



Devotional Thoughts :: Beams of Infinite Brightness

Beams of Infinite Brightness - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2008/2/7 0:15

"God Himself has revealed Himself as one who cannot be known. Our progress often consists in knowing what He is not, rather than what He is. We cannot fully know Him as He is. He is immortal, perfect, infinite and we are only mortal, finite, limited. His light is such that no creature can approach Him. He is not seen, not because He cannot be seen, but because we cannot bear the sight of Him. The light of God, in Whom is no darkness, forbids all access to Him by any creature. We who cannot behold the sun in its glory are too weak to bear the beams of infinite brightness."

- John Owen (from "The Mortification of Sin", 1656)

Re: The Beams of Infinite Brightness - posted by vico, on: 2008/2/7 9:37

"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." 1Timothy 1:17

"Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see : to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen." 1Timothy 6:16

Re: The Beams of Infinite Brightness - posted by enid, on: 2008/2/7 9:47

God is just awesome. I was going to say awful in the archaic meaning of the word, but I think that would have been misunderstood.

It sounds like a contradiction to say, 'God Himself has revealed Himself as one who cannot be known.'

But God has shown us what He wants us to know about Him, and no more.

The thought of God can be quite scary, when we consider how powerful and glorious He is.

With reverence we should come before Him, because His light reveals all the darkness in us, even us who profess to be His children.

...for God is in heaven, and you on earth, therefore let your words be few, Eccles 5v2.

God bless.

Re: Beams of Infinite Brightness - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2008/2/7 10:16

Quote:
-----Our progress often consists in knowing what He is not, rather than what He is.

A profound thought. Search your heart and see if there isn't an element of truth to this.

Brother Paul

Re: - posted by jgraves11 (), on: 2008/2/7 10:28

the fact that we cannot fully know God here makes Heaven all that more desirable. what we barely understand here will become clear when we see Him!

1 John 3:2 Beloved, we are God's children now and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2008/2/7 11:02

I remember hearing a sermon by Ravenhill - one of the very last ones he preached toward the end of his life - saying that after walking 70 plus years with God and a life of prayer, that he still saw himself standing before a vast ocean having nothing but the bottoms of his feet wet.

The greatest men of God who were able to get the closest to God all say the same: the ineffable glory and vastness that defies our mortal understanding. How do we define a Being who dwells outside of time, a Being who spoke and created trillions and billions of material suns - the least one of which we cannot even look at unguarded without destroying our retinas.

How will it be before His awful throne in the realms of eternity? The Bible clearly shows that every man who caught the few reserved glimpses of God was completely undone, terrified, and some fell down even as dead. The thunderings and quaking and clouds of smoke on Sinai when the law was given shows us something about God. I remember reading in Exodus that amidst the lightning and thunder a trumpet also sounded, but it was obviously coming from the abyss of eternity, as none of the Hebrews blew on instruments that day in the wilderness.

The more I meditate on what I am able to perceive of God, the more I fear. Every once and awhile God graciously allows me to behold a smattering sample of His glory and I am left utterly speechless and trembling in His presence. How in the world will it be on that day when He pulls out all the stops and sounds the trumpet for the final time? Peter says the elements are going to melt...

The bloodstained cross of Thy only-begotten Son looms over the gateways of eternity. Lord, wake our sleepy spirits up, and take away the earthly dross that so clouds our eyes!

Re: Beams of Infinite Brightness - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2008/2/7 12:32

Quote:

PaulWest wrote:

*"God Himself has revealed Himself as one who cannot be known.
- John Owen (from "The Mortification of Sin", 1656)*

Greetings, all.

With all due respect to John Owen, I hope you will not think me argumentative (that's far from how I feel) for saying that I don't think this is right. At least, it doesn't get it fully right.

Yes, no man of the first Adam's race can know God. But those in Christ, we CAN come to know Him.

I have a great hunger and longing in my heart to know Him: and He, Himself put that longing there.

And I long to SEE Him. It's He that put this desire there, and I believe He will grant me the desire of my heart.

There's an old hymn, I think one of Wesley's, based on the words God spoke to Moses, when He told Moses no man could see His face and live. I can't quite recall the words to the hymn, but it's along this line:

No man can see Your face and live?
Then let me see Your face and die.

...Die to sin, die to self, die to my own ways, my own thoughts, my own hopes and dreams, and then, LIVE unto Him who died for me and rose again.

And this is the hope of the New Covenant. "Seeing then we have such hope..." And Paul is talking about beholding the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

"...Our Lord Jesus Christ...who is the King of kings and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see..." (1 Tim. 6.14-16).

