

A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

IN THIS WORLD, WE EXPERIENCE SUFFERINGS: BUT GLORY IS COMING

SECOND CORINTHIANS

✠ II CORINTHIANS

An overview of the Book of Second Corinthians, by Given O. Blakely

Lesson # 17

COMMENTARY ON: 4:6-7

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

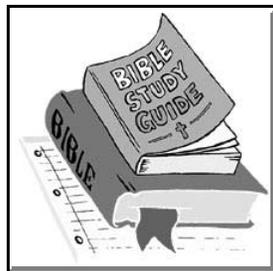
"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

THE BEGINNING AND NATURE OF SPIRITUAL LIFE

Spiritual life, or the "newness of life," can be traced back to a specific cause, or beginning. That beginning is designed to meet the predetermined objective of God, which is to conform us to the image of His Son (Rom 8:29). Regeneration is the fundamental "make-over" in which the Adamic nature is ultimately replaced by the Divine nature. This is depicted as a continual change "from glory to glory" under the administration of the Holy Spirit. Adam, together with all of his progeny, has been rejected by God. In Christ a new generation, or "seed," is being formed. This lesson deals with its beginning and nature.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-2

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. for in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven"



Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



The Epistle of Second Corinthians

Lesson Number 17



TRANSLATION LEGEND: AMPLIFIED = Amplified Bible, ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), *ESV=English Stand Version* (2001), IE = International English, ISV = International Standard Version, KJV=King James Version (1611), LIVING = Living Bible, MONTGOMERY = Montgomery's New Testament, NKJV=New King James Version (1982), NAB=New American Bible, NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version (1984), NJB=New Jerusalem Bible, NLT=New Living Translation, NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakj (1985), Webster=The Webster Bible 1833, YLT=Young's Literal Translation (1862), WEYMOUTH=Weymouth's New Testament, WILLIAMS = William's New Testament, PHILLIPS = J B Phillips New Testament
LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG=Friberg Lexicon, UBS=UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA=Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT=Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER=Thayer's Greek Lexicon

----- Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

THE BEGINNING AND NATURE OF SPIRITUAL LIFE

“ 4:6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. ⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” ^{KJV} (2 Cor 4:6-7)

INTRODUCTION

It is imperative that we see that salvation, in its entirety, is of the Lord. Although men are involved in the process, their involvement is not the critical factor. **The effectiveness of every aspect of salvation, from its initiation to its culmination, is not owing to men, but to God.**

As simplistic as this may appear, it is not at all common for men to consider salvation as being wholly of the Lord. Man's "fallenness" has constrained him to

overestimate his own strength, and understate his need for the Lord. From the beginning, however, godly men have confessed their unquestionable need for the Lord and His intervention.

- “But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. **Salvation is of the LORD**” (Jonah 2:9).
- “**Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy**

people. Selah” (Psa 3:8).

- “**But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: He is their strength in the time of trouble**” (Psa 37:39).
- “**He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto GOD the Lord belong the issues from death**” (Psa 68:20).
- “**But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting**

Spiritual life has, in a sense, come by means of God's command for light to shine into our hearts – by Given O. Blakely

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salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end” (Isa 45:17).

- ☛ *“And cried with a loud voice, saying, **Salvation to our God** which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb” (Rev 7:10).*

For those who live by faith and are acquainted with Scripture, all of this is evident – at least on an academic level. **However, through the ages, the church has suffered much from the philosophizing of those who have managed to obscure this marvelous reality.** It is for this very reason that Paul is opening this subject as he is.

The premier example of salvation is found in Israel – in particular, in their deliverance from Egypt. We are told that what occurred to them **“happened unto them as examples, and they are written for our admonition”** (1 Cor 10:11).

SEEN IN THE DELIVERANCE OF ISRAEL

The deliverance of Israel from a four hundred and thirty year Egyptian bondage, is often referred to as them being **“saved.”**

- ☛ *“And Moses said unto the people, **Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will show to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever”** (Ex 14:13).*

- ☛ *“Thus the Lord **saved** Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians” (Ex 14:30).*

- ☛ **ON THE BANKS OF THE RED SEA.** *“The LORD is my strength and song, and He is become my **salvation**: He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt Him” (Ex 15:2).*

- ☛ *“Happy art thou, O Israel, who is like unto Thee, O people **saved** of the Lord” (Deut 33:29).*

- ☛ *“I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having **saved** the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not” (Jude 1:5).*

There is no way that Israel could have delivered itself from Egypt. In fact, it appears that such a notion never occurred to the people. **No attempt was made to escape Egypt for over four centuries.** When deliverance finally did come, it was quite evident that it was **“of the Lord.”**

- ☛ The ten plagues in Egypt (Ex 7:14-12:30).
- ☛ Exemption from the plagues in the land of Goshen (Ex 8:22; 9:26; 10:23).
- ☛ Spoiled the Egyptians when they left (Ex 3:22; 12:36; Psa 105:36).
- ☛ A dog did not bark against them (Ex 11:7).

- ☛ Not a hoof was left behind (Ex 10:26).
- ☛ Crossing through the Red Sea on dry land (Ex 14:16.21-22,29; 15:19; Psa 78:13).
- ☛ Drowning of Pharaoh and his armies (Ex 14:17-18, 24-28; Psa 78:53).

There is not a one of these things that could be wrought by human wisdom or strength. No supposed law of nature could have caused them to occur. **If God had not done them, they never would have occurred, and that is very apparent. Israel’s salvation was wholly of the Lord.**

Israel’s Involvement

It is quite true that Israel themselves were involved in this deliverance. From their viewpoint, considerable effort was involved.

- ☛ The women had to borrow jewels of silver, jewels of gold, and raiment for their children (Ex 11:2-3).
- ☛ They had to kill the passover lamb (Ex 12:21).
- ☛ They had to smear the blood of the passover lamb over the doors and on the side posts of the dwellings (Ex 12:22).
- ☛ They were required to eat the lamb with haste, with their clothes on and their staffs in their hands (Ex 12:11).
- ☛ They had to bake unleavened cakes to take with them (Ex 39).
- ☛ All of the males had to be circumcised (Ex 12:48-50).
- ☛ The people had to take their unleavened dough, and carry their kneading troughs on their shoulders wrapped in clothing (Ex 12:34).

However, through the ages, the church has suffered much from the philosophizing of those who have managed to obscure this marvelous reality. It is for this very reason that Paul is opening this subject as he is.

- They had come out of Egypt together at the midnight hour, with all of their children and livestock (Ex 12:29-36; 13:3-4).
- They had to walk through the Red Sea with towering walls of water all around them (Ex 14:22).

- It was God who brought them out “with silver and gold” (Psa 105:37).
- It was God who parted the Red Sea (Psa 78:13).
- The Lord drowned Pharaoh and his armies (Deut 11:4).

nowhere – is Israel’s deliverance credited to their preparation. It is not said to have been the result of their wisdom, or any of their many activities. These things are obvious, and should require no further explanation.

The point I wish to make is that Israel provides us an example of **how** God accounts for the salvation of His people – whether it is Israel under the Old Covenant, or those in Christ Jesus under the New Covenant. **Even though Israel was obedient, the cause of their deliverance is not traced to their obedience! Even though they responded, their salvation is not accounted for in their response.** The cause is consistently traced back to God.

Even though Israel was obedient, the cause of their deliverance is not traced to their obedience! Even though they responded, their salvation is not accounted for in their response. The cause is consistently traced back to God.

The Deliverance Explained

In **all** of the Scriptural references to Israel’s deliverance from Egypt, **God alone** is credited with what happened. The cause is never traced to men.

- It was He who gave the women favor in the eyes of the Egyptians, so that their enemies gave them what they required (Ex 12:36).
- It was because of the Lord that “there was not a feeble person among their tribes” (Psa 105:37).
- It was God who “led the people” (Ex 13:18), and “went before them” (Ex 13:21-22).

- The Lord “dried up the water of the Red Sea” (Josh 2:10).
- God caused the people to pass through the Red Sea on dry land (Psa 78:13).
- God brought them forth out of Egypt, as out of “the iron furnace” (Deut 4:20).
- God brought them “forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm” (Deut 26:8).
- The Lord “saved the people out of the land of Egypt” (Jude 1:5).

Nowhere – absolutely

To be sure, there is no such thing as a salvation that does not involve the people – but **their involvement is not the CAUSE of their salvation.** The people participate, but not at the causal level. Human involvement is not the catalyst of the kingdom of God, nor can it ever be!

In the most precise way deliverance is “the salvation of the Lord” (Ex 14:13; 2 Chron 20:17; Lam 3:26), and “the salvation of God” (Psa 50:23; Luke 3:6; Acts 28:28). There is unwavering consistency in this matter.

All of this does have a bearing upon our text, for Paul will now account for the change that has taken place in those who are in Christ Jesus. **He will identify the cause of their salvation.**

FOR GOD

“^{4:6} **For God . . .**” Other versions read, “For it is the God,”^{NKJV} “Seeing it is God,”^{ASV} “Seeing that it is God,”^{BBE} “Because it is the God,”^{DARBY} and “It is God,”^{NJB}

This text is a further explanation for why Paul did not preach himself, but rather preached Christ Jesus the Lord. In the light of the subject he will now expound, it would have been absolute foolishness to promote himself, or seek to win men to a sectarian manner of

thought. **Paul himself had perceived the truth, and that circumstance caused the promotion of personal ambitions to become absurd and repulsive.** If we can see what he is now saying, they will become unreasonable to us also.

In order to experience valid understanding, the heart and mind must come to a point where God is seen as overshadowing everything else. Until this takes place, all views of salvation are

nothing more than human opinions, which have no weight at all in the matter of kingdom thought.

There is no purely human thought that can edify a believer, clarify Scripture, or bring greater lucidity to the salvation of God. No language expertise can accomplish such required understanding. No historical or cultural expertise can advance “wisdom and spiritual understanding.” The well of nature is not deep enough to supply the

refreshing water that comes from “*the wells of salvation*” (Isa 12:3).

One of the reasons for this condition is that salvation is wholly of the Lord. He is its Architect, Builder, and Author of all of its increase. **Therefore, when Paul begins to consider what marvelous things are accomplished in those who are in Christ Jesus, he takes us back to God.** This is also a Divine manner. When Moses opened up the matter of creation, he took us back to God (Gen 1:1). When he accounted for Israel’s deliverance from Egypt, he started with God hearing their groanings (Ex 2:24), and ended with Him delivering them.

The same approach is taken when expounding God’s “*great salvation.*” Whether we are considering purposing salvation (Eph 1:4; 1 Pet 1:20), implementing it (Gal 1:4; 1 John 4:9-10), or bringing it to its completion (Phil 1:6; Rom 9:28), God is the fundamental consideration.

ACCOUNTING FOR SALVATION

Men are too prone to account for their salvation by pointing to what **they** have done. This by no means suggests that men are saved without them doing anything. However, when **accounting** for that salvation, it must be traced back to God. Men do not do well to account for their salvation by pointing to their obedience or responses – even though they were essential, and salvation could not be realized without them. **Our necessary and valid responses are too close to the surface of life to be an adequate explanation of our salvation.**

A few examples will suffice to confirm the manner in which we are to account for our salvation. These are the key activities that caused us to be removed from a state of condemnation, and come into a state of Divine acceptance.

- ☛ “*But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*” (1 Cor 1:30).
- ☛ “*And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but*

ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11).

- ☛ “*To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved*” (Eph 1:6).
- ☛ “*And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins*” (Eph 2:1).
- ☛ “*But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with*

Cause of their salvation.

FURTHER ELABORATION

Apostolic doctrine confirms that Divine influence is found throughout every aspect of salvation. A few reminders of this will serve to further introduce the text we are going to consider.

- ☛ **RESPONSIVENESS.** “*And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul*” (Acts 16:14).

