

The Hope of Glory

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"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

"Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them." (John 17:20-26)

These final words in the high priestly prayer of our Lord contain perhaps the most profound truth in the entire revelation of our Lord. Here is the heart of the purpose of God. The answers to many of our questions are here. What is God doing in this hour? How is God working today? What is the secret of a witness that has power? What are the provisions of God to meet the responsibilities we face? These and many more questions are answered in the prayer of our Lord Jesus. It is not possible for words (especially the words in this booklet) to plumb the depths of the truth that is here. But if the reader can be provoked to seriously take these verses to God in prayer, asking God to reveal truth and shed light to walk in, the goal of this exhortation will be accomplished.

The Glory That God Has Given Us

"The glory which You gave Me I have given them..." What is this glory that God has given us? It is important that we know, for Jesus says it is the basis of our being *"made perfect in one."* It is also the basis of the church's testimony to the world: *"that the world may know that You have sent Me."* So much around us falls short of this. The "oneness" most experience does not even come close to the oneness expressed in the Godhead. The testimony given forth lacks power and a divine fragrance; therefore, men do not believe that Jesus was God and that He was sent from the Father. This should concern us deeply. What is the answer? Jesus says it is something vital that has been given to us: the glory that the Father gave Him.

Consider the testimony of the apostle John as he and the other disciples beheld the Lord: *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, 'This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.'"* And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (John 1:14-18).

What did John say they had seen? He said that the living Word that existed from the beginning *"became flesh"*--was expressed in human form. He said that as they beheld the glory of the only Son of God, it was expressed in *"grace and truth."* He said that nobody had ever seen God, but that Jesus declared who God is. The disciples believed they had seen the "glory" of God expressed in human

form.

So what was the glory the Father gave Jesus? Was it not that God was fully expressed through human form? We read that Jesus had a glory from the foundation of the world, but He laid aside that glory and took upon Himself another glory (see John 17:5). As men beheld that second glory, they saw a full expression of *grace* and *truth*. Jesus said plainly that He did not move on His own initiative; but that He moved only as the Father moved. He also said that whoever had seen Him had seen the Father (John 14:9). Jesus was not the Father, but the Father was in Jesus. This was a "glory" that had never been seen by man and had never existed until this time. Not every man who saw Jesus saw the glory, but those who had spiritual eyes to see recognized this glory.

What does this mean to us? In this context, John makes an amazing statement. He says, *"And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace."* Is this true? Is the fullness of God now available to us? The truth is staggering. If Jesus has opened the door that we also may be filled with all the fullness of God, if He has given us the same glory that the Father gave Him, the possibilities are beyond natural comprehension. Have we even begun to comprehend what Jesus has opened up to us in our fellowship with God?

The Fullness of God

In the account of the baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3), it is clear that John did not understand why Jesus was coming to him for baptism. God had revealed to John who Jesus was, and he knew he was unworthy to baptize Jesus. *"But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him"* (Matthew 3:15). I believe we see here a picture of God's plan, first displayed in Jesus, the *"firstborn among many brethren."* Jesus was God, so He did not need to repent of sin or be filled with the Holy Spirit like we do. But because it was necessary for Him to be perfected as the Son of man, the Author of our salvation, He submitted first to John's baptism--and ultimately to Calvary--to fully identify Himself with those He came to save (see Hebrews 2:10-18, 5:8-9). God gave His approval, as the Holy Spirit descended on Him to remain. From the very beginning, Jesus did not move on His own, but only in perfect union with the Father, led by the Holy Spirit.

What Jesus did first as the forerunner of our salvation became a reality for us also on the day of Pentecost. Jesus commanded the disciples not to depart from Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. They obeyed His command, and not many days later they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Until Jesus had paid the price of our redemption at Calvary, God could not come to abide within man. But on the day of Pentecost, God the Holy Spirit came to abide within a new temple. He came in fullness, and they were all filled to overflowing.

