

Ex. 34:29-35 “Shining Face”

For the Children: If you look too directly at the sun, or other bright lights – such as arc-welding – you can damage your eyes. It is difficult to look closely at a very bright light, even when it is reflected off some other object. Sinful creatures cannot look directly at God’s glory. It hurts them even to look at that glory when it is reflected – as it was off Moses’ face. It reminds too much of our sin and God’s judgement. In heaven, it will be fine to look at all God’s glory. For now, we know His glory not by seeing it, but by believing in the glory of His Son. The glory of the Lord Jesus is reflected in us when we live the way He wants us to. **Questions:** Why was Israel so scared of Moses’ shining face? When will we see God’s glory in all its fullness? How does the Lord Jesus take away the fear of coming near to God?

Introduction:

First Point: The Nature of the Shining Face

- 1) The Radiation Effect: After the meeting with God, Moses’ face radiated light – so much so that he had to wear a veil to avoid scaring the sons of Israel
- 2) Exposure to Glory: Close contact with God’s infinite glory always has an effect on man – either for destruction of sinners or their transformation. The transformation for Moses was not forced, painful or terrifying – he didn’t even know his face was shining. When God “sweetly” changes us, His supernatural work seems quite “natural,” since we concur with it
- 3) A Contrast of Faces: Moses underwent a visible change from seeing a visible manifestation of God’s glory, though it was not permanent. This shows the glory of the old covenant, in which God was present with Israel. But this glory did not change hearts – it remained veiled to many in Israel. They remained under condemnation and death. The new covenant brings a spiritual transformation by the work of Christ and His Spirit – making us more like Christ. It is a permanent change that leads to eternal life, not death. For the time being, we see this glory dimly, through sinful eyes. But Christ brings us from glory to glory, until we eventually see a greater visible manifestation of God’s glory in heaven (Rev. 22). Christ can do that because He radiates glory as God does, not a mere reflection like Moses. See Jn. 1:14, Mt. 17:1-11, Heb. 1:3 and 2 Cor. 3. We need to look for this spiritual glory now, rather than some kind of outward glory

Second Point: The Effect of the Shining Face

- 1) The Fear Factor: Seeing the reflection of God’s glory in Moses’ face scared Aaron and all Israel – for they had sinned grievously against God. They had already been terrified by God’s glory at the foot of Sinai. Perhaps He would judge them further through Moses? Jesus’ disciples were also scared when His face shone with glory (Mt. 17:6), but He told them not to be afraid. The terror of judgement is removed by Christ. Israel still feared after Moses’ words to them, so he had to veil his face. Those who know Christ should not fear any more
- 2) The Leader Confirmed: Israel had rejected Moses’ leadership *in absentia*, but now the evidence of God’s glory in Moses’ face, along with the knowledge God had met with Moses and sent him back to them, confirmed his role as their leader. They showed him more respect from that time. We have a greater leader and should show even more respect for His authority
- 3) The Covenant Restored: The shining face of Moses also confirmed that God was still present with Israel – His glory was once again in their midst, in a reflected form. For us, the evidence of God’s transforming work in us should re-assure us that He is merciful to us even though we continue to sin. This knowledge gave the apostles great boldness in proclaiming the Gospel as well. See 2 Cor. 3
- 4) Obligations Stressed: The shining face also reminded Israel to listen carefully to Moses’ repetition of God’s law and to obey. We have greater glory through God’s only-begotten Son, in the new covenant. We should be all the more committed to obeying His instructions. Instead of radiating light from our faces, our contact with the Lord should be seen by those around us by our progressive sanctification

Conclusion: