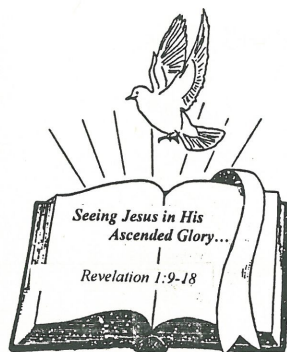


Seeing Jesus in His Ascended Glory...

A Journey of the Heart



Teaching 1 of 4

"To regain her lost power the church must see heaven opened and have a transforming vision of God."

A.W. Tozer

Well of Life Ministries

Altha Burts

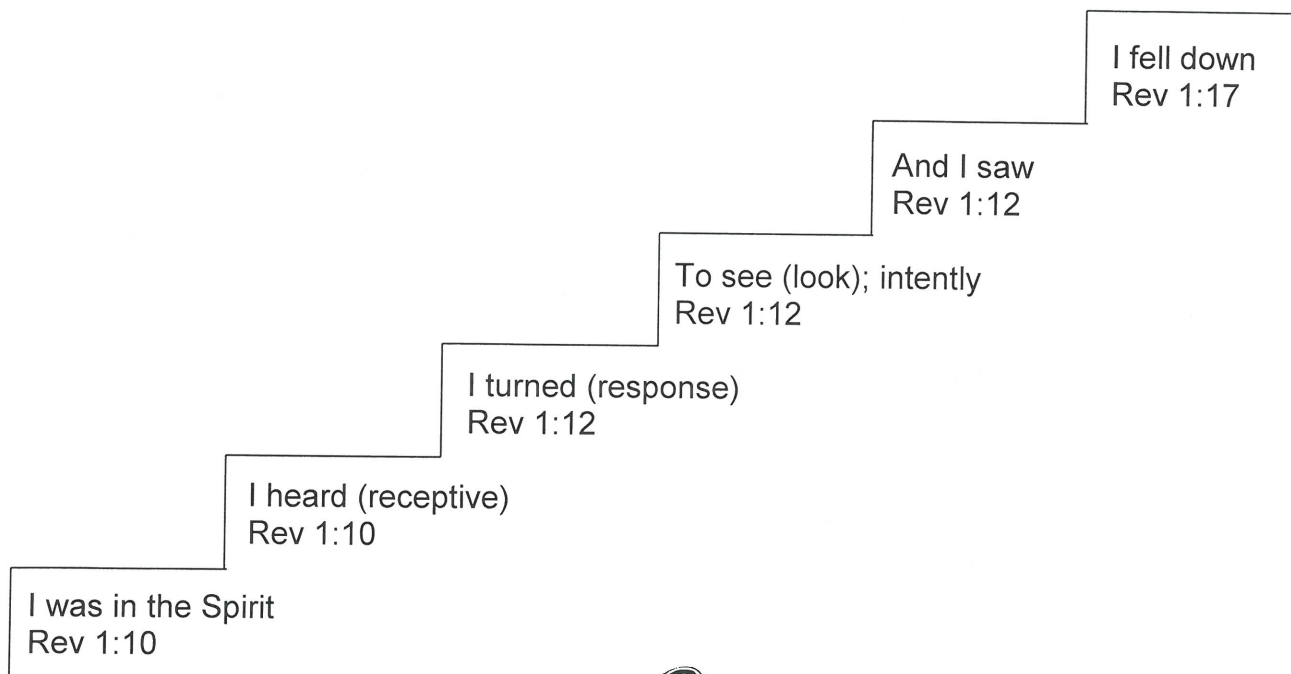
Table of Contents

Spiritually Positioning Diagram	Page 2
Teaching Notes (Unedited)	Page 3
Reflection Passages for Purifying our Gaze	Page 11
Reflections for Going Deeper	Page 15
Removing the Veil	Page 16
Apprehending God	Page 27
The Open Secret	Page 35

Spiritually Positioning

***"I was in the Spirit** on the Lord's Day, and I **heard** behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet... then I **turned** to **see** the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands... and when I **saw** Him, I **fell** at His feet as dead. But he laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. "I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have **the keys** of Hades and of Death."*
Revelation 1:10, 12, 17, 18

- I was in the spirit on the Lord's day...
- I heard behind me...
- Then I turned to see...
- And having turned I saw...
- When I saw Him, I fell at His feet...



Teaching Notes (Unedited)

These notes are provided as a rough draft in hopes that it will aid you in your review and study of this teaching/communication of 6/17/02.

I have entitled this evening's teaching, Seeing Jesus in His Ascended Glory, A Journey of the Heart, which is the first of a four part series.

Before beginning the teaching this evening I would like to share a little of my own spiritual journey from which this teaching flows. Over 16 years ago, after Greg and I were married, and Esther was still in diapers, the Lord began to lead me into passages of scripture which were instrumental in creating in me a longing to 'see' the Lord's glory in a way I had not seen Him before. One of those passages which created this hunger was Isaiah 6:1-5:

¹In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.

²Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings; with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

³And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!"

⁴And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

⁵So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the king, the Lord of Hosts."

I wanted so much to see like Isaiah was enabled to see the glory of the Lord. As I reflected on this passage, desiring to see the truth of which it expressed, the Lord brought me to Matthew 5:8. "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." Then I realized this was a journey of the heart.

So, He began the work of removing veils, one after another in areas of my heart that hindered me from seeing the Lord as I so desired to see Him. I spent the next few years in many passages 'beholding the glory of the Lord' and one particular passage was Revelation 1:9-20.

As I studied and meditated on the Lord's glory, as He was seen by John on the island of Patmos, I began to understand a little more how private our journey sometimes is. I felt like I was on an island with the Lord myself, and this went on for an extended period of time.

After a few more years of intensive study and veil removing, I began to see that which my heart so desired, I began to see what Jesus had become in His glory. I

share some of the fruit of my pursuit with you this evening. Our main passage of scripture will be from the book of Revelation beginning in chapter 1, verse 9 and continuing through verse 19.

But before we look at that passage I thought a helpful place to begin would be to quote from one of my favorite resources, The Pulpit Commentary. It will help frame our mind as to the importance of beholding (or seeing) Jesus in His ascended glory and also will prepare our hearts for prayer.

