

FACE-TO-FACE WITH GOD

“About face.”
“Egg on your face.”
“In your face.”
“Two faced.”
“Lie to your face.”
“Face lift.”
“Face it.”
“Face book.” (Social networking web site)

“Face the facts.”
“Face the music.”
“Face your fears.”
“I can see it on your face.”
“Save face.”
“Wipe that look off of your face.”
“Face to face.”

Someone once said this about the face. “What you see on a person’s face is like reading a book.” This is so true. Please open up your green newsletters. In there you will find a white, folded little booklet, entitled “What does your face tell people?” If you were to take a quick look at the first two pages of this booklet, you will find a multitude of faces that describe the kind of face people have. Which face did you have when you entered into church today? What kind of faces did you have yesterday? What kind of faces did you have over the past week?

I thought it was fascinating to find more than 340 times, the word “face(s)” is used in the Scriptures. The Bible reveals that there are different meaning for the face. For example, a face is...

a surface or front of something
face means respect
face is to have a good appearance; to stand well with others
face toward (the direction of something; it’s a that course a person is following)
facing downward in praise, thanksgiving, worship and prayer
there is an inside and an outside face
face-to-face (confront; meeting; communicating directly with one another)

Unfortunately, the Bible reveals that there are faces of people who turn away from God. The turning away of the face means rejecting God. In Jer. 5, the stone face person is one who refuses to repent of their sins. The prophet Isaiah spoke about the Jews who parade around flaunting their sins. For we read from ^{Isa 3:9} **The look on their faces testifies against them; they parade their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to them! They have brought disaster upon themselves.** What is this disaster the prophet Isaiah is talking about? People who turn away from God are fading away. They are blinded to the light of God. They are going to die and enter into an eternal death in hell.

When the pharisees and teachers of the law would deliberately distort and disfigure their faces while fasting, Jesus described them as being hypocritical. The Scriptures also reveal that there are people who will lie to your face. They give false testimony about a person. Jesus was falsely accused of many things. We read in Scriptures how, after Jesus was arrested and His hands bound were, as He stood before the Sanhedrin, they humiliated Jesus by spitting on His face, slapping and striking His face.

In numerous places throughout the Bible, it talks about God's face. When God turns away His face from the sin, it means that this is an expression of alienation, being forsaken, rejected, cursed, wrath, anger, judgment, a turning away because of our sins. The most traumatic, the most painful, the most rejected turning away of the face of God was what Jesus experienced at the cross. When the heavenly Father turned His face away from His only Son, because of our sins that were laid upon Him, Jesus cried out, **"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"** Why did Jesus become sin for us? THIS IS GOOD NEWS! So that the face of God may look upon us, because of His righteousness and innocent blood upon us. By Jesus' victory over sin, death and Satan, God has turned His face towards those who believe in the One whom God has sent. Jesus came so we can see God's face. For Jesus said, **He who has seen me has seen the Father who sent Me.**

Turn, if you will, to page three of the pamphlet. What do you see in the face of Jesus? We see the passion story of Christ Jesus, which we are about to experience together as we get into the Lenten season. In the beard of Jesus, we see the Son of God coming in the flesh. At His forehead, we see Jesus as He was agonizing in the Garden of Gethsemane. As you look straight into the eyes of Jesus, you see His focus of why He came. It is the cross. To the left side of His, we see the crucifixion. And on the other side of His face, the angels are proclaiming the resurrection and coming of Jesus. Because of what Jesus has done for us, the forgiveness of sins, the heavenly Father can shine His face upon us.

What does it mean by God turning His face toward the repentant sinner? It means salvation, forgiveness, rescue, deliverance, mercy, love, grace, and victory.

What does it mean to have the face of a repentant sinner? It is a face that is downcast, ashamed, gloomy, in despair, having heart aches, troubled, remorse and suffering. This is why the Psalmist cries out in ^{Ps 80:3} **Restore us, O God;**

make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved. This verse is mentioned three times in Psalm 80

Only God can restore us by the forgiveness of our sins. When the face of the Lord shines on His people, they are blessed with His presence and favor, and they will be saved.

What happens when a repentant sinner looks up to the face of the gracious God and Father? The Psalmist tells us in ^{Ps 34:5} **Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.** The face that looks to God as our Helper and Strength, can radiate with confidence and joy. Why? Because they look to the light of God's face and are blessed with the abundance of His goodness and blessing. The repentant sinner can have a glimpse of hope to seeing God face-to-face without the fear of death.

This brings us to the point of how we can face death. First of all, the Apostle Paul reminds us in Rom. 8:36 that **we face death all day long.** But when we face that moment of death, the prophet Isaiah reminds us in Is. 25:8 **[God] will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; He will remove the disgrace of His people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken.**

What will it be like, when we die and go to heaven, and we see God's face? The Psalmist tells us in ^{Ps 17:15} **And I—in righteousness I will see your face; when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness.** The godly, those made righteous through Christ Jesus, will enjoy God's presence "in righteousness." Righteousness has the sense of victory and joy secured for us by the Lord, Jesus Christ, Himself. And we will be satisfied with the likeness of God.

WOW! What a face-to-face experience with God! On the last page of the white pamphlet that you have in front of you, you will find these words from Ps. 105, verse 4, **Look to the LORD and his strength; seek His face always.** We are to be like the angels and saints in heaven. Always seeking God's face is being in God's Word, and letting His face be seen in your face. For we learn in ^{Ac 6:15} **All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.** What did they see in the face of Stephen? He was filled with the Holy Spirit and possessing a genuine spiritual joy in Christ Jesus. His face radiated a presence marked by confidence, serenity, and courage.

This is the kind of face we are to have when we leave this place. Let's think that for a moment. At the end of the worship service, we often close with the blessing spoken from Numbers chapter 6.

Nu 6:24 “ “**The LORD bless you and keep you; ²⁵ the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; ²⁶ the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.**

The words "make his face shine upon you" recalls the experience of Moses on Mount Sinai, when he stood before the presence of the living God. As God's glory had caused Moses' face to shine, so the Lord desires to make His presence known to all of us, His people. God had come down to reveal His grace and mercy. Hence we have this wonderful tie of the light of God's face and the grace of His presence. And we are sent forth by the power of the Holy Spirit to bring people to the Light. For we are eyewitnesses to the Light. The Apostle Paul tells us in **2 Cor. 3:18 ¹⁸ And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.**

Under the new covenant, all of us Christians behold and reflect the glory of the Lord to others. Unlike the Jews, who still read the law with veiled hearts, we Christians, with unveiled faces, behold in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We see the glory of the Lord, who is Christ Jesus.

What are people to see in your face? It's a face that **Look(s) to the LORD and His strength; (and) seek(s) His face always.** It is a face that reflects Jesus Christ. It is a face with an expression of deliverance from adversity, of close communion with Jesus, a trust in God, and the reality of God's blessed presence with you always. People are to see in your face the glory of God with the lips that speak and proclaim the glory of God through His Word and in the person of Jesus Christ. Amen.