The people gathered in amazement to behold what was taking place. What they saw and heard was rivers of living water flowing from the throne of God through human vessels, overflowing to the glory of God. But the promise was not just for a few. The door was open for all men, women and children to enter into the glory of God in fullness. Peter told his listeners that if they would repent and be baptized, they also would receive the Holy Spirit. He said that the promise was not only to them, but also to *"as many as were afar off."* I believe that refers to all believers down through the ages and to the present.

Writing to the Ephesians, Paul prays this prayer: *"For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,*

may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height--to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:14-19).

Although the door has been opened for men to enter into this fullness, it is not automatic that they will do so. Paul prayed specifically that the Ephesian believers might be filled with all the fullness of God. The way we enter into this fullness is also contained in Paul's prayer: *"to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith."* Jesus opened the door, but by faith we must walk through that door to partake of the riches of God. God has provided; faith receives. Faith is God's way for us to *experience* the riches He has provided.

John says, *"...and of His fullness we have all received."* The thought here is not that every believer is perfected in maturity when the Holy Spirit comes to abide, but that when we are united with God, the fullness of God is open to every believer. There is no reserve or limit on God's side. Every limitation is on our side. The Holy Spirit has been poured out without measure, and God is no respecter of persons. We often limit the experience of God's fullness through unbelief and disobedience, but it need not be so. Consider this statement of Jesus: *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it"* (John 14:12-14).

Grace For Grace

As John speaks of the fullness we have received, he adds *"and grace for grace."* Does this not expand the meaning of "fullness" and give more understanding of "glory"? Our concept of grace is often much more meager than God's. We may view grace only as mercy, or perhaps "unmerited favor." While I believe these ideas are included, grace is much broader in scope.

Along with the passage in John 1:14-17, consider this: *"And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all"* (Acts 4:33). *"When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord"* (Acts 11:23). *"So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified"* (Acts 20:32). *"So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well. But as you abound in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us--see that you abound in this grace also"* (2 Corinthians 8:6-7).

From these scriptures we see that grace can be expressed and seen in many ways. Grace is ability from God to meet responsibility in the kingdom of God. Grace brings an expression of the character and nature of God in human vessels. All have received some measure of grace, and this grace can be increased and developed. One grace builds on another, and grace in one person is used to build and expand grace in another. Grace is given in different measures, but each one has been given grace to perform that which God requires. An expression of grace brings glory to God, for we realize the source. Because the source is God himself, there is no limit to grace, and experiencing the grace of God to do what is humanly impossible always brings us to a new place in God where we can experience even more of His grace.

When John described the glory of God that was revealed through Jesus, the first word he used was "grace." Does this help to answer the question we began with? Jesus said that He has given us the glory the Father gave Him. That glory was expressed in grace, and in Jesus there was no limit to that grace.

He was God revealed in human form. He moved in union with the Father and under the direction of the Holy Spirit. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one, so there was one expression of God at all times and in every situation.

What is the glory Jesus has given us? Did He not give *Himself* at Calvary? Has He not given us the *Holy Spirit*? Did He not open the door that we may know *union* with God? Have we not been brought into *fellowship* with God, whereby He calls us friends, and all things He receives from the Father He makes known to us (John 15:15)? Do we not now move by the *ability* (*grace*) that God provides, and not our own ability? Is there any limit to what God can do? If there is no limit to what God can do, is there any limit to what God can do *in us*? And can all of this be described by anything other than "glory"? Hallelujah! What a glorious salvation we have in Jesus our Lord!

Truth

"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). *"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me'"* (John 14:6). *"Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth"* (3 John 2-4).

If there is one thing that must grip our hearts and direct our walk, it is this: truth and Jesus are not separate. They are one--so much so that Jesus said, *"I am the truth."* Our lives must be on a solid foundation of truth, but that truth is all summed up in *Christ*. Everything that brings us into and keeps us in that relationship is truth, and everything else must be discarded, for it has no value in God. Our salvation is a *person*, not a teaching or an understanding. The scriptures point us to Jesus, but unless we come to Jesus and partake of life and of Him who is Truth, the scriptures will not profit us. They will remain only theory that has no power.

