

INTRODUCTION TO EXODUS CHAPTER 34

God having in the foregoing chapter intimated to Moses his reconciliation to Israel, here gives proofs of it, proceeding to settle his covenant and communion with them. Four instances of the return of his favour we have in this chapter:--

- I. The orders he gives to Moses to come up to the mount, the next morning, and bring two tables of stone with him, **#Ex 34:1-4**.
- II. His meeting him there, and the proclamation of his name, **#Ex 34:5-9**.
- III. The instructions he gave him there, and his converse with him for forty days together, without intermission, **#Ex 34:10-28**.
- IV. The honour he put upon him when he sent him down with his face shining, **#Ex 34:29-35**. In all this God dealt with Moses as a public person, and mediator between him and Israel, and a type of the great Mediator.

Ver. 1.

The treaty that was on foot between God and Israel being broken off abruptly, by their worshipping the golden calf, when peace was made all must be begun anew, not where they left off, but from the beginning. Thus backsliders must *repent, and do their first works*, **#Re 2:5**.

I. Moses must prepare for the renewing of the tables, **#Ex 34:1**. Before, God himself provided the tables, and wrote on them; now, Moses must *hew out the tables*, and God would only write upon them. Thus, in the first writing of the law upon the heart of man in innocency, both the tables and the writing were the work of God; but when those were broken and defaced by sin, and the divine law was to be preserved in the scriptures, God therein made use of the ministry of man, and Moses first. But the prophets and apostles did only hew the tables, as it were; the writing was God's still, for *all scripture is given by inspiration of God*. Observe, When God was reconciled to them, he ordered the tables to be renewed, and wrote his law in them, which plainly intimates to us,

1. That even under the gospel of peace and reconciliation by Christ (of which the intercession of Moses was typical) the moral law should continue to bind believers. Though Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, yet not from the command of it, but still we are *under the law to Christ*; when our Saviour, in his sermon on the mount, expounded the moral law, and vindicated it from the corrupt glosses with which the scribes and Pharisees had broken it (**#Mt 5:19**), he did in effect renew the tables, and make them like the first, that is, reduce the law to its primitive sense and intention.
2. That the best evidence of the pardon of sin and peace with God is the writing of the law in the heart. The first token God gave of his reconciliation to Israel was the renewing of the tables of the law; thus the first article of the new covenant is, *I will write my law in their heart* (**#Heb 8:10**), and it follows (**#Ex 34:12**), *for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness*.
3. That, if we would have God to write the law in our hearts, we must prepare our hearts for the reception of it. The heart of stone must be hewn by conviction and humiliation for sin (**#Hos 6:5**), the *superfluity of naughtiness* must be taken off (**#Jas 1:21**), the heart made smooth, and laboured with, that the word may have a place in it. Moses

did accordingly hew out the *tables of stone*, or slate, for they were so slight and thin that Moses carried them both in his hand; and, for their dimensions, they must have been somewhat less, and perhaps not much, than the ark in which they were deposited, which was a yard and quarter long, and three quarters broad. It should seem there was nothing particularly curious in the framing of them, for there was no great time taken; Moses had them ready presently, to take up with him, next morning. They were to receive their beauty, not from the art of man, but from the finger of God.

II. Moses must attend again on the top of mount Sinai, and present himself to God there, **#Ex 34:2**. Though the absence of Moses, and his continuance so long on the mount, had lately occasioned their making the golden calf, yet God did not therefore alter his measures, but he shall come up and tarry as long as he had done, to try whether they had learned to wait. To strike an awe upon the people, they are directed to keep their distance, none must come up with him, **#Ex 34:3**. They had said (**#Ex 32:1**), *We know not what has become of him*, and God will not let them know. Moses, accordingly, *rose up early* (**#Ex 34:4**) to go to the place appointed, to show how forward he was to present himself before God and loathe to lose time. It is good to be early at our devotions. The morning is perhaps as good a friend to the graces as it is to the muses.

Ver. 5.

