

Exodus Chapter 34 v 29 - 35 & Philippians Chapter 2 v 12 - 18

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The End The End Let's continue to crown the Lord Jesus with our praises, with our worship.

As we come to him in prayer, as we do from time to time, let's have a time of open reading and a New Testament reading this evening. And the first reading is from Exodus chapter 34.

Aftermath, as it were.

[5 : 13] As we lay against it, it says, down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant and they were afraid to come near him. But Moses called to them.

So Aaron and all the leaders of the community came back to him and he spoke to them. Afterwards, all the Israelites came near him and he gave them all the commands the Lord had given him on Mount Sinai. When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face. But whenever he entered the Lord's presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out.

When he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, they saw that his face was radiant. Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the Lord.

And then if you'd turn with me please to Philippians and to Philippians in chapter 2. Philippians in chapter 2, that's page 1179. Philippians in chapter 2, beginning at verse 12.

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[7 : 26] Philippians chapter 2, beginning at verse 12.

Philippians chapter 2, beginning at verse 12. Philippians chapter 2, beginning at verse 12. If you'd like, if you can have both those passages to hand, both Exodus 34 and Philippians 2, that would be great.

But particularly Exodus 34 because it's in Exodus that we are journeying at this time and have been journeying for some time. And looking at God's dealings with his people in the Old Testament, seeing again that for us, God's word is vibrant, helpful, challenging, useful, instructive.

I wonder if anybody here, these bright young people, tell me what's the name of the brightest star in the sky. Do you have any idea?

Can be a bit of science. Sirius, well done. Well, there's a bright young person there. Alan, of course, I should have included you. Sirius is the brightest star in the sky.

[8 : 59] And astronomers measure the brightness of stars according to a system originally devised by an ancient Greek called Hipparchus in 120 BC.

It's still the same scale that they use to measure stars today. Though it's been updated and modernized because stars that they've discovered are even brighter than his scale.

In his scale, it went from 1 to 6. The brightest that he could see in the sky was 1 and the dimmest was 6. But Sirius, because it is so bright, in fact, it's 23 times more luminous than our sun.

But obviously, it's further away. And twice the size of the sun has a negative magnitude of brightness, which is minus 1.42.

So, one of us was the brightest, but now it's even brighter, so it's got to go into the negatives. I wonder how you and I would measure on Hipparchus' brightness scale.

[10 : 01] How bright are you? Not intellectually, but how brightly do you shine? We read there, didn't we, in Philippians 2, that as Christians we will shine among the people of this world like stars

in the sky.

Shining is something that as Christians we are to do naturally, just as a star shines by nature. So, as Christians we shine by nature because we are children of God.

But as we live out our lives as believers, as children of God, as the people of Christ, then we will shine.

But again, the question is this, are you shining brightly? Or are you dim?

Moses, we read, was, and we know, was a believer. In the Lord, and we're told in Exodus 34 that he was radiant.

[11 : 12] In other words, he shone brightly, quite literally, of course. His face, we're told, shone brightly. So much so that Aaron and the people, when they saw him as he came down from the mountain 40 days after he'd first gone up, were afraid of him.

And ran away from him. Until Moses sort of called them, a bit like Jesus. Let's see if you remember, as he walked on the lake, and they saw him walking, and they said, and they ran away, or rather literally, they were afraid of him.

Jesus said, no, it's me. Perhaps Moses did something like that. Look, it's me, it's Moses. Come and listen to what I have to say. So much so did he shine that when he was with the people, and he had to put a veil over his face to dim the shine, to hide the shine.

It was so very bright. Now, yes, Moses shone literally. His face was illuminated. But I think there's much for us to learn here in the experience of Moses to apply to ourselves in the light of what the New Testament tells us, that we are to shine.

We are to shine in this dark world. Well, why was Moses' face shining? Why was he radiant? Why was he glowing? I'm sure you've seen, and maybe it's happened to you as well from time to time, when you've been out in the sun too much.

[12 : 42] It doesn't happen often in Whitby, but in other places. You've been out in the sun too much, and you can almost feel your face glowing. And people look at you and say, look, you look like a lobster. You're just so red, shining, bright.

Neither is it that comical sort of shine that people are expected to get when they're exposed to radiation. No, this shine is something different, isn't it?

