

## The Glory of God (Part 3): From Glory to Glory

### Putting on Christ

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Given 07-Jun-03; Tape #615

Since it has been a month since I gave part two of this series on the Glory of God, I think it is best if I recap a little bit so that we can get everybody up to speed. I promise you that I'm not going to take a long time on this because I want to get into the next part. It was because of doing this last time that I didn't get to what I wanted to get to, and so we have a third sermon!

The first sermon dealt with the Glory of God as seen in the pillar of fiery cloud in the wilderness. You will remember that this was a physical representation of God's presence. We found that God was not the cloud, but was in the cloud. He looked through the cloud.

It was just a physical representation of Him. It was a very good one. This presence of God—the fiery cloud—stayed with the Israelites for forty years continuously. If you will remember, I said that this was very much like Jesus Christ. When He came, He came as Emanuel—God with us.

The fiery cloud was a representation of God being with them. All they had to do was look over their shoulder to wherever the tabernacle was, and they could see at any time during this forty years, day or night, that God was there. It should have made a wonderful witness to them and should have kept them on the right road, but we know what happened to that generation.

Later, the presence of God in the form of a cloud was seen to come into the temple when it was dedicated. It was a cloudy presence so thick that the priests could not do their work.

It resided then in the Holy of Holies, behind the curtain, on the Mercy Seat between the Cherubim. It was a representation of God sitting on His throne—on the seat of Judgment—in the temple among His people.

Again, God is with them.

Now the Jews, over time, gave a name to this. They called it "Shekinah [she-kee-nah]." Or, as I mispronounced so badly "Shekinah [she-ki-nah]." It sounds like Shock-and-Awe. That is what I was familiar with growing up. But, I think it is really [she-kee-nah].

This Shekinah actually limited God, limited Him to just that presence on the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies. It made the Jews have an idea of God that was very narrow. In some respects, they still hold that idea today.

But, we found out that when we went through the Bible, that God does not consider the light and the splendor of His Person to be His Glory. That is obviously part of it. It certainly hits us like a ton of bricks should we ever come across it. But, to Him, His glory is His goodness.

I want to read that scripture again back there in Exodus 33 just to review this. Just after Moses had asked God, "Show me your Glory," God responded in verse 19:

Exodus 33:19 Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before

you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

Exodus 34:5-7 Now the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."

We see here that God defines His glory not in terms of physical light, or awesome splendor that He would have, but rather in terms of His character, particularly His goodness and truth.

Those were the ones we keyed in on because they basically cover the whole spectrum of His glory—the truth in His revelation, and His goodness in His character—in His attitudes—His holiness, and all those attributes that He has and reveals to us.

We followed this concept throughout the Old Testament, and into the New Testament in that last sermon, and we saw that Jesus Christ Himself came to reveal that glory, not just by what He said, but also in Himself.

He was full of grace and truth.

If you would turn to II Corinthians 4:6 we will see Paul's rendition of this. This is just after he had talked about the god of this world blinding everyone's eyes, but that ours have been opened.

II Corinthians 4:6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Moreover, not only is God's glory revealed in the life of Jesus Christ and what He taught, but His life makes it possible for us to have the same glory even now. Not to the fullness yet, obviously, but one day we will. The reason why this is possible is because He lives in us and us in Him by His Spirit.

John 1:14 And the Word [who we know because Jesus Christ] became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory [remember this is written by an Apostle who had been with Him, and He saw Jesus Christ in action], the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Remember we saw those terms back in Deuteronomy 34.

John 1:16-17 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.

We will pick up now from this point, and go a step or two further, getting into some new material.

Now when the temple was destroyed the glory was not found to be there. There was nothing in the Holy of Holies in the Temple. Where is that Shekinah glory now?

I Corinthians 3:16-17 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which *temple* you are.

Where is that Shekinah glory now? Go to I Corinthians 6:19. Paul mentions this several times. He is also talking about sexual sins here:

I Corinthians 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

For some reason, he wanted to get this across to the Corinthian church. He mentions this three times in these two letters in I & II Corinthians.

II Corinthians 6:16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among *them*. I will be their God, And they shall be My people."

The Shekinah glory no longer sits between the Cherubim in a physical temple. God's glory can now be found in us. Or maybe I should say, should be found in us. Obviously, God's glory is wherever He is. And He says that He dwells in us.