No sooner had Moses got to the top of the mount than God gave him the meeting (**#Ex 34:5**): *The Lord descended*, by some sensible token of his presence, and manifestation of his glory. His descending bespeaks his condescension; he humbles himself to take cognizance of those that humble themselves to walk with him. **#Ps 113:6**, *Lord, what is man, that he should be thus visited?* He descended in the cloud, probably that pillar of cloud which had hitherto gone before Israel, and had the day before met Moses at the door of the tabernacle. This cloud was to strike an awe upon Moses, that the familiarity he was admitted to might not breed contempt. The disciples *feared, when they entered the cloud*. His making a cloud his pavilion intimated that, though he made known much of himself, yet there was much more concealed. Now observe,

I. How God proclaimed his name (**#Ex 34:6-7**): he did it *in transitu* --as he passed by him. Fixed views of God are reserved for the future state; the best we have in this world are transient. God now was performing what he had promised Moses, the day before, that his glory should pass by, **#Ex 33:22**. He *proclaimed the name of the Lord*, by which he would make himself known. He had made himself known to Moses in the glory of his self-existence and self-sufficiency when he proclaimed that name, *I am that I am*; now he makes himself known in the glory of his grace, and goodness, and all sufficiency to us. Now that God is about to publish a second edition of the law he prefaces it with this proclamation; for it is God's grace or goodness that gives the law, especially the remedial law. The pardon of Israel's sin in worshipping the calf was now to pass the seals; and God, by this declaration, would let them know that he pardoned *ex mero motu*--*merely out of his own good pleasure*, not for their merits' sake, but from his own inclination to forgive. The proclaiming of it denotes the universal extent of God's mercy. He is not only good to Israel, but good to all; let all take notice of it. He that hath an ear, let him hear, and know, and believe,

1. That the God with whom we have to do is a great God. He is Jehovah, the Lord, who has his being of himself, and is the fountain of all being, *Jehovah-EI, the Lord, the strong God*, a God of almighty power himself, and the original of all power This is prefixed before the display of his mercy, to teach us to think and to speak even of God's grace and goodness with great seriousness and a holy awe, and to encourage us to depend upon these mercies; they are not the mercies of a man, that is frail and

feeble, false and fickle, but the mercies of the Lord, the Lord God; therefore sure mercies, and sovereign mercies, mercies that may be trusted, but not tempted.

2. That he is a good God. His greatness and goodness illustrate and set off each other. That the terror of his greatness may not make us afraid, we are told how good he is; and, that we may not presume upon his goodness, we are told how great he is. Many words are here heaped up, to acquaint us with, and convince us of, God's goodness, and to show how much his goodness is both his glory and his delight, yet without any tautology.

(1.) He is *merciful*. This bespeaks his tender compassion, like that of a father to his children. This is put first, because it is the first wheel in all the instances of God's good-will to fallen man, whose misery makes him an object of pity, **#Jud 10:16 Isa 63:9**. Let us not then have either hard thoughts of God or hard hearts towards our brethren.

(2.) He is *gracious*. This bespeaks both freeness and kindness; it intimates not only that he has a compassion to his creatures, but a complacency in them and in doing good to them, and this of his own goodwill, and not for the sake of any thing in them. His mercy is grace, free grace; this teaches us to be not only pitiful, but courteous, **#1Pe 3:8**.

(3.) He is *long-suffering*. This is a branch of God's goodness which the wickedness of sinners gives occasion for; that of Israel had done so: they had tried his patience, and experienced it. He is long suffering, that is, he is slow to anger, and delays the execution of his justice; he waits to be gracious, and lengthens out the offers of his mercy.

(4.) He is *abundant in goodness and truth*. This bespeaks plentiful goodness, goodness abounding above our deserts, above our conception and expression. The springs of mercy are always full, the streams of mercy always flowing; there is mercy enough in God, enough for all, enough for each, enough for ever. It bespeaks promised goodness, goodness and truth put together, goodness engaged by promise, and his faithfulness pledged for the security of it. He not only does good, but by his promise he raises our expectation of it, and even binds himself to show mercy.

