

Abiding Fruit

John 15:16



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A Vision Glorious Exodus 33:18

In this passage of Scripture, the heart cry of Moses is to have God show him His glory. Moses has had enough experience of God, from the burning bush episode which revolutionized and galvanized his life in a new direction, to the contests with Pharaoh in Egypt, to the Passover deliverance, to the escape from Egypt through the Red Sea, to the giving of the Law of God, and we should not forget the on-going rebellion of the people. In all of these, God had so magnificently demonstrated that He was doing something beyond the powers and abilities of man. Moses had certainly recognized the *otherness* of God. The gods of Egypt were insufficient and puny and had no power (except the power of darkness) against God. Moses had rejoiced in the giving of the Law, as this was surely a revelation of God like no other.

The spiritual rebellion of the people stands in sharp contrast to the obedience and submission of Moses. In fact, even after the golden calf incident in Exodus 32, the people had no idea how close they really came to destruction. It was only the intercession of Moses with God that prevented such a catastrophic action. In Exodus 32:10, God desires to be left alone with the people, so that He could consume them in His burning anger, and make a great nation of Moses. Any other person might have been greatly tempted to take God up on His offer, but not Moses. He pleads on behalf of the people, reminding God of His covenantal obligations that God had placed on Himself (God would never forget these of course). Moses stands as an intercessor between God and the people. At the end of Exodus 32, Moses confesses the sins of the people to God, and desires that God pardon and forgive them, and then displaying that character that made him such a great man, he states that if God will not forgive them, then God should destroy him (Ex. 32:32). I don't think the people truly ever knew what this man Moses meant to them and to their survival.

God promises that he will continue to lead them (vs. 34), but will exact His justice upon them in due time with a plague (vs. 35). In a dramatic encounter at the beginning of Exodus 33, God tells Moses to go ahead and lead the people, and then states that He was not going with them (33:3). Again, we see how provoked God was at the rebellion of Israel (just think of 40 more years of this kind of rebellion). God states that if He goes with them, He will consume them (33:3b). Israel recognizes at this point, that they are in serious trouble, because the Scripture tells us (33:4) that when they heard this *disastrous word*, they mourned and refused to put on their ornaments (like making yourself presentable in the morning, but also reflects their casual attitude that nothing was really wrong). Verse 5 reveals to us, that God had instructed Moses that the people should do this, lest He consume them.

We are reminded of the wonderful relationship between God and Moses in Ex. 33:7 – 11. God would meet with Moses in the tent of meeting and verse 11 describes those encounters as God speaking face to face with Moses, as a man speaks with a friend. It is here that we see the great difference between Israel and Moses. Israel wanted their own comfort; Moses wanted the glory of God. We even see Joshua learning from Moses in verse 11, as he would remain behind in the tent savoring the presence of God. Exodus 33:12 – 16 is the poignant intercession of Moses for Israel. Moses reminds God of the

relationship that he has with Him, instituted by God, and sustained by God. God had promised to be with Moses, and now Moses wants to prove that.

On three occasions in Ex. 33:12 – 23, we find Scripture introducing Moses' dialogue with God with these words, "*Moses said*" ("*or he said*"- vs. 12, 15, 18), and then we find God responding to Moses. First of all, Moses wants to know what God is going to do with Israel (vs. 12a). Moses knew that God had told him to lead the people, but he has concerns about what God is doing if God is saying that He is not going with them. Moses reminds God, that even though God has stated that He knows Moses by name (indicates that Moses belonged to the Lord), Moses wanted something more. He wanted to see God's ways so that he could know that he had favor with God (vs. 13), and that God was leading the nation. This is the heart of a man burning with desire for God. God's gracious response to Moses is that His presence would go with Moses and that God would give him rest (vs. 14).

Secondly, in verse 15 – 17, Moses probes a little deeper into God's promise to go with them. He seeks confirmation from God. If God failed to go with them, then that would mean that God had not shown favor to Moses or to the people (vs. 16), and Moses reminds God, that if God does not go with them, then God's reputation would be damaged. God's presence among Israel is what set them apart from all other nations in the world (vs. 16). Again, God responds to Moses entreaty, by assuring Moses that He will do as Moses has asked, because Moses has favor with God and God knows him intimately (vs. 17)

Thirdly, we find Moses now assured that God is with him (and the people), revealing his deepest longing to God. Assurance of God's promise and presence will cause us to desire more of God. If we question God at every turn (like Israel), we live on a very superficial level spiritually. If God has said it, we must believe it. That is why Scripture is so important – it is God's Word to us, and every promise of God to us finds assurance and completion in Jesus (2 Cor. 1:20). In verse 18, Moses asks God to show him His glory. He wants to see something more of God. When we stop to analyze this, it causes us to think of everything that Moses has experienced with God already. For most of us, those experiences alone would have been mind-blowing and life-shattering, but Moses wants more. It is not enough to want to know things about God; our desire must be to know God only. A vision of God and his glory certainly would overshadow every previous experience. Think of Isaiah the prophet's encounter with God in the temple when he saw the glory of God. It shattered him (Isaiah 6:1 – 7). God gives to Moses what he desires – all God's goodness passing before him; the Lord's name being proclaimed (signifying the sovereign gracious character of God); God's preserving care for Moses by hiding him in the cleft of the rock, so that Moses would not be destroyed as God passed by in His effulgent Glory. God would remove his hand from covering Moses, so that Moses could catch a sight of God's backward parts as He passed by. Is not this the secret to power with God? To be in the presence of God overwhelmed by sheer grace and mercy is to have a vision of God. God reminded Moses that no man can see God's face and live (vs. 20; cf. 1 Tim. 6:16). Previously, verse 11 said that God spoke with Moses face to face. This is not a contradiction. Verse 11 simply suggests the openness and close relationship between God and Moses.

The Christian, however, has seen God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6). Jesus reminded Philip that if he had seen Jesus, then he had seen the Father also (John 14:9). We have everything we need to have a deep relationship with the Lord. We know His character, His promises, the truth, His salvation, and His forgiveness. We cannot even begin to imagine what it would be like if God said to us, "*My presence will not go with you.*" God, however, has promised to be our God. God promises deep and abiding fellowship with Him. Like Moses, we must ask and seek after God with a passion undiminished by time and events around us (as Moses did). Let us seek God and His glory above all things – it is our chief end. To see God and to know God is truly a vision glorious.

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