

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



Internet Edition 138 issued May 2019

Index

1. The Pastor's Letter (October 1978) - Moses' Great Request
2. Gleanings in the Psalms – Psalm 84
3. Mrs Seaton's Letter to the Boys and Girls – Lesson from a Field
4. A Blessed Division
5. Martyr Grace
6. Snippets - Quotations to Ponder.



At the Web Site of the Wicket Gate magazine www.wicketgate.co.uk you will also find the following recordings:

- Through the Bible with the Children – Bible Stories told by Mr Seaton.
- Congregational Praise – the singing of our Church during Worship Services
- Sermons preached by Dr Needham and Mr Seaton
- Historical Lectures given in the Church by Dr Needham
- Podcasts on Various Subjects
- Audio Archive of Sermons from 1970 to 2002. (A Work in Progress)

Moses' Great Request

(The Pastor's Letter October 1978)

Dear Friends,

The word of God is full of many great requests that the people of God have made before their God in all generations. Of all the great requests of the Word of God, there is probably none greater than the one that Moses made, as he stood before God in the Tabernacle in the wilderness and said, "*I beseech thee, show me thy glory;*" (Exodus chapter 33 verse 18). That was, surely, a great request, and a daring request; and it came as the culmination of a time where Moses has been setting before God one great request after another.

The children of Israel have greatly sinned against the Lord who has brought them out of Egypt. Moses has gone up Sinai to receive the Law, and in his absence, the people have set up the golden calf. There follow God's threats and punishments, but Moses comes time and time again, interceding on behalf of the people until, finally his prayers are acknowledged, and Moses might well have had the opportunity to relax and rejoice in the atmosphere of answered prayer. But he doesn't. And, in fact, the last thing that Moses is apparently going to do is leave-off asking from God his heart's desire. So, that desire comes in the 18th verse of the 33rd chapter of Exodus: - "And he said, I beseech thee, show me thy glory." What a request! What a great request.

Now, what exactly Moses meant in his great request must be drawn from the context of what follows. And it appears that he has requested some kind of "tangible", or "physical" manifestation and appearance of God. A sight on earth such as may only be realised in heaven. But whatever the exact nature of the request, it is the motive, and the desire underlying the request that serves as an example for every generation of the Lord's people. What really falls from the lips of Moses are the heart-breathings of the Lord's faithful in all ages - when they would know the Lord more and more to the blessing of

their souls. Like Job; "O that I knew where I might find him." Like the old hymn-writer;

"More about Jesus would I know."

And a very significant point about Moses' request here is this - that the reason that he wants to see the Lord's glory is because he has seen the Lord's glory! He has seen much; he longs to see more. He has been forty days and nights on Sinai; he has seen wondrous things and heard wondrous things. But the more he sees, the more he wants to see. He has become accustomed to asking God for His grace and favour, and it seems the more he asks, the more he receives - and so, he asks for more; "I beseech thee, O Lord, show me thy glory."

It's a word that ought to find consideration in our hearts and minds today - in this day of the Church's life on earth. In the general run of things, one of the least features of our age is the presence of the glory of God in the midst of His people. How much do we strive after an enhanced view of the glory of our Maker? And it would appear that, perhaps, we are on a "vicious circle" - one that is running anti-clockwise to Moses' at that point. As a people, have little experience of *any* real presence of the glory of God among them, so there is nothing to urge them to seek *more* of that glory. May the Lord give us all such a taste of His glory in our day that we learn the great request of Moses of long ago; "I beseech thee, show me thy glory."

Now, on the back of Moses' great request that day, you get God's great reply to that request; and I don't think we should miss that at all. (Exodus 33 verses 19 to 20) "And God said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. And he said Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me and live."

God then undertakes to place Moses in the "cleft of a rock" that is nearby and to "cover" him with His hand until He passes by, only

removing His hand in order to allow Moses to see His back as He moves on.

