

## Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

### Back to the Basics, Part 1

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 90-1

Recently, one of the elders came to me and said, "You know, I was listening to your tapes when you were preaching in New York." I was back in New York doing a series. And I was sort of surprised that this elder had gotten hold of the tapes from that entire series. Nothing I say anywhere escapes the scrutiny of the elders, by the way. Which I'm excited they want to hear it. But anyway, he said, "I feel like I've been cheated because often when you go away, you share things with other churches and other people that were very foundational in the ministry here, very basic, very important things that you taught at Grace before I ever came. And I feel like I've never heard those things. And there's sort of another whole ministry of John MacArthur elsewhere that the folks who've come recently to Grace never get involved in because those were things you did early in the ministry here."

And so he encouraged me to reach back and do some of the very most important and foundational things that we've ever done at Grace Church. And I thought about that and meditated on it and felt that that's really what the Lord would have me to do, as I share with you today. And what I want to do is reach back to some of the very basic things that we have learned here, relative to this whole matter of spiritual growth and the theme of glorifying God. And I'll show you how those relate as we get started.

But just to sort of establish a point, I'd be curious to know how many of you, here this morning, have come to Grace Church within the last five years? Lift your hand up high. Okay. That is really ... what happened to all of our people from before? Amazing! And so, I need to be aware of the fact that many of the things, as I say, that were very foundational in the life of our church, need to be reiterated and reaffirmed so that all of us can get a handle on some of the very, very basic things. And I want to share with you along that line this morning and then again tonight. And probably two weeks from tonight, I'll just pick up what I don't get to finish. But I'm very, very anxious to share with you in the matter of glorifying God and how it relates to spiritual growth.

Now to begin with this morning, I want you to open your Bible to 1 John chapter 2 ... 1 John chapter 2. And we need a sort of a launching point. Now by the way, the message that I'm giving this morning, we have the material in print in a little study note set called, *Nourishment for New Life*. Those are available this morning on the patio. We only have about 500 left. I don't know how many are left now since the first service. But they will give you in printed form, the things that I'm saying to you this morning and tonight with a few different emphases and so forth. But basically the same Scriptures are dealt with. And if you'd like a copy of these very essential, basic things for your spiritual growth, get a copy of *Nourishment for New Life* on the patio after the service this morning.

All right, 1 John chapter 2 and verse 12 introduces to us our subject. John writes, "I write unto you little children," and he uses a word that simply means "children" in a very general sense. In the sense that anybody is a child of their parent, it has no age identification. "I'm just writing unto you because you're children, because your sins are forgiven you, for His name's sake." John says, "I'm writing unto because your sins are forgiven for His namesake." And may I suggest to you that what he means by that is for the glory of the Lord. We are forgiven for His sake, not ours.

I think you have a little bit of an idea of how I feel about much of contemporary Christianity. But I continue to be rather appalled, almost on a daily basis, at the burgeoning cult that is growing in and around Christianity, a cult that I call a "cult of human exaltation".

I mentioned to you a few weeks ago about a parade I saw of Christians, each riding on their own float, to the applause of the people watching them. And I told you how distressed I was to see Christians being paraded around as if they were some kind of celebrities.

I pick up yesterday, the latest edition of *Newsweek* magazine and read a two-page spread about the current rock music mania that's hit Christianity. And some of the comments of these supposed Christian artists. I saw one group that looked like they were demonic, as demonic as any other heavy-metal group might look. And yet, they're supposed to represent Jesus Christ. And at the end of their concerts they throw New Testaments at the audience. I read about another female singer who comes out, and machines pump great amounts of smoke, and she comes out through all of this smoke and these flashing lights. And she's got some drapery on or something. And she throws it off to reveal her spandex skin-tight white pants and goes on in a comment about the fact that she is both sacred and sexy. Went on to read about certain bumper stickers that are associated with this kind of thing, the sayings on which I would not repeat.

And again, I saw in mind this incredible perversion of Christianity to the point where it is now trying to compete with the world's exaltation of its own. And has almost, on a wholesale basis, lost sight of the fact that we are redeemed, not for our own selves, but for God. Not for our glory and not for our exaltation, and not for our success and our promotion and our prosperity, but for God's glory. And all of this really is the byproduct of an abhorrent theology that teaches that salvation is primarily for me, to make me feel good. There are no limits on what I might do because God wants me to have a good time. God wants me to be prosperous. God wants me to be successful. God wants me to be me to do my own thing. I was saved for me. That is the underlying abhorration behind so much of contemporary Christian perversion.

And all the people who are now teaching doctrine of affluence and the doctrine of prosperity and, I like to call it, the doctrine of fame, really have come up with little else than another form of idolatry. But we have, who are Protestants historically, taking a rather sad and severe look at the Roman

Catholic Church because of its idols. And yet we, in Protestant Christianity today, are creating idols of another sort which if anything are even worse than the ones you might see in a local Catholic church.

