

Understanding the Glory
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In some of our worship services, we sing the whole message of “now” – or, “of today.” We can sing about our problems, our disappointments, and our needs – but it **isn’t what’s happening today that’s important**. Nor is it how we put everything altogether – how we understand it all. No – **it’s all about Him!** *He’s the Rock. He’s the Strong Tower! He’s the Fortress! He’s...* Well, He is all of those things – and more! And that is the *safety*, the security of the believer as things shake round about us and as we’re wondering, “Why” or maybe “Who’s next?” or “Is it going to affect *me*?” or “*How* is it going to affect *me*?” or “If this person didn’t make it, oh dear Father, how can I possibly make it?” We especially ask those questions when moral failure is exposed in the life of a well-known person, or some disaster strikes in a certain place – as did Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Those are thoughts or questions that come to us, but they do not come from God! The Bible is the book of the Thoughts of God – the Word – *His* Word. If you are confused today by the recent weather-related tragedies in our country (and the devastation *is* tragic!), I can promise you, *you’re not in the Word*. If you’re frustrated and low or despondent or depressed – you are not in the Word!

How do I know? How can I say that? Because the Glory of His Presence *lifts our heads* (Ps.3:3). I could start singing that chorus and you’d all join me – “*My glory and the lifter of my head...*” And the real truth is: when we are in His Presence, bathed in His Word, He lifts our heads! He gives us hope in our seemingly hopeless world.

Today, the word */glory/* (and I hope I don’t offend anyone – okay, I probably will. ☺ I’m sorry ahead of time and apologize. ☺) The word */glory/* seems to me to have joined the list of “buzz-words” that people use who believe themselves to be more spiritual than other people. Ouch. Does that communicate something to you? It should “ouch.” Some Christians make others feel like they experience God’s glory in such a way (different from the rest of us and superior to us) that it makes them somehow especially spiritual – above all the rest.

I use terms like “*the church within the church*” and “*the Kingdom*” and know exactly what I mean, but I don’t know if other people know what I mean when I use those words. I think it would be a sad thing if mine was a statement that excludes. It would be a sad thing if I believed myself to be in the *church within the church* and “judge” someone else to be in the “church without” or outside the Church. To me, such phrases are descriptive, but not exclusively defining. Please note that I understand all true believers in Jesus Christ to be members of His Church universal, but we also can observe that some are just hungrier for more of God than others. Some are in a greater, or “hotter” pursuit. That’s an observation, a description, not an exclusive designation.

Buzz-words. So we look at */glory/*. If I want to go “in” (to His Glory) – and I know how to do this because I’m an old lady and I’ve been around a long time! ☺ In certain circles, I can impress people with the right “buzz-words.” I can say, “Ohh. Ooooh, the *glory!* Ohhh! – the *glow - ry!*” ☺ You see, it’s how you put the emphasis on the word. ☺

I become curious once in awhile about some people who seem to be far more spiritual than I, but they’re really – thick – as in, dense. I mean, they’re so spiritually-minded, they’re of no earthly value. They don’t have their feet down on this earth. They’re just not firmly planted here. You can try to hold a conversation with them and it simply seems impossible. It’s like this: You try to converse with them on any given subject and they’re so – ethereal – so far beyond you: “Bless your heart. Well, you’re saved – you’ll probably go to Heaven – somewhere – some time...” ☺ But they are looking – seeking – searching – and no church ever is right for them. There’s no church “deep” enough. There’s no church “spiritual” enough. They hop from church to church – forgetting that they are sheep – thinking they’re

frogs! ☺ They just go from hither to yon, trying to find – the “deeper life.” Have you met some frogs along your way? ☺

Now, I believe there always is more of God to experience. Having said the other, I believe there’s always more to be discovered about our Mighty God. I believe there’s always more to be received *of* Him as well as *from* Him. I’m certain you know this scripture well: Second Corinthians 3:18. It says, “*Beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed from...*” from what? Read it: “...*from glory to glory.*” Well, what does that mean?

Isn’t it interesting how we can read something for so many years and really not know what it means? Nor question what it means, for that matter! We just hear it shouted from some preacher: “Hallelujah! How many are being *changed from glory to glory?*” And we all raise our hands, but we don’t know diddly-poo! ☺

The only way we can understand being changed “*from glory to glory*” is to understand what God said */glory/* is, and it is so simplistic in His presentation. God said, “I will reveal Myself, all that I am, all My Attributes, all My Nature – I will put it all in My Son.” The Good Book says that *He*, Jesus, is the glory of God. Then, Jesus said, “the Father has given Me all things” (Mt.11:27; Lk.10:22) and He prayed, “*Father, the glory that thou gavest Me, I have given them*” (Jn.17:22; see also Jn.1:17;14:9,10). “WOW!” would be a good response from you about now! ☺

The *glory* that Father gave Jesus was Himself! Everything He has and is – every attribute – everything that God is, He put in His Son, and then He gave His Son (Jn.3:16-21). Oh! Just think of that kind of *love!* We sing it! “What love! What wondrous love! That You would die for me! That You would...” What a great salvation we have!

But it isn’t just getting Fire Insurance! He didn’t die just to keep you out of the flames of Hell! True. His Blood on your life will keep you out of Hell. Hell won’t let you in with it! ☺

So, what is the “more” we can have of God? What does it mean – “*from glory – to glory?*” I’ll tell you what it isn’t, and this is where I may lose some of you – but we have guards at the door! ☺ I’ll tell you what *glory* is NOT – “*Glory*” is not being in a service where you begin to *feel* something you have not previously felt and you find yourself rising into some emotional response to what you’re feeling, and settle there. “Oooooo! Ooooooo!” That is not */glory/* – no matter where you place the emphasis on the expression. That is *your reaction to /glory/*.