(5.) He keepeth *mercy for thousands*. This denotes,

[1.] Mercy extended to thousands of persons. When he gives to some, still he keeps for others, and is never exhausted; he has mercy enough for all the thousands of Israel, when they shall *multiply as the sand*.

[2.] Mercy entailed upon thousands of generations, even those upon whom the ends of the world have come; nay, the line of it is drawn parallel with that of eternity itself.

(6.) He *forgiveth iniquity, transgression, and sin*. Pardoning mercy is specified, because in this divine grace is most magnified, and because in this divine grace is most magnified, and because it is this which opens the door to all other gifts of his divine grace, and because of this he had lately given a very pregnant proof. He forgives offences of all sorts--*iniquity, transgression, and sin*, multiplies his pardons; and with him is *plenteous redemption*.

3. That he is a just and holy God. For,

(1.) *He will by no means clear the guilty*. Some read it so as to express a mitigation of wrath, even when he does punish: *When he empties, he will not make quite desolate*; that is,

"He does not proceed to the greatest extremity, till there be no remedy."

As we read it, we must expound it that he will by no means connive at the guilty, as if he took no notice of their sin. Or, he will not clear the impenitently guilty, that go on still in their trespasses: he will not clear the guilty without some satisfaction to his justice, and necessary vindications of the honour of his government.

(2.) *He visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children.* He may justly do it, for all souls are his, and there is a malignity in sin that taints the blood. He sometimes will do it, especially for the punishment of idolaters. Thus he shows his hatred to sin, and displeasure against it; yet he *keepeth not his anger for ever*, but visits to the third and fourth generation only, while he *keepeth mercy for thousands*. Well, this is God's name for ever, and this is his memorial unto all generations.

II. How Moses received this declaration which God made of himself, and of his grace and mercy. It should seem as if Moses accepted this as a sufficient answer to his request that God would *show him his glory*; for we read not that he went into the cleft of the rock, whence to gain a sight of God's back parts. Perhaps this satisfied him, and he desired no more; as we read not that Thomas did *thrust his hand into Christ's side*, though Christ invited him to do it. God having thus proclaimed his name, Moses says,

"It is enough, I expect no more till I come to heaven;"

at least he did not think fit to relate what he saw. Now we are here told,

1. What impression it made upon him: *Moses made haste, and bowed his head*, #Ex 34:8. Thus he expressed,

(1.) His humble reverence and adoration of God's glory, giving him *the honour due to that name* he had thus proclaimed. Even the goodness of God must be looked upon by us with a profound veneration and holy awe.

(2.) His joy in this discovery which God had made of himself, and his thankfulness for it. We have reason gratefully to acknowledge God's goodness to us, not only in the real instances of it, but in the declarations he has made of it by his word; not only that he is, and will be, gracious to us, but that he is pleased to let us know it.

(3.) His holy submission to the will of God, made known in this declaration, subscribing to his justice as well as mercy, and putting himself and his people Israel under the government and direction of such a God as Jehovah had now proclaimed himself to be. Let this God be our God for ever and ever.

2. What improvement he made of it. He immediately grounded a prayer upon it (#Ex 34:9); and a more earnest affectionate prayer it is,

(1.) For the presence of God with his people Israel in the wilderness:

"I pray thee, go among us, for thy presence is all in all to our safety and success."

(2.) For pardon of sin:

"O pardon our iniquity and our sin, else we cannot

expect thee to go among us."

And,

(3.) For the privileges of a peculiar people:

"Take us for *thy inheritance*, which thou wilt have a particular eye to, and concern for, and delight in."

These things God had already promised, and given Moses assurances of, and yet he prays for them, not as doubting the sincerity of God's grants, but as one solicitous for the ratification of them. God's promises are intended, not to supersede, but to direct and encourage, prayer. Those who have some good hopes, through grace, that their sins are pardoned, must yet continue to pray for pardon, for the renewing of their pardon, and the clearing of it more and more to their souls. The more we see of God's goodness the more ashamed we should be of our own sins, and the more earnest for an interest in it. God had said, in the close of the proclamation, that he would *visit the iniquity upon the children*; and Moses here deprecates that.

