

God Manifesting Himself to Moses

by Charles Finney

God reveals his glory and character to Moses, promising to go with him and give him rest.

Scripture: Exodus 33:12

Topics: "Seeking God's Presence", "Leadership in Faith"

Description

Charles Finney emphasizes the profound relationship between God and Moses, illustrating how Moses, despite his previous encounters with God, yearns for a deeper understanding and revelation of God's glory. Finney highlights Moses' dependence on God's presence for guidance and success in leading the Israelites, showcasing the importance of knowing God intimately for effective leadership. The sermon underscores God's graciousness in revealing His character to Moses, emphasizing attributes such as mercy, grace, and long-suffering. Finney encourages believers to seek a personal encounter with God, as true knowledge of Him is essential for spiritual leadership and growth. Ultimately, the message calls for a deep longing for God's presence and a commitment to holiness in order to experience His glory.

Transcript

"And Moses said unto the Lord, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people; and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight. Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight, and consider that this nation is thy people. And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And he said to him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated; I and thy people from all the people that are upon the face of the earth. And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken; for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name. And he said, I beseech thee, show me thy glory. 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 show mercy on whom I will show mercy. And he said, Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live. And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock. And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock; and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by; And I will take away my hand, and thou shalt see my back parts; but my face shall not be seen." --Ex. 33:12-23

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first; and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest. And be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto Mount Sinai, and present thyself there to me in the top of the mount. And no man shall come up with thee, neither let any man be seen throughout all the mount: neither let the flocks nor herds feed before that mount. And he hewed two tables of stone, like unto the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone. And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation. And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped." --Ex. 34:1-8

There are many passages of Bible history which are richly edifying, and which it is important for us to read often and ponder deeply. The passage now before us I have read often, and several times have preached upon it. Every successive reading suggests new thoughts and develops new beauties; like a deep, rich mine of gold, the more it is wrought, the richer the ore it brings up.

God had called Moses to be a leader and instructor of his people in a great and mighty movement. Moses was to superintend and guide them from Egypt to Canaan. In the first verse of our passage Moses distinctly recognizes the fact that God had designated himself for this great work. "See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people."

But Moses very well understood that God had not called him to perform this work in his own strength, but designed to give him aid. It seems probable that Moses had often thought particularly of this point of having a helper, had often prayed over it and asked God whom he should have to help him in this great enterprise. He saw that the work before him was great;--he had been in that vast, howling, desolate wilderness before, and he could appreciate somewhat before hand the labor and responsibility of leading through it a host of three millions of dependent men, women and children. Such a work he well knew surpassed all human power, and he therefore rejoiced to know that God would send him a helper. Accordingly in the next verse Moses makes this appeal;--"Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight; and consider that this nation is thy people."

Observe here that this was after Moses had met with God several times. He had already received the law on Mt. Sinai from Jehovah's own hand, and had seen the great "I am" in the burning bush. Yet though he had known so much of God, he still felt that he needed to know very much more. He knew far too little of God to be fit for this great work of guiding his people through that trackless desert. Now therefore, he makes his call to this work and God's acceptance of him in this capacity an argument with God for revealing himself yet more fully. Now, he says, inasmuch as thou hast called me and I have found grace, now show me thy way. Let me know more of thee.

You cannot but be struck with the simple-heartedness of Moses in this conversation with God. He unbosoms his whole soul as a man would with his friend. He is deeply impressed with the importance of knowing more of God, and feels most deeply that without this knowledge he cannot persuade the people to encounter the perils of that great and fearful desert. He felt the pressure of his own responsibilities and turned confidingly to God. Hence his simple-hearted state of mind.

Opening his heart thus before the Lord, he reminds him that although he had called him, yet he had not told him who should go with him. The Lord seems to admit the full force of this appeal. How wonderful! Here is the great Jehovah, condescending to talk with a mere mortal man like one of us. He speaks; then he listens to the reply. He hears the appeal and feels the full force of the considerations it presents.

