

## The Face of God

### Numbers 6:24-26

24 Jehovah <sup>1</sup>bless you and keep you;

25 Jehovah make <sup>1</sup>His face <sup>2</sup>shine upon you and be gracious to you;

26 Jehovah <sup>1</sup>lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

Note 24<sup>1</sup>: The Father blesses us in every way and in every aspect in His love (cf. Eph. 1:3), and He keeps us in every way and in every aspect in His power (cf. John 17:11, 15; 1 Pet. 1:5).

Note 25<sup>1</sup>: The *face* here signifies presence. As the One whose face shines upon us, Christ the Son is the visible presence of the invisible God (cf. John 14:7-9). God and His presence are invisible, but through His incarnation He became the shining sun (Luke 1:78; cf. Matt. 4:16; John 8:12). This shining sun is God's invisible presence becoming visible.

Note 25<sup>2</sup>: Jehovah's face shining on us and His being gracious to us are equivalent to God's incarnation as the shining of His presence, which was accompanied by grace (John 1:14, 16-17). For the Lord to be gracious to us means that He is continually grace to us. This grace is the grace of Christ (2 Cor. 13:14a), which is actually Christ Himself.

Note 26<sup>1</sup>: The face (v. 25) denotes the presence of the person, and the countenance denotes the expression of the person. To lift up one's countenance upon a person means to confirm, assure, promise, and give everything to that person. Jesus, the Son, came as the face of God (see note 25<sup>1</sup>), and the Holy Spirit comes as the countenance of God (cf. Eph. 4:30). When the Triune God is dispensed into us, we have the face of the Triune God and also His countenance. Eventually, we are kept in the Triune God, the Triune God becomes grace to us, and we have peace.

### Psalm 31:16

Cause Your face to shine upon Your servant; / Save me in Your lovingkindness.

### Psalm 67:1

God be gracious to us and bless us; / May He make His face to shine upon us.

### Psalm 80:3, 7, 19

3 O God, restore us; / And cause Your face to shine, and we will be saved.

7 O God of hosts, restore us; / And cause Your face to shine, and we will be saved.

19 O Jehovah God of hosts, restore us; / Cause Your face to shine, and we will be saved.

### Psalm 119:135

Cause Your face to shine on Your servant, / And teach me Your statutes.

### 2 Corinthians 2:10

But whom you forgive anything, I also forgive; for also what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, it is for your sake in the <sup>3</sup>person of Christ.

Note 10<sup>3</sup>: Lit., face; as in 4:6. The part around the eyes; the look as the index of the inward thoughts and feelings, which shows forth and manifests the whole person. This indicates that the apostle was one who lived and acted in the presence of Christ, according to the index of His whole person, expressed in His eyes.

### 2 Corinthians 4:6-7

6 Because the God who said, Out of darkness light shall shine, is the One who shined in our hearts to illuminate the knowledge of the glory of God in the <sup>5</sup>face of Jesus Christ.

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us.

Note 6<sup>5</sup>: The face of Jesus Christ is in comparison with the face of Moses (3:7). The glory of the gospel in the face of Jesus Christ is much superior to the glory of the law in the face of Moses. The former shines in the face of One through whom grace and reality came, issuing in righteousness and the Spirit—life (3:8-9); the latter shone in the face of one through whom the law was given (John 1:17), resulting in condemnation and death (3:7, 9). The shining of God in our hearts is to illumine us that we may know not the glory on Moses' face but the glory in Christ's face; it is to enlighten us that we may know not the law of Moses of the old covenant but the gospel of Christ of the new covenant. The glory of God manifested in the face of Jesus Christ is the God of glory expressed through Jesus Christ, and it is Jesus Christ, who is the effulgence of the glory of God (Heb. 1:3); to know Him is to know the God of glory.

