

Unveiled Faces Behold the Glory of God

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[0 : 00] And we read from verse 27 of Exodus 34. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God.

Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.

But Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses talked with them. Afterwards, all the people of Israel came near, and he commanded them all that the Lord had spoken with them in Mount Sinai.

And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face. Whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he would remove the veil until he came out.

And when he came out and told the people of Israel what he was commanded, the people of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face was shining. And Moses would put the veil over his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

[1 : 49] And then we're going to read some verses in 2 Corinthians chapter 3, reading from verse 7, just to follow on from what we've been reading in Exodus 34.

So 2 Corinthians chapter 3. Now, if the ministry of death carved in letters on stone, that, of course, referring to the law of God, the law that condemned, if the ministry of death carved in letters on stone came with such glory, the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end.

Will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, that's the law that condemned, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory.

Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all because of the glory that surpasses it. For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory.

Since we have such a hope, we are very bold. Not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end, but their minds were hardened.

[3 : 11] For to this day, when they read the Old Covenant, that same veil remains unlifted because only through Christ is it taken away.

Yes, to this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.

Now the Lord is the Spirit. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And in these words, And we all, with unveiled face, behold the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

For this comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. Amen. And may God add his blessing to these readings from God's Word.

The wearing of face masks has become very much a common feature in our land, not just in our own country, but so many other parts of the world at this time.

[4 : 19] We even just saw just a few minutes ago, Ali and Fraser Murray wearing their face masks. Of course, these masks are worn for protection, to protect the wearer, and indeed those who are, who else are in the presence of those who are wearing these masks.

Certainly in my own case, I, for the first time, had to wear a face mask on Thursday when I had to go to the surgery in East Calder. And certainly for myself, it was a very self-conscious time.

I had to jettison my own embarrassment as I wore that mask when I went into the surgery. But there was no self-conscious embarrassment for Moses when he wore that veil that we were reading of both in Exodus 34 and in 2 Corinthians 3.

We read there of Moses wearing that veil, that face mask as it were, because the glory of God had shone on Moses' face.

When Moses was with God on Mount Sinai, God's radiant glory was such that Moses' face shone. The literal words that we read in Exodus 34 is that his face literally sort of brought forth horns.

[5 : 47] You know what it's like when you see a picture of the sun that maybe a child draws and you see the arrows or the rods coming out of the central portion of the sun. Well, that's literally what the language tells us in Exodus 34, his face.

It was like rods coming forth from his face. Such was the radiance of God's glory even reflected on Moses' face. And as we're going to consider more what we read in 2 Corinthians 3 about the wearing as it were of the veil.

We'll see how that tells us that the person who's come to faith in the Lord Jesus no longer has to have us wear that veil, no longer has that barrier, if you like, between God and the person.

The person who comes to know the Lord Jesus as Savior beholds the glory of God in the face of Jesus. That marvelous picture of the believer who shines for the Lord and indeed who beholds God in his glory and who beholds God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And for this evening then, I want to focus particularly on these words that we read latterly in 2 Corinthians 3. These words that tell us in verse 18 that we might say speaks of unveiled faces beholding the glory of God.

[7 : 11] And so we do, I think, need a wee bit more to focus on what we read in Exodus that really helps us to grasp what that verse is telling us about the marvelous, wonderful blessing that believers have in coming before God, in knowing God, in reflecting his glory, in shining for the Lord Jesus.

But as we said, let's just go back a wee bit to Exodus 34 again, just again to grasp the more what Paul is telling us in Exodus chapter 3.

Moses has been with God for 40 days and 40 nights on that mountain. Moses has been with God as God has communed with Moses.

God has given Moses to write down again, to write down the law, the Ten Commandments and two tablets of stone. And in that writing down the law, the commandments, as we read, God said he's making a covenant with Moses and with the people of Israel.

God was declaring his faithfulness to his people, but of course there were conditions to that faithfulness that people had to be faithful to God.

[8 : 32] And as we said, Moses had been in God's presence for 40 days and 40 nights. And when Moses came down from that mountain, it seems that Moses was unaware that he shone with the radiance that God had given to him.

