

GOD'S AWESOMENESS

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

—Romans 11:33

W^ebster's Unabridged Dictionary lists 550,000 words. And it is a solemn and beautiful thought that in our worship of God there sometimes rush up from the depths of our souls feelings that all this wealth of words is not sufficient to express. To be articulate at certain times we are compelled to fall back upon "Oh!" or "O!"—a primitive exclamatory sound that is hardly a word at all and that scarcely admits of a definition.

Vocabularies are formed by many minds over long periods and are capable of expressing whatever the mind is capable of entertaining. But when the heart, on its knees, moves into the awesome Presence and hears with fear and wonder things not lawful to utter, then the mind falls flat, and words, previously its faithful servants, become weak and totally incapable of telling what the heart hears and sees. In that awful moment the worshiper can only cry "Oh!" And that simple exclamation becomes more eloquent than learned speech and, I have no doubt, is dearer to God than any oratory. BAM084-085

Lord, I come, with my heart on its knees, into Your awesome presence this first day of the year. I long to know You better and to sense that awesomeness that leaves me speechless before You. Amen.

OH!

*Then said I, Ah, Lord God!
behold, I cannot speak: for I
am a child.*

—Jeremiah 1:6

In theology there is no “Oh!” and this is a significant if not an ominous thing. Theology seeks to reduce what may be known of God to intellectual terms, and as long as the intellect can comprehend, it can find words to express itself. When God Himself appears before the mind—awesome, vast and incomprehensible—then the mind sinks into silence and the heart cries out “O Lord God!” There is the difference between theo-logical knowledge and spiritual experience, the difference between knowing God by hearsay and knowing Him by acquaintance. And the difference is not verbal merely; it is real and serious and vital.

We Christians should watch lest we lose the “Oh!” from our hearts. . . .

When we become too glib in prayer we are most surely talking to ourselves. When the calm listing of requests and the courteous giving of proper thanks take the place of the burdened prayer that finds utterance difficult, we should beware the next step, for our direction is surely down whether we know it or not. BAM085-087

*Lord, don't ever let me lose the “Oh!” from my heart.
May I truly experience You so that my knowledge of
You will inspire my cries of admiration. Amen.*

A THIRST FOR GOD

As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

—Psalm 42:1

In this hour of all-but-universal darkness one cheering gleam appears: within the fold of conservative Christianity there are to be found increasing numbers of persons whose religious lives are marked by a growing hunger after God Himself. They are eager for spiritual realities and will not be put off with words, nor will they be content with correct “interpretations” of truth. They are athirst for God, and they will not be satisfied till they have drunk deep at the Fountain of Living Water.

This is the only real harbinger of revival which I have been able to detect anywhere on the religious horizon. It may be the cloud the size of a man’s hand for which a few saints here and there have been looking. It can result in a resurrection of life for many souls and a recapture of that radiant wonder which should accompany faith in Christ, that wonder which has all but fled the Church of God in our day. POG007

O Lord, I pray that a thirst for You may build and grow, may prove unquenchable and may indeed result in a recapturing of “that radiant wonder,” both in my own faith and in that of the Church. Amen.

SHOW ME THY GLORY

Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight.

—Exodus 33:13

Come near to the holy men and women of the past and you will soon feel the heat of their desire after God. They mourned for Him, they prayed and wrestled and sought for Him day and night, in season and out, and when they had found Him the finding was all the sweeter for the long seeking. Moses used the fact that he knew God as an argument for knowing Him better. “Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight” (Exodus 33:13); and from there he rose to make the daring request, “I beseech thee, shew me thy glory” (33:18). God was frankly pleased by this display of ardor, and the next day called Moses into the mount, and there in solemn procession made all His glory pass before him.

David’s life was a torrent of spiritual desire, and his psalms ring with the cry of the seeker and the glad shout of the finder. Paul confessed the mainspring of his life to be his burning desire after Christ. “That I may know him” (Philippians 3:10), was the goal of his heart, and to this he sacrificed everything.

