

# ***BEHOLD, THE BEAUTY OF THE LORD***



***The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?  
The Lord is the stronghold of my life of whom shall I be afraid?***

***When evildoers assail me, uttering slanders against me,  
my adversaries and foes, they shall stumble and fall.***

***Though a host encamp against me, my heart shall not fear;  
though war arise against me, yet I will be confident.***

***One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after;  
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,  
to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.***

***Psalm 27:1-4***

*That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord...* I used to think that David's desire to behold the beauty of the Lord every day of his life was a kind of indulgence and luxury, like wanting to go to the symphony three times a week when there's a war going on.

But the longer I live, the more I see of my own heart, the more I see of the world around me, the more I begin to understand David's desire to behold the beauty of the Lord and the effort David went to, to be able to do this.

These were not a luxury. These are what kept David sane.

In a world where there are enemies, whether it's danger, whether it's all kinds of evil, ugliness, despair everywhere, and where David finds sin in his own heart.

For him to be able to daily turn aside from all this and somehow penetrate through the realm of spirit and behold, to the beauty of the Lord, to see something good, something clean, something holy, something right...

This is what kept David on the track.

This is what kept him from going mad.

***One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after;  
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,  
To behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.***

Now as long as David disciplined himself to behold that beauty, to seek it, there was no way anybody could corrupt him.

Recall the time King Saul and his whole army were pursuing David as if David were some kind of wild animal to be caught and killed. And then one day Saul stumbles into the very cave where David and his men are hiding. It's dark in the cave, and he can't see what's going on, but they can. And David's men whisper to him, "*the Lord is giving him into your hand. Kill him. Now is your chance*". And David responds, "*no way. I'm not going to touch him, that's up to the Lord.*" He has a sense because he's beholding God's beauty and living in God's presence of what God would have him do and what God would not have him do. He just knows.

It was when David began to drift away from this desire, to behold God's beauty all the time that he began to stumble and lose his way for a while. If David had been beholding the beauty of the Lord that afternoon when he looked down from the rooftop and saw the magnificent Bathsheba bathing, he would have immediately turned away his eyes and he would have lifted his mind once again to be renewed in a vision of the transcendent splendor of the God of Israel. And he would have saved himself, and Bathsheba, and Uriah, and the whole nation of Israel untold misery.

***One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after;  
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,  
To behold the beauty of the LORD.***

Now we're not talking about escaping the world, withdrawing from the world. We're talking about beholding the beauty of the Lord in the midst of everyday life. Now, apart from God our everyday life is really not very nice, even when it appears to be quite nice from the surface, beneath the veneer, it's not very nice.

Our own hearts, for instance, are not exactly innocent. If anyone ever played a tape of the thoughts that rattle through our heads in a single day. If anyone could put out a video of the images that go dancing across our minds in a single day, who of us wouldn't be embarrassed?

And the world around us keeps bombarding us with voices that urge us to hate our neighbor, to envy our neighbor, to mistrust our neighbor, to covet what our neighbor has, to deceive them.

The world around us also bombards us with all kinds of images, that imply, that tell us often and very directly, that paradise is really the fulfillment of every lust.

And Paul urges us,

***Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.***

***Romans 12:2***



Otherwise, you're going to sink down into this crud. And how in the world can we be renewed in our minds, unless we're able to get our eyes off this crud and behold the beauty of the Lord.

Especially when we go out into the world as we are called and sent to do, to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus with power, to give people healing and hope. When we really stop talking about it, and actually go out there, whether it's on our jobs, or in our neighborhoods, or in our homes, wherever it is.... and begin to proclaim the Gospel in the real world... We soon find ourselves surrounded by absolutely overwhelming, horrendous problems. Problems that will engulf us unless we can see beyond the problems to the beauty of the Lord.

A TV movie, the *Day After*, portrays a hopeless parade of sick, dying, miserable victims of radiation not knowing where to go. And these people were portrayed as something that will happen perhaps in the future. This misery that was shown to us, that attempted to manifest to us as something that's going to happen in this world when the bombs begin to fall....this misery is already here.

It's here and it's not only among the starving masses of Somalia, or in refugee camps, or in battle zones, or the skid rows of every big city in the world. But it's everywhere we look. Everywhere we look we see sad, lonely, angry, troubled, bitter, frightened people. And the misery gets into us too.

