

IN AWE OF GRACE

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Sept. 1, 2013

Sermon in a sentence: Let us consider with awe the Grace of God that greatly supersedes The Law of Sinai.

Scriptures: 2 Cor. 3:1-18; Heb. 12:14-29; Titus 2:11-14

2 Cor. 3:1-18 NASB Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you? ² You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; ³ being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. ⁴ Such confidence we have through Christ toward God. ⁵ Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as *coming* from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, ⁶ who also made us adequate *as* servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for **the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.** ⁷ But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading *as* it was, ⁸ **how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?** ⁹ For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. ¹⁰ For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory because of the glory that surpasses *it*. ¹¹ For if that which fades away *was* with glory, much more that which remains *is* in glory. ¹² Therefore having such a hope, we use great boldness in *our* speech, ¹³ and *are* not like Moses, *who* used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what was fading away. ¹⁴ But their minds

were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. ¹⁵ But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; ¹⁶ but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, *there is liberty*. 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 from the Lord, the Spirit.

Heb. 12:14-29 NASB Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵ See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; ¹⁶ that *there be* no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a *single* meal. ¹⁷ For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears. ¹⁸ For you have not come to a *mountain* that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, ¹⁹ and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which *sound was such that* those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them. ²⁰ For they could not bear the command, "IF EVEN A BEAST TOUCHES THE MOUNTAIN, IT WILL BE STONED." ²¹ And so terrible was the sight, *that* Moses said, "I AM FULL OF FEAR and trembling." ²² But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, ²³ to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of *the* righteous made perfect, ²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than *the*

blood of Abel. 25 See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned *them* on earth, much less *will we escape* who turn away from Him who *warns* from heaven. 26 And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, “YET ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN.” 27 This *expression*, “Yet once more,” denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. 28 Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; 29 for our God is a consuming fire.

Titus 2:11-14 NASB For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, 14 who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

Most of us are familiar with the situation at Mt. Sinai when God delivered the Law to Moses. There was a dramatic display of God’s power and majesty – a fearsome spectacle!

The children of Israel were absolutely terrified (as was Moses himself), and asked that God would never interact with them in that way in the future.

After this encounter however, Moses face shone with the glow of the glory of God and for some time afterward he wore a veil to cover his face.

Nonetheless, when we read the theological analysis of this event by Paul and the writer to the Hebrews, we are faced with an amazing fact. As awe-inspiring as Mt. Sinai was, it pales in comparison with God's ultimate objective and plan for humanity: grace and mercy through Jesus Christ!

The Law of Sinai was given as a signpost, a foreshadowing, a "schoolmaster" leading us to Christ.

When God showed the 'preview' at Sinai, the people ran from Him in fear. Yet as He was in the midst of revealing His incredible plan for the eternal redemption of humanity, the people in Jerusalem gathered around Jesus shouting: "crucify Him".

Nature itself highlighted the magnitude of each event with thunder and lightning, an earthquake and darkness, but at the death of Jesus, the dead were also raised back to life! (And it is still the same today: Jesus' death is still bringing new life to humankind!)

Moses veiled his face to hide the fading 'glory' of the Law, but:

2 Cor. 3:18 NIV ... we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Every day as the people looked at Moses, there was less need for the veil as the brightness of his face faded. But our situation is the complete opposite.

God veiled Himself in flesh (Heb. 10:20) so we could see Him within the parameters of our earthly limitations. Through His Word and through the eyes of the Spirit, we

look upon Him. And the more we look, the more we are transformed into His image “with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit”.

As human beings, we find it easy to focus on outward appearances rather than the internal core of a person or thing. The whole nation of Israel stood in awe of the spectacle at Mt. Sinai. Today, very few stand in awe of the spectacle of Calvary.

At Sinai, God was deemed strong and majestic in the delivery of a weak Law, which had no power to save from sin and death. On the contrary, Jesus was deemed weak as He purchased salvation for humanity through the strength of His death, burial and resurrection.

The preaching of the gospel of God’s grace is ignored by the majority in our society, and there are no national celebrations in honour of His awesome grace. Christians certainly celebrate Easter, but the majority thinks of bunnies and eggs.

We however, take time today to stand in Awe of God’s Grace.

2 Cor. 4:15 NASB For all things *are* for your sakes, so that the **grace** which is spreading to more and more people **may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.**

Heb. 2:9 NASB But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, *namely*, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so **that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.**

Titus 2:11 NASB For **the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men....**

1 Peter 5:10 NASB After you have suffered for a little while, **the God of all grace**, who **called you to His eternal glory in Christ**, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you.

1 Peter 5:5 NASB You younger men, likewise, be subject to *your* elders; and all of you, **clothe yourselves with humility** toward one another, **for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.**

1 Peter 4:10 NASB As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as goodstewards of the manifold grace of God.