

Revelation of God's Glory

by Charles Finney

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a revelation of God's glory, which consists in his moral attributes: goodness, and the necessity of persevering in prayer to receive this revelation.

Scripture: Exodus 33:12

Topics: "Seeking God's Glory", "Understanding God's Character"

Description

Charles Finney emphasizes the significance of understanding God's glory as essential for spiritual leadership and personal faith. He explores Moses' earnest prayer for a deeper revelation of God's character, highlighting the necessity of knowing God's goodness and moral attributes to fulfill one's divine calling. Finney asserts that God's response to Moses illustrates His willingness to reveal Himself to those who seek Him sincerely, and that such revelations are crucial for sustaining faith and fulfilling God's work. The sermon encourages believers to persistently seek God's glory, recognizing that a true understanding of His character is foundational for effective ministry and personal transformation.

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, 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.

In this discourse I shall show,

I. WHAT IS INTENDED BY THE GLORY OF GOD.

II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN MOSES' PRAYER.

III. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN GOD'S ANSWER.

I. What is meant by the glory of God.

The original meaning of the term glory was, brightness, clearness, effulgence: from that it has come to signify honor, renown; and again, that which renders honorable, or demands honor, or renown, reverence, adoration, and worship--that which is worthy of confidence and trust. The glory of God is essential and declarative. By essential glory is meant that in Him which is glorious--that in his character which demands honor, worship, and adoration. His declarative glory is the showing forth, the revealing, the manifesting, the glory of his character--his essential glory--to his creatures: the laying open his glory to the apprehension of intelligences. And this is what Moses meant--that God would reveal Himself to his mind so that he might know Him--might have a clear and powerful apprehension of those things which constitute his glory.

II. What is implied in Moses' prayer.

1. A desire to know more than he knew of God. He knew comparatively little of God. Something indeed he had known of Him, but he wished to know more--A desire to know that which makes God worthy of the homage and adoration of his creatures, and especially he desired to be so subdued by this knowledge--his heart so fixed in his confidence, as to be prepared for his great work, the work of conducting Israel to the promised land--so subdued that his confidence might be perfect in him, so that he might never fail in his trust and leaning upon the Lord. God had called him to a very arduous work, and he needed a very thorough acquaintance with Him.

2. A sense of the necessity of this knowledge of the glory of God--that he greatly needed it.

3. That he was disinterested in his desire--entirely for God's glory and the people's good--that he might succeed in the great work of emancipating God's people, and glorifying his name by their establishment in the land of Canaan.

4. A sense of his responsibility, of the necessities of the people, and of H[h]imself.

5. The belief that from the call which he had received of God, to be the leader of Israel from Egypt, he had a right to expect this revelation to his soul. God had called him to a work--he saw that for him to accomplish it, he must have a clearer knowledge of God, to sustain him in his difficult position, and uphold him under discouragement; and he seems to have thought he had a right therefore, to expect that God would not deny him this requisite to success.

III. What is implied in God's answer to Moses.

'I will make all my goodness pass before thee,' said he. God's glory consists in his moral attributes--in his goodness.