I've often thought on this passage in Timothy that Vico quoted. I've read it, thought on it, dwelt on it... and for years mounded over it, because, Lord, I greatly long to see You, and haven't You Yourself put the desire in my heart to see You? And there's Something about that unapproachable Light that I feel greatly attracted to. I want to DWELL there too! Are You then just teasing me, or worse, tormenting me, planting in me an impossible desire? I'll always have to live in a measure of darkness? As if THAT would please you?

One day I suddenly realized something. Yes, it's true that "no man" hath seen God at any time, and no man can approach unto Him. But Jesus Christ is a Man, yet He HAS seen the Father, and dwells in that unapproachable Light. And as I am baptized into Jesus Christ, into this New Man, into the likeness of His death and resurrection, I too can see the face of God, and dwell in the same unapproachable Light!

So this gives me great courage, and comfort. God wants this. He has caused me to want it, too. I want to "come to the Light."

Yes God is unapproachable by natural man. But, "Blessed is the Man whom thou chooseth, and CAUSEST to approach unto Thee..." (Ps. 65.4). And so Lord, I can't approach You of my own accord... unless You DRAW ME. "No man can come to Me except the Father which hath sent me DRAW him" (Jn. 6.44) How encouraging that He, because He loves us so deeply, He will DRAW us, and CAUSE US to approach unto Him.

...It's true, as Leonard Ravenhill has said, that God is such a vast ocean that even after many years we feel we know Him, oh so little. In my own case I feel I know Him far less than I used to. But I think that's because over the years I've come to see a little of how great, how vast, how deep, He really is, and His purposes, just... immense. It makes you tremble. Yet in His grace He has made me a little part of His purposes... and I have the hope of knowing Him (though it may take all eternity to do so).

In Christ,
AD

Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2008/2/7 14:18

In all fairness to Owen, I think that what he is saying here is that no creature can know God according to human knowledge, or even religious knowledge. The fact that we have such an insatiable desire to know Him only shows our deficit of the same and ever-striving campaign in the Spirit to *know* Him in the way Owen is describing. True, the redeemed can know the nature of God in Christ, and are made nigh to Him through the blood (Eph 2:13), and we can also know His mind according to the written Word by what He has graciously chosen to reveal to us, but all this I believe is less than a drop in the bucket of an infinitely deep and silent ocean that looms before us. When I hear a person say that so-and-so knows God, I understand that it's all relative according to knowledge presently acquired. This is like a small child capturing a bucket of sea water and returning home to tell his friends, "I have the whole sea in my bucket!" John on Patmos caught a glimpse (a bucket) of his beloved Christ in His glory (the ocean) - and John straightway fell down as dead (and this was all while he was in the Holy Spirit).

There is much mystery still in God, and what we *do* know of Him we know only as much as what He has chosen to reveal by the fullness of the Godhead in Christ. Just when I am getting used to God's ways and detecting a pattern and starting to adopt some comfortable theology, He goes ahead and rearranges my furniture (though He Himself never changes) and once again I am left crushed like Job with my hand over my mouth and face in the dirt; a dumb, helpless worm trying to grasp the secrets of Him who sits on a throne of fire in the fathomless abyss of eternity.

Re: Knowing God - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2008/2/7 19:36

Hi, Paul.

I understand what you are saying, and in days past I myself was one of those who felt he had the "whole sea in his bucket." Not any more...

I do want to say, though, that, when it comes to knowing God, I believe He has far, far more for us right here on earth than we are often prepared to acknowledge, or accept, and we often turn our eyes from the bright beams of THAT.

But He wants us to come to the Light, and continue looking "with open face," till we are changed into His very image.

Our knowledge right now is "in part," Paul tells us. Like looking at a great construction project through a knot-hole in a fence. Just another illustration like the boy with the bucket: too often we're looking through our little knot-hole and thinking (and trying to tell others) we've got the picture of the whole project.

No, "we know in part." But God has a great promise for those who pursue Him.

"For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. For now we see through a glass (a mirror) darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

So, this is before us, territory our Lord Jesus Christ wants us to apprehend. The usual thought is that this "then" Paul talks about refers to after we get to Heaven, and we can't hope to come into such a knowing of God while in our mortal flesh. "THEN shall I know..." But that's not what Paul is saying here. He says it's "when that which is perfect is come."

And he's speaking of Love. And he calls us to pursue Love.

For as John says, "he that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."

And what dimensions there are to that!