“That John should have been favored with this glorious vision is but in keeping with what was often granted to the prophets of the Lord –

- To Moses, at the burning bush (Exodus 3),
- To Isaiah, in the temple (Isaiah 6),
- To Jeremiah, at his consecration to his prophetic office (Jeremiah 1), and likewise
- To Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1); and
- To the three chief apostles; Peter, James, and John at the transfiguration (Matt 17:1-8);
- St. John at Patmos (Revelation 1); and
- Paul at Damascus and when caught up to heaven (Acts 9:1-9; I Cor 12:2).”

“All these visions were designed to better fit and qualify them to speak for Christ to His people, and they teach us that those who are successful in speaking for Christ must have exalted ideas concerning Him. In some form or the other they must see His glory, or they will have but little to say, and that little they will not say as they should. ‘I beseech thee show me thy glory,’ may well be the prayer of all those who are to speak in the Lord’s name (Exodus 33:18).”

Now let’s open our Bibles to Revelation, chapter 1... you may want to follow along as I read:

⁹I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

¹⁰I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet,

¹¹saying, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,” and, “What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches

which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.”

¹²Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands,

¹³and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.

¹⁴His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire;

¹⁵His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters;

¹⁶He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.

¹⁷And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.

¹⁸I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.

¹⁹Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are...

“Write the things which you have seen and the things which are...” Now the picture John gives us of our Lord is almost beyond description. John seeing the glory of His person was likened to nothing he had seen before in Jesus.

But remember, in the Gospels we read that John was one of the three Apostles that were on the mountain when Jesus was transfigured. Matthew tells us: “Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, and led them upon a mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them, His face shone like the sun and His clothes became white as the light...” (Matthew 17:1-8). There they were struck with wonder. Here John falls before God as dead (Revelation 1:17). John became aware of Jesus in His ascended glory and was never the same after ‘that day.’

Let me share a quote that really made an imprint on my heart years ago,

“You know you walk along with the Lord Jesus, for years sometimes, and then one day while you have been walking, partnering with Him, side-by-side, He stops you and takes one step more and steps out in front of you and turns to you and looks deep into your eyes and says...
‘I AM GOD!’”

John was never the same after 'this' revelation.

Now in verse 10 he says that he heard behind him a loud voice like a trumpet. In the Old Testament we read that God's voice comes to us as a 'still small voice' (1 Kings 19:12). But when the voices of the human heart are stilled, that still small voice will always ring forth with a penetrating sound (Heb 3:15; Heb 12:25, 27).

I believe we do not receive the deepest revelations because we are so occupied with all the 'other' voices in our lives, we are occupied with the many other things which choke out our spiritual sensitivity... and our ability to spiritually hear and see (Mark 4:13-20).

I believe it is not because God is not speaking that we do not hear, nor is it because God is not here that we do not see Him. But, we do not hear Him as we ought or see Him as we ought, because we have not learned to **position** ourselves to do so (Rev 1:10; Hab 2:1).

Let me share a quote from The Pursuit of God by A.W. Tozer that is very descriptive of this thought:

"Our trouble is that we have established bad thought habits. We habitually think of the visible world as real and doubt the reality of any other. We do not deny the existence of the spiritual world, but we doubt that it is real, in the accepted meaning of the word."

"The world of sense intrudes upon our attention day and night for the whole of our lifetime. It is clamorous, insistent and self-demonstrating. It does not appeal to our faith; it is here, assaulting our five senses, demanding to be accepted as real and final. But sin has so clouded the lenses of our hearts that we cannot see the other reality, the City of God, shining around us. The world of sense triumphs. The visible becomes the enemy of the invisible; the temporal, of the eternal. That is the curse inherited by every member of Adam's tragic race."

"At the root of the Christian life lies belief in the invisible. The object of the Christian's faith is unseen reality. If we truly want to follow God we must seek to be **other-worldly** (Psalm 91)."

"Be still and know that I am God," the psalmist says (Psalm 46:10).

Again, the vision of the glorified Lord Jesus is one of the most wonderful word pictures in the Bible. We know that Stephen and Paul saw Him. We read in Acts of Stephen being full of the Holy Spirit, gazing into heaven and seeing the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And, again of Paul experiencing an encounter with the glorified Lord as he was journeying toward Damascus. Only John

leaves us with a description of Him in His glory. What a tremendous gift we have through the Apostle John!

He was never the same because of what happened 'that day'. It is important for us to remember that Jesus meeting John as He did on the island of Patmos was really, in many ways, an encounter for the whole church. How do we know this? Because John says in verse 9, "I, John, your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." He might have said, "I, John, the Apostle and teacher," but he didn't. There is a reason for this. He said, "I, John, your brother and companion (sharer and participator) in the tribulation and kingdom and patient endurance (which are) in Jesus Christ" (Amplified Bible 1:9).

As a companion (a co-participant) in tribulation he is saying, "I've got problems too, just as you do." He is identifying with us, isn't he? As a matter of fact, John had a few more problems in this season of life. He was alone and exiled on the island of Patmos because of the extreme persecution of the Christians. He was under severe pressure.

Now John wasn't aware, but this persecution would be going on for 250 years. He didn't know it, but Jesus did. The church didn't know it, but Jesus did. Jesus knows all things, doesn't He? And He knows just how to prepare each of us for what is coming next. He knows what unveiling of His Personhood, what aspect of His glory we need to know in order for us to turn to Him in time of need.

Jesus begins His communication to John by saying, "I AM the Alpha and the Omega" (Isaiah 44:6), "I know the beginning from the end." "I see the beginning from the end. I am the seer and controller of all history."

He says to John, "I AM the Alpha and the Omega, the Eternal One without limitation of time." "I know what you are headed into. It is in this situation, with this new outbreak of persecution, this pressure, this circumstance, that Jesus comes to and reveals Himself in His ascended glory (Revelation 1:9-15)."

Now, again it is important to note, Jesus is not just making contact with John to encourage John alone. Jesus is bringing a message through John to the whole church. This revelation of our Lord Jesus is for us and it is crucial for us to receive (John 16:14).

Jesus wants us to see Him in His ascended glory and to hear Him say to us personally (Rom 10:17), "I've got the keys." "Do not be afraid; I AM the First and the Last. I AM He who lives and was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore. Amen. I have the keys of Hades (the unseen realm) and of death..."

Now we often think that this verse is only saying I have the keys of hades and of hell. Then, of course, there would be only two keys. But all we know is that the word "keys" is plural and that it can mean 2 or more.

So let's look at it in another way as well, and I believe the whole of scripture will support this view. I think He was saying to John, and He is saying to us as well, "I've got the answer to whatever has you locked up, bound up. I've got the keys to your situation."