God's presence by His Spirit is not just with us. Remember I said that Emanuel means "God with us." Well, God's Spirit is not just with us, it is in us. It is that close that it is right there within us.

Now I think we understand that intellectually. However, I think that from my own experience that it is just the way that human nature is. We fail to live the same way as we know to live. Our application of what we know trails our knowledge. In many cases we know to do right, and we don't. Remember what James said, "He who fails to do right, to him it is a sin."

It is just a part of the learning process. Once we know something it is very difficult to change everything around and do it right away. So, God allows us time to take it from our head to our hearts—from mental, intellectual knowledge to actual experiential applications of righteousness. That is what righteousness is—right wisdom, right doing.

There is a lag time. As we become more converted, as we mature in the faith, that lag time should decrease substantially. But, there is still this difference between what we know, and what we do. There is a disconnect there between knowledge and practice, or behavior.

What should our response be knowing that God's glory is in us? Good question, right? Paul answers it immediately following this "You are the temple of the Living God."

II Corinthians 6:17 Therefore...

Usually when the apostles used "therefore," that means, "OK now, we've just had this statement. Let's explain, let's see what the response should be. Let's see what we should do with this knowledge."

II Corinthians 6:17-7:1 Therefore [quoting from Isaiah 52] "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty. [Now another "therefore,"] Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Notice the things that he said we have to do because we are the temple of the Living God in which God resides. First of all, separate yourselves from the world.

We live in the world, but we're not of the world. Jesus specifically says this in John 17 in His prayer for us. He knows that we're going to have to function in the world, but He asked us that God separate us from the world and protect us from the Evil One. To sanctify us and guard us from him and all his depredations, his broadcasts, and influence. And also from the rest of the world running on human nature, as well as our own human nature.

We have to learn to separate ourselves from those works, and do what is right. He says also in verse 17 that we have to refrain from touching, or from engaging in unclean things—things that defile, things that are not holy, things that are profane.

This is where we disengage ourselves from practices that are going to drag us down and take us into the other direction. We come out of the world, we disengage ourselves from practices that are going to drag us down, and then we go on to perfect or complete holiness in ourselves by growth.

Obviously this can only happen because of God within us working within us, giving us the gifts and the necessary strength to do so. We have to come out of the world, we have to stop doing what is bad, and we have to start doing what is good. This is the simple way of putting this.

There is a lot more to the words that are here, and the ways that he puts it together, but if you want the simplified version, that is it! It is very simple. Get out of the environment that is bringing you down, stop doing the bad things, and start doing the good things. Grow in them, and move on to perfection.

And it says here also that we should do this in the fear of God. What is our motivation? It is our fear of God all the way from our respect and reverence and awe for Him as our God to our terrifying fear of judgment.

We should have a terrified fear of judgment just to disappoint Him, not just the fear of the bad eternal judgment. Once this begins to happen something interesting occurs. We begin to show a likeness to God. God's character begins to be seen in us. This character, if I can define it, is permanent experiential righteousness.

There is an element of intellectual understanding, but it does not become ingrained in us— it does not really become a part of our character—until we have experienced its use. That's why God gives us all this time between our calling and our ultimate glorification—years for some people—40, 50, 60 years for some people—a whole lifetime for this character to be ingrained!

Do you remember what Paul says there in Hebrews 5?

Hebrews 5:14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age [mature], *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

He's talking about practice. The character that we will have by the time we are glorified will have gotten there through God's gifts, and our practice.

God is not just going to infuse us with mercy, or forgiveness, or loving kindness. There are elements of those things that He can give by His spirit, but they don't get ingrained upon our new nature until we use them.

That is why Paul says, "who by reason of use..." have these things and are able to discern both good and evil. God does an awful lot for us. And all we have to do, as we have found, is walk. That is what Israelites had to do. God did almost all the work to bring them out of Egypt, and to bring them into the Promised Land, and all He asked of them was to follow Him and walk. That is all it took.

It is by this walking (walking is an exercise, isn't it?) that we ingrain these good character traits upon our minds, hearts, natures. (And then it is the "plant"—the human nature—that we have there by reason of being human, of being in this world under Satan's influence.)

