

Exod 04-11-21b

Let's resume our study in the Word of God this morning now by turning to Exodus chapter 34 after our scripture reading in Psalm 97 and understanding the presence of God in the clouds and darkness, the clear dividing line between those who are delivered by God and the enemies of God who are burned up by the fire that precedes Him, the issue that is made clear by the declaration of God's sovereignty, God's righteousness, God's holiness in the heavens, in the earth, the lightnings that light the world. We come back now to Exodus 34 where God has manifested Himself much more clearly in the presence of Moses. The Lord descended in the cloud in Exodus 34.5 and we have studied both the physical manifestation of the presence of God and the sevenfold renewal of the covenant that follows.

We looked at each of the elements of this last time where in the restoration process, there was an initial coming together of God as sovereign Lord of Israel and the people who said, all the Lord has said we will do. Then the golden calf incident. God is about to judge and destroy them.

Moses intercedes and says, Lord, there's no point in us continuing unless you go with us. You have to be with us. You have to be our God.

You have to forgive and reclaim this people for yourself. And so God says in verse 10, I make a covenant. And then He gives these sevenfold terms of the covenant that is going to be the binding relationship between God and Israel for the foreseeable future.

Term number one in verses 10 and 11, God is going to manifest His power in the nation of Israel as a terror inciting witness to the godless. We talked about the word terrible last time. We've seen it in Psalm 97.

The clouds and the darkness, the thunder, the fire. This is designed to awe and to manifest the glory of God and make it an issue for all the people of the world. Number two in verses 12 through 17, no compromise with the godless is permitted.

They will be ensnared. They will be prostituted to evil if they compromise. These idol worshippers that the psalmist talked about, no compromise.

No intermarriage. No covenant. Destroy their altars.

Break down their images. Do not sacrifice to their gods. Otherwise, your sons will be led astray.

Third element in verse 18, remember from whence you came. Remember God's mighty and gracious deliverance. The fourth element in verse 23, three times in the year all the men should appear before the Lord.

Regular, formal remembrance of God by the leadership of that society, the men. They are all to go before the Lord three times a year without fail. That is a formal way of remembering the Lord that they should be remembering all the time.

We talked about other forms of three-fold remembrance that we can impose on ourselves, evening and morning and at noon while I pray and cry aloud and this sort of thing. The fifth element of these seven terms of the covenant, in verse 25, do not come before God in impurity. Do not allow that which is to be taken in to spoil.

We ourselves are not to come before God in impurity and we are not to allow impurity or spoilage in that which we take in. The Passover sacrifice was one of the few that was eaten by the participant. Do not leave it till morning.

Don't let it spoil. You're supposed to eat it. Eat it all.

The Lord said with the new covenant in His blood, drink ye all of it. The condemnation on the 5,000 and 4,000 that Jesus fed with miraculous multiplication of loaves is that there were fragments left over. Eat all of it.

Do not be impure before God. Do not let that which you take in in the presence of God to spoil. Remember verse 26, every good gift comes from above.

This is the principle of firstfruits. This is the principle of the firstborn that we're going to take a little closer look at in this lesson. But everything comes from above.

The first of the firstfruits bring to the house of the Lord your God. Do not forget where provision comes from, who it ultimately belongs to. And then finally, seventh, in the prohibition of boiling a kid in its mother's milk, do not use that which is intended to nourish the young for his benefit.

Do not take that to boil him alive for your own benefit. And this has specific application in the area of what we do with the Word of God. The Word of God is the milk that is designed to nourish and strengthen the young, those that we are superior to in terms of maturity or advancement.

Do not take that nourishment and instead of feeding it to them for their growth and their benefit, heat it up and boil them in it for our purposes, for our benefit. That's what we looked at last time. This was the sevenfold emphasis that God gave to Moses when he renews his covenant with Israel.

When you look at these seven things, all of it revolves around God and what He provides. Don't be distracted from God. Don't forget that God is your provider.

He is your redeemer. He is your deliverer. He is the one before whom you assemble to give an account three times in the year.

That one, of course, is right in the center. You have three before it but right in the middle, you have a threefold remembrance. And these threes are also a reminder of God.

Holy, holy, holy. Well, after this, in verse 29, this is where we pick up now this morning. 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, 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.

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.

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. You'll notice here that there are six entire verses devoted to the shining of Moses' face. It could have been done in a verse.

It could have been done in a phrase. But it is elaborated and described in great detail. Why would that be? I ask myself.