- Whatever habit binds you (Matt 16:19; II Cor 3:17),
- Whatever attitude has you tied up so that you feel helpless and hopeless (Psalm 42: 5, 11).
- I've got the keys... I've got full access and dominion over everything (Eph 1:22; Phil 2:9-11).
- Whatever operation is at work that has gotten you under its power, I have a key that fits that situation – that answers that need (Phil 4:19).
- There is not a situation, a bondage, a sickness that I do not have the power or willingness to free you from (Acts 10:38). Jesus is telling us, this is who I AM, I have the keys!

The glorious, all Powerful Lord Jesus is reaching out with His right hand and saying, I AM presently here among you with the keys that will answer whatever it is that confronts you... just turn to Me...see Me in my Omnipotence and Authority and you will never be the same. Now Jesus wants us, as a church, to receive this revelation of Himself...and He gives us the keys in verses 10 and 12.

The first thing that John says is: "I was in the spirit on the Lord's day..."

Jack Hayford puts it this way:

"Now being in the spirit is not some kind of mystical frame of mind. It isn't striking some mystical stance. Being in the spirit is the person who refuses to be dominated by what is happening around him, by what he physically sees or emotionally feels. Circumstances do not control him or her. Walking in the spirit is acknowledging who Jesus is and the things that He has done for us. Walking in the spirit is acknowledging what Jesus promises to bring about by acknowledging truth and keeping it ever before us."

Walking in the spirit is choosing to turn to Him rather than the arm of the flesh. It is a spiritual mindset to believe God, it is a walk of faith (II Cor 5:7; Gal 2:20; Romans 8:5). Looking at those things that are unseen, not seen (II Cor 4:16-18; Romans 8:5). Evaluating everything according to "it is written" (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10).

John says "I was in the spirit on the Lord's day." Why?...because he chose to be. He was spiritually **positioned** to receive this revelation. People who receive revelations of Jesus are people who are "in the spirit" while in the midst of stressful

circumstances and obedient to the light (truth) they have, so that more can be given (I Peter 1:22).

The second thing John says we also find in verse 10 is, "I heard behind me a loud voice..."

When John heard the voice he turned to see who was speaking to him. Now this is a very important point. We need to recognize that when the Lord speaks to our heart, we need to stop (I Sam 3:9; Luke 10:39)!

We need to stop what we are doing and turn to see what He is speaking to us about (Eph 5:17; Luke 10:39). We need to be still and hear what He is saying to us (Luke 10:39, 42). If we are honest with ourselves, we must admit that oftentimes our first response or inclination is not to turn but to rationalize... to ignore His promptings, the promptings of the Holy Spirit (I Thess 5:19; Eph 4:30). We just keep right on doing what we are doing. It is an ingrained habit, isn't it? Always doing... doing... doing... Martha, Martha...(Luke 10:41). From this, we must repent (Heb 6:1; I John 1:9).

But when we do turn in obedience, this is where the process begins (II Cor 3:16). We begin to receive deeper revelations of Jesus' power, His authority, His glory, as well as how His all-encompassing victory is meant to operate in and through our lives (Luke 17:20-21; Eph 1:19). He so much wants to reveal Himself to us this way. And, He gives us the key, in these passages, as to what facilitates revelation knowledge (I Peter 2:8; Eph 1:17; I Cor 2:9-12).

And the last thing John says to us, in verse 12, is "I turned to 'see' the voice that spoke to me..."

Now the word "to see" in the Greek is a word that requires activity on our part. It means a taking heed, expressing a more earnest contemplation. It requires a spiritual discipline and it requires **focus**.

Now what happened to John when he turned and gazed contemplatively, intently to see? Well the scripture tells us he saw and then he fell down and worshipped (Matt 5:8). So you see, the Lord Himself furnishes us with the key that opens up opportunity for us to see Him in His glory.

1. We are to be 'in the spirit' during times of being pressed.
 - We are not to be governed by our circumstances.
 - We are to have a spiritual mindset.
2. When we hear His voice:
 - We are to stop doing what we are doing, and
 - Turn to Him, and
 - Be intent on hearing what He is saying to us.

3. We are to contemplate His glory as we behold Him in His Word, and
- Reflect on those things about Himself that He has drawn our attention to i.e., His Omnipotence, His Omnipresence, His Sovereignty, and His Authority.

And by being responsive and obedient to the direction given in this passage, **in time** we can expect the Lord to reveal Himself more deeply to us as He is now in His glory (Heb 11:6). The vision John has of the Lord Jesus Christ is overwhelming in the picture it gives us of our Savior/King but most important to us is to see its significance and relevance to us.

Jesus invites us to “come up higher,” to behold Him in His ascended glory and to **partake** in His victory and authority. He has given us the keys that serve to facilitate the opening of this vision for us (Rev 1:10).

Will we stop what we are doing when we hear Him and turn?

Will we stay tuned long enough for us to truly **see** Him?

He has given us the keys, the knowledge, this evening,
and now the **choice** is ours.

Jesus said in John 14:21, “The person who has My commands and keeps them is the one who (really) loves Me; and whoever (really) loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I (too) will love him and will show (reveal, manifest) Myself to him. (I will let Myself be clearly seen by him and make Myself real to him.) The Amplified Bible

Let us respond to His beckoning...

Come Up Higher Church,

I want to reveal My glory!

Passages to Help Purify our Gaze

Purifying our Gaze of Jesus

The Glorified Christ

Seen at the Transfiguration

Mark 9:2-3 Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them.

As Portrayed by Himself

John 1:51 And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

Appeared at Paul's Conversion

Acts 9:4-5 Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads."

Described by the Revelator

Revelation 1:13-16 And in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.

Revelation 19:11-13 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

The Glory of Christ

Manifested at His Second Coming

Matthew 16:27 For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.

Shared by Believers

Matthew 19:28 So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Beheld upon the Mount

Luke 9:32 But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him.

Revealed in the Incarnation

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Possessed before the Foundation of the World

John 17:5 And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

Ascribed by the Heavenly Host

Revelation 5:12 Saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

Jesus' Authority

Matthew 7:29 For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Mark 1:27 Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him."

John 5:27 And has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.

Jesus' Lordship

Luke 6:5 And He said to them, "The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath."

Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.

I Corinthians 8:6 Yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.

I Corinthians 12:3 Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' Preeminence

John 3:31 He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.

Romans 14:9 For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

Colossians 1:18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

Hebrews 1:4 Having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

Hebrews 3:3 For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house.

Revelation 1:11 Saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."