Most of us respond – or, may I be honest? – *react* – differently to God’s showing or displaying or revealing of Himself. Our response/reaction depends on our own make-up and personality and the rest of what makes us different from one another. Some get very “this way” and some get very “that way” and some don’t get “very” anything visible ☺, but down deep inside... I have seen such people as I minister. You can’t tell where you are with them because they just look at you. I mean, they’re not big head-shakers – not big “Amen!”-ers. And yet they are a great supporter and lover of the Word, and they are stirred within their spirits. Sitting next to such a man, we’ll say ☺, is his wife – who is right there with you, word by word, thought by thought, saying everything in hearty agreement except, “Go, Girl, Go!” ☺

Now those are two different responses to the same Word being preached, and with the **same depth of understanding**, but oh, so different in their expressions and responses. So – maybe we’ll quit judging one another! Perhaps we’ll stop saying, “She’s really in there! You just watch her! She’s so effervescent about God! But he’s – I don’t know. He’s so... so... sedate it’s just hard to tell where he is!” ☺ Maybe we will come to a place of understanding that **God has been – is – and always will be revealing Himself to whomever wants to receive Him through His Son!** Now look – if you got that – that’s a whole sermon! Take a break! Turn off your computer! ☺ Because this is eternal. It’s not just here and now.

I really worry about some of the recent advertising I've seen for Christian meetings and conferences. It can be found both on the web and through snail mail – that *this* person is so – uh... into a “*glory-realm*” that you need to attend the meetings so you will be in that glory-realm too. I've gone to a few of those sessions and I didn't “go” anywhere they claimed to be going – because I didn't go to the meeting to see *Him* – I went to see whatever *that* was that was supposed to be happening. If you can hear this word, it'll help you in the future. It really will. This is about focus – understanding that **we are to be seeking experience with a Person**, but not with another human being.

The Glory of God very definitely can be revealed in our worship services – should be. Even in the instrumentalists on the platform. And I love it when they can switch instruments – that versatility is such a beautiful gift. But the Glory of the Lord shows up on the *true* worshippers' faces! (see Ex.34:29f). Do you know how I know? Because I look for it! ☺ It would be impossible for these worship leaders to sing and play with such a powerful anointing if they hadn't seen the *glory*.

And the same goes for *you* if you are true seekers of God (see Jn.4:23). You're coming along, growing in the things of God. Your smile or your countenance – it isn't just a *glow*. Thank God we have that too. But it is the **outward demonstration of an inward understanding** and you can't get this apart from the Word of God! He is the Word (Jn.1:1,14). He is the living, powerful Word! (see Heb.4:12).

If it always has to be *feeling* and all these other *experiences* – you're not going to go “*from glory to glory*.” You'll just go from glory... period. ☺ Do you understand that? You'll just get stuck there in that one spot. When they sing that certain song – “Ooooooo! I can *feel* the Lord!” Well, you're just stuck! And you will never be satisfied. You never will – because we have an innate craving for “*from glory to glory to glory to glory...*” that God put within us when we were born – again! Now let me add that I believe in *experiencing* God and His glorious Presence, and that we need to *respond* to Him. But that is not where the “*from glory to glory to glory*” is.

Along with that *new* birth also came another innate craving – or, if you prefer, a *thirsting* – for *righteousness*. Now if you are thirsty for righteousness and the only thing you read is the newspaper – you will be left being very thirsty! ☺ Unfortunately, I see too many people who are *very* thirsty and they don't know what they're thirsting for, so they drink anything that's handed to them! Selah!

And in that day – whether this is the end of my generation that gives me the sense of it being “the end” – or today really is during “the end” before the return of Christ – I don't know. But I do have that sense. I have a sense that I don't see how things can progress much more toward evil than they are without the return of Christ. And I like that sense! Wouldn't you like that? Right now, today would be just great! ☺ “Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev.22:20b).

But if He is to prolong human existence through another generation, what will we demonstrate to the children coming up behind us? Will we go back to old behavioral patterns for *their* standard? “You're a Christian, you can't chew gum in church.” ☺ Well, that was way back in my generation. Now I suppose it's that you can't smoke in church! ☺ So – are we going to just present to them a list of the dos on the left and the don'ts on the right? Or, are they going to see the *Glory of God* as He is revealed in us? Can we understand their capacity to possess such *glory*?

Let's open our Bibles (lest you think I don't read it ☺) – to the 24th Psalm. This is a Psalm that was to be sung each first day of the week, which we think of as our Sunday. Psalm 48 was for Monday; Psalm 82 for Tuesday; Psalm 94 for Wednesday; Psalm 81 for Thursday; Psalm 93 for Friday; and Psalm 92 on the Sabbath. That's your free information for the day! ☺ But this particular Psalm, 24, was for their Sunday reading, their first day of the week.

It begins like this: “*The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world and all that dwell therein...*” Now, I could talk for 30 days on that verse alone. We seem to forget this declaration! We think there are “God's people” and “no” people – like it's either-or. But God says, “All of them are Mine.

There are a whole lot of them that don't know it yet, and so I can't bid them to 'Come in' in the end, but the earth is Mine, and all who live there.'"

Oh! We need to come back to an understanding of Who created this whole thing! Yes, we have messed up just about everything on this earth – leave it to humans. You know – the waters aren't pure – the air isn't pure. I turned on the morning news to check on the weather – and they were telling about all the things we have to "beware of" now. You have to beware of this new threat that's out – you know, the bird flu – I never have liked chickens anyway, ☺ but this is a whole new threat. And so it's dangerous to just – breathe! ☺ Especially if you're in an airplane.

Besides the fear of disease-carrying animals, it's even dangerous to shake hands with people! Or just touching other people could be dangerous. The newscasters went through the whole scene! I said to my Secretary and friend of many years, "The only thing to do is to go find a mountain – but not together now – I'll go alone ☺ – and sit on the top of it and – 'Hummmm – ummmm...' or something!" ☺ "Because there are germs everywhere, and other *things* – and they're 'out to get you!'" ☺ Now, that was on the News this morning!

But, oh! We sing: "He's my Rock!" If I didn't have that comfort, I wouldn't get out of bed in the morning, would you? There's no way I would try to face a day without Him! He's "my Shield! – my Fortress! – Deliverer!" I have a hope! "My Shelter – Strong Tower – my very Present Help in time of need!"