What does it represent? If we think about observation, interpretation, application. First of all, there's only one face in Israel that shines. And that is the face that has beheld God up close.

That is the face that turns from God and gets pointed at the people. Moses is the go-between. He is the intermediary.

He alone enters into the presence of God and receives the words of God. Then he comes to the people with that information. The shining of Moses' face is evidence that he has been in the presence of God.

It is a supernatural... Obviously, God didn't have this happen as an accident, did he? He didn't turn to Gabriel and say, Look at there, Moses' face is shining. I didn't think about that happening. I forgot to modify the laws of physics.

God essentially causes this effect in Moses. It is never seen previous to Moses in the Old Testament. You do not see it again after Moses in the Old Testament.

Plenty of prophets hear from God. Elijah is going to go up and have the experience on the mountain that we looked at last time. It doesn't say anything about Elijah's face shining.

There's only one other face in Scripture that is spoken of as shining in this way. Whose is it? It's the Lord Jesus. First, on the Mount of Transfiguration, tells us specifically that his face shone.

Secondly, in the Revelation of John, chapter 1, you have the description of the resurrection glory

of the Lord Jesus, which, of course, was prefigured at the Transfiguration. What does it say about the appearance of the Lord Jesus? John 1, verse 13, "...in the midst of the seven lampstands, one like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet, girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes like a flame of fire." His face is shining.

His face and his head are white like wool. You know what happens when you see a fire or a headlight or some other bright light on TV? It isn't actually as bright as being in the presence of a headlight or a flame, right? Our mind tells us that it's a headlight or a flame, but what is actually represented on the screen there? It's just the whiteness. It's as white as your TV screen can get.

And compared to the surroundings, we say, ooh, that's bright. That's a headlight. That's a torch.

That's a flame of some kind. That's a bright beam. In reality, it is represented on the television screen by the color white.

It is no brighter than any other white on a Tide commercial or whatever else, but in the context of whatever you're watching, it appears to be this bright, shining thing. So when John says, his head and his hair were white like wool, this is as white and bright as you can still look at. So what does this tell us? This is the Lord in resurrection glory.

This is the Lord that has come from the right hand of the Father. This is the intermediary who has seen God and is now looking at us. Moses is typical of this function in the Old Testament.

He has penetrated through the clouds and thick darkness. He has been in the presence of God. Now, he was in the presence of God the first time.

He was in the presence of God at the burning bush. He and the elders were in the presence of God at the commemorative covenant meal earlier on in Exodus. Why is it only now that his face shines? I think it is because of what happened in verses 5 through 9. That's what is different.

Moses has been at a proximity to God that is unprecedented. He has never been that close before. God has declared His glory to Moses.

God has caused His glory to pass before Moses. And this establishes a new level of proximity to the Lord by Moses. He is in a new place that even in the first giving of the Ten Commandments, even at the burning bush, even at the covenant meal, everything that is preceded, he was not as close to God as he is now.

And his face continues to be illuminated. It's not just this one time. Every time he goes into the presence of God, he unveils his face and it is as though the nightlight gets recharged.

It reminds me of when I was a little boy. The first thing I ever saw that glowed in the dark was given to me at Sunday school or camp or somewhere. It was just a white plastic cross.

And when you held it under a light and turned all the lights off, it glowed in the dark. It was phosphorescent. Unlike most phosphorescent things I've seen since then that have kind of a greenish hue, this had a purplish hue in the dark.

And I had that thing for years and in the middle of the night, you could look over toward my desk and here would be this glowing cross. I think if you have anything glow in the dark, a cross is as good as anything. It's a great reminder of the power of light over darkness.

But this seems to be... You know how it is with something that's phosphorescent. You hold it under a light and it glows real brightly for a while and then it gets gradually dimmer. They put lights, they put phosphorescent numerals on watches and on clocks and so on.

And they're brightest right after they've been exposed and they gradually fade. Well, this seems to have been the effect with Moses, that his face was brightest right after he had been talking with the Lord. And over time, it would begin to dim.

And you have the comparison made over in 2 Corinthians. If you turn over there right quick. This is what the Apostle Paul has to say about this Old Testament truth.

2 Corinthians 3, beginning in verse 4. We have such trust through Christ toward God, not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves. Our sufficiency is from God. He's talking about sufficiency as an apostle.

Our ministry is of things that come from God. Paul says, I'm not making this stuff up. What I give you, I got from the Lord.

