May the glory of the Lord be in your view

*Then Moses said, “I pray You, show me Your glory!”*

 Exodus 33:18

If we, as the sinful creatures we are, were to suddenly be face to face with the infinitely holy God of the universe, it would be our destruction. His righteous disdain for evil prevents it from even being in His presence. In response to Moses’ request, God would not let him see His face, because that would be the fullness of God and Moses would not survive.

However, because Moses had found favor with God, God allowed His goodness to pass before Moses. While the goodness of God is evident everywhere in nature, only those who are in Christ (have favor with God) are able to truly see the goodness of God, and so, comprehend His glory.

The Lord also pronounced His glorious name, YHWH, to Moses as He passed before Him. In the Bible, the name is not simply a way to identify; the name contains all the essence of the person. Yahweh is the glorious expression of the great I AM.

In His great kindness, God shielded Moses from His perfect holiness, while giving him a glimpse of his Creator and Saviour. In Jesus, we have the perfect representation of God Himself, in a way that won’t destroy us. But if we only accept Him, He will save us to the full, and we will one day be able to be in the presence of the glorious God, no longer needing shielded from His glorious face.

In Christ’s love

John

 9-11-22

Genesis 13:1-18

Abram is learning. He had proved his faith in God by leaving his homeland and going where God told him to, believing in the promise God had made to him. God promised Abram land and many offspring, and Abram believed even though he was being brought into an already occupied land and he and Sarai were old and childless. They traveled the length of the promised land and worshiped the LORD regularly as they went.

I can’t help but think about Sarai during these times; of all the things that she endured. Abram followed God and Sarai went with him because she was his wife. Now, it might be argued that she didn’t have a choice since she was a woman and needed a husband to support her. But consider how beautiful she was. I believe that she could have stayed behind in the comfortable Pagan culture of Ur in Babylon and found herself another man. But she stayed with her husband during hundreds of miles of travel through unfamiliar, and often uncomfortable, land.

As we will see, Sarai certainly had her faults, but her character and righteousness were brought to light by the apostle Peter in his first letter. In chapter 3 verses 5 and 6 he writes, “*For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear*.”

My purpose in bringing this up is not to discuss the roles of husbands and wives in marriage; we’ve discussed this before. We know that submissive does not mean inferior. While the wife is to be submissive and respect her husband, he is to love, honor, and cherish her. It’s the way God has set things up and marriages work better when we do them God’s way.

My point is that while Abram followed God’s calling, Sarai followed Abram. While Abram’s name has become great, so has Sarai’s. While kings and nations have come from Abram and the land promised by God came to his offspring and will still come to him, through Sarai came the seed of the woman. She bore the child of promise; Isaac was promised to them by God and she bore him herself even though it was impossible. Through her was fulfilled the promise that all nations would be blessed in Abram. Her reward in heaven will be every bit as great as his.

Abram encountered his first test when famine hit the land and he did a fine job of failing the test. He chose to handle the problem himself by earthly wisdom and headed for Egypt. We considered how in a spiritual sense, Egypt can be thought of as the world system of seeking stability and security in what the world has to offer. We who are citizens of the Kingdom of God must keep our focus firmly on our King and where our citizenship lies; because our King is able, and will, take care of us. We live in the world and deal with it but our hope is not here.

Abram went to Egypt, and although he left with great wealth, he jeopardized the line of the seed of the woman when Sarai was taken by Pharoah. Certainly, no human mistakes are going to thwart the plans of God. But Abram’s deception caused anguish on Pharaoh’s house in the form of plagues; so, his lack of faith and sin brought problems to another who didn’t even know what was happening. This doesn’t sound fair, and it’s not fair, but that is the nature of sin and that is why it is so dangerous.

Here is what Abram did right. When he was ejected from Egypt, he went back to where God had wanted him. He went back to the section of the Promised Land that bordered Egypt, the Negev. The Negev is the “South Country”; the southern section of the Promised Land. Abram took everything he owned, along with his nephew Lot and everything he owned, and returned to where God had led him.

What we see here is that although Abram sinned, he turned back to God. It needs to be the same for us. Even though we are Christians, we will still fail, we will still sin. When we do these things, we must go back to Jesus, confess, and ask forgiveness. There is no sin so grievous that God will not take us back. Think about King David. He committed adultery with Bathsheba and then murdered her husband. But when he turned back to God in repentance, he was forgiven.

Of course, this does not mean that one won’t still suffer consequences because of sin. Because of what David did, his family was in turmoil from then on and his kingdom was at war. Each of us can look back over our lives and see difficulties we have faced because of sin; yet we are forgiven and we belong to Christ.

Abram is actually now facing his next test; he was very rich. Riches can bring many difficulties, but the most dangerous is that we become reliant on them instead of God. Proverb 18:11 says, “*A rich man’s wealth is his strong city, And like a high wall in his own imagination.*” The rich man is tempted to trust in his money and possessions; he imagines that he will be safe because of his wealth. When we consider eternity knowing that we won’t take any of it with us, we can see the folly of depending on wealth.

There is nothing wrong with wealth, in and of itself. Compared to the rest of the world, each of us here is wealthy. The test of having wealth is whether or not we will remain dependent on God for true security. If so, we can be generous in using that wealth to bless others and further the Kingdom of God. Depending on money usually leads to arrogance because of the earthly power it brings. As we see, Abram passed this test.

The combined wealth of Abram and Lot led to problems. A section of land can only support so much livestock. In addition, the local people groups were in the area and also had livestock. Quarreling over grazing area and water broke out between the herdsmen. In a land with no law enforcement and rule by those who had strength, this could have led to violence and loss of life.

