



“Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (II Corinthians 4:17).

Glorification

Central Truth: God will consummate His work of glory in the believer's life when Jesus returns.

L417. Date: November 1989. **Text:** II Corinthians 4:6-18.

Topic: Glorification: Of Believers.

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Have you seen that sign? It means, “Be Patient With Me; God Is Not Finished With Me Yet.” Every Christian might wear such a badge. God is not finished with any of us yet.

God's eternal purpose is to form us into the image of His dear Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 8:29). He worked on that plan in time past when Jesus went to the cross and died for our sins. He is working on that plan now as we are changed into the image of Christ, "from glory to glory" (II Corinthians 3:18). He will continue to work on that plan as He leads us along the path of the just. It is as a shining light which grows brighter and brighter “unto the perfect day” (proverbs 4:18).

Glory enhances the believer's experience with God from his conversion experience to His full vision of God in eternity. The comments which follow will observe a progression in the lesson text. It moves from knowing God (verse 6) to walking with God (verses 7-12) and to trusting God (verses 13-16). Finally, it consummates with our being made like the Son of God (verses 17, 18). All of that is related to the blessed hope to which the saints are looking. It encourages us today and assures us of tomorrow. Glory is a delightful word. May you share its joy as you pursue this study.

I. THE GLORY OF KNOWING GOD (II Corinthians 4:6)

The glory begins when the repentant believer meets God through faith in Jesus and is born again of the Holy Spirit. That is when God shines in the heart to give the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

A. Knowing God originates with God. It is His act. We do not seek Him out and find Him. He shines in our hearts. The initiative is His. The life and light we have is a gift of God through Jesus Christ, never a reward for merit of our own. God has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light that we should know Him personally.

What an honor it is that He should desire us, seek us, call us, and save us! What a glory that sheds on our conversion experience. Thank God for loving us so much that He sought and saved us.

B. Knowing God is illustrated in nature. There was a time when darkness was like a blanket which covered every particle of matter. “*God said, Let there be light: and there was light*” (Genesis 1:3). How did light appear? God purposed and spoke it, and it was visible.

That is the way the light of God is in the believer. God purposed and spoke it, and it was there. It was the act of God alone. He made himself known to us, and we received by faith the truth He revealed.

C. Knowing God is experienced personally. He has “*shined in our hearts.*” Since the “heart” is the mind, emotion, and will, the knowledge of God is internal and very personal. The psalmist said the Lord lit a candle inside him and illumined his darkness (Psalm 18:28). That is an excellent description of the spiritual experience, for the entrance of God's words gives light to the inner man (Psalm 119:130). To be a Christian is to enter a personal relationship with God in Christ.

D. Knowing God is spiritual and enlightening. The believer receives “*the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*” Those who see Jesus have seen the Father because He is God made visible to human eyes. That is the greatest experience one could have. Some glory in wisdom, others in might, and some others in riches. “*But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD, which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD*” (Jeremiah 9:24). That is how great it is to know God; it surpasses every other thing in value. Jesus said to know God in truth is eternal life (John 17:2, 3)!

II. THE GLORY OF WALKING WITH GOD (II Corinthians 4:7-12)

A. We walk with God in spite of our human weakness (verse 7). To know God is like possessing a treasure of greatest value. To know God in

our present finite condition is to possess that treasure in a fragile clay pot. What a contrast!

We are mortal creatures whose bodies are destined to return to dust. Our strength is very limited. We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves. But we who are so fragile, temporary, weak, and subject to sin have the privilege of knowing God personally. That is holding a priceless treasure in a worthless pot! Yet, God makes himself available to us and gives us that privilege. Glory!

B. We walk with God in the experience of suffering (verses 8-10).

Trials do not mean that God has forsaken us. Trouble does not bring distress, nor perplexity despair. Though persecuted, we are not forsaken; though cast down, we are not destroyed. If it seems that we are dying for Jesus, we know it is only that the glorious life of Jesus might be manifested in us. Jesus pronounced a blessing on those who suffer for His sake (Matthew 5:11, 12). They experience victory in their sufferings (Hebrews 11:32-38) and learn the glory of receiving God's strength in their weaknesses. When you suffer, remember the promise of I Peter 5:10: *"The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you."*

C. We walk with God in the experience of spiritual victory (verses 8-10). There is a great contrast in the Christian's trials and his reaction to them. On the one hand he has trouble, perplexity, persecution, and is knocked down. Yet through it all he is not distressed or in despair because he knows he is not forsaken of God and will not be destroyed. In fact, he relates his sufferings to the sufferings of Jesus and remembers how He came from them victorious. He expects God to give him the same victory through Jesus. One who shares Jesus' sufferings is certain to obtain His glory (I Peter 5:1). Never despair. You may be knocked down, but you will not be knocked out. *"Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (I Corinthians 15:57).