John says that the law came through Moses. The law was righteous, and it was given by God. But the law could not bring life, and apart from the life of God we cannot be righteous as He is righteous. The righteousness that profits comes by faith in Christ. This is because faith brings us into the life of God and His righteousness.

The truth brings us into God's grace, whereby we now can do the will of God. John says that truth came through Jesus, and that it is glorious. There is something wonderfully glorious about a believer walking in truth. You sense a fragrance, a reality, something that is divine. Sometimes you can't quite describe it in words, but you sense it is real and attractive. You sense purity, holiness, something that makes you want the same thing. This is the distinction between religion (our efforts to be righteous in God's sight) and reality (a true relationship with God, which causes us to express who He is, and which brings glory to Him). The former is death; the latter is life.

How do we discern the truth? How do we know what is of God? How do we know what will be beneficial, and what will not? There are two factors that are very important. One is the condition of our heart, which we have much to do with; the second is a provision from God, of which we need to be keenly aware.

First, consider this statement of Jesus: *"If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority"* (John 7:17). I believe we find here a basic element that is necessary for discerning truth. We must come to God with a heart that is willing to do His will when He reveals Himself. To come with just a curious mind is not enough. We

must come looking for light to walk in. We come because we truly want to know God--ready to obey, deeply conscious that unless He opens our eyes and sheds light on our pathway, we will remain blind and unable to take a step of faith. We come in humility, ready to be taught by God. Apart from this attitude, I do not believe we will be able to discern. We will always be wondering and questioning, unsure of the next step, always learning but never coming to a knowledge of the truth.

This place is so dangerous. Listen to the warning of Paul as he wrote to Timothy. *"But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was"* (2 Timothy 3:1-9).

This warning may sound too severe to us--we don't think we could ever be that bad. But how bad is our condition if we are not walking in truth? What is happening if we are always learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth? We are in our own righteousness, not that which is by faith in Christ. We are expressing who we are instead of who Christ is. We are walking in our own light instead of the light of God. Our heart grows cold, our ears dull, and our eyesight dims. We are on the road of death instead of the road of life. Could anything be worse? If there is any element of this in our heart, may we find a place of repentance today and come to God, ready to do His will. Then we will be able to recognize whether a teaching is of God or not.

Secondly, there is a very important provision God has made for us: *"But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him"* (1 John 2:27). This may seem too vague to us, for we all tend to look for something familiar. We would rather have a "rule book" or a person to tell us what is right and wrong. We might feel more comfortable reading the scriptures until we find something that seems good to us and applies to our situation. We want things to be made clear to our natural minds, in order to be "sure."

But the scriptures were not given to lead us into all truth. They cannot give us life. A book cannot contain God. Instead, the scriptures point us to Jesus, and Jesus must give us life. He gives us the Holy Spirit, and Spirit is the one who will lead us into all truth. *"And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever--the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you"* (John 14:16-17). *"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you"* (John 14:26). *"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you"* (John 16:12-15).

In the Old Testament, we see that the term "anointing" is associated mainly with oil being poured out on a person. Oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit. If we bring this thought into the New Testament, could we not say that the anointing John speaks about is the Holy Spirit poured out into our hearts? The Spirit, whom Jesus said is like a river flowing from within, is the one who takes the things of Jesus and makes them ours. God is spirit, and the Holy Spirit is the only one who can make God real to us. *"For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God"* (1 Corinthians 2:11-12).