But we have lost sight of a basic truth. And that is that you are saved for the glory of God, not for your own blessing and not for your own prosperity and not for your own ego satisfaction and not for your own healing and not for your own self-aggrandizement. You were saved for the glory of God and anything which does not point to His glory is a perversion of the intention of God's redeeming work. And the self-consumption of contemporary Christianity, to me, is absolutely frightening. I mean the old word was "worldliness". But we are for the sake of His name, for the sake of His glory. And the idea of for His namesake, the concept of name means all that He is. And all that He is, is His glory. And we have been forgiven for His glory.

Now within the family where all of us have been redeemed for His sake, all of us have been forgiven for His sake there are three levels of spiritual growth. We find ourselves somewhere around these three different levels, beginning in verse 13. The first level that he identifies is fathers. And he writes to fathers, and he's not talking about physical fathers, or earthly fathers, or human fathers. But spiritually mature people who have reached the highest level of maturity. The level where they are actually reproductive, they are fathers, they are giving life to others, they've reached the level of maturity that identifies them as "those who have known Him that is from the beginning".

Then he also, writing to this group of Christian, says, "I also write to some of you who are young men." And he's not again talking about physical young men, he's not talking about earthly age, but he's talking about a level of spiritual maturity. And he says, "You are young men because you have overcome the wicked one."

"And then I write unto to you who are babies," and here he uses a different word for children than in verse 12, he uses the word for infants, "and I write unto you who are spiritual babies because you have known the Father."

Verse 14 repeats, "I have written unto you fathers because you've known Him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you young men because you are strong and the Word of God abides in you and you have overcome the wicked one."

Now we see then that there are three levels of spiritual growth: there are spiritual babies, spiritual young men, and spiritual fathers. All of us, within the family of God, are set for the glory of God which process takes us through those three areas.

We start out as spiritual babies. And you'll notice at the end of verse 13 how they are identified, "You have known the Father." In other words, you now have a relationship with God; you're in the family.

Like an infant who knows Ma-Ma and Da-Da and not a lot more, unable to make proper judgments, unable to be discerning, as Ephesians 4 says, "tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine." So they are vulnerable, they are defenseless, they need protection and care and nurture.

And so it with spiritual infants, they know the Father. They have an intimate relationship with God. They are in the family. They have parental recognition but very little else. They are highly vulnerable to the encroachment of false teachings, false teachers, cults, and sins of all sorts. And they need insulation and protection and care.

That is why in Matthew chapter 18, the Lord says, "You better be careful how you receive one of these little ones who believe in Me. Because how you receive them is how you receive Me. You'd better not lead them into sin," He says, "or you'd be better off if a millstone were hanged around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea. And if one of them goes astray," He says, "you go and get that one and bring it back." Why? Because little children have those tendencies.

So when we come to faith in Christ, we have parental recognition and we're like children. But there's no strength there and we tend to be vulnerable to everything around us. So we don't want to stay at that level.

Spiritual growth pulls us then to a second level, identified in both verse 13 and 14, called young men. And he says about young men, "I write unto you, young men," verse 14, "because you are strong." Now the mark of a young man is strength, virility. How did they get strong? "The Word of God abides in you."

Strength in spiritual growth comes from internally knowing, understanding, and holding to the truth of the Word of God. The Word is our food, is it not? The Word is that upon which we feast. "Man shall not live by bread alone," said Jesus, "but by every word proceeds out of the mouth of God." So the Word of God is our spiritual food that takes us from being an infant to being a young man. And a young man is identified as one who is strong because the Word of God abides in him.

And both verses tell us, "He has therefore overcome the wicked one." Now you can actually say as a Christian, that you reach a point in your life where you have overcome the wicked one. Now what does that mean? The wicked one is Satan. In what sense have you overcome Satan? In the sense that Satan is primarily disguised as an angel of light teaching false doctrine, teaching lies.

I told you last week about an encounter I had with one who was under the control of Satan. Who was teaching lies and teaching false doctrine. Now there were spiritual babes who were very vulnerable to him. When I confronted him, I was not vulnerable to him. I was not susceptible to his attacks of lies and false doctrine because I had reached the point in my own life of knowing what I believe out of the Word of God. And there's a certain strength that comes in that when you encounter the lies of the

enemy. So being a spiritual young man is: understanding doctrine, understanding Biblical truth, coming to grips with what the Scripture teaches.

But there is even yet, another level of spiritual growth to which every believer should attain, and that is identified as being a father. Growing all the way up to being one who has known Him that is from the beginning. And it emphasizes there, the eternal God. Not just His fatherliness, not just the doctrine, but to actually come into an intimate communion with the living God Himself. The epitome of spiritual growth then, and carefully mark this in your mind, is to come to the point where you go beyond what it says on the page, to know and commune with the God who is revealed there.

And I can see these kind of patterns in the life of people as they progress in their spiritual development. Now we, who are redeemed and who have been forgiven for His namesake and are to live to His glory, are then to proceed on a path from knowing who He is to knowing what He says, to in a deep and profound way, communing with Him in a real and rich relationship. That's the process of spiritual growth.