Our sufficiency is from God who made us sufficient as ministers of the New Covenant. Ministers of the New Covenant. Moses is a minister of the Old Covenant.

This is the covenant we have just seen with this seven-fold emphasis given on the mountain. When Moses comes down with this covenant fresh in his mind, freshly written down, with his face glowing from being in the presence of the God who gave this covenant, it is evidence that Moses did not just sit up there for 40 days and think up the covenant and say this would be a great constitution for the nation of Israel. He is not the Thomas Jefferson of Israel.

He is not the constitutional congress in one man for Israel. What he gives them, he received from God in his glowing face his testimony that it came from God. Paul says he is made sufficient by God to be the minister of the New Covenant.

Not of the letter, but of the Spirit. Paul the Apostle did not come with more stone tablets to give to the church. You can't go to Rome and go to St. Peter's and find a niche in the Vatican where there are another set of stone tablets that came to Peter or to Paul or to anybody else from God.

He says this one is not written down in letters. It is of the Spirit. The letter kills, but the Spirit

gives life.

This goes back to what we were talking about Friday with regard to the strength of sin is the law. The sting of death is sin. The strength of sin is the law.

They are all connected. Law defines sin. The wages of sin is death.

The penalty for sin is death. It is elucidated. It is manifested.

It is laid out in the law. They are all connected. So Paul says the letter kills.

That means the letter of the law tells you what the penalty is for sin. That's its purpose. By the law comes the knowledge of sin.

That's what it's there for. The Spirit gives life. We have moved beyond identifying and defining and giving the penalty for sin to the solution.

We're not just demonstrating the sinfulness of man and his need for a Savior. Now we are exploiting salvation through the Spirit. That's why the Spirit was not given in the Old Testament the way He is in the New.

Because God's purpose in Old Testament days was that sin might be made manifest. Look at the nation of Israel and its history of perpetual failure. That is man apart from the power of God in the Holy Spirit.

It is that sin might become exceedingly sinful. Romans 7. Look at verse 7. If the ministry of death written and engraved on stones was glorious, what's he talking about? Our passage. Exodus 34.

This is the law written on stones. And it was glorious. Moses' face glowed.

Not just in the dark, but in the daylight. If the ministry of death written and engraved on stones was glorious, 2 Corinthians 3.7, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, and that glory was fading. Over time, like a phosphorescent toy, Moses' face would fade.

Verse 8. How will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? We have seen in our first chapter and a half of Hebrews how the author there points to what happened in the Old Testament and points to what happens in the New Testament as a result of the coming of Christ, and says, do you not see how this communication from God in the person of the Son is superior and is greater than this background and backdrop that was created in the Old Testament? He had the same idea here. If that was glorious, how can this that comes through the Spirit not be even more glorious? For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, we have all of the thou shalt nots, don't we? We just reviewed the seven. Don't come before God in impurity.

Don't let the sacrifice spoil. Don't intermarry with the people. Don't forget that God is your God.

Otherwise you will be condemned. The consuming fire that precedes the God of glory in Psalm 97 will consume in judgment those who depart from this covenant. If the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory.

I think it would be great. I think we all sort of secretly hope that there is some sort of video record of what took place in the Old Testament so that we can see the Red Sea part. We can see the top come off Mount Carmel.

I would love to see the scene where Moses comes down out of the smoke and cloud from Sinai. And when people look in his direction, all they see is this unbearably bright light emanating from his face. They can't even tell that it's Moses.

He looks like a halogen light on a human body. They might be able to see his sandals, but the rest of it is just the effulgence of brightness. And they're not even sure it's Moses.

Aaron runs away until Moses calls out and says, hey, it's me. Don't run away. They don't know.

Is it an angel? Is it an apparition? What is it? They can't tell until Moses calls out. He has to identify himself by voice. As great as that is, and as fascinating and impressive a scene as that is, Paul is saying here in 2 Corinthians 3, our revelation, the revelation that we receive through the Spirit, is greater than this.

And it's hard to believe. You think, how could anything be more impressive than that? Paul says it is. He says, if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory.

What we have is better than that. For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. What's he saying? Moses didn't have any glory.

Moses' face did not have any intrinsic glory. He didn't have illuminating cells in his skin. He was made glorious by what he was in the presence of.

He picked up glory that sort of rubbed off on him. And that's what people saw. Even what was made glorious, that's the face of Moses, had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels.