Men are too prone to account for their salvation by pointing to what they have done. This by no means suggests that men are saved without them doing anything. However, when accounting for that salvation, it must be traced back to God.

Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:4-6).

- ☛ “*But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior*” (Titus 3:6).
- ☛ “*Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son*” (Col 1:13).

Until the people of God learn to think and speak in this manner – tracing their salvation back to the Lord alone – they will be confined to a state of spiritual juvenility. In my judgment, God will not allow a person to realize spiritual advancement as long as they are unable to see Him as the sole

- ☛ **BELIEVING.** “*For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for his sake*” (Phil 1:29).
- ☛ **FAITH.** “*Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*” (Eph 6:23). “*And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus*” (1 Tim 1:14).
- ☛ **REPENTANCE.** “*When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life*” (Acts 11:18).
- ☛ **CONFESSION.** “. . . no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost” (1 Cor 12:3). “*And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven*” (Mat 16:16-19).

17).

- **BAPTISM.** *“Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him **through the faith of the operation of God**, who hath raised him from the dead” (Col 2:12). “. . . baptism doth also now save us . . . **by the resurrection of Jesus Christ**” (1 Pet 3:21).*
- **WORKING OUT OUR OWN**

able to make him stand” (Rom 14:4).

- **LOVING THE BRETHREN.** *“But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves **are taught of God to love one another**” (1 Thess 4:9).*
- **ABIDING IN CHRIST.** *“But the Anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not*

aspect. Also, from its initiation through its completion, the Holy Spirit also plays a significant role in all of its various facets.

This kind of thinking is very relevant to our text. **Paul will provide us with an explanation of our salvation – an exposition of why we are what we are.** He will account for the change that has taken place in *“the elect”* (Col 3:12).

There is not a single aspect of salvation in which God is not prominent. That includes its planning, initiation, maintenance, completion, and human response as well.

SALVATION. *“. . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For **it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure**” (Phil 2:12-13).*

- **FRUITFULNESS.** *“But **the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith**” (Gal 5:22).*
- **STANDING.** *“Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for **God is***

*that any man teach you: but as the same Anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even **as It hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him**” (1 John 2:27).*

This sampling confirms a pattern of thought that is found throughout Scripture – particularly in regards to the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. **There is not a single aspect of salvation in which God is not prominent. That includes its planning, initiation, maintenance, completion, and human response as well.** Further, the Lord Jesus is also prominent in every

Therefore he begins with *“for God.”* **This** is not an academic expression. The phraseology denotes something that is very apparent – i.e. *“Seeing that it is God.”*^{BBE} Paul is not reciting a religious creed, but declaring what he has perceived – and there is a vast difference between the two. What follows is reason for the conditions Paul has cited.

- *“We faint not”* (4:1).
- The hidden things of dishonesty have been *“renounced”* (4:2a).
- Paul did not walk *“in craftiness”* (4:2b).
- He did not *“handle the word of God deceitfully”* (4:2c).
- He manifested *“the truth”* (4:3).
- He did not preach himself (4:5a).
- He was a servant of the saints for Jesus’ sake (4:5b).

WHO COMMANDED THE LIGHT TO SHINE

“^{6b} . . . who commanded the light to shine out of darkness . . .”

The Spirit will not allow men to philosophize about God. He will be specific about how we are to think of Him. Since men are prone to be superficial when considering the God of heaven, the Spirit will move Paul to speak very precisely about Him – particularly when addressing the matter of salvation. Remember, **Paul is dealing with the superiority of the New Covenant,**

and of the framework of illumination within which its benefits are realized. He is showing why a state of spiritual ignorance is wholly unjustified during this marvelous *“day of salvation.”* How sorely this message is needed in a day when spiritual retardation is at flood-tide, and a lack of acquaintance with New Covenant glory is so prominent.

WHO COMMANDED THE LIGHT

“...who commanded the light...”

Other versions read, *“Who said,”*^{NASB} *“Who spoke,”*^{DARBY} and *“has said.”*^{IE}

This is the God we are called to consider – the commanding God! Here, the Spirit does not point us to what God has commanded men to do, but to a higher order of Divine dictation.

A Higher Order of Commandment

There is an higher order of commandment – one that is more lofty than moral requirements. There are

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several references to such commandments. **These commands are not intended to illicit human response.** They can neither be initiated nor terminated by human wisdom of initiative.

- ☛ “Then I will command My **blessing** upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years.” (Lev 25:21).
- ☛ “The LORD shall **command the blessing** upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee” (Deu 28:8).
- ☛ “And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have **commanded the ravens** to feed thee there” (1 Kgs 17:4).
- ☛ “If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I **command the locusts** to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people” (2 Chr 7:13).
- ☛ “Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was done; **He commanded, and it stood fast**” (Psa 33:8-9).
- ☛ “Yet the LORD will **command His lovingkindness** in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life” (Psa 42:8).
- ☛ “Thou art my King, O God: **command deliverances** for Jacob” (Psa 44:4).
- ☛ “Thy God hath **commanded thy strength**: strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us” (Psa 68:28).
- ☛ “Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast **given commandment to save me**; for Thou art my rock and my fortress” (Psa 71:3).
- ☛ “Though he had **commanded the clouds** from above, and opened the

doors of heaven, and had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven” (Psa 78:24).

- ☛ “He sent redemption unto his people: He hath **commanded His covenant for ever**: holy and reverend is His name” (Psa 111:9).
- ☛ “As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD **commanded the blessing**, even life for evermore” (Psa 133:3).
- ☛ “And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall

breaketh the cedars of Lebanon . . . The voice of the LORD **divideth the flames of fire**. The voice of the LORD **shaketh the wilderness** . . . The voice of the LORD **maketh the hinds to calve**” (Psa 29:3-9). This is a command, that can neither be activated nor neutralized by man. His word is with power, so that speaking is equated with commanding.

This is the kind of word to which our text refers. **There is a level at which the mighty God of heaven speaks that has nothing whatsoever to do with the will or ability of men.** In order to substantiate this, the Spirit takes us to the point where there was no man. He takes us to “*the beginning*,”

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come up briers and thorns: I will also **command the clouds** that they rain no rain upon it” (Isa 5:6).

- ☛ “And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I **command the serpent**, and he shall bite them” (Amos 9:3).
- ☛ “And I know that **His commandment is life everlasting**: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto He, so I speak” (John 12:50).

Once such commandments go forth, they cannot be countermanded by any created personality in heaven, earth, or under the earth. They are issued by the will of the Lord, not the will of man. This is the kind of word to which the Psalmist referred: “*The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty. The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars; yea, the LORD*

when the Lord spoke the world’s into existence.

TO SHINE OUT OF DARKNESS

“ . . . to shine out of darkness . . . ” Other versions read, “*shall shine out of darkness*,”^{NASB} “*let light shine out of darkness*,”^{NIV} “*that out of darkness light should shine*,”^{DARBY} “*Let there be light in the darkness*,”^{NLT} “*Out of darkness light is to shine*,”^{YLT} and “*From darkness let the light shine*.”^{IE}

If the phraseology seems a bit strange, it is because there is nothing in all of time and space that can be compared with it. **No one in the flesh has ever done such a thing – nor has any angelic spirit, be it wicked or holy.** Scripture begins with this event – when God Almighty “*commanded the light to shine out of darkness*.” At that time “*the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep*” (Gen 1:2a). Like a brooding mother-hen, the Spirit of God “*moved*,” or was “*hovering*”^{NKJV} “*upon the face of the waters*” (Gen 1:2b).

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Some have speculated concerning this verse, saying there must have been a previous world that had been reduced to chaos. There is, however, nothing in Scripture to support such a notion. We

not things that “do not appear,” nor are they invisible. They are extremely small, but can readily be seen if duly magnified. Things that “do not appear” cannot, under any circumstances, be made visible.

light. “

Our text says of this occasion, God “commanded the light to shine out of darkness.” Elsewhere God said of Himself, “I form the light” (Isa 45:7). **He formed the light with His Word, which is the ultimate display of power or authority.** Men can cause things to happen by with their hands, but not with their word. A man can build a house, but he cannot call it into existence with a command.

God was not asked to produce light. No angel assisted Him in bringing it forth. The creation of light was not a project. **It did not happen by some random occurrence. Light was caused to come into being by the commandment of God.** It shined where it did not exist previously.

The God who did this is the Subject of our text. The event will be paralleled with regeneration. The creation of “the world,” then, is an example of **how** men are delivered from the power of darkness, and brought to a point where they are being changed from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord (3:18). God IS prominent in the totality of the matter of salvation!

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know from other statements that “the worlds” in their entirety were “framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things that do appear” (Heb 1:3). The term “worlds” in no way suggests chaos or disorder, but rather convey the idea of symmetry, synchronization, and harmony. **It is a term given to what God created – the finished product.** Further, “things that do not appear” are not protons, neutrons, atoms, and the likes. Those are

“Let there be light!”

Now the Spirit focuses on the creation of “light,” which was the first recorded command of God: “Let there be light!” (Gen 1:3). Most all versions read the same: “Let there be light.” Some variant readings include, “Let light be,”^{YLT} and “Be light made.”^{DOUAY} In an instant, where only darkness existed (“darkness was upon the face of the deep,” Gen 1:2), light sprang forth, dissipating the darkness – “and there was

HATH SHINED INTO OUR HEARTS

“^{6c} . . . hath shined in our hearts . . .”

In order to discern the truth about our salvation, we must trace its beginning to God Himself. If we choose to think of it in terms of men and **their** deeds, we will not obtain a clear view of the matter. Keep in mind that the Spirit is moving Paul to expound the glories of the New Covenant, and how that relates to the lives of “the elect.” **He is showing the Corinthians the unreasonableness and total unacceptability of walking in ignorance.** There is a purpose to redemption, and it is not merely the change of human conduct – even though that is the unwavering result of the work. Here we will be exposed to Divine intent – what the God of heaven, by purpose, is accomplishing in His great salvation.

Men must seek deliverance from the inveterate tendency to speculate about salvation. God has spoken extensively concerning what He is doing in Christ Jesus, and it is our business to hear what He has said.

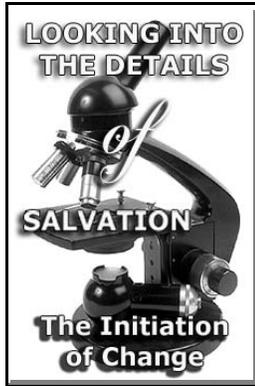
It is not uncommon to hear men wrangle about whether or not man’s “free will” is involved in them being saved. Others are snared by extended considerations concerning a sequence of steps that are required to be saved. Some see the critical matter to be what group we join, and what theological system we embrace. Whatever place there may be for such things, it is not at the foundational level. It is imperative that our thoughts concerning the redemption that is in Christ Jesus be formed in the light, and not in the room of the philosophers, or the

libraries of the theologians. **We must know where to BEGIN our considerations.** We must think within the context of primary things, not incidentals. **The branch of religious thought must be directly connected to the trunk of Deity and Divine purpose.** If this does not occur, we will flounder in the abyss of darkness rather than rejoice in the glory of light.

The Spirit has already affirmed that moral and spiritual “change” occurs when we behold “the glory of the Lord” as reflected in the Gospel of Christ. This initiates a transformation, or metamorphosis, “from glory to glory,” like the change of a larvae into a monarch butterfly. The change occurs in us, but is actually accomplished by the Spirit of God (3:18).

Spiritual life has, in a sense, come by means of God’s command for light to shine into our hearts – by Given O. Blakely

Now the Spirit will put this whole matter under the microscope of Divine explanation. He will show the details of how this whole process was initiated. Remember, this is the activity of the God who *“commanded the light to shine out of darkness.”*



HATH SHINED

“ . . . hath shined . . . ” Other versions read, *“has shone”*^{NKJV} *“made His light shine,”*^{NIV} *“has put . . . the light,”*^{BBE} *“has shone,”*^{ESV} and *“He made light shine.”*^{IE}

Let it be clear, this is describing the activity of God, not man. **At this point, the issue is not when this occurred, but who caused it to occur.** We will not be able to discern any of the pertinent details until the Source of the accomplishment is perceived.