Moses was unaware that his face literally beamed with God's radiance. And so we're told that because of that, that brightness, that intense brightness of his face, that Moses had to wear a veil when he spoke with the people.

and the point is this then, that when Moses came down from that mountain, the people actually were shocked at his appearance. They were afraid to come near him, they were afraid to look at him.

So for their protection, Moses had to wear that face mask, that veil. And that's the background then to what we read in 2 Corinthians 3.

When Paul uses that language of the veiled faces, the veiled faces that were read there in verse 18 of 2 Corinthians 3. But of course, we have to ask for the application for all this.

[9 : 47] What do we understand when we read there of what Moses showed initially and what Paul is telling us of unveiled faces beholding the glory of God?

Well, surely the application then for us and for your encouragement is to realise the transforming difference that the Lord Jesus Christ makes to anyone who knows him, to anyone who knows him by faith.

That transforming change, that transformation in a person's life has come to know the Lord Jesus by faith. What we read in 2 Corinthians 3 really has been to stress the difference that Jesus makes to faith and to life.

God had given Moses the terms of the covenant and Paul is showing that the Lord Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of that covenant because it's the Lord Jesus who gives life.

The old covenant, the old law, the old law pointed to Jesus but the old law didn't and couldn't give life everlasting and yet the Jewish people then and indeed still now still cling to the law of Moses to say that by their apparent keeping the law that they are in fact right with God.

[11:16] But as we heard in 2 Corinthians 3 as Paul says the law condemned. The law condemned because whether it be Jew or non-Jew no one can keep the law perfectly.

Only the Lord Jesus has kept the law perfectly. Only he kept that law perfectly on our behalf so that we might be made righteous before God not because of anything we have done not because of our works but because of the works of the Lord Jesus.

He kept that law perfectly on our behalf so that we might come before God and know God and know that before him we are right with God through the works the finished work of the Lord Jesus.

So we come to see that you are made you who know the Lord Jesus by faith you are made right with God through what Jesus has done for you in fulfilling the law in his perfect life of obedience he obeyed the law fully there was no impediment no barrier we have no barrier now when we behold the glory of God when we behold the glory of God in Christ you who put your faith in him do so can behold his glory through the power the enabling power of the Holy Spirit and that's where this analogy of the veil comes in this veil if you like the face mask it's here before us the veil that Moses had to wear was to keep the people from being absolutely overcome with the radiant glory of God shining in the face of Moses and Paul tells us that that veil represents the barrier it represents the obstacle that the

Jewish people have and they're not beholding the glory of God in Christ because of hardened hearts hearts that won't accept the Lord Jesus as saviour that won't accept the Lord Jesus as Messiah that barrier to faith in Christ because of ignorance and unbelief in Paul's day and even in our own day the Jewish people then would attend the synagogue and hear the law of Moses proclaimed but through the veil of unbelief the veil of ignorance don't see that the words that Moses spoke and wrote point to the Lord Jesus as the fulfilment of God's covenant with his people and that veil remains lodged in the hearts of their hearts because of unbelief and that veil will remain unless the Lord

[14:14] Jesus is seen and believed and that veil of unbelief removed and we see that only the Jewish people will see that the Old Testament scriptures their scriptures point to the Lord Jesus only they will see that and by the grace of God through faith in the Lord Jesus they will come to the Saviour as their Lord as the promised Christ the promised Messiah now there are a number of applications that certainly this passage gives to us to help us in our faith in our love in our practice and the first surely is that we continue to pray for the Jewish people that we pray for God's ancient people that the veil that's covering their hearts that that veil be removed that they'll be persuaded truly persuaded that Jesus is Lord that Jesus the Lord Jesus

Christ the Son of God is the Messiah the promised Messiah and so we pray for various organizations various evangelistic organizations that seek to bring forth and show forth the Lord Jesus to the Jewish people some organizations you might know Christian Witness to Israel Messianic Testimony Jews for Jesus for example we pray for the work that these people are doing and need many individuals some that you know some we know whose life work it is as Jewish believers to bring the one true faith to fellow Jews so pray for the work of mission the work of evangelism even during this time of pandemic that the work of mission continues even the work of mission to the Jews pray for that work and we remember not just Jews of course but non-Jews Gentiles even for all for whom the veil of unbelief remains in the hearts and that that veil be lifted by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit now of course in this passage

