

SCRIPTURE STUDIES – Key words: face, hidden, suffer, seek, cheerful

“THE FACE OF GOD”

More than 70 times in the Scriptures we have reference to *“the face of God.”* Repeatedly, God ascribes the human physical characteristic of a “face” to Himself. Jesus speaks of the face of His Father. He warns in Matthew 18:10, *“Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven.”*

The Bible states clearly in John 1:18, that *“No man has seen God at any time.”* The Lord said to Moses: *“You cannot see my face, for no man can see me and live!”* (Exodus 33:20). That, of course, is in a literal or absolute sense. But figuratively many Bible characters saw the face of God and so can we in the figurative sense.

There Are Three Basic Pictures Of God’s Face Revealed In Scripture:

A. THE CONCEALED FACE OF GOD.

1. God’s face is said to be concealed because of sin.

Two examples will suffice:

Genesis 4:14 - After Cain killed Abel he lamented, *“I shall be hidden from Your face....”*

Psalms 34:16 – *“The face of the LORD is against those who do evil...”*

These two statements are self explanatory. God will not look upon sin with the least degree of allowance. It is so repugnant to His holy nature that He cannot bear to look upon it. And so, He is presented as turning His head, looking away. Does that action mean that God does not know what is taking place behind His back? No! The verbiage used is intended to convey God’s abhorrence of sin.

2. God’s face is thought by some to be concealed when being sifted or tested.

Several persons questioned God when they were in adversity:

Job: Job 13:24 - *“Why do You hide Your face, and regard me as Your enemy?”* In his testing Job felt that God had turned His face away from him.

David: Psalm 13:1 - *“How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?”* And, Psalm 143:7 - *“Answer me speedily, O LORD; my spirit fails! Do not hide Your face from me.”*

Sons of Korah: Psalm 44:23-24 – *“Awake! Why do You sleep, O Lord? Arise! Do not cast us off forever. Why do You hide Your face and forget our affliction and our oppression?”*

Does God look the other way when His children suffer? Does He abandon them? No! It is

not God Who says that He is ignoring tested or suffering ones. It is the one enduring discomfort who wrongfully perceives that God is ignoring their pain and their pleas for deliverance. It is an imagined “hiddenness” on the part of sufferers who tend to construct their own theology when in a temporary vacuum of faith.

B. THE CONDEMNING FACE OF GOD.

1. The face of God appears as a condemning face when judgment is impending:

Genesis 19:13 – The angel announced the destruction of Sodom saying, *“For we will destroy this place, because the outcry against them has grown great before the face of the LORD, and the LORD has sent us to destroy it*

John, in his description of final judgment, writes in Rev 20:11, *“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away.”*

2. The face of God is a condemning face when humankind worships false gods:

In Leviticus 20, three times God says, *“I will set My face against that man.”* (Any man who gives his children to the false God Molech, verse 3; any who tolerate such a man, verse 5; and, anyone who *“turns to mediums and familiar spirits.”* verse 6)

3. The face of God is a condemning face against evildoers.

I Peter 3:12 – *“The face of the Lord is against them that do evil.”*

Why, then, would it be thought to be an un-Godlike thing that the holy God’s face would reflect His displeasure at sin? The frown of God, the displeased face, the hostile face of God is to be expected when warranted or He would not be true to His character. He is both the God of love and the God of wrath. Why would some rejoice when God is pleased but rebel when He is displeased?

C. THE CHEERFUL FACE OF GOD.

That God also has a cheerful and happy face is no surprise to those who have experienced His heart of love. Many are the references to the glad face of God. Among them are the following:

1. Numbers 6:24-26 – *“The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.”*
2. Psalm 31:16 – *“Make Your face shine upon Your servant...”*
3. Psalm 67:1 – *“God be merciful to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us...”*

4. Three times in Psalm 80 the psalmist prays, *“Turn us again, O God, and cause Thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.”* (Ps. 80:3,7,19)

5. That God smiles when He is pleased and sings over His obedient children is reflected in Zephaniah 3:17 – *“The LORD your God in the midst of you is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over you with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over you with singing.”*

Jesus is God in human form. When on the earth we read that, *“Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.” And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.”* (Mark 10:13-16)

I ask you, “What parent would hand their children over to a sour-puss, a grumpy, hostile-faced person to have them blessed?!” Jesus, no doubt, had a cheerful face on that occasion. A glad face is winsome.

Have you looked into the face of Jesus and seen *the face of God*? It is there that we will be cheered as we see the glory of God. Are you going through a difficult ordeal? It is in the face of Jesus that you will find strength not only to endure, but also to triumph and He will cheer you as He did the children of long ago when you look into His face!

SEEKING GOD’S FACE

It is God’s desire that we seek His face. He does not play hide and seek with us! He is not hard to find. Acts 17:27 tells us: *“... seek the Lord though He is not far from each one of us.”*

There are many commands in scripture to seek God’s face. Here are three:

I Chronicles 16:11 – *“Seek the LORD and His strength; seek His face evermore!”*

II Chronicles 7:14 – *“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”*

Psalm 27:8-9 – *“When You said, “Seek My face,” my heart said to You, “Your face, LORD, I will seek.”*

In Psalm 27 God’s command is: *“Seek My face.”* The psalmist’s compliance was: *“Your face, LORD, I will seek.”* Let us respond in like manner for God is insistent that His children maintain close communication with Him.

He desires that we face Him, *“For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.”* (I Peter

3:12) Earthly fathers expect their children to approach them, look them in the face, and talk with them. God expects no less from His children.

Looking to God is an action that begins in the deepest recesses of our being – in our hearts. The hurting heart will seek God’s face; the hungry heart will seek God’s face; the humble heart will seek God’s face. Do you have a God-seeking heart? The heart of the matter is the matter of the heart! *“And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.”* (Jer. 29:13)

To seek God’s face is to pursue God in prayer and even plead before God acknowledging and confessing sin, and desiring God’s favor and blessing. We seek God’s face in adoration and worship, for aid in distress and for His approval. The God-seeker is one who is appealing earnestly, acknowledging that apart from God he is helpless.

Jacob said, after his night of struggle with God, *“I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.”* (Gen. 32:30) We do not seek God’s face in vain. *“For the LORD your God is gracious and compassionate. He will not turn his face from you if you return to him.”* (2 Chron 30:9)

We are told that in heaven we *“shall see His face.”* (Rev. 22:4) Seekers of His face here will also see His face hereafter! Let us be people who live life looking into the face of our Savior and reflecting in our faces His glory!

“Face to face with Christ, my Savior,
Face to face—what will it be,
When with rapture I behold Him,
Jesus Christ Who died for me?”

Refrain

*Face to face I shall behold Him,
Far beyond the starry sky;
Face to face in all His glory,
I shall see Him by and by!”*