

Sermon Outlines

The Face of An Angel

“All . . . saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.”
Acts 6:15

This is a remarkable description. How did Luke know what an angel looked like? Had he heard from Mary or Peter who had seen one, or was this an echo of Paul’s eyewitness account in the light of later experience? In any event, Luke probably could give no truer description of Stephen’s face, for an angel then, as now, suggests the highest ideal of character and appearance, although there is a sense in which a saved sinner in his glorified body will outshine the most resplendent of the angelic host and sing:

“A song which even angels
Can never, never sing;
They know not Christ as Saviour,
But worship Him as King.”

The face of any created being is highly indicative of character.

I. What Characterizes the Face of an Angel?

1. Light
 - a. Cf. Matt. 28:3 - intelligence, moral excellence, glory.
 - b. Face should show (1) intelligence, and (2) sincerity.
 - c. Cf. Acts 6:3 and 10 - “wisdom”
2. Warmth
 - a. Cf. Acts 6:10 - “spirit” - attractiveness, lovingkindness.
 - b. Face with light but no warmth likely to be “icily regular, splendidly null.”
3. Repose
 - a. Light only tends to over-anxious thought - warmth only to too great vivacity.
 - b. Balance of repose needed - no care or unrest.
4. Strength
 - a. Light, warmth, and repose only can be weak.
 - b. Strength needed to complete picture. Cf. Psa. 103:20; Judg. 13:6.

These four elements of a noble face may also be called: Truth, Love, Peace, Power.

II. Why Was Stephen’s Face like that of an Angel?

1. It was revealing - light
 - a. There is a revelation of heaven in a good face.
 - b. Cf. Exod. 34:29-35 with 2 Cor. 3:7, also Matt. 17:2 with Luke 9:29.
2. It was attractive - warmth
 - a. Face and manner count in God’s service, showing sympathy and kindness, and inspiring trust.
 - b. Others see (Exod. 34:30 even if the owner does not (v. 29).

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3. It was glorifying - repose
 - a. Peaceful face has air of glory.
 - b. Reminds how beautiful God must be if His reflection is - cf. sun and moon.
4. It was reassuring - strength
 - a. A strong face brings comfort.
 - b. It spells an indefinable power - possible for all because it derives from character, not from position or possessions or intellect.

III. *What is the Secret of an Angelic Face?*

1. Privileged Position
 - a. Angels see God (Matt. 18:10), and s did Stephen (Acts 7:55).
 - b. Cf. 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:6 - shining in heart, make shining out of face.
 - c. Cf. Heb. 2:9 with 12:2 - nearness begets likeness when heart is right.
2. Personal Purity
 - a. Face index of nature and occupation (Luke 9:29).
 - b. When off guard, character will out.
 - c. "Pure in heart" denotes holiness of entire personality.
 - d. We grow like those we love - so let us love God.
3. Perfect Obedience
 - a. Disobedience darkens face.
 - b. Greek word for "angel" means also "messenger."
 - c. Obedience makes for a serene countenance, for whole being is in the full will of God.
4. Perpetual Fellowship
 - a. Basis - abiding.
 - b. Two sides to fellowship:
 - (1) Human - faith, surrender, trust make avenues of being open;
 - (2) Divine - bestowal of Holy Spirit makes avenues of being full.Stephen experienced both of these.

*"Satisfied and full of favor
By my King I stand,
Having blessings without number
From His opened hand;
Oh, the richness of His treasure,
Oh, the greatness of His measure,
Oh, the fulness of my pleasure,
As His gifts expand!"*

- c. Ct. verse 5 - "a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost."

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Conclusion

1. The Duty of All
 - a. Rendering of due - debt of love.
2. The Privilege of All
 - a. To reflect God and attract others.
3. The Power of All
 - a. No comparable power on earth.
4. The Possibility of All
 - a. God is able and will shine through the surrendered personality.

Therefore:

Think God's thoughts by meditation
Receive God's life by trust
Live in God's presence by prayer
Do God's will by obedience

. . . . W.H. Griffith Thomas, D.D.