Just as surely as the natural light had a genesis, or beginning, so spiritual light has a commencement – a time when it begins to be. There is a time when the *“things of the Spirit of God”* (1 Cor 2:14) begin to be seen – when the individual becomes acutely aware of another world, another domain, another kingdom, and another frame of reference. It is a time when this world is seen as it really is, and humanity as a whole, as well as on the individual level, is seen *“in truth.”* At this time moral and spiritual darkness is dissipated, and proper understanding, I an infant stage, comes into being.

Scripture refers to this as the time we *“were illuminated”* (Heb 10:32). It is also called the time when we *“were once enlightened”* (Heb 6:4). This is the time when you received *“the eyes of your understanding”* (Eph 1:18), and the capacity to see things formerly hidden was received.

The Personal Aspect of Salvation

The text before us describes the

personal aspect of salvation. There was a sense when light entered into the world in the enfleshed Christ: *“light is come into the world”* (John 1:9; 3:19). Jesus Himself said, *“I am come a light into the world”* (John 12:46). It is then that *“The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up”* (Mat 4:16). However, that light was refused by many. As it is written, *“men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil”* (John 3:19). This is **not**, however, the focus of this text. It is not Jesus’ coming into this world that is intended, but the light of the glorified Christ, as declared in the Gospel.

The glorified Christ is in heaven, not upon the earth! He is *“by the right hand of God exalted”* (Acts 2:33). God has *“set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places”* (Eph 1:20). He is **“above” the entire autonomic order – out of its reach, and inaccessible to flesh and blood** (Col 3:1). The Savior is *“the brightness of”* God’s *“glory”* (Heb 1:3), *“dwelling in the light which no man can approach to”* (1 Tim 6:16).

powerfully declared: *“For it is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ who has shone.”*^{RSV} Our personal circumstance was as hopeless as *“the face of the deep,”* which was covered with darkness! There was no imagined law of nature that could have brought light into the dark abyss mentioned in the first chapter of Genesis. **No created personality, whether angel, seraph, or cherub, could have changed that situation! If God did not MAKE something happened, the condition could not change.** If God did not *“command”* the light to shine, it never would have shined. However, when He **did** command it to shine, there was neither a person nor power that could negate that command!

This is the God who commands, or *“shines,”* the light upon us. We see because of Him. We understand because of Him. We discern and comprehend because of Him! There is no school that can cause the light of the glorified Christ to shine upon us. But God can, and did!

Clarifying A Point

In this text, the Spirit is describing

If this glory is the means used by the Holy Spirit to “change” us, how then can we gain access to it? There is no hope of change without it, and there is no hope of heaven without that change!

The Challenge

As already declared, men are changed by *“beholding the glory of the Lord”* (3:18). **However, this is a glory that cannot be accessed by natural abilities.** Men cannot study their way into this essential glory. In fact, it is only through the Gospel that they are even aware that Jesus is, in fact, *“glorified”* (Acts 3:13), *“crowned with glory and honor”* (Heb 2:9). If this glory is the means used by the Holy Spirit to *“change”* us, how then can we gain access to it? **There is no hope of change without it, and there is no hope of heaven without that change!**

The answer to the dilemma is

regeneration in its most foundational sense. At this point, He is not associating it with human response, obedience, or even faith. **All of those are involved in regeneration – but not at the most foundational level.** Here we are viewing the fountain from which the realization of every spiritual benefit springs. Without this, religion is only pretension.

In the beginning, creation was initiated by the command of God. Now we will see that **re-creation** is also initiated by His command. There was no autonomic process *“in the beginning,”* when *“God created the heaven and the earth”* (Gen 1:1). There is also no reflexive

process whereby the new creation comes into being. **That is, re-creation, or regeneration is not something that is at the end of a series of perceived procedures.** God does use means, to be sure. Here, however, the means is His “command.” This is not a command to be obeyed by men, but a sovereign command by which something is accomplished. It is a command issued to the light, not to the man! It is something that God does, not something man does.

Let it be clear, the “light” of

This is not a command to be obeyed by men, but a sovereign command by which something is accomplished. It is a command issued to the light, not to the man! It is something that God does, not something man does.

reference does not turn on when men have done this or that. It is rather caused to shine by a Divine fiat, or decree. **This does not negate any requirement for the preaching of the Gospel or for human obedience. Rather, here we are given to look behind the scenes to see how things are really working in the heavenly kingdom.** It is much akin to beholding the inward workings of a complex clock. We might be able to move the hands here or there, wind the clock, set an alarm, etc. But when the back is removed, and the inward parts are revealed, we see the real power of the clock.

IN OUR HEARTS

“ . . . in our hearts . . . ” Other versions read, “into our hearts,” ^{NJB} and “has flooded our hearts with his light.” ^{PHILLIPS}

And, where is it that the light is “commanded to shine?” It has been caused by God to shine “in our hearts.” Just as the natural heart is the center of man’s physical constitution, so the word “heart” is used to describe the central part of man’s spiritual constitution – the “center of spiritual life.” ^{STRONG’S}

Various things are said about “the

heart” in Scripture. A brief review of some of them will serve to clarify what is being affirmed in this text.

- **By nature, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”** (Jer 17:9).
- **The heart can purpose: “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every**

man have praise of God” (1 Cor 4:5).

- **The heart pursues what is treasured by the individual. “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”** (Mat 6:21).
- **God promised He would circumcise the heart. “And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live”** (Deu 30:6).
- **The issues of life proceed from the heart. “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life”** (Prov 4:23).
- **The corruption of sinners is found in their hearts. “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man”** (Mark 7:21-23).
- **Obedience is from the heart. “But God be thanked, that ye were**

the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you” (Rom 6:17).

- **Men believe with heart. “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”** (Rom 10:10).
- **The Word of God discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart. “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”** (Heb 4:12).
- **The heart can be established with grace. “Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein”** (Heb 13:9).
- **Christ dwells in the heart by faith. “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love”** (Eph 3:17).
- **The aim is for our hearts to be unblameable in holiness. “To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.”** (1 Thess 3:13).
- **The Lord God is sanctified in the heart. “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear”** (1 Pet 3:15).
- **This is where the Day Star arises – in our hearts. “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the daystar arise in your hearts”** (2 Pet 1:19).

If Divine light can penetrate this part of men, it will impact his entire person. Such a person will think, reason, and purpose in a different way – a way that is harmonious with heaven. This is because illumination makes everything clearer, enabling the individual to see how things really are.

HEARTLESS RELIGION

The bane of modern religion is seen in its heartlessness. Men are often not really changed, but stumble through life in the dark, all the while wearing a religious tag about their necks. Such people do not think any differently than the unregenerate. They see things the same way as the lost, entertain the same values, and perceive issues as does the world. **They must have some commandment to do something religious, else they will not do it.** If there is some word from God demanding they go to church, they might consider doing so in times of convenience. If He does not say to go two times, once will suffice. They will not seek out opportunities to draw close to God, imbibe His Word, or be in fellowship with His people. **They must be governed by Law, for the love of Christ does not constrain them** (2 Cor 5:14).

Such people are **not** abandoning all competing interests, counting them but *“dung.”* They are **not** pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. They are **not** seeking to *“win Christ,”* realize *“the power of His resurrection,”* and experience *“the fellowship of His sufferings”* (Phil 3:8-10). They **care nothing** for attaining to *“the resurrection of the dead”* (Phil 3:11). They do **not** *“esteem”* the words of God’s mouth more than their *“necessary food”* (Job 23:12). **They are quite content to remain ignorant of the precious words of Scripture, choosing to read and consider other things.**

And why do these conditions exist? Is there anything at all about salvation that contributes to such a posture? Indeed, there is not. **These conditions exist because their heart is not in their religion.** They actually do not care for the things of God – that is why they do not seek them. The truth of the matter is that God has **not** commanded the light to

shine into their hearts. **He has not issued that command because such people are not occupying the vicinity where light can fill their hearts.** That is why they are walking in darkness. That is why they have little or no appetite for the Word of God, and are not involved in a fervent quest to obtain the prize!

Heartless religion is lethal. Unless a person is delivered from it,

(Eph 3:17).

- ☛ God directs our *“hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ”* (2 Thess 3:5).
- ☛ In the New Covenant, God writes His laws into our hearts (Heb 8:10).
- ☛ The will of God can be thoroughly and acceptably done only *“from the heart”* (Eph 6:6).

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all hope of being saved is lost. Although I have already sited these Scriptures pertaining to the heart, bear with me while I once again underscore them. **These things are pivotal to our understanding of life in Christ Jesus.**

- ☛ True circumcision is *“of the heart, in the spirit”* (Rom 2:29).
- ☛ The love of God is *“shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit”* (Rom 5:5).
- ☛ When we are baptized, we are obeying *“from the heart that form of doctrine delivered”* to us (Rom 6:17).
- ☛ It is *“with the heart”* that we *“believe unto righteousness”* (Rom 10:10).
- ☛ God gives us *“the earnest of the Spirit”* in our hearts (2 Cor 1:22).
- ☛ The *“light of the knowledge of the glory of God”* is shined into *“our hearts”* (2 Cor 4:6).
- ☛ God has sent forth *“the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father”* (Gal 4:6).
- ☛ Christ dwells in our *“hearts by faith”*

- ☛ The objective of the commandment is *“charity out of a pure heart, and of faith unfeigned”* (1 Tim 1:5).
- ☛ We can only approach God with a *“true heart”* (Heb 10:22a).
- ☛ Our hearts are *“sprinkled from an evil conscience”* (Heb 10:22b).
- ☛ It is the heart that is *“established by grace”* (Heb 13:9).
- ☛ We are to sanctify the Lord God in our *“hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope”* that is in us (1 Pet 3:15).
- ☛ As we give due heed to the Gospel, which is the fulfilled prophetic words, the day will *“dawn, and the Day Star”* rise in our hearts (2 Pet 1:19).

A religion that sidesteps the heart causes the individual to forfeit all of these benefits – all of which are required, and of which none is optional. The new covenant addresses man’s need for a new character, not a new procedure. That is precisely why God shines the light into our hearts. That is where character is established. We cannot afford to have darkened hearts!

TO GIVE THE LIGHT OF THE KNOWLEDGE

“^{6d} . . . to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God . . . ”

What kind of light is beamed into our hearts by God, who Himself “*is light*” (1 John 1:5)? What is it that illuminates everything else, enabling us to see all things plainly?

It should be evident that this is a light only God can give. That eliminates

cannot be found in anything of this world. Only God can handle and dispense this precious “*light*.” There is no earthly depository where it can be stored, or from which it can be dispensed.

What is given by God is driven by His nature and will. He gives nothing of which He does not approve, or His nature does not constrain Him to give. His “*gifts*” are not a reward for well doing.

are in Christ Jesus.

The kingdom of Christ is an economy of “*light*” – of illumination, enlightenment, comprehension, and discernment. It is not a kingdom of darkness, where ignorance and a lack of awareness are prevalent. Where such things are found, unbelief has taken hold of the people. “**LIGHT!**” How gloriously sufficient it is, and what marvelous things are said of it.

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anything and everything originating with man. Further, the illuminating factor cannot be centered in man – like clarifying men and their circumstances. **If man is the one requiring enlightenment, then the enlightenment itself must be higher than man.** Man cannot be the pivot upon which this light revolves, or the focus upon which it centers. That ought to be evident enough to require no further explanation.