POG015-016

Lord, make Your glory known to me and let me learn from Moses, David, Paul and others that deep longing that results in intimate knowledge of You. Amen.

DETERMINE TO FIND HIM

My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.

—Psalm 5:3

I want deliberately to encourage this mighty longing after God. The lack of it has brought us to our present low estate. The stiff and wooden quality about our religious lives is a result of our lack of holy desire. Complacency is a deadly foe of all spiritual growth. Acute desire must be present or there will be no manifestation of Christ to His people. He waits to be wanted. Too bad that with many of us He waits so long, so very long, in vain.

Every age has its own characteristics. Right now we are in an age of religious complexity. The simplicity which is in Christ is rarely found among us. In its stead are programs, methods, organizations and a world of nervous activities which occupy time and attention but can never satisfy the longing of the heart. The shallowness of our inner experience, the hollowness of our worship, and that servile imitation of the world which marks our promotional methods all testify that we, in this day, know God only imperfectly, and the peace of God scarcely at all.

If we would find God amid all the religious externals, we must first determine to find Him, and then proceed in the way of simplicity. POG017-018

Quiet my heart, Lord, that I might be still enough to find You in the midst of this complex world. Simplify my life that I may never lose sight of You. Amen.

SPIRITUAL RECEPTIVITY

When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.

—Psalm 27:8

*P*ick at random a score of great saints whose lives and testimonies are widely known. Let them be Bible characters or well-known Christians of post-biblical times. . . .

I venture to suggest that the one vital quality which they had in common was spiritual receptivity. Something in them was open to heaven, something which urged them Godward. Without attempting anything like a profound analysis, I shall say simply that they had spiritual awareness and that they went on to cultivate it until it became the biggest thing in their lives. They differed from the average person in that when they felt the inward longing they *did something about it*. They acquired the lifelong habit of spiritual response. They were not disobedient to the heavenly vision. As David put it neatly, “When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek” (Psalm 27:8). POG062-063

Lord, give me open ears, a quiet mind, a receptive heart and a willingness to obey. I commit before You my desire to acquire a “lifelong habit of spiritual response.” Amen.

HE WANTS US TO COME

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

—Revelation 22:17

*G*od takes great pleasure in having a helpless soul come to Him simply and plainly and intimately. He takes pleasure in having us come to Him. This kind of Christianity doesn't draw big crowds. It draws only those who have their hearts set on God, who want God more than they want anything else in the world. These people want the spiritual experience that comes from knowing God for Himself. They could have everything stripped away from them and still have God.

These people are not vastly numerous in any given locality. This kind of Christianity doesn't draw big crowds, but it is likely to draw the hungriest ones, the thirstiest ones and some of the best ones. And so God takes great pleasure in having helpless people come to Him, simply and plainly and intimately. He wants us to come without all that great overlording of theology. He wants us to come as simply and as plainly as a little child. And if the Holy Spirit touches you, you'll come like that.

AOG030-031

Thank You, Lord, for this warm invitation. I come to You humbly, deeply grateful for Your compassionate desire to meet with me and fill me. Amen.

THE SUM TOTAL OF OUR HUNGRERS

*My soul thirsteth for God, for
the living God: when shall I
come and appear before God?*

—Psalm 42:2

One of the big milk companies makes capital of the fact that their cows are all satisfied with their lot in life. Their clever ads have made the term “contented cows” familiar to everyone. But what is a virtue in a cow may be a vice in a man. And contentment, when it touches spiritual things, is surely a vice. . . .

Religious complacency is encountered almost everywhere among Christians these days, and its presence is a sign and a prophecy. For every Christian will become at last what his desires have made him. We are all the sum total of our hungers. The great saints have all had thirsting hearts. Their cry has been, “My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?” Their longing after God all but consumed them; it propelled them onward and upward to heights toward which less ardent Christians look with languid eye and entertain no hope of reaching.

