

## Loving God – 2b The Means in the Life of a Christian

The foundation of loving God is the fact that He is the only God who is glorious. The starting point for fallen human beings to be able to see and love that glory, is regeneration and justification - a new heart and a new state.

But assuming then that such a new heart is in place; assuming that a new state is true of a person, is loving God with all your heart, soul and mind automatic? Or to ask it another way, once we have new hearts and a new state, why don't we love God with all our heart, soul and mind? If the moral madness has been removed, why don't we pursue God and love Him as the Supreme Treasure and ultimate end of our lives?

The answer is simple: the same thing which occurs at salvation must continue to occur in our lives to sustain and grow love for God.

What happens at salvation? The Spirit of God illuminates the gospel of the glory of Christ for the first time, and we turn and trust Him. That's regeneration and saving faith.

But from that point on, a similar thing must occur. The Spirit illuminates the glory of Christ to us, and we respond with love. That's sanctification and living faith.

The secret of loving God is found in the Gospel and in your conversion. That was your first taste of the glory of God. That is where you return.

The motive for loving God is God Himself! It is His glory! It is His attributes of greatness and goodness in Jesus Christ, which are now directed towards you in your favour, making them a source of rejoicing, love, admiration and worship.

You will not love God because you are told you must do it. You will not love God because you feel guilty for not doing it. You will not love God because the pastor tells you to do it. You will not love God by keeping every Christian ritual you can think of and doing it in a disciplined fashion. You will love God when your new heart sees the glory of God.

The sun does different things to different objects. The sun beating down upon a rock cracks it. The same sun shining upon a plant causes it to grow. The glory of God to an unregenerate heart is cause for hiding, suppressing, covering. The glory of God to a regenerate heart is precisely the thing that causes love and joy to spring up in your heart.

Just as in conversion, it is the Spirit of God who takes the Word of God and reveals the Son of God.

This is what Paul is saying in 2 Corinthians 3. He is contrasting New Testament ministry with Old Testament ministry. He uses an incident in Moses' life to illustrate what happens in the life of every New Testament believer. Through this incident, Paul draws some similarities and some differences.

**Firstly, Moses was a believer.** Moses is similar to you if you are a Christian. Moses had already experienced grace.

**Exodus 33:11-12** *So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle.*  
<sup>12</sup> ¶ *Then Moses said to the LORD, "See, You say to me, 'Bring up this people.' But You have not let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found grace*

in My sight.'

Jesus says of His sheep:

**“John 10:3** *To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.*

If you are saved, then you have experienced God graciously opening your eyes, knowing you by name, leading you to this point.

**Second, the grace which Moses had received made him hungry for more.** It was precisely because he had experienced something of God, that he was desirous for more grace.

**Exodus 33:13** *“Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people.”*

Once you have come to experience God's glory in true conversion, nothing else will again satisfy. You may try, but you will find they even fail to bring you the joy they used to before you were saved. The heart of a believer says, “Give me more grace”.

**1 Peter 2:2-3** *as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, <sup>3</sup> if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.*

Look at Moses' request further,

**Exodus 33:18** *And he said, “Please, show me Your glory.”*

Moses desired to know God personally. He wanted to know and see the glory of the God He loved. What does he mean by glory? Glory is the beauty of all God is. It is what radiates from the truth of the worth of God's character. Gold is beautiful, but it is when the light hits it and it glints and sparkles that you see its beauty and you value it. God's Person is valuable. But it is when His Person is revealed, when it glints and sparkles – that you are seeing His glory.

**Now, what motive do you think Moses had for asking to see God's glory?** Was it for riches? Fame? Power? Was it so that he could tell others and be admired himself? In other words, was this request to see God's glory a means to something else, or was it the absolute goal of Moses' heart? When you see the glory of God, and your heart responds in love, you have reached the goal (though you will repeat it many times). There is nothing higher or beyond seeing God's glory and loving Him for it. You do not use seeing God's glory as a stepping stone.

