

Series: the goodness of God

Sunday, January 18, 2026

Divine Positioning & Sovereign Activity

Exodus 33:20-23 **20** But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.” **21** And the Lord said, “Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, **22** and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. **23** Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen.”

Theophany | THē'āfēnē | noun (plural theophanies)

An appearance or manifestation of God; a compound word derived from the Greek noun for God and the Greek verb “to appear.”

Theophany is regarded as one of the means by which God's special revelation comes to man. God's special revelation may be divided into two basic forms, that of word and deed. God's revelatory deeds may be further divided into the categories of theophany and miracle. **A theophany is then a form of divine revelation in which God's presence is made visible and recognizable to man. God, therefore, reveals himself not only by word and miracle, by prophecies and signs, but also by making his presence perceptible to men.**

Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “Theophany,” in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 2050.

- Although Moses' request of God was most noble, we see God's benevolence on full display in his response: “You cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.” Moses, like many of us, desired something from God that he did not have the capacity to handle.
- **We must trust that God, in his loving sovereignty, will always give us what's best for us and withhold from us what we can not have.**
- “There is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock...” is a sermon in itself! There are two truths that must be highlighted here.
 1. There is a place in our human existence that has been divinely chosen for us to experience his glory. If we are patient, he will lead us to the place.
 2. Any experience of the glory of God must be done on the basis of the revelation of Jesus Christ.
- Moses' prayer is to see the *kābôd* (Hebrew), the manifested glory (literally ‘weight’) of YHWH, is answered by God positioning him in a place where he could experience God without being crushed.
- **We must allow God to position us in a place where we can experience His manifested presence and his divine protection.**
- Even though it may feel like prison, it's preparing you for His presence.
- And even though it may not be exactly what you prayed for, it's exactly what you need.

God has no problem with experiencing his glory; he just doesn't want you to take it.