D. We walk with God in the experience of showing Jesus (verse 11).

Why does God permit difficulties, and even death, to come upon His children? It is that the life whereby Jesus conquered death might show itself in each generation and through each circumstance. Christ was raised up from among the dead by the glory of God the Father. As we are brought through trying experiences, God's glory is manifest in us as in Him. What a privilege it is to show Him through our trials.

Alvis Burgeson expresses the idea quite well in saying, "It is glory just to walk with Him whose blood has ransomed me;/ It is rapture for my soul each day;/ It is joy divine to feel Him near where'er my path may be;/ Praise

the Lord, it's glory all the way.” And it is! May you experience today the glory of walking with the Lord.

III. THE GLORY OF TRUSTING OUR GOD (II Corinthians 4:13-16)

A. We trust God in the spirit of faith (verse 13). In doing so we are not exercising wishful thinking or self-deception; instead; we are placing confidence in the person of God. We trust Him. We do not trust how much we trust, but we trust Him whom we trust. Such a faith gives substance to our hopes and makes us certain of realities we do not see. It is the way we overcome the depraved world system. Believing in the Lord, we are established; trusting Him, we prosper. With the shield of faith we are able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. Our lives move from triumph to triumph and faith grows stronger with each victory.

B. We trust God in the assurance of faith (verse 14). Faith is not the antithesis to knowledge. It is based on “*knowing*.” The text (verse 14) points out that our knowing how God raised Jesus from among the dead assures us that He will raise up us also and present us together in His presence.

Faith is more than a vague hope or a fervent longing. It has a certainty about it. It is being certain of unseen realities. We believe because we know!

C. We trust God as the goal of faith (verse 15). All we are and do is to “*redound to the glory of God*.” That was the purpose of our salvation (Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14). That is the highest desire of our hearts (Philippians 1:20). That is the goal toward which God is working in us (Ephesians 2:4-7). What glory that will be when we realize how we have contributed to people everywhere, and even the angels of heaven, recognizing the glory of God.

D. We trust God in the strength of faith (verse 16). We should not faint (give up) as we trust. Instead, we should learn to dwell with the Lord so as to increase our strength, mounting up with wings as eagles and continuing to walk without fainting in daily affairs (Isaiah 40:31). Faith should never wilt in the face of dangers, doubts, or delays. He who promised is faithful. We are safe when we trust Him.

IV. THE GLORY OF BEING LIKE GOD (II Corinthians 4:17, 18)

The best is yet to come! Whatever is suffered in this world is less than the glory that is to be revealed. Think about that and you will rejoice even in your trials. “*Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning*” (Psalm 30:5).

Our greatest glory is to be made like our blessed Savior. “*Our*

conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (Philippians 3:20, 21). “As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (1 Corinthians 15:49). “It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (I John 3:2). What a prospect! Try to imagine what it will be like when we are in the likeness of our dear Savior.

We agree with the testimony of Charles H. Gabriel. “When, by the gift of His infinite grace,/ I am accorded in heaven a place,/ Just to be there and to look on His face,/ Will thro' the ages be glory for me.” But there is more than looking at His face; there will be the privilege of being in His very image. Yes, the best is yet to come. That prospect is the “*blessed hope*” of the saints (Titus 2:13). It inspires us. It assures us. It stabilizes us, becoming “*an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast*” (Hebrews 6:19). The critic cannot accuse us of being so heavenly minded that we are of no earthly good. The hope for the future which inspires us is the same assurance in the present which challenges us to serve our Lord faithfully now.

Keep on trusting and serving. The glory which began in our knowing God continues in our walking with God, is increased by our trusting God, and is consummated in our being like God. Be steadfast, dear Christian. There's greater glory ahead!

Questions

1. How is II Corinthians 3:18 being realized in your life?
2. What is the progression of glory in our lesson text?
3. What is the glory in knowing God?
4. What is the glory in walking with God?
5. How is the glory of God related to our suffering for God?
6. What is the glory in trusting God?
7. What is the glory in being made like God?
8. What does Philippians 3:20, 21 say about the glory ahead?
9. What does I John 3:2 promise you?
10. How can you reflect the glory of God in your lifestyle this week?