

The Shining
Exodus 34:29-35:3
October 28, 2007
FBC Waynesboro

Back in the day . . . when men were really men and women were really women, that day when we were far smarter than the current generation as evidenced by the mental capacity that was needed to do the dances that were done, you know; the twist, the jerk, the pony—can I get a witness? Back in the day there were two kinds of guys. On the one side you had the brylcream boys, a little dab will do ya. And on the other side you had Vitalis Vikings, that oily, greasy slick your head down and make your forehead shine Vitalis with 7. Anybody remember? Now you talk about a shining and a smellin. Get enough Vitalis with 7 in your head and go to sweatin, well you were shining from your hair to your nose and wherever else that Vitalis with V7 would run. That was a real shining.

We are going to talk this morning about a different kind of shining. It was found on the face of Moses but was in fact simply the outward manifestation of an inward transformation. What we see on his face is simply what is the inevitable outcome of what is always seen when God does His real work of grace in our hearts. It is the pinnacle point of our diagram because it is that to which we can always point as the proof, the only real proof that the presence of God and the power of God is at work in our lives. So this morning I want us to walk together through this text and I want us to use our senses: I want us to see the shining face of Moses, I want us to hear the sharing faith of Moses, I want us to understand the Sabbath focus of Moses and I want us to focus ourselves fully on the splendid fullness of God shining in the face of Jesus who is formed in us and found manifest through us when we are truly people of faith.

There is a text in Acts four that always stuns me and stops me when I get to it. It is one of those passages that ought always to cause us to pause and to pray, to pull over to the side during our journey where we can stay long enough to get some answers to some questions that are so critical for us to answer. Peter and John had seen the work of God in the healing of a lame man and they had experienced the great glory of God in the saving of this lame man. His healing made him leap; his salvation caused him to leap with joy and give praise to God. The religious leaders were in trouble: they could not deny the miracle of the healing and they could not explain where it came from since they knew Peter and John as unlearned and ignorant men. What they knew about these two men was simply that they had been with Jesus. They could look at their lives and listen to their language and

know that they had been with Jesus. This is what gives me pause. This is what causes me to pull over the side in my journey and ask, “when people look at me and listen to me, do they know without any doubt that I have been with Jesus?” What about you? Do people know that without you telling them? Can others discern it without you declaring it to them? This text helps us to see, to hear, and to comprehend what is the result of an encounter with God.

Look with me first at the shining face of Moses, 29-30. Three things are clear in verses 29-30. First, Moses had engaged in an encounter with the living God. Second, that encounter came through the Word of God. God spoke to Moses His Holy Word. Third, the result of that encounter was radiant face and a resistance from others to draw near to him. What is described here is simply the results of an encounter with the living God. What we see in the shining face of Moses is the outcome of the saving grace of God. We are changed. And what changes us is the grace of God working through the Word of God that makes us different than we were before. And it is this difference that causes others at first to draw away from us rather than to draw near to us. Moses’ presence was not repulsive to Aaron and the Israelites, but they were resistant to come near him because they knew he had been with God. They could see the change.

There is no such thing as an encounter with God that does not change us. When God comes to us in the goodness of His grace and through the glory of His Word we are changed. We are changed forever. And it shows. Ask Jacob if he was ever the same after he wrestled with God during the night and that holy God change him? Ask Abram when he asked God for some assurance that he was blessed of God and God showed him the stars and gave him a son, and he will tell you that he was changed; so much so that when God asked him to give back to him the son that he had received he obeyed, because he had been changed by this God. Ask Paul if his encounter with God on the road to Damascus made any difference in his life or talk to Thomas about his encounter with the risen Christ and they will all tell you that no encounter with this God through His word leaves us the same. Heaven help us when in our day we can speak of people knowing God and not having radically changed lives as a result of the encounter with this God. We can see the shining face of Moses because of what the sovereign God had done in his soul.

But we need to do more than look at the shining face of Moses, we need to Moses as he shared his faith, 31-35. Moses cared for the people and wanted to communicate to them the truth of God, so he called them to himself and he communicated to them the truth of God. He wanted them to be changed by the God who had changed him. He wanted them to experience from God what he had

experienced. He wanted them to know this God even as he knew this God. Such is the impulse of every person who has had a radical encounter with God. Such is the way of every soul that is saved by the grace of God. We do not get over God and His glory. We grow in the experience of the glory of God. And we want everybody to know Him and they know Him because we show Him and we share Him and one without the other is worthless and useless. Moses went into the presence of God and came out both to show and to share the glory of God.