Now mark the gracious answer. "My presence shall go with thee and I will give thee rest." Moses asks--Who shall go! The Lord replies--I will go with you myself--my presence shall guide you--you need not fear. How full of kindness, love, and condescension, is this answer! If you want to know who shall go with you, let this suffice you--I will go with you myself. I feel the force of your plea. I see all your necessities. I pledge you my presence.

How full of consolation to Moses, to be assured of Jehovah's glorious presence! How sweet the promise, "I will give thee rest."

Now listen to the beautiful answer of Moses, in which we have another exhibition of his great simplicity of character. He is so deeply sensible of his own deficiencies, that he knows and feels that he cannot go without God. "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." He thus acknowledges most fully his entire dependence on God, and his perfect despair of success unless God be with him. What can be more striking than these developments of character, both on the part of Moses and of God! On the part of Moses, you see the most perfect simplicity and dependence; on the part of God, the most astonishing goodness and condescension.

But let us examine the course pursued by Moses yet more attentively. When God had given him the promise "My presence shall go with thee," why did he not drop the subject at once? Why go on to argue and urge the case yet further? The answer is to be found in his intensely anxious state of mind. He could not endure to think of going on without God. Without God's presence, he urges, "wherein shall it be known that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight?" Now plainly Moses had looked thoroughly through this subject. He did not say this without reflection. It was no hasty remark; nor was it made without good reason. Indeed, Moses was in an eminently collected and rational state of mind. He saw how infinitely necessary it was, for the good of Israel, and for the honor of Jehovah, that this nation should stand out before all the nations of the earth as a distinct people. Hence he urges before the Lord--how can this be manifest unless thou be with us? Can any thing else make it manifest? Can my saying so do it? No; God himself must be with us, sustaining us amid all our trials, guiding us in all our ways, delivering us from all our foes, else we shall not be known as the people of God, and God himself can get no honor from our bearing his name. How perfectly reasonable are these views of the case, and the state of Moses' mind resulting from these views!

We come now to the answer of God. "And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name." The Lord seems to feel the full force of every word that Moses says. Indeed, no being in the world is so easily influenced by considerations of real importance as God is. I have always found that if I had good reasons to urge in prayer before God, I could certainly prevail with Him, for He is always reasonable. It is wonderful to see how the Lord suffers Himself to be carried by the least reason, presented even by a child. Yes, He seems to say, I know very well that your reasoning is all good, and I will surely act accordingly. So with Moses. God heard, and then did for him all that he could ask.

At this stage of the interview Moses ventured upon yet another great request. He had been drawing nearer and yet nearer to God during this whole conversation. How often in reading this narration have I seemed to be by his side, and to see God taking an attitude all along to encourage Moses to draw yet nearer and nearer. God promises to give him his gracious presence. He meets every request with his smiles and his assent. Moses therefore dares to take a position which probably no mortal had ever taken before. What is it? This--"I beseech thee, show me thy glory." But why should Moses make this request? Mark what had already passed. God had shown himself gloriously on Sinai until the people trembled and did not dare to hear that awful voice anymore. Moses had come down from that awful mount, his face all blazing with the glory of this interview with God. So much of that awful majesty of the Lord of Hosts had Moses seen; yet now he ventures to draw yet nearer and nearer, and since God kindly permits him to approach, he ventures upon another request. Let me see yet more of thy glory. Take that vail away and let me see thy face and all thy heart.

O what a request this must have been for a mortal man to make! But what reply did the Lord make? Did he say--"Take care, Moses, take heed what you ask?" Let us see. "And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee." O how ready--how infinitely condescending and gracious! I will make thee know my name;--that is, my real character--for by God's name we are to understand his character, since all his names were originally significant, and each expressed some leading attribute of his character.