TO GIVE THE LIGHT

“ . . . to give the light . . . ” Other versions read, “to give us the light,”^{NIV} “has put . . . the light,”^{BBE} “This brings the light,”^{IE} “that the sunrise of,”^{MONTGOMERY} “so as [to beam forth] the light for illumination.”^{AMPLIFIED} and “has flooded our hearts with His light.”^{PHILLIPS}

This refers to the means employed by God to get the light into our hearts. It is “**given**” to us – “put”^{BBE} into us, “brought”^{IE} to us, or “beamed forth”^{AMPLIFIED} into us. This “*light*” is not an achievement of man in any sense. This “*light*” is resident in God alone, and

Theologically, this means “*light*” comes by means of His “*grace*,” which is the driving influence behind all of His gifts. That is why Scripture speaks of the “*gift by grace*” (Rom 5:15), receiving the “*abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness*” (Rom 5:17), and “*the gift of the grace of God*” (Eph 3:7).

This is the same light to which Satan blinds hardened hearts. “*In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them*” (2 Cor 4:4). In this case, the light has been given to the recipient – put into his heart – in spite of Satan’s efforts to blind men’s minds. **The condition of the receiver is one that Satan in all of his subtlety cannot dominate or alter.** Those who receive this light are themselves a living testimony to the overthrow of Satan’s power. It is in this sense that Satan was “*destroyed*” in the death of Jesus Christ (Heb 2:14). He was rendered impotent in the domain of faith – the “*heavenly places*” in which God has “*set*” those who

☛ **PROTECTION.** “*The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light*” (Rom 13:12).

☛ **SEPARATION.** “*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*” (2 Cor 6:14).

☛ **CHANGE.** “*For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light*” (Eph 5:8).

☛ **REVELATION.** “*But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light*” (Eph 5:13).

☛ **ENVIRONMENT.** “*Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*” (Col 1:12). “*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light*” (1 Pet 2:9)

☛ **RELATIONSHIP.** “*Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness*” (1 Thess 5:5).

A Telling Sign

A telling sign that people are at a

distance from the Lord is the lack of light, or the prevalence of spiritual ignorance. **Where the things of God are not known, light is not present – or, at the very best, is flickering, so that the people are nothing more than smoldering wick** (Matt 12:20). This by no means suggests the Lord is not interested in awakening such poor souls. But they must know where they are, that they may “*call upon the name of the Lord.*” It is not the Lord’s manner to “*quench*” a “*smoking flax.*” However, neither will He treat that person as though they were a brightly shining light.

Spiritual Babylon has set in place a religious system that does not require “light” from the Lord. It is an organization that is fueled by the wisdom of this world, and leaves the people in a state of practical alienation from God. Men are taught to rejoice in the number of people who are identified with the institution. Or, perhaps, they glory in their religious heritage, or the credentials of their leaders. Some have nothing more in which to glory than the facilities in which they meet, or an occasional community program that is offered.

Mark it well, if “God is light” (1 John 1:5), and **Jesus Christ is “the Light” in which we are to “believe”** (John 12:36), **identity with Them cannot be maintained in a state of darkness.** This text will make evident the absolute essentiality of this light.

It is imperative that we perceive that there is nothing about regeneration that is associated with mere options. **What takes place in the new birth is essential** – including God shining light into our hearts. Nothing about salvation is optional – nothing!

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GLORY

“... of the knowledge of the glory of God . . .” Other versions read, “*has made us understand that this light is the brightness of the glory of God,*”^{NLT} “*has made us understand that it is the brightness of His glory,*”^{LIVING} “*of knowing God’s glory,*”^{IE} “*The light of the knowledge of God’s glory,*”^{WEYMOUTH} “*of the knowledge of God,*”^{MONTGOMERY} “*of the knowledge of the majesty and glory of God,*”^{AMPLIFIED} and “*knowledge of the glory of God.*”^{PHILLIPS}

Knowledge

As the word “*light*” suggests, it involves “*knowledge*” – something that is known or understood. **An economy of light is one in which knowledge is prevalent.** This is not academic knowledge, or knowledge after the manner of this world, for that does not require God to shine light into the heart. The unregenerate can obtain academic knowledge. However, the knowledge of which this text speaks belongs exclusively to those who are in Christ Jesus. **It is a higher form of knowledge.**

This is a “*knowledge*” with which men can be “*filled*” – “*filled with all knowledge*” (Rom 15:14). It is not the mere knowledge of certain facts, but includes the perception of the significance

breaking through the barrier erected by iniquity. By nature, men are “*alienated and enemies*” in their minds (Col 1:1). It is the “*carnal mind*” that is “*enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*” (Rom 8:7). That is why no unregenerate person knows God, or “*understands*” Him (Jer 9:23-24).

Permit me to be more precise in the exegesis of this text. **Those who do not know God will be condemned.** Lacking this knowledge excludes one from the presence of the Lord. Thus it is written, “. . . *the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus*

It cannot be denied that man, if left to himself, will only descend deeper into darkness – a pervading ignorance of the Almighty God. It will require some kind of heavenly intervention to arrest this descent, and our text is identifying that intervention.

and relevance of certain eternal verities. It has to do with “*understanding.*”

The Glory of the Lord

How marvelous is this statement. The thing that is “*known*” or perceived is “*the glory of the Lord*” – “*the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.*” **This is a more precise view of “the knowledge of God.”**

By nature, man does not have the capacity to know God, even though he is made in His image. This is one of the great paradoxes of life. Further, we know the state of nature is wholly inadequate for this knowledge because Jesus unequivocally affirmed, “*Ye must be born again*” (John 3:7). Sin created a very real gulf between God and man. That gulf has nothing to do with God’s **dealings** with humanity. It rather pertains to man’s perception of and acquaintance with God. We know this is the case because **the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness has shined into our hearts,**

Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power” (2 Thess 1:7-9). **We must, therefore, see the “knowledge” of our text as essential, and not a kind of spiritual luxury.** The profound ignorance of God that resulted from sin must be resolved – and that resolution cannot be found within men. Only God can cause the light of this knowledge to shine into the heart.

It cannot be denied that man, if left to himself, will only descend deeper into darkness – a pervading ignorance of the Almighty God. **It will require some kind of heavenly intervention to arrest this descent, and our text is identifying that intervention.** It was when God shined into our hearts with “*the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.*”

Jesus said knowing God was, in fact, eternal life. “*And this is life eternal,*

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that they might know **Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent**" (John 17:3). Near the close of the first century, John the Beloved affirmed the same thing. "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. **This is the true God, and eternal life**" (1 John 5:20).

This being the case, **we came**

is the result of spiritual knowledge – something that is known.

However, the text is even more specific. It does not refer to "the knowledge of God," but to "the knowledge of the glory of God." This is a more precise expression of the case. "The knowledge of the glory of God" refers to the understanding of what He has revealed of Himself. There remain aspects of God's Person and purpose that are "past finding out" (Rom 11:33). There are

introductory at this time. In this world, we are in the vestibule of Divine glory. Yet, even this is "a large room" (Psa 31:8).

"The glory of God" refers specifically to the revelation of Himself in the Gospel. There we find the most precise and thorough exposition of God that can be received by men. This is "the knowledge" that is frequently mentioned as the means through which Divine benefits are realized.

- ☛ "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you **through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord**" (2 Pet 1:2).
- ☛ "According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, **through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue**" (2 Pet 1:3).
- ☛ "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world **through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning**" (2 Pet 2:20).

Concerning God, only the things that have been revealed can be known. Those things are "the glory" to which our text refers. This is the radiance of His glory that can be received and known in this world. I do not doubt that there are aspects of God that, if shined into our hearts, would destroy us with a great destruction.

alive when the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God" was beamed ^{AMPLIFIED} into our hearts. This is how God "quicken" us (Eph 2:1,5), raising us from a dead state. Colossians associates this with our baptism, in which God was at work. As it is written, "Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of **the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses**" (Col 2:13). Our text goes behind the scenes and traces life to the "knowledge of the glory of God."

The "knowledge of the glory of God" depicts a condition in which enmity no longer exists, and the individual experiences "peace with God" (Rom 5:1). That peace is more than a mere feeling. It

still "secret things" belonging to God, that cannot be known by men in the flesh. As it is written, "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: **but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law**" (Deut 29:29).

That principle is still operative. **Concerning God, only the things that have been revealed can be known.** Those things are "the glory" to which our text refers. This is the radiance of His glory that can be received and known in this world. I do not doubt that there are aspects of God that, if shined into our hearts, would destroy us with a great destruction. The residue of the fallen nature is significant enough to prohibit the reception of certain facets of the Divine nature. Our familiarity with Him, as great as it may appear, is only

It also is the knowledge that is realized in the New Covenant. "And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: **for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest**" (Heb 8:11). It was a blessed day, indeed, when God shined "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God" into our hearts. This is what enables us to "walk" with God – the very God with whom we once were at enmity. Now, what could **not** be experienced by Israel **IS** experienced by those in Christ Jesus. Amos asked, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). That question is answered in the affirmative in the Lord Christ Jesus. **He is the One through whom both Divine knowledge and fellowship are realized.**

IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST

"^{6c} . . . in the face of Jesus Christ."

Now the Spirit takes us to an even more detailed view of this knowledge.

First, it is "the knowledge of the glory" – the knowledge of something that has

Spiritual life has, in a sense, come by means of God's command for light to shine into our hearts – by Given O. Blakely

been revealed, for “glory” has to do with revelation. Second, it is “*the knowledge of the glory of God*” – the cognition of, or acquaintance with, what has been revealed of God Himself. That is, what God has made known of Himself is understood, comprehended, or discerned.

God Desires to be Known

We know from the prophets that God desires to be known. That is, He wants His “offspring” to comprehend and appreciate who He is and what He is doing. Jeremiah was moved to say it in this way: “*Thus says the Lord: Let not the wise and skillful person glory and boast in his wisdom and skill; let not the mighty and powerful person glory and boast in his strength and power; let not the person who is rich [in physical gratification and earthly wealth] glory and boast in his [temporal satisfactions and earthly] riches; But let him who glories glory in this: that he understands and knows Me [personally and practically, directly discerning and recognizing My character], that I am the Lord, Who practices loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight, says the Lord.*”^{AMPLIFIED}

The Apostles affirmed that this Divine desire is, in fact, realized through the ministry of Jesus Christ. “*And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life*” (1 John 5:20).

It is imperative that we keep in perspective that the Spirit is addressing the matter of salvation itself – not some mythical aspect of it. This is the means by which we are being “*changed into the same image,*”^{3:18} which is the revealed predetermination of God (Rom 8:28). **It is not possible for salvation to be realized where this is not being accomplished.** This throws to the ground the notion that once we enter into Christ salvation is forever sealed. **Our entrance marks the beginning of our transformation, not its consummation.** This text reveals the means by which the work is being brought to a glorious completion. It is done stage by stage by the Spirit working with glory.

Now the vehicle of this knowledge is more precisely defined, for **the condition to which sin brought humanity requires a precise and detailed salvation.** This knowledge is defined as “*the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” – the knowledge of God that is revealed in the Person, accomplishments, and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is higher than what has been revealed of God in nature. It is more lofty than what was revealed of God in the Law. It is even higher than the glory that was revealed in Christ’s earthly ministry. It also involves much more than knowing what to do to be saved, as in Acts 16:31: “*What must I do to be saved?*” The answer to that question deals with our **induction** into Christ Jesus. Our text addresses the matter of being “*conformed to the image*” of God’s Son (Rom 8:29).

The completion of the work is stated in a number of different ways.

