

Heaven Came Down and Glory Filled My Soul

Let's just have a word of prayer before we start.

Father, You know my heart, and You know that I would much rather live this out than try to preach about it. But Lord, here we are before You, that You might reveal Your heart to us, and You would be blessed by the things we share and the things we hear this morning, and You would be exalted. We commit our hearts to You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

I titled this message, borrowing a line from a hymn in our songbook, "Heaven Came Down and Glory Filled My Soul." As an introduction, I just want to say that we are all very familiar with a number of ministries that we have had about how our Lord Jesus ascended into the heavens. The letter to the Hebrews talks about His wonderful ministry that He has there in the heavens as our Intercessor on our behalf. And all that He has done in the shedding of His blood all the way through the curtain, all the way to the very throne of God on our behalf. We have also heard a lot of ministries on the Book of Revelation about the Lord Jesus and his magnificence, His new appearance, and being seated at the right hand of the Father. I read this morning a little bit about the glory, the honor, the power, and the strength that are in our Lord in the heavens. We have also had ministry on the letter to the Ephesians and how the Lord has ushered us into the heavens with the Lord where we are seated in Christ Jesus.

The Godhead Makes His Home in Us

But there is also something else that the Lord has done on our behalf, and I would like to read just a couple of verses in John chapter 14. Of course, this is the Lord speaking to his disciples around the table on that last night.

John 14:16-17: "I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you."

So there we have the Spirit of the Father who has been given to us, the Spirit of Truth. He dwells with you and will be in you. Then in verses 18 and 20.

John 14:18, 20: "I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you. In that day you will know that I am in the Father, and you in me, and I in you."

There we have the Lord Jesus as a Son saying, "I am in you."

John 14:23: "Jesus answered him, 'If a man 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.'"

We find that all three of the Godhead have promised to make their home with us or in us. Then one other verse I want to read in Ephesians, which I had mentioned earlier was how that letter lifts us up into the heavens with the Lord. And yet Paul says in a phrase in verse 14 of Ephesians chapter 3.

Ephesians 3:17: "I bow my knees before the Father" (meaning he is praying this for the saints.) V

erse 17: "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith."

God Never Changes

In the letter to the Ephesians it says that we are lifted up into the heavens, and here it says that Christ dwells in our hearts. So we have this situation, the Lord in the heavens and us in the heavens, but the Lord is also in us and dwells in us. There are a number of attributes that the Lord has revealed to us in this age about just who He is and what his nature is like, and one of them is that God is immutable, meaning that God does not change. He does not, and He cannot change. This is a redundant statement: God is God wherever He is; He does not change. In the heavenlies, God has manifested Himself to us, and we have glimpses of it in the different books of the Bible and the letters of the New Testament.

Again, as I said before, His strength, His honor, His power, His majesty, His magnificence, His glory and honor are all there revealed to us. And the point of it is that those same attributes, those same strengths and honor and power, and glory are in you and I today. There is no difference, God cannot change. What He is in the heavens, He is in us right now, today. And that is what I want to emphasize this morning, that whatever is true in the heavenlies is true in our lives.

Opening the Doors of Our Heart to the Lord

There is something about God's desire for us. There is a little pamphlet that was written in 1954 by a man whose name is Robert Munger, and it was distributed by InterVarsity press. Then it was, of course, redistributed during the Jesus Revolution to all of us Jesus freaks, and it was very illustrative. It was an illustration for us of something that is very true. It was called, "My Heart, Christ's Home." He uses an illustration of when he comes to know the Lord, and he invites the Lord into his life. And, of course, the Lord in His great mercy and grace comes into his life.

And then as the Lord dwells there with him, the man begins to open the different rooms of his home to the Lord. First, he opens his study or his library, and the Lord very graciously deals with some of the things that are maybe a little amiss in his life. He then puts the Word of God as the first and foremost thing in his life. He goes to the dining room, and the Lord deals with some of his appetites and bodily desires, and He shows him that He is his manna and his food. He goes on to the other rooms of the house, then his work room.

Finally, there is that hall closet that most of us have in our homes that things get stuffed into. That hall closet was locked so nobody could get in there. There was a smell, an odor that was coming from that room. It was not a good smell, but the man had not noticed it before. However, the Lord noticed it, and then the man noticed it. And so lastly, he opened the

hall closet and deals with the last vestige of things he tried to hide from the Lord, and it gets dealt with.