Jesus' Dominion

Eternal

Isaiah 9:6-7 For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

Universal

Zechariah 9:10 I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem; the battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be 'from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.'

Over Nature

Matthew 8:27 So the men marveled, saying, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"

Over the Church

Ephesians 1:22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church.

Over Heavenly Powers

I Peter 3:22 Who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.

Jesus' Exaltation to Heavenly Places

Mark 16:19 So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.

Luke 22:69 Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God.

Ephesians 1:20 Which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.

Philippians 2:9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name.

Revelation 5:12 Saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

Taken from Thompson Chain Reference Bible

Reflections For Going Deeper

Removing the Veil

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. (Hebrews 10:19)

Among the famous sayings of the church fathers, none is better known than Augustine's, "Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee."

The great saint states here in few words the origin and interior history of the human race. God made us for Himself—this is the only explanation that satisfies the heart of a thinking man, whatever his wild reason may say. Should faulty education and perverse reasoning lead a man to conclude otherwise, there is little that any Christian can do for him. For such a man I have no message. My appeal is addressed to those who have been previously taught in secret by the wisdom of God. I speak to thirsty hearts whose longings have been awakened by the touch of God within them, and such as they need no reasoned proof. Their restless hearts furnish all the proof they need.

God formed us for Himself. *The Shorter Catechism*, "Agreed upon by the Reverend Assembly of Divines at Westminster," as the old *New England Primer* has it, asks the ancient questions *what* and *why* and answers them in one short sentence hardly matched in any uninspired work. "Question: What is the chief end of man? Answer: Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." With this agree the four and twenty elders who fall on their faces to worship Him that liveth forever and ever, saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Revelation 4:11).

God formed us for His pleasure, and so formed us that we, as well as He, can, in divine communion, enjoy the sweet and mysterious mingling of kin-

dred personalities. He meant us to see Him and live with Him and draw our life from His smile. But we have been guilty of that "foul revolt" of which Milton speaks when describing the rebellion of Satan and his hosts. We have broken with God. We have ceased to obey Him or love Him, and in guilt and fear have fled as far as possible from His presence.

Yet, who can flee from His presence when the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him? when as the wisdom of Solomon testifies, "the Spirit of the Lord filleth the world"? The omnipresence of the Lord is one thing and is a solemn fact necessary to His perfection. The manifest Presence is another thing altogether, and from that Presence we have fled, like Adam, to hide among the trees of the garden, or like Peter, to shrink away crying, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8).

So the life of man upon the earth is a life away from the Presence, wrenched loose from that "blissful center" which is our right and proper dwelling place, our first estate which we kept not, the loss of which is the cause of our unceasing restlessness.

The whole work of God in redemption is to undo the tragic effects of that foul revolt, and to bring us back again into right and eternal relationship with Himself. This requires that our sins be disposed of satisfactorily, that a full reconciliation be effected and the way opened for us to return again into conscious communion with God and to live again in the Presence as before. Then by His prevenient working within us He moves us to return. This first comes to our notice when our restless hearts feel a yearning for the presence of God and we say within ourselves, "I will arise and go to my Father." That is the first step, and as the Chinese sage Lao-tze has said, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with a first step."

The interior journey of the soul from the wilds of sin into the enjoyed presence of God is beautifully illustrated in the Old Testament tabernacle. The returning sinner first entered the outer court

where he offered a blood sacrifice on the brazen altar and washed himself in the laver that stood near it. Then he passed through a veil into the holy place where no natural light could come, but the golden candlestick which spoke of Jesus, the Light of the World, threw its soft glow over all. There also was the shewbread to tell of Jesus, the Bread of Life, and the altar of incense, a figure of unceasing prayer.

Though the worshiper had enjoyed so much, still he had not yet entered the presence of God. Another veil separated from the Holy of Holies where above the mercy seat dwelt the very God Himself in awful and glorious manifestation. While the tabernacle stood, only the high priest could enter there, and that but once a year, with blood which he offered for his sins and the sins of the people. It was this last veil which was rent when our Lord gave up the ghost on Calvary, and the sacred writer explains that this rending of the veil opened the way for every worshiper in the world to come by the new and living way straight into the divine Presence.

Everything in the New Testament accords with this Old Testament picture. Ransomed men need no longer pause in fear to enter the Holy of Holies. *God wills that we should push on into His presence and live our whole life there.* This is to be known to us in conscious experience. It is more than a doctrine to be held; it is a life to be enjoyed every moment of every day.

This Flame of the Presence was the beating heart of the Levitical order. Without it all the appointments of the tabernacle were characters of some unknown language, having no meaning for Israel or for us. The greatest fact of the tabernacle was that *Jehovah was there*; a Presence was waiting within the veil.

Similarly, the presence of God is the central fact of Christianity. At the heart of the Christian message is God Himself waiting for His redeemed children to push in to conscious awareness of His presence. That type of Christianity which happens now to be the vogue knows this Presence only in theory. It

fails to stress the Christian's privilege of present realization. According to its teachings we are in the presence of God positionally, and nothing is said about the need to experience that Presence actually. The fiery urge that drove men like McCheyne is wholly missing. And the present generation of Christians measures itself by this imperfect rule. Ignoble contentment takes the place of burning zeal. We are satisfied to rest in our judicial possessions and, for the most part, we bother ourselves very little about the absence of personal experience.

Who is this within the veil who dwells in fiery manifestations? It is none other than God Himself.

"One God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible." It is "one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God; begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God; begotten, not made; being of one substance with the Father."

And it is "the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified." Yet this holy Trinity is one God, for

"we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one: the glory equal and the majesty co-eternal."

So in part run the ancient creeds, and so the inspired Word declares.

Behind the veil is God, that God after whom the world, with strange inconsistency, has felt, "if haply they might . . . find him" (Acts 17:27). He has discovered Himself to some extent in nature, but more perfectly in the Incarnation. Now He waits to show Himself in ravishing fullness to the humble of soul and the pure in heart.

The world is perishing for lack of the knowledge of God and the Church is famishing for want of His presence. The instant cure of most of our religious ills would be to enter the Presence in spiritual experience, to become suddenly aware that we are in God and God is in us. This would lift us out of our pitiful narrowness and cause our hearts to be enlarged. This would burn away the impurities from our lives as the bugs and fungi were burned away by the fire that dwelt in the bush.

What a broad world to roam in, what a sea to swim in is this God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is *eternal*. He antedates time and is wholly independent of it. Time began in Him and will end in Him. To it He pays no tribute and from it He suffers no change.