A question that may come to our minds is this: What about God's gift of teachers in the church? What about Paul's instruction to Timothy to find and teach faithful men who will in turn be able to teach others? He also instructed him to be sure to give attention to reading the scriptures. What about Paul, who said he was a teacher sent from God? The answer is quite simple. God uses men, He uses the scriptures, He uses many channels, but no matter what, in the end only the anointing can tell us what is of God and what is not. Only the anointing can make the proper application of truth in our life and circumstances. Only the anointing will enable us to apply the scriptures rightly. The reason we get confused at times is that we try to reason about the things of God with our natural minds instead of following the anointing. The anointing is always faithful, because the anointing is God, here and now. Are we listening? Are we sensitive? Do we realize God's provision?

From Glory to Glory

"And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious. Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech--unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:4-18).

God is in the business of changing men. He is changing them into His likeness. When we see Him, we shall be like Him. One evidence that we are in union with God is that we are being changed. If we are not being changed, it should concern us deeply. Do we think we have arrived? Have we been perfected? At the end of his life, Paul did not feel that he had arrived. Rather, he said that he was pressing on to know Christ in all things. This should be the attitude of our hearts at all times, from the beginning of our walk with Jesus until the end.

The question is, how are we being changed? Many desire change in their lives, but never experience victory. They try and try, but year after year they remain the same. It is a discouraging place to find ourselves. If this is your experience, give close attention to the passage we have just quoted, for I believe the direction we all need is there.

First, notice the attitude of heart. We are not sufficient in ourselves. We cannot change ourselves. Trying to change by our own human effort ends in struggle and defeat. At the root of the problem is pride. It is humiliating to admit that we cannot do what we want to do. Paul described this in Romans 7. I believe what he wrote there was his testimony before he experienced the power of Calvary. He really wanted to change, but found himself unable to live up to his own expectations. If this is your experience, be honest before God. Humble yourself before Him and admit that you cannot make it on your own--but be sure that you mean it, because mental acknowledgement alone will not suffice.

Briefly contrasting the glory of the Old Covenant and the New may help our understanding at this point. Paul said that the Old Covenant was glorious. God manifested His presence by many miracles, and the manifestation of God is always glorious. Moses experienced God's glory, so much so that his face shone. The people could not even look at his face! But this glory brought condemnation, because it revealed how far the people were from God. They thought they could keep the commandments of God, but they did not know themselves. When the law came, it produced death. They could not lift up holy hands. Their lips were unclean. They could not approach a holy God. It is the same today, if we try to come to God on our own efforts. If we read the Bible, look for principles, and try to apply those principles apart from an indwelling Christ by the Spirit, the result will be discouragement, failure, and death.

Even though the Old Covenant was glorious, Paul says that in comparison with what God has provided in Christ, the old had no glory at all. Sometimes we find this hard to accept. We wish we could have seen the Red Sea parted--that we could have seen the cloud by day and the fire by night. Why do we feel this way? It is because we have not yet experienced the glory of the New Covenant. This is still just theory to us, not reality. Once we taste the glory of the New, we will never want to go back. One taste of the presence of our glorious God should turn our eyes to focus on Him once and for all.

What the saints in the Old Covenant experienced was primarily with their natural senses. They saw and heard evidence of God's presence with their physical eyes and ears. In their time, God dwelt behind a heavy curtain, and they could not go in to be with God lest they die. They were unclean, and the blood of bulls and goats could not wash away their sin. Although God has done away with the Old and we live in the time of the New Covenant, we can still make the mistake of depending on our natural senses. We can be thrilled with beautiful music, awed by temples made with hands, impressed with great oratory. We can be moved in our emotions, stimulated by great logic in our minds, and think in all of this that we are experiencing God--but it can all be natural, man's effort and ability, void of the presence and glory of God. Paul told the Corinthians that he did not want their faith to rest on the wisdom of man, but on the power of God. Is this also our heart cry?

Brothers and sisters, we need to be ruthlessly honest at this point. We condemn the children of Israel for their failure, but so often we are not willing to acknowledge our own. Are we willing to evaluate our own experience and all that we see around us in the light of what God has revealed of Himself? Is what we labor in bringing glory to God? Does it speak of what God can do, or is it filled with the glory of man? Can we say we are experiencing the glory of God, the power that raised Christ from the dead--or are we struggling? Are we being changed from glory to glory, or from defeat to defeat? We must be honest before God if we want to experience the grace of God that can lift us up into His glory.