So, when we read this: "*The earth is the Lord's*" – as dirty and as messed up as it is – the whole thing belongs to Him! And frankly, I'm ready to give it back to Him – I think I've seen enough! ☺ "*For He hath founded it upon the seas and established it upon the floods. Who shall ascend to the hill of the Lord? Or stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart, and hasn't lifted up his soul into vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He [that person] shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and...*" What does it say? "...*righteousness from the God of his salvation*" (Ps.24:2-5). Matthew adds: "*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst...*" – for what? – "...*after righteousness.*" (Mt.5:6).

And that's where we are today, my Friends. I want to see righteousness, don't you? I long for that! I love to be with God's people when you just can sense that. *Righteousness* simply means "rightly related to God" or "in right standing with God." It doesn't mean a person who is sinless. We're not sinless. We just sin – less. ☺ "Oh, the Blood of Jesus – it washes white as snow." Hallelujah for that!

So, old carnal flesh rises up and we – do something – think something – say something – *feel* something – that we know isn't Jesus. When just a little thought comes to you, like: "I hope they get their dues!" So quickly the Holy Spirit rises up inside – "Well, that was real Christlike!" ☺ And I come back to the truth of that song – "Oh, the Blood..." You see, that's the way we live! We just *sin!* (see Rom.7).

Forgive me if this is hard for you – I'm 76 – and I've never met anyone who didn't have to constantly repent! I never have! There's no one! Not even me! ☺ And the devil keeps trying to beat you down with that. He's quick! He beats you down for what you don't condemn in yourself! We tend to do his work real well if he just lingers a little! With *self*-condemnation. But he constantly badgers at us – "See, you have..." done this or thought that: "Maybe you didn't *do* it, but you *wanted* to!" The best way to handle that is to say, "Oh, you're so right on that! I wanted to do it – but I didn't!" And then sing to him: "Oh the Blood of Jesus..." **Everything about the thirsting for righteousness – hear me – is satisfied upon confession: first of your sin and secondly about the Blood** (see Rev.12:11; 1Jn.1:9,10).

It's just time for the Church to get out of **guilt**. "*There is therefore now – no condemnation to them that walk in Christ Jesus*" (Rom.8:1,paraphrased). Why? Because we're being "*changed – from glory to glory*" (2Cor.3:18). Oh! You're getting this, aren't you?

The truth is, the more I repent, the more I'm being changed! Some day, I'll have a glorified body (Oh, glory to God! ☺). In the meantime, it's only in the Spirit. ☺ But it's there – potentially. And when I look back throughout my lifetime, I can see that I confess less about “that” particular area than I used to! “Hal-le-lu-jah! I've conquered that! What glorious grace!”

Oh yeah, there's still a bunch over “here” but we're not going there right now. ☺ We just say, “Thank You! Thank You, Lord because You've given me the victory!” – and *that's* what overcomes the world! It's the “*word of our testimony*” (Rev.12:11). It is coming back to the written Word and making the truth of it an application to our lives – so that I don't have to feel guilty! We simply need to walk in the Light of the understanding we have (1Jn.1:5-7; Gal.5:16).

If you run into someone who knew you before you were saved, I can tell you what'll happen! The enemy – right like that! – will say to you, “They remember you when you used to hmmm – mmmm – mmmm!” What you need to do with that is say, “Thanks, devil, for reminding me. I need to witness to them! I need to tell that person: ‘Remember how I used to be? I want to tell you something – I met a man! And He changed my life!’” And you begin to talk to them, not in King James language, but in today's language! Helloo.

“You mean you don't do that anymore? How'd you quit?” “Thank you for asking.” ☺

Some people find real deliverance from some of their old habits – instantly! – while others do not. I've watched it countless times. I've seen people at the altar who were drinkers and others on drugs be set free – totally, instantly, miraculously! I've seen people who smoked since they were just little kids finally awoken to realize that habit has nothing to do with God! Cigarettes will not keep you out of Heaven. You just have to leave your cigarettes outside the Gates. ☺ (Oh, oops! I hit every legalist that time! ☺) Smoking has to do with your *body*, Dumb-dumb. Those things, those weeds, are going to kill you! ☺

I watched this when I pastored, years ago. I've seen people who finally come to that awareness – “I've got to quit doing ‘this’” – or “I've got to quit doing ‘that’” – and instantly! I've seen them come up, lay certain things down on the altar (paraphernalia), and absolutely, instantaneously were delivered! They never longed for it again. I've seen that dozens of times – maybe hundreds. I've seen people so drunk on alcohol they could barely walk – instantly made sober and accept Jesus Christ.

But I've also seen it the other way – people who didn't get rid of those things *instantly* – who desperately wanted to quit – desperately wanted not to desire the thing they knew God didn't want for them – and it has been a constant battle for them. Let me tell you something – they too are going *from glory to glory*! Every time they win that battle! Don't you put them down by saying or even thinking, “You know if they were really *saved*, that whole thing wouldn't...” Not necessarily. I don't understand the whys of it, but sometimes God just lets desire remain and then it's a *climb*.

“*He shall receive the blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation.*” Then verse 6 (in case you've forgotten where we were in Psalm 24 ☺). “*This is the generation of them that seek Him, that seek Thy face, O Jacob.*”

Now, if you look at many of our churches – if we took out all the visitors when there was a “named” speaker on a given Sunday – there would be far less people – fewer people in attendance. You'd say about the “normal” congregation, “Well, look at this little church – just a little group of people that come together. Doesn't look to me like this is ‘*the generation that seeks His face!*’” Yes it is. It is a generation who longs to belong – to a family.

