

The Bible is a series of historical accounts of God's interaction with mankind. The purpose of the record is to teach us about human nature, but more than that, to reveal the nature of God. In our passage today, perhaps more than any other in our Old Testament, God declares to us the essence of His nature.

Moses has just pled with God to forgive the nation for their idolatry and "breaking loose" (Exodus 32:25) and to go with them to the Promised Land. His plea was based on his relationship with God and the promises God had given to Abraham. It also addressed concern for the way the world would interpret what God was threatening to do.

17 And the LORD said to Moses, "This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name." God granted the request because of His relationship with Moses. The people were saved because God was pleased with their mediator. It is the same reason we are saved today, because God was well pleased with Jesus. (Matthew 3:17) The people didn't honor Moses by obeying his request to wait for him. They were ready to forget him and choose a new leader. (Exodus 32:1) But God honored Moses.

Whose honor do you desire? This is a test every child of God will face. God allows situations in which we must choose between the honor of men and the honor that comes from God alone. (Galatians 1:10; John 12:43) It is an inevitable step in our spiritual growth.

Since Moses had just heard an affirmation of God's relationship with him, he went out on a limb and made another request.

18 Moses said, "Please show me your glory." Moses had seen the burning bush (Exodus 3:3), met with God numerous times on the mountain, ate with the elders in God's presence (Exodus 24:9-10), and spent 40 days in the cloud of glory (Exodus 24:15-18), but he knew that he had only experienced a tiny fraction of the glory of God. Now Moses is asking for as much as he can handle. He had already asked to have a revelation of the ways of God so he could please God (verse 13), but now he is asking to have a visible revelation of His glory.

The word "glory" (*kabod*) is derived from a word (*kabad*) that means heavy, substantial, and so it implies the real substance of something in a good sense. It is the splendor of a thing. The definition of glory that I have found most helpful for my understanding is this: **the visible essence of a good thing.** There is a glory of earthly things and another of heavenly things. (1Corinthians 15:40) The glory of God is the

Commented [Paul1]: Exodus 32:25 (ESV)

²⁵ And when Moses saw that the people had broken loose (for Aaron had let them break loose, to the derision of their enemies),

Commented [Paul2]: Matthew 3:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Commented [Paul3]: Exodus 32:1 (ESV)

¹ When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, "Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."

Commented [Paul4]: Galatians 1:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Commented [Paul5]: John 12:43 (ESV)

⁴³ for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.

Commented [Paul6]: Exodus 3:3 (ESV)

³ And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned."

Commented [Paul7]: Exodus 24:9-10 (ESV)

⁹ Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, ¹⁰ and they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness.

Commented [Paul8]: Exodus 24:15-18 (ESV)

¹⁵ Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. ¹⁶ The glory of the LORD dwelt on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. ¹⁷ Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. ¹⁸ Moses entered the cloud and went up on the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

Commented [Paul9]: Exodus 33:13 (ESV)

¹³ Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people."

Commented [Paul10]: 1 Corinthians 15:40 (ESV)

⁴⁰ There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another.

visible expression of his nature. When we say, "Give glory to God", we are saying we should declare His nature accurately whether in words or in action.

The glory of God was manifest in the life of Jesus. (John 1:14; 17:4) We see the very nature of God in all that He said and did. The Gospels declare the glory of God. Nature, to a lesser extent, declares the glory of God. (Romans 1:20) Moses wanted to see the splendor of the essence of God. That is quite a request! We ask for the same thing when we ask for a greater revelation of Jesus and all that He means to us. (John 14:9)

¹⁹ And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.'" Because the LORD is good, and there is no evil in Him (1John 1:5), the essence of His being is goodness. His glory is goodness. In other words, the LORD is saying He will do what Moses asked. The goodness, or glory of God, will pass before Moses.

Then, the LORD repeated it in another way. He said He will proclaim His name. The Hebrew idea of one's name was the essence of who they were and their destiny. The Hebrew portion of Scripture uses this method of clarification quite frequently. It is called parallelism, which is to say something one way and then to say it again in different words so as to add richness to the expression. Glory, goodness, and "name" are all the same idea.

And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. This is a preview of the description of the glory of God. The very fact that God would bother to reveal His nature to rebellious and stubborn man is gracious. God has just had mercy on the Israelites by receiving Moses' intercession for them. He is merciful in having a relationship with a man who was a murderer, Moses. (Exodus 2:12) He is graciously about to renew the covenant after the people broke the first two commands about a month after promising to obey. **The first and foremost revelation of the nature of God is mercy and grace.**

I frequently hear that the God of the Old Testament is a brutal despot so unlike the God of the New Testament. Those who make that statement don't realize what judgment mankind deserves or they would see these attributes of grace and mercy are a dominant theme of the Old Testament.