The expression this treasure in verse 7 refers to verse 6, where Paul speaks of the face of Jesus Christ. The Greek word translated "face" in verse 6 is the same word translated "person" in 2:10, which refers to the part around the eyes, the look as the index of the inward thoughts and feelings, which shows forth and manifests the whole person. This indicates that unless we have the index of Christ's face, He cannot be a treasure to us in reality. We will not sense that we have a treasure within us until we see the face of Jesus Christ. On the one hand, we can all declare that we are the earthen vessels and that Christ is the treasure within us. On the other hand, we need to see that it is only when we are living in the presence of Christ, looking at the index of His being, that we will sense that He is a treasure to us. In the whole universe there is nothing that is more precious than beholding the face of Jesus Christ. The more we live in His presence, the more we will sense His presence. (*Conclusion of the New Testament*, msg. 317, pp. 3209-3210)

Second Corinthians also gives us another extraordinary verse. "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us" (2 Cor. 4:7). There is not such a verse in any other book. Paul tells us that we are the vessels, and the Lord Jesus within us is the treasure. But the key to this verse is the verse preceding it: "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). In Greek, the word for "face" is the same word used for "person" in 2 Corinthians 2:10, which means the index around the eyes. This means that if we don't have the index of Jesus' face, He can never be a treasure to us. We will never sense that we have a treasure within until we see the face of Jesus. When we are enjoying His presence, we sense that He is such a precious treasure within us.

This can never be just a kind of saying. We all can say that we are the earthen vessel, and Jesus is the treasure within. But we can say this without any sense of the reality within us. It is only when we are living in His presence, looking at the index of His being, that we will sense that He is such a treasure to us. In the whole universe, there is nothing so precious as to behold the face of Jesus. This is something of personal experience and enjoyment. The more we live in His presence, the more sense we will have of the preciousness of Jesus. This is just the enjoyment of His indwelling. This very Jesus indwells us. This is a living reality, not merely a saying. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1973-1974*, "The Indwelling Christ in the Canon of the New Testament," ch. 12, pp. 597-598)

## **2 Corinthians 3:18**

But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

## **Revelation 1:16**

And He had in His right hand seven stars; and out of His mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword; and His face shone as the sun shines in its power.

Note 16<sup>3</sup>: In S. S. 5:10, 13, Christ's face appears lovely for His seeker's appreciation of Him, and in the Epistles His face reflects God's glory (2 Cor. 4:6) for the imparting of life into His believers. Here, however, His face shone as the sun shines in its power (cf. Dan. 10:6); this shining is the judging enlightenment for bringing in the kingdom. When He was transfigured and His face shone like the sun, that was His coming in the kingdom (Matt. 16:28—17:2). When He comes to take over the earth for the kingdom, His face will be like the sun (10:1).

## **1 John 3:1-2**

1 Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and we are. Because of this the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet been manifested what we will be. We know that if <sup>3</sup>He is manifested, we will be like Him because we will <sup>4</sup>see Him even as He is.

Note 2<sup>3</sup>: *He* refers to God in the previous sentence and denotes Christ, who is to be manifested. This not only indicates that Christ is God but also implies the Divine Trinity. When Christ is manifested, the Triune God will be manifested; when we see Him, we will see the Triune God; and when we are like Him, we will be like the Triune God.

Note 2<sup>4</sup>: By seeing Him we will reflect His likeness (2 Cor. 3:18), which will cause us to be as He is.

## **Revelation 22:3-4**

3 And there will no long be a curse. And the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His slaves will serve Him.

4 And they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads.

To continually see God is a special privilege. Fallen men are forever kept away from the Lord's face and from the glory of His strength (2 Thes. 1:9). In the Old Testament, Moses was the only one allowed to see even the back of God (Exo. 33:18-23). In the millennium, only the overcomers can see God's face (Heb. 12:14), but in the new city, all those who are saved will see God's face and will draw near to Him.

Revelation 22:3 speaks "of God and of the Lamb," but verse 4 says only "His face." This shows that the Lord and the Father are one. The Father and the Son are distinct but not separate. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Set 1*, vol. 16, "Study on Revelation," ch. 11)

