

Show Us Your Glory



Gary Wilkerson January 28, 2013

We long to see our churches transformed, filled with power and the glory of God. The book of Acts shows us the way.

In Acts 3, Peter and John had just been part of a historic spiritual awakening at Pentecost. Jesus' followers had gathered in the Upper Room when the Holy Spirit came and filled everyone in the place. As a crowd gathered outside, Peter was emboldened by the Spirit to preach — and three thousand people came to Christ in a single hour.

Now Peter and John were walking to the Temple when they encountered a beggar who couldn't walk. As the man pleaded for alms, Peter told him, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" (Acts 3:6).

The beggar was healed instantly. It was a miracle that had a resounding effect: "While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's" (3:11). Here was yet another amazing scene of God's glory manifesting.

I want to highlight five things about this scene that tell us a lot about God's glory and how he desires to manifest it in his people's lives.

The healed man "clung" to Peter and John (3:11). The image here is of someone clutching unashamedly, hanging on for dear life. It's as if this man were saying, "God's presence is real! I have sat here for years, begging for help, but I never experienced anything like this. He has stirred my soul beyond anything I've ever known!"

God loves to be clung to. He loves a heart that pursues him crying, "Lord, your glory is too great to let it pass by. I cling to the hope you give me — hope for healing, for transformation, for your presence in my life and my world."

"All the people" came to see what had happened (3:11). When God reveals his glory in power, there will not be a trifling response. The greatness of his power demands the attention of everyone around.

Suppose this beggar's miraculous healing had happened at the church I pastor. We wouldn't be able to buy enough chairs to accommodate the throngs that would come. I'm not referring to gawkers who love a spectacle. We're all hungry for the touch of God in our lives. Believers and nonbelievers alike are hurting today, wandering lost like sheep without a shepherd, hungering for what's real. So when God's glory manifests itself, bringing newness of life, it draws the attention of all, not just a few.

"All the people (were) utterly astounded" (3:11). When the people saw that the beggar was healed, they marveled, "Nothing we know compares to this. Surely God is in this place!"

Let me ask you: Do you want more from your life in God? Do you want his glory to come into your home, your marriage, your children's lives and transform things so that all are astounded? Guess what? God wants that! He wants you to be astounded by his glory and transformed by it. And he wants the world around you to be astounded as his glorious power brings new life to situations where defeat has been the rule.

The people “ran” (3:11). I ask you, wouldn’t you run, too? The heavenly glory that manifested in that place was so real, so pure and true, people were drawn as to a magnet. An inner voice told them that what they were running toward was love. And it gave them a sense of expectation: God was on the move and their soul’s hunger was about to be filled.

What hurting man, woman or child wouldn’t run to a place where lifelong troubles are answered by God, where deep, miraculous healing takes place? That is truly a “Jesus movement.” And it doesn’t happen by plans, ingenuity or organized events; it happens when God shows up. Wherever his glory manifests – whether through faithful preaching or a simple testimony – people will run to taste it.

The people “ran together to them” (3:11). There is great significance in this word “together.” These people weren’t scrambling to get past one another. They went as one, each humbled by the majestic power of God’s presence.

His glory has that effect. It unifies us in awe. Indeed, that is God’s desire for us — to set aside our differences, forgive offenses, leave our offerings at the altar and go to those who need our forgiveness or who need to forgive us.

We can’t expect a glorious, awe-inspiring God to move in our midst if we cling to a tongue that speaks evil, a heart that stewes on grudges, a spirit that refuses to forgive another. Why would nonbelievers run to a church where malice and division rule? God’s acts of glory knit our hearts together — but how can we be knit if we refuse to lay down our divisions?

Why is God’s glory manifested in some churches and people but not in others?

Peter provides an answer in the scene at the Temple. He told those marveling people, “Men of Israel...the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus” (Acts 3:12-13).

