

# (Knowing God's Way) 15. Seeing the Glory of Christ and Partaking of It

by Zac Poonen

---

*The sermon emphasizes the importance of beholding the glory of Christ and being transformed into His likeness, rather than just focusing on external righteousness or doctrine.*

**Scripture:** Numbers 6:23-25, Psalm 1:5, Luke 10:38-42, John 1:4, Romans 6:22, 1 Corinthians 1:30, 2 Corinthians 3:18 - 4:1, 2 Corinthians 11:3, Philippians 2:8-11

**Topics:** "Transformation in Christ", "True Spirituality"

---

## Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes the transformative power of beholding the glory of Christ, which leads believers to be changed into His likeness from glory to glory. He warns against the dangers of mere religious activity that lacks true Christlikeness, highlighting that true ministry is about inner transformation rather than external righteousness. Poonen stresses the importance of simple devotion to Christ, cautioning against being led astray by religious works that do not reflect the character of Jesus. He encourages believers to renounce dishonesty and craftiness, focusing instead on the humility and purity that come from a genuine relationship with Christ. Ultimately, the sermon calls for a deeper understanding of the glory of Christ, which is essential for true spiritual growth and fellowship among believers.

---

## Transcript

"Beholding the glory of the Lord, we are transformed into the same image from glory to glory by the Lord, the Spirit. Therefore, since we have received this ministry we do not lose heart. (2 Cor.3:18; 4:1)

When most believers think of a ministry they think only of some external service for the Lord. But here Paul speaks of the ministry of being changed into the likeness of Christ from one degree of glory to another. Because he had such a ministry, he was never discouraged.

The one who serves the Lord will have "the fruit of sanctification" (Rom.6:22) in his life. The more he serves the Lord, the more he will be transformed into the likeness of Christ.

In other words, the more he serves the Lord, the more he will do everything for the glory of God, the more he will seek to hide himself, the more humble he will become in his attitude to others, the more he will hate money, the more he will become pure in his thought-life, the more he will love even his enemies, etc., etc., One who does not have such fruits of sanctification in his inner life and attitudes is not really serving the

Lord at all, even if he is engaged in a multitude of religious Christian activities, and even if he is a world-famous preacher or healer or whatever.

There are many upright, righteous people among Christians who are not spiritual, but only religious. Do you know that there is a world of difference between being upright and being Christlike?

Because we preach righteousness, many religious, upright Christians are drawn to us. But they may not be interested in being Christlike!! People who are taken up with the letter of the Scriptures are only interested in being upright. But those who are taken up with the spirit of the new covenant will seek to be Christlike. They alone become truly spiritual.

We read in 2 Cor.11:3 that we face a constant danger of being led astray from simple devotion to Christ into mere religious works - just as the serpent deceived Eve. The devil did not frighten Eve into committing sin. No. He deceived her with his cleverness. Therefore it is not surprising that Satan's servants today too come preaching "righteousness" (2 Cor.11:15).

The servants of Satan may preach "righteousness", but they will not preach Christlikeness. They will emphasise matters like long hair for women and short hair for men, covering of the head for women, removal of ornaments, obedience to the pastor/elder, payment of tithes, breaking bread every week, following the new-testament pattern in the church-meeting etc., etc., With such preaching on external matters they will deceive many believers into thinking that they are servants of God.