Once this begins to happen, once we begin to showing a likeness of God in ourselves, and the way we live, then we can be seen and considered as children of God. Isn't that what he says here?

Listen to II Corinthians 6:17-18. Notice the progression here:

II Corinthians 6:17-18 ... "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty."

If there is any progression here it is that they will be noticed as being His sons and daughters once they come out of the world, once they stop touching what is unclean, and once the character begins to be shown in them. This is ultimately how it works.

There are bits of it that God does immediately. He puts His spirit in us, and it is by His spirit that we are the children of God. But we don't really begin to look like Him until we start acting like Him. I want you to understand this principle. Jesus brings it out in John 8, verse 37:

John 8:37 I know [He says to the Jews in the audience] that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you.

I like the way the New King James has done this because they use the word "descendants" here. Later, they will use the word "children." By this, they show Jesus' distinction between physical, and spiritual.

John 8:37-39 I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father. They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children [notice the change there], you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. You do the deeds of your father." Then they said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father—God. Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are ~~your~~ father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do.

What is the principle here? This is a bible-wide principle. It is brought out most clearly right here. Children should look like, and act like their parents! One should be able to see one (either child or parent), and recognize the other.

John 14:9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

Jesus was the perfect representation of the Father on earth. In Hebrews 1, the first few verses, He is the express image of the Father, meaning that if you take a stamp of God the Father, and stamped it into some wax, you would see the exact same image.

Jesus was so much so the perfect representation of the Father that if you saw Jesus, you didn't have to see the Father to know what He looked like, acted like, or is like.

Jesus is saying here back in John 8, that though the Jews claim to be the descendants of Abraham, and they were, they also claimed to have Abraham as their spiritual father, and Jesus is disputing that because Abraham didn't act like they did.

Abraham wanted to see Him. Abraham was happy to see Him. He welcomed Him in, and gave Him food, and talked to Him. Just go back and read the life of Abraham. God was always appearing to him. They were friends. They got along great. Abraham always put out a spread when God came by. They had a good time. They talked.

They were so close, that God would not go do anything without first talking with Abraham, especially about things that directly dealt with Abraham, like Sodom and Gomorrah where his nephew Lot was. God let him get Him down to 10 righteous people. They bargained with one another. They were best buddies if you want to put it that way.

Abraham was the friend of God. That is one of his titles. Jesus is telling these Jews, "If you were really like Abraham, you would treat me like Abraham treated Me." Not kill Him! Not want to kill Him! Eventually, they did kill Him.

By their lying and murderous spirit, they exhibited the traits and therefore exposed their real spiritual father—Satan the Devil. What has Satan always done regarding Jesus Christ?

First thing when Jesus appears on the scene, he tries to kill Him. He lied about Him all through the gospels. He lied to Jesus Christ in the temptations. "Oh just throw yourself off the pinnacle of the Temple! I'm sure God will catch you!"

What was he trying to do? He lied to Him to kill Him! And these Jews here at this particular place and time were exhibiting those very same traits! Let's turn this around. Let's go back and read John 8:42 again:

John 8:42 ...If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me.

Let's make this positive to us. If we claim God as our Father, we should love Jesus Christ. And loving Him expresses itself, how? "If you love Me, keep My commandments!" That's one way. Another way is, as Paul said, "Imitate me as I imitate Christ!"

So, we obey Him. We follow His examples. In a word, obedience, and imitation. Isn't imitation the sincerest form of flattery? In a good sense, flattery is nothing but a show of respect and love, and admiration.

We can gauge in a fair way how much we act like our Father by how well we obey Him, and how

much we imitate Him. We have the life of Jesus Christ in the gospels, and the whole rest of the book is full of His commands. How well are we following those things? That is the question. Please keep this in mind.

We are going to be veering off a bit at this point. Let's go to II Corinthians 3:17-18. This is after a long section where Paul is trying to explain to the Corinthians the much better glory available in the New Covenant, as opposed to the Old Covenant. These are the last two concluding verses of this section. Paul writes:

II Corinthians 3:17-18 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.

Verse 17 tells us two important things. 1) The Spirit of God who dwells in us is primarily Jesus Christ not some third member of any kind of trinity. This is a very clear non-trinitarian statement that those who believe in the trinity have to twist in order to make it fit.

