

WORSHIP

The Christian's Highest Occupation

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CHAPTER SEVEN

THE IMPORTANCE OF WORSHIP: MOSES

4. Moses Learned the Importance of Worship (Exodus 33:11; 34:9)

Moses, the great leader of Israel, had many and varied experiences in God's dealing with him, but it is doubtful if any could compare with the one described in Exodus 33 and 34. Let us look at for a little while and learn, still further, the importance of worship.

(1) Moses had been chosen by God

It is perfectly true that Moses chose God of his own volition, for the Scripture plainly affirms: **“By faith Moses, when he was come to years [or maturity], refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season”** (Hebrews 11:24-25).

Yet this choice of Moses was due to God's primary choice of him, even as is the case of every believer. We read that we were “chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4).

The movement of a soul towards God, is but the effect of the movement of God towards that soul. From this we learn that the worshipper is one who has been chosen and called of God.

Isaac Watts beautifully expressed this in a hymn:

“Why was I made to hear Thy voice
And enter while there's room,
When thousand make a wretched choice
And rather starve than come?”

“‘Twas the same love that spread the feast
That sweetly forced me in.
Else I had still refused to taste,
And perished in my sin.”

(2) Moses had been redeemed to God

He had experienced the deliverance of the Passover, together with all who had availed themselves of this divine provision for their salvation and security. He had been commanded by God to proclaim to the people of Israel: **“The blood shall be to you for a token . . . When I see the blood, I will pass over you.”**

Thus he had learned the value of the sprinkled blood of the Lamb to give safety, and the spoken word of the Lord to give certainty to all who took advantage of God’s provision in salvation.

(3) Moses enjoyed rare intimacy and communion with God

We are told that **“the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend”** (Exodus 33:11).

It was this holy intimacy with God that distinguished Moses from all his contemporaries. At his death he had the unique honor of having God as his grave Digger and chief Mourner. In fact, God not only buried Moses, but also buried his grave and the cemetery; for **“no man knoweth of his sepulchre until this day”** (Deuteronomy 34:5-6). Over that lonely, unknown grave on Mount Nebo’s lofty height, God wrote his epitaph: **“There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face”** (Deuteronomy 34:10).

What holy intimacy is implied by these words!

Moses was a man who enjoyed the hallowed privilege of communion with God, with nothing between to mar the fellowship. Communion is one of those words impossible to define, but which, thank God, each believer may experience.

Blessed indeed is that person who enjoys such intimacy with God, and over whose tomb can be truthfully inscribed: “Here lies the body of a person, with whom God communed face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend.”

(4) Moses aspired to a fuller revelation from God which should result in his greater appreciation of Deity.

The effect of communion with God is an ever-increasing desire for greater communion and an enlarged capacity for Him.

Paul ever kept this before him as the supreme passion of his life. He expressed it thus: **“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto his death”** (Philippians 3:10-11).

Notice Moses’ two-fold request for this greater knowledge of God.

He desired to know God’s way.

“Shew me now thy way that I may know thee” (v. 13).

By God's "way" is meant the revelation of the outgoings of Deity, as evidenced by His dealings with men.

David prayed: **"Cause thy face to shine upon us . . . that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations"** (Psalm 67:1-2).

David, by the Spirit exclaimed: **"Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: Who is so great a God as our God?"** (Psalm 77:13).

It is here that His infinite holiness, inscrutable wisdom and illimitable power is revealed.

Through God's "way," we are enabled to perceive Deity on the march.

Paul spoke of God's ways and exclaimed: **"O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and his ways past finding out!"** (Romans 11:33).

However, the full revelation of God's "way" awaited the coming of the incarnate Son of God, Who said simply: "I am the way" (John 14:6).

By this He said, as it were: "Would you see the outgoings of Deity, the revelation of God's character as seen in His holiness, wisdom, love and power? Then look at me. I am Deity on the march. **'I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.'**"

God's answer to Moses' bold request was the gracious promise: **"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."** In other words, God Himself would be the Way, and His presence with Moses would give him perfect confidence and complete rest as to the wisdom of all His dealings with Israel. Thus Moses' supreme confidence should be based upon the assured presence of God in every circumstance of life and all the varied experiences of the journey that lay before him.

He desired to see God's glory (v. 18).

Moses now gets bolder still, and actually asks the God of the universe to show him His glory! Perhaps the best definition of glory is, "displayed excellence."

It represents those unique prerogatives and excellencies that can be displayed by God alone. **"I am the LORD, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another"** (Isaiah 42:8).