Let's talk about family for a moment. It used to be just “ours.” Then it was “his” and “hers” and “theirs.” Now, it's “his” and “hers” and “God only knows!” ☺ The stories are wild: she doesn't know who fathered this kid. She put this one out and now that one's gone. And this one left after one wild night. I mean, here are all these children! Do you understand with me that *it is the intention of God for those*

children to come into righteousness? These children have the *same thirst for righteousness* that you and I do! Their *way* of asking for it or seeking it is to want a “family.” When they can’t find a family – when they go to church and don’t look good enough, or act good enough, or smell the way they ought to and are rejected there, they look to the GANGS – where they are received and it doesn’t matter how they look or smell or act. And a “brother” says to them, “Hey, if you join this gang, *we’ll* protect you.”

Oh, Church. Wake up! Don’t you understand how *we’ve missed our opportunities*, trying to stay “clean?” Trying to “look right?” And our excuse is: “Oh, but they got involved in – this.” Oh, did they? “Yes, and I’ll tell you, never have we had anyone in our church (or, in our family) who did *that!*” Well you do now. ☺ What are you going to do with them? Do you think it’s a shock to God that they “happened” into your *family*?

This is pretty hard. Why am I doing this to you? Why am I telling you these particular things? I don’t even know you. But I know this: you – I – cannot grow in Him – we can’t grow *from glory to glory to glory* with prejudiced attitudes. It simply can’t be done – not really. We cannot come into the destiny God has for us and try to do it our own way.

Do you know how we’re generally handling this situation? When the unlovely arrive at our doorsteps? We’re handling it by appointing “those people” to certain churches who have more compassion for them than others. “Oh, well, I know a church... in the city... It’s a good church. You’d really be content there. You know, they minister to street people and homosexuals and drug addicts and the whatever...” – whatever seems awful to “us.” But listen, Church, what really seems awful to God – is listed in The Book: “...backbiters... disobedient to parents... covenant breakers... unmerciful (heartless!)...” (cf. Rom. 1:29-32). But we relegate “those people” to “that service” instead of opening our arms and understanding – “*This is the generation that are seeking*” – they’re *seeking!* Can’t we help them find – *Him?*

They not only want a *family*, this “generation of *seekers*” wants intimacy! We come together in the congregation and say, “Hi. How was the trip?” and vaguely respond “Oh, okay.” Pretty shallow inquiry; equally shallow response. And I say those are my close friends? We’re so emotionless, as we drone on in a nasally monotone voice: “Hi, Pastor Jim.” or “Hi, Sis, so good to see you again.” Blah – blah. But we don’t know what’s really going on in their lives because we’re not close enough to find out. Oh, there’s always a little group here and there – cliques, maybe. They eat together and talk about a few things. But there’s no intimacy – not true intimacy. We just don’t care that much – or enough.

Intimacy costs something – like time and caring. I have a pretty good intimacy with my daughter and son-in-law. We’re working on more as we *invest* in one another. But I have good intimacy with her already. When we’re together, it only takes about five minutes for us to decide which one is the neediest that day. ☺ This is true. ☺ She knows I love her professional field and everything she does in it. She’s a physician and has all sorts of stories to relate, and I love those stories. But sometimes when she comes to visit with me, within about five minutes she realizes – “Mom is in a place!” ☺ And she takes the lead: “Tell me how you’re feeling, Mom...” and the whole thing – because she cares and discerns my predicaments. Pretty soon, she says, “I’m sorry, Mom, I really have to go.” Then after she leaves, I realize I didn’t ask anything about her! But the next time we’re together, the whole thing is reversed. Not legalistically or by arbitration, it just happens that way. That’s *intimacy*. We just sense one another. Are you there?

That’s what we ought to have in the *family of God!* In fact, we need to have it. We need to look at people – I mean, *look* at people. We casually say, “God bless you.” ☺ But we need to look right at them! – in them – through them! “Are you going through something, my Sister?” “Oh, no, things are just fine.” “Good. Then would you pray for me?” ☺

They’re looking for a *family*. They’re looking for *intimacy*. And they’re looking for *fellowship*. I am somewhat of an idealist. My closer friends that would say, “Somewhat?” ☺ But I get angry in my spirit

every time I watch a ballgame on TV and there are a lot of empty seats. That just infuriates me! Do you want to know why? Well, I'm going to tell you. ☺ Because there are hundreds and hundreds of kids out on the streets who would give anything even to be in those upper deck seats. Yet, no one gives a rip enough to go out, run a bus and say, "Free Tickets." We'd rather sit there and let those seats remain empty. What a waste! Now you're going to be mad at that right along with me, aren't you? See how well I did that? ☺

I wonder if, in our churches, we're not just as foolish as those money-hungry businessmen? Think about it – there's no money in ministering to children and youth, they basically don't have any. All they can do is "take." But, Church, that should be okay! Is that too hard on you again? Hard to hear – hard to swallow? It's the truth – and if you serve on a Church Board, you personally know the awful truth of this: too many decisions concerning outreach are made based purely on financial issues. And I am not encouraging the Church to be irresponsible in financial matters. We need to come up with a plan that works. And we need to get hold of God's ways concerning money – our money!

Hungry to belong to a *family* – for *intimacy* – for *fellowship*. They're also hungry for – success – and the *satisfaction* that it brings. Now, it takes the maturity of parents to give our children things (resources), or provide activities or opportunities in which they can be successful, so they can have the *satisfaction of achievement*.

My children would tell you, to my shame – (“*confess your faults one to another*” ☺ Jas.5:16a) that during their school years, or all through high school at least, they dreaded bringing home grades less than a “B.” Yet we all know that “C” is “average.” Are you hearing me? I made demands! ☹ “You’re my kid. You can do better than *this*!”

Now, motivating our kids to stretch and reach and accomplish what they are able to do is good, but – I went too far. Did they do it? Did they perform? Oh, yes they did. They brought home A's and B's. Did they enjoy school? No – not very much. ☹ I hope you can see beyond my little examples. You don't have perfect kids, so leave them alone. Teach them the things that matter: honesty, integrity, personal responsibility, and to love and serve God, but accept them as they are. Don't try to make them be something they're not and never can be – and if they do arrive at “it” or achieve it, whatever “it” is you have determined to set before them as a target, they'll not be happy in it. We're talking about the *satisfaction of being successful* in whatever it is we have put our hands to do.