It doesn't come from the sun or radiation. It isn't like that glow that you often see on a Renaissance painting of Jesus or Mary or one of the saints.

You know, behind their head there's that halo. There's that sort of shining beacon, a bit like one of those beacons that you get at the zebra crossing. No, it isn't like that.

This shine, of course, clearly was the reflected glory of God. We're told why Moses' face shone.

[13 : 43] We read it there in verse 29. When Moses came down from the Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord.

That's why he shone, because he had spoken with and spent time with the Lord God. God is spoken of, isn't he? Often in the Scriptures as being a bright light.

We're told in 1 Timothy 6 that God lives in unapproachable light. In 1 John chapter 1 we're told that God is light.

In him there is no darkness at all. And even there's that wonderful picture of heaven that's given to us in Revelation 21 where we're told there is no sun or no moon because heaven does not need a light for the glory of God gives it light.

So God himself is light and Moses exposed as he was to the glory of God, the light of God, finds that now his face is radiating with that reflected glory.

[14 : 57] If we are to shine as God's people, as God's children, then we are only able to do that as we reflect the glory of God, as we reflect the likeness of the Lord Jesus.

And indeed that's what we are to do. In 2 Corinthians 3, verse 18, Paul has been talking about Moses and the veil and he says this, We all, speaking of believers, with unveiled faces, contemplate, or else the word can possibly mean reflect, the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever increasing, glory.

As we look upon, as we gaze upon, as we see the face of God, as we contemplate, as we meditate upon the glory of God, so we are being transformed into that image with ever increasing glory.

Dear friends, the truth is this, that we are meant to be shining brighter as we get older. Not to be, as it were, like the things of this world, that as they get older, they become dimmer.

Like the paintwork on your car was lovely and shiny when you bought it, and then over time it's become sort of, the shine is gone. That's not to be us. We're to be more shiny than we were before. [16:21] And if that's our desire, if that's what we're meant to be, if that's how it's supposed to be, then it will only come about, dear friends, as we do what Moses did and spend time in the Lord's presence.

That's the secret. That's the beginning. That's the key. Spending time in the presence of the Lord will cause us to reflect his glory.

I don't know whether the last time you saw one of the Trooping of the Colour or any of those sort of displays in London when the Queen is out, but always on those occasions you'll have the lifeguards of the household cavalry.

And they've got these fantastic metal breastplates, haven't they? And their horses as well, and they've got these helmets. And they must have spent hours and hours and hours shining and shining and polishing and shining to get them to glisten.

Their boots and everything about them gleams. Several pounds of elbow grease were used. Dear friends, we can't polish ourselves as the lifeguards can polish their uniforms.

[17:32] We can't make ourselves shine. We can't become shiny. We can't polish ourselves in that way to bring out the best gleam. It will only come by one means, and that is reflecting and mirroring the glory of God.

And that will only come when we spend time with Him. There's no shortcut. There's no shortcut to being a Christian whose life reflects the glory of God.

It will only happen as we spend time in prayer, as we spend time in God's Word, as we spend time in God's presence. When Jesus' disciples were hauled up before the Sanhedrin, they noted they were ignorant men, unlearned men, untaught men, but we're told they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

So if this glow, this shine comes from spending time with Jesus, what is this shine like? What is, how do we recognize this shine? How is this shine, how does it appear?

It clearly isn't meant to be like Moses. We're not meant to walk around with Belisha beacon faces. So how are we to shine? Well, it seems that Paul shows us and speaks to us about this in that Philippians passage, if you have it there.

[18:56] Notice in Philippians 2, Do you know everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure children of God, without fault in a warped and crooked generation, then you will shine among them like stars in the sky.

So it is as we become blameless and pure. What does that mean? Blameless doesn't mean sinless. Blameless doesn't mean that we never do anything wrong.

We know that we are never going to be sinless people in this world. We're never going to be perfect and righteous. But it does mean, and this phrase comes out often in the Old Testament, in people like Noah and Job and others, blameless means having integrity.

Blameless means having a consistency of life and behavior in keeping with the testimony of our lives. So by saying that I'm a believer, we live as a believer.

There's nothing to be found in us where people may say, Oh, what a hypocrite they are. They say they're this loving, caring Christian, but they are so really different on a Monday morning to a Sunday.

[20:15] In the midweek Bible studies, we've been looking at the life of Daniel. Daniel was a believer who lived in a pagan, godless society, and he was a blameless man.