The incident is a famous one. But the important thing to grasp is that, ultimately, God's glory is displayed to Moses, not so much in what Moses sees, but in what Moses hears! The whole incident rests on the declarations that God makes about Himself in His attributes and character; verse 19 - "And God said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will ***proclaim the name of the Lord before thee*** ..." And once the actual display takes place, in the next chapter, it is the relating of the glory of God in His character that dominates; - "And the Lord passed by before him ***and proclaimed*** - The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth," etc. God is especially glorified in the declaration of what He is as revealed in His truth. And that view of God's glory is open to any of the Lord's people with a heart to desire it, and a faith to see it within that truth.

Here is one of the great downfalls within our churches today: people are so often looking for the spectacular instead of listening for the glorious. "Will you see my glory, Moses? Then here is what I will do; 'I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will ***proclaim*** the name of the Lord before thee.'" And when God's reply is given in the next chapter, it is the word, not the sight, that causes Moses to bow in adoration before the God who has ***declared*** what He is in His person and work. And if we ask what it is that God declares Himself to be there, it is this: a glorious sovereign, and a gracious saviour. The world revolves on its two "poles," and the glory of God revolves on those two mighty arms. God is a just God and a saviour; He is gracious, and He is glorious. Either of these is minimised at our absolute peril.

When George Gillespie opened that meeting of the Westminster divines in prayer, it was that prayer that formed the basis of the answer to the question that those men were trying to answer for the Shorter Catechism: "What is God?" "O God," George Gillespie had prayed, "Thou art a Spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable, in thy being,

wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth." And who can we possibly conceive of a God who is not something like that? We always need to go back - back beyond ourselves; back beyond men at all - back beyond Adam, when there were only the angels of God. But back yet; back beyond the angels, and beyond any created being or thing, when there was only God! We are to listen to the silence! There is nothing; only God in all the fulness of the Godhead. He is a sovereign God; an all-glorious God.

He is a gracious Saviour, as well. Wasn't it a gracious word that God spoke to Moses that day: and wasn't it a gracious illustration of God's coming graciousness in Jesus Christ His Son that God gave to Moses that day for us? "Stand upon a rock," says the Lord to him, "and I will put thee in a cleft of the rock." He was surrounded by a rock, you see: that rock was roof, and floor, and walls on either side and behind him. God put him in that rock, and from that vantage point he was to realise the greatness of God and the graciousness of God - those two "arms" that gathered within them all the glory of God that Moses could contain at that present hour.

We need only note, Moses' great response to all this; Exodus 34 verse 8 - "And Moses made haste, and bowed his head towards the earth, and worshipped."

May we learn to worship God in our day. Beseeching God that we might see His glory more and more. Realising that that glory is enveloped within those two mighty aspects of our God revealed for us in all His Holy Word. His sovereignty and His saviourhood; His greatness and His goodness towards us. The apostle Paul, although in a Roman prison, wasn't cut off from that sight. After reviewing God's grace towards him, "Now," says he, "unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever, Amen." God grant us all grace to say, "Amen" - so be it - and pursue that desire in the worship of our great God and Saviour.

Yours sincerely,
W. J. Seaton

Gleanings in the Psalms

Psalm 84



It matters little when this psalm was written, or by whom; for our part, it exhales to us a Davidic perfume; it smells of the mountain heather and the lone places of the wilderness, where King David must have often lodged during his many wars. This sacred ode is one of the choicest of the collection; it has a mild radiance about it, entitling it to be called the Pearl of Psalms. If the twenty-third be the most popular, the one-hundred-and-third the most joyful, and one-hundred-and-nineteenth the most deeply experimental, the fifty-first the most plaintive, this is one of the most sweet of the Psalms of Peace.

C. H. Spurgeon

Verse 1. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!"

What was there in these tabernacles that appeared so amiable? Perhaps the edifice was famed for the skill and cost bestowed upon it. But the Temple - that building of extraordinary beauty - was not yet constructed. The tabernacle was lowly, more suited to pilgrims than to a great people, and little becoming the king himself. Therefore, to the pious there is no need of vast or sumptuous temples to move them to love the house of God.

Musculus

Verse 2. "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."

