

The Testimony of an Open Face



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We know the Holy Spirit has come to "convict the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment" (John 16:8). The Puritans interpreted the Greek correctly in rendering it, "When He, the Holy Ghost, shall come, He will give demonstration concerning sin, righteousness and judgment."

How will the Holy Spirit produce this conviction in a Laodicean age? How will He convict a world growing more corrupt and chaotic by the hour? How will He convict our unconverted loved ones, especially when there is so little preaching that is anointed by the Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is going to convict this generation of sin, righteousness and judgment just as He did in the wilderness among the children of Israel. He takes a servant of God, wholly surrendered to His will - draws him to a holy mountain top to speak to him face to face - brings him into intimate fellowship and union with Himself - lets him behold the glory and majesty and holiness of the Kings of Kings - puts a shine on that servant's face - then brings him back down to face the lukewarm children of God - and convicts them with His own reflected glory.

In beholding the glory of God, Moses' face began to shine! "So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did eat no bread or drink water and it came about when Moses was coming down from Mount Sinai that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because of his speaking with Him..." (Exodus 34:28,29).

Those children of God who had idols in their hearts became fearful and convicted in the presence of a servant of God who reflected the glory of the Lord. "So when Aaron and all the sons of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him..." (Exodus 34:30). Not Aaron the priest nor any other Israelite could stand to look at his face. Paul said, "The sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face..." (2 Corinthians 3:7). Notice, the Scripture says the glory of his face - not just on his face! It reflected from the heart.

Moses had to put a veil over his face to hide the glory; it was too sobering, too convicting for the children of God. "When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face. But whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with Him, he would take off the veil until he came out; and whenever he came out and spoke to the sons of Israel what he had been commanded, the sons of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone. So Moses would replace the veil over his face until he went in to speak with him..." (Exodus 34:33-35).

Paul said the veil was needed because "their minds were hardened" (2 Corinthians 3:14). One man, coming forth from God's holy presence and reflecting in himself the glory of the Lord, condemned their sins. It was a testimony against their divided, stubborn hearts. It convicted them of their lack of holiness and of their loss of the fear of God. It reminded them how far from the Lord's presence they had strayed. And it showed them the coldness of their hearts.

I doubt that Joshua and Caleb turned away from Moses' face of glory. How it must have rejoiced their hearts! How their hearts must have burned to experience that same glory. But for the multitudes of God's chosen people, the Holy Ghost had raised up a testimony - a testimony that told the church that a servant of God can reflect the glory

of the Lord on earth; but also, that a single child of God, shut in with the King of Glory, can so reflect that glory as to convict the world and the church of sin, righteousness and judgment.

The glory on the face of Moses faded after a while because it was only a type of the spiritual glory to come! What happened to Moses is not to be compared with what the Holy Spirit wants to do today! "For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory... For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory on account of the glory that surpasses it... For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory" (2 Corinthians 3:9-11). In other words, if the fading glory in the face of Moses had such convicting power - if it proved to be such a powerful, Holy Ghost testimony - how much more will the present glory of Christ in His servants be a testimony - by the Spirit - to convict and convince!

Paul is telling us that the Holy Spirit is bringing a people into a great glory - a stronger, more powerful testimony to bring forth ever-increasing conviction of sin, righteousness and judgment. There is a glory available today to holy servants which will never fade and which will be called a ministry of righteousness! A testimony to the world and the church that will never die!

The Holy Spirit is at work right now, raising up a testimony of an open face!

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Paul begins by saying where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. The Greek word here expresses "liberty" as access or the freedom to go as you please. Certainly this is not meant that the Spirit-filled person has access to the world. It is access to the Lord's presence. It is freedom to enter His courts, to appear before the Lord in Zion. It is freedom to come and behold Him - freedom to climb His holy hill and fellowship and commune with Him. The Spirit invites us to enter the closet, shut the door, behold His glory, and be rewarded with His reflected glory in us.

While many rise up to play and dance around golden calves, the Holy Spirit is calling out a remnant people to go to the holy hill of God to spend much time in the Lord's majestic presence. How do you think the Holy Ghost will convict our dead churches? How will He convict your uncovered family? How will the Spirit convict the wicked crowd of sin, righteousness and the coming judgment? Did you suppose He would strike them down with supernatural light, as with Paul? Did you think the Spirit does not need us to do His work? The truth is: The only testimony against the sin and wickedness of this age is a man or woman of God who is so in touch with Jesus that His very presence in and on them convicts and produces the Holy fear of the Lord!

The Spirit of God will not let Christ's glory be veiled! The ministry of righteousness is a sanctified body of saints whose very lives are given to beholding Christ Jesus, who walk among Christians and sinners, shining with His presence - whose lives testify against sin - speaking forth righteousness - proclaiming His judgment of sin!

An open face, full of the glory of Christ, is condemnation to the lukewarm. An open face, shining with the awesome presence of Jesus Christ, strikes fear in the hearts of adulterers, fornicators, and idolaters. The Holy Ghost is at work in that open face of glory, striking fear among the false prophets and backslidden shepherds.