Thou canst not see my face, said he; thou canst not bear the view of my unveiled glories; no man can see me in this perfect sense and live. The Lord grants him all he can give--all that Moses can bear. Moses was in a state of mind so disinterested and confiding that God could deny him nothing which was possible in his mortal state;--nothing which could be essential or useful to his success in the great work before him.

Moses needs to have such an impression made on his mind as will carry him through all possible trials and toils. Hence the Lord engages to show him all he could bear. Accordingly he proceeds to say--"Behold there is a place by me and thou shalt stand upon a rock, and while my glory passeth by, I will put thee in a cleft of the rock." In a cleft of the rock--where else should he put him? What other place so suitable? Christ is sometimes represented as a rock cleft for us, in which we may hide ourselves and be safe. So God places Moses in a cli[e]ft of a rock, and says, "I will cover thee with my hand while I pass by; and I will take away my hand and thou shalt see my back parts; but my face shall not be seen." The Lord seems to have felt the importance of giving Moses all he had asked. Nay rather, the Lord himself had put it in Moses' heart to make these requests and had emboldened him to ask for things so great and precious. So God is wont to do with his children, and the fact should assure us that when our souls hunger and thirst after God, he will most certainly reveal himself to us and show us the fulness of his glory.

It deserves special notice here that the answer given by God to Moses shows in what his glory really consists. Moses says, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." The Lord answers--yes--"I will make all my goodness pass before thee." The glory of the Lord, then, consists in his goodness. It is not as some seem to suppose some dazzling splendor, some effulgence of light ineffable and overpowering--no such thing as this seems to have been thought of; but Jehovah's goodness--the intrinsic excellencies that compose his character--these he would cause to pass before Moses, for these are his true glory. And these glories of his character were brought before Moses when, passing along, he proclaimed those glorious and most expressive names--"The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious; long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." Every word in this description is full of most emphatic meaning. O how

does it reiterate and amplify the precious thought that God is love.

It should also be noticed particularly that Moses had been previously prepared for just such a revelation of God. He had been a long time on Mt. Sinai amid its thunderings and smoke, and amid all the fearful manifestations of Jehovah's terrible justice. The flaming law of God had been before his mind most vividly and could not have failed to make deep and solemn impressions. He was therefore now prepared to hear of grace and mercy. He could appreciate them. He could hear the joyful promulgation and not abuse it. No man is ever prepared to hear the gospel until he has heard the law. He must in the nature of the case appreciate the strict and righteous demands of law before he can appreciate the real value of gospel grace to sinners.

None of the Hebrew people except Moses seem to have gone through this preparatory process. They had not been thoroughly impressed with the awful majesty, purity and strictness of the holy law of God. Hence they could not appreciate these manifestations of his goodness and not another one of the whole nation was allowed to be present with Moses in this glorious interview with God.

It is important in this connection to notice the precise moral attitude in which Moses stood before the Lord. He was now commanded to prepare himself two new tablets of stone. The circumstances in which the two formerly prepared were broken, you will all remember. Moses had been with the Lord on the burning mount; had tarried long; at last returns and finds that the people had made a calf and were engaged in the grossest idolatry. His indignation was kindled; he dashed the stones to the ground and broke them to pieces. The Lord seems not to have rebuked Moses for this outburst of indignation; it appears to have been under the circumstances entirely proper and acceptable to God, as was also his subsequent conduct in calling on the Levites to take the sword and slay those of their brethren who were leading that horrible iniquity and would not desist. In all this, the Lord seems to have fully accepted Moses.

Let us now pursue the thread of our history. Moses prepares the two tables of stone, and goes up early in the morning as the Lord had commanded him and lo, the Lord descends and meets him there. What an interview was this for a mortal man to hold with the great God! Think of the circumstances;--the deep solitudes of that rugged, awful mount Sinai were the temples of Jehovah's presence; the heavens above were the canopy of that temple;--there was God!