Where I'm going with this is it's the same thing in the Church. We are all being changed – from glory to glory. So, you bring a youngster to accept Jesus Christ. You've presented Him – they comprehend and say, “Yes, I receive.” That's *glory-ous* – on a salvation level. But let's begin to recognize that *glory* in our kids – and compliment them: “Oh, I see a *difference* in you!” And then you can ask, “Do you know the Holy Spirit?” “The Holy Spirit? No, not really.” “Oooooo – have I got a present for you!” And then, when they get filled with the Holy Spirit or they want to be baptized in water – each of those is a step into more glory! And we have a tendency to praise those first three steps! Then our attitude is: “That's that. See you in Heaven.”

That position only satisfies old people like me – “Okay, where's the rockin' chair? I'm ready to sit!” ☺ But that doesn't satisfy young people. They want to “be” and “go” and “do” and be challenged. They want to know, “Where do I fit in this church? I don't see anything...” – “Can you sing?” ☺ They're breathing. Maybe we could teach them what to do with that! ☺ I have to wonder: couldn't we be a little more creative in the way we treat – “kids?”

Now, I use children for an example because it's far more comfortable for you than if I just said, “people.” But I also mean – “people.” Too many churches, once they get all the “slots” filled for their in-house ministries, they haven't a clue what to do with anyone new that shows up. “Well, we've got our musicians – our worship team – and we've got our pastor – we have our Women's Leader – we've got plenty of ushers and the janitor – and we've got... I just don't know – but you can come Sunday morning

and bless us.” So, they sit in a service looking for an opportunity: “I want to bless them! I want to bless...” “But don’t move! We’d be out of order!” ☺

So there is a *thirst* in the Body of Christ like I’ve never seen before. This truth that I’m sharing with you starts at the edge of the platform and moves outward. Everyone up there – the choirs, the orchestra, the staff and leaders – all those people are NOT thirsty! Because they’re drinking *good!* ☺ Their thirst is quenched! Some of them are just plain drunk! ☺ You can hear them: “Oooooooo! Yeah. Yea God!” ☺ But then, down there, in the pews, are all the “common ones.” But – they’re not common to God! He says to everyone, “I’ve revealed Myself through My Son. I gave My Son to you (plural, collective) and He wants to reveal Me to you.”

Now, this divine revelation doesn’t stop inside the Church walls. Most of the gifts of the Holy Spirit are intended by God to function *outside of the Church*. Instead of saying to someone you meet at work, the health club, or just in the marketplace – instead of using your weakest, most timid voice: ☺ “Do you know the Lord?” “Lord who? Lord Byron? Isn’t he a poet?” ☺ They don’t know what you’re talking about! When you say: “Have you been *saved?*” They’re just as likely to reply: “No, I can swim!” ☺

Instead of using your church vocabulary, what if you said to someone that didn’t know the Lord – “I’ve been praying for you, and I’ll tell you why. I think the Lord has picked you out to be blessed.” How mad can they get at that? You’re not dangling them over Hell. ☺ You’re not, you know, heating up the flames. No preachy fire and brimstone or doomsday message. Most likely they’ll say, “He picked me to be blessed? How so? Blessed with what?” “Blessed with things better than you’ve ever had them! You’ll be better on your job – better in the...” and you just start talking person-to-person, telling them about the goodness of God. In that process, you’re meeting every need they have that I just showed you exists. Their needs: their familial need to belong. Their need for intimacy. Their need for fellowship. The need to be cared for – the need to be loved – and their need to be successful. You have just, in a sentence or two – if it’s under the influence of the Holy Spirit – the *glory* of God has been revealed! Now, don’t be dumb enough to say, “You know what this is? This is the *glo – ry* of...” ☺ They don’t want to hear that! Not yet.

But you need to remember it. You need to leave the encounter carrying that sense of – “Thank You. Oh, thank You, Lord. They don’t know it but You just revealed Yourself to them. And I’m going to follow through, as You give me grace... Give me more creative ways to open a conversation about You. Help me to know the right time and the right ways to follow up with these people I meet.”

So “*Lift up your heads, O ye people... Lift up... and the King of Glory shall come in*” (Ps.24:7). Then the question comes from the psalmist: “*Who is this King of glory?*” (vs.8,10) And he answers the question: the King of glory is “*the LORD of hosts!*” (vs.10) – the Lord of lords. And then he ends it by saying, “*Selah*” – “Think about that,” or “Pause a minute to think about the Lord of Glory!”

Oh, but there’s always a catch – have you noticed that? Just about the time you get hold of a *truth*, then there’s this little *hook* in it. So many of the scriptures begin with: “*If ye...*” Here in Psalm 24, the qualifications of the seeker are given clearly: “*This is the generation that seek...*” (vs.6). But it started with the need to climb in order to find: “*Who shall ascend – to the hill of the LORD?*” (vs.3a).

Now again, I have to tell you – I don’t know why this is – I just know that it is. I don’t know why some people seem to soar into His Presence and others have to climb. But that is true. And, I don’t know why some times I soar and other times I have to climb.

Have you ever spent half a service climbing? Surely you have. They sing the song you don’t like – they even start the service with it. “I hate that song!” ☺ And then they sing it over – and over – and... ☺ (I know, I have those feelings too. ☺) But you’re determined to worship, “Oh, God. Oh, I want You, Lord.” So you sing in the spirit: “I love You, Lord – You’re the King of Glory.” And you’re climbing! Because the fact that you’re still there in the service, and the fact that you can identify, at least, with the

words of the song you don't like tells you that you are climbing. You're making an energetic, mental effort to take a step higher than when you came in the door.

“Draw nigh to God and...” and every time! “He will draw nigh to you.” (Jas.4:8)

So, what happens is this: we start climbing. You have to ascend to the Hill of Jehovah. And then, we “stand” in His holy Presence (vs.3b). American people are the worst I know of in the world about standing, or being still. We just can't. This is a generation – this is a nation of – *action!* Go and do and be. You can motivate people – you know – “...on the count of three, I want all of you...” and out we go! But if we say, “Let's just *be still*...” It's awful. We just can't seem to do it – can't seem to stay focused.