"Lord, do not only pardon it to them, but to their children, and let our covenant-relation to thee be entailed upon our posterity, as an inheritance."

Thus Moses, like a man of a truly public spirit, intercedes even for the children that should be born. But it is a strange plea he urges: *For it is a stiff-necked people*. God had given this as a reason why he would not go along with them, [#Ex 33:3](#).

"Yea," says Moses, "the rather go along with us; for the worse they are the more need they have of thy presence and grace to make them better."

Moses sees them so stiff-necked that, for his part, he has neither patience nor power enough to deal with them.

"Therefore, Lord, do thou go among us, else they will never be kept in awe. Thou wilt spare, and bear with them, for thou art *God, and not man*," [#Hos 11:9](#).

Ver. 10.

Reconciliation being made, a covenant of friendship is here settled between God and Israel. The traitors are not only pardoned, but preferred and made favourites again. Well may the assurances of this be ushered in with a *behold*, a word commanding attention and admiration: *Behold, I make a covenant*. When the covenant was broken, it was Israel that broke it; now that it comes to be renewed, it is God that makes it. If there be quarrels, we must bear all the blame; if there be peace, God must have all the glory. Here is,

I. God's part of this covenant, what he would do for them, [#Ex 34:10-11](#).

1. In general: *Before all thy people, I will do marvels*. Note, Covenant-blessings are marvellous things ([#Ps 98:1](#)), marvels in the kingdom of grace; those mentioned here were marvels in the kingdom of nature, the drying up of Jordan, the standing still of the sun, &c. Marvels indeed, for they were without precedent, *such as have not been done in all the earth*. They were the joy of Israel, and the confirmation of their faith: *Thy people shall see, and own the work of the Lord*. And they were the terror of their

enemies: *It is a terrible thing that I will do.* Nay, even God's own people should see them with astonishment.

2. In particular: *I drive out before thee the Amorite.* God, as King of nations, plucks up some, to plant others, as it pleases him; as King of saints, he made room for the vine he brought out of Egypt, #Ps 80:8-9. Kingdoms are sacrificed to Israel's interests, #Isa 43:3-4.

II. Their part of the covenant: *Observe that which I command thee.* We cannot expect the benefit of the promises unless we make conscience of the precepts.

1. The two great precepts are,

(1.) *Thou shalt worship no other gods (#Ex 34:14)*, not give divine honour to any creature, or any name whatsoever, the creature of fancy. A good reason is annexed. It is at thy peril if thou do: *For the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God*, as tender in the matters of his worship as the husband is of the honour of the marriage-bed. Jealousy is called the *rage of a man (#Pr 6:34)*, but it is *God's holy and just displeasure*. Those cannot worship God aright who do not worship him alone.

(2.) *"Thou shalt make thee no molten god (#Ex 34:17); thou shalt not worship the true God by images."*

This was the sin they had lately fallen into, which therefore they are particularly cautioned against.

2. Fences are here erected about these two precepts by two others:

(1.) That they might not be tempted to worship other gods, they must not join in affinity or friendship with those that did (#Ex 34:12):

"Take heed to thyself, for thou art upon thy good behaviour. It is a sin that thou art prone to and that will easily beset thee, and therefore be very cautious, and carefully abstain from all appearances of it and advances towards it. Make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land."