Now the question is how do we get there? How do we move on that path? Let's look at 1 Peter 2 for a moment, and we're laying a foundation now, 1 Peter 2. It says, "Wherefore," verse 1, "laying aside," as if you were taking off old clothes, get rid of them, "all evil," the word is cocchia means evil, "and all galas, deceit that's used for fishhook," nothing is more deceitful than a fishhook, a fish thinks it's going to have a meal and turns out to be one, "so you lay aside all evil and you lay aside all deceitfulness, and all hypocrisy, and envy, and concellaliah," backbiting evil-talk about other people. In other words, you set aside your sin. Now if you're going to start with your spiritual growth pattern from being a baby to being a young man to being a father, the first thing that is necessary is to set aside the sin in your life.

Frankly, the churches are full of people who read the Bible. And maybe they read the Bible because they want God to think that they're devoted to Him. Maybe they read the Bible because they think it'll put them in a place where God'll have to bless them. Maybe they read the Bible because they want to impress their spouse or their children or their friends. Maybe they read the Bible because there's a certain sort of, I don't know, power that comes when you know the Bible and you can rattle off at a Bible study or answer questions and it gives you a sort of an ego trip. There are people who read the Bible, and maybe they have a sincere heart. They read it, but by not applying it and not dealing with the sin in their life, they train themselves to read Scripture without application. And that then, becomes the habit of their life. And the Scripture then, is thin and ineffective because it's not applied.

So to begin with, you lay aside the evil. It begins with a confession and a repentance from sin. And then verse 2 says, "As newborn babes desire the pure milk of the Word that you may grow by it." The first thing, if you're going to grow by the Word, is you got to lay aside the evil. The second thing is there has to be consuming desire like that of a baby for milk. That's this point.

Now how strongly does a baby desire milk? Very strongly. In fact, a baby really doesn't desire anything else. Babies are only interested in the fact that you give them milk and deal with the consequences. That's the beginning and the end of the cycle of their life. They don't care ... there's never been a baby who woke up in the middle of the night screaming because there were yellow booties or her feet rather than blue. No, they don't care. They don't care about the curtains, or the carpet, or anything. They don't care about anything except that bottle. I mean that is the beginning and the end for them.

And that is what Peter has in mind when he says if you want to grow, the first thing is the setting aside of evil. The second thing is that consuming desire. And the point of it is, verse 3, "so be that you have tasted that the Lord is gracious," now listen to that. It isn't that in studying the Bible, you get a taste of information. It is that in studying the Scripture you get a taste of the Lord from the very beginning. The purpose of Bible study is not to gain information. The purpose of Bible study is to commune with the living Christ. I mean that's the bottom line. And anything short of that misses the point.

So that what you're doing then is: like a baby, you're desiring the milk. You want to be strong in the Word. But your real goal is to go beyond the Word to enter in to a communion that is profound and rich with the living God. That's the pattern. That's the essence of spiritual growth.

Now when you look at the Word, how do you do that? How can I so study the Word that I'm not just getting information? How can I so study the Word that I don't just say, "Well, I read my Bible today therefore I'm a spiritual hero and God has to bless me." How can I study the Word so that I plumb the depths of the God it reveals? 2 Corinthians chapter 3 will answer that question ... 2 Corinthians chapter 3 verse 18.

Every time I sign my name, I suppose over the last 15 years, I've autographed a book or something, I always put this verse under it. People say, "Is that your life verse?" I say, "I don't have a life verse. This is just one that I think everybody ought to read and become familiar with. It's a powerful one." Now it says in verse 18, "But we all," and that means all believers, all of us as believers, "we all with an unveiled face."

Now earlier in this text, he's been talking about Moses. And he's been talking about the old covenant. And he's been talking about what it was like to live under the law. And the fact was that in the time of the law, the face was veiled in the sense that you couldn't fully see all that God had planned. Right? Even the Old Testament writers, for example, when they wrote about the Messiah, "Look," Peter says, "at their own writings to see what person and what manner of time they were writing about." In other words, they didn't fully understand everything of which they wrote.

Those who were under the old covenant had a certain veil over their face. There were certain things about the power of the Spirit that were unrevealed. There were certain things about, of course, the work of Jesus Christ that was as yet unrevealed. There were great mysteries of the Kingdom, Jesus call them. There were great mysteries of the new covenant, as Paul identifies them, that they were as yet unrevealed. And so there was, in a sense, a veil over the face of those under the old covenant.

"But as we have come into the new covenant," verse 16, "the veil is taken away." Now that we've come to the Lord, the veil is away. "And we," verse 18 says, "can look as we were looking in a clear glass. And we see there, the glory the Lord." Now, I want to just stop at that point.