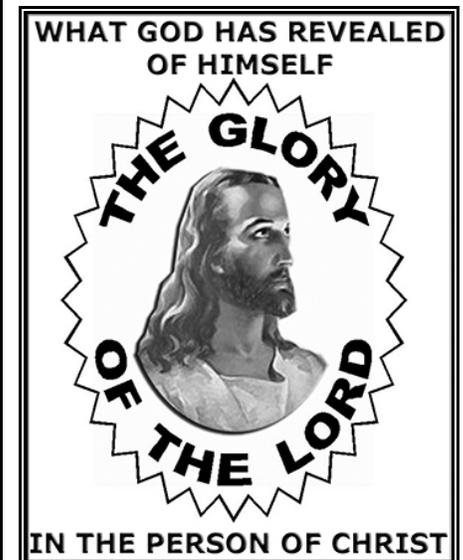
- **Performing the work until the day of Christ.** “*Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*” (Phil 1:6).
- **Perfecting that which concerns the individual.** “*The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands*” (Psa 138:8).
- **Sanctifying the individual wholly.** “*And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Thess 5:23).
- **Perfecting and establishing us.** “*But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you*” (1 Pet 5:10).
- **Growing up into Christ in all things.** “*But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ*” (Eph 4:15).

By what means will God perform the work until Jesus comes? How will He perfect what concerns us? What will He use to sanctify us completely, spirit, soul, and body? How will He perfect and establish us? Through what appointed means will we grow up into Christ in everything? **That is what is being answered in this text.**

These things will be accomplished through a certain kind of “*knowledge,*” or understanding. **It has to do with knowing God, comprehending Him, and being conversant with His nature.**

IN THE FACE OF

“*. . . in the face . . .*” Other versions read, “*on the face of,*”^{NAB} “*is radiant on the face,*”^{WEYMOUTH} “*reflected on the face of,*”^{WILLIAMS} and “*[as it is manifest in the Person and is revealed] in the face.*”^{AMPLIFIED}



The phrase “*in the face*” parallels something that was said of Moses. When he came down from Mount Sinai, “*the face of Moses*” was described as “*the glory of his countenance.*” After being in the presence of the Lord, that glory was so bright that the people of Israel could not look upon it. For that reason, he covered his face with a veil (2 Cor 3:7,13). It is written that the “*Israel could not steadfastly look*” upon the glory emanating from Moses’ face. It was too bright for them. Flesh, even in its most refined stage, is not suited for this glory.

However, the *“face”* that we have been given to see, though infinitely brighter than the glory reflected in Moses’ face, is unveiled, and we are summoned to gaze steadfastly upon it. This, we are told, is the appointed means by which we *“are changed”* (2 Cor 3:18). *“The face,”* in this case, stands for the Person – the One who is coming to us; the One who is in the fullest sense of the word, in the presence of the God of heaven.

JESUS CHRIST

“ . . . of Jesus Christ.” Other versions read, *“of Christ.”*^{NASB}

There is a solitary means by which we come into a saving acquaintance with God. It is the Lord Jesus Christ! He is the One in whom *“all the fulness of the Godhead”* is resident (Col 1:19; 2:9). He is also the only One who knows who the Father is, and only those to whom He reveals the Father can possibly come to know Him (Matt 11:27).

And how is it that we come into

It is essential that we see the centrality of Christ in Apostolic teaching. If we are changed by beholding *“the face of Jesus Christ,”* we cannot afford to be diverted to some other emphasis. The following is an introduction the centrality of which I speak. It is by no means exhaustive. Here I will group some of the Apostolic emphases under the headings of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection.

CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS

Christ’s death, necessitated because of *“our sins,”* is the subject of Divine elaboration. All of the points shown below are inherent in that death, and are the subject of extensive Divine exposition.

- ☛ He bore, or carried, our sins in His body on the tree (1 Pet 2:24).
- ☛ He was made to be sin for us (2 Cor 5:21).
- ☛ In His death, He was cursed by God (Gal 3:13).
- ☛ He gave His life a ransom for many (Matt 20:28).
- ☛ He took away the sins of the world (John 1:29).
- ☛ He gave His life for the sheep (John 10:11).
- ☛ No man took His life from Him, He laid it down that He might take it up again (John 10:17-18).

- ☛ up for us all (Rom 8:32).
- ☛ In His death, Christ is our Passover, sacrificed for us (1 Cor 5:7).
- ☛ We are bought with the price paid in Christ’s death (1 Cor 6:20).
- ☛ If One died for all, then all are dead (2 Cor 5:14).
- ☛ He died that we might no longer live unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us (2 Cor 5:15).
- ☛ He gave Himself to deliver us from this present evil world (Gal 1:4).
- ☛ In His death, He redeemed us from the curse of the Law (Gal 3:13).
- ☛ We have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins (Eph 1:7).
- ☛ We are made nigh unto God by the blood of Christ (Eph 2:13).
- ☛ In His flesh, Jesus abolished the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances (Eph 2:15).
- ☛ He gave Himself to sanctify and cleanse the church (Eph 5:26).
- ☛ Christ died in order to present His church to Himself without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing (Eph 5:27).
- ☛ He made peace through the blood of His cross (Col 1:20).
- ☛ In the cross, He plundered principalities and powers, making a public display of them (Col 2:15).
- ☛ In His death, he delivered us from the wrath to come (1 Thess 1:10).
- ☛ He died for us that whether we wake or sleep, we might live together with Him (1 Thess 5:10).
- ☛ He gave Himself to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a special people, zealous of good works (Tit 2:14).
- ☛ He tasted death for every man (Heb 2:9).
- ☛ Through His death, He destroyed the devil (Heb 2:14).
- ☛ He obtained eternal redemption for us (Heb 9:12).
- ☛ Through Christ’s blood, our conscience is cleansed, or purged, from dead works (Heb 9:14).
- ☛ Through His death we receive the promise of an eternal inheritance (Heb 9:15).
- ☛ The New Covenant, or *“will,”* has been sanctified by the blood of Christ (Heb 10:10).
- ☛ In offering Himself in death, Jesus has perfected forever all who are sanctified (Heb 10:14).
- ☛ Through His blood, we enter into the holiest place the very presence of God-Heb 10:19).
- ☛ The way to God has been dedicated through Christ’s death (Heb 10:20).
- ☛ Through His blood, we are washed from our sins and made kings and priests unto God (Rev 1:5-6).

HE WAS BURIED

The burial of Christ was not simply a technicality. He was active during the time He was buried. Too, it provided time to assure that He really did die, tasting death for every man in the fullest sense of the word.

And how is it that we come into acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ? It is through the Gospel, particularly as revealed through the Apostles. The *“face of Jesus Christ”* is seen in the declaration of the facts of the Gospel, and the exposition of the redemptive implications of those facts.

acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ? It is through the Gospel, particularly as revealed through the Apostles. **The *“face of Jesus Christ”* is seen in the declaration of the facts of the Gospel, and the exposition of the redemptive implications of those facts.** *“The Gospel”* is not only found in *“The Gospels,”* it is found in all of the Epistles as well. High above the corrective teaching, rebukes, and instruction in righteousness, the light of the Gospel shines forth in Apostolic doctrine. It is what causes everything else to make sense. It is what brings makes sin unreasonable, and holiness desirable.

- ☛ He purchased the church with His blood (Acts 20:28).
- ☛ We are justified freely through the redemption of Christ (Rom 3:24).
- ☛ God has set Jesus forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood (Rom 3:25).
- ☛ God commended His love to us in the death of Jesus (Rom 5:8)
- ☛ We are justified through His blood (Rom 5:9).
- ☛ We are reconciled to God through the death of His son (Rom 5:10).
- ☛ We are buried by baptism into Christ’s death (Rom 6:3-4).
- ☛ God condemned sin in the flesh of His Son (Rom 8:3).
- ☛ God did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him

Here is also a point at which unity with Christ is realized.

- ☛ In His burial He was “numbered with the transgressors” (Isa 53:12).
- ☛ While His body was in the tomb, He preached to the spirits that were disobedient in the days of Noah (1 Pet 3:18-20; 4:6).
- ☛ In our baptism, we are “buried with Christ” (Rom 6:4; Col 2:12).
- ☛ The burial of Christ was “the sign of the prophet Jonah” to an adulterous generation (Matt 12:39-40).
- ☛ His grave was made with the wicked, and the rich as well (Isa 53:9).
- ☛ The woman with the precious alabaster box of ointment anointed Jesus for His burial (Matt 26:7-12).
- ☛ The grave was not capable of holding the body of Jesus (Acts 2:29-26-32).

HE ROSE AGAIN

The resurrection of Christ is the engine of our salvation – the source of its power. Over and over this is affirmed in Scripture.

- ☛ Jesus was declared to be “the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom 1:4).
- ☛ We are raised from baptism like Jesus was raised from the dead “by the glory of the Father” (Rom 6:4).
- ☛ Jesus was “raised for our justification” (Rom 4:25).
- ☛ We are reconciled by His death, and saved by His (resurrection) life (Rom 5:10).
- ☛ In regeneration, we are united with Him “in His resurrection” (Rom 6:5).
- ☛ Jesus being raised from the dead, we can now be joined to Christ and bring forth fruit unto God (Rom 7:4).
- ☛ Righteousness is imputed to us if we believe on “Him who raised Jesus from the dead” (Rom 8:24).
- ☛ His resurrection is God’s pledge that we will also be raised (1 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 4:14).
- ☛ The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead, dwells in believers, giving life to their mortal bodies (Rom 8:11).
- ☛ The resurrection of Christ validated His death, and inducted Him into His intercessory ministry (Rom 8:34).
- ☛ Confessing the Lord Jesus with our mouth, and believing in our heart that God raised Him from the dead, results in our salvation (Rom 10:9).
- ☛ If Christ is not raised, our faith is vain (1 Cor 15:17).
- ☛ The power employed to raise Jesus from the dead, is precisely the power that is now devoted to those in Christ (Eph 1:19-21).
- ☛ Believers are raised up together with Christ and

- made to sit with Him in heavenly places (Eph 2:6).
- ☛ Jesus is the “Firstborn from the dead,” that in everything He might “have the preeminence” (Col 1:18).
- ☛ In His resurrection, we were “delivered from the wrath to come” (1 Thess 1:10).
- ☛ The desire to know the power of His resurrection dominates those living by faith (Phil 3:10).
- ☛ He is able to save us because, being raised from the dead, He “ever lives to make intercession” for us (Heb 7:25).
- ☛ The blood of the cross obtained its effectiveness when, after His resurrection, Jesus entered into heaven with it (Heb 9:12).
- ☛ The risen Christ, having entered into heaven, is now appearing in the presence of God “for us” (Heb 9:24).
- ☛ We are begotten again to a living hope “by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet 1:3).
- ☛ Jesus was raised from the dead that our “faith and hope might be in God” (1 Pet 1:21).
- ☛ The resurrection of Christ is what validates our baptism (1 Pet 3:21).

THE CHOICE IS OURS

Jesus has revealed that the Scriptures are all about Him: “*they are they which testify of Me*” (John 5:39). A holy angel revealed to John the beloved, “*the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*” (Rev 19:10). The Gospel itself is referred to as “*the record God has given of His Son,*” upon which our salvation is hinged (1 John 5:10-11).

We have a choice concerning how we approach the Scriptures. We can come to them with a mind to discover which church is the right church – and, in such a case, it will appear as though this is their emphasis. We can draw near to the Word of God to find answers to the various social, political, and religious dilemmas that we face – and again, it will appear as though that is their thrust. The domestic facet of life, together with its various roles and applications may be the purpose that drives one to “*search the*

Scriptures” – and such an emphasis will actually appear to be there.

I by no means deride the individual who desires to know the mind of the Lord on matters such as those I have mentioned, and others that are similar to them. God has, indeed, addressed those subjects, and we do well to accept what He has said.

However, we must decide if these are the **real** issues that are addressed in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Is Jesus merely showing us a way to do things more precisely? Is that why He died, was buried, rose again, and is enthroned at the right hand of God? **Is strict adherence to His Word concerning such things really the appointed means by which we are changed?** Is this how the reality of transformation is accomplished? Are we shaped into the image of Christ by walking in an orderly manner?