At the conclusion of this little pamphlet, the man realizes that it has all been taken care of. The Lord has gone through all the rooms and touched and dealt with the things in his life. And he felt pretty good about it, but then he realized, "Hey, wait a minute, He is still sort of like an invited guest; He is a dweller in this house of mine, of *my* house." Then he says, "Wait a minute, I don't know how to keep this thing running the way the Lord has set it up." So, he deeds the house over to the Lord and says, "It is Your house, You get to run it the way that you desire to run it".

Our Heart is Christ's Home

So, it is my heart, but it is Christ's home, and so it is true for us also that there comes a time in our lives in which we need to say that it is no longer my life to live and the things that I want to do. But the Lord really desires as He dwells in our hearts and our lives, "I want this to be My house, this is where I want to dwell, where the Father and the Spirit and the Son desire to dwell."

Madame Guyon said something that really spoke to my heart about this matter. She said, "Do you not know that he wants you to seek him no longer within you, but within himself?" The deed to the house, the deed to our heart has been signed over, it is no longer that I am looking for the Lord that dwells within me, but it is in the Lord Himself that I come to, that I touch and I enjoy.

Hebrews 3:6 RSV says, "But Christ was faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house if we hold fast our confidence and pride in our hope." We are His house; what is true of the church of the body of Christ, the corporate expression of Christ, is true of us as individuals also, and we are His house. There we see the real desire of the Lord for us, that He would own us, that we would be His house, and He would have His way with us.

I want to touch on a few things in my own life when I came into a fuller realization of this reality, that the Lord is there with me. I can come and commune with Him at any time, any place, any situation. He is always there, available to me and to you, and He desires to have communion with us.

All Things that Happen In Our Lives Has Come By His Will

The first realization that I really came to is that the Lord is actually, really present in me in all His glory, in all His splendor, in all of His power, and in all of His might. He made Himself readily available to me and to you. A second realization that I came into is again a quote from Madame Guyon. She puts it so very succinctly, and she repeats this over and over again in her books, and Fenelon does the same thing of repeating the same idea. Everything that happens has all come to us by His will and by His permission. You must utterly believe that everything that has happened to you is from God and is exactly what you need. There is a realization that there is nothing that is outside of the Lord's control that happens in my life. No matter how small it is, or how big it is, the Lord has allowed it to happen in my life. Therefore, everything can become a lesson to us about who the Lord is and what he is trying to do with us. We do not ever have to think that something happens to us by chance or that something bad has happened to us. There is nothing that is bad that happens to us; it is all ordered by the Lord, and given to us.

Then the Lord started to teach me different things about myself. With the Lord I use the phrase, "the finger of God." It is just the Spirit convicting me of different things in my life, small things and large things, but He is there to put his finger on these things. He has allowed situations to rise in my self-life, my self-love, my self-preservation, whatever it might be of self. And He is so gracious to bring it about, to show me, to show you also, what He wants to deal with at a particular time. It is just marvelous that the God of the universe would have that much time and that much concern for us as individuals that He would put his finger on

something so very small or so very large in our individual lives. But that is the truth. That is who our Lord is.

The Little Irritants In Our Lives

Something very trivial happened that I will share. Recently I have been studying the Minor Prophets, and as I go through them, there are certain phrases that I will write out from the Scriptures. And like Kenny, I have thrown away several forests because of the paper that I have thrown out, but I find that it speaks to my heart clearly when I write the Scriptures out.

I was reading the Book of Jonah, finishing the fourth chapter, and we all know what the fourth chapter of Jonah is about. He was there overwatching Nineveh to see what was going to happen, and the hot sun is burning him. So he built a shelter, but that was not sufficient, and the Lord raised up a tree to shade him during the day. Then, as you know, the next morning the shade tree withered away. And there was Jonah, grumbling and complaining about the plight that he found himself in under the burning sun, and he was bitter in his soul about it.