1. The answer implies Moses' disinterestedness in his request--that his motives were right. If it had been mere curiosity that induced Moses to ask, God would not have granted it. God saw the sincere and earnest consecration of Moses' soul to the one object of his aim, to wit: The fulfillment of the work which God had given him.
2. He recognized the real necessities of Moses and the people, and testified that He thought it necessary to give what Moses asked.
3. The reasonableness of Moses' expectation--that Moses had a right to expect grace equal to his circumstances.
4. A willingness on the part of God to make known himself to Moses, for the purpose for which Moses desired it.
5. A regard for the frailties of Moses and the people. 'Thou canst not see my face and live.' The glory of my ineffable presence is too much for mortal eye to behold; it would overwhelm you, and separate soul from body. But I will hide you in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand as I pass by. And I will take away my hand and thou shalt see my back parts, but my face shall not be seen.' You may see as much as you can bear, and no more. You shall have as clear a revelation of my character as you can sustain; as vivid an apprehension of my holiness as your powers can endure and bear up under.
6. It implies that God considers his goodness, his moral attributes, as making up his essential glory. His glory does not consist in his natural attributes--his power, his wisdom, his omnipresence, his eternity--these are awful, they are fearful for us to behold. But his glory lies in his goodness, his moral character, his justice, benevolence, holiness, mercy. All these are but so many forms of his benevolence. God respects Himself, and demands respect and honor of others for his holiness, because He is voluntarily subject to the law of love, of universal and impartial benevolence. And not in one merely, but in all, combined and balanced in due proportion, his glory consists. Mark what He says, 'I will make all my goodness pass before thee.' And what a beautiful and awful revelation it was! 'And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, [the impenitent]* visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.' This was all of it, the goodness of God--forgiving the penitent, rewarding the obedient, bearing with the rebellious, fulfilling his promise for good to the faithful and confiding, and pouring the vials of fiercest wrath on the incorrigible--all this is the goodness of God, his benevolence under different phases, and all of this, is the essential glory of the living God.
7. His sovereignty in the disposal of his mercies. 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and have compassion on whom I will have compassion.' By God's sovereign grace, I do not mean that He acts arbitrarily, or without a good reason; but that He acts independent of all save Himself--that He obeys the dictates of his own infinite benevolence, and asks no being but Himself for leave to do what He sees best to be done. 'I will consult my own unsearchable wisdom, and that which to me seemeth best, I will do,' is his declaration to the universe.

REMARKS.

1. The circumstances and the prayer of Moses, were the conditions of the revelation which God made to him. His circumstances--he needed to know more of God. His prayer--he made supplication to be taught.

The circumstances alone were not enough, nor the prayer alone, but both united. He had subsequent and frequent manifestations of God's presence and power as circumstances required. Sometimes alone, sometimes in the full presence of all the people. On awful Sinai He moved in thunder and fire, and the congregation quaked at the terror of the Lord. According to the exigencies of Moses and of the people God dealt with them, and showed his glory to them.

2. A principle of the divine administration is here developed, namely--God will furnish such grace and manifestation of his goodness, as the circumstances demand, and their exigencies require. He is unchangeable. In the same circumstances his dealings are the same. He who gave to his ancient servant, an overwhelming view of his glory, such a view, as that in unspeakable awe, 'he bowed his head and worshiped,' will, whenever necessary, grant the same or greater manifestations, if it be requisite to strengthen for his own work.

3. He will be inquired of, to do the things that need to be done for you for his glory. The Bible every where insists on this. Moses prayed, and prayed with great earnestness and importunity--'God show me thy glory.' 'Lord if Thou go not with us, take us not up hence.' The universal example of Bible saints, is one continued stream of prayer, flowing onward in a broad and deep current, with a strong and resistless tide, to the great ocean of God's boundless mercy and compassion.

4. We are to persevere in this asking. Was Moses to be put off? No indeed. He cries-- 'Show me thy way, that I may know Thee, that I may find grace in thy sight.' God answers, 'My presence shall go up with thee, and I will give thee rest.' But a mere promise is not enough for Moses. 'O Lord, surely Thou wilt go up with us, but O Lord show me thy Glory, let me know Thee, let thy perfections come home with such power to my soul, that they shall never depart therefrom. Lord show me thy glory.'

He reminded God that He had called him to bring up the people, and yet he was not prepared. 'Thou hast said to me, bring up this people, and yet thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me.' Moses persevered, and he gained his request. God did for him what he asked. It is exceedingly important that we continue to press upon God, so to speak, for any grace which we need. Let us learn our duty from the Bible, and the relations we sustain, and then, having settled the question that we are in the work to which God has called us, let us come to God with a full assurance of faith that He has promised to be with us always, and that what He has promised, He is able also to perform.

Press upon Him your wants. Say to Him--O Lord Thou hast placed me here, Thou hast made me what I am, and I have not strength for the work, I have not knowledge for the labor. O Lord, arm me for the contest, harness me for the battle, fit me for the work. O Lord, thy name will be disgraced if I fail, for Thou hast set me here, thy honor is at stake. What will become of thy great name? 'O God show me thy glory.' Whatever we find ourselves in need of for the success of his work, to which He has called us, we have a right to go and ask for, with perfect confidence, and complete assurance, and we should not let go our suit, till the request is granted.