Our text emphatically affirms that this is not the way we are “**changed into the same image.**” Such an approach to Scripture is more closely associated with the Old Covenant than with the New Covenant. If our character is to be changed – and that is something that must take place if we are to dwell forever with the Lord – we are going to have to do more than obey a set of rules, or adhere to certain moral guidelines.

Jesus has already told us, “*So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do*” (Luke 17:10). If you could, in fact, obey all of the rules, and fulfill every commandment, that is still not enough! You **MUST** participate in the Divine nature – you **MUST** (2 Pet 1:4). You **MUST** become a partaker of Christ – you **MUST** (Heb 3:14). At some point,

We can draw near to the Word of God to find answers to the various social, political, and religious dilemmas that we face – and again, it will appear as though that is their thrust.

Jesus must take up residence in you (Col 1:27), and “*be formed*” in you (Gal 4:19). You must come to the point where His “*yoke*” is experientially “*easy*,” and His “*burden*” is verifiably “*light*” (Matt 11:30). It is imperative that you be brought to the point where it can be said of you, “*For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh*” (Phil 3:3), and that you “*have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts*” (Gal 5:24).

Now, the issue with which Paul is dealing is HOW all of this will happen. As is confirmed in the church at Corinth, it will **not** come by means of spiritual gifts,

explanation for this situation.

It is possible to simply pass over the moral and spiritual dilemmas of the professing church by saying we are “just human,” and that such weaknesses have always been around. But such foolishness is not at all acceptable! **Jesus did not give Himself for us in order that we might remain like everyone else.** Such a postulate is a reproach to the Savior, and an admission of a miserable level of ignorance. The Spirit is not simply using rhetoric when He affirms, “*And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again*” (2 Cor 5:15).

If Jesus died to deliver us from such a condition, and to “purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Tit 2:14), woe to that slovenly person who does not take that purpose seriously – whether young or old, male or female, bond or free!

for they did not come behind in any of them (1 Cor 1:7). It will **not** come by the ability to speak in other tongues – even those of angels (1 Cor 13:1). **The required transformation will not even come by means of the gift of prophecy, the understanding of great mysteries, and moving mountains with your faith** (1 Cor 13:2). Nor, indeed, will it come through some heroic act of martyrdom, like giving your body to be burned (1 Cor 13:3). All of those gifts come from God, but none of them have transforming power!

One only has to briefly consider those who boast of these gifts to confirm this is the truth. They appear to have all of the moral and spiritual challenges that are experienced by those who make no claim to possessing such abilities. Their physical, moral, and spiritual health appears to be no better than those whom they chide for not emphasizing “the gifts.” In all candor, they owe us an

Religious men may admit they are living for themselves, and purported Bible scholars may say such a state is simply a weakness, and that God loves us all anyway. But they are wrong – emphatically wrong! If Jesus died and rose again in order that we might cease living for ourselves, who is the sophist who will affirm men can embrace Him and continue living for themselves?

It is time for the professing church to settle it in their minds that living for self is in no way acceptable with God. **If Jesus died to deliver us from such a condition, and to “purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Tit 2:14), woe to that slovenly person who does not take that purpose seriously – whether young or old, male or female, bond or free!**

If people are not being “*changed into the same image*,” it is because they

are not steadfastly beholding the face of Jesus. **There is no other explanation!** We know from this passage the Holy Spirit changes the looking ones “*into the same image*” they are beholding, “*from glory to glory*” (2 Cor 3:18). **If, therefore, that is not happening, something or someone has upstaged Christ.** There is no need to look for an answer anywhere else! That **is** the reason!

Holy familiarity with Christ will result in a certain transformation. That is because the transforming glory of God in all of its fulness is resident in Him. This is precisely the process to which Jesus referred when He said, “*He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him*” (John 14:21). And again, “*Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him*” (John 14:23).

Let me be clear about this. **The person who does not focus upon Jesus, but seeks his own earthly interests, does not love Jesus, profession notwithstanding.** Further, if Jesus is not manifesting His transforming Person to the individual, it is because that person is not keeping His commandments in his heart, and does not love Him.

If all of this makes sense, and appeals to the heart, then “*the light of the glory of God*” is actually being seen “*in the face of Christ Jesus.*” If it does not make sense, and is not seen as desirable, then the god of this world has blinded the minds of those that believe not, thus prohibiting the light from shining into them.

It ought to be abundantly apparent that we are speaking of critical matters. Yet, and tragically so, these things are virtually unknown in the professing church. This is evidence of as great “*falling away*” (2 Thess 2:3), in which the Son of God has been thrust into the background, and other pursuits have supplanted the quest to know Him. **Such an approach can yield nothing more than a religious carcass with no life.**

THE TREASURE IN EARTHEN VESSELS

^{7a} ***“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels . . .”***

The Spirit now opens to us the very nature of spiritual life. This is something that is Divinely deliberate – purposed by God. What follows is a condition that cannot in anyway be avoided. Herein we find the explanation for many of the difficulties with which we wrestle. We also find why it is imperative that we live by faith (Heb 10:38), walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:16,25) and in light (1 John 1:7). This is why we must put on *“the whole armor of God”* (Eph 6:11). It is why we must *“fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life”* (1 Tim 6:10). The cause for constant sobriety and vigilance can be traced to the circumstance now described.

The powerful statement we will now consider dashes to the ground the imagination that those in Christ face no serious danger. Theories concerning not being able to fall away, or being eternally secure, are decidedly neutralized by this declaration. This described condition is not something that is a mere happenstance, or coincidence. This is according to God’s *“eternal purpose,”* and is a condition built into the very fabric of salvation. This is why believers are admonished, *“work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”* (Phil 2:12).

WE HAVE THIS TREASURE

“But we have this treasure . . .”

Other versions read, *“But we have this wealth,”*^{BBE} *“But this precious treasure – the light and power that now shine within us,”*^{NLT} *“Why do we have this treasure,”*^{IE} *“But I am keeping this jewel,”*^{WILLIAMS} *“But I hold this treasure,”*^{MONTGOMERY} and *“However, we possess this precious treasure [the divine Light of the Gospel].”*^{AMPLIFIED}

“This treasure” is what God has shined into our hearts – *“the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”* It is not a sectarian creed or something learned from men. **Let it also be clear that a person who does not possess the knowledge of God has no treasure within.** The

possessed treasure is, in fact, knowing God, which *“is life eternal”* (John 17:3). A lack of the knowledge of God equates to spiritual poverty. This does have alarming implications, but the people of God must be willing to ponder what is said.

Jesus said a *“good man”* brings forth *“good things”* *“out of the good treasure of the heart”* (Matt 12:35). Reduced to its essence, that *“treasure”* is the *“knowledge of the glory of God.”* It is what God has made known of Himself through the Lord Jesus Christ. It pertains to His character and His purpose, His power and His grace.

The *“treasure”* consists of knowing God, and what He is doing. It is the opposite of an *“ignorance of God,”* which is the state in which those who are alienated from God find themselves. In

☛ *“Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name”* (Acts 15:14).

☛ *“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified”* (Rom 8:29-30).

☛ *“Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together*

In view of this, a religion that allows men to remain fundamentally ignorant of God is false to its very core. That is the kind of religion that Satan will use, for he specializes in blindness.

view of this, a religion that allows men to remain fundamentally ignorant of God is false to its very core. That is the kind of religion that Satan will use, for he specializes in blindness.

This knowledge is frequently stated doctrinally – expounded, as it were, in order to show its marvelous magnitude. It amounts to God divulging what He is doing in Christ Jesus. A few examples of these statements will establish a direction for this discussion.

☛ *“To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me”* (Acts 26:18)

in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will: that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ” (Eph 1:9-12).

☛ *“That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye*

Spiritual life has, in a sense, come by means of God’s command for light to shine into our hearts – by Given O. Blakely

might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Eph 3:16-19).

- “Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14).
- “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ . . . But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out

heaven” (1 Pet 1:4), then what can there possibly be in **this** world that can be deemed worthy of our emphasis?

Some would have us believe that getting **others** to obtain the inheritance is the greatest thing. But while the sound of their words is fading in our ears, heaven fairly shouts to us, “give diligence to make **your calling and election sure**” (2 Pet 1:10). Again we hear, “Let **us** labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief” (Heb 4:11). Still again the words ring in our ears, “Let **us** therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of **you** should seem to come short of it” (Heb 4:1).

nothing of, or from, this world that can assist in participating in God’s “eternal purpose” (Eph 3:11) – **NOTHING!**

If men will take to heart what is being taught in this passage, they will experience a sensitivity to the eroding effects of this world and all of its relationships. **It will become clear that only “the treasure” will remain after the entire temporal order has passed from the scene.** It is absurd in the extreme, therefore, to build our lives around things that are passing away. Let the saints of God become proficient in USING the things of this world, not abusing them. As it is written, “And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away” (1 Cor 7:31).

Knowing God, or experiencing the “light of the knowledge of the glory of God,” involves a persuasion of the transitory nature of this world, and all that is in it. It constrains one to “look for new heavens and a new earth

of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:5,9).

Throughout “church” history, there have been a few precious souls who have seen the Divine intention in salvation. It is not to make the world a better place to live. It is not merely to have a people in this world who live above sin. It is not to have a technically correct church that teaches pure doctrine. It is not to establish a proper line of authority within the home and the church. In fact, this world is only the arena in which the sons of God are being oriented for glory. **Remove glory, and there is no purpose for salvation. Thrust the objective out of view, and all of the means lose their meaning.**

The church has historically suffered from minuscule views of God and His purpose. That is precisely why many, if not most, of the Epistles were written. If God has begotten us again “to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in

Knowing God, or experiencing the “light of the knowledge of the glory of God,” involves a persuasion of the transitory nature of this world, and all that is in it. It constrains one to “look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet 3:13). It moves the individual to make plans for AFTER the “first heaven” and the “first earth” have passed away, and there is “no more sea” (Rev 21:1; 2 Pet 3:10-12). The truly knowledgeable soul ponders his condition AFTER the day of judgment, and AFTER the sheep have been separated from the goats. That is the effect of “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God” upon those who possess it.

Earth-centricity

Here is the scourge of the modern church – its earth-centricity, or earth-centeredness. It is anchored to “this present evil world,” from which God intends that Jesus deliver us (Gal 1:4). **The weakness of our present salvational experience is the part of us that is of this earth.** There is

A Summation

The “light of the knowledge of the glory of God” involves knowing what He is really doing in Christ Jesus. It is being able to see the wisdom of the remarkable investment that both God and Jesus have made in this salvation, rather than being staggered by the consideration of it. It is being able to look at the revealed facts and reason, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:13-14).

This “knowledge” moves the insightful soul to say, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day” (2 Tim 1:12). Again, those possessing this knowledge confess with understanding, “We **know** that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one”^{NIV} (1 John 5:19).

Finally the glory that persuades us of these realities, is also the glory by which we are transformed “from glory to glory.” This transformations moves us from being spectators to participators.

IN EARTHEN VESSELS

“... in earthen vessels...” Other versions read, “jars of clay,”^{NIV} “clay jars,”^{NRSV} “vessels of earth,”^{BBE} “pots of earthenware,”^{NJB} “is held in perishable

containers,” ^{NLT} “in a perishable container, that is, our weak bodies,” ^{LIVING} “in a fragile vase of clay,” ^{WEYMOUTH} “an earthen jar,” ^{WILLIAMS} and “in [frail, human] vessels of earth.” ^{AMPLIFIED}

Here is our present liability – our “earthen vessels,” or our bodies. Elsewhere our body is referred to as “our earthly house of this tabernacle” (2 Cor 5:1). It is a far greater restriction than many dare to imagine. With the reality of this verse shining brightly in our hearts, it becomes clear why Paul referred to “our vile body” (Phil 3:21), and “the body of this death” (Rom 7:24). We must continually bring it into subjection, as it pulls us away from the treasure and our participation in the glory. Paul stated the case well. “But [like a boxer] I buffet my body [handle it roughly, discipline it by hardships] and subdue it, for fear that after proclaiming to others the Gospel and things pertaining to it, I myself should become unfit [not stand the test, be unapproved and rejected as a counterfeit]” ^{AMPLIFIED} (1 Cor 9:27).