Verse 4 says, "And they will see His face, and His name will be on their forehead." All of our work for the Lord must be led by fellowship. True service to the Lord is in fellowship. Serving alone is not enough; there must be the fellowship. They will serve Him, and they will see His face. Oh, how many times when we see God we have already done His work. But I must say that we can do His work only after we see God. We should not be doing the work and constantly regretting—this is not fellowship. May God deliver us from any service which is not in fellowship, and may He save us from ever accomplishing any work without being able to fellowship after we have finished. We should never feel proud, self-content, or self-sufficient upon finishing the work. May God save us and deliver us from any kind of service which does not issue from fellowship and which is not in fellowship, and may He enable us to remain in fellowship even after we have finished the work. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Set 2*, vol. 34, "The Glorious Church," ch. 5, p. 149)

Verse 4 continues, "And they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads." That those who serve God will see His face indicates that genuine service leads us into fellowship and the presence of the Lord. Whether or not our service is proper can be checked in this way: Does our service lead us into the Lord's presence? The more some people serve, the more they do not have the fellowship of the Lord and the more they lose His presence. This means that their service is wrong. The right way to serve is that the more we serve, the more we see His face. (*A General Sketch of the New Testament in the Light of Christ and the Church, Part 4: Revelation*, ch. 14, p. 484)

## **Matthew 5:8**

Blessed are the <sup>1</sup>pure in heart, for they shall <sup>2</sup>see God.

Note 8<sup>1</sup>: To be pure in heart is to be single in purpose, to have the single goal of accomplishing God's will for God's glory (1 Cor. 10:31). This is for the kingdom of the heavens. Our spirit is the organ by which we receive Christ (John 1:12; 3:6), whereas our heart is the ground where Christ as the seed of life grows (13:19). For the kingdom of the heavens we need to be poor in spirit, empty in our spirit, that we may receive Christ. Also, we need to be pure, single, in our heart that Christ may grow in us without frustration.

Note 8<sup>2</sup>: If we are pure in heart in seeking God, we will see God. Seeing God is a reward to the pure in heart. This blessing is both for today and for the coming age.

## Seeking the Face of God

### Psalm 27:4, 8

4 One thing I have asked from Jehovah; / That do I seek: To dwell in the house of Jehovah / All the days of my life, / To behold the beauty of Jehovah, / And to inquire in His temple.

8 When You say, Seek My face, / To You my heart says, Your face, O Jehovah, will I seek.

In Psalm 27:4 David said that he desired to behold the beauty of Jehovah in His house. The Hebrew word for *beauty* implies loveliness, pleasantness, and delightfulness. When we are beholding God's beauty, we are in a very pleasant atmosphere. Second Corinthians 3:18 says that we can have an unveiled face to behold the glorious face of the Lord in glory. In our time with the Lord in the morning, it is best to have short prayers with a number of "selahs" so that we can behold the Lord, look at the Lord.

The psalmist also inquired of God in His temple (Psa. 27:4b). This means that we can check with God about everything in our daily life. (*Life-study of Psalms*, msg. 12, p. 160)

### Psalm 24:6

This is the generation of those who seek Him, / Those who seek Your face, even Jacob.

### Psalm 42:1-2, 5

1 As the hart pants / After the streams of water, / So my soul pants For You, O God.

2 My soul thirsts for God, / For the living God. / When will I come and appear / Before God?

5 Why are you cast down, O my soul? / And why are you disquieted within me? / Hope in God, for I will yet praise Him / For the salvation of His countenance.

### Psalm 105:4

Seek Jehovah and His strength; / Seek His face continually.

### Psalm 119:2, 58, 131

2 Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, / Who seek Him with all their heart.

58 I entreated Your favor with my whole heart; / Be gracious to me according to Your word.

131 I opened by mouth wide and panted, / For I longed for Your commandments.

Psalm 119 is a psalm which dwells specifically on the law....The psalmist did not write this psalm according to theology. Rather, it was written according to his sentiment and experience, according to the deep aspiration of his heart, and according to his enjoyment of the law. The psalmists expressed their hunger, thirst, and desire for the Lord. Like all the psalms, Psalm 119 is filled with aspiration, not with doctrine. Verse 131 says, "I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments." Here the psalmist uses the word panted, a word also used in Psalm 42:1: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." The note in one version says that in Hebrew the word pant refers to the longing for a cool spring after suffering burning heat. The use of this word in Psalm 119:131 and 42:1 shows the deep sentiment and aspiration of the psalmists. The psalmists thirsted and panted after God. Hence, although Psalm 119 has much to say about the law, it does not speak about the law from the perspective of doctrine, but from the viewpoint of spiritual experience. This psalm was written by one who dealt with the law in the way of enjoyment.