Now, when you with the veil off your face by the work of Jesus Christ in the presence of the Holy Spirit, lift up the pages of Scripture, you can understand fully the Scripture, right? There were many in the Old Testament time, and there are people still today, Jewish people who try to read the Old Testament without the New Testament, and they have a veil over their face, don't they? They can't understand it. They can't make sense of it. Because there's too much unrevealed, there's too much they haven't understood.

But we take the veil off and read the New Testament. And not only does the New Testament make sense, but so does the Old. But as we gaze at the Scripture, what is it we are looking at? Notice that in verse 18, "we are gazing as in a clear glass," not foggy but very clear, "and we are seeing the glory of the Lord." And beloved, may I suggest to you that that is that pursuit which must occupy your heart when you study the Scripture.

Spiritual growth, yes, it's a matter of desiring the Word. But when you look in the Word it is a matter of focusing on the glory of the Lord, not simply on the truth itself. Not the flat words on the page but what is it about the God behind the page that is being revealed. It's what was the cry of Paul's heart in Philippians 3:10, when he says, "That I may know Him and the fellowship of His sufferings, and the power of His resurrection," see. In other words, you might to say to Paul, "Hey, you know the Lord. You're saved. Hey, you know the Lord; you know doctrine." It wasn't enough for him to be saved and be in the family and be a spiritual baby. It wasn't enough for him to be a spiritual young man who knew doctrine. He wanted to see the glory of the self-revealing God in the pages of Scripture that he might become a spiritual father who really knew the One who was the eternal God.

So that to go to the Bible, with an almost sort of evangelical legalism, and just read it for the sake of reading, or just read it for the sake of knowing it, or just read it for the sake of being able to throw it around in groups that study the Bible, or read it to pacify a friend or a life partner or whatever, isn't the point. The point is to study the Scripture to understand the revelation of God that is in it. Now watch this.

"As you do that," back to verse 18, "as you focus on the glory of the Lord, clearly seeing it, you are transformed into the same," what? Image. Is the goal of a Christian to be like Christ? Is the goal of spiritual maturity to come to Christ's likeness? Obviously it is because 1 John 3:2 says, "When we shall Him, we shall," what? "Be like Him." And obviously, "We are redeemed," Romans 8 says, "to be conformed to the image of His Son." And that's why that whom the Lord justified, He also glorified because He brings us to be like Christ.

Now if we want to move along the path of being like Christ, as we gaze at the glory of the Lord in the Scripture, we will be transformed into that same image. Moving from one level of glory to the next level of glory, ever ascending into Christ's likeness. And who does that? It is done by the ... what? Spirit of the Lord.

Spiritual growth isn't that complex. It's me taking the Word of God, confessing my sin, 1 Peter 2, getting it out of my life, turning from it, and then desiring the Word with a passion like a baby desires milk. Hungering and thirsting after the Word, but not the Word for its own sake, not the Word for the sake of the Word, but to know behind the Word, the self-revealed God who wants me to know Him through His Word. And as I gaze beyond the words, if you will, into the glory of the Lord who is revealed there, the Spirit of God, then taking that heart attitude, moves me from one level of glory to the next, closer to the very image of Jesus Christ. Now that's the essence of spiritual growth. And what a marvelous and thrilling thought it is.

Now, the master key then to all spiritual progress is learning to focus your life on the glory of the Lord. Seeing His glory and living to His glory. And those of you who've been here for any time know that many years ago, I shared with you that this was the most life changing truth I ever learned: was learning to live to the glory of God. It becomes the bottom line in everything. Every decision you have, all you have to do is ask yourself the question: is this to the glory of God? And given the options I have, will doing this give Him the greatest glory? That's the question. Or, will I be seeking my glory and my satisfaction and my comfort and my joy and my happiness and my self-esteem and my prosperity? See, that's where the conflict comes right down to the very nexus. Life is either lived for the glory of God or for the glory of me. It's that simple.

And David had it right. In Psalm 16, such a marvelous verse, he said, in verse 8, "I have set the Lord always before me." What did he mean? He meant he gazed into the glory of the Lord. He had set the Lord always before me. In other words, right out front where I see Him first. It's as if I look at the world through God-colored glasses; everything is filtered through Him so that all I do and all I say and all I decide and all I think and every act that I engage in, is with a perception to giving the glory to God. That's the only way a Christian can live. That's the only way that growth takes place. Because when you live in the soil of a life set to glorify God, then the Spirit of God moves you from one level to the next.

The result of that, in Psalm 16, David said, "Therefore my heart is glad." He knew joy that can only come through that perspective. Now there are people who say they're Christians. And they think the way to get joy is to fulfill their own desires. And so they live a self-consumptive kind of life. And they're under this abhorrent theology that says: Jesus wants you rich; and He wants you to have diamonds; and He wants you to have gold; and He wants you to have big cars and big houses; and He wants you to be a star, and all of this kind of thing, at one degree or another. And they're under that illusion that God saved them for their sake, primarily. And as a result, they chase the elusive happiness at the lowest level and never know the ultimate happiness that comes from God to those whose whole life is spent glorifying Him. That's the true gladness.

