

THE RADIANT LIFE

"And It came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him." Exodus 34:29.

Occasionally we meet people who seem to think that the Christian life is pale and thin, dull and drab, cold and negative. How little they know about it! They are as far from the truth as the North Pole is from the South Pole.

In our scripture story we find a man coming down the mountainside. He had been at the top. In his outlook upon life, he had been twenty thousand feet above the level of the sea where those other Israelites were splashing about. He had gained such an open vision of spiritual reality because he had been speaking with the Lord. He had seen those principles of righteousness which underlie all human well-being--principles having to do with the sacredness of life and purity, truth and property, family peace and personal honor. He had seen each one prefaced by a "Thou shalt" from on High. All that had lifted him to such a level of thought and feeling that as he came down the mountainside his face was radiant.

Very wonderful indeed was the interview of Moses with God on the mount during the period of forty days and forty nights. Moses was there in intimate communion with God, and during that entire period he neither ate nor drank. He simply remained in uninterrupted communion with God. While he gazed on God's goodness, his soul was transfigured, and the glory of it shone in his face. Who could spend that long in unbroken fellowship with God without being transformed into His likeness? The record says: "Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone."

That light was not on his face when Moses lay in the ark of bulrushes nor when he espoused the cause of enslaved Israel. It really began to take place when he made his great decision in Egypt. There and then Moses had chosen "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." Then it was that his face began to shine.

Only Moses saw that revelation in the desert of Midian. Ever after he stood barefoot on holy ground. Afterwards he did not fear the face of Pharaoh because he had met God face to face. Forty days and forty nights on Horeb's height he neither ate bread nor drank water, but his soul was satisfied with marrow and fatness by communion with God. Ever after his deepest desire and most earnest prayer was: "Show me Thy glory." Then Moses stood in the cleft of the rock while the Ineffable Glory passed by and proclaimed "the Lord merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth; keeping lovingkindness for thousands and forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." Then Moses made haste and bowed to the earth and worshiped. His face began to shine, and he knew it not. Once more he went up to the holy mount to receive the Tables of the broken Law a second time. When he came down his face shone with heavenly light.

When Moses came down from the mountain, the Hebrews fled from their leader, for his face shone, or, as the vivid Hebrew puts it, 'sprouted light,' a glory they were afraid to look on. Whence came this effulgence which shone from Moses face? This radiance of Moses' face was the outward expression of a glorious inward experience.

I. The Causes Of His Radiance.

1. Fellowship with God.

Moses had prayed, "Show me now Thy way; show me Thy glory," and God had answered that prayer, had taken him up into the mountain, and, after forty days and nights of fellowship with God, Moses came down with this effect, that the skin of his face shone.

This blessed experience of Moses is a possibility for every one of us, as we behold

the face of God in Jesus Christ. If only our lives are lived in His fellowship, the result will be evident, first, in our thoughts, then in our desires, then in our character, and then in our very physical features.

The blessings which come from fellowship with God will be unmistakable by those around us. Aaron and those who were with him saw this, and they were afraid. If only our lives are lived in close communion with God the result will be evident to others, even though we may not be conscious of it.

2. Service for God.

Moses was a man with a social vision. He was called into the service of God by a direct appeal to his social sympathies. And the sense of shame over the wrong which was being done to his fellow countrymen and the sense of obligation to do something about it put a new light in his face which had not faded out when he came down the mountainside to the place where those same Israelites were now encamped.

Moses had a far-reaching purpose. He wanted to get those Israelites out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage--and he did. We are told that the Red Sea opened before them when they made their escape. We are told that a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night guided them on their march toward the promised land. We are told that in a dry and thirsty land where there was not any water they were providentially supplied with the necessities of life.

3. Sacrifice for others.

Moses had the spirit of self-sacrifice. While he was on the mountaintop, speaking with the Lord, there had come a terrible falling away among the people he had been sent to lead. They had made for themselves a golden calf, like the sacred bulls which they had seen the rich and the great worshiping along the banks of the Nile River. They had stripped off their clothes and were dancing naked before the hideous idol in a wild, pagan orgy. They were calling out to Aaron, "Up, make us gods to go before us! As for this Moses, we know not what has become of him."

Then we read that "the anger of the Lord was kindled against them." He stood ready to destroy all of them for their evil-doing. God said, "Let me alone, and I will destroy this people, and I will make of thee a great nation." But this man who had undertaken to lead them into newness of life, drew near and said: "O Lord, these people have sinned a great sin! They have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive them! Forgive their iniquity! If not, blot me out of the book of life." "Blot me out," if need be, but spare them! He stood ready to give his life for theirs. He was willing to be forgotten for the sake of Israel. On account of that spirit, his name is one that God says will never be forgotten.

4. Zeal for God.

Moses had an intense zeal for the glory of God. His face shone because the will of God was the purpose of his life and the glory of God was his supreme ambition. To reveal the glory of God is the supreme mission of every saved person. It is the mountain crest of consecration.

II. The Consequences Of His Radiance.

1. Unconsciousness of it.

The highest excellence is that which is least conscious of itself. There are those who have been alone with God on the mountain, and have come down with their faces shining, but of this they have been themselves the least conscious. Your life in public truly reflects your private life. You may not think so, but it does. You never rise in public above the spiritual level of your private life with God. Whenever men and women get apart with God, and talk face to face with Him concerning His holy will, they come away changed.

2. Humility.

When people began to observe the radiance of Moses he put a veil over his face. Surely, if any man could be proud of holiness, it would be when God wrote it on his face. There is a loud-mouthed, so-called holiness today that boasts of its superior beauty. It has denunciation for all except itself, and it readily vaunts its preeminence. It is but polished brass trying to pass itself off for gold. True holiness is like ripe wheat in that the riper it becomes the lowlier it bends its head.

3. Fearlessness.

Moses faced a whole rebellious nation and subdued it. His shining face signified God's special favor upon him. It indicated a great increase in his power.

There is no place for fear in the life of a consecrated Christian. It always takes real courage to be loyal to Christ.

4. Victory.

Moses won the victory over self, and then over every opposing force. He brought a whole nation to its knees. We, too, can meet our obligations and overcome the obstacles in our way, provided we have the spirit that Moses had.

5. Conspicuousness.

Moses' transfigured face was noticeable to all who saw him. People will not fail to recognize how good one is. His face is the index of his life, the expression of the inner life and the disposition.

6. Benediction.

Moses' life and ministry were a great blessing to others. The lives that bless are the ones which are truly beautiful. People who know God, have communion with Him and are true to Him are the ones whose help is sought the most, and who are the most gifted in bringing blessings to others.

Do we want our faces to be transfigured, our lives to be radiant, and our service to be a blessing to others? Then, let us live near to God, for we cannot take others nearer to Him than we live ourselves.