Paul says that when anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. This is the key, is it not? We must turn away from every other source of help. We must turn from man's wisdom, from our own knowledge, from our past experiences and every natural help, and look unto Jesus alone. Only Jesus can deliver and help us. Only Jesus can give us life as He baptizes us with the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the one mediator between God and man. Until Jesus applies the eye salve to the eyes of our heart, we cannot see. But when we do turn to Jesus, the veil is removed, and we behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Every encounter with God is glorious, and every taste of His glory makes us hungry for more. There is no end, for there is no end to God. This is what captured the early disciples. They had experienced the glory of God. They were caught up in a love relationship with Jesus. The Holy Spirit had come abide, never to leave them alone. He had come within, to be with them forever. They had seen the glory of God in Jesus, but now they were experiencing the same glory themselves. It was the fulfillment of the promise of Jesus: *"The glory that you have given Me I have given them, that they may be one even as we are One."*

Brothers and sisters, if we are experiencing the glory of a love relationship with Jesus, it is impossible that we will not be changed into His image, for the work is now of God. It is God who works within, both to will and to do His good pleasure. Struggle is gone; defeat is gone. We move from grace to grace, from victory to victory, and from strength to strength. The fragrance that comes from our lives is an aroma of His presence. It is glorious to us, and God can use the overflow to make others hungry for Him. We are now witnesses unto Him. *This* is the glorious salvation Jesus paid for with His blood. How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?

Christ in You, the Hope of Glory

"To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily" (Colossians 1:27-29).

Paul said that the mystery of the purpose of God was revealed to him, and that he was called to declare this mystery. The mystery that was hidden but now has been revealed is this: ***"Christ in you, the hope of glory."*** These words are probably very familiar to most of us, but has the revelation of this truth gripped and controlled us? When Paul uses the term "hope," he does not mean that we are hoping something will come to pass--but not quite sure. Those who are in Christ Jesus have a hope that is as sure as God himself! The reason it is sure is that *Christ* is in us (and we are in Christ). We have been brought into union with God.

Describing this hope, he says that it is a *"hope of glory."* Everything about our hope is glorious. It is glorious now because we are experiencing the presence and power of a risen Christ. It is a glory in the future, because we have been united with Christ and we will be with Him in His glory for eternity. It is a sure hope, because we have been brought into the grace of God by faith in Jesus Christ. Our righteousness is now of God, not of our own efforts. God is at work within us, both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

There are vast implications to this truth. The first question we must ask is this: Have we entered into union with God? Being aware of the teaching or believing it does not necessarily mean we have entered in. Someone may have told you that Jesus dwells within you, but has God told you? The relationship is personal, and only the anointing of the Holy Spirit within can give the witness that Christ dwells in

your heart. *"Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him'"* (John 14:23). He comes within by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. There must have been a divine transaction with God at some point, where I asked Him to take up residence in this vessel of clay, and I must know for sure that He answered.

Do we think of God as far off, or are we aware of Him dwelling within? This is critical. If we think of God as separate from us, we will be robbed of the glory. Many people believe in God, but their God is far away. They do not know the Jesus who said He would come and abide. They hope for union with God someday, but that is not their "hope of glory" now. The promise is not just for the future; it is for today. It has a greater fulfillment in the future when we see Him face to face, but we need not wait. We can know the glory today--and not only that, but we can know this glory together.