We should come with importunity I said. See how Moses speaks to God at one time, with what confidence and holy familiarity, he addresses his heavenly Father! When God was angry with the rebellious Israelites, and said, 'Let me alone, that my anger may wax hot against them, that I may destroy them from the face of the earth,' Moses besought the Lord. He came, and seizing hold of his hand as it were, 'O Lord,' he cries, 'why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, for whom Thou hast done so much?'

Why should the Egyptians say, for mischief did He bring them out to slay them? O turn from thy wrath and repent Thee of the evil.' Moses was so importunate, it seemed as though God could not deny him. And thus may we come to God, and cry--are not all thy promises yea and amen in Christ Jesus? Hast Thou not promised, and shall thy word fail? Brethren, is not this directly in point? May we not come to God and ask at all times? Is He not able to save to the uttermost? Shall not 'our strength be equal to our day?'

O how strongly my experience testifies to this truth. Many a time, I should have given up all for lost, and sat down in despair, had it not been for such a revelation of God's glory, as to strengthen me for the work I had to accomplish. Always, yes always, when I have gone to God, as Moses did, with the prayer, 'Show me thy glory,' He has never denied me, never, never.

5. It is reasonable to understand a call of God to any station, as a virtual pledge of every thing that we need, to stand in that place, and meet those responsibilities. If God calls us to do a thing, it can be done. What is needed to accomplish it may be had. God is not a Pharaoh, commanding to make brick, yet withholding straw. The requiring a thing, always vouchsafes every thing necessary for its fulfillment.

6. The people always need one thing. Every child of God is called to represent God, to be a teacher of God, to show forth to the world around him the character of God. Every saint is called of God to do this. Every Christian has a right to insist that God will give him grace to do that--to do it fully and successfully. He may say to God, "Lord, thou hast made me a Christian, put thy [S]pirit within me, called me to represent thee, and show the world who thou art, and what thy character is; but how can I do this, except I be shown by thy grace, except all thy goodness pass before me and melt me into contrition and love." How long shall it be, ere Christians, feeling their weakness, will go to God and ask him thus for what they need, and must have, or perish.

7. Many persons seem to have exceedingly narrow, partial, obscure views of God. So shadow-like, and dim is their notion of Him, or so partial and one sided, and distorted, that it is like any thing almost more than like God. Perhaps Moses was somewhat in this condition. He had seen God in the burning bush, he had heard his voice, saying, "O, lead my people Israel," he had been the rod of Jehovah's wrath on wicked Egypt, he had stood on Sinai and seen God in fire and smoke and lightnings, but he could not be satisfied--he must know more. And all along Moses had to ask for new revelations continually.

Many know God only as a lawgiver and judge. They apprehend his law, and they sink in terror and fear; that is all they know of God. Others know nothing of him but what they call his mercy and love; nothing of justice, and holiness, and righteous indignation against sin. They have neither of them any confidence in his word and promises. Now Moses ever after, trusted firmly and unwaveringly in God's truth. God had shown him his truth, and Moses forgot it not. The impress of that hand, he felt always pressing on him; that sight was ever present to his mind. He had confidence in his mercy after this. Only see how, when God said, "Let me destroy this rebellious and stiff-necked people, and I will make of thee a great nation." Moses had such trust in God's mercy. He cried, "O Lord, save thy people, or blot out my name from thy book." "O God, what will become of thy great name?" What a savor and relish the revelation had left on his mind--a sweet and controlling sense of God's mercy and goodness. God's Justice, too, rested with awful distinctness upon Moses' apprehension. He was the great and terrible God, visiting the iniquities of them which hate him, upon their own heads, and upon the heads of their children. It is vastly important that men should have just and symmetrical views of God's character; for where the revelation is partial, they do not possess a well proportioned piety; they show a want of balance in their character. If they have not seen the justice of God, his holiness, they have no apprehension of the guilt of sin, of its desert of punishment,

of God's infinite hatred of it. They have no proper sense of the condition of sinners, have no compassion, no ardent zeal, no burning love for them. So if men have not a revelation of the mercy and love and compassion of God, they will be legal, have very little confidence to pray for sinners; instead of laying hold of God, as they should do, even in the most desperate cases, they slacken, and give up in despair. So of all his attributes; if men have not sought and obtained a just view of God's character, they will be like their views of God, ill-proportioned, and unbalanced in their own character.