Now, if we're going to bring any kind of meaningful hope to such a world, and if we're going to sustain that hope in ourselves, while we do it, we're going to have to learn how to get our eyes on something truly good... all the time, to train our minds to behold the beauty of the Lord, to see the transcendent splendor of God in the Son.

If we don't, we're just going to sink right down into all the despair. The despair is not always the hopelessness that you see in apocalyptic movies. The despair is also “*get all the gusto you can, you only go around once*”...

That's not hope. It's despair, it's sick.

If all there is, is an afternoon in the sun with a bottle of booze or our dope.. we're in bad shape.

***The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul:  
The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.  
The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart:  
The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.  
The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever:  
The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.***

***Psalm 19:7-9***

So against the background of all the lies that the Father of Lies... spews out into this world.... to convince the world of those lies....God approaches us with something that is perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, true, righteous.

But that's not going to do us any good... unless we get our eyes on it. If we're looking at all the junk and we never see this, what good does it do us?

***But we all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord  
are changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another by the Spirit of the Lord.***

***2 Corinthians 3:18***



Paul is telling us that it is absolutely possible to behold that glory with unveiled face. And Jesus promises that he will manifest himself, reveal himself, to those who follow him.

***“I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you.  
Yet a little while, and the world will see me no more, but you will see me;  
because I live, you will live also.***

***In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.***

***He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me;  
and he who loves me will be loved by my Father,  
and I will love him and manifest myself to him (reveal myself, show myself to him).***

***John 14:18-21***

These words are to everyone who ever has or will follow Jesus.

What we need to see if we're going to live in this world with a clear mind and not become distracted by the corruption, or the false hopes, or the despair that surround us and that also fill our flesh, we have to see that it is possible, absolutely possible, to behold the glory of the Lord with unveiled face. It's possible to see the splendor of the Living God shining from the face of his Son, that it's possible, in some way, for every one of us to behold this. And once we get it clear that such a vision is possible for every one of us, not just for Saint Francis of Assisi, or Saint Augustine, or for Luke, or John, or Matthew, but for every one of us.

Once we get that clear that we can have such a vision of God...there are four things we need to do.

### **Desire the Beauty of the Lord**

The first thing we need to do is to desire the beauty of the Lord.

***One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after;  
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,  
To behold the beauty of the LORD.***

***Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God***

***Matthew 5:8***

The pure in heart are the ones who desire to see that beauty.

Think of the sacrifices we have made for lesser desires, the efforts we've gone to, the time we spent on much, much lesser goals than that.

What is it that I desire?

What is it that drives my life?

What is the longing that leads me on?

*Lord God, help me to unload and get rid of every desire that distracts from this one desire... so that you become, Lord God, the one desire of my heart.*



## **Seek the Beauty of the Lord**

The next thing we need to do is to seek the beauty of the Lord.

***One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after.***

Now we turn our desire into a pursuit.

We don't just sit around and wish the vision would come.

We pursue the vision.

We seek it.

Every man or woman who has ever come to the place where they are able to behold the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, got there by seeking.

Somebody might say, “*well, wait a minute the vision is a gift of grace*”. True, a vision of God is always a gift of grace. But the only people who ever receive that gift of grace are those who seek it. “*Well, what about the Apostle Paul, he wasn't seeking it and bang there it came*”? But don't kid yourself, Paul was following the light he had. This man was going by what he thought was right. He was wrong, but this man at least followed the light he had. He didn't sit on top of truth and rot with it. And the vision came to him.

Do you want to see the Lord, the glory of the Lord with unveiled face?

Seek it!

Do you want to hear God speak?

Seek Him!

Do you want to meet Jesus alive from the dead?

Seek Him!



And seek him in specific ways.

We *make time* to seek him. We all need to make time for him in prayer daily.

Seek him in the *gathered fellowship*. We underestimate the awesome things that go on when the saints come together.

Seek him by *following the light* that has already come.

If I'm really serious about having a vision of the glory of God and beholding the beauty of the Lord, then I'm going to take the trouble to block out some time every single day where I'm going to close off everything and look for him.