It says very clearly that the Spirit is the Lord; or, the Lord is the Spirit. Don't we know, He said it Himself in John 17, He said, "I in them," and "You in Me." There are places in Romans 8 specifically that does say that the Spirit of Him who resurrected Christ from the dead dwells in you.

We also have the spirit of Father in us. But, most of the time what we're dealing with here is the spirit of Jesus Christ, because that is His function! I don't want to make a too big a deal out of this, because the Spirit of God the Father, and the Spirit of Jesus Christ is the same spirit. They are unified. They are one. And so whether it is the spirit of the Father, or the spirit of the Son, it shouldn't matter because it is the one and the same. It will produce the one and the same character.

There is no other Being that is the Spirit outside of the two of them. This makes it very clear. This only makes sense that it is primarily Jesus Christ because our contact with the Father is through Him. He is the Mediator. He is our High Priest. He is our Advocate. It is by His blood that the way to the holiest of all has been opened.

Once that access is granted, then we have full access to the Father as well. That is why I don't want to make too much of this because the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ is one spirit. We find that in Ephesians 4.

The second thing that it tells us here is that because we have Christ's Spirit within us, we have liberty. We are free to do something. We are free to have something. Now, what do we have liberty to do?

In this particular context the liberty that we have is to have the glory of God. There is more to it, obviously, but since I'm speaking about glory, and Paul goes on to the subject of glory in verse 18, then that is specifically what we have the liberty to do. That was his specific point.

II Corinthians 3:18 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.

Under the Old Covenant the path to glorification was veiled. Only a few were able to tread that path. They were able to do so by grace, just as we also are able to have glory by God's grace. There wasn't a different kind of salvation in the Old Testament. But God has narrowed that path down so much that only a few—His patriarchs, prophets, and some kings were able to take this path. He did this for a purpose.

The whole Old Testament ritual and everything about the whole Levitical priesthood showed that God had cut access off from Him. It was only through very slender means that one could actually have access to God.

Notice: God was in the Holy of Holies. But, it was guarded by a curtain. And, only one man could go there only one time each year, and that was the high priest. He could only go in there and do a few ritualistic things, and get out.

In front of this was the holy place. Only the priests could go in there. And they had to come bearing an offering of some sort. All they could do at best would be to pray through the veil.

Surrounding this was a courtyard. And only male Israelites could go in there. Not even women could go in there. They had their own court near there. The whole ritual was set up so that the "average Joe" could not approach God!

Because, there was something greater coming down the road. Remember what it says there that end of everything (the end of the law) is Christ. The way to God was going to be opened up through Him. Then, it would be opened wide.

Except that God would take to Himself the prerogative of whom to call. And so even now under the New Testament the way is still narrow, because He has called many, but only few are chosen.

We see that from all that we know, the number is quite small that actually end up in the first resurrection—the first fruits—the very small early crop.

What we've seen here is that even though the Old Testament had all of these rituals—glorious rituals according to Paul—there was a lot there that was wonderful, and glorious, and exalting God in the way it was done—but the New Covenant is so much more glorious. It is not because our rituals are any better, but because we have a far better reward.

The end of the New Covenant is so much better than the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant was for a physical people. The New Covenant is for a spiritual people, and these spiritual people have the opportunity to have God's glory.

Moses had his face shine seeing God, and he had to put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel wouldn't be frightened. But, we have this glory in us all the time!

All that limited access to God has been ripped away for us. We have with Christ's spirit in us freedom—liberty—to enter into God's presence, and to access all the knowledge and gifts that we need to attain to God's glory.

It is by Jesus dwelling in us by His spirit combined with our cooperation that we are being transformed into His image. "From glory to glory."

Some have thought this to mean, "From the glory of man, to the glory of God," because man certainly has a kind of glory—the pinnacle of God's physical creation.

However true, maybe the best way, the simplest way, because it is the literal Greek would be, "From one degree of glory to a greater," or "Ever increasing glory."

This tells us, looking at this here, that we're being transformed into the same image—in ever increasing glory. This tells us that glorification, which will ultimately culminate in receiving the fullness of God's glory in the first resurrection, is a process.

