

3c. Theology Proper – God’s Glory

Read Exodus 33:12-34:8



Charles Spurgeon once said: "*The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy which can ever engage the attention of a child of God is the name. . . of the great God whom he calls his Father.*" God's names in Scripture are more than labels—they are revelations of his covenant character. As God proclaims his name, we come to know him more intimately.

This story narrates a slice of Moses' unique experience as a prophet of God. He has pleaded with God to spare the people and continue his support and presence among them. Elated by God's answer, Moses asks to see God's glory. When God appears, Moses sees only his "back" not his "face," but he hears words of definitive self-revelation. These words reveal the nature of the God we worship.

1. What is the difference between being acquainted with someone and really knowing that person?

- a. Acquaintances will barely open the door for you. Real friends will be there when you need them, not just when it's convenient.
- b. Acquaintances will shy away from you as soon as you become a social liability. Real friends will love you even when your life or your appearance is a mess.
- c. You can have a good time with them, but you can't have a good cry with them.
- d. An acquaintance you might say "I know them." But you could say of a real friend "They know ME."
- e. They might be someone you would say hi or have a social time with but they would not be someone you would get into a deep, intimate conversation with.
- f. Acquaintanceship is usually built on points of commonality. They're usually a lot like us on the surface. Friendship can exist even when you have differences of opinion. Many times outsiders will look at two friends and shake their heads in confusion. "What do they see in each other?" They ask.
- g. Acquaintances are usually limited to group encounters or public settings. Friendship is usually more private and intimate.
- h. Acquaintances judge you on surface issues (clothes, tattoos, club you belong to). Friends judge you on your character and your belief system.
- i. Acquaintances you can have a polite conversation with. Friends you can get rude or crude with and they'll love you anyway.
- j. With acquaintances you share gossip. With friends you share secrets.
- k. With acquaintances you have to always worry about where your communication will go. You can share secrets with friends with no fear of it being spread around.
- l. You can usually have a LOT of acquaintances but usually only a few real friends.

The challenge I want to give you is "Based on these criteria" how good a friend is God to you?" God frees us from our enemies.¹ God died for us even though we were sinners.² He is

¹ 2 Samuel 22:49

² Romans 5:8

concerned about us and tracks every tear we shed.³ He knows every detail about us and loves us anyway.⁴ He is willing and able to tell us the hard truths we need to hear.⁵ Though we are puny He is willing to elevate us.⁶ Though we are sinful He is willing to make us holy.⁷ He likes to spend time with us. He is willing to meet with us privately.⁸ He sees beyond our outward appearance. He is not put off by our physical or mental shortcomings.⁹ He has no problem fellowshiping with down and outers.¹⁰ He is willing to share His counsel with those who fear Him. He will rescue them, turn toward them and be gracious to them. He reveals His covenant to them.¹¹ He always loves and supports what is right and His love is unfailing.¹² Though all our human friends may turn against us, if we maintain our integrity and righteousness, God will never forsake us.¹³ What a truly great Friend we have in Yahweh!

- **Psalms 55:22 HCSB** Cast your burden on the LORD, and He will support you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.

Now – based on the same criteria, how good a friend are you to God? Are you an acquaintance or a real friend?

2. Read Exodus 33:12-23. In Exodus 33:3 the Lord threatens not to go with the people into the Promised Land because of their wickedness. How does Moses respond? (Exodus 33:12-13)?

- **Exodus 33:12 HCSB** Moses said to the LORD, "Look, You have told me, 'Lead this people up,' but You have not let me know whom You will send with me. You said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found favor in My sight.'

Look. Consider Hashem's command in Exodus 32:34 and note that it began with "see" (hinneh; pronounced hin-nay; Strong's #2009; demonstrative particle). It means "look, notice, see, take note, consider, pay attention to or beware." Moses is reminding the Lord of that command. In view of 32:34 I believe the punctuation of this passage should read "'Look', you told me, 'Lead this people up...'" Moses quoted God's promise back to Him.

You have not let me know whom. Moses was unsatisfied by anything but God Himself.¹⁴ Up to now the Christophany had been leading them. If Hashem was to leave them, even if it were in the hands of a holy angel, Moses was going to be at a loss. Our brother had learned to cherish the Giver over every potential gift.

- **Exodus 33:13 HCSB** Now if I have indeed found favor in Your sight, please teach me Your ways, and I will know You and find favor in Your sight. Now consider that this nation is Your people."