But these servants of Satan can easily be recognised by what they do NOT emphasise. They will leave out the most important matters in the Christian life, like humility, purity of heart, fervent love for one another, taking up the cross daily, being filled with the Spirit, following Jesus in daily life etc.,

An elder who commits adultery or one who steals church funds can never lead other believers astray, because even unbelievers will be able to see that such a man is not a godly man. But a religious brother can easily lead many believers astray, because most believers (not being able to differentiate between religiosity and spirituality) will be impressed by his external righteousness of life, his religious fervour and his religious activities. If you think that "serving the Lord" (as Martha did), is more important than "listening to His voice" (as Mary did), you can be certain that you are religious and not spiritual (Lk.10:38-42)

There are many preachers visiting India nowadays from Western lands. No-one knows how such preachers live with their wives at home, how they have brought up their children or what sort of brotherhood they have built up in their home-towns. People are taken up merely with their eloquence, and (very often) their money!! But to evaluate a man's ministry aright, you need to know how he lives at home! Don't consider any man to be a spiritual man until you have seen how he has brought up his children. If his children are worldly, that would usually indicate that the man himself is a hypocrite - because a man cannot fool his own children about his spirituality. If his local church is only a congregation of his admirers and not a brotherhood of equal brothers and sisters, then it is obvious that he knows nothing about building the body of Christ.

The Christian world is full of many righteous people who very often cannot get along with each other!! The more "righteous" they are, the more difficult it is often for people to have any fellowship with them!! Those who pursue Christlikeness however are easy to get along with and will always have glorious fellowship with each other.

Satan came to Eve and told her that she could be like God. Jesus also came to earth with the message that we could be like God. Both messages appear to be the same. But there is a world of difference between what is meant in the two statements - a difference as vast as the difference between heaven and hell. Satan tempted Eve to be like God in knowledge, power and authority. Jesus however came to make us like God in character - in humility, purity, love and goodness.

Because of lack of discernment, most Christian churches today are crowded with Pharisees who are proud of their numbers, their "righteousness", their "new-testament pattern" and their activities. They sit in their churches with a testimony of being very righteous. But in their private lives, they behave worse than the heathen. They were probably not like that when they started their Christian lives. They may have become Pharisees gradually. They may have started in genuine righteousness. Today they are first-class hypocrites. God allowed such a development to take place in their lives, because He saw that they were basically insincere.

But God has His remnant in many places - humble brothers and sisters who are seeking for inward purity and who are broken and contrite in spirit, people who are not seek anything for themselves, but who are concerned about the glory of God's Name and who are taken up with Jesus Himself, and not with doctrine or teaching or any external thing primarily.

How can we prevent ourselves from being deceived? The answer is given us in 2 Cor.11:3 - By a simple and pure devotion to Christ.

Anything that leads us away from devotion to the person of Jesus Himself - whether it be a doctrine or an emphasis or a ministry or whatever - is part of Satan's scheme to lead us astray and destroy us.

A.B.Simpson was a great man of God who lived in the 19th century - one who founded the largest missionary movement of his time. At first, he was a sickly preacher. But then he was baptized in the Holy Spirit. One day, he heard someone singing these words: "My Jesus - no man can work like Him". Those words gripped his heart and he realized that his problem was that he was working in his own strength and getting exhausted. He then saw Jesus, not just as a Healer, but as the very Source of his physical health and life. Then he wrote a hymn that described his experience:

"Once it was the blessing, now it is the Lord, Once it was the feeling, now it is His Word. Once His gifts I wanted, now the Giver own Once I sought for healing, now Himself alone.

Once it was my working, His it hence shall be Once I tried to use Him, now He uses me Once the power I wanted, now the Mighty One! Once for self I laboured, now for Him alone."

This has been the secret of every great man of God in the history of the church - THEY WERE TAKEN UP WITH THE PERSON OF CHRIST HIMSELF, AND NOT WITH HIS BLESSINGS OR HIS GIFTS. Thus they entered into a life of rest in the midst of a world full of turmoil and strife.

"There is a place of quiet rest near to the heart of God - A place where sin cannot molest - near to the heart of God."

This is the place into which the Holy Spirit desires to lead us every day. We will not thereby become hermits living in solitude by ourselves. No. We will be active in serving and helping others. But our personal life, our married life and our ministry will all be transformed.

In the next verse (2 Cor.4:2), we read Paul saying, "We have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God."