If God, in kindness to them, drove out the Canaanites, they ought, in duty to God, not to harbour them. What could be insisted on more reasonable than this? If God make war with the Canaanites, let not Israel make peace with them. If God take care that the Canaanites be not their lords, let them take care that they be not their snares. It was for their civil interest to complete the conquest of the land; so much does God consult our benefit in the laws he gives us. They must particularly take heed of intermarrying with them, #Ex 34:15-16. If they espoused their children, they would be in danger of espousing their gods; such is the corruption of nature that the bad are much more likely to debauch the good than the good to reform the bad. The way of sin is downhill: those that are in league with idolaters will come by degrees to be in love with idolatry; and those that are prevailed upon to eat of the idolatrous sacrifice will come at length to offer it. *Obsta principiis--Nip the mischief in the bud.*

(2.) That they might not be tempted to make molten gods, they must utterly destroy those they found and all that belong to them, the altars and groves (#Ex 34:13), lest, if these were left standing, they should be brought, in process of time, either to use them or to take

pattern by them, or to abate in their detestation and dread of idolatry. The relics of idolatry ought to be abolished as affronts to the holy God and a great reproach to human nature. Let it never be said that men who pretend to reason were ever guilty of such absurdities as to make gods of their own and worship them.

Ver. 18.

Here is a repetition of several appointments made before, especially relating to their solemn feasts. When they had made the calf, they proclaimed a feast in honour of it; now, that they might never do so again, they are here charged with the observance of the feasts which God had instituted. Note, Men need not be drawn from their religion by the temptation of mirth, for we serve a Master that has abundantly provided for the joy of his servants: serious godliness is a continual feast, and joy in God always.

I. Once a week they must rest (#Ex 34:21), *even in earing time, and in harvest*, the most busy times of the year. All worldly business must give way to that holy rest; harvest-work will prosper the better for the religious observance of the sabbath-day in harvest-time. Hereby we must show that we prefer our communion with God, and our duty to him, before either the business or the joy of harvest.

II. Thrice a year they must feast (#Ex 34:23); they must then appear *before the Lord, God, the God of Israel*. In all our religious approaches to God, we must eye him as the Lord God, infinitely blessed, great, and glorious, that we may worship him with reverence and godly fear, as the God of Israel, a God in covenant with us, that we may be encouraged to trust in him, and to serve him cheerfully. We always are before God; but, in holy duties, we present ourselves before him, as servants to receive commands, as petitioners to sue for favours, and we have reason to do both with joy. But it might be suggested that, when all the males from every part of the country had gone up to worship in the place that God should choose, the country would be left exposed to the insults of their neighbours; and what would become of the poor women and children, and sick and aged, that were left at home? Trust God with them (#Ex 34:24): *Neither shall any man desire thy land*; not only they shall not invade it, but they shall not so much as think of invading it. Note,

1. All hearts are in God's hands, and under his check; he can lay a restraint, not only upon men's actions, but upon their desires. Canaan was a desirable land, and the neighbouring nations were greedy enough; and yet God says,

"They shall not desire it."

Let us check all sinful desires in our own hearts against God and his glory, and then trust him to check all sinful desires in the hearts of others against us and our interest.

2. The way of duty is the way of safety. If we serve God, he will preserve us; and those that venture for him shall never lose by him. While we are employed in God's work, and are attending upon him, we are taken under special protection, as noblemen and members of parliament are privileged from arrests.

III. The three feasts are here mentioned, with their appendages.

1. The passover, and the feast of unleavened bread, in remembrance of their deliverance out of Egypt; and to this is annexed the law of the redemption of the first-born, #Ex 34:18-20. This feast was instituted, #Ex 12:13, and urged again, #Ex 23:15.
2. The feast of weeks, that is, that of pentecost, seven weeks after the passover; and to

this is annexed the law of the first- fruits.

3. The feast of in-gathering at the year's end, which was the feast of tabernacles (#Ex 34:22): of these also he had spoken before, #Ex 23:16. As to those laws repeated here (#Ex 34:25-26), that against leaven relates to the passover, that of the first-fruits to the feast of pentecost, and therefore that against seething the kid in his mother's milk in all probability relates to the feast of in- gathering, at which God would not have them use that superstitious ceremony, which probably they had seen the Egyptians, or some other of the neighbouring nations, bless their harvests with.