Teach me Your ways. The prayer uses the Hiphil imperative of the verb "to know." Cause me to know" is "show me, reveal to me, teach or inform me." Moses wanted to know more of God's dealings with people, especially after all that has happened in the preceding chapter. It could be understood thus: Show me:

1. how you deal with humans

³ Psalm 56:8

⁴ Psalm 139:1-17

⁵ Psalm 39:4

⁶ Psalm 8:3-6

⁷ Isaiah 6:5

⁸ Matthew 6:6; Genesis 32:24

⁹ 1 Samuel 16:6-7; Matthew 23:28

¹⁰ Matthew 9:10-11; 11:19

¹¹ Psalm 25:14-16

¹² Psalm 33:4; Proverbs 11:13

¹³ Psalm 41:9-10; 55:12-17

¹⁴ Hebrews 11:24-27

2. your purpose and will concerning me and your people
3. the method you will choose to fulfill your promises
4. the course you would have me take
5. how I should conduct and lead your people.

Consider David's requests. He too asked the Lord to make His ways known; to be taught the paths of righteousness; to be given an undivided mind on the matter; to have the meaning of God's statutes revealed.¹⁵ Isn't it interesting that these two men, one who was referred to as "God's friend" and the other "a man after God's own heart" both repeatedly made this request?

Now consider this nation is your people. The verb "see" (an imperative) is a request for God to acknowledge Israel as His people by providing the divine leadership needed.¹⁶ So his main appeal will be for the people and not himself.¹⁷

What magnificent hubris! Yet Moses has spent enough time with the Lord to know His mind. He would later write,

- **Deuteronomy 4:33-35 HCSB** Has a people ever heard God's voice speaking from the fire as you have, and lived? (34) Or has a god *ever* attempted to go and take a nation as his own out of *another* nation, by trials, signs, wonders, and war, by a strong hand and an outstretched arm, by great terrors, as the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? (35) You were shown *these things* so that you would know that the LORD is God; there is no other besides Him.

He knew the Lord's intent and was determined to join in those efforts. Later generations were also told that if they prayed according to God's will, that their prayers would be positively answered¹⁸ but Moses knew that truth thousands of years before the rest of us.

3. Why is Moses so concerned about God's Presence with Israel (Exodus 33:14-16)?

- **Exodus 33:14 HCSB** Then He replied, "My presence will go *with you*, and I will give you rest."

Presence.

The presence of God is the presence of power.¹⁹

The presence of God is the presence of victory.²⁰

All true authority is delegated from the presence of God.²¹

- **Exodus 33:15 HCSB** "If Your presence does not go," Moses responded to Him, "don't make us go up from here.

Don't make us go up. Moses understands that victory is impossible without the sanctifying presence of the Lord.²²

These were a people habituated to submission by generations of slavery. These were no warriors yet. They were barely able to handle freedom much less defend it! Oh that all of Adonai's people would read and learn. We must have the Lord's presence and blessing in our lives or we face nothing but defeat and sorrow. If we cannot go forward with His blessing,

¹⁵ Psalm 25:4; 27:11; 86:11; 119:33

¹⁶ Deuteronomy 9:29; Isaiah 63:8-10

¹⁷ Deuteronomy 9:24-27; Joel 2:17

¹⁸ 1 John 5:14-15

¹⁹ Deuteronomy 4:37; Isaiah 63:11-12

²⁰ Numbers 32:20-22

²¹ 1 Samuel 10:25

²² Joshua 21:44; 23:1; Psalm 95:10-11

let us not go forward. Even the promise of rest falls short of the blessings of the presence of the Name.

- **Exodus 33:16 HCSB** How will it be known that I and Your people have found favor in Your sight unless You go with us? I and Your people will be distinguished *by this* from all the other people on the face of the earth."

Distinguished by this. We are made wonderful, or eminent or glorious above all other peoples— not by our own merit but by the presence and favor of Yahweh.²³

- **Titus 3:5 HCSB** He saved us--not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to His mercy, through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

4. Why is it important today as well as then for God's Presence to be the distinguishing mark of his people?

He is the source of Light and life.²⁴ Dust and distance dim our view of the stars. Sin and spiritual distance dim our view of God and keep His life-bringing light from shining on our lives.

Outside the camp may be disgrace but that's where salvation is.²⁵

God's presence means victory.²⁶
but...

- **Joshua 5:13-14 HCSB** When Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in His hand. Joshua approached Him and asked, "Are You for us or for our enemies?" (14) "Neither," He replied. "I have now come as commander of the LORD's army." Then Joshua bowed with his face to the ground in worship and asked Him, "What does my Lord want to say to His servant?"