When Moses went up he had already received the promise that the Lord would meet him there. But the promise was not fulfilled immediately. At least one night intervened. What a night of anticipation--still, deep, solemn, anticipation that must have been!

Probably Moses had borne about as much as he well could for one day, and the Lord kindly deferred the more glorious interview until Moses should rise refreshed on the next morning. So the Lord often does when his people get very near him. Christian, have not scenes like these occurred in your own experience? You have a precious interview with God as the day closes and the shades of evening gather round you. You retire for the night, and your very dreams seem full of heaven, and you feel assured that those hallowed interviews with God will be renewed in the morning. You lay down yourself to rest with the sweet sustaining conviction that the Lord will reveal himself speedily again.

So to Moses. Early in the morning you see him brushing the early dew away, climbing that well known mountain, upon whose craggy summits he had seen God more than once before. If you might only have seen him;--if your eye could only have followed him as he drew near and entered into audience with the great God! How impressive and solemn must the spectacle have been!

Moses was in a state of mind in which God's saints have been frequently. The utmost conceivable awe pervaded his whole soul, yet he was not afraid of God. He was ready to go into any solitary wild and meet God alone. Many would have been oppressed with a superstitious awe under such circumstances, and would have declined or at least have dreaded such an interview. But Moses had no such superstitious dread.

Probably no mortal man was ever called to meet God under circumstances which were calculated to make a deeper impression than these. Consider what Moses desired and what his heart was now fixed on most earnestly. The renewing of the tables of the law was altogether an incidental thing. The chief thing was for God to show him his glory. He was fully aware that God was about to show such manifestations of himself as human nature could scarce endure.

Let me ask you what you would think of such an interview with the great God? How would you like to be drawn into such near and glorious communion with the dread Jehovah? Suppose God should apprise you that you might enjoy such an interview with himself as you retire from this place to your rooms. He gives you the promise. Would you be ready? Would your very heart leap up within you in the prospect and cry out--O let me know more of God and of his unsearchable glories? O, then, prepare your hearts. Put away every thing sinful, every thing earthly. Let your soul thirst after God, yea, after the living God. When you feel your need of it and ask it with such simplicity and faith as Moses had, you may rely on receiving it--to the joy and blessedness of your souls.

With Moses the solemn hour has come. The Lord passes by and proclaims his name--"Jehovah, Jehovah God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin." Observe that the previous interview of Moses with God had been at the giving of the law from Sinai, and it is remarkable that immediately after this, God should begin with proclaiming his name and should explain it by saying, "merciful and gracious," "long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth." Few except very spiritual persons would know how to understand this. But those who have had the law revealed to them as on Sinai's top can understand it well. No person ever really sees the law until it is revealed to him and he sees its pungent bearing upon his own case. So to Paul; when the commandment came he says, "sin reviled and I died." But what is this? Had the commandment never come to Paul before? He had studied the law under the greatest doctors of his age; he had sat at the feet of Gamaliel; but yet he had not so understood the law as to have it cut him up root and branch and convict him powerfully of his own sins, until the moment when the commandment came to him.

Now when a man has had the law really given to him it comes in a sense very similar to that in which it came to Moses. If any of you have had the law thus revealed to your hearts and consciences, you can understand why Moses should cry out--"I do exceedingly fear and quake." You would see why the people should stand afar off and dare not to approach the awful scene.

Now this revelation of law exceedingly well fitted Moses to receive the next revelation made at this interview. The giving of the law was first in order, as indeed it always must be, or the gospel of grace and mercy cannot be appreciated. This done, the revelation of mercy and grace may follow. This same God before whom all the people and even Moses trembled on Mt. Sinai, now revealed his name--"the Lord God, merciful and gracious." Mercy is a disposition to pardon. Grace is used in a wider sense--a disposition to bestow favor. The next thing is--"long-suffering," he can suffer and bear long with abuses and provocations. He is most forbearing towards those who offend him.

