

FACE TO FACE

Text: II John, verse 12; III John verse 14

I didn't have time. I took the time. It was out of the way. I went out of the way. He's not three, eight or thirteen...he just turned thirty. I just wanted to see his face. Our youngest son works and lives in the Woodlands area. It was one of the busiest days of my year, but I just wanted to see if he was at work. I sent him a text message asking, "Are you at work today?" I didn't hear from him. It was past lunch time and I was giving up hope for taking him to lunch. Then after I had ordered at Chick-fil-A, he texted me, "Yes sir, I'm here." I quickly texted him, "May I bring you a sandwich or something?" He said, "No sir, I'm good." Then I sent him the following message, "I know you are busy, I'm just going to drop by for something quick to drink." (He serves coffee at one of the busiest shops in the Woodlands). I just wanted to see his face, even if it was only for a few sacred minutes. The very first time I saw Sean Patrick's face was within the first minute of his birth. Suddenly, he was turning blue and the doctor snatched him from my arms and placed him under oxygen. Our youngest son had Hyaline membrane disease, also known as Respiratory Distress Syndrome. His was a very serious case. The doctors could not give us hope that he would survive. I still remember well when his doctor told his mother and me, "What we have here may be a miracle," after he pulled through the ordeal. His mother stayed by his little oxygen boosted basinet day and night until he was released. Then she picked him up in her arms and held his face right in front of hers. She just wanted to see his face. I expect one day Sean will be a professor at a college and will probably author books, but as long as I am alive there will never become a time that I don't want to see his face. No matter how important he becomes and no matter how far away he lives, I will always seek his face. And I will make the trip necessary to get in his face.

I. THE FACE IS THE PLACE RELATIONSHIPS ARE SECURED.

In the world of technology, "face-time or skype" is reserved (as a rule) to people who have close relationships. This is very appreciated by the troops

stationed far, far from home. You might say it is the next best thing to being there. Jacob had been on the run most of his life until Peniel. The Bible says, *"And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved"* (Genesis 32:30). In the next verse it says, *"And as he passed over Peniel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh"* (Genesis 32:31). Have you ever wondered why the spelling is different when it is obviously speaking of the same place? Both names mean "The Face of God." I see something very beautiful in the different spellings. You see, the second spelling ends in "El"; this is direct reference to the one and only True and Living God. Get the picture! Wayward Jacob goes into battle with the Lord and finds Him face-to-face. There were many false gods being worshipped in that land, but when Jacob leaves Penial, it forever becomes Penuel, meaning he now knew in the most intimate way the one and only God. As a matter of fact, for the rest of the time throughout the Bible this place is never called Penial again; it is referred to as Penuel.

Do you need face time with God? Do you need to get to know Him better? When God began to reveal Himself to Moses, the man destined to be one of God's mightiest representatives was very hesitant and awkward in the face of God as seen in Scripture, *"Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God"* (Exodus 3:6). The relationship between God and Moses deepened, so much so that the Bible later declares: *"And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend..."* (Exodus 33:11a).

II. THE FACE REFLECTS THE WARMTH OF RELATIONSHIP.

When we come face-to-face with someone, we are getting to the heart of relationship as indicated by Proverbs 27:19: *"As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man."* For many years Joseph was deprived of his father's relationship. Finally Joseph and Jacob were restored and when Jacob died, we find this tender salute: *"And Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him"* (Genesis 50:1).

To be deprived of face time is to experience rejection and loneliness. One of the saddest displays of this has to be found in II Samuel 14:24, 28 and 32 when David refused to see the face of Absalom after he permitted him to return to the land. David had only partially forgiven Absalom. I built a message around this thought, "Living in the Suburbs of Forgiveness," almost forgiven but not

quite. When our Lord forgives us He shows us that we are "...accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:6b), and when we look what our heavenly future promises we behold this truth, "And they shall see his face..." (Revelation 22:4).

When we don't have face time with God, we are the reason. At times all of us have cried out with the Psalmist, "LORD, why castest thou off my soul? why hidest thou thy face from me?" (Psalm 88:14). We see in Isaiah 59:2, our sins will hide God's face from us, but thank God, in Isaiah 54:8, God reveals it is never His will to keep us from His face. We hear the longing, loving voice of God expressed in Psalm 27:8: "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek."

III. WHEN WE LEARN TO LIVE IN GOD'S FACE, WE ARE CHANGED.

Let's do a Bible study with this thought in mind; look up with me Numbers 6:25; Psalm 67:1; Matthew 17:2; II Corinthians 4:6; Psalm 119:135; Ecclesiastes 8:1; Exodus 34:29-35; II Corinthians 3:13-18; and James 1:23.

We cannot live in the presence of a Holy God on a regular, consistent basis and not be changed. It has been said, "A man is what he thinks about all day long." What or who dominates our thought life? Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote a short story published in 1850 entitled, "The Great Stone Face." The storyline tells us of a perceived face of an old man in the side of a mountain. The prophecy was that a man would one day come into the community bearing the resemblance who would be "the greatest and noblest personage of his time." A youngster named Ernest studied the face and then kept an eye out for the great stone-faced man of integrity. Our story ends with Ernest aging and himself being declared the great stone face by the townspeople. When we study the Word of God looking for Jesus, don't be surprised when the likeness of our Lord begins to transfer.

CONCLUSION:

God's ultimate goal is for us to be conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). Prov. 4:18 : "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Living in the face of God will make us more like Him.

Psalm 17:15: "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." I Corinthians 13:12: "For now we see

through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

The Lord wants to live face-to-face with you, not on the periphery.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.