Revealing God Together

We often think of the indwelling of Christ only in an individual way. It is true that we must experience this union in a personal way, but if Christ dwells in me individually, and Christ dwells in my brother or sister individually, we are brought together because of our common life in Christ. We are now brothers and sisters in reality. This forms the very foundation of what God is doing today. Jesus said He gave us the same glory that the Father gave Him so that we may be one, even as God is one. Then He follows, *"I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me"* (John 17:23). Thus, what God is doing is bringing us into a union, a fellowship, a oneness that is divine and miraculous. It is the reality of this oneness being expressed that God will use to reveal who He is to the world.

"Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually" (1 Corinthians 12:27). Throughout the New Testament, we see that God has designed to dwell not only in individuals, but in a company of people. When a gathering of people under the authority of Christ allows God to build them together, they form an expression of the church in that locality. It is true that Christ dwells in each believer by the Spirit, but an individual believer cannot contain or reveal the *fullness* of God. We are individual members of Christ, but the church is the *body* of Christ and it is there that the glory of God is seen in fullness. When we see this truth, it puts a great emphasis on corporate unity and our relationship with one another in Jesus.

The basis of our oneness can be found in the scriptures we have been considering from the prayer of our Lord. His prayer was that we would be one even as He and the Father were one. He says that this is possible because of the *glory* He has given to us. Do we begin to see the glory? It is glorious for an individual to know that Christ is in him, but it is even more glorious to know that Christ dwells in the midst of a company of believers that is bound together in the love of God. We are told that the *fullness* of God dwelt bodily in Jesus. Does Jesus still have a body on earth today? Is the church really the *body* of Christ? If so, then is the *fullness* of God still revealed in the body of Christ?

If not in the body of Christ, where would the fullness of the glory of God be seen? The heavens declare the glory of God, but they do not declare the fullness of His character. Only man was made in the image of God. Man fell into sin, but Christ redeemed us back to God. Because of Calvary, we can again enter fully into God's original purpose. The fullness of God is revealed in the church, the body of Christ, because Christ inhabits His body by the Spirit. As we enter into and abide in this union with God, we give forth a divinely originated expression of the oneness of God. *"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to*

Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21).

Many today are missing this glory. They think only of themselves. They are satisfied with religious programs, content with listening to sermons and singing songs. They are satisfied to visit with each other or share a meal occasionally. But the oneness they are experiencing is not the divinely originated spiritual oneness that can be described as "glorious." The oneness God desires is that which testifies of and brings glory to Him. It is a witness in this sin-sick world of the presence and reality of God. Men saw Jesus when He was on this earth, and men can still see Jesus in His body when it is functioning underneath the Head and united in His life and love. The church is a real, visible company of people, dwelling in love and giving expression to the presence of God here and now for His purposes.

As is true with most things, there will be a fuller revealing when Christ comes back, and through eternity, but that does not diminish the expression now. Now is the time, and this is the place for us to be a witness unto Him--a real expression of the glory and love of God, expressed in grace and truth. Every member has a part, for all have received a measure of grace. As we submit to the authority of Christ and His grace expressed through every member, it keeps God in control and every member active in faith. As this truth fills our vision, it forms the framework in which we walk and glorify God together. It puts a proper demand on our relationship with God and with each other. It focuses our attention on God and the corporate testimony through which He is expressed in fullness. This is the testimony that God will bless, and it is here that men will see God.

Brothers and sisters, if what we are saying is true, we must let it judge everything that falls short of this. We cannot be satisfied with anything less than the true purpose of God. To function in this is entirely beyond the ability of man on his own, but Paul prayed to Him who is able to do *"exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think."* We need to think, and we need to ask, but we serve a God who is able to do greater than we ask or think. That should fill our hearts with hope, and our souls with glory. This is not a natural work, limited by man's ability, but a work of God, which we have the privilege of entering into. *"Unto Him be glory in the church."*

The Way Forward

While our souls may thrill at the truth we are considering, there may be questions lingering in our minds. What is the way forward? What shall we do? If this is a work of God, do we just stand by and wait for Him to complete the work? I believe these questions are valid and that they must be answered. God has involved man in a very intimate way. His method is men and women filled with the Holy Spirit. We were made in the image of God and His purpose is fulfilled us. If we want to enter into this purpose of God (and I trust we all do), we must clearly see our part.