"Abundant also in goodness;"--yes infinite in goodness and loving-kindness. Abundant moreover in truth;--faithful ever to his promises of love and mercy. O how precious are these revelations made to Moses.

To Moses we must presume these were not mere announcements. Moses felt the impression of every one of these things. I might announce these very words in your ears, and though they might fall distinctly on your ears, yet the impression of their meaning might utterly fail to reach your heart.

But not so when Jehovah himself speaks. His words then reach the very heart. You have sometimes felt the thrilling impression of these truths, when every idea in them seemed to sink into your very soul. Just think how Moses must have felt, after all he had just seen of Jehovah's awful majesty on Sinai. O how these words must have gone down into his inmost mind! And not the words merely, but the ideas they represented--the very attributes of God must have stood right out and flashed their glorious truth before the very mind's eye of Moses. O what a scene of solemn impressions!

Perhaps I should say right here that we have no reason to suppose that all these things transpired in a moment, as some might at first thought imagine. Moses was full forty days and nights with God in this interview. A few other things were said during the whole scene, but this revelation of the name of God seems to have been the chief thing which transpired during this eventful period. It is therefore most rational to conclude that time enough was occupied to allow each thought to be fully expanded before the mind of Moses so as to make its deepest possible impression. Each feature of the divine character was doubtless developed distinctly;--his mercy, his grace, his long-suffering, his abundant goodness and truth, and the blending of each of these feature with his glorious justice. Every thing was so revealed to the mind of Moses that it pervaded his entire mental being and set his very soul on fire. O how did he ponder, and muse on each point, and study the illustrations presented to his mind! We can imagine the solemn, awful, thrilling impression as he sat in silence for many days together, no human being present to divert his attention for one moment--alone with God forty days--neither taking nor needing food or drink during all this time, but absorbed in beholding face to face the glory of God, and thus being changed into the same image from glory to glory.

At length he comes down from that mount of glorious manifestation. No wonder his face shone with a lustre of which he was unconscious but which was too glorious for mortal eyes to behold. No wonder the vivid impressions that filled and fired his soul should throw their reflection forth in his countenance. It was as if an angel from Jehovah's upper temple had alighted in the camp of Israel. A vail must be drawn over his face, for what mortal eye could bear the sight?

God's abundant truthfulness formed one important feature in these developments. This was especially pertinent to the case and the wants of Moses. The thorough development of this feature formed the secret of his great faith ever after. The whole subsequent history of Moses develops a most remarkable degree of confidence in God. The thousand trying emergencies through which he passed rendered it indispensable that he should have such confidence. Here in this signal interview with God the foundation was laid for it.

"Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty;" that is will never justify the impenitent and self-righteous. God did not mean that he would not pardon the guilty sinner on his repentance. He only meant that he was not a corrupt judge who could be bribed to clear the guilty yet in his sins and impenitence. Moses needed to know this, that while God was

most gracious and merciful towards the contrite, he should most assuredly punish the guilty and hardened sinner. No rebel could ever escape in his impenitence and rebellion.

"Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children unto the third and fourth generation." This clause needs to be explained. It has been sometimes supposed to mean that God sends children to hell for the sins of their parents. This cannot be the meaning. The declarations of God by Ezekiel affirm that only the soul that sinneth shall die, and that father and son shall each die only for his own sins.

The declaration made here to Moses refers to the course of God's providence towards families and nations only in the present world, and to his course towards them for present discipline--not for eternal retribution.

The relations of parent and child almost inevitably involve these results. A dissolute father entails disease, poverty and degradation on his offspring. God allows, nay ordains it to be so, and thus creates a strong inducement to each parent to lead such a life as shall entail blessings and not curses on his children. Yet these children are not rewarded with heaven or doomed to hell merely for their parent's deeds. The whole of the result is this--they have their own probation on earth, in which their future state of joy or woe must be decided according to their own deeds. But they shall have this probation in prosperity or adversity--amid influences adapted to bless or adapted to curse, according as their parents may have so lived before God as to leave them a legacy of good or of evil.