It is the presence of the Lord which distinguishes God's people from all others!

The world does not recognize Christians by that name alone. They ridicule those who have no power or presence of Christ in their lives. Moses prayed to God, "If Thy presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here... For how can it be known that I have found favor in Thy sight, I and Thy people? Is it not by Thy going with us, so that we, I and Thy people, may be distinguished from all the other people who are upon the face of the earth?" (Exodus 33:15,16).

What a powerful statement Moses made! Without the abiding presence of the Lord, God's people are not one iota different than the worldly crowd. Moses knew that it was the presence of the Lord in the camp alone that caused

dread to fall upon all their enemies. After crossing the Red Sea on dry ground, Moses sang this song: "In Thy lovingkindness Thou hast led the people whom Thou hast redeemed; in Thy strength Thou hast guided them to Thy holy habitation. The peoples have heard, they tremble; anguish has gripped the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed; the leaders of Moab, trembling grips them; all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. Terror and dread fall upon them; by the greatness of Thine arm they are motionless as stone; until Thy people pass over, O Lord, until the people pass over whom Thou hast purchased" (Exodus 15:13-16 NAS).

Moses told the Israelites, "If you are careful to keep all this commandment which I am commanding you, to do it, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, and hold fast to Him.... There shall no man be able to stand before you: the Lord your God shall lay the dread of you and the fear of you on all the land of which you set your foot, as He has spoken to you" (Deuteronomy 11:22, 25).

Moses knew well what it took to be God's testimony in a wicked world. The principle is not complicated. God said: "Stand before Me - obey Me - hold fast to Me - put aside all idolatry - and My presence will go with you - and sinners will tremble - you will bring forth a dread upon paganism - not a man shall stand before you unconvicted!"

Who are these open faced witnesses? They are those who were wooed into their Master's presence by the Holy Spirit because they turned their hearts wholly toward Him. They saw the swirling tides of wickedness and coldness; they heard the howling winds of deception and false doctrines; they saw the love of many wax cold, having a form of godliness with no convicting power; they saw the roaring lion devouring the weak and faithless! So they ran to the rock higher than themselves! They cried out, "You alone, Lord, have the words of eternal life!" They walked away from the hype, the fleeting pleasures, the arrogance and pride of men - and decided to cling to Christ alone! They have learned that it is not enough to be pure. It is not enough to be "opened up" in every area of the heart. There must be a coming apart from the world - a drawing nigh unto the Lord - a giving up on ones self to communion and closet prayer.

These are they who weep between the porch and the altar! They spend hours in His holy presence, learning His Word and will. They keep coming to the light - to stand before Him to expose their hidden sins and motives; and they tremble at His Word and are changed - one glorious revelation after another - one glorious vision of Christ after another.

The glory of the Lord is His presence!

It is impossible for a believer to fully reflect Christ's glory but by spending much time shut up with Him! There is much said about new revelations, new forms of praise and worship, new ways to build and grow, new out-reaches to the lost! But the Holy Spirit is in very little of it. In fact, much of it is an abomination to the Lord, and little conviction of sin is produced through it all. We have wasted enough time inventing ways to save the lost and purify the church. We need more open faced testimonies, more believers among us who truly reflect the glory of the presence of Jesus in them!

Show me one who shines with the presence of His glory and I will show you one who becomes "a manifestation of the truth." By their renouncing everything hidden and dishonest and by refusing to walk in craftiness or handle the Word of God deceitfully - they touch and convict the consciences of all men. Christ has shone forth in their hearts, and their very lives give forth the light of the knowledge of His glory. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ..." (2 Corinthians 4:6). This means the open faced believer, whose heart and face reflects Christ in fullness, causes all others to face up to the light of His glory. The result will be either conviction or rejection. The light of Christ's presence shines out of the open face - to expose, so as to save!

The veil is a ministry of good works! It speaks of man's self-sufficiency! It is a ministry of fading glory!

Much of what is done for the Lord today to advance His kingdom is done behind this veil of unbelief. The church can't bring itself to accept the fact that God won't accept the flesh or anything that flesh touches. We find it so hard to believe that most of our religious activities are in vain.

We are not yet in the testimony of righteousness. We have not yet been convinced God doesn't use ambitious men - but holy, Christ-like men. We chase after causes; we spend time, money and so much effort trying to wake up the church and change sinners through plans and programs. We are blind! We can't see that the Spirit convicts the world through Christians who live in the throne room and who come from God. They have and want nothing but Christ. They do nothing except what they see and hear Him do. "But whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away..." (2 Corinthians 3:16). Another way to say it is: Whenever one turns to the Lord, spending time with Him, changing with each session with Him - he too will be an open faced testimony to the world!

This is the danger of those who hold to idols and secret sin - they are veiling Christ to the world. Their lives do not touch the world; they are "spiritual duds." If you are not changing from glory to glory, becoming more and more like Jesus, then you are changing daily into the image of the wicked one! We are all changing - one way or another!