IV. With these laws, here repeated, it is probable all that was said to him when he was before upon the mount was repeated likewise, and the model of the tabernacle shown him again, lest the ruffle and discomposure, which the golden calf had put him into should have bereaved him of the ideas he had in mind of what he had seen and heard; also in token of a complete reconciliation, and to show that *not one jot or tittle of the law should pass away*, but that all should be carefully preserved by the great Mediator, who came not to destroy, but to fulfil, #Mt 5:17-18. And in the close,

1. Moses is ordered to write these words (#Ex 34:27), that the people might be the better acquainted with them by a frequent perusal, and that they might be transmitted to the generations to come. We can never be enough thankful to God for the written word.
2. He is told that according to the tenor of these words God would make a covenant with Moses and Israel; not with Israel immediately, but with them in Moses a mediator. Thus the covenant of grace is made with believers through Christ, who is *given for a covenant to the people*, #Isa 49:8. And, as here the covenant was made according to the tenor of the command, so it is still; for we are by baptism brought into covenant, that we may be *taught to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded us*, #Mt 28:19-20.

Ver. 28.

Here is,

I. The continuance of Moses in the mount, where he was miraculously sustained, #Ex 34:28. He was there in very intimate communion with God, without interruption, forty days and forty nights, and did not think it long. When we are weary of an hour or two spent in attendance upon God and adoration of him, we should think how many days and nights Moses spent with him, and of the eternal day we hope to spend in praising him. During all this time Moses did neither eat nor drink. Though he had before been kept so long fasting, yet he did not, this second time, take up so many days' provision along with him, but believed that *man lives not by bread alone*, and encouraged himself with the experience he had of the truth of it. So long he continued without meat and drink (and probably without sleep too), for,

1. The power of God supported him, that he did not need it. He who made the body can nourish it without ordinary means, which he uses, but is not tied to. *The life is more than meat.*
2. His communion with God entertained him, so that he did not desire it. He had meat to eat which the world knew not of, for it was his meat and drink to hear the word of God and pray. The abundant satisfaction his soul had in the word of God and the visions of the Almighty made him forget the body and the pleasures of it. When God would treat his favourite Moses, it was not with meat and drink, but with his light, law, and

love, with the knowledge of himself and his will; then man did indeed eat angels' food. See what we should value as the truest pleasure. *The kingdom of God is not meat and drink*, neither the abundance nor delicacy of food, but *righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost*. As Moses, so Elijah and Christ, fasted forty days and forty nights. The more dead we are to the delights of sense the better prepared we are for the pleasures of heaven.

II. The coming down of Moses from the mount, greatly enriched and miraculously adorned.

1. He came down enriched with the best treasure; for he brought in his hands the two tables of the law, written with the finger of God, **#Ex 34:28-29**. It is a great favour to have the law given us; this favour was shown to Israel, **#Ps 147:19-20**. It is a great honour to be employed in delivering God's law to others; this honour was done to Moses.
2. He came down adorned with the best beauty; for the *skin of his face shone*, **#Ex 34:29**. This time of his being in the mount he heard only what he had heard before, but he saw more of the glory of God, which having with open face beheld, he was in some measure *changed into the same image from glory to glory*, **#2Co 3:18**. The last time he came down from the mount with the glory of a magistrate, to frown upon and chastise Israel's idolatry; now with the glory of an angel, with tidings of peace and reconciliation. Then he came with a rod, now with the spirit of meekness. Now,

(1.) This may be looked upon,

[1.] As a great honour done to Moses, that the people might never again question his mission nor think nor speak lightly of him. He carried his credentials in his very countenance, which, some think, retained, as long as he lived, some remainders of this glory, which perhaps contributed to the vigour of his old age; that eye could not wax dim which had seen God, nor that face become wrinkled which had shone with his glory. The Israelites could not look him in the face but they must there read his commission. Thus it was done to the man whom the King of kings did delight to honour. Yet, after this, they murmured against him; for the most sensible proofs will not of themselves conquer an obstinate infidelity. The shining of Moses's face was a great honour to him; yet that was no glory, in comparison with the glory which excelled. We read of our Lord Jesus, not only that *his face shone* as the sun, but his whole body also, for his *raiment was white and glistening*, **#Lu 9:29**. But, when he came down from the mount, he quite laid aside that glory, it being his will that we should *walk by faith, not by sight*.