Just think about our own situation. Was there any reason Jesus should have been incarnate, lived as an example to us, and died an excruciating death for our salvation? None, but the love in His heart for us prompted Him to extend grace and mercy to rebels such as us. (Romans 5:8)

Commented [Paul11]: John 1:14 (ESV)
¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Commented [Paul12]: John 17:4 (ESV)
⁴ I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.

Commented [Paul13]: Romans 1:20 (ESV)
²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

Commented [Paul14]: John 14:8-9 (ESV)
⁸ Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us."
⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

Commented [Paul15]: 1 John 1:5 (ESV)
⁵ This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

Commented [Paul16]: Exodus 2:12 (ESV)
¹² He looked this way and that, and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

Commented [Paul17]: Romans 5:8 (ESV)
⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

²⁰ *But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live."* God does not have a face or hands or feet, and yet the expressions of the human body are used for us so that we can relate. To see His face is to see the fullness of his glory, the whole essence of His nature. (1Corinthians 13:12) That includes justice and wrath towards all evil. No human has yet been perfected. Just as we saw that the touch of Jesus made the unclean whole, so the gaze of God obliterates evil. If God granted Moses' request, Moses would have died.

The only man that ever saw the face of God is Jesus (John 1:18), because there is nothing in Jesus that needs judgment. God is gracious toward us in keeping us from facing His justice until His work in us is complete. (1John 3:2-3) Not one of us is ready for a full revelation of God. That is why we need Jesus. Even then, His life in us is getting us ready to live in His presence. We have been made holy but we are being sanctified. (Hebrews 10:14) We are holy because of the blood of Jesus shed for us, but we are still working out what that means in our life. (Philippians 2:12) That is the process of sanctification.

God had Moses stand in a cleft in the rock and covered the opening. As the glory of God passed by, God allowed Moses to see the "back" of God, not the face. The implication is that the penetrating eyes of God's justice would not be toward Moses. Neither would Moses see the fullness of God's glory, but only as much as he was able to handle.

¹ *The LORD said to Moses, "Cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke.* Moses punishment for breaking the tablets is getting to cut and haul two more tablets of stone back up the mountain. Remember, Moses is 80 years old! He was one tough guy! An unguarded moment of anger will usually cost us.

God is about to enter into a do-over with Moses and Israel. Moses will go up and spend another 40 days on the mountain. If the people were in a hurry before and couldn't wait, now they get another chance to sit and wait and see if they can do it right this time.

Does that sound familiar? I can sure relate. I'm so grateful for God's do-overs. Sometimes I don't get a second chance, but many times when I fail I get a repeat situation to try again to yield to my Master.

⁶ *The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, YHWY, YHWY, (the eternal One!) merciful and gracious! Just as we saw in the preview, the*

Commented [Paul18]: 1 Corinthians 13:12 (ESV)

¹² For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

Commented [Paul19]: John 1:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

Commented [Paul20]: 1 John 3:2-3 (ESV)

² Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

³ And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

Commented [Paul21]: Hebrews 10:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

Commented [Paul22]: Philippians 2:12 (ESV)

¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

description begins with mercy and grace. The only reason we get a description is mercy and grace. If it weren't for mercy and grace, man would never have survived the Garden of Eden, the flood, Babel, and the numerous wars throughout our history. If it weren't for God's mercy and grace we wouldn't be here this morning (Nehemiah 9:31), there would be no Bible, no salvation, no life and death of Jesus, and we would be hopeless wretches preying on one another instead of loving one another.

Commented [Paul23]: Nehemiah 9:31 (ESV)

³¹ Nevertheless, in your great mercies you did not make an end of them or forsake them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.

But God is gracious, and that's why we just celebrated Thanksgiving. We should be most grateful for these central attributes of grace and mercy. Soon we will celebrate Christmas, the greatest of all acts of grace and mercy, when God became a man to save wretches like us. (1Timothy 1:15)

Commented [Paul24]: 1 Timothy 1:14-15 (ESV)

¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

¹⁵ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

If God were simply gracious and merciful it would be enough, but He is ⁷ *keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin*. There is the word I value most, (*hesed*) steadfast love. It is an unshakable love. If it were just for the Son I would understand. If it were just for Enoch and Moses and Elijah I wouldn't be that surprised, but it is for thousands. It is for all those who come to Jesus. (John 14:23) It is even for people like you and me. "Amazing love, oh what sacrifice, the Son of God, given for me. My debt He paid; my death He died, that I might live!" Greater love has no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13); and that is exactly what Jesus did for you and for me. "Love so amazing so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all!" Love took Jesus to the cross so that our iniquity, transgressions, and sins could be forgiven.