**John 17:3** *And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*

**Philippians 3:10** *That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,*

Here's another question. **Why does he have to ask God to show him his glory?** Why can't he just look? Because God must sovereignly reveal Himself. God must grant this view of Himself by His Spirit. God sovereignly chose to honour Moses' desire. He chooses to be gracious.

**Exodus 33:19** *Then He said, “I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”*

Do you know that you can no more produce this in your own heart than you could raise your own dead heart from the grave? You cannot make illumination happen. God must sovereignly grant it, in response to your seeking.

So which is it? Do we ask God to give us this kind of heart or do we seek God with all our heart? The answer is yes. Is it a matter of God sovereignly working in my heart so as to see Him, so as to love Him, or is it a matter of me willing to pursue Him, so as to love Him? The answer is yes. You will not love God unless He grants you sight; He will not grant it unless we seek Him as our absolute and ultimate end.

Think of David's prayers "Incline my heart" ... "Unite my heart" ... "Enlarge my heart" ... "Open my heart"

Now we come to the central event – when God showed Moses His glory. **What did that entail exactly?** Well, look at God's description of it.

**Exodus 33:19-23** *Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." <sup>20</sup> But He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live." <sup>21</sup> And the LORD said, "Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. <sup>22</sup> "So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. <sup>23</sup> "Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen."*

Now don't miss this. On the one hand, Moses experienced something which not many people will ever experience on this side of eternity – a kind of visible manifestation of God, limited to seeing God's back parts, and not His face.

However, take note of something in verse 19.  
"I will make my goodness pass before you"

Have you ever seen goodness? What colour is goodness? What is its texture? What shape is goodness? What dimensions does it have? The truth is, you can't see goodness with the eyes, and you see goodness with the heart.

Look at something else:

"I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you."

Have you ever seen a proclamation? When someone proclaims something, can you see those words coming out of the speaker's mouth? No. How do you see a proclamation? You can't see a proclamation with the eyes; you see a proclamation with the eyes of your heart.

Look down in 34:5-7

**Exodus 34:5-7** *Now the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. <sup>6</sup> And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, <sup>7</sup> "keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."*

How did God reveal His glory to Moses? He proclaimed His name. What is God's name? It is His character, His person.

**The glory of God was manifested to Moses in a proclamation of truth about God.** God proclaims the truth about himself – He proclaims His attributes before Moses.

Moses primarily experienced the glory of God in the proclamation of truth about God by God. God proclaimed to Moses in words the essence of His great name.

Do you realise that the same is true for us? We see the glory of God when the Spirit of God takes the truth of God, in the Word of God, and proclaims His name before us. The Spirit is never divorced from the truth. The truth is the medium in which He flies. The truth is the waters over which He hovers. They that will worship God must worship Him in Spirit and in truth. The Spirit of God takes the Word of God and shows us the Son of God.

If you are waiting for the glory of God to happen to you in a dream, in a vision, in a sudden, unexpected moment of epiphany, you are looking in the wrong place. God has chosen to reveal Himself in propositional form. He has revealed Himself in the form of propositional truth. Truth which can be understood. Objective statements that can be examined, analysed and understood. That means anyone desirous to see God's glory pursues God in His truth. Not for academic reasons. Not for knowledge which puffs up. Not to calm a conscience. Not to please a pastor. Not to find a Bible lesson or prepare a sermon. A believer who wants to love God, pursues God in the truth of His Word - whatever that requires.

If God has revealed Himself in a book, then that means learning how to read, learning language and grammar, unpacking some of the history and context, understanding what it meant when written, so you can understand what it still means. The Bible is not some kind of chemical reaction that you hope happens by staring at the words or by mindlessly assimilating the information. It is revealed truth about God, and your diligence to understand that truth will be your diligence to see the glory of God.

You see, when it comes to seeing God's glory, we see with the eyes of the heart.

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

**And that means seeing God's glory is dependent on hearing.** Words correspond to hearing. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing of the Word of Truth.

And there is a contrast here. Moses could not look upon God's face. But what does 2 Corinthians 4:6 tell us about God's glory now in the New Covenant? The glory of God is seen in the face of Jesus. We look into the face of Jesus in the Scriptures, and we see the glory of God, not merely His back parts while hidden in the cleft of a rock, but we with open face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord.