We can never come into this rest of God, if there is anything of dishonesty or craftiness in our lives. In the past, there were one or two brothers who joined us (they have fallen away now), who were very gifted and very intelligent. But they were very crafty too. God can use gifted and intelligent people if they are straightforward and honest and humble. But God will trap crafty people in their own craftiness (1Cor.3:19). And that is what He did to those brothers. Like Haman, they finally hung on the very gallows that they had prepared for others.

Crafty brothers and sisters may survive for a long time in the church, because God being longsuffering and merciful, gives them plenty of time to change. But if they don't cleanse themselves, they will not survive in a spiritual church. "Sinners cannot stand forever in the assembly of the righteous" (Psa.1:5).

If you want to be a useful member in the body of Christ, then begin here: Renounce all craftiness and dishonesty, renounce the hidden things of shame, and stop adulterating the word of God to suit your convenience.

There are two ways in which people can adulterate the Word of God.

One way is by compromising the standards of God's Word, when it comes to their own life or when dealing with someone who is a close friend or a loyal supporter. Jesus would rebuke even someone as close to Him as Peter saying, "Get behind Me, Satan", if Peter suggested a course of action that was contrary to God's will. We must not adulterate the standards of God's Word to cover-up the failures of our wives or to please some rich person or close friend. We must never have any friends who are closer to us than the Word of God itself - for such a friendship can never be a spiritual fellowship.

A second way in which people can adulterate the Word of God is by twisting the interpretation of a verse to suit their pre-conceived theology or ideas. Consider just one example: The doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. This truth is emphasised very plainly and clearly at the very beginning of each of the first 5 books of the New Testament (See Mt.3:11; Mk. 1:8; Lk.3:16; Jn.1:33; and Acts 1:5) Yet it is almost impossible to get believers from Brethren and Baptist groups to believe that Jesus can baptize them in the Holy Spirit today - because they have been brainwashed from childhood into believing that "they got everything as soon as they were converted". If they are honest, they will have to admit that rivers of living water are not flowing out of their lives, as Jesus said it would out of the lives of those who are filled with the Holy Spirit. But they will not face up to reality. When they read the Scriptures relating to being baptized in the Holy Spirit, they will make it fit the shape of their denomination's theology. This is intellectual dishonesty and adulterating the Word of God.

A honest believer however would say, when he comes to a difficult verse, that it doesn't seem to fit with the doctrine that he has always believed, and that perhaps he needs to get more light from God on it. There is great hope for such honest believers.

Honesty and humility are like twins. They always go together in a person. They are like the two sides of a coin. You can't have one side without having the other. If you are really humble, you will be honest too. To acknowledge your craftiness is to humble yourself. When you renounce dishonesty you are actually renouncing a part of your pride.

Paul goes on to say in this passage that the gospel that he preached was hidden from the eyes of many. Which gospel was he speaking of there? Not just the gospel of the forgiveness of our sins, but "the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God" (2 Cor.4:4). The glory of Christ is certainly not found in the forgiveness of sins - for Christ had no sins to be forgiven!!

What is "the gospel of the glory of Christ"? The answer is found in the same verse. It refers to Christ as being the image of God. The gospel message is that after our sins are forgiven, we can be transformed into the image of God.

In the beginning of creation, God said, Let there be light (2 Cor.4:6). That was the first word spoken by God. That is the first word that God speaks into our hearts too. There is darkness within us, because we have the nature of Adam in our flesh - not only Adam's lust and anger, but Adam's shrewdness and craftiness as well. All of that darkness has to be driven out. It is not only the bad sheep of Amalek that God commanded to be killed, but the good sheep too (1 Sam.15).

What is the light? John 1:4 states very clearly that it is the life of Christ which is the light. That is the light with which God wants to light up our dark hearts. The glory of God "full of grace and truth" was seen in the earthly life of Jesus. One who is taken up with this light will be more interested in being Christlike than in just being righteous.