He is *immutable*. He has never changed and can never change in any smallest measure. To change He would need to go from better to worse or from worse to better. He cannot do either, for being perfect He cannot become more perfect, and if He were to become less perfect He would be less than God.

He is *omniscient*. He knows in one free and effortless act all matter, all spirit, all relationships, all events. He has no past and He has no future. He *is*, and none of the limiting and qualifying terms used of creatures can apply to Him.

Love and mercy and righteousness are His, and *holiness* so ineffable that no comparisons or figures will avail to express it. Only fire can give even a remote conception of it. In fire He appeared at the burning bush; in the pillar of fire He dwelt through all the long wilderness journey. The fire that glowed between the wings of the cherubim in the holy place was called the Shekinah, the Presence, through the years of Israel's glory, and when the Old had given place to the New, He came at Pentecost as a fiery flame and rested upon each disciple.

Spinoza wrote of the intellectual love of God, and he had a measure of truth there. But the highest love of God is not intellectual, it is spiritual. God is Spirit and only the spirit of a man can know Him re-

ally. In the deep spirit of a man the fire must glow or his love is not the true love of God. The great of the kingdom have been those who loved God more than others did. We all know who they have been and gladly pay tribute to the depth and sincerity of their devotion. We have but to pause for a moment and their names come trooping past us, smelling of myrrh and aloes and cassia out of the ivory palaces.

Frederick Faber was one whose soul panted after God as the roe deer pants after the water brook, and the measure in which God revealed Himself to his seeking heart set the good man's whole life afire with a burning adoration rivaling that of the seraphim before the throne. His love for God extended to the three Persons of the Godhead equally, yet he seemed to feel for each One a special kind of love reserved for Him alone. Of God the Father he sings:

Only to sit and think of God
Oh what a joy it is!
To think the thought, to breathe the
Name;
Earth has no higher bliss.
Father of Jesus, love's reward!
What rapture it will be,
Prostrate before Thy throne to lie,
And gaze and gaze on Thee!

His love for the Person of Christ was so intense that it threatened to consume him. It burned within him as a sweet and holy madness and flowed from his lips like molten gold. In one of his sermons he says,

Wherever we turn in the church of God, there is Jesus. He is the beginning, middle and end of everything to us. . . . There is nothing good, nothing holy, nothing beautiful, nothing joyous which He is not to His servants. No one need to be poor, because, if he chooses, he can have Jesus for his own property and possession. No one need be downcast, for Jesus is the joy of heaven, and it is His joy to enter into sorrowful hearts. We can exaggerate about many things; but

we can never exaggerate our obligation to Jesus or the compassionate abundance of the love of Jesus to us. All our lives long we might talk of Jesus, and yet we should never come to an end of the sweet things that might be said of Him. Eternity will not be long enough to learn all He is, or to praise Him for all He has done, but then, that matters not; for we shall be always with Him, and we desire nothing more.

And addressing our Lord directly he says to Him:

I love Thee so, I know not how
My transports to control;
Thy love is like a burning fire
Within my very soul.

Faber's blazing love extended also to the Holy Spirit. Not only in his theology did he acknowledge His deity and full equality with the Father and the Son, but he celebrated it constantly in his songs and in his prayers. He literally pressed his forehead to the ground in his eager, fervid worship of the Third Person of the Godhead. In one of his great hymns to the Holy Spirit he sums up his burning devotion thus:

O Spirit, beautiful and dread!
My heart is fit to break
With love of all Thy tenderness
For us poor sinners' sake.

I have risked the tedium of quotation that I might show by pointed example what I have set out to say, viz., that God is so vastly wonderful, so utterly and completely delightful that He can, without anything other than Himself, meet and overflow the deepest demands of our total nature, mysterious and deep as that nature is. Such worship as Faber knew (and he is but one of a great company which no man can number) can never come from a mere doctrinal knowledge of God. Hearts that are "fit to break" with love for the Godhead are those who have been in the Presence and have looked

with opened eye upon the majesty of Deity. Men of the breaking hearts had a quality about them not known to nor understood by common men. They habitually spoke with spiritual authority. They had been in the presence of God and they reported what they saw there.

They were prophets, not scribes, for the scribe tells us what he has read, and the prophet tells what he has seen. The distinction is not an imaginary one. Between the scribe who has read and the prophet who has seen there is a difference as wide as the sea. We are overrun today with orthodox scribes, but the prophets, where are they? The hard voice of the scribe sounds over evangelicalism, but the church waits for the tender voice of the saint who has penetrated the veil and has gazed with inward eye upon the wonder that is God. And yet, thus to penetrate, to push in sensitive living experience into the holy Presence, is a privilege open to every child of God.

With the veil removed by the rending of Jesus' flesh, with nothing on God's side to prevent us from entering, why do we tarry without? Why do we consent to abide all our days just outside the Holy of Holies and never enter at all to look upon God? We hear the Bridegroom say, "Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely" (Song of Solomon 2:14). We sense that the call is for us, but still we fail to draw near, and the years pass and we grow old and tired in the outer courts of the tabernacle. What hinders us?

The answer usually given, simply that we are "cold," will not explain all the facts. There is something more serious than coldness of heart, something that may be back of that coldness and be the cause of its existence. What is it? What but the presence of a *veil in our hearts*? A veil not taken away as the first veil was, but which remains there still shutting out the light and hiding the face of God from us. It is the veil of our fleshly, fallen nature living on, unjudged within us, uncrucified and unrepudiated. It is the close-woven veil of the self-life which we have never truly ac-

knowledge, of which we have been secretly ashamed, and which for these reasons we have never brought to the judgment of the cross. It is not too mysterious, this opaque veil, nor is it hard to identify. We have but to look into our own hearts and we shall see it there, sewn and patched and repaired it may be, but there nevertheless, an enemy to our lives and an effective block to our spiritual progress.

This veil is not a beautiful thing and it is not a thing about which we commonly care to talk. But I am addressing the thirsting souls who are determined to follow God, and I know they will not turn back because the way leads temporarily through the blackened hills. The urge of God within them will assure their continuing pursuit. They will face the facts however unpleasant and endure the cross for the joy set before them. So I am bold to name the threads out of which this inner veil is woven.

It is woven of the fine threads of the self-life, the hyphenated sins of the human spirit. They are not something we *do*, they are something we *are*, and therein lies both their subtlety and their power.

