

The Shining Face

by T. Austin-Sparks

The shining face is a reflection of God's glory and peace, a result of being occupied with the Lord Jesus Christ and His glory, and a guarantee of God's power and love.

Scripture: Exodus 34:29

Topics: "Inner Transformation", "The Glory of God"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the concept of the 'shining face' as a reflection of one's relationship with God, drawing parallels from the lives of Moses, Daniel, Stephen, and Paul. He explains that true radiance comes not from external circumstances but from an internal connection with the Lord, which manifests as peace and joy even in adversity. Sparks highlights that being occupied with Jesus and understanding His glory leads to a transformation that others can see, even if we are unaware of it ourselves. The sermon encourages believers to focus on God's vision and the reality of Christ within them to maintain a shining testimony in challenging times.

Transcript

Read: Daniel 1:8-16; Acts 6:15; 7:56

"When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tables of Testimony in his hand, he did not know that the skin of his face shone and sent forth beams by reason of his speaking with the Lord. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, behold the skin of his face shone, and they feared to come near him. Exodus 34:29-30

And all of us, as with unveiled face, continued to behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are constantly being transfigured into His very own image in ever increasing splendor and from one degree of glory to another; from the Lord, the Spirit. 2 Cor 3:18

You will notice the common feature of all these passages to be the shining face. We have been gathered together for a season up here on the mountain with the Lord and we have to go back, to be scattered in different places, and meet the difficult situations, and we want to go back with shining faces. But we want to know the secret of the shining face. That does not need to be taken literally. We may not always have a countenance that is cracking with mirth, but there is that which even in the midst of adversity and difficulty and suffering and trial speaks of something within the heart that is God's peace, God's rest, God's joy. It is possible to know the peace that passeth understanding. It is possible to know joy unspeakable and full of

glory even amidst very great pressure and suffering. It is possible for there to be recognised, even in a pain marked countenance, something that is of God.

What one is speaking of is not necessarily just a shining of our faces, but something shining through our faces, something which our faces indicate which is more than merely human endurance, human bravery and courage; something of the deep strength and grace of God. That is what I mean by the shining face, and in these four instances of which we have read we have the secrets of the shining face in this sense. You know it is that, that is the testimony. It is not always the things that we say, but that which is expressed through us in times of stress and trial and provocation and opposition and antagonism and suffering. It is then that that which is caught, as it were back of our faces, that is the testimony.

When it is known that we are undergoing trial, when it is known that we are in suffering, when it is known that others in a different realm would act and speak and react to things in the flesh, as men would react; there is just that betrayal of something of the Lord Jesus. That is the testimony. It is the betraying of the Lord Jesus in the right sense. And it will be very little good to the Lord, very little gain to Him or us, if as we go back and continue in the scenes of our life, and when there is a test, there is not some fuller indication of the Lord Himself in our hearts and lives. People will come to their conclusions on that basis - what we reveal under pressure, under trial.

That is the proof of the thing, not what we know and what we say. But when we pass through intense difficulties and adversity, what is revealed at such times. And in order that the testimony may be maintained, we want to understand what the secrets of the shining face are. They are four-fold.

"Moses Wist Not That His Face Did Shine."

The first is in the case of Moses. Moses had been up in the mount with the Lord and the Lord had spoken with him. Moses had come to see that upon which the eye of the Lord was resting. He had stood by the side of the Lord and he had looked with the Lord's eyes as the Lord brought before him His own vision, and that vision was expressed in the type, in the tabernacle. It all passed before the eye of Moses in the most minute detail. From the ark, out to the Holy Place to the Court and all its contents, and the priesthood and the sacrifices, and he saw what God's eye was resting upon. And by reason of the Lord's speaking to him about that, he became alive with the very glory of the Lord.

It is a wonderful thing to recognise that the Lord's glory became imparted to Moses by reason of that which became the common object of their eyes. What the Lord was looking at, Moses was looking at, and as they both looked at it together they shared the same glory. When does the Lord's own face light up with glory? When is the Father's face full of glory? When He looks upon the Lord Jesus. The tabernacle was only the Lord Jesus in a representation, and it was the Lord Jesus in all His Mediatorial, Priestly Person and work gathered up in a great system, but it was the person of the Lord Jesus as relating to man's fellowship with God--the place, the sphere where God and man come into oneness, where God can, without sacrificing His holiness, have fellowship with man and where man can without being consumed by the very holiness of God, have fellowship with God. From Him, the Lord Jesus Christ, with a centralmost reality of the mercy seat He will speak with you face to face.