A Point of Derision

This very point – having a treasure in an earthen vessel – was a point of derision against Paul. Those who had heard from him, including the Corinthians, could not deny the power and wisdom of what he said. **However, His vessel was held in disdain.** Here is what they said: “For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but **his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible**” (2 Cor 10:10).

This weakness and contemptibility was not owing to any casualness or sloppy appearance by Paul. It is not that he was unkempt in appearance, and used crude language. His “bodily presence” was not something that appealed to men.

While there have always been some who gloried “in appearance and not in heart” (2 Cor 5:12), here we read of a treasure that is contrasted with appearance. The contrast is one that cannot be avoided. In this case, there is no way to make the vessel equal to the contents.

Elsewhere he indicated that he carried about the results of his beatings and stoning: “for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus” (Gal 6:17). There are indications that he also had bad vision. He wrote to the Galatians, “for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, I would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me” (Gal 4:15). His physical appearance did not match the grandeur of his message. He had the treasure in an “earthen vessel.”

While there have always been some who gloried “in appearance and not in heart” (2 Cor 5:12), **here we read of a treasure that is contrasted with appearance.** The contrast is one that cannot be avoided. **In this case, there is no way to make the vessel equal to the contents.** That will only take place at the resurrection of the dead. Until then, life is contained in something that is dying. Glory is carried in something that is wretched. The point is this: the vessel, or body, itself, is what is weak and contemptible. **It cannot, therefore, become the object of our attention.** It is the treasure that is important.

A Consideration

The expression “earthen vessels” does not suggest that we should pay no

heed to them. While, by their very nature, they contrast sharply with the treasure of the “knowledge of the glory of God,” **they are to be managed and maintained to the glory of God.** Solemnly, we are told to present our “bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom 12:1). Again we are told, “Now the body is not for fornication, but **for the Lord; and the Lord for the body**” (1 Cor 6:13). And again, “Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?” (1 Cor 6:15). And still again, “therefore glorify God **in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s**” (1 Cor 6:20). We are also warned of those who teach that spiritual superiority can be achieved through the “neglecting of the body” (Col 2:23).

The point here is not the development of a particular view of the body. That is developed in other texts. **Here a Divine arrangement will be chronicled – something that God has set in place for a specific purpose – az purpose that brings glory to Him.** He has, by design, put the marvelous treasure of the knowledge of His glory in a container made of earth. He will now expound the reason for this arrangement – an arrangement that necessarily accompanies the salvation of God.

THE EXCELLENCY OF THE POWER

“^{7b} . . . that the excellency of the power . . .” Other versions read, “that the excellence of the power,” ^{NKJV} “that the surpassing greatness of the power,” ^{NASB} “that this all-surpassing power,” ^{NIV} “this extraordinary power,” ^{NRSV} “the transcendent power,” ^{RSV} “the exceeding

greatness of the power,” ^{ASV} “the surpassingness of the power,” ^{DARBY} “so that the immensity of the power,” ^{NJB} “So everyone can see that our glorious power,” ^{NLT} “To show that this superior power,” ^{IE} “to prove that its surpassing power,” ^{WILLIAMS} and “that the grandeur

and exceeding greatness of the power.” ^{AMPLIFIED}

A TREASURE WITH POWER

Here is a “treasure” that has “power.” That is not a trait of earthly treasures. The treasures of this world

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become effective only as **men** use them. They can do nothing of themselves. They obtain **power** only if they are employed – and even then, the power is owing to their use, not to their nature.

Here, however, is a “*treasure*” that of itself has power – power that has been given to it by the mighty God of heaven. **What is even more, the power is not inhibited by the frailty of the vessel in which it is contained.**

This is a power that is

that causes it to exceed all other power? One diamond may excel in glory because of its luster, or even its size. But is that the kind of excellence that is intended by this text? Indeed, it is not. **This power is excellent because of what it does – what it accomplishes.** It is greater than the power that was manifested at Sinai because it accomplishes more. It does more than was done when Israel came out of Egypt, or when they crossed the Red Sea (Ex 14:22). This is a power that achieves greater things than Israel experienced when an angel destroyed

things. Their involvements are not lofty enough. Their objectives fall far short of those that have been determined by the Savior. The “*power of His resurrection*” cannot be expected to be employed for earthly ambitions and responsibilities.

It is certainly true that all believers are responsible for living their lives to the glory of God – **but that is the whole point – “the glory of God.”** Simply getting through the day, or fulfilling earthly responsibilities, is not enough. Though required, such things are to be considered an arena in which, through us, holy angels may be taught of the “*manifold wisdom of God*” (Eph 3:10).

Settle it in your mind: **anything that can be done in mere human energy cannot be allowed first place in our lives** – no matter what it is. The purpose of salvation is not to merely get us through this world. Rather, in that process, salvation is designed to orient us for glory. **That orientation is accomplished by changing us into the image of God’s Son.**

A religion that leaves men fundamentally unchanged, even though it enables them to execute their lives with seemingly great precision, is false to the core. If conformity to the image of Christ is not the fundamental objective for the individual, their religion – all of it – is in vain.

Comprehending the Power

Paul sought for believers to be brought to a point where this “*power*” could be comprehended. “*I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know . . . what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power*” (Eph 1:16-19).

The preeminent display of this “*mighty power*” is seen in an unparalleled “*change*” that was wrought in Jesus Christ: “*Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the*

characterized by excellency and surpassing greatness. **This excellency indicates it is thoroughly adequate for the task for which it is given** – changing us “*from glory to glory.*” Whatever obstacles may be thrown before it cannot neutralize its power or diminish its effectiveness. Opposing powers are impotent in its wake. If, in fact, this power remains in the “*earthen vessel,*” **its assigned work will be accomplished.** The **only** way for this to fail of realization is for spiritual blindness to prevail, for this power works wherever the eyes have been enlightened. Only those who are blinded by the “*god of this world*” do not experience the greatness of this power.

The word “*excellency*” comes from a word meaning “an expression of extraordinary degree, excess, extraordinary amount or quality of anything.” ^{ROBERTSON} Lexically, the word means, “throwing beyond, superiority, excellence, preeminence,” ^{THAYER} “surpassing or outstanding quality, beyond measure, utterly, or to the extreme,” ^{UBS} and “a degree which exceeds extraordinarily . . . far more, much greater.” ^{LOUW-NIDA}

What is it that makes the power of reference excellent? What is there about it

Sennacherib’s army of 185,000 (2 Kgs 19:35).

None of those marvelous exhibitions of Divine power wrought a fundamental change in the people themselves. Their hearts were not altered by that power, nor were they brought through it to have the thoughts and ways of God.

But the excellency of the power that is revealed in this text is of another order. This is the power employed by God to “*change*” us into the image of Jesus – which is the predetermined purpose of God Himself (Rom 8:29)!

The Blight of the Ordinary

In Christ we are delivered from the ordinary, common, customary, and regular – all of which have to do with the mundane and mediocre. **Rest assured, extraordinary power is not given for us to accomplish ordinary things.** Heavenly potency is not granted in order to fulfill earthly objectives. One of the reasons professing believers experience so little of this “*excellency of the power*” is that they are only engaged in ordinary

In Christ we are delivered from the ordinary, common, customary, and regular – all of which have to do with the mundane and mediocre. Rest assured, extraordinary power is not given for us to accomplish ordinary things. Heavenly potency is not granted in order to fulfill earthly objectives.

heavenly places" (Eph 1:20). Jesus was brought from the dead, clothed with immortality, and enthroned at the right hand of God. **The change intended to be made in you by that very same power is certainly not an impossible thing!** That impossibility is owing to the greatness of the power being employed.

Note that Paul affirms that this magnificent and effective power has been focused to "us-ward who believe" – that is, it is intended for those with faith. Also, see that the power itself is not the point, but what it does: "according to the **WORKING** of His mighty power." **In other words, this power is designed to, and actually does, work in those who believe.** The work that it accomplishes is conforming us to the image of Jesus – changing us "from glory to glory." Furthermore, the power does not work automatically, or unattended, but is employed by the Holy Spirit – "changed from glory to glory, even as **by the Spirit of the Lord**" (3:18).

BACK TO THE POINT

Now, back to the point of the text. The remarkable treasure of the "knowledge of the glory of God" is presently contained in "earthen vessels" – vessels that are not, of themselves, adapted to contain such glory. This glory is powerful, and not in any ordinary way. Through it, there is an "excellency of the power" at work. Because of the essentiality of this working, God has arranged for it to be contained in "earthen vessels" – even though the power is infinitely greater than those vessels themselves. Ordinarily, one would think such magnificent power would shatter the vessels, making them useless.

An Exception to the Rule

Here, in fact, we have a contradiction of one of the ordinary rules of the Kingdom: "Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved"

(Matt 9:17). And again, "But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved" (Luke 5:38).

Now we are given to consider the "newness of life" being put into a fleshly and dying body. Everlasting life is found housed in a mortal body. The "excellency of the power" is being realized in a weak and frail body – **and it is all on purpose!**

You must understand that this is a temporary situation, pending your entrance into the resurrection body. As long as the world remains, and as long as we are "in the body," this is the ordained situation. "We have this treasure **in earthen vessels**" – the ultimate incompatibility. The "treasure" is contained within a body that cannot utilize its power, or capitalize upon its presence. **Rather than making us independent and self-sustaining, we will find it has made us dependent upon the Lord owning its glory.**

MAY BE OF GOD

^{7c} . . . may be of God . . . "

Other versions read, "is from God,"^{NIV} "belongs to God,"^{NRSV} "might be of God,"^{GENEVA} "will be of God,"^{NAU} "is God's,"^{NJB} "must be from God,"^{LIVING} "comes from God,"^{IE} "may be seen to belong to God,"^{WEYMOUTH} and "may be shown to be from God."^{AMPLIFIED}

Salvation is arranged so that God will receive the glory. That circumstance does require some elaboration. **This is another way of saying "true religion" will not work without God.** Even when we are granted a treasury of indispensable knowledge, it is not a knowledge of things, but of God. The glory that changes us is not the glory of some great man, or a hoary institution, or a particular thread of thought. Rather, it is "the glory of the Lord." This "knowledge" is our connection with the source of life – like an umbilical cord connects the pre-born infant with its mother. From one perspective, this "knowledge" is a facet of faith, which is "the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen" (Heb

11:1). That is knowledge in its highest form – familiarity with God and the things of God.

There is one complicating factor, however. **This "knowledge" will not function in a vacuum.** Nor, indeed, is it functional on its own. It is God who really does the work. Our knowledge is, from one perspective, the awareness that this is what is happening.

How can men begin to experience the "working of His mighty power?" How can they be liberated from the dreadful scourge of mediocrity, and become

involved in the "wonderful works of God?" How can they participate in excellent things, that require an excellent power? Will this take place through some kind of instruction, or academic tutelage? To see all of the seminars, workshops, counselors, and professed experts in living, one might be led to think such approaches are, in fact effective.

However, our text affirms the means by which true kingdom effectiveness is realized. **God Himself dispenses the treasure of spiritual knowledge, placing it within an "earthen vessel."** He does not wait for

There is one complicating factor, however. This "knowledge" will not function in a vacuum. Nor, indeed, is it functional on its own. It is God who really does the work. Our knowledge is, from one perspective, the awareness that this is what is happening.

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the resurrection to do this, but starts the work while we yet remain in these “vile bodies.” He begins when the circumstances are **not** the best, and when we are surrounded by personal infirmities, and host of enemies as well.