So much so that when we get to Daniel in 6, his enemies, the other leaders, the other governors of the provinces who hated him and wanted to find a way to oust him from being favorite to the king, look for ways to discredit him, look for ways to destroy him.

But we're told this in Daniel 6, they could find no corruption in him because he was trustworthy, neither corrupt nor negligent. Notice Paul says we're to shine like stars in a warped and crooked generation.

In other words, we're to be different. The Christian is not to toe the line like everybody else and cook the books and fiddle the accounts. We're to be free from that, which in one sense mars our testimony.

The world looks at the devious schemings of men and lifts them up as a virtue. Oh, how clever they are that they can twist the law around their fingers.

[21 : 40] How clever a lawyer is to get his client off the hook for a crime he committed. Does my life look straight in a crooked and perverse generation?

Or if my enemies, like Daniel's enemies, were to look for things to find at fault in me, could they find them? Could they find places of corruption or negligence or untrustworthiness?

We're to shine because we are to be blameless. But notice we have to be blameless and pure.

Again, that isn't speaking of sinlessness or absolute purity, but it is speaking about holiness.

Without which no one may see the Lord. Holiness. To be free from corruption and taint. The word that's used here was used particularly of wine that had been undiluted.

Wine that had not been sort of added to to make it weaker, to spread it out and to make it longer.

It's also used of precious metals which were not alloyed with any other cheaper metal, but pure.

[22 : 58] Holiness is to mark out the Christian. It's always everywhere, isn't it, in the Scriptures. Be holy, for I am holy, says the Lord.

There's things around us that would corrupt us. There's things around us that would water down our testimony. That behavior that is so easy to join in with. We're to be free from those pollutants in our lives so that we shine out in a depraved generation, an impure generation.

It doesn't mean that we're holier than now. It doesn't mean that we have high opinion of ourselves or think of ourselves as perfect. But it does mean this, we avoid those things which are unholy.

Those things which are able to water down our lives. Holiness unto the Lord. Blameless and pure.

That's how we shine. But also we're told we shine as we hold firmly to the word of life. Verse 16. Or hold out the word of life. In a sense, this phrase has two senses to it which are connected.

[24 : 16] The first one's brought out in the NIV, holding firmly to. Remember when Moses came down the mountain, what was he holding? He was holding God's commandments.

He's holding God's word, God's truth, in his hands, in those commandments. We're to hold on to the word of life. Peter, when he was challenged by Jesus in John 6, after many people left Jesus and turned away from him, he said to them, well, what about you?

To his disciples, are you going to leave me? Are you going to turn away? No, said Peter, we can't leave you for you alone have the words of eternal life. We hold on to the word of life when we believe God's word to be true and we put it into practice in our lives day by day.

It's not just enough to say, yes, I believe in the Bible and I believe that the gospel is true and I believe that it's about Jesus and that about God. It has to be something that is impacting and shaping and molding and changing our lives.

We're holding on to it. our faith and trust in it. We're living by it. Our lives are conforming more and more to the good, perfect, pleasing will of God.

[25 : 40] Because our lives are becoming more and more like Jesus. Jesus was the only person who ever lived in perfect obedience to God's word. And as we live out in obedience to God's words, we find our lives conforming to and sharing something of the splendor and the glory of Jesus' life.

But there's one thing for certain that will happen as we seek to live holding on to the word of God. It's this, we will not be popular. We will stand out like sore thumbs.

We will be an object of ridicule. We will find ourselves at odds with the world around about us. just as Jesus was at odds with the world around him.

But people will notice. People will sit up and take notice. You see, that's the difference, isn't it? How do we know that this light is shining or that candle is burning bright?

Well, because it stands out, doesn't it? It stands out from the background. It stands out from the darkness. Dear friends, as Christians, the only way that the world is going to take notice of our witness is this, when we stand out.

[26 : 51] the more grey we become, the more like the world the church becomes, the more we compromise and take on board the same thought patterns and the same worldview and the same practices of the world around about us, the dimmer and darker we become.

The more we become like Jesus, the more holy we live our lives and the more we will shine and the more the world will take notice and the world will say there's something very real about this person.

But also, it seems to me, and this is the sense of the phrase in other translations, we hold out the word of life. In other words, sharing the gospel, giving the word to those who are without it by way of testimony and witness.