God has set forth Christ as a propitiation. God sees beyond the pattern to the reality, His Son, and it was Christ Who was in the eye of the Father in all His wonderful, mediatorial work to bring men nigh to God and God nigh to man. When that is in the eye of God, His face is full of glory, and when we get what is in His eye, we partake of the glory of the shining face of God.

Simply, it just means that when we are occupied with the Lord Jesus in all that He is from the Father to us and to the Father for us, when we are occupied with Him, then we know the shining face. Be occupied with anything else and you lose the shining face. Be occupied with yourself and your own spiritual life and condition, so that you are always self analysing, and it will not be long before you have lost the shining face.

Keep your eye upon Jesus and you will know the secret of the shining face. Look around on things as they are in the world and you will lose it. The secret of the shining face is to get God's thought about the Lord Jesus, to get your eye where God's eye is. That is tremendously important.

The only hope for God of the ultimate realisation of His purpose is to look at the Lord Jesus. He has all the guarantee in Him. And He says, "Because He is what He is, my end is secure, I have My Sabbath, My rest, My eye is upon Him." And until we have seen that God has reached His end in Christ, and our eyes are upon Him, we have not got the secret of hope and confidence and rest and satisfaction. It is the secret. It is a wonderful reality.

I cannot tell you what a blessing this brought to my own heart when the Lord showed me what He had made the Lord Jesus to Himself on my behalf. I was always craving to bring to the Lord something that would satisfy Him in myself. If I could bring to the Lord a perfect life, that would please Him and satisfy Him, and He could be perfectly satisfied with me! But it was impossible and it seemed no good trying. The more you try, the further away you seem to be, and the longer you live the more you know the utter deceitfulness of your own heart.

Oh, to be able to come before the Lord with something that would please Him! And now the Lord says, "I have made the provision for all that. I have provided you with absolute spiritual and moral perfection. I have found those in One, and I have put them into your hands. I accept you in Him, I am satisfied with you in Him, you are accepted in the Beloved." You cannot bring perfection to God, and that is the only thing that will satisfy Him, but the Lord Jesus fulfills - fills full - all the Divine requirement.

In Leviticus, God speaks about the offering. "If any man desires to bring an offering," then the Lord provides as to the offering. You have got to desire to bring an offering. And you know quite well it is no use bringing to God anything that is not absolutely perfect, and where will you find that? That only which is according to Christ satisfies God. When this breaks upon us, it is rest. It is the shining countenance. When we get to the perfections of His Son, we have found the good pleasure of God and we stand, not looking at God askance, but we stand by the side of God and we are both looking at the same thing and sharing the same glory. God's objective is the Lord Jesus.

Moses did not know that his face was shining. It is a great thing to be occupied with the Lord Jesus inside, and people will take note of it. "He wist not that his face shone," but others did, and that is the important thing.

Daniel's Secret Of The Shining Face

Daniel has learned the secret of the shining face, and there is something deeper here, more testing. Daniel is in Babylon. Babylon is in the ascendancy. Jerusalem is in ruins. We know what these things mean spiritually. We know that that which really is wholly according to God, that which was at the beginning, is not to be found today - that where the Holy Spirit absolutely governs and where it is all the Lord Jesus. You do not find that in the ascendancy today. It is the other religious system made by man

that is in the ascendancy. That is Babylon. And the mass of the Lord's people are in captivity to it, a man-made Christian system.

And here is Daniel, seeing that which is according to God broken, ruined, and he sees this other thing, that is not according to God, holding sway and engulfing the mass of the Lord's people. The wonder of it all is that Daniel did not accept Babylon. He repudiated Babylon and clung to Jerusalem. If Jerusalem is literally in ruins, to Daniel it is not so. He does not accept the things seen. He knows that Babylon is only a temporary thing and that God is going to have His testimony again. And God is going, through a remnant, to get His house again. He knows that God cannot be defeated and so he will not defile himself with the king's dainties. God is his life and he repudiates that which seems to have the upper hand for the time being and clings to God.