Now let's think about it. God made everything for His glory, did He not? I mean let's think about the creation itself. Psalm 19:1 says, "The Heavens declare the glory of God and firmament showeth His handiwork." In other words, everything that's created in the universe declares the glory of God. You say, "How?"

Well, it's obvious if you look at the universe, an endless universe, and you study all of the stellar bodies and all the things that are going on in space, you're going to conclude that God is a fairly astounding Being. He really is on display. His genius is on display. His power is on display. His majesty is on display. His love of beauty is on display. His order is on display. God is glorified in His creation. And as Isaiah 43:20, He says, "The beasts of the fields shall give Me honor." You can take a sort of a lower look, come out of space if you will, and down to the earth, and you look at the creation here and even the animal kingdom, and you're in absolute awe of the creative genius of God, the majesty of God.

Our family was down in San Diego and we went to the Wild Animal Park. And we were riding around on this tram all over these miles and miles. And there lions and there were all these animals jumping around and bouncing around. And there were rhinoceros and hippopotamus and little birds. And I was in awe of the fact, when you see it all in one big gob like that, that God has such a mind. I mean God doesn't want to be bored for one thing. I mean He has created such an infinite. Just sit at the bus stop for half-an-hour, you can tell that. But God has an infinite capacity for variety that staggers your mind; it's absolutely unbelievable. And you say to yourself, "Why? Why does that thing exist? Look at it. It's ridiculous. It doesn't do anything." But God has this astounding capacity for creation that boggles the mind. The genius is inconceivable. So we understand that everything that was made was made to put Him on display.

And you remember in Luke 2:13 and 14, of course, when the Savior was born, the angels said, "Glory to God in the highest." And that's the angelic chorus, Glory to God in the highest. The firmament gives Him glory. The earth creatures give Him glory. The angels give Him glory. And the apostle Paul calls, in 1 Timothy chapter 1 verse 17, "That great benediction now under the King eternal,

immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory, forever amen," and so forth. And in so saying, he is saying in effect, that all men should be giving Him glory. You see everything was created by Him and for Him, Colossians says. Everything is created through Him and to Him, Romans 11:36 says. It's all for His glory. It's all for His glory. And everybody on the face of the earth has the responsibility to glorify Him, to glorify Him. And can't you see how essential it is that we as Christians do that for which we have been redeemed?

Look at Romans 1, for a moment. Romans 1:21, here you have the chapter in which Paul delineates the condemnation of the human race for its sin. Verse 18 talks about the wrath of God being revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. And why is God going to judge the world? What have men done to deserve such judgment, to deserve hell, to deserve punishment forever? What have they done?

Well, in the first place, verse 20 at the end says, "They're without excuse." They have absolutely no excuse because God revealed Himself to them. Verse 19, "That which may be known of God is manifest in them." God has put the knowledge of Himself in the conscience of men. Verse 20, the creation itself reveals Him. So there's knowledge of God from the inside. There's a knowledge of God from the outside. Man is absolutely without excuse if he rejects that and what precisely has he done? Verse 21, this is what men have done, When they knew God that is by conscience and creation, they could know God. But instead of coming to God, instead of glorifying Him, they did not glorify Him as God. And they weren't thankful. But they, in their empty imaginations, with their dark and foolish hearts, thought they were so smart, verse 22 says, but really became fools. And they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image. They had idols of their own making which is to say they became God. Listen if you create your own gods, then you're god over your own gods.

So man, then, competes with God just as Adam and Even. They said, we'll be like God; we'll take our own chances; we'll make our own decisions; we'll rule our own lives. All of humanity fell. And the bottom line was they failed to glorify God. Man rejects the glory of God. He refuses to let God have His rightful place.

I was reading yesterday in the paper that the homosexual community in West Hollywood has now banned Christmas and Yom Kippur from that city. They don't want any remnant of God present in their society. They want God, altogether, out of their society. It's understandable that people who live like that would want to get rid of God 'cause God would be a very difficult problem for them to deal with in that kind of lifestyle.

But the ultimate rejection of God is the refusal to give Him the glory He is due. Now we expect the world to do that. What hurts me so deeply is when I see Christians who seem to be, well they say they're Christians, only God knows, but who seem to be living for their own glory and self-fulfillment.

Now God has always called for recognition of His glory. When God made Adam and Eve in the garden, they walked and talked with God in the cool of the day, His glory was there, present in the Shekinah, in that great light, that cloud of light, that was the visible presence of God, representative of His great glory, His wonderful person. But when they sinned, they were thrown out of that place because no longer could God tolerate them in His presence and He just put them out. But then God, in wonderful mercy, set out to bring men back to see His glory.

Let me give you some illustrations of how He did it. Look at Exodus 33. Exodus chapter 33, we're going to move quickly because I want you to get this in a condensed form. Now remember, man has sinned against God. Has lost that intimate fellowship with the presence of God and glory of God. But God wants man to see His glory. And so He selects a nation, that nation Israel. And He sets out to show that nation Israel, His glory. How does He do it? He does it with a leader, Moses.