The psalmist declared that he could not remain silent in his desires, but began to cry out for God and his house. He wept, he sighed, he pleaded for the privilege. Some need to be whipped to church, but here is David crying for it. He needed no clatter of bells from the belfry to ring him in; he carried his bell in his own bosom. Holy appetite is a better call to worship than a full chime.

C.H.S.

Verse 2. "... my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."

The word that is here rendered "crieth" is a very vivid one. It signifies to cry out as soldiers do at the beginning of a battle when they shout. Fall on, Fall on, Fall on; or when they cry out at the end of a battle, Victory, Victory, Victory. It is most vivid when applied to the cry of a hungry child for then, every whit of the child cries - hands cry, face cries, feet cry.

From T. Brooks

Verse 2. Here is a text to promote a sermon on Spiritual Desire.

1. The Object of the Desire: The House of the Lord, and the Lord of the house; the life of God in us, and our life in Him.
2. The Occasion of the Desire: Exclusion from the sanctuary. David does not say, Oh how I long for my palace, my crown, my kingdom, my sceptre: but, Oh how I long to return to the house of God.
3. The Strength of the Desire: It was an inward longing - "my soul longeth," he says; it was a painful longing - "yea, fainteth," he goes on; it was a prayerful longing - "my heart crieth out;" and it was an entire longing - "my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."

We might also note three things: -

1. The value of God's house is known by attending it.
2. It is better known if we are ever denied attending it.
3. It is best known by being then restored to it.

(Hints to the Village Preacher)

Verse 3. "Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King, and my God." The sentiments of this verse often find expression in the writings of Samuel Rutherford during that period when he was banished from his beloved church and congregation at Anwoth on the Solway Firth. To Robert Gordon of Knockbrex he wrote, "I dare not say that I am a dry tree, or that I have no room at all in the vineyard; but yet I often think that the sparrows are blessed, who may resort to the house of God in Anwoth, from which I am banished." On another occasion he wrote to David

Dickson, the great commentator on the Psalms and minister of the church in Irvine, "I pray that you never have the woeful and dreary experience of a closed mouth; for then ye shall judge the sparrow, that may sing on the church of Irvine, blessed birds." No wonder Mrs Cousins, author of the outstanding hymn written around Rutherford's sayings, included the sentiment in one of the verses where she shows Rutherford weighing the dearest things of this life with that which is to come, and rejoicing in the latter: -

"The little birds of Anwoth, I used to count them blest, -
Now, beside happier altars, I go to build my nest:
O'er these there broods no silence, No graves around them stand,
For glory, deathless, dwelleth in Immanuel's Land."

Verse 3. "*even* thine altars ..." The word "*even*" is in italics in our printed Bibles, because it is not in the original. The psalmist breaks off his sentence in the midst of it, and cries out that he needs God's altars: - "Thine altars! O Lord, Thine altars," he cries.

BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE

Dear Boys and Girls,

One early summer day John and Julie woke up to see the sun shining brightly. They bounced up out of bed and went downstairs to see their mother. "Mummy, what a lovely day! Let's go for a picnic, back to that place where we went last summer; remember how nice it was with all those bright coloured flowers and the friendly cows and the green fields?" Mother was rather busy, but when she saw their excited faces she decided to stop her work, and take them off for the

day. So, off they went and soon arrived at their favourite picnic spot, but Oh dear, their happy faces soon became so glum.

This is what they found: instead of the green grass, there was just a ploughed-up field, all bare, brown earth. No friendly cows, or bright flowers, or singing birds - just a few squawking seagulls who were picking up worms. John and Julie both cried, "Who has spoiled our lovely field?" Mummy put a hand on each of their heads and said, "Come along children, let's find another spot to have our picnic, and then I'll answer your question."

Later on, this is what their mummy told them, "Well, children, remember how this morning you thought back to your lovely field and now, this afternoon, you have found it all ploughed up. But do this, close your eyes and think of your field - not as a green flowery field - but as it will be in the autumn, with all its heavy ripe stocks of corn or wheat. Not a green field, but a golden field glinting in the sunlight." As mummy spoke, she saw the faces of the children brighten up, all smiles again.

