

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 3-22-15 PM NOTES
"THE PRAYERS OF MOSES" (PART 2)
EXODUS 33:1-23
#11 in Series, "Learning to Pray from the Experts"

I. A Prayer for the Manifest Presence of God (V1-3; 13-17)

Psalms 42:1-2 (HCSB) "1 As a deer longs for streams of water, so I long for You, God. 2 I thirst for God, the living God. When can I come and appear before God?"

Psalms 63:1 (HCSB) "God, You are my God; I eagerly seek You. I thirst for You; my body faints for You in a land that is dry, desolate, and without water."

Psalms 84:2 (NKJV) "My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God."

Psalms 143:6 (NIV) "I spread out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land. Selah"

John 7:37b (NKJV) "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink."

Exodus 32:10 (NKJV) "Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation."

Isaiah 64:1a (NKJV) "Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down!"

The Essential Presence of God

The Manifest Presence of God

Psalms 139:7-10 (NKJV) "7 Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? 8 If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. 9 If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, 10 even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me."

Isaiah 64:1 (NKJV) "Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down! That the mountains might shake at Your presence".

Isaiah 64:2 (NKJV) "As fire burns brushwood, as fire causes water to boil-- to make Your name known to Your adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Your presence!"

"The town seemed to be full of the presence of God. It was never so full of love, nor of joy, and yet so full of distress, as it was then. There were remarkable tokens of God's presence in almost every house. It was a time of joy in families on account of salvation being brought unto them; parents rejoicing over their children as new born, and husbands over their wives, and wives over their husbands ... Our public assemblies were then beautiful ... The assembly in general was, from time to time, in tears while the Word was preached, some weeping with sorrow and distress, others with joy and love, others with pity and concern for the souls of their neighbors." - Ray Ortlund Jr., *Preaching the Word Commentary – Isaiah*, Page 432-433]

"The problem is that the situation is desperate and we are not."

– Vance Havner

II. A Prayer to See God's Glory (V18-23)

Philippians 3:10a (NKJV) “that I may know Him...”

Philippians 3:10a (AMP) “[For my determined purpose is] that I may know Him [that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly]...”

“Do we know anything of such a longing? We may have been Christians for many years, but have we ever really longed for some personal, direct knowledge and experience of God? Oh, I know we pray for causes, we pray for the church, we pray for missionaries, we pray for our own efforts that we organize, yes, but that is not what I am concerned about. We all ask for personal blessings, but how much do we know of this desire for God Himself? That is what Moses asked for: ‘Show me Thy glory. Take me yet a step nearer.’ It is the same thing, of course, as the Psalmist voices in **Psalms 42:1-2a (NKJV)** ‘¹ As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. ² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.’ That is what he wants. He wants the living God Himself, and that is why he pants and thirsts. You find the same thoughts in **Psalms 17:15 (NKJV)** ‘As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.’”
- Martyn Lloyd-Jones

“In other words, no man is capable of standing the full vision of God's glory. He could not bear it; it would kill him, because of the inconceivable nature of the glory. There is no doubt that 99.9 per cent of our troubles as Christians is that we are ignorant of God. We spend so much time in feeling our own pulse, taking our own spiritual temperature, considering our moods, and states and fears. Oh, if we but had some conception of Him, of the inconceivable glory of God.”
- Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Exodus 34:29-30 (NKJV) “²⁹ Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses' hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him. ³⁰ So when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.”

1 Corinthians 13:12 (NKJV) “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.”

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I believe that I am both convicted and motivated more by the prayers of Moses than any of the other “experts” whose prayers we see in the Bible. In the last message, I was deeply touched by Moses' passionate intercession for the Israelites when God (testing Moses) told him he was going to wipe out the whole nation because of their sin. I saw how far I have to go in true intercession – standing before God on

behalf of others. In today's text, we see Moses praying for the presence of God and to see the glory of God. Those who know God best are those who are the deepest and richest in their prayers. What I am about to say is not pleasant. Usually those who are the most desperate for God are those who find themselves in a crisis. However, I believe that God would have us cultivate a sense of desperation for Him at all times – a crisis time or in non-crisis times. We will see what being desperate for God looks like in these two prayers of Moses. Get ready to be challenged.

I. A Prayer for the Manifest Presence of God (V1-3, 13-17)

Without a doubt, God is pleased with those who are desperate for a deeper walk with Him. The Psalmist summarized what I am talking about in **Psalms 42:1-2 (HCSB)** “¹ As a deer longs for streams of water, so I long for You, God. ² I thirst for God, the living God. When can I come and appear before God?” The picture here is a deer being chased, probably by dogs, sides heaving and searching desperately for water. Oh the shame of how we are satisfied with such a small and almost insignificant daily walk with God! Many times, as the Psalmist did in Psalm 42:1-2, desperation for the presence of God is described in terms of hunger and thirst. **Psalms 63:1 (HCSB)** “God, You are my God; I eagerly seek You. I thirst for You; my body faints for You in a land that is dry, desolate, and without water.” **Psalms 84:2 (NKJV)** “My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.” **Psalms 143:6 (NIV)** “I spread out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land.” In the New Testament we read in **John 7:37b (NKJV)** “... Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.’”

