

Lesson 35 - THE GLORY OF GOD IN CHRIST *Exodus 33*

(Exod. 33:1-6) - God commands Moses to lead the people from Sinai to the Promised Land. It is made clear here that the land was given because of God's promise to Abraham. Their possessing the land was of God's power and not their own. This is a picture of how salvation is by God's grace to undeserving sinners, and it is by God's power to utterly depraved sinners. It is by the merit and power of Christ.

(Exod. 33:7-11) - Before the actual tabernacle was built, Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the tent of meeting. Anyone inquiring of the Lord would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp. When Moses would visit this tent of meeting to intercede for the people of Israel, *"the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the LORD talked with Moses"* (Exod. 33:9). Again, this is probably another preincarnate visitation of Christ speaking with Moses. Moses's position of favor with God is evident in the fact that *"the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend"* (Exod. 33:11). We see again that Moses interceding for Israel is a type of Christ Who intercedes for spiritual Israel. We also see how the glory of God is revealed in the face of Jesus Christ, which is the glory of Christ's Person (God manifest in the flesh) and the glory of His finished work (righteousness established for His people) (2 Cor. 4:6; Col. 2:9-10). There is no acceptable approach unto or communion with God apart from Christ.

(Exod. 33:12-23) - Moses intercedes for the people by asking for three great blessings. These blessings reveal all that we need and all that God requires for our complete salvation!

(1) **SHOW ME NOW THY WAY** (Exod. 33:12-13) - On a physical and temporal level Moses certainly needed the Lord to show him the way to lead the people to the Promised Land. They were totally dependent upon God's guidance and power to get them to their destination. But on a spiritual and eternal level, we can see how this applies to salvation. When it comes to God's dealings with sinners, God's way is the only right way. Man's way is always the wrong way. We see man's way demonstrated in the sin and rebellion of Israel. They would have returned to Egypt and bondage. They thought this was the right thing to do. It is the same in our natural thoughts concerning eternal salvation - *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death"* (Prov. 14:12; 16:25). As natural, unregenerate, and unbelieving people, we have two problems when it comes to salvation - (1) We do not know the right way, and (2) We do not want the right way. We devise and desire our own ways so that we can have some glory or reason to boast in ourselves. All the ways of the natural man are the broad way that leads to death (Matt. 7:13). When it comes to salvation, like Israel of old, our thoughts and our ways are not God's thoughts and God's ways (Isa. 55:7-8).

Because of God's grace in revealing Himself to Moses, Moses understood that God's way was (and is) the way of grace (unearned, undeserved favor) - *"if I have found grace in Thy sight, shew me now Thy way, that I may know Thee, that I may find grace in Thy sight."* Christ told the Pharisees, *"For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me: for he wrote of Me"* (John 5:46; Heb. 10:19-22). Moses knew that God's way is the way of Christ (John 14:6), the way of mercy and justice based on the righteousness of Christ freely imputed to His people and received by them in God-given faith.

(2) **DON'T LET ME GO WITHOUT THEE** (Exod. 33:14-17) - Moses knew that if this task were conditioned on him and the people, it would fail. He knew that it was all of God's power and grace to bring them to the Promised Land and keep them together until the time of the promised Messiah. So, he begged for God's presence because of God's grace towards him. Like

Noah of old, Moses had found grace in God's sight. Again, on the spiritual level, without grace that reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord, God's presence is not something to be desired. It is something to be feared. Without Christ, God's presence is His wrath against all to whom sin is imputed - *"For our God is a consuming fire"* (Heb. 12:29; cf. John 3:36). God assured Moses of His gracious and glorious presence - *"I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in My sight."* When God says, *"I know thee by name,"* it speaks of God's electing His people to salvation by His grace through Christ. God knows the names of all people, but this knowledge is the intimate knowledge of a loving father to His children (2 Tim. 2:19). Their names were written in the Lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world. Like the names of the tribes of Israel were engraved on the breastplate of the high priest, the names of God's elect were engraved upon Christ's heart.

(3) SHOW ME THY GLORY (Exod. 33:18-23) - God's glory is His majesty and honor in everything He is and does in creation, judgment, providence, and salvation. Delivering the Hebrews from Egypt and bringing them to the Promised Land was a matter of God's honor and glory. Exodus 33:19 shows us that God's greatest glory (His shekinah glory) is in His sovereign choice of a people (the elect, spiritual Israel) whom He saves in mercy and grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote that this proves that salvation is not by the works or the wills of sinful men but of God (Rom. 9:14-16; cf. Matt. 11:25-26). All of God's attributes are revealed, all working consistently together, in the salvation and justification of His people, sinners, by His grace in the glorious Person and finished work of Christ, their Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer (John 1:14; Col. 1:19-20; 2:9-10). This is the glory of God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ showing how God can be both a just God and a Savior based upon Christ's righteousness freely imputed to His people and received by them in God-given faith (Isa. 45:20-25).

God tells Moses, *"Thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me, and live."* Does this contradict verse 11? No. Most believe this is saying that Moses could not see God's face in the fulness of His perfections and the grandeur of His designs and live, as no human being could bear, in the present state, this full discovery. But the main lesson here is that if any of us are to see the face of God in His glory, it can only be as we see His glory in Christ, the Godman, and on the basis of His righteousness accomplished for us. Christ said that to see Him is to see the Father (John 14:7-10).

The Lord then shows Moses how He can reveal Himself in His glory to sinful men - *"Behold, there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock."* That place by God is where the Lord Jesus Christ sits at the Father's right hand ever living to make intercession for us as our Advocate. He is that ROCK upon whom we stand, the very foundation of His church. God puts His people in the cleft of the Rock which is in Christ Jesus, washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness. Christ is our hiding place who shields us from the just wrath of God. Christ took our wrath upon Himself as our sins were imputed to Him, and we stand before God in His righteousness imputed to us.

To be covered by God's hand is a metaphor for His providential protection of His people until the time that He passes by in the coming of Christ into the world and who as God manifest in the flesh accomplished is work of redeeming His people from sin. His *"back parts"* is a metaphor for His finished work wherein He reveals Himself as both a just God and a Savior. God reveals Himself in His works whereby He shows His power, goodness, justice, grace, and mercy (Isa. 46:9-13). The salvation of sinners is not assured by what God intended to do but failed, for God has never failed. But salvation is assured by what God has already done in and by Christ!