[2.] It was also a great favour to the people, and an encouragement to them, that God put this glory upon him, who was their intercessor, thereby giving them assurance that he was accepted, and they through him. Thus the advancement of Christ, our advocate with the Father, is the great support of our faith.

[3.] It was the effect of his sight of God. Communion with God, *First*, Makes the face to shine in true honour. Serious godliness puts a lustre upon a man's countenance, such as commands esteem and affection. *Secondly*, It should make the face to shine in universal holiness. When we have been in the mount with God, we should let our *light shine before men*, in humility, meekness, and all the instances of a heavenly conversation; thus must the *beauty of the Lord our God be upon us*, even the *beauty of holiness*, that all we converse with may *take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus*, **#Ac 4:13**.

(2.) Concerning the shining of Moses's face observe here,

[1.] Moses was not aware of it himself: *He wist not that the skin of his face shone*, #Ex 34:29. Thus, *First*, It is the infelicity of some that, though their faces shine in true grace, yet they do not know it, to take the comfort of it. Their friends see much of God in them, but they themselves are ready to think they have no grace. *Secondly*, It is the humility of others that, though their faces shine in eminent gifts and usefulness, yet they do not know it, to be puffed up with it. Whatever beauty God puts upon us, we should still be filled with a humble sense of our own unworthiness, and manifold infirmities, as will make us even overlook and forget that which makes our faces shine.

[2.] Aaron and the children of Israel saw it, and *were afraid*, #Ex 34:30. The truth of it was attested by a multitude of witnesses, who were also conscious of the terror of it. It not only dazzled their eyes, but struck such an awe upon them as obliged them to retire. Probably they doubted whether it were a token of God's favour or of his displeasure; and, though it seemed most likely to be a good omen, yet, being conscious of guilt, they feared the worst, especially remembering the posture Moses found them in when he came last down from the mount. Holiness will command reverence; but the sense of sin makes men afraid of their friends, and even of that which really is a favour to them.

[3.] Moses put a *veil upon his face*, when he perceived that it shone, #Ex 34:33,35. *First*, This teaches us all a lesson of modesty and humility. We must be content to have our excellences obscured, and a veil drawn over them, not coveting to *make a fair show in the flesh*. Those that are truly desirous to be owned and accepted of God will likewise desire not to be taken notice of nor applauded by men. *Qui bene latuit, bene vixit--There is a laudable concealment*. *Secondly*, It teaches ministers to accommodate themselves to the capacities of people, and to preach to them as they are able to bear it. Let all that art and all that learning be veiled which tend to amusement rather than edification, and let the strong condescend to the infirmities of the weak. *Thirdly*, This veil signified the darkness of that dispensation. The ceremonial institutions had in them much of Christ, much of the grace of the gospel, but a veil was drawn over it, so that the children of Israel could not distinctly and *stedfastly see those good things to come which the law had the shadow of*. It was beauty veiled, gold in the mine, a pearl in the shell; but, thanks be to God, by the gospel life and immortality are brought to light, the veil is taken away from off the Old Testament; yet still it remains upon the hearts of those who shut their eyes against the light. Thus the apostle expounds this passage, #2Co 3:13-15.

[4.] When Moses *went in before the Lord*, to speak with him in the tabernacle of meeting, he *put off the veil*, #Ex 34:34. Then there was no occasion for it, and, before God, every man does and must appear unveiled; for *all things are naked and open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do*, and it is folly for us to think of concealing or disguising any thing. Every veil must be thrown aside when we come to present ourselves unto the Lord. This signified also, as it is explained (#2Co 3:16), that when a soul turns to the Lord the veil shall be taken away, and with open face it may behold his glory. And when we shall come before the Lord in heaven, to be there for ever speaking with him, the veil shall not only be taken off from the divine glory, but from our hearts and eyes, that we may see as we are seen, and know as we are known.