Daniel also sees beyond and sees when Babylon and all the other kingdoms will be shattered. If you accept Babylon you will lose the shining face. If you accept religion as it is today and say, "It is the best there is," you will get involved in something that is not of God. And people more and more today are revolting, and are not satisfied. People say, "Oh, to be out of it, to find the real thing." God is going to have His real thing. God cannot be robbed of that thing which He has set His heart upon.

Let us set our hearts upon it, and not accept anything else. It is so easy to say, "Christianity is in a mess, but we must make the best of a bad job." But there is no joy along that line. God is working today secretly even in Babylon. And when we come to the book of Ezra, we find that God acts sovereignly. He stirs up the spirit of Cyrus and he makes a proclamation. That is God's outside action. But there is a company with whom God has secretly worked in Babylon.

And God is seen working in Babylon today with His own remnant and they are gradually moving in a detachment from this system so that when God's time comes He will have that which is after His mind. But Daniel was the first one. He represented that company. He stood for what was of God although it might not be manifested at the moment. Do not accept anything less than what God has set His heart upon. Daniel's secret of the shining face was in that He looked on to God's sure end and believed that in a dark day the ultimate purpose and thought of God was certain of realisation.

Stephen's Secret

Stephen - all that were in the council, looking upon him, saw his face as it were the face of an angel. What is the secret? I believe the second passage is the secret. "And lifting up his eyes he said, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." Stephen was a man full of the Holy Ghost and faith, and the Holy Spirit had drawn Stephen's attention to the Lord Jesus in glory. Read Acts 7. It is almost matchless in New Testament literature, and see the place that he gives to the Lord Jesus. He heads it right up to the Lord Jesus in glory and, while he is under the test, that is the thing that sustains him, and when he comes to the last moment he sees literally with his eyes what he had been seeing with his heart all the way through. And that just means this - when we see the Lord Jesus in glory we have seen this, that God having got Him there, the Son of Man, having got one all-inclusive Man there, it is all right for us. He can get us there.

That One has simply fathomed all judgment, all death, all the power of Satan and the grave. He has exhausted all and God has got Him there. He had all the sin of all the creation from Adam onward heaped upon Him, and then that One came to glory. He had all the power and fury of the devil heaped upon Him, and God got that One to glory; the power of Death and Hades being liberated upon Him, and God brought

that One to glory. We will never have to go through all that He went through. Stephen saw that one Man in the glory, being such a One as He was, is the guarantee that God could get him there, let all hell rush upon him. It is the secret of the shining face.

Sometimes we may, by reason of many things, wonder if we shall get to glory, if we shall hold out to the end, but, blessed be God, he is capable of getting us there. It is not our doing, it is the Lord's doing. Why? Because He has already got our forerunner in His presence. That bears you up in the time of opposition. And men filled with the Holy Spirit are especially the object of stones.

Paul's Secret

And now, finally, what Paul says about himself and about us. We all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory" - transformed. It is by the Lord, the Spirit. And what is the secret of this shining face? 2 Cor. 4:6, "God hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The secret of the shining face in this case is not Christ objectively but Christ subjectively. It is a blessed thing to realise that the One Who has gone up there is His great triumph is within us. It does not depend on what is outside of us. But the Lord is inside us, Who has already overcome. We are familiar with the terms but it is a great day when suddenly we wake up to know what Christ is in us. Has it ever come to you by a sudden flash of light? Christ in you! "Know ye not, as to your own selves, that Christ is in you." (2 Cor 13:5) "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." (Eph 3:17) Get that, spiritually apprehended, and you have got the shining face. All that which is around you is no match for Him. "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." (1 John 4:4).

Ask the Lord to make this live. To know this means a wonderful lot to the life. May the Lord take us back with that in our hearts which speaks of the Lord Jesus! That is the testimony. Our eye is upon what God's eye rests upon, our hope is set upon God's hope, our assurance upon God assurance. And it is all the Lord Jesus.

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