As I am writing out this verse, my pen dried up. It was one of those little irritants in life. We all know those little irritants such as red lights or having to go to the gas station and fill up your car, all these niggly things that come into our lives. My pen ran out of ink, and, of course, I get that little grumble, that little, "Oh man!" And I think to myself, the Lord has just shown me something, taught me something: "You are Jonah." Jonah was bitter about this plant that the Lord had given him. I have this little bitterness about this little dried-up pen, and the Lord showed me His heart towards human lives, human hearts, and revealing himself to even the Gentiles in that day. And here I am, little me complaining about a little niggly thing. I think we all can identify with something like the little things that bother us in life, and we think we have a little complaint about it. Next time think about what the Lord is teaching you about something as simple and little as that.

The Crucifying of the Self-Life

Then a couple days later after that, the Lord began to put His finger on some larger issues that I found prevalent that He began to reveal in my life. I say this to my shame that I have been a Christian for a little over fifty years, and the Lord is revealing some things that have always been there, that are an offense to Him, that He wants to deal with. Yet they have always been there, and yet His love has always been there for me. It boggles the mind to think that the Lord has always known that the hall closet has always been stinking, always smelling, but yet He is gracious enough to still live in the house.

So He put His finger on my life again, and this time He revealed to me that I was being sarcastic. I was using sarcasm at various times against different people. Of course, the person who uses sarcasm thinks of themselves as just being witty, quick-minded, you have a certain degree of intelligence about things that you can immediately say something or do something in a situation. But then the Lord revealed to my heart, "No! Sarcasm is not just being witty or being quick of mind, but in reality sarcasm is hurtful, it is biting, it is demeaning other people at your own expense." The Lord put His finger on it and said, "Do not do that; you cannot do that." What was also so beautiful about that was normally in the world you would say, "Let's look at the psychology, let's look at what causes me to be like this, and let's deal with the root cause or whatever." The Lord did not want to deal with me about the root cause. He just said, "Come to the cross; it is dealt with".

So, what a marvelous thing that something that has been there for fifty years, the Lord just graciously put His finger on and dealt with it. I do not have to dig into the past in it or why it is there because it is dealt with. There is the assurance of the Lord in my heart that the Lord has done something. I know something has been done.

Do the Little Things Without Being Noticed

Then a little bit later in my own experience, I realized that it was not only the things that He does not want me to do, such as the crucifying of my self-life, self-love, self-preservation, or whatever it is of self that we have left in us. But there are things that He wants you to do also, not just not do, but things that He wants you to do. When He put His finger on that, my immediate reaction was, “Oh no; He is going to ask me to do some grand thing or some great thing that is going to be horrendously costly to my self-life, and Lord, you know how I try to avoid those kind of things.” But the Lord was very gracious; that day I was reading in Fenelon, and I will just read the quote: “Great acts of virtue are rare.” But then he went on to say, “To do small things that are right continually without being noticed is much more important. These small acts attack your pride, your laziness, and your self-centeredness.”

So, it was a relief to my heart, maybe to your hearts also, that He was not asking me to do some great and grandiose thing that was going to seem to be impossible, but He is saying, “Do the little things,, whatever the little things are, washing the dishes, going to work and earning a living, whatever it might be. Just do the little things, and do them right. Do them as unto the Lord, and they will minister to you and to the Lord Himself. I am so grateful, but I could go on. I have a list of the various things that the Lord has spoken to my heart. It is just so wonderful that the Lord would care that much about us. it boggles my mind that the Lord is that precious to us.

I am concluding my message here, and I will just wrap it up with a few thoughts. First, just a reminder that you and I are at the Lord's house, and that He lives inside of us. Like I said at the very beginning, in all His magnificence, and all of His majesty, and all of His strength and power, that is the same God that lives inside of you and me right now. He is so precious, so thoughtful, and long-suffering that He would graciously put His finger on things in our lives. Just try to be aware during the day's

activities, “Lord, are You trying to teach me something right now? Is this a lesson?”

Do Not Dredge Up the Self-life

The second thing is that we need not dredge up the self. Do not try to bring up things that you think are important to the Lord. Do not put yourself in the place of the Holy Spirit and the Lord, and say, “Lord you need to deal with me in this.” That is just another form of self-love and pride, thinking you know better than the Lord. The Lord is so real and so precious, that He will bring up what He wants at the right time, not your timing. It is His timing. When He brings it up, and He puts His finger on it, then you know something has been dealt with, something has been touched in your life. So do not try to dredge up yourself, and do not try to hurry the Lord along. He does not need to be hurried along by us. It might take fifty years for Him to touch certain things in your life, but that is the right time; that is when it is ready to be dealt with. It is not to be dealt with by our flesh.