Our minds? Our thoughts? We have no control of the mind – it just roams. When the leader says, “God is in His holy Temple, let us just be still; let's be quiet before Him...” (Ps.46:10; Hab.2:20), I imagine your mind first goes – “Oh, I should have done *this* before I left this morning. If I was home, I could do *that*. I *have* to remember to do that. This afternoon, I could even do this other thing. Uhhh... Oh, focus Iverna. Are they still singing the same...?” ☺

We simply don't know how to quiet our spirits and our minds so that we can rise beyond *praise* and flow into *worship*. Worship isn't clapping and stamping and dancing and singing – usually. **Worship is coming up that hill into His Presence and then – dying.** I don't exist when I get to that place. It's not about “me.” I'm not confessing sin. I'm not making up words like I do in praise.

In praise, I work at it. I say, “Glory. Hallelujah! You're wonderful! You're altogether lovely. I worship You.” Okay – now I'm out. My vocabulary is gone. I so quickly run out of “praise words.” Then I have to say – “Holy Spirit – take it from here” and I begin to pray or sing in tongues. And with that I start climbing again. But when I really get *there*... Are you with me?

When I really get there and I know it's face-to-face with my Lord, it would be insulting to Him to do *anything*. I just need to be there with Him (cf.Ex.24:12). He is everything He says He is! And He has allowed me to climb up that hill of holiness and *be there*. I don't know if it's going to be for a moment or an hour. At that moment, I don't care. But I definitely know I'm somewhere that is wonderful! I'm in the Presence of royalty! But we have to climb to get there.

And when I come out of, or down from (because always to come out of His Presence is to come down) it shouldn't be a “downer.” There's a difference. You can't live up there in His Presence. Even Paul couldn't stay there forever. He went *somewhere* – he doesn't even know where he went! (2Cor.12:2-4). “I think it was the third heaven.” ☺ He didn't know – and when he came back down – “Where have you been, Paul?” “Well, I was in... I can't exactly explain it.”

But do you know what the sad truth is? Today people are trying to explain where it is and how to get there! Forgive me – but if Paul couldn't, or wouldn't, I don't think I can trust you to do that! ☺

So, let us be content if every now and then, He lets us come that high – to that glorious place where we feel like we left whatever or wherever – and we're *there* in His Presence. We need to just be quiet – as in, ‘shut up’ – and enjoy it! “Yum-yum. Mmmmm – mmmm.” Drink Him in! We sing, “Lord, let me drink of Thy Spirit!” Now there in His Presence we can do just that! How long has it been since you got to that place – and that was all you wanted to do – was just to bask in His *glory* – to take Him in – to drink of His Spirit?

Do you know where you lost it? When you came back from that glorious experience with God – and tried to give someone else – *your* experience. Look at all the testimony books today. There are hundreds of them out on these subjects. I've read many of them and still have them in my library. The “How-you-too-can-experience-the-same” books. But – they didn't take me *there*. I didn't get their experience. They made me a little jealous perhaps – “WOW! I never had an angel follow me around. If I did, I'd fly

First Class!” ☺ I want what they had, no question. But no one has ever – through a book or a tape or a testimony – no one has ever *imparted* to me the *sense of glory* they experienced. That can only come when I, myself, am in His Presence!

You can sit vicariously in the bleachers and watch someone hit the ball, but you don’t know the thrill of it until you hold a bat in your hand! (swing it and connect! ☺).

Now, *God’s glory* does some real things. It not only brings satisfaction but His glory surrounds His people. Listen to this scripture: Zechariah 2:6 – God is speaking: “*And I Myself will be a wall of fire about it.*” Yes, He is speaking of Jerusalem in this context. But don’t you remember? We’ve sung this for years: “I am the seed of Abraham.” We know the truth of that. We’re all grafted in. If you don’t remember, read Romans 11, beginning at verse 17. We’re all *one* in the Lord – Jews and Gentiles alike in one Body, the Church (Gal.3:26ff; Eph.2:14ff; 4:4ff). We’re *all* “His people.” And yes, there will be a literal coming back of Israel to the Land (the Old Testaments Prophets are replete with promises of this return – the remnant will return). They’re still going to go through some things before that fulfillment because historically, they just don’t pay any attention to God until they go through some difficult things. It is historical with them. Read the Book. Read the Old Testament – the History and the Prophets.

God repeatedly said to Israel of old, “I’m going to get you – because you didn’t believe Me – didn’t heed My Word and you rejected My ways.” Then all the way through their history, He says, “BUT – I’m going to bring you back! There will always be a remnant of true believers.” What a God! “I’m going to slap you sideways, but then I’m going to pick – you – up and dust you off.” That’s a new translation. ☺

When God Himself says to me (or you!), “You’re inside a place, and I’m going to surround that place with My – *glory* – it will be like a *wall of fire*,” He means that for where you live, darlin’. It’s not only when you’re in “la-la-land” – off in some spiritual ecstasy. It’s where you live. It’s on your job. It’s in your home. It’s when the kids don’t – and the husband doesn’t – and the wife won’t. It’s when all those nasty now-and-now things are occurring. **There’s a wall of fire about you!** Not for your sake. It’s not so that you can, at any moment you so desire, *feel spiritual*. God does that so the devil can’t get in! Don’t you love it?

If he could, the devil would destroy every one of us! But as he comes up toward us, all he can do is shout threats – over the *wall of fire*! “You’re not going to make it!” “You’re a failure!” “Things all around you are breaking up, falling apart.” “That won’t work.” You know how I know about the shouts? You’d better believe it – I have been there – often!

Those *shouts* come in – and those *other* shouts – and some more shouts. But, you see, I’m wise enough to have read The Book and I know some things: “You can’t get in here, devil! There’s a bloodline drawn around me – it’s a *wall of fire*!” And I know this: “You’re a liar, devil! You’re the father of lies! (Jn.8:44). Or, this: “I’m covered by the Blood of Jesus. I’m walking in His Light. So, why are you standing out there, shouting at me something you can’t perform?”