Whereas Moses veiled his face, so that the Israelites would not see the fading glory of those meetings he had with God, you and I experience an increasing glory which does not diminish as we keep exposing ourselves to the glory of the Son of God in the Word of God. Do you realise that the Bible is saying that in some ways, a New Testament believer has a superior experience than Moses did?

When we study and meditate and memorise and apply the Word of God in a diligent search for Christ Himself, and for Christ as our ultimate end, God will delight to reveal His glory to us in those truths to the eyes of our heart.

Now there is one other thing here. Moses was changed by seeing the glory of God.

**Exodus 34:29-30** Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses' hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him. <sup>30</sup> So when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.

When we behold the glory of God in the Word of God, we will be changed by it. That's what this Scripture says.

**2 Corinthians 3:18** But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

For us, the change is not a change to our skin, but a change in character. We change to become more like Jesus Christ. We are changed into the image of the One we are seeing. You see, something springs up in our heart when we see Him as glorious.

The Bible calls it faith.

**1 Peter 1:7-8** that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, <sup>8</sup> whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

When you love someone you don't see in front of you, that is faith. Faith is the love that springs up in a human soul that has seen and tasted something of the sufficiency of Christ.

And the effect is to cause you to admire Him and imitate Him.

The effect is to change your whole mind, to renew it and make it like His.

The effect is to make you more confident in trusting and obeying Him.

The effect is to make you more desirous to be with Him, and to set your affections where He is, and to hope for His return.

That changes you. It transforms you. The Greek word is μεταμορφούμεθα

To become more like Christ is to become more like the only man to love God supremely.

The more we are changed to be like Him, the more we will love Him. The aim of sanctification is worship.

Do you see how this happens? God's grace works in you to provoke you to want to know Him more, for no other reason than Him. So you seek Him for more grace. He is the one who must graciously reveal truth to us again. As we search out the truth and seek to understand it, God the Spirit illumines our minds, the eyes of our hearts and grants us a fresh view of the beauty of Christ, the glory of Christ. The result is faith – love for the one we have not seen physically. Out of faith will spring up all the various manifestations of love – adoring God, praising Him, abiding in Him, waiting on him, trusting Him, pleasing Him, submitting to Him, obeying Him surrendering to Him, sacrificing for Him, serving Him, giving to Him, confessing to Him, repenting of sin. Arising out of faith is a mind which loves what He loves and hates what He hates.

But what does it come back to - the grace of regeneration which urges us on to the grace of sanctification. Becoming more like Christ by beholding His glory, and becoming more like Him.

Firstly, ask God to grant you a heart that desires Him. Pray the grace upon grace prayer. Grace has got me far enough to where the world does not satisfy, Lord. Now grant me more grace to desire you alone.

Seek God with a single-minded heart. Purpose to find no ultimate satisfaction except in the glory of God. Do not seek God to get a thrill, or to feel better about yourself, or to calm your conscience. Have the heart of Esther – If I perish, I perish. Go seeking God knowing He is a reward, but not seeking any other kind. That single-minded heart is something we will look at next week – it is the heart of a disciple.

Ask God to see. Admit your utter helplessness to see Him. Jesus said of the disciples:

*“**Matthew 13:16** But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; “If you see the truth of God in the Word and the result is a growing love for God, then God has been good to you. **Matthew 16:17** Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.*

So pray the prayer of psalm 119:18

**Psalm 119:18** *Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law.*

Take up the means, search for the face of God in Jesus Christ in all His revealed truth.

**Luke 24:27** *And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.*

If you recognise it is God who must give you such a heart, if you realise it is God who must enlighten, but you fail to take up His means, you are like someone who prays but does not obey. Nothing will happen. Become a Bible-saturated person.

There is a sense in which loving God is automatic to a believer and a sense in which it is not. It is automatic in the sense that when a believer sees the glory of God, his or her new heart instinctively responds with love. It is not automatic in the sense that we do not see His glory automatically. That is where the fight comes in.