In chapter 33, Moses comes to God and says I want to see Your glory, verse 18, show me Your glory. Lord, I have to know You're here. I have to know You're present. And so the Lord says all right. I'll pass all My goodness and I'll proclaim the name of the Lord, in other words, His glory, all His attributes. And I'll be gracious and I'll show mercy and so forth. So, I'll show you My glory. I'll show you all My attributes revealed in a light. He said, in verse 20, you can't see it all. Nobody could see Me and live. I mean you can't even look at the sun without going blind, you can only imagine what it would be like to stare into the face of the One who created all the whirling suns in all the universe. He would be consumed. And so He says you can only see a part.

So He puts him a rock and hides him a little bit and veils him. And then lets him see His glory a little bit. And Moses gets the glory all over his face. It's transferred to Moses. So Moses now becomes the agent of God's glory. And Moses goes down the mountain, in chapter 34, and he gets in front of the people and they see His glory on his face, starting in verse 29 of chapter 34. Even Moses didn't know the skin of his face was shining, verse 29 says. But he talked with the people with the glory on his face.

Now what's the point? The point is this: God was saying by using Moses as the instrument: here is My glory; will you see My glory; will you acknowledge My glory? You say, "Why was it important to do that?" Because they were very busy worshipping a golden calf, they were busy turning their back on the true God and fashioning gods of their own making. They were doing exactly what Romans 1:21 said men would do, "They would not glorify God as God," then in verse 23, "They were making images and idols by which God's glory was stolen." So God sends Moses down, his face is shining, that the people might see the glory of God.

The sad fact is they never really had any lasting response. Do you realize that even Moses, who had had the glory of God on his face, was told by God to speak to the rock and it would bring forth water.

And instead of that, wanting to show off, as if he were the source of the power, he hit the rock with his rod. And as a result of that, though the water came out, Moses was never allowed to enter the Promised Land. He had stolen the glory from God for himself. So even Moses failed to give God the glory and sought it for himself.

A second way, in which God endeavored to reveal His glory, in the fortieth chapter of Exodus, was the building of the tabernacle. We remembered that when the Lord gave them instructions to build this tabernacle, it was to be a place of worship, a place in which He, Himself, would dwell. They would set up this tent during the 40 years of their wilderness wandering, and all tribes would sit in their proper places around the tent, all facing in because that was focusing them on worship and on the glory of God.

Now when they finished building the tabernacle, chapter 40 describes how they got it all put it together. Over in verse 34, we see what happened. "Then a cloud," and here is the glory of God, "covered the tent of the congregation. And the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation because the cloud "abode thereon and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." And then it says that when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys. If the cloud wasn't taken up, they stayed. And the cloud was a cloud by day and it turned into fire by night. And it led the children of Israel through those 40 years.

Now what God saying? "I want you to see My glory." First: symbolically on the face of Moses; secondly: in this tabernacle, as it dwells in the tabernacle, as it rises in the sky as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. They were to watch and see the representation of the glory of God to be reminded that God received the glory. They were to focus on the glory of God. That was to be their preoccupation.

But you remember what happened, don't you? They focused on their own problems, their own complaints, their own grumbling, and the entire generation died in the wilderness really refusing to give God glory. By God's grace, they did receive the opportunity to go into the Promised Land. When they got into the Land, God said, "I want you to build a permanent place where My glory can dwell." So 1 Kings chapter 8 is the next stop.

And there in 1 Kings chapter 8, Solomon had built a great temple, a temple unto the Lord, a temple like no other facility in the history of his people, before or since. And in that temple would the presence of God in glory. And again, it was so that the people would see His glory. That they would look to Him. That He would be their preoccupation.

And down in 1 Kings chapter 8 verse 10, it says, "It came to pass when the priests would come out," they had finished it, they came out of the Holy place, "there came the cloud again," the same one in

the tabernacle, the same one on the face of Moses, "filled the House of the Lord," the priests couldn't stand to minister because of the cloud because the glory of the Lord had filled House of the Lord. And now here the temple is filled with the glory of the Lord. And again God is saying to all of His people in Israel please see My glory and then disseminate the message of My glory to the world. They were to be a witness nation.

You know the sad result, don't you? Did they? Look at Ezekiel, the prophet Ezekiel, chapter 8, and Ezekiel the prophet gets a vision of the temple. So sad. He goes in the temple, in verse 9, and wicked abominations are there. He went in and he said, "I saw every form of creeping thing," verse 10, "abominable beasts," there are you are, Romans 1, "snakes and beasts, images, idols. All the idols of the house of Israel painted on the walls round about. I found 70 men of the ancients of the house of Israel, 70 elders, 70 older men. And in the midst of them, a man named Jaazaniah, the son of Shaphan, and they each had a sensor in his hand." They were men who were usurping the role of a priest without credentials. They were men who were acting as priests of God when they had no right. They had invaded the priestly office.