Do you know what our attitude ought to be? It should be something on this protected side of that wall saying, “Na-na-na-na-na-na!” Or, “Neener-neener-nee-ner! You can’t catch me!” ☺ We ought to have that faith-filled attitude! Okay, there are more spiritual ways to say it, ☺ like, “I’m a child of the King! I’m covered by the shed blood of Jesus! You have no right to me or mine! You have no authority here!”

The Lord says, “*My glory surrounds you.*” You don’t have to lament, “Oh, I’ve never experienced the *glory* of God.” Yes you have, if you’re His child. You just haven’t seen it – not the way you expected it to look.

Does that remind you of any story in the Old Testament? Remember the story of Elisha (2Kngs.6:8ff) – when he was going to battle with the enemy (Syria) and his servant sees what is surrounding them? It is the enemy out in full force! (vs.15) – they are in full battle array! That fearful servant says to Elisha,

“Master, there’s some things you’re not seeing here. Are you aware...?” Every church has those kinds of people! ☺ “There are some things that are going to destroy this work, Pastor.” “There are some things that aren’t going to work for you.”

Elisha looks around but he doesn’t see the *enemy* – because he isn’t interested in looking for the enemy! (Selah! That alone would preach! ☺). He sees – “between” or “behind” or “in front of” – however you like to picture it – all along where the enemy has circled the city (that’s where the people are) – Elisha sees God’s angels – His heavenly hosts! They’re bigger – mightier – greater. And far more fierce! And they’re filled with purpose! They’re making up that wall of fire – all around the camp of the Israelites (vs.17b).

So, Elisha turns around when he’s told that this thing is going to break up – “Master, we’re not going to be successful here” – and says, “I wish you could see what I can see.” I like to say that to people from time to time. “I wish you could see what I can see. Do you think this church is getting better? That this world is getting better and better? Do you think that the Kingdom of God is being established? I think this world is getting worse and worse to the point of putrid and more full of hatred – **but!** I wish you could see what I can see – by His Spirit!” I have it on the highest authority that we’re going to win!

Read the end of the Book – one day, the King is coming back and all He’s going to do is put His one foot here and His other foot there and a big split is going to come through. I think He will say something like, “Who is on the Lord’s side?” I probably won’t be here; I’ll be up there. ☺ That depends on your doctrine, of course ☺ whether or not the Church gets scooped up and whisked out – or goes through.

But the vision that I have, and the hope that keeps me going day after day is “*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as in Heaven!*” (Mt.610). It’s okay – all these things I see with my natural eyes. The enemy wants me to see the putridness! The filth that floats in the River. But underneath all that “stuff” that’s floating on the top for all to see is a clean flow. Read the Book of Revelation – chapters 21 and 22. Read over there about the clear stream, the River of God, that flows from the Throne (22:1).

Listen – the power of His Presence – His *glory* – is going to hit every stream. He formed the water in the first place. He separated it all and with one breath of His mouth – it is pure!

You’re so worried about the temporal. We even wail: “Oh, my! What’ll we do if we run out of gas – oil? We’re just wasting all our natural resources! Ohhh...” We’ll find a pill! You’ll just drop a pill in the tank! ☺ Probably hydrogen! POW! and off you’ll go! ☺ I mean – come on, Church! My grandparents rode in a horse and buggy – they didn’t *worry* about the future! What happened to us? Why do we get caught up in that fearful place? Answer is simple: we forgot the *wall of fire!*

God is taking good care of us! In fact, I think some of the newest discoveries in research and scientific inventions are going to come through God’s people! Why? So they can get rich! So God can transfer the wealth of the world into the Kingdom! (cf.Pr.13:22b; Ec.2:26; Jb.26:16,17) – as soon as we can learn to handle money! ☺ (see Mal.3:7ff). So far, we haven’t demonstrated much trustworthiness in financial matters.

God says, His *glory* will be around you – and it’ll be *in* you. You don’t realize how much of the *glory of God* goes with you – everywhere you go. That’s why you frustrate some people you’re trying to be so nice to, the ones you’re just trying to bless. I’ll tell you who likes you the least: backsliders. Because there’s something in you that ignites something in their memory system – and that makes them very uncomfortable. They once knew that *glory* and they don’t want to see it again. They don’t want to think about it. They don’t want to hear it. And here you are! Making them feel guilty and all you’re doing is saying, “Do you have change for a 20?” ☺ But that *glory* in you and on you is like a neon sign flashing: “God loves you!” “Remember Me?” And they can’t get you out of there fast enough!

But there are others who have never seen the *glory* until you show up. Some of them are your employers who don't know why you're different. They don't know why you don't cheat on your lunch-hour or steal from the till or take things from the office or pad your expense report, even though you have the same opportunity as the ones who try to lift anything that's not fastened down. They don't understand why, but they recognize that something's different about you. They even may see an indescribable glow about you (remember Moses? Ex.34:29ff). You may not literally glow, but being in His Presence, His *glory* makes you different.

They even may know that your lives are not all that easy, that you have to live from paycheck to paycheck, from moment to moment. And still you always have that joy, a song, a lilt in your step, or something else special and happily unique about you. And your co-workers just like to be around you: "What is it about you...?" "I wish I could be like you!" That's an opening! Hellooo.

It's His *glory*. It's not us! Don't be so foolish! We haven't attained to anything! Every once in awhile we climb the ladder – we go up into Heaven – get a fresh glimpse and remember, "Oh, yeah. That's what it's all about! He is *glorious!*" And then He sends us back – into our little worlds.