It's interesting how everyone wants God and his church to support their views or needs while criticizing the church's supposed support of the status quo. The established culture wants Christianity to give its blessing to, and the church to act as chaplain of the status quo. Subcultures take issue with this and commonly regard the Church as a tool of the "establishment", soundly criticizing the Church for failing to support their chosen views. So apparently they would welcome the Church's blessing if THEY were the status quo.

For example, Marxists may resent the Church for not supporting their ideology. Similarly, the typical right-winger may dismiss the suggestion that the Scriptures do not necessarily support laissez-faire capitalism! But Adonai is on neither side. He does not choose sides. He just IS. We must choose whether or not we are on HIS side.

We must be willing to admit His absence. A wealthy man lost all he had. He was so greatly ashamed of being poor that he informed no one of his situation, and eventually died of malnutrition. The local tzaddik consoled the ashamed townspeople: "That man did not die of starvation, but of excessive pride. Had he been willing to ask others for help and admit to his situation, he would not have died of hunger."

- **Revelation 3:17-19 HCSB** Because you say, 'I'm rich; I have become wealthy, and need nothing,' and you don't know that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked, (18) I advise you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire so that you may be rich, and white clothes so that you may be dressed and your shameful nakedness not

²³ Exodus 34:10; Numbers 14:14; Deuteronomy 4:6-8, 34; 2 Samuel 7:23; 1 Kings 8:23; Psalm 147:19-20

²⁴ John 1:4-5

²⁵ Hebrews 13:11-13

²⁶ Joshua 1:3, 7; 6:2

be exposed, and ointment to spread on your eyes so that you may see. (19) As many as I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be committed and repent.

5. What does it mean that God knows Moses by name (Exodus 33:12, 17)?

- **Exodus 33:12 HCSB** Moses said to the LORD, "Look, You have told me, 'Lead this people up,' but You have not let me know whom You will send with me. You said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found favor in My sight.'

I know you by name. That is, "chosen you".²⁷ I know you distinctly and familiarly. Your name is written in My book.²⁸ The term here connotes approbation and affection.²⁹

The verb "to know" here translates the Hebrew word "yada" (Strong's #3045) and can connote not only mere perception but also to also make one's self known or to reveal one's self. It is an extremely passionate, intimate word. In fact it is also used in the carnal sense (i.e. "he knew his wife and she conceived"). Hashem knows us better than we know ourselves. Our innermost being is fully revealed to Him. Solomon wrote:

- **Proverbs 20:27 HCSB** A person's breath is the lamp of the LORD, searching the innermost parts.

Note: I disagree with the HCSB team's decision to render this "breath." The Hebrew term it is supposed to represent is נְשִׁמָּה (nishmat), which is a feminine noun in construct. This is what God breathed into humanity at creation (Genesis 2:7) and differentiates us from animals. It is the inner spiritual part of human life that constitutes humans as spiritual beings with moral, intellectual, and spiritual capacities.³⁰

- **Hebrews 4:12-13 HCSB** For the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating as far as to divide soul, spirit, joints, and marrow; it is a judge of the ideas and thoughts of the heart. (13) No creature is hidden from Him, but all things are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account.

This is why we should be primarily concerned about our inner beauty.³¹

You have found favor in my sight. Clearly, the fact that Moses was standing in the very presence of Yah without being destroyed indicated that favor had been extended.

- **Exodus 33:17 HCSB** The LORD answered Moses, "I will do this very thing you have asked, for you have found favor in My sight, and I know you by name."

I will do this very thing. Yahweh Yireh has a reputation for granting requests to those who trust His provision. He has granted security.³² He has granted the gift of a child.³³ He is willing to generously grant wisdom to those who ask in faith.³⁴

Apparently faith, stability, decisiveness and righteousness go hand in hand and together bring great influence with God. This is what Moses was seeking.³⁵

For you have found favor. As did Noah,³⁶ Abraham,³⁷ Lot,³⁸ now Moses,³⁹ later Gideon.⁴⁰ What is the common characteristic of each of these? Humble obedience. This trait characterizes each man (in spite of their individual sins and peccadilloes) as a *ch'asid*.