Orthodox Christianity has fallen to its present low estate from lack of spiritual desire. Among the many who profess the Christian faith, scarcely one in a thousand reveals any passionate thirst for God. ROR059-061

Oh, Lord, deliver me from the complacency that is so prevalent both around me and within me. Give me an unquenchable thirst for You that I may cry out for You along with the saints of long ago. Amen.

SEEKING FOR MORE OF GOD

*And he said, I beseech thee,
shew me thy glory.*

—Exodus 33:18

*W*hen Moses saw the glory of God he begged that he might see more. When God revealed to him that he had found grace, he wanted more grace. Remember this: The man that has the most of God is the man who is seeking the most ardently for more of God. . . .

I have been greatly and deeply concerned that you and I do something more than listen, that we dare to go to God like the Lady Julian and dare to ask Him to give us a faithful, fatherly wound—maybe three of them, if you please: to wound us with a sense of our own sinful unworthiness that we'll never quite get over; to wound us with the sufferings of the world and the sorrows of the Church; and then to wound us with the longing after God, a thirst, a sacred thirst and longing that will carry us on toward perfection. . . .

Almost every day of my life I am praying that “a jubilant pinning and longing for God” might come back on the evangelical churches. We don’t need to have our doctrine straightened out; we’re as orthodox as the Pharisees of old. But this longing for God that brings spiritual torrents and whirlwinds of seeking and self-denial—this is almost gone from our midst. MDP116-117

Lord, I pray that You will bring about a renewed, intense longing for You in my heart. Begin the work in my own heart, and let it spread also to all of Your Church! Amen.

DAILY GLIMPSES OF HIS GLORY

For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.

—Isaiah 64:4

Every emotion has its reaction and every pleasurable experience will dim after a while. The human organism is built that way and there is nothing we can do about it. It is well known that the second year of marriage is often the most critical, for then the first excitement has worn off the relationship and the young couple has not had time to acquire a new set of common interests and to learn to accept a more stable if less emotional kind of life.

Only engrossment with God can maintain perpetual spiritual enthusiasm because only God can supply everlasting novelty. In God every moment is new and nothing ever gets old. Of things religious we may become tired; even prayer may weary us; but God never. He can show a new aspect of His glory to us each day for all the days of eternity and still we shall have but begun to explore the depths of the riches of His infinite being. . . .

The sum of all this is that nothing can preserve the sweet savor of our first experience except to be preoccupied with God Himself. Our little rill is sure to run dry unless we keep it replenished from the fountain. GTM127-129

Lord, every day there is indeed some new glimpse of Your glory. May I enter the day today with a holy anticipation! Amen.

A GENUINE ENCOUNTER WITH GOD

And the angel of the LORD ap-peared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

—Exodus 3:2

*S*is it not true that for most of us who call ourselves Christians there is no real experience? We have substituted theological ideas for an arresting encounter; we are full of religious notions, but our great weakness is that for our hearts there is no one there.

Whatever else it embraces, true Christian experience must always include a genuine encounter with God. Without this, religion is but a shadow, a reflection of reality, a cheap copy of an original once enjoyed by someone else of whom we have heard. It cannot but be a major tragedy in the life of any man to live in a church from childhood to old age and know nothing more real than some synthetic god compounded of theology and logic, but having no eyes to see, no ears to hear, and no heart to love. . . .

We who experience God in this day may rejoice that we have in Him all that Abraham or David or Paul could have; indeed the very angels before the throne can have no more than we, for they can have no more than God and can want nothing apart from Him. And all that He is and all that He has done is for us and for all who share the common salvation. POM010, 013

Lord, may I experience Your presence in such a real way today that I'll feel like taking off my shoes, because I'll know I'm on holy ground. Amen.

MADE FOR HIGHER WORLDS

*Set your affection on things above,
not on things on the earth.*

—Colossians 3:2

*G*od has revealed Himself many times and in many ways to assure men and women made in His image that there is another and a better world than this vale of tears we refer to as home. . . .