And again, that comes out with Moses. It wasn't just that he carried and held on to the word of God, the tablets of the covenant, but we're told there when they came near, he gave them the

commands.

He spoke to them about what God commanded. He shared with them the truth of God's word as well. We are called to be witnesses, dear friends, by holding out the gospel, the good news of Jesus.

[28 : 09] Yes, our lives are to shine but so is our speech, if I can put it that way, our testimony, our words. The people that we live in around about us are in complete darkness.

Their faces have a veil over them. This is what Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 4. Even if our gospel is veiled, it's veiled to those who are perishing. The God of this age has blinded the eyes of unbelievers.

That's why we must shine. That's why only as we do shine will people be able to see or perceive the light of the gospel.

If you've been in a room and it's been quite dark and then somebody's turned on the light, it's a sort of a, you shy away, don't you? Your eyes take a moment to adjust to it. We shouldn't be surprised, dear friends, when we speak with people of the gospel of Christ, when we hold out the light, that their immediate response is to shy away or to hold up their hands or to blink.

But by God's grace, we pray that their eyes may become more accustomed to that light and that they might see and understand the gospel and so be saved.

[29 : 28] That's God's work. God's the only one who can take away the veil. God's the only one who can open their blind eyes. Our responsibility is to make sure we shine clearly, brightly.

There's one other mention, isn't there, in the New Testament about shining as Christians shining in the world. It's, of course, the words of Jesus in Matthew 5 where he says, let your light shine before others that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Jesus is the light of the world. We know that. He is the perfect and pure light, the original light, the true source of light. But we, dear friends, are to be reflective lights of His by the things that we do. Not just by the things we hold to and believe and apply to our own personal lives, not only by the way that we witness and share and speak the truth of God's Word, but actually in the everyday things that we do, in every moment, in every activity, we are to be light to the world.

They may see your good deeds. The moon's been quite lovely of late, especially the new moon.

[30 : 55] It was a beautiful slither just a few days ago. But we know that the moon has no natural light. It doesn't shine because it's a sun or because it's on fire or because it has some brilliance of its own.

It's basically just a grey lump of rock, isn't it, with a bit of dust over the top. But it shines brilliantly and brightly on a full moon because of the sun shining upon it, because it reflects and radiates that glory of the sun.

And so it is with us. We're just lumps of rock, clay, pots, Paul calls us elsewhere. But the treasure, the glory, the splendor comes from Christ shining on us and shining from us.

He saved us for good works, remember, Ephesians in chapter 2. But he's not talking here, Jesus, about religious things that we do, if I can put it that way.

Oh, well, we're only shining when we are witnessing or when we're doing gospel work or only shining when we're in the church or we're doing those sort of things. No, we shine in everything that we do.

[32 : 07] We're to shine in the mundane things, in the cleaning of the toilets, in the washing of the windows, in the doing the shopping in the supermarket, in sitting at our school desk, at driving our car.

In all of these things, our lives are to be good deeds shining with Christ's brilliance because his light has shone first of all in our lives and shines out from us.

So sad, wasn't it? that the glory of God in the face of Moses had to be hidden because the people didn't like it.

Dear friends, we've got to be so wary that we do not wear a veil ourselves before the world, that we do not, as Jesus put it, hide our light under a basket, but that we shine as children of God, blameless, pure, holding on to, holding out the word of life because, you know, when everything comes to its perfect conclusion, when the Lord Jesus Christ comes back again, do you know what we're going to be doing for all eternity?

We're going to be shining like stars. That's what Daniel was assured of and that's what we're assured of. In Daniel 12, verse 3, he was told, those who are wise will shine like the brightness of

the heavens, those who lead many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.

[33 : 54] Let's sing together our final hymn. O Lord, let your light shine on us and reflect from us in the days of this week ahead.

Deal with the darkness of our hearts and lives, those blemishes, as it were, those black spots which keep your light from shining. Make us blameless and pure that we may in this crooked and perverse generation shine like stars.

Keep us holding on to and holding out your word of life. And in your mercy and grace, remove the veil that covers the eyes and the faces of those without Christ that they may see even in us and through us the glory and the majesty of their Savior and King.

Help us then in this, we pray. We know we cannot do it ourselves. Draw us closer to yourself that more and more of Jesus may be seen. For we ask it in his name now.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[35 : 05] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.