Did you catch that? Glorification, the way that God has set it up under the New Covenant, is a process! We go from glory to glory, to glory, to glory, and it keeps getting more glorious until we finally share the exact glory of Jesus Christ in the resurrection.

Isn't that what John says in I John 3: 2?

I John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

You could juxtaposed this with the end of Exodus 33 when God tells Moses, "Look, you can see my front-side, it will kill you. I will cover you up, and pass beyond you, and you can see my backside."

John here says that in the resurrection you are going to look at His Face! We will see Him as He is! As He is now. As the glorified Son of God and King. Not in any toned-down human form, but as He is now! And, we will be like Him! That is exactly what He says!

That's the ultimate glory we are reaching for. Getting back to this idea that glorification is a process, you could say in a sense that sanctification is glorification. They just stress different aspects of the same process.

Sanctification emphasizes being set apart, and growing in holiness. But, glorification emphasizes exaltation and honor, as well as, witnessing. When you turn a light on, it illuminates the whole place.

If we show the glory that God has built in us, then it makes a witness. Sanctification emphasizes being set apart and growing in holiness; glorification emphasizes exaltation and honor, and witnessing.

In the end, however, they end up at the same place. They are attained by the same means by becoming like Christ, growing in His image.

The whole purpose that God set all of this up is so that He could have sons and daughters in His image (Genesis 1: 26). Please let's go now to Colossians 1 and carry this a little further.

Colossians 1:24-28 I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up

in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. 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.

Probably the most well-known part of this passage is, "Christ in us by the Holy Spirit is our hope of glory." As we put on Christ more and more, as we transform with God's help into His image our hope of glory gets stronger, and stronger, and stronger because God in Christ is gracious and faithful to complete the process. Isn't that what he says in Philippians that He will complete the work that He has started in us? But, as we grow in Christ's image our hope of glory also grows and expands.

Let's go back to verse 26 where it talks about the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations.

Colossians 1:26 ...the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations...

What Paul tells us here is that Christians of this world do not realize the fullness of the mystery. They don't understand how awesome the invitation is because it has been revealed only to the true church. They have head-knowledge of this Christ in us, but they do not understand how it works. The reasons they don't understand how it works is that they rejected His message and His law.

Thus, they do not walk in wisdom, or make any effort to go on to perfection (Hebrews 6:1) because they think it has all been done for them. It doesn't make any sense.

If we're being told that we must work out our own salvation, and must do all these other things to transform into Christ's image, then how can they say that it has all been done for them? By refusing to work out their own salvation in fear and trembling, they cut themselves off from the path of glorification. At best they are what Paul calls "the weak," or "babes."

Remember, meat belongs to those who are of full age, who by reason of use put these things to practice and are able to discern good from evil. Paul says here,

Colossians 1:28 Him we preach,...

"Him we preach..." Christian churches of this world certainly preach Jesus. They preach Jesus all the time. But, they don't preach the Jesus of the Bible. It is a distorted picture. It is a very pale imitation received through tradition and syncretism, and suppression of the truth in

unrighteousness.

Their Jesus, for example, rejects His Father's law! But, the Jesus of scripture upholds it, teaches it, demands it, and magnifies it.

They certainly do not preach that we should become like Christ. They change it into some sort of mystical union—a type of gnostic separation between physical and spiritual. That if Jesus just comes into your heart...you will be saved.

The Bible does say that. But there is a great deal more to it than that. Christianity is not just belief. It is a way of life. It is that way of life that instills in us that character that makes us to look like our Father in heaven.

The Bible teaches that we are to imitate Jesus in every aspect of our lives so that if a person sees us, they should see Jesus in us. Paul says that he teaches Christ in wisdom.

This could be seen two ways, that Paul teaches in wisdom, or that he teaches us to walk in wisdom—the proper application of what we know in our daily lives.

This is what I've mentioned several times already Paul calls in Hebrews 6:1, "going on to perfection," which is exactly the same thing that he told the Corinthians in II Corinthians 7:1 which was about perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

They are all the same thing. It is just put into different words so we could understand. There is a lot more to this than just believing and getting dunked. Some people don't even do that. Some get sprinkled. Some just confess.

There is a lot more in the pages of your Bible that God says that we must do so that we can be transformed into the image of His Son.