And he said, "That's not all there is. Turn around," verse 13, "and look at some more abominations. And there were women weeping for Tammuz." Tammuz, of course, is another name for Baal and they were weeping for Baal. Baal worship. And then in verse 16, "25 men are worshipping the sun." Sun worshippers. "Pointed toward the east with their backs to the temple of God." And so, in the next chapters we read about the glory of God departing. The glory of God goes into the air, chapter 10, and it goes away in the distance and finally it's gone. And God writes "Ichabod" on the temple.

You see, God's glory was in the garden and man refused it. God's glory came on the face of Moses and they rejected it. God's glory came in the tabernacle and they ignored it. It came in the temple and they desecrated it and blasphemed it. And always there was a small remnant of people who accepted and faced the glory of God.

But it's been the same sad pattern through all of history: the glory of God has been rejected. You say, "Did God ever send it back?" Yes. John 1:14 ... In John 1:14 comes the next appearance of the glory of God and it is in human flesh again. This time it's a man, not like Moses, but like no other man. The God man Jesus Christ. And verse 14 describing Christ with these words, "And the Word," meaning Christ, "was made flesh." "The word Christ was made flesh and dwelled among us and we beheld His," what? "His glory." And what glory was it? Human glory? No. It was the glory as the One who proceeded from God Himself, the Father, full of grace and truth, the attributes of God. It was divine glory. And you remember in Luke 9:28-36, Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration let them see His glory. And they wanted to die, they were so afraid.

So God sent His glory to a world that was refusing to give Him glory. It came on the face of Moses. It came in a tent. It came in a tabernacle, in a temple. And finally it came on the face of Jesus Christ.

And they did with Jesus Christ essentially what they'd done with all other times God revealed His glory. There was a small remnant that believed, the majority did not and they killed Jesus to eliminate it.

The fact is, the glory of God will be back again, by the way. In Matthew chapter 24 verse 30 it says, "He'll come with power and great glory," doesn't it? Chapter 25 it says, "He comes in glory with His holy angels." There's going to be a day when the glory comes back. Only this time the glory is going to be so consuming that the Bible says in Revelation, "Men will cry for the rocks in the mountains to fall on them to hide them from the Face," from the face. When He comes it won't be just the back parts. It won't be veiled glory. It'll be the blazing face of His glory. His glory will consume all those ungodly people. His glory will fill the earth. And He will rule and reign supreme.

So the glory of God came in the past. The glory of God will come in the future. But what about the present? If the world is to see the glory of God, the glory of the Lord today, where are they going to see it? Where are they going to see it? Well, they're going to see it in us or they're not going to see it at all. There's no man with a shining face. There's no presence of a cloud and a pillar of fire at night. There's no cloud dwelling in a building anywhere. There's not incarnate Christ walking this earth. And that is why it tells us, and so importantly, in Ephesians chapter 3, that "It is now unto Him who is able to do exceedingly, abundantly, above all we can ask or think according to the power that works in us, unto Him be glory," here it is, "in the church." See that? It's kind of like Colossians 1:27, "Christ then knew the hope of glory."

If the world is to see the glory of the Lord they're going to see it in us. Can you imagine? Can you imagine what it must be like for the world to look at Christianity and see us consumed with our own glory? With our own ease and our own comfort? With our own schemes and our own enterprises? If the world is to see the glory of the Lord, they'll see it in the church.

2 Corinthians 4, I think it's verse 6, "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness has shown in our hearts, the glories in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. We have this treasure in," what? The next verse says, "earthen vessels." So we are the agents of the glory of God. You say, "You mean I'm the tabernacle and I'm the temple?" That's right. You are the temple of the Holy Spirit, right? 1 Corinthians 6, what? "Know you're not that you're body is," what? "The temple of the Holy Spirit which you have of God." You're not your own; you're bought with a price. You as a church, collectively, have become, Ephesians 2 says, "the habitation of the Spirit." He dwells in us. And if the world is to see the glory of God they're going to have to see people who focus on the glory of God, who live to the glory of God.

Now beloved that is the soil in which spiritual growth occurs. And the world wants to destroy that. We get so torn and so distracted and so pulled apart and so shredded and split into such a myriad of motives, that somewhere along the line we have to come back to this bottom line that I will live my life

to the glory of the Lord. And I will gaze on His glory and I will study the Word to see Him revealed. And as I reach deeper and deeper into who He is, and as I know Him more intimately and more intimately, I will allow the Spirit of God, thereby, to transform me from one level of glory to the next toward being like Jesus Christ.

We've got to get away from filling our own needs. I worry about all this preaching today that's relational. It sort of strokes everybody. Makes you feel good about yourself. Always purporting to solve your problems. Always trying to salve your hurts. Always trying to make you feel better.