To be specific, the self-sins are self-righteousness, self-pity, self-confidence, self-sufficiency, self-admiration, self-love and a host of others like them. They dwell too deep within us and are too much a part of our natures to come to our attention till the light of God is focused upon them. The grosser manifestations of these sins—egotism, exhibitionism, self-promotion—are strangely tolerated in Christian leaders, even in circles of impeccable orthodoxy. They are so much in evidence as actually, for many people, to become identified with the gospel. I trust it is not a cynical observation to say that they appear these days to be a requisite for popularity in some sections of the church visible. Promoting self under the guise of promoting Christ is currently so common as to excite little notice.

One should suppose that proper instruction in the doctrines of man's depravity and the necessity for justification through the righteousness of Christ alone would deliver us from the power of the self-sins, but it does not work that way. Self can live

unrebuked at the very altar. It can watch the bleeding Victim die and not be in the least affected by what it sees. It can fight for the faith of the reformers and preach eloquently the creed of salvation by grace and gain strength by its efforts. To tell the truth, it seems actually to feed upon orthodoxy and is more at home in a Bible conference than in a tavern. Our very state of longing after God may afford it an excellent condition under which to thrive and grow.

Self is the opaque veil that hides the face of God from us. It can be removed only in spiritual experience, never by mere instruction. We may as well try to instruct leprosy out of our system. There must be a work of God in destruction before we are free. We must invite the cross to do its deadly work within us. We must bring our self-sins to the cross for judgment. We must prepare ourselves for an ordeal of suffering in some measure like that through which our Savior passed when He suffered under Pontius Pilate.

Let us remember that when we talk of the rending of the veil we are speaking in a figure, and the thought of it is poetical, almost pleasant, but in actuality there is nothing pleasant about it. In human experience that veil is made of living spiritual tissue; it is composed of the sentient, quivering stuff of which our whole beings consist, and to touch it is to touch us where we feel pain. To tear it away is to injure us, to hurt us and make us bleed. To say otherwise is to make the cross no cross and death no death at all. It is never fun to die. To rip through the dear and tender stuff of which life is made can never be anything but deeply painful. Yet that is what the cross did to Jesus and it is what the cross would do to every man to set him free.

Let us beware of tinkering with our inner life, hoping ourselves to rend the veil. God must do everything for us. Our part is to yield and trust. We must confess, forsake, repudiate the self-life, and then reckon it crucified. But we must be careful to distinguish lazy "acceptance" from the real work of God. We must insist upon the work being done. We

dare not rest content with a neat doctrine of self-crucifixion. That is to imitate Saul and spare the best of the sheep and the oxen.

Insist that the work be done in very truth and it will be done. The cross is rough and it is deadly, but it is effective. It does not keep its victim hanging there forever. There comes a moment when its work is finished and the suffering victim dies. After that is resurrection glory and power, and the pain is forgotten for joy that the veil is taken away and we have entered in actual spiritual experience the presence of the living God.

* * *

*Lord, how excellent are Thy ways, and how devious
and dark are the ways of man. Show us how to
die, that we may rise again to newness of life.
Rend the veil of our self-life from the top down
as Thou didst rend the veil of the Temple. We
would draw near in full assurance of faith.
We would dwell with Thee in daily experience
here on this earth so that we may be accustomed
to the glory when we enter Thy heaven to
dwell with Thee there.*

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

Taken from The Pursuit of God by A.W. Tozer

Apprehending God

Canon Holmes, of India, more than twenty-five years ago called attention to the inferential character of the average man's faith in God. To most people God is an inference, not a reality. He is a deduction from evidence which they consider adequate, but He remains personally unknown to the individual. "He *must* be," they say, "therefore we believe He is." Others do not go even so far as this; they know of Him only by hearsay. They have never bothered to think the matter out for themselves, but have heard about Him from others, and have put belief in Him into the back of their minds along with various odds and ends that make up their total creed. To many others, God is but an ideal, another name for goodness or beauty or truth; or He is law or life or the creative impulse back of the phenomena of existence.

These notions about God are many and varied, but they who hold them have one thing in common: They do not know God in personal experience. The possibility of intimate acquaintance with Him has not entered their minds. While admitting His existence they do not think of Him as being knowable in the sense that we know things or people.

Christians, to be sure, go further than this, at least in theory. Their creed requires them to believe in the personality of God and they have been taught to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven" (Luke 11:2). Now personality and fatherhood carry with them the idea of the possibility of personal acquaintance. This is admitted, I say, in theory, but for millions of Christians, nevertheless, God is no more real than He is to the non-Christian. They go through life trying to love an ideal and be loyal to a mere principle.

Over against all this cloudy vagueness stands the clear scriptural doctrine that God can be known in personal experience. A loving Personality domi-

nates the Bible, walking among the trees of the garden and breathing fragrance over every scene. Always a living Person is present, speaking, pleading, loving, working and manifesting Himself whenever and wherever His people have the receptivity necessary to receive the manifestation.

The Bible assumes as a self-evident fact that men can know God with at least the same degree of immediacy as they know any other person or thing that comes within the field of their experience. The same terms are used to express the knowledge of God as are used to express knowledge of physical things. "*O taste and see that the LORD is good*" (Psalm 34:8, emphasis added). "*All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces*" (45:8). "*My sheep hear my voice*" (John 10:27, emphasis added). "*Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God*" (Matthew 5:8, emphasis added). These are but four of countless such passages from the Word of God. And more important than any proof text is the fact that the whole import of Scripture is toward this belief.

What can all this mean except that we have in our hearts organs by means of which we can know God as certainly as we know material things through our familiar five senses? We apprehend the physical world by exercising the faculties given us for that purpose, and we possess spiritual faculties by means of which we can know God and the spiritual world if we will obey the Spirit's urge and begin to use them.

That a saving work must first be done in the heart is taken for granted here. The spiritual faculties of the unregenerate man lie asleep in his nature, unused, and for every purpose dead. That is the stroke which has fallen upon us by sin. They may be quickened to active life again by the operation of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. That is one of the immeasurable benefits which comes to us through Christ's atoning work on the cross.

But why do the very ransomed children of God themselves know so little of that habitual, conscious

communion with God which Scripture offers? The answer is because of our chronic unbelief. Faith enables our spiritual sense to function. Where faith is defective the result will be inward insensibility and numbness toward spiritual things. This is the condition of vast numbers of Christians today. No proof is necessary to support that statement. We have but to converse with the first Christian we meet or enter the first church we open to acquire all the proof we need.