Moses here says, in effect, "O God, let me see the display of all Thy Divine attributes, the bursting forth of all Thy effulgent brightness, as Thou dost demonstrate the unique excellencies of Thy Person, which distinguishes Thee from all Thy creation!"

As God has revealed His "way" in His Son, so also God has displayed all His "glory" in Him.

One Scripture, out of many, will suffice to prove this: **“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”** (II Corinthians 4:6).

Thus all the intrinsic excellencies of Deity are fully seen, harmoniously blended and marvelously displayed, in all their absolute perfection, in the Person of the Son of God.

Christ’s own words to Martha should be pondered by every believer: **“Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?”** (John 11:40). To believe on Christ, to receive Him, and to observe Him, is to see the glory of God displayed through Him.

(5) Moses was granted a rich provision by God (vss. 19-23)

Note God’s answer to this bold request.

Moses would not be permitted to see His face, yet he was to be allowed to see His “back parts” (v. 23). This expression depicts an “afterglow.”

Let us illustrate.

We cannot steadfastly gaze into the dazzling splendor of the midday sun, but we can appreciate its glories by means of a magnificent sunset. Likewise, God’s uncreated glory is so surpassingly brilliant that no human eye could bear the sight; but we can appreciate it by the “afterglow” which we were permitted to see as we study His holy word.

Eternity will provide God with the opportunity of displaying to His redeemed people “the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:7).

As we are occupied with the Lord Jesus, there will be an ever increasing apprehension and appreciation of the glory of God on the part of every believer.

In order that Moses might be enabled to see this tremendous spectacle, it was necessary that a four-fold provision be made for him by God, apart from which he could not possibly witness this demonstration of His glory.

This provides us with a beautiful picture of the still more wonderful provision God has made for each believer in Christ, by which he is enabled both to appreciate the glory of God and, as a direct consequence, become a worshipper of Him.

Moses was first given a place of acceptance before God.

“There is a place by me” (v. 21).

By this placing of Moses in a position of acceptance, nearness and dearness to God, he was thereby fitted for the sight he was soon to witness.

The Bible clearly indicates that the sinner has no standing before God, or acceptance in God's presence. By nature he is at "**enmity to God,**" and is consequently "**not subject to the law of God.**" While in this condition, he "**cannot please God**" (Romans 8:7-8).

Thus, by nature, the sinner has no place before God, or right to stand in His presence.

When a sinner, in true repentance, puts his confidence in Christ and His finished work, and receives Him as his own Saviour, he is immediately given a place of acceptance by God which fits him for the Divine presence.

Paul, by the Spirit, puts it thus: "**Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved**" (Ephesians 1:5-6).

Catesby Paget's well known lines are appropriate in this connection:

By nature and by practice far,
How very far from God!
Yet now by grace, brought nigh to Him,
Through faith in Jesus' blood.

So near, so very near to God,
I cannot nearer be;
For in the Person of His Son,
I am as near as He!

So dear, so very dear to God,
More dear I cannot be;
The love wherewith He loves the Son,
Such is His love to me!

We can assuredly gather, from what we have read, that worship necessitates that the worshipper be in a state of acceptance with God, and that this acceptance is based on God's sovereign grace.

Moses was then given a good foundation on which to stand.

"Thou shalt stand upon a rock" (v. 21).

God saw to it that beneath Moses' feet was a solid, substantial and immovable rock.

Though he might tremble as he stood on the rock, he could be certain that the rock would not tremble under him!

Of the typical significance of the rock, we are left in no doubt.

David sang: **“The Lord is my Rock”** (Psalm 18:2).

Moses himself, in his grand farewell song, exclaimed: **“I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect”** (Deuteronomy 32:3-4).

Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians says: **“Other foundation can no man lay than is laid, which is Jesus Christ”** (I Corinthians 3:11).

Our Lord’s words to Peter, when he made his memorable confession of Christ’s essential and eternal Deity, were: **“On this rock, I will build my church”** (Matthew 16:18).

Only as we stand on this Rock can we appreciate the glory of God, and become worshippers of Him in Spirit and in truth. The Christian, like Moses, has a Rock on which to stand, which all the storms of earth can never shake.

He rests his all upon the Deity of Christ’s Person, on the eternal value of the precious blood He shed, and on the Divine authority and assurance of His holy word and sings:

“On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand.”

Moses was then given a position in the Rock.

“I will put thee in a clift of the rock” (v. 22).

This rock had a clift in it, and Moses was now placed in the midst of the rock. Thus he was not only on the rock, but in it!