That glory of Moses' face dims into darkness compared to the glory of the Spirit. He says, if you want to talk about glory, that just pales. It fades into insignificance next to what we have in this age.

For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious. Moses' face faded. God the Holy Spirit does not fade.

The truth of the Lord Jesus Christ witnessed in the Bible, the Word made flesh that dwelt among

us, the fullness of deity in bodily form that we've talked about in the first chapter of Hebrews, does not fade, is not superseded. The law of Moses has been superseded. It doesn't mean everything in it was of no value or that the principles weren't valid.

It communicates and illustrates righteousness. It communicates and illustrates sin and the difference between the two. But as a means of communication, as an operating mode, it has been superseded.

It has been set aside by this new covenant. And this covenant is not superseded. It is not replaced.

It is not going to be done away. And by so much, the things that the Spirit communicates about the Lord Jesus Christ to us are greater than what Moses heard on Sinai. It's greater than seeing the covenant stones that were written on by the finger of God.

It's greater than seeing the glowing face of Moses. We have a hard time being impressed with how good we have it as believers in this age. It's hard to realize how great our deliverance is, how great the ministry of the Holy Spirit is, because we take it for granted.

In the first session, we talked about God giving us capacity for things by suffering. We value relationships when we have done without. We value provision when we have done without.

We value good health when we have done without. We value a lot of things more. Jesus said this lady washing his feet with her hair and her tears loved him much because she had been forgiven much.

Her pain and that journey through the valley of the shadow that she had gone through gave her capacity to appreciate Jesus much more than the scholars of the law who were putting on the dinner. If what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious. Look at verse 12 of 2 Corinthians 3. Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech.

Unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end or the result of what was passing away. This sounds like Moses said, I want to cover this up before my face completely fades so that you don't see my unfaded face anymore. But what this really is talking about is the children of Israel could not look steadily at the result of this superseded covenant.

The original one, the result of Moses receiving that covenant and coming down and being in the presence of God was this glowing face. The children of Israel could not look at it steadily. Moses had to cover it up.

This was the result, not the end, not the departure of the glory, but the result. Their minds were blinded. The veil over Moses' face, it's kind of like Jack Nicholson in that lawyer movie where he says, you want the truth? You can't handle the truth.

And the children of Israel could not handle the glory of God. That's why they could not come up where Moses was. They did not enter in behind the veil of cloud and thick darkness that surrounded the mountain.

They weren't ready for it. Even the reflection of it, even the echo of it in Moses' face, they couldn't take it. Aaron the priest couldn't look at it.

Moses had to veil it because they just couldn't stand it. Much as when they first came to the mountain, Moses went toward the mountain and the rest of the people fled away from the mountain. And they said, you go talk to God.

We don't want to hear anymore. It terrifies us. The one thought that I hope goes away with us today of all of the things that we've talked about is this.

Thanksgiving is coming up. We think about God and His blessings. The Lord Jesus is going to return one of these days.

He is going to be manifest just the way John saw Him on the Isle of Patmos with the glowing face, the hair and head of whiteness that exceeds that of wool. The Israelites could not bear to look at the face of Moses which was glowing from the presence of God connected with the first covenant. How much more is there going to be glory associated with the actual presence of the Lord Jesus Christ when He returns? How tragic is it going to be if we, like the Israelites, are not going to be able to bear to look on His face? Wouldn't it be awful to be like the Israelites saying to Moses, you go talk to Him.

You go look at Him. We're going the other way. We can't bear it.

Jesus, please veil your face. Why do you think that so many believers are not going to be in the Millennial Kingdom proper, are not going to be in the land of Israel, are not going to have the right to the city, to enter, to see the presence of Christ? They won't want to. They won't be able to bear it, even in resurrection, even in the kingdom to come.

Why? Why is it that Moses can ask for the revelation of God's face and the rest of the Israelites are asking that He not? They're all delivered. They are all redeemed. They all passed through the sea.

They have all partaken of the manna. They are all at the mountain. God is present.

Why is it that only Moses can view His face? It is a matter of the heart. It is a matter of decision. It is a matter of choice.

We choose for or against. You don't have a repulsion. You are not repelled.

You are not driven away by that which you love. If you love someone, it doesn't matter if they get disfigured. It doesn't matter if they are ravaged by disease.

It doesn't matter if they become unlovely or abhorrent even to others. When you love them, you go past whatever these superficialities are because you love them and you go forward where others would draw back. You think about people who care for those who are terminally ill and sometimes the ending of that terminal illness is not pretty.