Commented [Paul25]: John 14:23 (ESV)

²³ Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

But that does not mean God lets evil go unpunished. God is holy. Justice must be met. ... *who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.*" We have seen how the sins of the father or mother can affect the generations that follow. Sinful ways of dealing with life are learned from parents. Harmful ways of dealing with stress are taught by example. God doesn't step in and save us from the consequences of our sin. He lets us deal with it to learn the lesson. Those who do not know Him are driven to Him by the consequences of their actions and sometimes those consequences affect the following generations.

What has God just declared? He has told Moses that He is gracious and merciful. His steadfast love is for many, as well as His forgiveness. Yet, He is holy and just and will not let sin go unpunished. This is God's self-description!

⁸ *And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped.* And when we realize what this means, we ought to do the same. What a mighty God we serve! The

revelation of glory came not so much in sight as it did in the words describing God's nature.

⁹ And he said, "If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us, for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance." This is an interesting compromise between God and Moses. God has said that He doesn't want to go with them as He might have to wipe them out because of their many sins. Moses acknowledged that they were stiff-necked, but then went right to the attributes that God had described and asked that God go with them, forgive as sins arise, and keep them as the chosen people.

Isn't that the case with us? We often refuse to bend our neck and accept the yoke and yet we want Jesus to live in us. (Galatians 5:24) We know we won't be perfect and deserve judgment, and yet we rely on the grace and mercy we received at the cross. We depend on forgiveness. We desire to remain God's children and know it is only grace and mercy that makes that possible. (Job 42:5-6)

The parallel is so strong. Perhaps God's answer to them is the same for us as well, since we are also recipients of steadfast love. *¹⁰ And he said, "Behold, I am making a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels, such as have not been created in all the earth or in any nation. And all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the LORD, for it is an awesome thing that I will do with you.* God renewed the covenant. We have a better covenant made with better blood. (Hebrews 12:24) He has done marvels in Jesus and the Apostles and through the ages since. People of the world witness the transformed lives of those who know Jesus as their Master and realize He has done an awesome thing in us.

Then God went over the promises and points of the covenant that He had given them before. They get another chance. I imagine this time they listened more intently. They had seen the consequences of taking it lightly. Sometimes we need to fail and pay the price so that we can get serious.

Though most of verses 11 through 26 have been stated earlier, verse 14 reveals a name of God we have not yet encountered. *¹⁴ (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God),* When we looked at chapter 20 verse 5 we discussed this nature of God. He is all good and is jealous of anything that would draw us away from His goodness to destructive evil. His is a holy jealousy. I'm glad He is jealous for me.

²⁹ When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his

Commented [Paul26]: Galatians 5:24 (ESV)

²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Commented [Paul27]: Job 42:5-6 (ESV)

⁵ I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you;

⁶ therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Commented [Paul28]: Hebrews 12:24 (ESV)

²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Commented [Paul29]: Exodus 20:4-5 (ESV)

⁴ "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

⁵ You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me,

face shone because he had been talking with God. Moses had seen the glory of God, at least to some extent. The glory shined from Moses' face as if some of it had rubbed off on him. Actually, the Apostle Paul tells us that this is what happens to believers as we linger in the presence of the Lord. Last week we talked about the importance of being in God's presence.

18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. 2Corinthians 3:18 (ESV) Paul is telling us that it isn't that glory rubs off on us, but rather that it transforms us. This is that process of sanctification. He is telling us that our countenance is changed by being in God's presence just as Moses' countenance was changed. (Ecclesiastes 8:1) You may not get the same kind of radioactive glow, but faces are changed! Sometimes I can tell just by looking at someone that they love the LORD. The brightest faces are those that spend time in God's presence. They are those who come to know the grace and mercy of God and how it is manifested in steadfast love and forgiveness of sin.

What a gracious and loving God, whose desire is to transform us into His wonderful image! (Philippians 3:21) Will you linger in His presence until your face begins to shine?

Commented [Paul30]: Ecclesiastes 8:1 (ESV)

¹ Who is like the wise? And who knows the interpretation of a thing? A man's wisdom makes his face shine, and the hardness of his face is changed.

Commented [Paul31]: Philippians 3:21 (ESV)

²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Questions

- 1 Why did God grant Moses' request? Relate that to Jesus.
- 2 What is glory?
- 3 Discuss Hebrews 10:14.
- 4 Why did Moses only see the "back" of God?
- 5 How did God reveal Himself?
- 6 What was Moses next request? Relate.
- 7 How does God's answer relate to us?
- 8 What new name of God is revealed? Explain.
- 9 How does Moses' shining face relate to us?

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