God has placed all his majesty, glory and power in one source: Christ. His glory isn’t made known in smart and powerful men or through brilliant plans and ingenious strategies. His glory is found in a single source: his servant Jesus.

That is the hope for the church, and it has always been so. If we want Christ’s glory in our lives and in our churches, it’s not going to come through our strength or schemes. It’s going to come by emptying ourselves out that he may fill us. We must say with John the Baptist, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

You may ask, “I know how to empty myself, but how do I get filled with God’s glory?” Many in the Old Testament asked that same question as they cried, “Lord, how long before you come down and show your glory?”

Moses uttered this very cry. The King James Version renders Moses’ anguish most clearly: “He said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory” (Exodus 33:18). This “beseeching” implies a pleading, a begging, a groaning in the soul, an expression of a need that simply had to be filled.

God must have been pleased by Moses’ request, because he agreed to reveal his glory. He instructed Moses to hide behind a rock and to peek out briefly as he passed by, because he knew even Moses couldn’t behold the brilliance of his glory. So Moses beheld God’s glory in small part — yet that ray of glory affected him powerfully.

Most of us have been taught that after Moses descended and addressed Israel, he had to place a veil over his face because it shone so brightly. Yet Scripture actually says, “When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face” (Exodus 34:33). It was after Moses spoke to the people that he covered his face. What was that about?

Paul explains this in Second Corinthians: “Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end” (2 Corinthians 3:13).

Paul is making a bold statement that a form of God’s glory actually comes to an end. Paul was referring to the glory on Moses’ face. Even the brilliant glory of God’s presence would eventually fade. Why? The shine on

Moses' face wasn't permanent.

Yet, Paul says, there is a type of God's glory that does not fade away. "If what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory" (3:11). Paul is speaking here of God's glory as embodied in Jesus Christ alone. "Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face" (3:12-13). Because of Christ's glory, we are emboldened in a way that even Moses wasn't! Paul explains:

"When one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (3:16-18).

In Christ, we have within us a glory that does not fade. It is why our boldness exceeds even that of Moses: It is empowered by Christ's own Spirit. The glory of the Lord was on Moses from his time in the Lord's presence, and the people were mesmerized by it. But Moses had to cover his face to keep the people from seeing that glory fade away.

It's different for us. Because of Jesus, God's glory in us never stops working. It continually transforms us "from one degree of glory to another." We have a permanent, unchanging, unfading glory!

What an amazing God we serve. He says, "When you come to my house on Sunday to be filled with my glory, it won't start fading on Monday. It won't be weakened by Tuesday so that you have to yearn for next Sunday. That is not my way. My glory resides in you at all times, and it isn't fading – it's growing!"

This message is not for a small portion of the body of Christ. It is truth to all who follow Jesus, from the weakest to the strongest, from the youngest to the oldest. The promise of God to fill us with his glory is yes and amen to every believer.

As Paul declares, his manifest glory brings freedom – from bondage to sin, from despair and defeat, from lukewarmness and apathy. There is no veil anymore for us who live in Christ. We are being transformed by his glory into his own image. That's the kind of glory that causes people to rush to God with unashamed hunger.

It is time for us to put aside everything that veils God's glory in our lives. Is there anything in your heart that may hinder God's glory from drawing others to you? Is there slander, bitterness or unforgiveness in your heart? Are you burdened by habitual patterns of sin?

It does not have to continue. The veil of fear that Satan has placed over you will not work anymore. His lie that you're too weak won't hold power over you. God says his glory rests on weak, earthen vessels. It shines through people who are brokenhearted, whose lives are in turmoil. When our Lord manifests his glory, he transforms defeat into victory, fleshly weakness into heavenly strength.

Believe his word to you: "You don't have to lead a defeated life. You don't have to live without a testimony. I will manifest in ways that will astound you. Lost people are going to be drawn to me through your life. And when they do, they'll say, 'Truly, the Lord is in this place.'"

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