²⁷ Jeremiah 1:5; 1 Peter 2:9-10

²⁸ Exodus 32:32-33; Psalm 56:8; 87:5-6; Isaiah 43:1; 49:1; Philippians 4:3 cf Psalm 69:28; Matthew 7:21-23

²⁹ Psalm 1:6

³⁰ Proverbs 23:16 (expressed positively); Jeremiah 13:17 (expressed negatively)

³¹ 1 Peter 3:4

³² Genesis 19:20-21

³³ 1 Samuel 1:20

³⁴ James 1:5-8

³⁵ James 5:16

³⁶ Genesis 6:8

6. What will it mean for Moses to know God by name (Exodus 33:18-22)?

- Exodus 33:18 HCSB Then Moses said, "Please, let me see Your glory."

Then Moses said. The Hebrew reads "and he said"; the referent (Moses) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

Let me see Your glory. Moses now wanted to see the glory of Yahweh, more than what he had already seen and experienced. He wanted to see God in all his majesty.⁴¹

The LXX chose to translate glory in Exodus 33:18 without a word for "glory" or "honor"; instead they used the pronoun *seautou*, "yourself" – show me the real You. God tells him that he cannot see it fully, but in part. It will be enough for Moses to disclose to him the reality of the divine presence as well as God's moral nature (cp "my goodness" in v.19). The glory refers to God's majesty, might, and glory, as manifested in nature, in his providence, his laws, and his judgments. It would be impossible for Moses to comprehend all of the nature of God, for there is a boundary between God and man. But God would let him see his goodness, the sum of his nature, pass by in a flash.

Consider Moses' request in view of what things He had already seen:

1. He was the sole witness of the burning bush where he was obliged to remove his shoes due to the sanctifying presence of the Lord.
2. He had personally participated in all the splendid miracles performed in Egypt.
3. He had daily access to the tent of meeting where he stood in the very presence of God and spoke face to face with the Lord as to a friend.
4. Along with Aaron and the Israeli nobles he had eaten in Hashem's presence without harm.
5. He had been up on Mt. Sinai for forty days where there were such thundering, lightning and earthquakes and sounds of trumpets that the people feared for Moses life!

That such a man would long for ever more is instructive. Once we have truly tasted of the Lord, we will never be fully satisfied with anything less.

Why do you think Moses desires this so much?

Names hold power in the Bible.⁴² They come with inherent promises.⁴³ The idea is that to know someone's true name is to hold some influence with them.⁴⁴ This is why it is so crucial that we carry the Name well and that we proclaim it to all people.⁴⁵

The "name of Yahweh" refers to his divine attributes revealed to his people, either in word or deed. What will be focused on first will be his grace and compassion.

7. In what ways can we demonstrate our desire to know God?

We can:

- Seek to establish regular time with Him.
- Read His love letter regularly and with kavanah.

³⁷ Genesis 18:3

³⁸ Genesis 19:19

³⁹ Exodus 33:12-13, 16; 34:9

⁴⁰ Judges 6:17-18

⁴¹ Daniel 2:22; 1 Timothy 6:16; Revelation 1:16-17 cp Exodus 24:10; Revelation 22:3-5

⁴² Malachi 1:11, 14; 2:2

⁴³ Genesis 12:2; 17:5, 15; 32:28; Isaiah 62:2, 12; Revelation 2:17

⁴⁴ Genesis 32:29; Psalm 91:14-16; Romans 10:13; 1 Corinthians 6:11

⁴⁵ Matthew 28:19; Acts 9:15

- Obey what we discover.
- Conform ourselves to Him. Admire what He admires. Hate what He hates. Pursue His goals for the world single-mindedly and whole-heartedly.
- Love and fellowship with His family.

8. God places limits on the extent of his self-disclosure because no one may see God and live (Exodus 33:19-23). Why do you think this is so?

- [Exodus 33:20 HCSB](#) But He answered, "You cannot see My face, for no one can see Me and live."

Sometimes a negative statement takes the place of a conditional clause; here it is equal to "if a man sees me he does not live".⁴⁶

- [Exodus 33:23 HCSB](#) Then I will take My hand away, and you will see My back, but My face will not be seen."

My face will not be seen. The Niphal imperfect could simply be rendered "will not be seen," but given the emphasis of the preceding verses, it is more binding than that, and so a negated obligatory imperfect fits better: "it must not be seen." It would also be possible to render it with a potential imperfect tense: "it cannot be seen."

- [John 1:18 HCSB](#) No one has ever seen God. The One and Only Son--the One who is at the Father's side--He has revealed Him.
- [1 John 4:12 HCSB](#) No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God remains in us and His love is perfected in us.

⁴⁶ Genesis 32:30; Deuteronomy 4:33; 5:24-26; Judges 6:22; 13:21-23; Isaiah 6:5