8. It is of the last importance, that men should realize that all God's character is made up of his benevolence, his goodness. See how He says, "All my goodness;" not my mercy, my love, but all, my mercy, my justice, my holiness, my hatred of sin, and my settled purpose to punish it, my tender compassion and pity, and my righteous vindictive justice. A minister, especially, should thus know all his goodness, and be duly affected by every attribute. If they do not have such a revelation, they will induce and foster an unnatural and ill proportioned piety in their congregation, and among the people of their intercourse--either an antinomian or a legal, just as the bent and cast of the minister's own mind is.

9. Nothing can make us stable Christians, but to behold his glory, a revelation of Him to us. No excitement, no intellectual acumen, no strength of logic, nothing can secure us but a revelation of God to our souls. We should therefore persevere and insist that this be done for us, that we see God's glory, and be fixed on Him. The church should pray for ministers and for candidates for the ministry, that God would reveal to them the deep secrets of his love and mercy; that He would open to them the ever flowing fountains of exquisite and perennial blessedness to let them drink therefrom and never thirst more. O do the churches think and feel how much they can do for their ministers, by praying the heavens open, and letting down on their hearts such rays of glory as shall forever enrapture and hold them in awful apprehension of God's presence and character, as that the spirit of the Highest shall come upon them, and the power of God overshadow them, and transform them from men of clay, to angels of mercy and power to a fallen world? Why do they not pray? Brethren, why do you not pray--pray that God would show you, would show the students here, the community, the whole church in the land, and in the world, his glory? Pray, and give God no rest, till He glorify his people before the nations?

10. It is easy to see what made Moses' face shine so, when he came down from the mount. The manifestation of God's glory has the same effect always and every where. There was such a clearness, a glory, a brightness, in his countenance, that the people could not look upon him. Christ in the mount, when the glory of God appeared to Him, was transfigured, his raiment was white as the light, and his face was like the sun.

11. Many cannot bear much of the revelation of divine glory to them. They are babes, and must be fed with milk and not with meat; for they cannot take meat. How it affected Isaiah, to behold the glory of the Lord. Isaiah, that man of God. Who could behold, if he could not? One would think his views of God were high and exalted. But see his vision. "I saw the Lord, sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim, and one cried to another, and covered his face with his wings, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of Hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory!" Think of it! It overcame Isaiah. He cried in despair, "Wo is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts!" He saw the holiness of God as he never saw it before. He was completely overcome, he seemed unable to recover from it, till one of the seraphim came with a live coal from the altar, and laid it on his lips, saying, "Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." O, how much do we need such revelations--new revelations--great and mighty things which we have not known. And then we shall be humbled, subdued

under his mighty hand. Mark how Isaiah was subdued to the will of God. When he heard the voice crying, "Who will go for us?" with meek boldness he answered, "Here am I, send me." And so shall we be humbled, and say, "Lord, glorify thy name in us."

But often God has to hold back. He must cover Moses in the rock-cleft, and hide his face from him. Often must Christians say, "Hold thy hand, O Lord, it is enough; draw the curtain, and veil the glory from my fainting, reeling sense."

12. Sometimes young converts get proud, and think that they know a great deal of God, and imagine that all which they never experienced, is fancy, and cannot be true. If just what they know of God is not presented, they think it is not the gospel, when, poor blind men, they know just one part, and a very small part. They must not think they know the whole of God that may be known of Him. Many cannot bear to hear of God's justice, of his sovereignty, of his holiness. Now, we should desire to have all the character, all the goodness of God pass before us; to have him let in upon the mind as bright and glorious a vision as it can bear.

Brethren, is it not true, that we need new manifestations of God? One revelation brings need of new and more glorious revelations. Do we not need it? My soul from its depths, my heart from its very bottom, cries out, "O God, I beseech thee, show me thy glory. Let me see and know more of God." Will you pray for me? Will you pray for yourselves? Do we not need it, I say again? Have we not high responsibilities? Who has higher? Now pray in view of your circumstances; besiege the throne; give God no rest; let him have no peace, till He come and revive his work, and make his name glorious.

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