There are various terms that people use for this desperation, this consuming thirst for God. Some call it intimacy with God. I suppose that description is OK, but for me that word “intimacy” is feminine sounding and just doesn't seem right. I've used it before and it's not wrong, but I don't think it really describes what Moses is talking about. Some call it “experiencing God”, and that's a little better, but I don't think it is the best phrase. I prefer the phrase “the manifest Presence of God.” The greatest hunger of our heart, whether we can verbalize it or not is the manifest presence of God.

Let's examine the text [Read Exodus 33:1-3]. I believe that this is another test and opportunity for Moses to grow as was the test back in **Exodus 32:10 (NKJV)** where God said, “Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation.” Moses passed that first test; would he pass this one also? The Lord says, “I will fulfill my promise that I made to Abraham to give his descendents the land of Canaan. I will drive out all your enemies, but I will not be with you because you are a stubborn (that's what “stiff-necked” means) people and you will sin and I will have to destroy you.” Before we see Moses' response, we need to make sure that we understand what we are referring to when we speak of the manifest presence of God. We read a prayer in **Isaiah 64:1a (NKJV)** “Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down!” Someone defined revival as God showing up. But isn't God omnipresent? Yes, He is, but we need to understand the distinction between God's essential presence and His manifest presence. His essential presence speaks of the fact that there is nowhere that God is not. The omnipresence of God is hard for us to comprehend because it is so unlike us. The question is asked in **Psalms 139:7 (NKJV)** “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?” The answer is “nowhere!” **Psalms 139:8-10 (NKJV)** “⁸ If I ascend into heaven, You *are* there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You *are there*. ⁹ If I take the wings of the morning, *and* dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, ¹⁰ even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.” But God's manifest presence is different. This is when God makes us acutely aware of His presence and we are transformed. When Isaiah asks the Lord to “come down”, he was speaking of His manifest presence that had a great effect. Notice how it is pictured in **Isaiah 64:1 (NKJV)** “Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down! That the mountains might shake at Your presence”. Mountains often symbolize obstacles. When God shows up in His manifest presence, every obstacle is moved. We read in **Isaiah 64:2 (NKJV)** “As fire burns brushwood, as fire causes water to boil-- to make Your name known to Your adversaries, *that* the nations may tremble at Your presence!” Brushwood is all tangled up and this pictures how the fire of God's

presence deals with tangled lives that are bringing dishonor to Him by turning all of the tangles to ashes. The presence of God like fire also makes the water boil. That is a life filled with coldness and apathy that He sets on fire when He shows up. This is the effect we desire when we pray for the manifest presence of God. When God shows up, He can do more in a minute with his power than we can do in a lifetime with all our strategies.

Listen to Jonathan Edwards' description of his own town when the longed for revival came in 1735. "The town seemed to be full of the presence of God. It was never so full of love, nor of joy, and yet so full of distress, as it was then. There were remarkable tokens of God's presence in almost every house. It was a time of joy in families on account of salvation being brought unto them; parents rejoicing over their children as new born, and husbands over their wives, and wives over their husbands ... Our public assemblies were then beautiful ... The assembly in general was, from time to time, in tears while the Word was preached, some weeping with sorrow and distress, others with joy and love, others with pity and concern for the souls of their neighbors." [Ray Ortlund Jr., *Preaching the Word Commentary – Isaiah*, Page 432-433]. That is the manifest presence of God.

Let's go back to our text in Exodus. When God says in **Exodus 33:3b (NKJV)** "... for I will not go up in your midst..." He was saying that they would not experience His manifest presence. There would be no communion with their God; there would be no fellowship with their God as they went through the desert to the promised land (OK, you can call it "intimacy with God" if you so desire).

In verse 13, Moses begins to pray for God to manifest His presence as they go through this wilderness [Read V13]. In verse 14, God answers Moses prayer [Read V14]. It's as if Moses is taking no chances and he continues to pray for the manifest presence of God. Verses 15-16 are remarkable verses. [Read Exodus 33:15-16]. That is a powerful and desperate prayer. He is saying, "Lord, your presence means more than taking the Promised Land. Your presence means more than being in the land of milk and honey; Your presence means more than my life; I would as soon stay right here and rot as not experience your manifest presence. I want the nations in the land of Canaan to see your presence among us that they might glorify You".

Do you know the Lord? Are you daily sensing His manifest presence? If not, where is your desperation? Let's talk about our church. I love this church! I have poured out my life here for almost 29 years. We have seen the manifest presence of God in our midst. We have also experienced services where God, in His manifest presence wasn't here. To be honest, we've had more of the latter than the former. That doesn't mean that nothing good happened. Songs that glorified the resurrected Savior were sung. An expository message was preached. The Word of God never returns void; it always accomplishes the purpose for which it was sent (Isaiah 55:11). We can say nice things about those services, but the truth is, God didn't show up! What happens when that happens? Do we become desperate? Do we repent of the coldness of our hearts? Do we gather together after the service and spend time asking the Lord how we grieved Him. I am guilty also here. Where are the prayer meetings during that next week pleading with God and telling Him that we'd rather just not have services if He wasn't going to show up? Allow me to re-quote Vance Havner from last week. "The problem is that the situation is desperate and we are not." Do you realize how few people we are seeing be saved in our services? Our altar calls are for the most part dead. We meet, sing, listen to a message and go home or out to eat and never grieve that God wasn't here in our service.