We often see this principle illustrated in the history of nations. Nations as such must of course receive their retribution in the present world--they having no existence as nations in any other state. Hence we often see that God holds a nation responsible for the sins of their fathers. It would be an illustration of this principle if God should do as I have thought he would do in retribution for the slavery which has so long existed in this nation. The English nation introduced slavery here; we have perpetuated it, and have done about as much to enhance its calamities as we could do. I have often thought that God will some day remove this evil in a way which will scourge both of these nations with most signal and exemplary judgments. Suppose the mighty power of England's arms should come down upon us and blood should flow over our southern plains till every spot where the tears and blood of the slave have fallen should be saturated with the blood of his oppressors--till the carnage of masters and drivers should fatten the cotton fields so long worn out by the bitter toil of the oppressed--and other groans should take the place of the long unnoticed and uncared for wailings of broken-hearted mothers and bereaved children.

In this the world might read a lesson about that awful Justice which visits the iniquities of fathers upon the children and upon children's children.

On the same principle we often see children involved in the guilt and consequent sufferings of their parents. A most cogent motive is thus created to induce parents to obey God. You can easily see that it is most wise in God so to unite parents and children that the latter shall receive good or evil in the present world according to the voluntary course taken by their parents.

When God had made these revelations to Moses, naming these attributes distinctly and giving him time to dwell on each one until his whole soul was impressed with the truth, Moses prostrated himself before the Lord in most profound adoration. This was its first result on his mind. "He made haste and bowed his head toward the earth and worshipped."

Do you understand this feeling? Have you never found when God had revealed himself to you that you have felt pressed to bow yourself in deep prostration of soul before the Lord?

Mark his next step. He has a request to make. "He said, If now I have found grace in Thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us, for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance." Moses feels that it is time now to find how the Lord really feels towards the nation. It is a time to intercede in their behalf that God would pardon all their sin and make them forever his own inheritance.

The Lord replies--"Behold I will make a covenant, before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation; and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the Lord; for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee."

The history then narrates various precepts and closes with the descent of Moses, his face resplendent with the unutterable glory of this wonderful and most instructive scene.

REMARKS.

Whatever is written in the Bible is for our instruction. Much of the historical part is rich with the most practical instruction conceivable. All this may be said most truly of the passage we have been considering. It teaches,

1. That a personal acquaintance with God is indispensable to one who is to lead the people in reform. We must know God and have God preeminently with us, or we cannot lead on his people to higher degrees of holiness.

We may learn something of God by study and thought; but all this will fail us without special revelations from God. Some expect by the mere force of learning to prepare themselves for usefulness. They seem to take pains to get more learning rather than to get nearer God. They could not make a worse mistake. The learning is good, but the things God teaches when he draws the soul into deep personal communion with himself are incomparably better.

Moses was before this a very learned man. He was skilled in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and their science was at this period pre-eminently rich. Education and learning there were indeed only that of heathen, yet God saw that this would be valuable to Moses, and therefore arranged it in his providence that Moses should be trained in the royal family with all the facilities for education that Egypt could afford. But he needed infinitely more than all this, and God drew him into his own school to impart it.

2. Every part of this history is replete with instruction to us. Mark for instance the peculiar features of character developed in Moses at this time. A careful study of these will reveal to us the conditions on which we may expect divine revelations to our own souls.

When I see a man deeply impressed with a sense of this dependence upon God, feeling that he cannot get along and bear his great responsibilities without God, I know such a man is being prepared for usefulness. God will meet him and reveal to him the great things of his own character. Let him only give himself wholly to the work and to the interests of God's cause, and then have confidence enough to lay hold of the Lord;--such a soul never fails of being blessed.