I minister with people who claim to live there, in His glorious Presence. They don't – I'm sorry, but they don't live there! If they think they do, I guess they're happier than I am. ☺ I would love to live there! Moment by moment. Day by day. Yes, we truly do or can go there at times – up to His Holy Hill – but then as He did with Moses, He says, "Go back to the people." "Oh! Lord, I don't want to go back to the people!" ☺ "The people are all building calves and – *things.*"

Is that not the story of our society? You're as popular as how many golden calves you own. But that's going to change! I guarantee you – it is going to change. I'm not certain *how* it will come. It may be that God gives all the gold-seekers all the gold they can handle. That could happen first, Pastor. They may get very rich! Become very wealthy – until they have no wants left. How pitiful a place to be! There's no more success to be had – got it all. There's nothing more to climb for...

And I think maybe – I could be wrong (it would be the first time, of course... ☺) – but I think maybe that will be when the riches of the world will be given into the Kingdom. Because they've had it with everything they've achieved. They're full to the brim with worldly success. They have all kinds of everything and now they're looking for some place that it could do some good. There is a need within mankind of being useful, of feeling significant, of really making a difference. And if you look around with discernment, you'll begin to see that God is upsetting their little applecarts.

Not ten or just twenty – not a hundred people – but a *million* people have been absolutely displaced! From New Orleans and our Gulf States – displaced by the Hurricanes. God looked down at them and said, "You're poor and have been treated like you don't even exist! You were born into this whole society – and you've grown up here. You don't even know voodooism isn't right. You don't really know any of these things... You're just taught by the people who've gone before you. You're practicing what they practiced without questioning anything. Some little church comes in and preaches Jesus, so you add Him to the voodoo!" Hello, Church. That's mixture, Folks. You just keep adding what you see until you have a hodge-podge of religious practices – that gets you no where. So, God moves people – for His divine purposes!

And big names, recognized preachers, prophetic voices have come to the city – on the rich side – and shout to the people! But deaf ears were not unstopped. So God just said, "Okay. Have it your way. I'll displace them. I'll put them in a different place where they'll be accepted and fellowshiped and cared for and loved – and they'll be taught right from wrong.

Take a look around, Church. It's happening – right now. "You mean to tell me that God is causing people to die?" I'll tell you this – no one is dying that hasn't had a chance to know Him. His grace is

poured out – long before His wrath and judgment come. And then His grace always follows wrath! So – you are serving a Mighty God!

Well, how is she going to end this? I was wondering that too. ☺ No, just teasing. I’m going to end this with... Well, I’m not going to read it, but you can. The whole Book of Nahum. The whole long book – just three little chapters. ☺ This is where the prophet comes and denounces a certain approaching destruction of Assyria – specifically, the capital city of Ninevah.

Did you ever read this little Book? It’s kind of hard to find – it’s just a tiny Book in the Old Testament – Jonah, Micah, Nahum. The prophet Nahum prophesies saying, “It’s going to happen. God will take vengeance...” (vs.2). But of course, as was typical, no one believed him.

Then we read a consolation for the countrymen. Nahum says, “Now look, if you’ll trust God...” (vs.7) – there’s always that option, Church! Now here’s what he says – we sing it today in our worship services – verse 7: “*The Lord is good!*” First the Prophet of God comes in and says, “This whole place is going to get wiped out. God has had it with you, Ninevah!”

Remember Ninevah – when Jonah went there? Jonah called for their repentance about a hundred years before this prophecy of Nahum’s. And they did repent at that time (Jon.3:3-10). But over the longer time, they completely departed from God again and now Ninevah was the capital city of Assyria, a treacherous enemy.

Now look carefully – in the middle of this pronouncement of judgment – in the center of this threat, if you will, Nahum reminds them, “*The Lord is good*” (Nah.1:7). He is *jealous* and *furious* and promises to take *vengeance* on His enemies – “*and reserveth wrath for his enemies*” (vs.2), but He is also *good*.

Preachers today are afraid to say that the Lord is judging anything. They don’t want to make anybody mad! Well – get mad! ☺ – and then get over it! If He is King of kings and Lord of lords and nothing happens unless He allows it! What? He is the Just Judge (cf.Rom.3:26). “*The Lord is good!*”

Here’s what else it says about God in Nahum 1, verse 7: “...*a stronghold in the day of trouble...*” It doesn’t say there’ll be no trouble for believers. But He does say, “I’ll put a Rock there – and you can hang onto it (Him).” In my day, we used to sing “On Christ, the Solid Rock I stand; all other ground is sinking sand...” Today, we sing the same thing but with different words – and – music you can’t sing. ☺ Okay. That’s just us old people who have trouble keeping up – the rest of you do very well with the tempos and all the words. ☺

“*The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knows those who take refuge in Him.*” It also says, in the Book of Proverbs: “...*the name of the Lord is a Strong Tower, the righteous run into it and they’re safe.*” (Pr.18:10). Nahum just agrees with the wisdom of Solomon.

You’re not fooling God – He knows those who truly take refuge in Him. So – when all about you is just shaking and rumbling (“sinking sand”) and you don’t know this or that or the other thing – the Lord will say, “Well, she trusts Me. He trusts Me. *He* trusts Me. And he trusts Me. I’ll never let *them* down!” (Josh.1:5; Heb.13:5; Deut.31:6).

You say, “Well then, you mean that that *wall of fire* is not round about everyone? Just around those that trust God?” Oh, no. The *wall of fire* is still there. They’re just not smart enough, or discerning enough to see it! Elisha had to say, “Lord! Open Dumb-dumb’s eyes!” ☺ It’s worded a little different in the King James. ☺ “Give him eyes to see what’s really going on” (2Kngs.6:17).

Church! If the Lord would open our eyes right now so we could really see, comprehend, and understand what is said in His Word, we wouldn’t be down, or discouraged and worried – not by our personal situations and not by our amoral western culture. We would have hands raised and be shouting: “*Great is*

the Lord! And greatly to be praised! In the city of our God and in the mountain of His holiness”
(Ps.48:1).

That is where He wants His children to be blessed – filled with His *glory!* And then He says, “Class dismissed! Go ye into all the world...” (Mk.16:15) and rather than quote: “...and preach the Gospel,” let me say, “Go into all the world and let them *see.*”