He was surrounded by the rock and, in this way, partook of all the strength and security of his refuge. Is not this a graphic illustration of what God has done for the believer?

Not only does the Christian have Christ as his foundation, but also as his habitation, for he is described as being **“in Christ.”** In fact, these words, **“in Christ,”** form the key phrase of the Epistle to the Ephesians which unfolds, as no other portion of God’s word, the eternal blessedness of the believer (see Ephesians 1:1-14).

A striking picture of this is seen in Proverbs 30:26.

We are told that the conies (rock rabbits) are a feeble folk, yet they make their houses in the rocks. The coney is a feeble creature, and no match whatever for the large beasts of prey but, the moment danger threatens, it runs into the shelter provided by God. The moment it enters the rock, it can laugh in the face of the pursuing foe, for it has learned that to be in the rock, is to be as the rock.

Perhaps David had this in mind when he said: “**I flee unto thee to hide me**” (Psalm 143:9). Again he said: “**Thou art my strong Refuge . . . Thou art my hiding place**” (Psalm 71:7; 32:7).

The story of how Toplady came to write his best known hymn is in order at this point.

Overtaken by a storm, as he walked on a lonely moor in England, Augustus Toplady, knowing the location of a great rock with a cleft in it, ran there for shelter.

As he entered the cleft,

- The storm broke in all its fury;
- The lightning flashed,
- The thunder rolled and the rain descended in torrents.

In the midst of all this storm, Toplady, in his refuge, was untouched, for the storm exhausted itself on the rock in which he was sheltered.

As the storm raged, a verse from Isaiah 26:4 came to his mind, which reads: “**Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.**” He looked up the verse and saw in the margin the words “*rock of ages*” and as he thought upon this Scripture, the first two lines of a hymn suggested themselves to him:

“Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.”

Later, he added the other lines, and thus the beautiful and well loved hymn came into existence.

Nineteen hundred years ago, a far greater storm burst, in unparalleled fury, upon the sinless and unprotected head of our Divine Substitute: Christ, the Rock of Ages. All the concentrated judgment of a holy God, because of our sins, fell on Him who bore them all “**in his own body on the tree.**”

In that “lone, dark and mysterious hour,” Christ received the full force of God’s righteous judgment against sin, and thus was cleft for us.

On Calvary He accomplished all the work necessary for our salvation. Now risen and glorified at God’s right hand, He ever lives to save all who will hide themselves in Him. Each believer can now, reverently and rejoicingly, sing:

“The tempest’s awful voice was heard,
O Christ, it broke on Thee!”

Thy open bosom was my ward;
It braved the storm for me.

They form was scarred, Thy visage marred;
Now cloudless peace for me.”

(d) *Lastly, Moses was given a perfect protection while in the rock.*

God said: **“I will cover thee with my hand while I pass by”** (v. 22).

There was no possibility of Moses falling out of the rock, for his security therein was guaranteed by the omnipotent covering hand of Him who later said: **“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand”** (John 10:27-28).

Thus Moses enjoyed the perfect peace which comes from the assurance of absolute security. He had been given a place of acceptance; under his feet was a solid immovable foundation; around him was his God-provided refuge; and enclosing him was God’s covering hand.

He could now worship, without one disturbing thought that if he did not hold on tight enough, he would slip out of the rock and be lost!

Many of God’s dear people are so occupied with their efforts to “hold on to Christ,” that they have neither the time nor the inclination to worship!

How much better it is for the believer to rest, in perfect peace, upon His blessed guarantee of eternal security. Thus with “a heart a leisure from itself,” he is enabled to worship the One who “doeth all things well.”

(6) *Moses was given a marvellous revelation of God* (Exodus 34:5-7)

God saw to it that Moses was now in a proper position to appreciate the awe-inspiring spectacle he was about to witness, and which should result in drawing forth his heart’s worship and adoration.

- He had a place of acceptance before God to satisfy him;
- A good foundation to steady him;
- A strong refuge to shelter him;
- An omnipotent hand to secure him.

What more could any person want? Before his wondering eyes God now displayed the glory he had asked to see.

We are told that **“The Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him and proclaimed: ‘The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth generation’”** (Exodus 34:6-7).

Moses had asked God to show him His glory, and God's response had been: **"I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee"** (Exodus 33:19).

Thus God's glory is His goodness, as revealed in His name, for God's names, in Scripture, predicate His character. God has said: **"I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another"** (Isaiah 42:8).