3. Another thing peculiar in the case of Moses was his very clear apprehensions of what he needed to fit him for his work. This is immensely important. If a man lacks this just apprehension he will struggle on in the dark;--and how long often and how fruitlessly! He does not know what he wants.

But read this history of Moses and you will see that he had a clear idea of his responsibilities and of the qualifications he needed to discharge them well. He knew that he needed a revelation from God to his own mind. He knew that he needed to apprehend all these great truths so that they should stand out before his mind as living realities.

4. When these attributes of God are clearly developed to the mind of any one he will have an entirely new view of the character of God. It will be so different from his former views as to make him doubt whether he really knew any thing right of God before. The impressions will be such as he can never lose during all his future life.

5. Moses saw that he needed to have God reveal himself to his mind. This is just what young men fitting for the gospel ministry need. Did you never see the difference in the manner in which two different individuals will speak of the attributes of God? One speaks mere words and they fall as if they were only wind. The words of the other come out of his heart and seem to fall like lead into the hearts of the people who hear him.

Here is a young man studying theology. He may become as wise as a man can become by merely human learning; but unless God reveal himself all will be mere words. If you ask what such a man has been preaching, the answer will always be--nothing but words, words, mere words. This is the great difficulty with much of the preaching of this age--it is nothing but words.

Do you not think that when Moses came down from the mount, the people felt? The influence of Moses on them was not that of mere words. Have you never seen how the eyes of the hearer would stand out when one is speaking from the heart? Even so when the people heard Moses, they hung on his lips and stood tiptoe to catch his burning words and the glory of his unearthly countenance. If young men feel as Moses did--"O my God, send me not up without thy presence"--they will seek that presence, and never rest without it. God calls you to the ministry;--how can you go into it without his presence--until you have seen as Moses saw, his glory.

6. This whole history is most replete with instruction for us. If those arguments used were good in his mouth as reasons for God's revealing himself to him, they are equally good for us. He pleaded God's call of him and acceptance of him for a great work, and said--Lord, since thou hast called me, now make me fit for the labor. "I beseech thee show me thy glory." Young man, go and do likewise. If God calls you to lead his church up out of the wilderness, see to it that you insist before you set out that the Lord be with you and show you his glory. Nor is this truth applicable to young men destined for the ministry alone. Every Christian is a priest of God, and should in some sense preach the gospel. Every man needs grace to fill the station to which God calls him. And every Christian should seek this grace even as Moses sought the grace he needed.

6. [7.] The disinterestedness of Moses is worthy of all commendation. He never once thought of lifting himself up. Do you suppose he was continually saying in his mind--How people in future generations will honor me and reverence my name! No, not thus--he is all swallowed up in another and a very different great idea;--how shall this nation honor God? How may I do something to magnify his dread, his glorious name?

If we ever expect or hope to be great men, in mercy, don't let us aim at it. We shall pluck down ruin and disgrace on ourselves if we do; and as far as in us lies, on the cause of God also. I once knew a young man who had considerable trouble in getting license to preach. He was not thought to be very promising. This difficulty seemed to set all his ambition on fire. He declared--"I am determined to get to the head of the heap." Someone said to him--You never will by aiming at it. But he gave no heed to this warning, and set off on his career of attempted greatness. I don't know where he is now. Gone I suppose, sunk from public observation into that obscurity which alone forms a fitting place for unholy ambition. "He that exalteth himself shall be abased." So it must ever be. This is the law of Christ's house.

How remarkable that Moses seemed never to care for himself or for his family. On one occasion some persons began to prophesy, and some of his friends seem to have been jealous for his honor. But Moses felt no jealousy of this sort. "I would to God," said he, "that all the people were prophets." How noble! God could make Moses a great man without his making himself a great fool. Not so with some men, God cannot make them great without their making themselves fools.