Abram acted quickly to stop the problem. He had all the rights to give orders and the strength of numbers to enforce them; yet he voluntarily laid them aside and deferred to Lot. Instead of simply telling Lot where to take his belongings, he allowed Lot complete freedom in choosing where to go. The idea of laying aside one’s own rights is very foreign to us, especially in the United States. While having rights is good and even necessary in a civil society, we are sometimes called to lay those rights aside for the greater good. For a Christian, the greater good is the glory of God and His Kingdom.

In Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, he talks about fights taking place in the church; fights involving rights. In chapter 6 verse 7 he asks them, “*Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?*” Paul is not asking these questions in the context of the world; he is not telling us to let everyone walk all over us. The context is the church which should be glorifying God. He is asking the saints to self-sacrificially lay aside their rights to maintain peace and unity in the body of Christ. Doing so is amazing to the world. It demonstrates the defeat of satan and builds the Kingdom of God.

Lot is a very interesting character. He messes up time after time and he starts right here. The thing we have to keep in view is what we are told in 2 Peter. The apostle Peter is writing about God’s supreme ability to save and protect those who are His. In chapter 2 verses 7 and 8, he says, “*[God] rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds).*” So, even though we read about Lot continually fumbling around and making serious mistakes, He apparently believed God and so, was counted righteous.

Again, no mistake is too great for the forgiveness we have in Christ. This is not an invitation to blatantly go about sinning, but an invitation to hold fast to the power of the cleansing blood of Jesus. Time and again, we can turn back to Him in repentance and He will take us in His loving arms.

Lot could have humbly given the choice back to Abram where it belonged; he could have picked a somewhat less desirable land instead of the best; he could have sought guidance from the LORD, or even from his older and wiser uncle. Instead, Lot lifted his own eyes and chose what appeared to be the best of the land for sustaining livestock.

We can detect a foreboding even in the way Lot viewed that section of the valley of the Jorden River. He compared it to the Garden of Eden; while beautiful, God had thrown the people out because of sin. He compared it to Egypt, a place involved in Abram’s sin and that they had been thrown out of. And as always, Egypt is the spiritual representation of depending on the world instead of God.

In this section of the valley were five cities; the most famous of which were Sodom and Gomorrah, although they were all guilty of the same wickedness. In verse 13, the reference to “*the men of Sodom*” is a shorthand way of talking about the population of all five cities. It is disturbingly significant that these cities were singled out as being “*wicked exceedingly and sinners against the LORD*”, considering that the whole area of Canaan had already been designated for God’s judgement.

Apparently, the wickedness of these cities was known, but Lot chose to move into the area anyway. As we continue learning about Lot, we will see that although these people did not turn him from God, he was influenced enough by them to make poor decisions; decisions that would not be pleasing to Yahweh.

As we live in this world, one that can be increasingly described as “Sodom”, we must constantly be engaged in the struggle to remain true to Christ and His commands. This world is our mission field and we are called to spread the good news of the Gospel even in the most desperately evil places. At the same time, we adorn ourselves daily with the armer of God so that we are not defiled or led astray from our Saviour.

If we look closely, we can see the hand of God at work. Even in Lot’s misguided decision, he is used by the LORD. Into this area of great wickedness came a righteous man of God. The people who lived in the valley would have been exposed to God’s goodness and His righteousness. They would have had a chance to turn from their ways to the ways of God. We know that they didn’t take this opportunity and they experienced the fierce wrath of God in their complete destruction.

Here is the Gospel. For those who accept it, it is the means to salvation and everlasting peace with God. For those who reject it, it is the means to face the wrath of God and everlasting torment. The cities of the valley are a physical picture of rejecting Christ.

Abram has handled this test well. He didn’t let his wealth go to his head and was willing to lay aside his rights in order to peacefully solve a difficulty. He trusted that God’s promise of land was abundant enough that he could be generous with Lot and let him have whatever he wanted. And so, God spoke with Abram again.

Whereas Lot had lifted up his eyes on his own, God told Abram to lift his. And then God told Abram that all he saw in every direction would be his. Interestingly, this would have included the land that Lot had chosen. Abram has lost nothing in his generosity. Once again, God tells Abram that he will have a tremendous number of descendants. Both of these are impossible promises, but as Jesus pointed out, “*[W]ith God all things are possible.*” And we now know that the number of Abram’s descendants, both physical and spiritual, is huge. His descendants had the land of Canaan and he will get to live there forever in the new Earth.

Abram wandered through the land to see what would come to be his and then he settled by the oaks of Mamre. He still didn’t own this place, but he was content to dwell in the land that God had promised him. In gratitude and in worship, Abram built an alter to the almighty God of the universe.

Prayer

We pray, Lord Jesus, in gratitude, that You have overcome the world, sin, and death, by Your perfect life and by Your perfect sacrifice. Thank You for clearing our way to the Father, so that our sins are atoned for, and for those times we stumble, by repentance, our right relationship with Him can be reestablished. Jesus, You have made these things possible by Your obedience to the Father and because of Your love for us.

Father, as our Saviour taught us to pray, we ask You not to put us to the test. But we are comforted Lord, because we know we will receive no temptation without a means of escape, and that if You do allow our testing, it is for our good and for Your glory. In the times of temptation, Lord, we ask for the Holy Spirit’s powerful help; in wisdom, in discernment, and in keeping our focus completely on our Saviour.

Blessed Lord, thank You for imparting the righteousness of Jesus Christ to Your children. We confess that our own righteousness is worthless in Your sight; and so, we depend entirely on Jesus for salvation. And by Him, we thank You that our good works become acceptable to You. Use us to build Your Kingdom.

We praise You Lord in Jesus’ name

Amen