First, are we hungry and thirsty to experience more of the fellowship that God has opened to us? Jesus extends Himself to those who desire more. If we are satisfied where we are, Jesus has nothing more to offer. He does not force us. This is a love relationship, and He invites us to come and partake of His love. God is love, and love is to be experienced. Do we desire?

Perhaps our desire has grown cold. We have let other things enter into our lives, or found fulfillment in something other than God. Are we willing to reckon with this? Do we see that what we have given ourselves to is passing away? The pleasures of sin are but for a season. Our senses are thrilled, but it passes quickly and leaves emptiness behind. Jesus bids us turn from this world and what it offers, and come to Him. We cannot deliver ourselves, but we can turn to the one who can deliver us.

As we have already seen, the grace of God is real. It does something divine in us. *"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works"* (Titus 2:11-14). We are saved by grace through faith. Are we willing to come and partake of this grace?

Perhaps our spiritual senses have become dulled. Here is the rebuke given to the Hebrews: *"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil"* (Hebrews 5:12-14).

If we have received the Spirit, but have not been exercised in the Spirit, our spiritual senses are dull. We may be unaware of the anointing within, insensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. In this place we cannot discern good and evil. Only God is good, so "good" is everything that brings us into and keeps us in relationship with Him. Evil is all that is outside of God, so everything in this world that pulls us down to a natural level and keeps us satisfied with things that are passing away is evil, even if it is not the sordid things we often associate with the term "evil." If we are aware of a God who dwells within, and if we give attention to the anointing, the Holy Spirit will put His finger on that which hinders our fellowship with God.

What is our part in this? I believe one of the most important elements in developing this spiritual sensitivity is taking time for intimate communion and fellowship with God. We spend time with the One we love. It is not forced. We want to get to know Him. We cannot do what only God can do, but we can make ourselves available to God for Him to work. We lay aside the "evil" things that are waging war against our soul, the things that fill our mind and pull at our desires. We can turn from this world to Jesus. We can sit at His feet to hear His word. As we draw near to God, He will draw near to us. He will bring us into this fellowship of which we have been speaking. He will apply the eye salve to the eyes of our heart, that we may see. He will shed light on our pathway. He will not turn away the one who comes to Him in sincerity, bowed low in utter humility. God will meet us. Are we willing?

Every revelation of the glory of God includes a place of response. This is our part: not to find our own way, but to respond to God. The grace of God will be there to enable us to respond. Every response works more of Christ in us and brings us to a new place in our relationship. In this new place we can see more, and our fellowship with God and with others is brought to a higher ground. The oneness we have been brought into is expressed in an even fuller way. We experience the glory of God, and our desire to experience more of that glory is increased. We are being changed from glory to glory, and God is glorified in the midst of His church.

Unto Him Be Glory Now and Forever

Our theme has been the glory of God. As we began, we said that words cannot contain this glory. We have sought to peer into this glory, but actually only the Holy Spirit can reveal this glory to each one of us. In every account of men beholding the glory of God, they had one response: to fall down and worship. Perhaps this is the final test of whether we have beheld the glory of God. As long as we are still standing, just thinking about these things, I doubt that we have seen the glory of God.

Jesus is the Lord of glory. He has riches He wants to share with us. He paid the ultimate price so that we may enter into His glory. He prayed that we might be with Him where He is--that we might behold His glory. Oh, brothers and sisters, how lightly we treat this salvation! Do we realize how great a salvation has been opened up to us? Has it caught our full attention? Have we partaken of His glory? Has it possessed us? Oh, that God would open our eyes, that we might see the riches of His glory. Have we heard the call to higher ground? He invites us to be with Him in glory. Have we heeded the invitation? May God give us ears to hear and eyes to see this day, that we may not miss the riches of His glory, and that together we may be with Him both now and forever. Amen.