Oh the powerful, God pleasing prayers of Moses. In last week's text we saw that he interceded for God's people and God stayed his wrath from being poured out on them. Tonight we see that he prayed and the manifest presence of God returned [Read v17]. Have we come to the place that we realize that without the presence of God, it is useless to go on just going through the motions? If you are not experiencing the manifest presence of God, and you are not broken over it, it is because you have grown content to live without it.

II. A Prayer to See God's Glory (V18-23)

Moses had an insatiable appetite for God. He prayed for His manifest presence, but he wanted even more! He longed for a vision of His glory. That is a “next level” request. There is no greater request that we could make than to ask God to show us His glory. What Moses was asking was, “Lord, open my eyes to see the greatness of your person.” He is requesting for God to show him the awesomeness of Himself. Every page of Scripture reveals the glory of God and declares His greatness. Moses didn’t want to miss any of that. May Moses desire to see God’s glory, to bask in His awesomeness, be the desire of our heart.

When Moses asks to be shown God’s glory, he is praying basically the same thing as the Apostle Paul was praying when he said in **Philippians 3:10a (NKJV)** “that I may know Him...” I really like the Amplified translation of **Philippians 3:10a (AMP)** “[For my determined purpose is] that I may know Him [that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly]”...” Is that desire to experientially know Him, to know His glory, descriptive of you? For most church goers, that isn’t even on their radar. Moses has gone beyond the crowd. He longs to see the glory of God and to know Him. Moses was no longer asking for specific blessings; he is now going beyond the blessings to the “Blesser.” He has moved beyond the desire for the gifts; now he desires the giver Himself – “show me Your glory”. It is not wrong to ask for God’s provision and guidance and wisdom. But the highest request is to know His person and to see His glory. Allow me to quote Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. “Do we know anything of such a longing? We may have been Christians for many years, but have we ever really longed for some personal, direct knowledge and experience of God? Oh, I know we pray for causes, we pray for the church, we pray for missionaries, we pray for our own efforts that we organize, yes, but that is not what I am concerned about. We all ask for personal blessings, but how much do we know of this desire for God Himself? That is what Moses asked for: ‘Show me Thy glory. Take me yet a step nearer.’ It is the same thing, of course, as the Psalmist voices in **Psalms 42:1-2a (NKJV)** ‘¹ As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. ² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.’ That is what he wants. He wants the living God Himself, and that is why he pants and thirsts. You find the same thoughts in **Psalms 17:15 (NKJV)** ‘As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.’” [Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Revival*, page 215]

Let’s look at God’s answer [Read V20-23]. It was not possible for Moses to see the fullness of the glory of God, for to do so would have taken away his physical life. Dwight L. Moody, like Moses wanted to see more of God’s glory and ended up asking God to “stay Your hand lest I die”. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones quotes the last part of **Exodus 33:20b (NKJV)** "... for no man shall see Me, and live." And then gives this insightful comment. “In other words, no man is capable of standing the full vision of God’s glory. He could not bear it; it would kill him, because of the inconceivable nature of the glory. There is no doubt that 99.9 per cent of our troubles as Christians is that we are ignorant of God. We spend so much time in feeling our own pulse, taking our own spiritual temperature, considering our moods, and states and fears. Oh, if we but had some conception of Him, of the inconceivable glory of God.” [Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Revival*, page 217]. Do you get what Martyn Lloyd-Jones is saying? We are so self focused! We have such little longing to see God and His glory. When He is our focus and our desire, our self-centered longings, worries, concerns begin to fade away and He becomes our all in all!

Moses did indeed get a partial glance at God’s glory. He was changed. He was even physically changed. We read in **Exodus 34:29-30 (NKJV)** “²⁹ Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses’ hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him. ³⁰ So when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.” When God shows us a glimpse of Himself, we will be different. I believe that He could certainly literally cause our skin to shine, but I know that others will see a distinct difference in our daily lives.

We often quote the first part of the Westminster Shorter Catechism that asks, “What is the chief end of man?” The answer is, “The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever”. But I believe that we cannot glorify God until we at least catch a glimpse of His glory. We often pray for revival in the church, but I believe that genuine revival comes when we catch a glimpse of the glory of God. The most

appealing thing about Heaven to us should be that we will see His glory, see it to an extent that is not possible down here. We read in **1 Corinthians 13:12 (NKJV)** "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known."

CONCLUSION

May God grant us a longing for His manifest presence. May we long to see His glory as did Moses, as did David Brainerd and Jonathan Edwards and Dwight L. Moody and so many of the men and women who have been used in such an amazing way by God. Maybe we should stop praying for revival and start praying **Exodus 33:18 (NKJV)** "Please, show me Your glory." When we catch a glimpse of His glory, we will be revived.