7. [8.] All these features of the character of Moses should be distinctly studied. They are features of the character of Jesus Christ. Are you not in the habit of studying the character of those great men, such as Moses, Daniel, Job, Paul and John with the distinct design of drinking in their spirit and conforming your own to theirs? This is your true wisdom.

8. [9.] The urgency of Moses is well worthy of special notice. How strongly he insists upon God's giving him the blessing he asks for. On one occasion the Lord put his serious earnestness to the test most fully. The Lord said--Let me alone--go get thee down, for thy people have corrupted themselves;--let me alone that my wrath may wax hot against them and that I may consume them, and I will make of thee a great nation." But no, Moses could not let the Lord alone. He seemed to seize right hold of his hand and insist that God should spare and forgive the guilty people. The Egyptians will hear of it and will say, "For mischief did he bring them out and to slay them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth. Then what wilt thou do for thy great name? I cannot let thee go. What will become of thy glory? Blot out my name, but blot not out the name of thine Israel." Thus did Moses hold fast upon the hand of the Lord as it was uplifted to smite the nation. And what was the secret of his power with God? His disinterested love, and his zeal for Jehovah's honor.

Let this be our example. Surely it is most worthy of all imitation. How noble to be thus swallowed up and filled with zeal for the glory of God.

9. [10.] The great faith of Moses constitutes another point worthy of distinct consideration. Where every body else's faith would fail, that of Moses remains firm. Yet he had his sore trials. Once he cried out--"What shall I do, Lord, for this people are almost ready to stone me?" But remark that under this great trial he runs at once to God and hence is safe. So every man should do. If a man only has such faith as to run at once to the Lord, he cannot fail to get strength for all emergencies of trial.

10. [11.] His implicit obedience also was wonderful. He knew no law but the will of God. This spirit of universal obedience was one condition of those remarkable manifestations. He could not have had them without his obedient spirit.

When first appointed to his work, he felt great reluctance to go. He pled that he was slow of speech. But God overlooked the objection; Moses yielded and seems never afterwards to have shrunk from duty.

11. [12.] Moses seems always very careful to do all that God required of him, so that he could always have near access to God. It was very common before the Lord made any manifestations to the people, for him to say--"Sanctify yourselves;"--ye are now unfit to meet me. But Moses seems to have been always in a state of readiness to meet God and receive any manifestations. It is of infinite importance to maintain this state of sanctification--to abstain thoroughly from all iniquity and never fall into such a state of defilement as to feel your need of penitence, pardon, and cleansing before you can meet God.

I once knew a Christian who had been eminently a man of prayer--who had lived for years so that he could pray daily with acceptance before God, and whose conversations and prayers had created quite an interest in the subject of the prayer of faith. Yet this man sadly declined from this state and the Lord at length recalled him in the following way. I had, said he in his diary, an intimate friend who was impenitent, and who in raising a building was suddenly crushed with a fatal blow. I rushed to him. The dying man begged me to pray for his soul. That is all, said he, that you can do for me; pray for my soul lest I sink at once into hell. But I could not pray if it had been to save my own life. I was away from God and I could not get near him to pray a word. O my agony of soul was perfectly inexpressible. But that was the last hour of my quiet in such a state. I could not live so.

Moses could not get away from God. His circumstances demanded ceaseless watchfulness and permanent sanctification. Only once afterwards was he overcome and then by the sin of impatience. For this sin the Lord took him up on Mt. Nebo to let him view the land of promise and then die without ever going over. This was a sore affliction; yet for one sin the Lord sent it upon him; yea for one sin only. But this in Moses was a great sin. His light had been so great and the sin itself had been so public; God could not do less than to put his mark of intense displeasure upon it. So, beloved, must you keep your heart pure and your hands pure, if you would be always ready for communion with God, and if, having enjoyed these seasons of communion you would not fall under the marked displeasure of a jealous and holy God. But if you are content to live so that you must go and repent and cleanse yourself from present sin in order to be prepared to commune with God, of what use can you be to the world?

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