We must hear this truth. When we are changed by the grace of God, it not only shows but it is shared. Moses left the presence of God to proclaim the glory of God. Jacob left his encounter with God to declare that surely this God is the one and only true God. And Paul went from persecutor to proclaimer because of the work of God in his life. We must hear this and know this: when God changes us that change not only shows but it is shared.

There is something here to see and something here to hear, but there is something here that must be understood. Right in the midst of this marvelous manifestation of God is this simple statement about the Sabbath, 35:1-3. These verses are what is known as a transitional text. They open chapter 35 but they also end chapter 34. They could be placed either as a conclusion or an introduction; they really are both. These words culminate what has come before and initiate what is ahead. They do both at the same time. Their force is found in their focus on the Sabbath: what these words teach us is that the external reality that most reveals the reality of a changed heart and a changed life is the Sabbath. How we treat the Sabbath reveals who we really are and where we really are in relationship to God. Sometimes others cannot see who we are and cannot hear what we say because they know what we do with Lord's Day.

So we must see the shining face of Moses. We must hear the sharing faith of Moses, We must understand the Sabbath principle as stated by Moses, but there is one other thing: we must focus ourselves fully on the splendid fullness of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ. Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 3. It is here that we find the New Covenant fulfillment of the Old Covenant teaching. This text in Exodus 34 finds its focus and its fullness right here. Listen to what this text teaches us.

Whenever we read the Word of God or hear the Word of God taught, there is a veil over our hearts that keeps us from understanding the Word of God until that veil is removed. And it is Christ who removes that veil. So that Paul proclaims that Christ takes away that veil that keeps us from hearing and seeing the truth of the

Word of God when we turn to God. This is repentance. When a person is awakened by the Holy Spirit to his sinfulness and separation from God and by the Holy Spirit turns to God, the veil is removed. It is then that we see ourselves for who we are in the light of the greatness of our God. And when we turn to this God who alone can save us, we are set free, 17. This freedom that comes to us is freedom from the wrath of God and the condemnation that God's wrath brings and freedom from the curse of the law so that we do not face the penalty of the punishment that we deserve. It is freedom from the curse of sin and the condemnation of that curse. But it is also freedom for that fullness of life that God has for us as He begins the wonderful work of transformation. He begins from the moment of conversion to change us, 18.

I want you to see six simple but life-changing truths in verse 18. First, we have unveiled faces. Our sin has been taken away. We can look toward the glory of God and God in His glory looks upon us. We have no shame in His presence. We have received the robes of His righteousness in exchange for the ruinous rags of sin and shame. Second, the word reflect represents who we are as new creatures in Christ. We are reflections of Jesus in the world. What the world knows of Him will come through us. Third, the word glory dominates this section and it is that presence and power of God that is poured into us as His people. We reflect His glory. His presence and power is in us and made known through us. Fourth, and this is so critical: we are being changed or transformed. The word is the Greek word for our English word metamorphosis. And it means real, radical revolutionary change. But here is what is important: this change is the work of God. We are being changed. The verb form that is used points to the work of God that He does by Himself and for Himself. The lack of change in a professing Christian is a slap at God's holiness; it is our saying that God cannot do what He promised to do. Is that true? If it isn't, then a professing Christian who is not being changed is a contradiction in terms. There is no such thing. Fifth, the change has a goal. The word for likeness is the Greek word, "eikon." It means that God changes us to be more and more of what He wants us to be and here is the sixth thing, "with ever increasing glory." God changes us constantly and continuously so that He is bringing to us more and more of the glory of God to make us more and more like Jesus. This means practically that the longer you are a believer, the more you ought to see and to show evidence of the grace and glory of God in your life. And where that evidence of change is not present you and I have to conclude either that God is a liar or that we are.

Richard Sibbes one of the greatest of the Puritan preachers puts it succinctly, "if there is not a change and a glorious change here, never look for a glorious change

here.” He says that if heaven is the city in which the believer lives in the hereafter, then just outside of it is where we are living in the here and now. God’s promise to God’s people is that He will change us completely and continuously. So, let me leave you with some homework, three questions: one, are you being changed? If so, how, where, and for what reason? Two, how long have you been a believer? On a scale of one to ten with one being noting and ten being complete, how much change do you see in your life from where you started to where you are now? What is the most radical change? What is the area in your life that is the most resistant to change? Three, what is the greatest growth challenge in your life today?