External righteousness brings us the honour of men. But God wants to make us like His Son inwardly.

About 350 years ago there lived in France a woman named Madam Guyon. She had so much light on the ways of God, even at a time when there were no Christian books available. The reason was that she sought God Himself in the midst of her suffering. Many believers suffer but they don't get to know God through their sufferings, because they don't seek Him for what He is Himself. They only seek for relief from their sufferings. Madam Guyon however sought after God Himself, and as a result, came to know God in a way that few very people have. It is when we joyfully accept all the suffering that God sends our way that we get to know God - not only when we submit to it, but when we joyfully accept it as well.

Madam Guyon, in one of her writings, says that there is a way of lights, gifts and graces - a holy life - which brings us the admiration of those who do not have the purest light. But if we go beyond such a life, to a life of total obedience to the Lord in all areas, we will find ourselves despised and rejected by those very same people who formerly admired us. Then we shall find fellowship with Jesus in His sufferings - because this was exactly what Jesus experienced too.

You can rejoice in the opinion that others have of you that you are a godly man. Many are satisfied with just that. But if you really follow Jesus you will go further. Why did the people who saw Jesus' life in Nazareth - even his own relatives who saw it more closely than anyone else - reject Him instead of admiring Him? Don't people in your office and your neighbourhood generally admire an upright man? But people did not admire Jesus. Why? Because the spirit of this world is so opposed to the Spirit of God that anyone who is a faithful witness to the true God will be rejected. Jesus was such a faithful witness to the true God.

How is it then that people admire you so much?

Perhaps, even people in dead denominations admire you!! And perhaps you even glory in their testimony about you!!

We read nowadays of "Christians" even getting the Nobel peace prize. But the world would never have given that prize to Jesus, the Prince of Peace. The world gave Him a cross, not a prize or a medal. And remember that the spirit of this world has not changed. It has in fact become worse. Jesus said that those who were admired by all men were false prophets. He said, "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you" (Lk.6:26).

When you really see the glory of Christ, the honour of men will mean nothing to you any more.

When we walk in the pure light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, we will be misunderstood and rejected and called all sorts of evil names by others - especially by religious Christians. Jesus was called by such names as "a mad man", "a friend of sinners", "the prince of demons" etc., You too will be called by such names if you follow Jesus all the way. If however you seek to please man and to be diplomatic in your speech, then you will avoid that reproach of Christ. But that would also indicate that Satan has blinded your eyes from seeing the glory of Christ.

In 2 Cor.3:15, it says that if you read the Word of God according to the letter, you will find a veil over your eyes - a veil that hinders you from seeing the real meaning of Scripture and the glory of Christ. And then even if you seek to obey the new-covenant commandments such as, "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who harm you" etc., you will obey them only according to the letter. It is possible to obey all these commandments with a self-righteous, Pharisaical spirit - because of a veil over your eyes. But when you turn to the Lord, that veil will be removed, and you will see the glory of Christ (v.16).

It is possible for you to go to a meeting just to hear a message, and not to meet with the Lord. But no message can solve your problems. Only Jesus can do that. Many believers, for example, who have heard so much about what a truly Christian marriage is, still do not have Christlike attitudes towards their marriage-partners. Why? Because they are occupied with the letter of Scripture. What you need then is not to hear more messages, but to see the glory of Christ.

When you are taken up with Jesus Himself, and not with religious activity, or with healing, or with emotional experiences (such as falling down and laughing and dancing etc.,) you will begin to be spiritual.

It is not even righteousness that we need, but Jesus Himself.

In 1 Cor.1:30 we are told that "Christ Himself has become to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification". It is not that He gives us wisdom. He Himself is our wisdom. He is our sanctification, our redemption, our healing, our ministry, our everything. When we leave Christ and are taken up instead with some doctrine, then we have been led astray.