The concern might be that with such a focus on the Lord living inside of us and all of what is inside of our hearts, that we might become self-centered, we might become too introspective and not have the big picture. We do not have to worry about that. The Lord does not let us get self-centered and introspective because He is there, it is His house. He will not let you become self-centered about things; He will put his finger on it.

The Lord Owns Our Lives

Another thing that He has spoken to my heart about is that the Lord is my Lord, and the Lord is your Lord, and He owns my life, and He owns your life. Whether you know it or not, that is what He has done. It is just the exhortation of what the Scripture says in the first and the great commandments, “Love the Lord with all your soul, with all your heart,

and with all your strength.” It is every part of you, every bit of you—your heart, your soul, your strength.

You have given Him your self-life, “Lord, you deal with it as you wish when you wish. I do not want it any other way.” It may really hurt at times; it may really seem to be harmful and difficult, but Lord, I would have it no other way. And I know that you say the same thing in your own hearts: “I would have it no other way than to have the Lord present and putting his finger on the things that He desires.” May the Lord do and direct as He sees fit and not as we see fit.

God Leaves A Weakness in Our Lives

I mentioned another thing about reading the quote from Fenelon that really spoke to my heart, kind of hurtful in a way, kind of contrary to what you might think is the truth. Fenelon said, “God leaves weakness in all of us.” He gave this illustration of what he meant by that. Of course, he is writing in the 18th century so that is what his reference is. He says, “In a field, a workman may leave a pillar of earth to measure the amount of material removed. Then Fenelon goes on and explains what he means by that illustration. He said, “God leaves similar pillars within those that he is perfecting. The Lord leaves a weakness in us all.”

To my mind, the first thing that came up was, of course, the Apostle Paul and the thorn in his flesh. Three times he petitioned the Lord to remove that from him because it weakened him. Probably he was speculating that it not only weakened him physically, but it weakened him what he thought was spiritually. As a man, it had weakened him. So, he sought the Lord for that thing to be taken away, that thorn would be taken out. You know what it is like when you are working in the yard and you get a thorn in your finger or your hand and that painful reminder when you touch it. Fortunately, we can remove the physical thorns, but Paul could not remove that spiritual thorn. Of course, we know what the Lord was teaching him, “In your weakness is My strength.”

For all of us, there will be something that the Lord is going to leave in our life of the self-life. It is going to be a different thing for all of us, no two are going to be the same. We will see it and sense that there is something there that is contrary to the heart of God, and we will seek for the finger of God to touch it, to show us, to convict us, that we might repent and come to the cross and know His power. But He is going to leave it there in you, and you will go back, and you will go back three times asking for the removal of this weakness that is found in your self-life: "Lord, surely it must weaken your testimony because this is my self-life, this is contrary to your life." But the Lord says, "I leave it there; this is a reminder of a weakness within yourself, but learn the lesson." That is where you must rely on the Lord and His strength for your life.

I trust that this is just a reminder to all of us of just what the Lord has done for us, who He is, and His fullness. He is not just the God of the heavens, but He is the God in our lives also, that we can at a moment's notice come unto Him in whatever situation we find ourselves in, whatever circumstances, however dire they might be. The Lord is there, He makes Himself available to us, and speaks to our hearts. How precious is the Lord! How wonderful is our salvation! How full is our salvation! It is beyond any of our understanding, our comprehension of who the Lord is and what He has done for us. It is just so marvelous!

Let's end with a word of prayer:

Lord, thank You for just who You are. Thank You for living, for dwelling, for owning our lives. Thank You for possessing our hearts and our souls. Thank You for Your tender touch, the quietness of Your voice, Your finger that You put on different things in our lives, that even the days in which You seem to be absent and there is a shallowness in our hearts and it seems like You are far away, yet that is when You are closest to us. And even in that You are teaching us such a vital lesson of just who You are. Lord, we tell you we would have life no other way than for You to be

*present in our lives. It is just so marvelous! We thank You for who You are,
in Jesus' name. Amen.*