

A Reflection on God's Glory and the Transformation in Christ

Exodus 34:29-35 (NKJV)

Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses' hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him.

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

Then Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned to him; and Moses talked with them.

Afterward all the children of Israel came near, and he gave them as commandments all that the Lord had spoken with him on Mount Sinai.

And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face.

But whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with Him, he would take the veil off until he came out; and he would come out and speak to the children of Israel whatever he had been commanded.

And whenever the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone, then Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with Him.

Moses' radiant face was the result of his prolonged encounter with the glory of God. After more than 80 days in God's presence (combining the initial 40 days receiving the law and the second set of 40 after intercession, Exodus 24:18; 34:28), the reflected glory of the Lord marked his physical being. Like someone who picks up the scent of strong perfume after sitting near it, Moses bore the imprint of God's glory.

This glory caused fear among the people. The Hebrew word for "shine" (קָרַן, qaran) implies rays of light or radiance, perhaps like beams or flashes. Though Scripture doesn't detail the exact nature of this glow, it was so awe-inspiring that Aaron and the people dared not come near (Exodus 34:30)

Moses, seeing their fear, veiled his face — an act both compassionate and symbolic. The veil shielded the people from the fading glory (see 2 Corinthians 3:13), and ultimately foreshadowed the greater glory yet to come in Christ.

The Temporary Nature of the Old Covenant Glory

Paul interprets this event in 2 Corinthians 3:7-11 (ESV):

Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that 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, 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.

Moses' reflected glory was temporary because it was tied to the law — the “ministry of death” and “condemnation.” The law revealed God's holiness, but it could not change human hearts (Romans 3:20). The fading of Moses' face signified the transitory nature of the old covenant, which pointed ahead to something greater: the new covenant in Christ's blood (Luke 22:20).

The New Covenant: A Glory That Transforms

The glory that Moses reflected was external; it did not spring from within. But the glory we have in Christ transforms us at the core of our being. Paul writes:

2 Corinthians 3:18 (NKJV)

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Unlike Moses' glory, the believer's glory does not fade because it flows from union with Christ. Jesus Himself prayed that believers

would share in His glory:

John 17:22 (NKJV)

And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one.

As we are sanctified by the Spirit (Romans 8:29), we are progressively conformed to Christ's likeness. This inner transformation is what the law could never produce.

The Work of Christ: The Removal of the Veil

Paul declares that the veil remains over the hearts of those who cling to the law without Christ:

2 Corinthians 3:15-16 (ESV)

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.

The veil is only lifted through faith in Jesus Christ. Where the law revealed sin, Christ brings righteousness (Romans 10:4). Where the law condemned, Christ justifies and gives life (Galatians 3:21-22).

A Call to True Transformation

We must not merely reflect God's glory as Moses did; we are called to become bearers of that glory through Christ's indwelling presence. The difference between the moon and stars illustrates this truth. The moon's light changes because it depends on the sun. The stars, however, shine from their own substance. Similarly, we are called to shine with the inner light of Christ, not just reflect Him from a distance.

Philippians 2:15 (NKJV)

..that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.

The Danger of Spiritual Blindness

Satan's great strategy is to blind people to this glorious truth:

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 (NKJV)

But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

Christ did not come to offer superficial change or external religion, but deep, lasting transformation.

Final Encouragement

When Christ changes a person, He changes them completely. His work is sure and perfect, unlike human efforts. He came not to guess at solutions but to fully accomplish the work of salvation (Hebrews 7:25).

May the Lord grant you His glory that does not fade, as you walk in true faith in Christ Jesus.

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