He does this so that “*that the grandeur and exceeding greatness of the power may be shown to be from God and not from ourselves.*” ^{AMPLIFIED} **That is, salvation is calculated to make us totally dependent upon God while the treasure is in us.** The Lord has, in Christ Jesus, put us in a situation where we are actually helpless of ourselves to do what He absolutely requires. Once we are convinced that what God directs us to do is positively required, a need for this power will be at last perceived. That perception will become the prelude to the accomplishment of the work.

I am persuaded that multitudes of

can be addressed “*in the flesh*” – with procedures and routines that will make the person think they have actually made some progress. Still, most of their time will be spent subduing uncomely things, rather than engaging in virtuous deeds.

I speak of these things with care, lest someone conclude I am speaking derisively of them. **However, I am not speaking of simply avoiding being an obviously bad person, but of actually being conformed to the image of God’s Son.** All of these lower things are effectively addressed in Christ Jesus. No person who fellowships with Christ can, in that posture, be a faulty husband, wife, child, employee, employer, etc. It simply is not possible. But, let me move on to some higher considerations – things that are more directly related to our text.

Let us take a moment and affirm

While there is a passing familiarity with Divine requirements, a system of religious thought has been embraced that does not see them as really necessary. For that reason, the power to do them is never realized.

professing believers have never really been convinced of the essentiality of moral and spiritual change. While there is a passing familiarity with Divine requirements, a system of religious thought has been embraced that does not see them as **really** necessary. For that reason, the power to do them is never realized. **There is a thread of religion in our country that moves people to ambitions that are good, yet elementary.** For example, being good fathers, mothers, children, husbands, wives, etc., is not to be despised – yet these, as ultimate goals, are too low for “*the excellency of the power.*” Others might consider the most challenging thing to be managing their anger, being a good employee, or even abstaining from immorality to be the ultimate change they can make. Yet, these also are too low “*for the excellency of the power.*” From an earthly perspective, all of these ambitions

some of these requirements. These are things that **must** be done – things for which “*the excellency of the power*” is particularly suited. They are all to be taken seriously. They are not to be considered long-term goals.

- “*Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you*” (Matt 5:44).
- “*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*” (Matt 5:48).
- “*If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me,*

cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:27).

- “*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*” (Rom 12:2)
- “*Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good*” (Rom 12:21).
- “*Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*” (1 Cor 1:10).
- “*Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men*” (1 Cor 14:20).
- “*Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong*” (1 Cor 16:13).
- “*Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you*” (2 Cor 13:11).
- “*Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is*” (Eph 5:17).
- “*Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth*” (Col 3:2).
- “*But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing*” (2 Thess 3:13).
- “*Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses*” (1 Tim 6:12).
- “*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen*” (2 Pet 3:18).

Who is the person willing to affirm these are mere options that are available for those who are more seriously

committed to the Lord? Are these not glaringly absent within the professing church? Who cannot see this?

How is it that people rarely consider things of this order? I will tell you. **It is because they appear to be beyond the circumference of human ability.** They are too lofty, too noble, too advanced for ordinary men and women! While that assessment is true, we must not stop there. **The inability of humanity is not a sufficient reason for them to be left undone! They still must be done in us!**

Right here is where our text comes in. There is such a thing as *“the excellency of the power.”* This is a power that can do these things in us – a power that is utilized by the Holy Spirit Himself. The fact that we cannot do them is not an acceptable reason for them not being done. If you have been brought to see the impossibility of doing these things, you are seeing the truth of our text. We *“have this treasure in earthen vessels.”*

Now, our attention must turn from the vessels to the treasure. The treasure is in us so that *“the excellency of the power”* can work in us. That power, however, comes from God, not from us. In fact, it cannot work in us if God is not personally involved in the matter.

Is this a situation describing the

Those who teach us to rely on our natural abilities have thrust a knife into our hearts. They have turned our eyes away from the treasure to the vessel, and diminished the requirements our Maker and Redeemer has placed upon us.

crises of life – when all hope evaporates, are our back is against the wall? **Indeed not!** This has to do with every single facet of spiritual life – the *“newness of life.”* If God is not *“working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight”* (Heb 13:21), **no genuine work for God is being done!** If God is not working in us *“to will and to do of His own good pleasure,”* **then in no sense are we working out our “own salvation with fear and trembling”** (Phil 2:12-13).

This is not a call to disengage from activity, but to focus our activity on beholding Christ and having faith. God will, so to speak, take the matter from there.

Positive Thinking

There is an increasing amount of talk within the professed church about “positive thinking.” Some address the subject more directly than others, but it is gaining more and more popularity.

People are being taught that change comes by their own thinking. We are being told to be joyful, and certain genes will awaken in our system that will promote healing. Others tell us that if we think we can do it, we will at last be able to do so. Of course, none of them attempt anything too great – like adding eighteen inches to your height, as Jesus challenged them to do (Matt 6:27).

Those who teach us to rely on our natural abilities have thrust a knife into our hearts. They have turned our eyes away from the treasure to the vessel, and diminished the requirements our Maker and Redeemer has placed upon us.

When we see spiritual life as it is intended to be seen, the need for Divine assistance will become apparent. That is the way salvation has been deliberately structured. It has been so designed that God WILL receive the glory because He DOES do the work.

AND NOT OF US

^{7c} **... and not of us.** Other versions read, *“and not from ourselves,”* NASB *“and not from us,”* NIV *“and does not come from us,”* NRSV *“comes not from us,”* BBE *“not our own,”* NJB *“and not to originate in us,”* WEYMOUTH *“not mine,”* WILLIAMS and *“not from myself.”* MONTGOMERY

Throughout the entirety of salvation, from its planning to its consummation, from its initiation to its completion, **the effectiveness of the power is “not of us.”** It simply is not possible for this fact to be violated. Not so much as a weightless mote having to do with salvation can be accomplished independently of *“the excellency of the*

power,” which is wielded by God alone.

In a moment of keen spiritual insight the Psalmist cried out, **“Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake”** (Psa 115:1). After 430 years of bondage, Israel was reduced to a state of hopelessness. If God did not help them, they simply would not be helped. When Israel faced the Red Sea, they faced an impossible circumstance. Their **only** hope was that God would work! If the angel of Lord did not deliver Daniel from the lions, he would be killed by them. If the angel of the Lord did not deliver Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from

the fiery furnace, they would have been burned up. What they experienced was *“not of”* themselves.

This is the manner of salvation. It is, in every way, *“not of us.”* **It is designed that way.** That is precisely why we cannot be saved by a system of Law – because that kind of system causes it to be *“of us.”* That is why *“self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body”*^{NASB} (Col 2:23), are not the answer. They are all *“of us.”*

The only way a religion can be successfully promoted that causes men to rely upon themselves, is for

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the requirements to be reduced. As soon as the objective is minimized, the corresponding need for “the excellency of the power” is also reduced.

I will wax bold and define why

much of the modern church attempts to do so much on its own. It is because they are doing such little things. They are not doing anything large and significant enough to require “the excellency of the power,” which the Lord alone can wield.

That is why little of the power is realized. It is a sad situation, nevertheless it does exist. May the Lord hasten the day when there is a great awakening of the grandeur of salvation, and of the greatness of the power that comes with it.

CONCLUSION

The text we have reviewed assists in delivering us from a merely philosophical view of religion. In a time when academia and human wisdom are being unduly exalted, this is an especially precious deliverance. The thorough inadequacy of much of the “Christianity” of our day is evident. Many of the professed ministries within the church are

- ☛ Giving (6)
- ☛ Ruling (7)
- ☛ Showing mercy (8)

1 Corinthians 12:8-10

- ☛ The word of wisdom (9)
- ☛ The word of knowledge (10)
- ☛ Faith (11)
- ☛ Gifts of healing (12)

Many of the professed ministries within the church are devoted to recovering fallen members and trying to enlist the interest of indifferent members. If it were not for solving problems, many religious careers would become obsolete.

devoted to recovering fallen members and trying to enlist the interest of indifferent members. If it were not for solving problems, many religious careers would become obsolete. However, none of the gifts God has placed within the church are obviated by the resolution of difficulty. Their objective is to edify, strength, build up, and make the people ready for glory.

Today, the ministries that are being demanded, and become increasingly popular, differ significantly from the various gifts that the Lord has placed within His church. Let me briefly rehearse these genuine gifts from God.

Acts 20:28

- ☛ Overseers (1)

Romans 12:6-8

- ☛ Prophecy (2)
- ☛ Ministering (3)
- ☛ Teaching (3)
- ☛ Exhorting (5)

- ☛ The working of miracles (13)
- ☛ Prophecy ALREADY MENTIONED
- ☛ Discerning of spirits (14)
- ☛ Divers kinds of tongues (15)
- ☛ Interpretation of tongues (16)

1 Corinthians 12:28-29

- ☛ Apostles (17)
- ☛ Prophets ALREADY MENTIONED
- ☛ Teachers ALREADY MENTIONED
- ☛ Miracles ALREADY MENTIONED
- ☛ Gifts of healings ALREADY MENTIONED
- ☛ Helps (18)
- ☛ Governments (19)
- ☛ Diversities of tongues ALREADY MENTIONED

Ephesians 4:11

- ☛ Apostles ALREADY MENTIONED
- ☛ Prophets ALREADY MENTIONED
- ☛ Evangelists (20)
- ☛ Pastors and Teachers (21)

1 Peter 4:10-11

- ☛ Speaking (22)
- ☛ Ministering (23)

Whatever you may think about the validity and contemporary presence of these gifts, you must admit that only God can give them!

As to the source of these various gifts, the Spirit is very precise.

- ☛ The Holy Spirit made men overseers (Acts 20:28).
- ☛ Gifts according to the grace of God (Rom 12:6)
- ☛ Prophesying according to the proportion of faith (Rom 12:6).
- ☛ Gifts “given by the Spirit” (1 Cor 12:8-10).
- ☛ All gifts are divided to men, and worked in them, by the Holy Spirit, and in strict accord with His will (1 Cor 12:11).
- ☛ God set the gifts in the church (1 Cor 12:28).
- ☛ The risen and ascended Christ gave gifts unto men (Eph 4:8-11).
- ☛ The gift is received (1 Pet 4:10).
- ☛ The gifted are stewards of the manifold grace of God (1 Pet 4:10).
- ☛ The gifts are fulfilled according to the ability that God gives (1 Pet 4:11).

In all of these things, “the excellency of the power is of God,” and not of men. All of them – every single one of them – are received from God, and fulfilled by His power. **None of them can be effectively emulated by men. There is no vein of worldly wisdom that can confer the ability to employ these gifts.**

Men may choose to argue about whether or not these gifts are active, but that is all a foolish waste of time. **God alone gives them, and God alone makes them effective.** That is the point of the texts. Also, it is folly to postulate that every single assembly of

believers has all twenty-three of the gifts mentioned – or that these are intended to be an exhaustive list. The point being made is that they all come from God, and fulfill His purpose. That purpose is delineated in Ephesians 4:12-16), and it, and in all of its facets, emphatically

requires “*the excellency of the power.*”

Let every child of God embark on an emphasis of life that requires the working of God. Put your hand to something that requires the “excellency of the power” of God.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 1/7/2005. In this session, we continue our current series of lessons on the Epistle of Second Corinthians. The eighteenth lesson will cover verses eight through twelve of the fourth chapter: **“A DICHOTOMUS EXPERIENCE.”** Having “*this treasure*” of Divine glory in an earthen vessel produces a human experience of contradiction and conflict. This all by design, and is not intended to cause us to faint. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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COMMENTARY on Daniel: <http://wotruth.com/Daniel.htm>

COMMENTARY on Colossians: <http://wotruth.com/Colossians.htm>

COMMENTARY on Second Corinthians: <http://wotruth.com/2Corinthians.htm>