Many people would avoid that and go away, but not if you love them. If you love them, you are there. You work all the way through that.

Why? Because you know and you love the person at the center of those issues and your love is stronger than any of these other factors. Well, there is a healthy fear of the presence of God because He is righteous and we are not. And it puts us on our face like the Old Testament prophets.

But when the Lord Jesus returns, we have a choice and we are making the choice right now as to whether or not when He comes and His shining, glorious face is revealed, if we are attracted and we are running toward Him or we are running away saying, put something between me and that. It's too bright. It's too much.

I can't handle it. This is the daily task which we are undertaking. This is why we suffer now.

This is why we work through challenges. This is why we dedicate ourselves to the study of the Word of God. Ultimately, symbolically, we are working for that day when Jesus returns.

We want to be able to look upon His face. We want to be welcoming and positive and shouting the run-on of welcome. We want run-on and not running.

We don't want to be running. We want to be run-on. We want to be singing and shouting the victory.

Unfortunately, the hymn, as great a hymn as it is, when we all see Jesus, we will not all sing and shout the victory. Unfortunately, most of us are going to be running. And God will put us at a safe distance, at the distance where we can tolerate the radiance of the glory of the presence of Christ.

Look at what Paul says here in 2 Corinthians. Their minds were blinded. Until this day, the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Covenant, the Old Testament.

Because the veil is taken away in Christ. And it's too bright. It's too much.

I don't want to see that. Put the veil back, they say. I don't want to see that glory revealed.

I reject that. Take it away. Even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.

Nevertheless, when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now, the Lord is the Spirit. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

But we all, with unveiled face, and that but should be now. It's the conjunction d-e in Greek. It can be translated either adversatively, by the word but, or consecutively by the word now.

And I choose now. Now, we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image, from glory to glory. We can be Moses.

Not only can we view with an unveiled face the glory of the Lord, like Moses did. Moses, when he went into the presence of the Lord, said, I've got to get this rag off my face. I want to see God.

I don't want anything between me and Him. We have that same opportunity to see the glory of the Lord with an unveiled face. And Paul says, even though we are not in the presence, we're seeing a reflection.

It's in a glass. He says in 1 Corinthians, now we see like in a glass, darkly. One of these days it's going to be face to face.

But even now, looking at that reflection, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, we are being transformed into the same image. Our face can glow. Our study of the word of God, our growing in grace and knowledge of the Savior, causes our face to glow.

We can be a testimony. We can be a light shining in a dark place. It isn't what we say, it's where we've been.

It is the transforming presence of the Spirit of God, the power of God, the word of God, that makes us into something that shows forth the glory of God. It transforms us. We don't have to consciously try to do something different.

We will be transformed by the renewing of our minds into the same image. From glory, the glory that's in God's word, the glory that is manifested by God's Spirit, that lights us on fire. It lights us up.

It makes us into something we were not. It transforms us, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. That's the difference between the Old Testament and the New.

That's the difference between Israel and the Church. That's the difference between Moses and us. When Moses came down from the mountain, he had a glowing face, but you know what he did not have? He did not have the indwelling, sealing, filling, gifting, transforming ministry of God's Holy Spirit that you and I have.

Moses longed to see our day, because this is better than that. We behold with an unveiled face. We are transformed from glory to glory, and this is a glory that fadeth not away.

What an opportunity we have. This is why the book of Exodus, which Moses wrote, spends six verses talking about the shining face. As great as that was, our opportunity is greater.

Don't we want to see the shining face of the Lord Jesus and shine in return? Be those who are already lit up with that glory, and that glory comes together. What we have learned about Him, what we know of Him, our love for Him, draws us to Him at His return, and we rejoice and sing on the day that He returns, that shout of victory, and we are not ashamed. We are not running away.

We are not saying, somebody get me a veil. That's the fruit of small decisions, small recognitions through our day of who we are and why we're here. We are here to be transformed.

We are here to glow with the glory of God. I wish you all a happy Thanksgiving. Let's close in a word of prayer.

Father, we are thankful at this particular time of year, especially for all of the wonderful things that you have done for us, but especially for the unique relationship to you that we have through the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will be able to minister these truths to our souls so that we are transformed and we do reflect your glory, manifest in the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray your blessing on each one here.

We ask for safe travel and for return to fellowship and opportunity to worship together in the study of your word. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.