Surely, in so far as the Old Testament is concerned, this was the most majestic display ever seen by mortal eyes. Compared with this, the most gorgeous spectacle staged by man sinks into utter insignificance.

Here was a demonstration of the One who is described as being: **"The King, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God,"** to Whom be **"honor and glory for ever and ever"** (I Timothy 1:17).

People have travelled thousands of miles, and put themselves to great expense and trouble to watch the coronation procession of some King, or the inauguration of some president; but Moses was the solitary witness of the incomparable spectacle of Deity in procession!

Yet, wonderful though this sight must have been, a greater was witnessed nineteen hundred years ago, when God came down to earth in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Before the eyes of a wondering, yet unbelieving world, Deity was displayed in terms of a perfect human life.

John, the beloved disciple, says of Him: **"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"** (John 1:14).

The Son of God completely satisfied all His father's desire and glorified His name, as never before. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews thus describes His Person and work: **"Who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high"** (Hebrews 1:3).

Moses was not permitted to see the face of God, but John, the beloved apostle, speaks of Christ as the One: **"Which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life"** (I John 1:1).

Thus all the glory of God has been concentrated in the face of Him whom this world despised and crucified, but whom the Christian loves and honors above all others.

(7) Moses gave to God the humble, reverent, and sincere worship of his heart (Exodus 34:8)

We are told that the effect of this majestic display of God's glory was that **"Moses made haste, and bowed his head towards the earth and worshipped."**

There was nothing else left for him to do under such circumstances.

This majestic revelation put him where it will put every true believer, low at the feet of the One Who alone is worthy and to Whom worship rightly belongs.

Thus Moses learned, upon the holy mount, the significance of God's glory, as revealed in the display of His Divine attributes, and the importance and necessity for true spiritual worship in the presence of such an august Being. From this demonstration of God's glory and its resultant worship he returned, forty days later, to the camp of Israel a changed man. We are told that the glory upon which he had gazed so long was reflected in his face, for we read: **"It came to pass . . . when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone."**

From this we can surely gather that God will be no man's Debtor.

When a believer gives to God the worship due to His name, he will unconsciously reflect that fact as he comes into contact with his fellow men. There will be something about him which will distinguish him from others, though he himself will be unaware of it. Occupation with Christ is the secret of the shining face and the satisfied heart.

As the Scripture puts it: **"We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord"** (II Corinthians 3:18).

5. David Sensed the Tremendous Importance of Worship

We shall look at several of his statements in this connection.

In Psalm 69:30-31, he declares: **"I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the Lord better than an ox, or bullock, that hath horns and hoofs."**

In these words, David boldly affirms that praise and thanksgiving is of greater value to God than the offering of the most valuable of animal sacrifices. The horns speak of power and the hoofs of separation. Thus he affirms that even a life of power and separation is excelled by the greater value of worship.

In I Chronicles 16, is described David's removal of the ark, this time in a scriptural manner, from the house of Obed-Edom to the tent he had prepared for it in Jerusalem.

To celebrate this event, David, by the Spirit's inspiration, wrote a beautiful Psalm which was sung for the occasion.

Let us glance at a few extracts from this magnificent hymn:

“Glory and honor are in His presence; strength and gladness are in His place. Give unto the Lord, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due to his name. Bring an offering, and come before him: worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness . . . Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for ever and ever” (v. 26-29).

Again, in one of his beautiful Messianic Psalms, he writes of the **“King’s daughter,”** who is a type of the believer, and says: **“Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for He is thy Lord, and worship thou him”** (Psalm 45:10-11).

Notice the progression of thought.

- First there is an appeal for concentration of mind: “Hearken and consider, and incline thine ear.”
- This is followed by a call to renunciation: “Forget also thy people and thy father’s house.”
- The result of this is attraction on the part of the King: “So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty.”
- The effect of this is the adoration of the one who has thus been brought into Divine favor: “He is thy Lord and worship thou him.”

Thus the close link is emphasized between the acknowledged Lordship of Christ and the believer’s worship of Him.

To own Him as Lord is to fall at His feet and render to Him the homage that is His due.

One more quotation will suffice to show how David realized the importance of worship. In Psalm 95, where the greatness of God is described, we read: **“For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods . . . The sea is his, and he made the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture,”** to bow in worship before their mighty Creator, Saviour and Shepherd.

The Christian does so, with the added knowledge that the same One who brought all things into being by the word of His mouth, became the Redeemer of His people, and bought them with His own most precious blood.

~ end of chapter 7 ~

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