That is what Paul is talking about here. It has been revealed to us what the mystery is. Remember we heard what that mystery was in last week's sermon—a kind of hidden knowledge that can only be revealed or understood if you have the key that opens it up. It is this key that God has given us.

If you want to put it into the terms of a person, that key is the revelation of Jesus Christ. We have His spirit that opens up spiritual knowledge to us, and the way to be in His kingdom. This is our hope of glory that we have this knowledge and the means to be in the image of Jesus Christ. That is why Paul preached it.

We don't preach Jesus Christ, His example, and His teaching, and then we don't have any idea what we're supposed to transform into. He is our example in this whole process of glorification.

If we know what He did, and we know what He tells us to do, then we're a good ways along that path. Of course, we get further along when we start actually imitating Him.

Let's conclude now in II Thessalonians 1. This is not only Paul's desire for the Thessalonians, but it is every minister's desire for the people of God. This is a kind of prayer, or at least Paul tells us what he prays for them to receive.

II Thessalonians 1:11-12 Therefore we also pray always for you that

our God would count you worthy of *this* calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of *His* goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice what he asks for here. We will take it phrase by phrase.

He says that he asks that God would count you worthy of this calling. This might raise a question in some people's minds. If we've already been called then doesn't that mean that God has found us worthy?

Paul is writing to converted people here. We have to think of what he is asking for here in terms of Paul's admonition to make your calling and election sure. *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* paraphrases this, that it really means,

"May *you* be found among the saints whom God shall count worthy."

The emphasis is on the word, "*you*."

He puts the onus on the individual to make his calling and election sure, that God will by the end of his life judge him (the person) to be worthy of the glory that He can bestow, the ultimate glorification that we could have.

We can assure this. Peter tells us how to make our calling and election sure if we look into that section of scripture. Be diligent in learning this way, and living this way. That is how we do it by producing growth and producing fruit. We can then be assured that there will be a place for us.

That is what Jesus said, that He was going to prepare a place for us. He is not going to come back empty handed. If we do our part in making sure that we are following this way, we won't have to worry about being found worthy. We can know that we can be worthy because we are doing our best to follow it, and God is faithful who will finish what He started.

OK. The next phrase. He asked that God would fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness.

*Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown* again to the rescue! They paraphrase it this way:

"That God would fully perfect in you all goodness according to His gracious purpose."

Now, that makes a lot more sense. Paul asks that God would fully perfect in you all goodness. What did we say earlier that goodness was a synonym for? In this particular series of sermons it stands for the glory of God. It stands for His entire character! His character is His glory.

What he is asking for here is that God would fully perfect in us all of His character. That is His gracious purpose for us. That's exactly why He's called us. He wants us to be like Him.

Do you remember how disappointed He was with the children of Israel when they didn't look like Him? When they didn't act like Him?

He didn't recognize them! "Are these my kids?" "They look like somebody else's kids!" It is God's gracious purpose that we look like Him and that we act like Him. And so He is going to answer this prayer that He will fully perfect in us all His goodness.

One more thing: The idea here is repeated in verse 12. It is in the phrase, "that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you." That is basically the same thing. Remember the names of God tell us all about Him, and His character. They identify Him for what He is. And so asking that He will fulfill all His good pleasure in us, as well as the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in us, are saying basically the same thing.

Finally, let's go onto the next phrase. "The work of faith with power." This is a faith manifested powerfully by works. Let's read that again and put these together.

"Therefore, we also pray that our God would fully perfect in us all goodness according to His gracious purpose, and that this faith would be manifested powerfully by works."

Now, Paul requests here that God work powerfully in us so that we would show by our works our faith in Him.

This is how God's glory is seen in us. It is in our behavior and the outworking of righteous character. So, what Paul is doing is asking that God would supply them with what they need to faithfully work out their own salvation. To do all the things that were necessary to produce that character.

So, this would then show—display or manifest—God's glory in us, and reciprocally by doing those faithful works, we glorify Him.

It serves a double purpose. The faithful works that we do that are done powerfully enough that they go beyond, and other people see, not only show God's glory in us, but it turns back around and gives glory back to God.

So with God working in us by His Spirit of power, and of love, and a sound mind, we can proclaim by our righteous life the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is the glory of God in us.