Every mountain, every hill is brought low by the presence of Jesus Christ! Those who spend much time with Him will see their hills of sin melt like wax, every high place of flesh brought down, every crooked thing made straight. "The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth" (Psalm 97:5). Paul speaks of "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God" (2 Corinthians 10:5). These high things are idols, habits, ambitions, motives - which become high and exalted hills and mountains in us. They must come down!

John the Baptist came to fulfill the words of Isaiah: "As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth" (Luke 3:4, 5 KJV). This is exactly what happens in the life of one who is shut in with the Lord, beholding His holiness. The mountains begin to crumble and the high and lofty hills of pride and self melt like wax before His fiery eyes. "...and the mountain shall be molten under Him, and valleys shall be cleft, as wax before fire..." (Micah 1:3,4 KJV). "The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at His presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein..." (Nahum 1:5).

All that is earthly, sensual, fleshly and carnal is exposed for what it is - all is burned up! None of it can survive His constant presence. Those who behold the glory of His holiness cannot stand before His eyes of fire They are brought low!

Christ's presence is devastating to flesh!

Isaiah was a good man who prophesied against the sins of God's people. He spoke much of the Holy One of Israel. But one day he beheld the Lord in the glory of His holiness and he cringed at the sight of his own sins! He cried: "Woe is me!" In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with [two] he covered his face, and with [two] he covered his feet, and with [two] he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." (Isaiah 6:1-5). When your eyes see the King in His glory - sin is exposed! There will be true heart repentance. The message here is: "See God and die!" Die to self and sin. Die to the corruption of the heart.

Daniel said, "I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and fasting and supplications..." (Daniel 9:3). Three full weeks he mourned and set his face toward the Lord. The Man dressed in linen, whose eyes were as lamps of fire, appeared to him in glory. "Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphas: His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore I was left

alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground" (Daniel 10:5-9 KJV).

Talk of conviction! When the Lord was moving on Daniel by His holy presence, "quaking fell upon the men who were with him, so that they fled to hide themselves." We live in a day of an unveiled Christ - how much more should the Lord's presence in us cause a quaking among all around who are living in sin.

John, on the Isle of Patmos, could not stand before the presence of Christ when He appeared in holiness to judge the seven churches. The one who laid his head on the breast of Jesus now beholds Him in the glory and power of His holiness - and he falls to his face. "And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the [breasts] with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last" (Revelation 1:12-17 KJV).

In His presence, Isaiah crumbled, Daniel melted, John fell as dead! And those who stood nearby were convicted and fled!

In these last days, multitudes are hiding from the presence of the Lord! Their sins have veiled His face from them and they are afraid to be much in His presence. Like Jonah, their disobedience causes them to "run from the presence of the Lord." They can't stand the fire in His eyes. So from a distance, they follow Him - claiming security and rights in His name. They will not bring down their high place of idolatry.

Many are moving on without the Lord's presence with them!

God gave Moses a most frightening directive. "Depart, go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up from the land of Egypt - to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, "To your descendants I will give it... and I will send an angel before you... for I will not go up in your midst... because you are an obstinate people, lest I destroy you on the way" (Exodus 33:1-3).

The people of God had spun completely "out of control" because of lust and idolatry (Exodus 32:25). Gold had become their god. They wanted to dance, to play, to fornicate, and to follow their lustful appetites. Only the sons of Levi stood up for the holiness of God.

Then followed the dread revelation that the Lord had removed Himself from them - He had departed lest He slay them. But still they were commanded to move on to claim their inheritance. God said, "I will give you what I promised." They could claim all their rights; they could move on with an angel to go before them; but because of sin and stubbornness - they had no more claim on the Lord's holy presence. They could have their rights and His protection - but not His presence.

Is that not what we are seeing today? It is the sad spectacle of multitudes of God's people, moving on in their religious quest for promised rights, boasting of angelic help against enemies - but no holy, awesome, convicting presence of Christ in them!

What could be worse than hearing this kind of commandment from the Lord, "Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey for I will not go up in your midst..." (Exodus 33:3)? God said to them, "You are an obstinate people, should I go up in your midst for one moment, I would destroy you. Now therefore, put off your ornaments from you, that I may know what to do with you..." (Exodus 33:5).

There are Christians today who are even more stubborn than the Israelites, who refuse to put away their idolatrous toys, gimmicks and man-centered programs. But they are moving on! Without the Lord's presence, the heart gets only harder, the enemy bolder, and the Lord's interests on this earth are forgotten and self is enthroned!

Moses wanted something greater than a land flowing with milk and honey. He wanted to know and experience the Lord's presence. He prayed, "Thou hast said, I have known you by name, and you have found favor in my sight. Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found favor in Thy sight, let me know Thy ways, that I may know Thee, so that I may find favor in Thy sight" (Exodus 33:12,13).

No wonder this precious servant of God convicted his generation! No wonder there was so much glory in his face. He wanted only to know the Lord. The only favor he wanted was the abiding presence of his Lord. So it was with Paul, whose heart cried out, "Oh that I might know him!"

The testimony of an open face is backed by this one glorious promise from the Lord: "My presence shall go with you; I will give you rest..." (Exodus 33:14). And because of His presence reflected in us, we shall become a demonstration to the world - convicting it of sin, righteousness and judgment.

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