory of God. They agree with Jeremiah, "my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the LORD" (Jeremiah 31:14).

Seeing God's Glory

Have you seen God's glory? Do we lament the small numbers in our churches? The weakness of our witness? The Lord's glory is not in big numbers, great buildings or dramatic demonstrations of power. The Lord's glory is in the goodness of God to His people. It is in the gospel of free, sovereign grace. It is Jesus Christ Himself, the person of whom that gospel speaks.

Are you satisfied with the goodness of God? Are you satisfied with the gospel of Christ? Are you satisfied with Christ? Is Christ enough? Then, "Give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good" (Psalm 136:1)

Have you by faith, seen Jesus? Has He shielded your eyes from the searing flame of Divine holiness (Leviticus 10:2; Hebrews 12:29)? And then removed it so far as you might see his hindmost part?

Moses asked God, "Shew me thy glory" God replied, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee". In the event this is what happened. "And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen" (Exodus 33:22, 23).

Here is one final thought. What are these back parts? Ask yourself this question. What would be the hindmost part your eye would see if someone passed you by in such circumstances?

The heel. This is what Moses saw when the Son of God removed His hand. And what did Moses notice about the heel of the Son of God there upon Mt. Sinai? The heel of God was bruised.

Where else did Moses get that striking image in Genesis 3:15? We call this the proto-evangel or first declaration of the gospel. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15).

Moses saw God’s glory in His goodness. He saw God’s glory in the Gospel of sovereign grace. He saw God’s glory in Christ’s suffering for His people. Lord, grant us the grace to see with thy servant Moses, God’s satisfying goodness in Christ.

1. O what matchless condescension

The eternal God displays;

Claiming our supreme attention,

To his boundless works and ways.

His own glory.

He reveals in gospel days.

2. In the person of the Saviour,

All his majesty is seen!

Love and justice shine for ever;

And, without a veil between,

Worms approach him,

And rejoice in his dear name.

3 Would we view his brightest glory,

Here it shines in Jesus' face;

Sing and tell the pleasing story,

O ye sinners saved by grace;

And with pleasure,

Bid the guilty him embrace.

4 In his highest work, redemption,

See his glory in a blaze;

Nor can angels ever mention

Aught that more of God displays;

Grace and justice

Here unite to endless days.

5 True, 'tis sweet and solemn pleasure,

God to view in Christ the Lord;

Here he smiles and smiles for ever;

May my soul his name record;

Praise and bless him,

And his wonders spread abroad.

William Gadsby 2

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