A spiritual kingdom lies all about us, enclosing us, embracing us, altogether within reach of our inner selves, waiting for us to recognize it. God Himself is here waiting our response to His presence. This eternal world will come alive to us the moment we begin to reckon upon its reality.

I have just now used two words which demand definition. Or if definition is impossible, I must at least make clear what I mean when I use them. They are *reckon* and *reality*.

What do I mean by *reality*? I mean that which has existence apart from any idea any mind may have of it, and which would exist if there were no mind anywhere to entertain a thought of it. That which is real has being in itself. It does not depend upon the observer for its validity.

I am aware that there are those who love to poke fun at the plain man's idea of reality. They are the idealists who spin endless proofs that nothing is real outside of the mind. They are the relativists who like to show that there are no fixed points in the universe from which we can measure anything. They smile down upon us from their lofty intellectual peaks and settle us to their own satisfaction by fastening upon us the reproachful term "absolutist." The Christian is not put out of countenance by this show of contempt. He can smile right back at them, for he knows that there is only One who is Absolute, that is God. But he knows also that the Absolute One has made this world for man's use, and while there is nothing fixed or real in the last meaning of the words

(the meaning as applied to God), *for every purpose of human life we are permitted to act as if there were.* And every man does act thus except the mentally sick. These unfortunates also have trouble with reality, but they are consistent; they insist upon living in accordance with their ideas of things. They are honest, and it is their very honesty which constitutes them a social problem.

The idealists and relativists are not mentally sick. They prove their soundness by living their lives according to the very notions of reality which they in theory repudiate and by counting upon the very fixed points which they prove are not there. They could earn a lot more respect for their notions if they were willing to live by them; but this they are careful not to do. Their ideas are brain-deep, not life-deep. Wherever life touches them they repudiate their theories and live like other men.

The Christian is too sincere to play with ideas for their own sake. He takes no pleasure in the mere spinning of gossamer webs for display. All his beliefs are practical. They are geared into his life. By them he lives or dies, stands or falls for this world and for all time to come. From the insincere man he turns away.

The sincere, plain man knows that the world is real. He finds it here when he wakes to consciousness, and he knows that he did not think it into being. It was here waiting for him when he came, and he knows that when he prepares to leave this earthly scene it will be here still to bid him goodbye as he departs. By the deep wisdom of life he is wiser than a thousand men who doubt. He stands upon the earth and feels the wind and rain in his face, and he knows that they are real. He sees the sun by day and the stars by night. He sees the hot lightning play out of the dark thundercloud. He hears the sounds of nature and the cries of human joy and pain. These he knows are real. He lies down on the cool earth at night and has no fear that it will prove illusory or fail him while he sleeps. In the morning the firm ground will be under him, the blue sky above him and the rocks and trees around him as

when he closed his eyes the night before. So he lives and rejoices in a world of reality.

With his five senses he engages this real world. All things necessary to his physical existence he apprehends by the faculties with which he has been equipped by the God who created him and placed him in such a world as this.

Now by our definition also God is real. He is real in the absolute and final sense that nothing else is. All other reality is contingent upon His. The great Reality is God, the Author of that lower and dependent reality which makes up the sum of created things, including ourselves. God has objective existence independent of and apart from any notions which we may have concerning Him. The worshipping heart does not create its Object. It finds Him here when it wakes from its mortal slumber in the morning of its regeneration.

Another word that must be cleared up is *reckon*. This does not mean to visualize or imagine. Imagination is not faith. The two are not only different from, but stand in sharp opposition to, each other. Imagination projects unreal images out of the mind and seeks to attach reality to them. Faith creates nothing; it simply reckons upon that which is already there.

God and the spiritual world are real. We can reckon upon them with as much assurance as we reckon upon the familiar world around us. Spiritual things are there (or rather we should say here) inviting our attention and challenging our trust.

Our trouble is that we have established bad thought habits. We habitually think of the visible world as real and doubt the reality of any other. We do not deny the existence of the spiritual world but we doubt that it is real in the accepted meaning of the word.

The world of sense intrudes upon our attention day and night for the whole of our lifetime. It is clamorous, insistent and self-demonstrating. It does not appeal to our faith; it is here, assaulting our five senses, demanding to be accepted as real and final. But sin has so clouded the lenses of our hearts

that we cannot see that other reality, the City of God, shining around us. The world of sense triumphs. The visible becomes the enemy of the invisible, the temporal, of the eternal. That is the curse inherited by every member of Adam's tragic race.

At the root of the Christian life lies belief in the invisible. The object of the Christians's faith is unseen reality.

Our uncorrected thinking, influenced by the blindness of our natural hearts and the intrusive ubiquity of visible things, tends to draw a contrast between the spiritual and the real—but actually no such contrast exists. The antithesis lies elsewhere—between the real and the imaginary, between the spiritual and the material, between the temporal and the eternal; but between the spiritual and the real, never. The spiritual is real.

If we would rise into that region of light and power plainly beckoning us through the Scriptures of truth, we must break the evil habit of ignoring the spiritual. We must shift our interest from the seen to the unseen. For the great unseen Reality is God. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). This is basic in the life of faith. From there we can rise to unlimited heights. "Ye believe in God," said our Lord Jesus Christ, "believe also in me" (John 14:1). Without the first there can be no second.

If we truly want to follow God, we must seek to be other-worldly. This I say knowing well that word has been used with scorn by the sons of this world and applied to the Christian as a badge of reproach. So be it. Every man must choose his world. If we who follow Christ, with all the facts before us and knowing what we are about, deliberately choose the kingdom of God as our sphere of interest, I see no reason why anyone should object. If we lose by it, the loss is our own; if we gain, we rob no one by so doing. The "other world," which is the object of this world's disdain and the subject of the drunkard's mocking song, is our carefully chosen goal and the object of our holiest longing.

But we must avoid the common fault of pushing the "other world" into the future. It is not future, but present. It parallels our familiar physical world, and the doors between the two worlds are open. "Ye are come," says the writer to the Hebrews (and the tense is plainly present),

unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. (Hebrews 12:22–24)

All these things are contrasted with "the mount that might be touched" (12:18) and "the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words" (12:19) that might be heard. May we not safely conclude that, as the realities of Mount Sinai were apprehended by the senses, so the realities of Mount Zion are to be grasped by the soul? And this not by any trick of the imagination but in downright actuality. The soul has eyes with which to see and ears with which to hear. Feeble they may be from long disuse, but by the life-giving touch of Christ they are now alive and capable of sharpest sight and most sensitive hearing.

