

FROM THE PASTOR



The Lord make His face shine on you...

My nephew Christopher, as many of you know, recently graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. It took me back to my days in seminary. I reflected upon all the coursework. No seminary student can forget their ten week intensive in Summer Greek.

One of the first words that I remember learning in summer Greek class was the word, *prosopon*. It means, “face.” I suppose it will always be a word in my repertoire for that reason. I came across that word once again when I was reading Paul’s second letter to the church in Corinth. In the 4th chapter Paul writes: ⁶*For God, Who said, “Let*

light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

So what’s the big deal about the word “face”? Like many words, it has many connotations. For example, there is the obvious meaning, “the front part of the head from forehead to chin.” Then there is this meaning, “the expression/countenance shown by its features.” The word also could be used as a verb. As a verb, “face” means, “to have or turn the face toward (a certain direction).”

So, when the LORD makes His face shine on you it’s a good thing. ²⁵ *The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance (face) upon you and give you peace* (Numbers 6). It is for blessing that the LORD causes you to be in the direction of His gaze.

To behold the face of Christ is the ultimate of blessings. John, the apostle/evangelist writes: ⁴ *They will see His face, and His Name will be on their foreheads.* ⁵ *And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign for ever and ever* (Revelation 22). To behold the face of Jesus Christ is heaven. It’s the goal of this life!

You may be thinking, “do I want our Lord to gaze upon me, a sinner? Do I want Him to see every one of my actions, hear the thoughts that go through my head and the words that roll off my tongue? God gives us these frightful words through Moses’ pen: ¹⁷ *Then My anger will be kindled against them that day, and I will forsake them and hide My face from them, and they will be devoured. And many evils and troubles will come upon them, so that they will say in that day, “Have not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?”* ¹⁸ *And I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil that they have done, because they have turned to other gods* (Deuteronomy 31).

How often have we given our LORD reason to turn His face from us?! How often, in full view of His face, have we willfully and shamefully done things as if in secret, as if no one was looking!

One more Biblical reference to the word “face” makes all the difference for you and me. Luke writes: ⁵¹ *When the days drew near for Him to be taken up, He set His face to go to Jerusalem* (Luke 9). The King James Version is more literal here. It translates this verse in this way: ⁵¹ *And it came to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.*

In other words, Jesus willfully went to the city of His execution. There He openly suffered at the hands of sinful men, suffered the tortures of the damned in hell and died the sinners’ death. All in full view of His Father’s face. Because of what Jesus allowed to happen to Himself and for what He willingly did (kept the Law of God perfectly in our place) that our LORD’s face is always set toward us in blessing. For His face always gazes upon us through the cross of Jesus Christ.

What a difference it makes that our LORD’s face is *resolutely* and *steadfastly* set upon us! In Jesus, our Father in heaven has answered our cry for mercy. He orders all things for our eternal good. Not one thing escapes His protective gaze upon the objects of His affection, namely you and me. If you should ever have doubts that His face really be upon you for your eternal salvation, just gaze upon the face of Jesus Christ and you don’t ever have to wonder.

The LORD bless you and keep you!

Pastor Szczesny