Now I'm not one for making people feel miserable all the time, some of the time. Because you have to feel bad before you can know what the source to feel good. But I think we've gone way overboard, where in a very subtle way, we have well-meaning people who are constantly preaching and teaching relational stuff that, in effect, is saying to people: the most important thing is that you feel good. The most important thing is that you solve your problems. The most important thing is that you'll be happy. The most important thing is that you have friends, and on, and on, and on, we go. That is not the most important thing. You live to the glory of God, focus on His glory, enter into a deep relationship with Him, and He'll give you more of that than you every dreamed possible. Because your heart will be glad, says the Psalmists, when you set the Lord before you.

And you say, "How serious is this?" Very serious. The world is divided into two kinds of people. My grandfather used to call them the "saints" and the "ain'ts". But those two kinds of people can be defined this way: those people who live to the glory of God and those people who don't. That's the dividing line. And those of us who are Christians are those who live to the glory of God. The unbelieving world does not; they refuse to give God glory.

You say, "Well, is that serious?" Yes. Let me tell you how serious. In Jeremiah chapter 13, Jeremiah beginning in verse 15, says, "Hear and give ear. Don't be proud." Pride always gets in the way of glorifying God. Don't be proud. "The Lord has spoken." Now listen to this, verse 16, just listen to it, "Give glory to the Lord, your God." That's the command: give glory to God, live to the glory of the Lord, live to His honor, His majesty. Live for Him. Give Him glory. Before He ... what? "Before He caused darkness, before your feet stumble on the dark mountain and while you look for light, He turned it into the shadow of death and make it gross darkness." Well, that's pretty serious stuff. All of those are words about death and judgment. You'd better give glory to God before He judges you.

There's an illustration of that in Daniel. There was a king of the Babylonian empire by the name of Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar was under the illusion that he was king by his own skill and power. And so, in verse 30 of chapter 4, it says, "The king spoke," and listen to his speech, "is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power and for the honor of my majesty." Aren't I something? Look at this great thing that I have built to demonstrate

my majesty and my might and my power. And while that word was in the king's mouth, a voice out of Heaven said, "O King Nebuchadnezzar. To thee it is spoken, the kingdom is departed from thee." That is enough.

So what happened to him? Well, he had to learn a lesson. Verse 32 says the lesson he had to learn is that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men. He was taking glory, so you know what God did to him? Verse 33 says, "He was driven from men and did eat grass like oxen, his body was wet with the dew of Heaven till his hairs were grown like eagle's feathers and his nails like bird's claws." God turned him into a raving maniac. For seven years he lived in a field like an animal until he learned.

And verse 34, "At the end of days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up mine eyes into Heaven, my understanding returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, I praised and honored Him who lives forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His Kingdom is from generation to generation." After seven years of that, he said now I understand who gets the glory.

It may just be that there are still people who are raving maniacs because of a refusal to give God the glory. There was another incident like that in the twelfth chapter of Acts, a man named Herod who was enamored with his own power. And he declared a special day in which he could put on his royal robes and go out and parade around and have everybody applaud him. And so he gave a speech, Acts chapter 12 describes the situation. "And he made an oration," in verse 21, he had on his royal apparel and all that, "and the people were shouting." And you know what the people were saying? They were saying about him, it is the voice of a god and not a man. Listen to him; he's a god! And he loved it. And he was taking glory that belonged to the true God and the next verse says, "Immediately an angel of the Lord smote him because he gave not God the glory and he was eaten by worms and died." I don't think that was the planned ending for Herod Day. But that's how it ended.

God wants the glory and He's worthy of it. And He will judge forever those who refuse to give Him glory. Now, when you become a Christian and you come to Jesus Christ and you give Him your love and you embrace Him as your Savior, it seems to me that basic to your identity is that you should live to the glory of God. So let's go back and just briefly summarize.

You are a child of God. You have been forgiven for His namesake, not yours. Now, how am I going to grow through the process of spiritual development so that I'm not an infant but a young man and then a spiritual father? By getting the sin set aside, by having a great desire for the Word, and by more than that, looking into the Word, not to see the Word itself, but the revelation of the God who is there, so that I gaze at His glory. And as I focus in the Word on His glory, communing with Him, the Spirit of God moves me from one level to the next. The key then is that if I would reveal His glory, I must focus on His glory. All other things are set aside.

Now how do you do that, specifically? I mean nuts-and-bolts, one-two-three is what we're going to talk about tonight. I don't want you to miss it, if you have a heart desire to glorify God, be here tonight, very, very important life-changing truth. And you can pick up the little booklet on the way out, if it would help you.

Father, we've tried to cover some very basic things today. And Lord, we know simply what it is You ask. Whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God. So said Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:31, and we agree. That is to be the focus of our life. Help that, Lord, to be that which causes us to make every decision. That when a myriad of choices face us, as to what we should say, what we should do, where we should go, how we should act, may it be that the overriding and ever-present question is: will this glorify the Lord? Is this, of all the options, that which will most bring Him glory? And save us from seeking self-glory so that we who are the agents for the glory of God to be revealed in this generation, may indeed reveal that glory by the Spirit to the watching world. That they may not have to wait until the glory comes in judgment before they see it.

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