What is the secret of godliness (1 Tim.3:16). Is it the doctrine that Christ came in our flesh? No, it isn't. The secret of godliness is Jesus Himself Who came in our flesh. Those who are taken up with this doctrine, I have found, are the greatest Pharisees in Christendom. But those who are taken up with Jesus Himself never become Pharisees.

There is a big dividing line in Christendom today: It is drawn between those who are taken up with the letter of Scripture and those who are taken up with its spirit - or in other words, between those who are occupied with doctrines of holiness and those who are occupied with the person of Jesus Himself.

The more believers look at the letter, the more there will be a veil over their eyes, that they do not see the Lord. God wants us to see the light of His glory in the face of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Consider the glory of His humility. In Phil.2:8-11, we read that God has exalted the Name of Jesus over every other name, so that at that Name, everyone everywhere should bow down. Every demon has to bow down before that Name today. Why? Not because He was the Son of God or because He lived a holy life. But because He humbled Himself.

If you are not willing to humble yourself, and yet seek to use the Name of Jesus, you will be trying to use it as some sort of magic word. And it won't work. But one who humbles himself and dies to himself and uses the Name of Jesus, will find power in the use of it.

When you preach the Word of God in the Name of Jesus, if you have not understood why God has exalted the Name of Jesus above every other name, you won't have the power of the Spirit backing your preaching. You can preach the same message that another person preaches or that you read in a book. But there won't be the same anointing over your preaching. A man can preach in order to get honour for himself. But the Holy Spirit won't back up that message - and any apparent fruit from his ministry will not last for eternity.

Have you seen the glory of Jesus' humility?

Whatever we do, we are commanded to do in the Name of Jesus. Then we must do everything in the same spirit as Jesus, Who humbled Himself and became a servant and died. All through His earthly life, He refused to be anything other than a servant. This is our calling too. We are to be not only brothers, but servants of one another too.

May we be gripped by the glory of His humility. Then there will be no veil over our faces, but only a powerful, continual anointing.

We read in 2 Cor.3:13 that Moses put a veil over his face, so that the people would not see that the glory was fading away. You can put a veil over your life too - to hide the glory that you've lost. You may want others to think that the glory in your inner life and in your married life is still the same as it was some years back - even though it is not so today.

But Paul says "We have renounced all these hidden, shameful things. With an open, unveiled face we now see the glory of the Lord"

We read in Numbers 6:23-25 that God asked Aaron to bless the children of Israel thus: "The Lord make His face shine on you." This was the greatest blessing that they could receive from the Lord - His shining upon them with His glory. This is the greatest blessing that we can receive today under the new covenant too.

When the sun shines on the moon, it reflects the sun's light. But as the earth comes in between the sun and the moon, the moon gradually becomes invisible. This is how it is with many believers too. The things of earth come between them and the Lord. And soon what started out as a full moon becomes a half moon and finally no moon at all!!

The only way we can avoid this fading away of the glory is by being totally honest and removing every veil. To be honest does not mean that we have to publicly confess our sins. No. But it does mean that we must

renounce all dishonesty and pretence.

When people hear someone preaching fantastic truths that are not backed up by a humble, holy life, they are turned away from this glorious gospel. If you wear a badge that says, "JESUS SAVES" and then lose your temper, you must change the badge to read "JESUS SAVES US FROM HELL BUT NOT FROM ANGER". Either that, or remove your badge. At least then the Name of the Lord will not be dishonoured.

Let us be gripped by the glory of Jesus' humility. Nobody could stop Him from being a servant to one and all. People wanted Him to be a king, but he would not oblige them. He never wanted to have a reputation as a great man, a knowledgeable man or any such thing. He came to show us by His life what God was like. Now that is our calling too - to be servants, to die to our Self-life, and to show others what God is like.

We must allow the Holy Spirit first of all to show us the glory of Christ.

Then the Spirit will make us partake of that glory - increasingly.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/knowning-gods-way-15-seeing-the-glory-of-christ-and-partaking-of-it/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**