You know, boys and girls, as we grow up and live our lives from year to year, there are many lessons for us to learn, and this is one of them. What may seem to be the end of something good is very often the beginning of something better. That's what it was like when Jesus, Who was all good, died on the cross. For when He "rose again" He made things much better, because He died for our sins, and now we, by trusting Him, can live forever with Him. Jesus taught us that lesson about the "corn of wheat" being sown into the ground and dying. But afterwards comes the harvest in that field.

Love,
Mrs Seaton.

A Blest Division

It is, perhaps, hard for us to imagine today that the friends and advisers of John Bunyan were greatly divided with regards to the publication of the Pilgrim's Progress.

Bunyan tells us how he came to his decision as he paced the floor of his cell in Bedford jail. "I am in a strait: what is best to do? One brother says, Print it; others say, Not so! My friends, since you are thus divided, ***I will print it!*** So that decides the case, and I will put the book to the test, and so prove which of you, my neighbour-friends, advised the best."



When he was released from prison he made his way to London, consulted with the great John Owen who, in turn, recommended the work to his own publisher who bore one of those magnificent names and addresses of the publishers of that day - Mr Nathaniel Ponder, at the Sign of the Peacock, in the Poultry, near Cornhill, in the City of London." The work was published, and formally licensed on February 18th, 1678, and now we know "which of" his "neighbour-friends advised the best."

Martyr Grace

It is undoubtedly the case that God gives grace for each situation into which His will and purpose brings His people: it is surely this fact that explains the outstanding attitude of so many of those "everyday" saints who died the martyr's death in those ages of the church's troubles.

Two old men threatened by their persecutor - the Mayor of London - that they would be "tied up in sacks and thrown in the Thames," made

this reply; "My Lord, we are going to the Kingdom of heaven, and whether we go by land or by water is of very little consequence to us."

Like the other two - one blind and the other on crutches - when tied to the stake, the lame one threw his crutches away and shouted to his blind companion - "Courage, brother, this fire will cure us both!"

Snippets ***Quotations to Ponder***



Shallow-Water Pilgrims.

"It has been said that men carry on a kind of "coasting-trade" with religion. In the voyage of life, they profess to be in search of heaven, but they take care not to venture so far in their approximations to it, as entirely to lose sight of the earth. And should their frail vessel be in danger of shipwreck, they will gladly throw their darling vices overboard, as other sailors their treasures, only to fish them up again when the storm is over.

John Cotton.

Conviction.

Conscience may convict men of ordinary sins, but never of the sin of unbelief. Of the enormity of this sin, no man was ever convinced but by the Holy Ghost himself.

George Smeaton.

Satan's Subtleness.

Satan is so subtle that he will make a man proud that he is not proud.

Thomas Brooks

Author and Finisher of our Faith.

And then we may learn this supreme lesson above all: that it is of the very gravest importance to keep clearly before our (and others') minds and hearts the great fact that in Christ alone is there salvation. In

Christ alone; and that in both senses of the word "alone." Not only can there be no salvation except in him, but in him is all that can be needed for salvation. Jesus only! Paul determined to know nothing in Corinth but Jesus Christ and him crucified. The only saving gospel is to find in him all. There needs no supplement to his work. His work admits to no supplement. To depend on aught else - aught else, however small it may seem - along with him is as truly to lose him as to depend on aught else instead of him. The solemn words of Paul, "Behold I Paul, say unto you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing," have their multiform application in these modern times. And it behoves us to live and to so preach today, that we can say now, as he said then, that our only trust and our only glory is in the cross of Jesus Christ; and that we find in him and in his work alone the beginning and the middle and the end of salvation. He is not only the author but also the finisher of our faith.
B.B. Warfield.

Spurgeon Summarises Spurgeon.

If any of you want to know what I preach every day, and if any stranger should say "Give me a summary of his doctrine," say this: "he preaches salvation all of grace, and damnation all of sin."

Orders are Orders.

An old backwoods preacher was being questioned by a Bishop concerning his "right" to preach the gospel. "Do you belong to the Standing Order?" asked the Bishop. "Not so far as I know," replied the old man, "But I belong to the Kneeling order!"