Psalm 119:2 tells us that those who enjoyed God's law in the Old Testament were seekers of God: "Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart." The writer of Psalm 119 was such a seeker. Many Christians are not familiar with the term "seekers of God," even though this concept is biblical. According to Psalm 119, seeking God is related to keeping the law. If you try to keep the law without having a heart to seek God, your efforts will be in vain. This was the

serious shortcoming of the Judaizers at the time of Paul. Trying to keep the law without seeking God with their whole heart, they failed in their endeavor to fulfill the law's requirements. If we want to walk according to God's law, we must seek Him with our whole heart.

Psalm 119:58 says, "I entreated thy face with my whole heart" (Heb.). The King James Version uses the word *favor* instead of *face*. To seek a person's face is actually to seek his favor. If we entreat the Lord's face, His countenance, we shall receive bounty. Often little children will earnestly seek the face of their mother. To them nothing is more dear than beholding their mother's face. We also should seek the Lord in such an intimate way, entreating His countenance. The Lord's countenance brings His favor to the seeking one. For whatever the psalmist needed, he would entreat God's countenance.

Psalm 105:4 says, "Seek the Lord, and his strength: seek his face evermore." According to this verse, we need to seek God's face continually. Then in Psalm 42:5 the psalmist praises God "for the help of his countenance." In a deeply personal and intimate way, the psalmist sought the help of the Lord's countenance.

The Old Testament seekers of God also prayed that the Lord's face would shine upon them. Psalm 119:135 says, "Make thy face to shine upon thy servant." This thought is based upon the second aspect of the priests' blessing in Numbers 6:24-26: "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." No doubt, this threefold blessing refers to the blessing of the Trinity: the blessing of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. With respect to the Son's blessing, there is mention of the Lord's face shining upon the people. Prayer for the shining of God's face is also found in Psalm 4:6 and in 80:3, 7, 19, where the psalmist prays, "Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine." The Old Testament seeking saints were not people who merely endeavored to keep the law in letters. They lovingly sought God in an intimate way, even asking Him to cause His face to shine upon them.

If we do not have such a heart to seek the Lord, we shall not care for the shining of His face. Even if He caused His face to shine upon us, we would not be conscious of that shining. To sense the shining of the Lord's face we need a seeking heart. If we are those who seek the Lord in an intimate way, we shall sense the shining of His face. According to 2 Corinthians 4:6, we can experience this shining: "Because the God who said, Out of darkness light shall shine, is the One who shined in our hearts for the illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." Praise the Lord that we can experience the shining of His face! (*Life-study of Exodus*, msg. 56, p. 657-660)

### **Hebrews 11:6**

But without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing to Him, for he who comes forward to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Hebrews 11:6 says that if you believe in God, you will also believe that He is a rewarder. He not only exists, He is a rewarder. Why does God reward people? Because He is anxious to have man living for and fulfilling His purpose. We should not only believe that God exists, but also that He rewards all those who seek Him out. Although the King James Version says "diligently seek Him," the Greek text actually means "seek Him out." God is in this universe, and no man can see Him, but we must seek Him out. Do you believe that there is a God, that God exists? Then what should you do? You must seek Him out. Enoch did this. He believed that there was a God and he sought God out by believing that God was a rewarder. It must have been his believing in God and his seeking God that motivated him to walk with God. Enoch was God's seeker, and God was his rewarder. He sought God and walked with God, and God rewarded him.

What reward did God give Enoch? God gave him the highest degree of life—escape from death. "Enoch was translated that he should not see death." What a reward that was! For quite a number of years I have told the Lord, "Lord, I don't want to see death. Lord, come quickly. Keep me until the time of Your coming. I do not want to see death, I want to see You." This desire has caused me and still causes me to seek the Lord out. I am not boasting, but speaking the truth I must say that I am a seeker of the Lord. Are you not one of His seekers? By His mercy and grace we are all seekers of the Lord. (*Life-study of Genesis*, msg. 26, pp. 355-356)