Thanks,
AD

Re: - posted by Lor_E (), on: 2008/2/8 18:42

I hope you don't mind my popping in on the conversation.

"For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead..."

In considering the ocean, for example, its fullness is never ending, it is awe inspiring to behold, its power is beyond comprehension (especially when we have seen its overwhelming, devastating power), it is so vast that its depths are virtually undiscovered (and even then I think those searching would learn new things every time they searched).

So with the sun, its power is beyond our understanding to grasp, yet we view it, enjoy it; see that regardless of the weather, the season, or position on earth it rises and sets in faithfulness incomparable to so many things within our lives in this creation; and sometimes wish it were behind a cloud when it is in the heat of a summer's day..

Yes, and even beyond our world are solar systems so far away that just the distance and beauty of them are beyond my mind's understanding... and yet, God created these things. They are there for me to see, to recognize that the Creator of the universe is more than all of the amazing things I can see with my eyes, and understand with my heart.

Yet, I Corinthians 2 speaks of the Holy Spirit who knows the deep things of God and reveals them to those who learn from Him. Philippians: "that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection..." that, to me is an overwhelming thought... that

The Christ who is the Son of Man, the Son of God, the meek and humble, the obedient to the point of death, even the death on the cross, the Resurrection and the Life; the Glorified at the right hand of the Father; would set aside His dwelling in inapproachable light to set His foot on a dirty world to suffer and die for sinners like me?

I believe it in my heart and soul, with all that I have within me; but I don't think I'll ever comprehend it all.

John who lay on the Masters chest at the Passover meal describes this meeting:

"His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were a flame of fire.... and His countenance was as the sun shining in its strength. And when I saw Him I fell at His feet as dead..."

This Man, our Intercessor, glorified and awesome, HOLY and Righteous; full of power and the authority of the Father reaches over and touches John, lays His right hand on him and says, "Fear not, I am the First and the Last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen."

No, I shall never have the fullness of that knowledge... and that's alright, what I want is the faith to believe it, the grace to live it, the wisdom to search after all God has for me in this life with great expectation; and never lose that wonder and awe at an awesome God and His great love for humanity!

Thank you for your opportunity to consider these things!

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2008/2/8 22:38

Quote:

Lor_E wrote:

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Lor_E, thanks for sharing; I much appreciated your post.

One passage of Scripture that always seems like an "ocean" to me is this one:

"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

"Of whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named,

"That He would grant you according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man;

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

"May be able to comprehend (lit., apprehend) with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

"And **to know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge** that ye might be filled with (ie, unto) all the fulness of God" (Eph. 3.14-19).

...Wow. There's the "wonder and awe" you were talking about. It just takes your breath away; you just get weak in the knees, seeing the dimensions of it all... He says the Love of God passeth knowledge, and yet invites us to come to KNOW this Love? Lord, I'm undone. I'm just a worm; how can I ever expect to... Who am I?

But then he says, "Now unto HIM that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto HIM be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages world without end, Amen."

So, why it pleases Him to share with me such wondrous things is beyond my comprehension. It's His love, I guess, beginning to reach out to me. So I want to believe what He says, and receive it, like Mary, when the angel spoke to her such wondrous things. I bow my head in humility as Mary did. Why me, Lord? I don't know. I know I'm not worthy. But, if it's all about Your own glory... "Be it unto me according to Thy word."

AD

Re: - posted by Lor_E (), on: 2008/2/8 23:53

Quote:

So, why it pleases Him to share with me such wondrous things is beyond my comprehension. It's His love, I guess, beginning to reach out to me. So I want to believe what He says, and receive it, like Mary, when the angel spoke to her such wondrous things. I bow my head in humility as Mary did. Why me, Lord? I don't know. I know I'm not worthy. But, if it's all about Your own glory... "Be it unto me according to Thy word."
AD

It seems to be quite an amazing sort of thought that the God of glory would receive glory in revealing His glory to quite an inglorious piece of creation, such as we humans are.

Yet, Christ spoke in John 17 that
"And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I am glorified in them."

"And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are One."

Far too often we see, or rather choose to see, the inglorious parts of one another.. when it is the will of God that we should recognize the glory that God has given to us all through His Son... for His own glory..

Praise be to the God of glory!

Teach me Your ways, and lead me in Your truth, that we may all, including my too often stumbling soul, become a glory to You, Father through that glory that was given to me by Christ the Lord, shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Spirit.

That I might be able to comprehend with all the saints the breadth, and length, and width and height.....