If I'm really serious about having a vision of God, I am going to gather with the saints at least one day out of seven, unless I'm dying or at the North Pole. I'm not trying to lay down a rule here, but I believe this is important for me. I believe I need that! Not... my Athlete's Foot acting up today, I think I'll stay home or I'm not in the mood, or I don't feel very receptive, or I don't think I want to be around those hypocrites. If I'm serious about pursuing the face of God, I'm going to be among the Saints.

If I'm also going to do the things the Lord shows me, in whatever way he chooses to. I'm going to follow the light I have. If I get light on the fact that Father is calling me to get reconciled with that brother or sister. I'm going to do that. And if the word in some way shows me that it's time for me to open up my hand and share my goods with that person, I must do that.

And if it's clear that I have to go and find that forgotten sheep and bring it back to the fold. I have to do that.

**Once we seriously pursue that vision, the vision comes, it always comes.**

**It never, never, never fails.**

And when the vision comes and we begin to behold the beauty of the Lord, we are ready for the third step, which is to open our hearts to it.

### **Open our Hearts to the Beauty of the Lord**



*That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,*

*To behold the beauty of the LORD.*

The House of the Lord is not a place. It's a state of the heart.

So that instead of a flash of vision and then nothing, a clear insight for five minutes, and then nothing.

**It's that I dwell there, I live there.**

*He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High  
shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty*

*Psalm 91:1*

Those that dwell there...stay there...live there day in and day out.

That means the opening of the heart.

It means that I take off the veil, and behold his glory with unveiled face.

It means that I humble myself and become a child when the glory of the Lord descends upon us as we sing together and it's there and we know it's there.

What do we do with it? Do we open our hearts to it, or let it fly on by, have a couple of goose pimples and go on our way rejoicing, or do we open our hearts, let it come in?

We come together around the Lord's table. We eat his flesh and drink his blood... in with and under that bread.. is the Spirit of the Lord. Breathing through that wine is the Spirit of the Lord. And as we eat and drink this food the issue is, do we open our hearts, that last inmost door of our hearts, and truly let Jesus get in there?

### **Conform Our Lives to the Beauty of the Lord**

Finally we need to conform our lives to the beauty of the Lord.

Conform our lives, not to the illusions of the world around us, and not to the vanities and fantasies of our own hearts, but to the beauty of the Lord that we soak up every day.

Now I begin to bend my life into that. I pour myself into that. I yield to it.

What I look at is what I become.

When I behold that glory with unveiled face, I begin to rise up into it, and become like it.

To conform our lives to the glory of the Lord, means that we look at it, keep looking at it, and keep peeling away everything in our lives, every thought, every desire, every ambition, every fear that interferes with it, that keeps us from yielding and bending to it... until our eye is single and our heart is pure.

Don't ever let anyone tell you or imply that it's impossible to behold the glory of God in this life of flesh and blood. It is possible.

Men and women before have done it. And there are many people on the Earth right now who are beholding the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, and are being transformed by it.

And this can happen for us too, if it's not already happening, and if it is already happening.

We know there's more ahead, more to be done... if we will ....

Desire the beauty of the Lord.

Seek the beauty of the Lord.

Open our hearts to the beauty of the Lord

Conform our lives to the beauty of the Lord

Then the Lord himself will anoint our heads with the oil of his Spirit. And he will cause our cups to so overflow with his life, with such an abundance, that instead of sinking down into this world of despair, we will take authority over that despair, bringing to this despairing world, the one hope and the one beauty that it will ever know or see.... from which every other beauty and hope comes... the beauty of God shining from the face of his son Jesus.

***One thing one (one thing) have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after.  
That I may well in the house of the Lord all the days of my life..  
to behold the beauty of the Lord and to enquire in his temple.***



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*Prayer- Oh Lord, to behold you, truly behold you... Oh how we need this... to see your wondrous beauty, to enter into your perfect presence... Lord help us to still ourselves enough, to need you enough, to desire and seek you enough to enter into the discipline of opening our hearts fully to you... each and every day. Lift us from the despair, the misery this world brings... and lift us into your beauty... the shining beauty that illuminates our hearts, our lives, our very being. What glory, what life, what transformation awaits us if we would open ourselves to this precious gift of beholding you... make it so beloved Lord. Amen.*

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