

Praying for a knowledge of God and his ways

• He still wants to know more

• Moses' Concern for the nation

• God's incomplete answer

• Request for authentication

• Summary: four requests

• God's answer

• "Wrestling"

• God enjoys our fellowship

God's glory – the highest prayer

• No longer asking for God's support and gifts but for increased knowledge of God

Every Christian should pray 'Teach me your ways', as Moses did^{☐1}. Our prayers should ascend higher and higher until we are praying for a knowledge of God Himself, and the 'ways' He has in leading us.

The Christian faith is not just a doctrine or a morality or a matter of doing good to others or of studying a holy book. The Christian faith is a matter of knowing God! The Bible is an encouragement and guide in seeking God Himself.

Moses had been a believer a long time. He had experienced some wonderful things in his encounters with God. But he still wants to know more. He wants more of God, more understanding of His ways.

Moses was not praying selfishly. His praying was not purely personal. He wanted this special enabling from God for the sake of Israel. 'Remember that this nation is your people', he prays^{☐1}.

God answers, 'My presence will go along; and I will give you rest'^{☐1}, but it is not a complete answer, for the word for 'you' is singular. God says He will go with Moses, but Moses is still concerned about the whole nation. *'If your presence does not go with us... How will anyone know you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us?'*^{☐2}.

Moses wanted authentication 'How will the world as a whole know that we are your people,' he prays, 'if you do not show in some great way that you are with us?' How will we be authenticated in the eyes of anyone else? 'What, other than God's presence, will distinguish me and your people from all the other people ...?'^{☐1}.

So Moses has prayed for four things: (i) detailed guidance, (ii) the presence of Yahweh, (iii) knowledge of the ways of Yahweh, and now (iv) authentication.

In Exodus 33:17, Moses gets his answer. 'I will do the very thing you have asked for ...' God allows Himself to be persuaded by Moses' arguments.

This is what it means to pray. There is an atmosphere of 'wrestling' in all of this. Moses is arguing with God and giving God reasons why He should answer Moses' praying. His prayer is rising higher and higher. He still has not finished. He will go higher still.

When we pray like this we have fellowship with God Himself. Why does God demand that we get things from Him in this way? I do not know, but I suspect it is because He simply likes the pleasure of our company! God enjoys fellowship, He likes talking to us, and He likes it when we talk to Him.

Next we come to the highest and greatest part of Moses' prayer. *'Then Moses said, "Please show me your glory"'*^{☐1}. The request is related to God's wish to have the tabernacle built. The tabernacle will be a home for God's glory. God will dwell in Israel.

It is this 'glory of God' that Moses asks to experience personally. His prayer is getting greater and greater. What Moses now wants more than anything else is to experience and realise for himself the greatness of God. He has had many experiences of God, including seeing the glory of God in the wilderness^{☐1} and experiencing God upon Mount Sinai^{☐2}. He had even spoken to God 'face to face'^{☐3}. One is amazed at Moses' spiritual ambition. He dares to ask more and more from God. He is now

☐1 33:13

☐1 33:13b

☐1 33:14

☐2 33:15

☐1 33:16

☐1 33:18

☐1 16:7, 10
☐2 24:16, 17
☐3 33:11

asking not simply for God's support and God's gifts. Rather he is asking that he might have an increased knowledge of God Himself. The greatest spiritual blessing any person can have is to know God Himself.

1. *Partial answer – a passing glimpse of God's glory*

1. **Moses receives a partial answer.** He does not get everything he asks for, just as he wants it. When we pray we have to leave it with God to determine how He answers. We have seen this several times in Moses' praying. He asked to be an atonement for Israel's sin^{□1}, but God did not precisely answer this request in the form Moses offered it. Then Moses prayed 'You have not let me know whom you will send with me'^{□2}. God answered, 'My presence will go along; and I will give you rest.' It was only a partial answer. Now something similar happens again. God will give Moses an experience of His greatness^{□3}, but He tells Moses that there is no way in which Moses can fully see God's glory with his naked eye^{□4}. The answer is modified. Moses does not fully get everything he wanted.

□1 32:32
□2 33:12
□3 33:19
□4 33:20

2. *Moses is to receive a revelation of God's glory*

2. **Moses is to receive a revelation of God's glory.** God arranges that Moses should see a part of the glory of God. He cannot see it totally; it would kill him. The visible glory of God is brighter than ten thousand suns; no one can see God and live. But God arranges for Moses to see a passing glimpse. And at the same time God will speak. The 'glory' of God is the radiation of God's character. 'I will make my goodness pass in front of you,' says God^{□1}. The glory of God is God's goodness-become-visible. It is the same as His 'name'. There will be (i) something to see, (ii) something to hear, and at the same time (iii) an answer to Moses' prayer. God will have compassion on many (but not all) of the people of Israel who sinned so badly in worshipping the golden calf, and (iv) at the same time God will renew His covenant with Israel and again give them His law.



□1 33:19

• *If we please him, Jesus will enlighten our spiritual eyes*

God will put Moses in a broken part of a rock on the mountainside^{□1}. Moses will be 'covered with God's hand'^{□2}. There will be some kind of protection over him so that Moses cannot see or be hurt by God's glory. Then the visible glory of God will pass by. **After** God has passed by in this way, Moses will be allowed to see the 'after-glow', the final split-second of the passing glory of God. Perhaps we shall never have an experience quite like this, but we should to get as much as we can. Jesus promised us 'I will show myself to him.' If we please Him, Jesus is able to let us see Him with the eye of faith. It will not be exactly identical to Moses' literal and visible glimpse of the glory of God, but it will be similar. It will be a step in that direction. If we please Him, Jesus will enlighten our spiritual eyes so that we see something of His glory.

□1 33:21
□2 33:22

• *We will see something of this glory!*

 <p>slices.org.uk</p>	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible</i> (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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