When people around us learn that we are involved in a spiritual kingdom not yet visible, they think we are prime candidates for a mental institution. But this we know: Those same people around us are subject to the cruel tyranny of material and temporal things—things that will decay and pass away. No world dictator ever ruled his cowering subjects with any more fierce and compulsive domination than the material, visible things rule the men and women of this world.

Of all the calamities that have been visited upon this world and its inhabitants, the willing surrender of the human spirit to materialistic values is the worst! We who were made for higher worlds are accepting the ways of this world as the ultimate. That is a tragedy of staggering proportions.

We who were meant to commune with the Creator God, with the angels, archangels and seraphim, have decided instead to settle down here. As well might the eagle leave his lofty domain to scratch in the barnyard with the common hens. MMG101-102

It's so easy, Lord, to become enamored with and en-snared by the things of this barnyard. Help me to be more lofty in my affections today. Amen.

THE SECRET GARDEN

And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.

—Genesis 3:8

*H*owever we may explain this mysterious “ground” within us, we will not have been long in the Christian way until we begin to experience it. We will find that we have within us a secret garden where no one can enter except ourself and God. . . . This secret inner chamber is the secret trysting place for Christ and the believing soul; no one among all our dearest friends has the open sesame that will permit him to enter there. If God is shut out, then there can be only everlasting loneliness and numb despair.

Where God is not known in the inner shrine, the individual must try to compensate for his sense of aloneness in whatever way he can. Most persons rush away to the world to find companionship and surround themselves with every kind of diversionary activity. All devices for killing time, every shallow scheme for entertainment, are born out of this inner loneliness. It is a significant and revealing fact that such things have in these last days grown into billion-dollar enterprises! So much will men pay to forget that they are a temple without a God, a garden where no voice is heard in the cool of the day. NCA114-115

What a privilege, Lord, to fellowship with the God of the universe. Slow me down today, that I might know this intimate inner fellowship. Amen.

GIVE ME THYSELF

And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel.

—Numbers 18:20

*A*bove all gifts, God desires most to give Himself to His people. Our nature being what it is, we are the best fitted of all creatures to know and enjoy God. . . .

When God told Aaron, “Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel,” He in fact promised a portion infinitely above all the real estate in Palestine and all the earth thrown in (Numbers 18:20). To possess God—this is the inheritance ultimate and supreme. . . .

To give God back to us was the chief work of Christ in redemption. To impart Himself to us in personal experience is the first purpose of God in salvation. To bring acute God-awareness is the best help the Spirit brings in sanctification. All other steps in grace lead up to this.

Were we allowed but one request, we might gain at a stroke all things else by praying one all-embracing prayer:

Thyself, Lord! Give me Thyself and I can want no more.

WTA071-072

Lord, may I be truly satisfied today with nothing but the best gift of all—You. Amen.

LESS THAN THE BEST

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

—Matthew 5:6

*J*t is disheartening to those who care, and surely a great grief to the Spirit, to see how many Christians are content to settle for less than the best. Personally I have for years carried a burden of sorrow as I have moved among evangelical Christians who somewhere in their past have managed to strike a base compromise with their heart's holier longings and have settled down to a lukewarm, mediocre kind of Christianity utterly unworthy of themselves and of the Lord they claim to serve. And such are found everywhere. . . .

Every man is as close to God as he wants to be; he is as holy and as full of the Spirit as he wills to be. Our Lord said, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” If there were but one man anywhere on earth who hungered and was not filled, the word of Christ would fall to the ground.

Yet we must distinguish wanting from wishing. By “want” I mean wholehearted desire. Certainly there are many who wish they were holy or victorious or joyful but are not willing to meet God’s conditions to obtain it. TIC064

Lord, may I settle for nothing less than the best when it comes to my relationship with You. Give me a wholehearted thirst for You, that I may partake of the incredible privilege of intimate fellowship with You. Amen.