As we begin to focus upon God, the things of the spirit will take shape before our inner eyes. Obedience to the word of Christ will bring an inward revelation of the Godhead (John 14:21–23). It will give acute perception enabling us to see God even as is promised to the pure in heart. A new God-consciousness will seize upon us and we shall begin to taste and hear and inwardly feel God, who is our life and our all. There will be seen the constant shining of "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9). More and more, as our faculties grow sharper and more sure, God will become to us the great All, and His presence the glory and wonder of our lives.

*O God, quicken to life every power within
me, that I may lay hold on eternal things. Open my
eyes that I may see; give me acute spiritual
perception; enable me to taste Thee and know
that Thou art good. Make heaven more real to
me than earthly thing has ever been.
Amen.*

Taken from The Pursuit of God by A.W. Tozer

The Open Secret

To regain her lost power the church must see heaven opened and have a transforming vision of God.

When viewed from the perspective of eternity, the most critical need of this hour may well be that the Church should be brought back from her long Babylonian captivity and the name of God be glorified in her again as of old. Yet we must not think of the Church as an anonymous body, a mystical religious abstraction. We Christians are the Church and whatever we do is what the Church is doing. The matter, therefore, is for each of us a personal one. Any forward step in the Church must begin with the individual.

What can we plain Christians do to bring back the departed glory? Is there some secret we may learn? Is there a formula for personal revival we can apply to the present situation, to our own situation? The answer to these questions is *yes*.

Yet the answer may easily disappoint some persons, for it is anything but profound. I bring no esoteric cryptogram, no mystic code to be painfully deciphered. I appeal to no hidden law of the unconscious, no occult knowledge meant only for the few. The secret is an open one which the wayfaring man may read. It is simply the old and ever-new counsel: *Acquaint thyself with God*. To regain her lost power the Church must see heaven opened and have a transforming vision of God.

But the God we must see is not the utilitarian God who is having such a run of popularity today, whose chief claim to men's attention is His ability to bring them success in their various undertakings and who for that reason is being cajoled and flattered by everyone who wants a favor. The God we must learn to know is the Majesty in the heavens, God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, the only wise God our Saviour. He it is that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, who stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in, who bringeth out His starry host by number and calleth them all by name through the greatness of His power, who seeth the works of man as vanity, who putteth no confidence in princes and asks no counsel of kings.

Knowledge of such a Being cannot be gained by study alone. It comes by a wisdom the natural man knows nothing of, neither can know, because it is spiritually discerned. To know God is at

once the easiest and the most difficult thing in the world. It is easy because the knowledge is not won by hard mental toil, but is something freely given. As sunlight falls free on the open field, so the knowledge of the holy God is a free gift to men who are open to receive it. But this knowledge is difficult because there are conditions to be met and the obstinate nature of fallen man does not take kindly to them.

Let me present a brief summary of these conditions as taught by the Bible and repeated through the centuries by the holiest, sweetest saints the world has ever known:

- ① First, we must forsake our sins. The belief that a holy God cannot be known by men of confirmed evil lives is not new to the Christian religion. The Hebrew book, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, which antedates Christianity by many years, has the following passage: "Love righteousness, ye that be judges of the earth: think of the Lord with a good heart, and in simplicity of heart seek him. For he will be found of them that tempt him not; and sheweth himself unto such as do not distrust him. For froward thoughts separate from God: and his power, when it is tried, reproveth the unwise. For unto a malicious soul wisdom shall not enter; nor dwell in the body that is subject to sin. For the holy spirit of discipline will flee deceit, and remove from thoughts that are without understanding, and will not abide when unrighteousness cometh in." This same thought is found in various sayings throughout the inspired Scriptures, the best known probably being the words of Christ, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."
- ② Second, there must be an utter committal of the whole life to Christ in faith. This is what it means to "believe in Christ." It involves a volitional and emotional attachment to Him accompanied by a firm purpose to obey Him in all things. This requires that we keep His commandments, carry our cross, and love God and our fellow men.
- ③ Third, there must be a reckoning of ourselves to have died unto sin and to be alive unto God in Christ Jesus, followed by a throwing open of the entire personality to the inflow of the Holy Spirit. Then we must practice whatever self-discipline is required to walk in the Spirit, and trample under our feet the lusts of the flesh.

④ Fourth, we must boldly repudiate the cheap values of the fallen world and become completely detached in spirit from everything that unbelieving men set their hearts upon, allowing ourselves only the simplest enjoyments of nature which God has bestowed alike upon the just and the unjust.

⑤ Fifth, we must practice the art of long and loving meditation upon the majesty of God. This will take some effort, for the concept of majesty has all but disappeared from the human race. The focal point of man's interest is now himself. Humanism in its various forms has displaced theology as the key to the understanding of life. When the nineteenth-century poet Swinburne wrote, "Glory to Man in the highest! for man is the master of things," he gave to the modern world its new *Te Deum*. All this must be reversed by a deliberate act of the will and kept so by a patient effort of the mind.

God is a Person and can be known in increasing degrees of intimate acquaintance as we prepare our hearts for the wonder. It may be necessary for us to alter our former beliefs about God as the glory that gilds the Sacred Scriptures dawns over our interior lives. We may also need to break quietly and graciously with the lifeless textualism that prevails among the gospel churches, and to protest the frivolous character of much that passes for Christianity among us. By this we may for the time lose friends and gain a passing reputation for being holier-than-thou; but no man who permits the expectation of unpleasant consequences to influence him in a matter like this is fit for the kingdom of God.

⑥ Sixth, as the knowledge of God becomes more wonderful, greater service to our fellow men will become for us imperative. This blessed knowledge is not given to be enjoyed selfishly. The more perfectly we know God the more we will feel the desire to translate the new-found knowledge into deeds of mercy toward suffering humanity. The God who gave all to us will continue to give all *through* us as we come to know Him better.

Thus far we have considered the individual's personal relation to God, but like the ointment of a man's right hand, which by its fragrance "betrayeth itself," any intensified knowledge of God will soon begin to affect those around us in the Christian community.

And we must seek purposefully to share our increasing light with the fellow members of the household of God.

This we can best do by keeping the majesty of God in full focus in all our public services. Not only our private prayers should be filled with God, by our witnessing, our singing, our preaching, our writing should center around the Person of our holy, holy Lord and extol continually the greatness of His dignity and power. There is a glorified Man on the right hand of the Majesty in heaven faithfully representing us there. We are left for a season among men; let us faithfully represent Him here.

Taken from The Knowledge of The Holy by A.W. Tozer

Personal Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