Paul was writing specifically in relation to Jewish ignorance and Jewish unbelief but of course the veil of unbelief is amongst all peoples all nations and that's where we pray that we pray to God that the Lord of the harvest will raise up harvesters that God will raise up those who will sow the seed we pray even now that God even through this time that God will raise up those who will sow the seed of gospel truth and that many will come in that many will come into the kingdom and that truly we do pray that God's kingdom will come and even at this time through the proclamation of God's word even through the various means that God has given us at this time that God will use these means to further his kingdom and that the harvesters that are sowing that seed will truly be rewarded with the ingathering of souls into God's glorious kingdom but what of those who have

believed what of you you who've been converted you who know the Lord Jesus Christ you who know him as Lord and Saviour what of you listen again to these words that Paul gives us here listen to them for your encouragement and we all with unveiled face behold the glory of the Lord we're being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another for this comes from the Lord who is the spirit Paul's telling us here that in contrast to the veiled heart of unbelief and ignorance in contrast to that veiled heart are you who see the glory of God in the Lord Jesus and notice Paul speaks of all we all with unveiled face the all whom Paul speaking of here are all who've surrendered their lives you who've surrendered your life to God through faith in the Lord Jesus in other words every believer every Christian everyone whose life is hidden in Christ everyone who confesses and professes the Lord

Jesus as saviour everyone from every tribe and nation and language group and people all who confess the Lord Jesus as saviour Paul's telling us come before God with an unveiled face so in other words something's been removed the face mask of human centred reason is no more the veil of spiritual ignorance that's been removed the veil of failure to believe in the Lord Jesus as the one true saviour the one mediator between God and man that failure to believe that has been removed that veil has been removed and so that at one time when you hid behind human centred morality human centred spirituality human centred reason that's been removed by the love of God so that you now behold

[19 : 56] God in the face of the Lord Jesus and notice what that unveiled face beholds as we're told here what it sees it sees the glory of God you go back remember to Exodus 34 remember when Moses spoke with God in the tabernacle in the portable tent that went through the desert Moses revealed Moses removed his veil he didn't need his veil on when he was speaking with God and when you see by faith when you see the Lord Jesus you see the one whom the Apostle John spoke of when he said of Jesus you beheld his glory even the glory of the one and only Son of God you who know the Lord Jesus as Saviour your eyes have been opened you see now what before you didn't see and couldn't see you see

Jesus the all glorious one and notice too it's a transforming power in those who see the glory of God in the face of the Lord Jesus as Paul tells us that you're being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another it's that transforming power that changes a believer it's that what we call that process of sanctification that sanctification by which a person becomes more and more Christlike more and more like his like her saviour because the more that you gaze on the glory of the Lord Jesus the more that you read of Jesus the more that you hear Jesus speak to you through his word the more that you gaze on Christ by faith the more you're being transformed or you're being sanctified becoming more Christlike and the less you have that image that image of fallen Adam and the more you're being conformed to the image of

God how's that going to be seen it's going to be seen in your life and in your lifestyle it's going to be evident in your conversations it's going to be evident in your habits it's going to be seen in your relationships the way that you form relationships it's going to be seen in the way that you live a disciplined Christian life it's going to be seen in your growth of holiness the radiance of God's glory in the face of Moses well that was so evident it was so evident in Moses face because Moses shone with the glory of God before the people and the evidence of the glory of God shining in your heart is going to be evident in a life that shines for Jesus as Paul says that being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another and that should give you that confident hope that you are being transformed that you are growing in sanctified holiness by the power of the Holy Spirit the glory that you now know in Christ that's going to be complete complete in the glory of heaven when you see the Lord face to face and that that calls you that calls for you who know Jesus as Lord and Saviour that calls for you to give glory to God for his transforming work in your lives he's removed that veil that veil of unbelief that veil of ignorance he's removed that veil from your heart he's given you that strength to enable you to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus and so it's for you and for me for all of us who know the Lord Jesus as Saviour to have that that desire that desire the more to be like Christ in every area of your life in every day of your life to be more like Christ to reflect him reflect him in his glory to give him the glory in every avenue in every aspect of your life living for the glory of God and that's a challenge of course it's a challenge that we're all engaged in every moment of every day of our lives as Christians you know the

Amen