

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Called Unto the Kingdom and Glory of God

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“As you know, like a father with his own children,¹² we encouraged, comforted, and implored each one of you to walk worthily of God, the One calling you unto the kingdom and glory of Himself.”

1 Thessalonians 2:11,12

“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;³ seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of the One calling us to His own glory and manifestation-of-power.”

2 Peter 1:2-3

“The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness,⁴² and will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.⁴³ Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

Matthew 13:41-43

“We are destined for glory.” Most of the time when we might hear someone make a statement like that, we tend to think of heaven, or the glory of the new earth. But that is not what that statement would mean, from a biblical perspective. **God has designated, determined and invited us to share in His glory, yes, ...but not just some external radiance or splendor. The glory He calls us to is an internal glory, the radiance and beauty of His Spirit shining through us.** It is our present possession as children of God, ...a growing and expanding reality of our present lives and experience, if we will embrace and align ourselves to it..., and a future certainty that will be fulfilled in us, when Christ returns and our old Adam-nature fully falls away and we are transformed into the likeness of our King.

In the original creation, we were made in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26,27; 5:1). Humankind was to have dominion and rule over the rest of created animals on the earth. Psalm 8 expands on this a bit more: “What is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him?⁵ Yet You have made him a little lower than God, and You crowned him with glory and majesty!⁶ You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet...” (vss. 4-6). **We were given glory and majesty as part of our intended nature, function and existence. It was the visible manifestation of God's splendor.** The Hebrew word for “glory” occurs 45 times in this way in the OT. The same words for glory and majesty were used in Psalm 145:5 for God Himself: “On the splendor of the glory of Your majesty, and on Your wonderful works, I will meditate.”

We have talked about this period of time we live in as the overlap of two kingdoms or ages. There is the present evil age, that began with the fall of Adam and Eve into sin. At that moment when they chose to disobey God, something was radically changed within them. Instantly, they felt “naked”. Their focus changed from being joyful, positive, outward, ...delighting in the beauty and wonderful experiences of the garden God had made for them, and freely, innocently enjoying His Presence..., to a sudden awareness of emptiness, self-consciousness, aloneness. Their focus became inward, self-protecting, fearful. **Something was different; something was lost.** Interestingly, there is a distinction made in Genesis 5. In verse 1 it says that “On the day that God created humankind, He made them in the likeness of God”, but then in verse 3, **when Adam fathered his son, Seth, the focus is different. “He became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image.”** Seth is not said to be in the image of God, as Adam had been. Seth is said to be in the image and likeness that Adam bore *at the time of Seth's birth*. **Seth, and every human child after him, has been born in this diminished image and likeness that was the result of the fall.** Since that time, every human child has been born with a propensity toward selfishness and sin. This was *not* a natural characteristic of Adam and Eve in the original creation. They were innocent. No one had to teach them to be good, ...in fact, someone had to teach them to do evil, because it had not occurred to them on their own! Since that time, however, every human child is born with an inclination toward selfishness and sin. They have to be taught to be good.

What was this missing component? What had been lost at the fall? A significant clue is given to us in Romans 3:23. Paul writes, “For all have sinned and they lack (or are in need of) the glory of God.” Paul tells us that **the fundamental problem is that we have lost the glory, splendor of manifest-power of God.** That makes sense, doesn't it? That helps to explain the nakedness, the emptiness, the radical inward self-focus that Adam and Eve experienced. You may say, “Wait, I learned that verse differently! Doesn't it say, “All have sinned and *fall short of* the glory of God”? Well, most of our English translations do say that, but that is not what the original Greek means. Fortunately, this is very easy to demonstrate. This Greek word only occurs 14 other times in the NT (Matt. 19:20; Mk. 10:21; Lk. 15:14; 22:35; Jn. 2:3; 1 Cor. 1:7; 8:8; 12:24; 2 Cor. 11:5,9; 12:11; Phil. 4:12; Heb. 4:1; 11:37; 12:15). When you look them up, you can clearly see that the predominate meaning is always “being in lack, or in need of something”. Furthermore, if you supply this meaning to the couple of verses that seem to say “fall short of”, this definition makes

perfect sense in those contexts. **The inner emptiness that motivates sin is the lack of the life and radiance of God's glory within us. Forgiveness of sins will not solve this problem. We need to be filled with God's life!**

This is precisely what God has done, and made available. He has not only paid for our sins, to set us free (redemption – Rom. 3:24); and satisfied God's wrath (propitiation – Rom. 3:25) through the sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf; but He united us with Jesus in His death and resurrection, so that we would be freed from its power and be raised to newness of life (Rom. 5:12-6:6). By faith in Him we have been justified (acquitted, treated “just-as-if-I'd-never-sinned”) and now enjoy peace with God; we have access to Him through Jesus, and we rejoice in the present hope of the glory of God made available through Christ (Rom. 5:1-2; Col. 1:27). In fact, Paul says that **there is a glory that is available to us who believe. It is the glory of the new covenant, a covenant written on our hearts, by the indwelling Holy Spirit** (2 Cor. 3). You see, that was the weakness of the old covenant. It was external, and there was no power in us to motivate or enable us to fulfill it. Again, the powerlessness was in *us*.

When Jesus came, He showed us something different. He was the “radiance, or outshining of God's glory and the exact representation of His being” (Heb. 1:3). **He had the glory!** The apostle John put it this way, “...and the Word became flesh and dwelt (‘pitched His tent’) among us, and we beheld His glory, full of grace and truth.” **Not only did Jesus show us something different, He came to multiply what He was doing, and how He was living, by making it possible for us to live as He did,** ...for us to live by the indwelling glory of God's Spirit working inside of us!

I have mentioned the old and new covenant, and earlier I mentioned the overlap of two ages. The first age began with the fall of Adam and Eve into sin: **the present evil age**, Paul called it (Gal. 1:4). We have lived all of our lives within the time frame and dynamics of this kingdom, the kingdom of darkness. Yet, when Jesus came, He inaugurated a new age, **the age of the present and future King**, the kingdom of light, the kingdom of Jesus the Messiah. **We who know Jesus live within an overlap of both ages.** We experience *both* realities. When we chose to follow Jesus as our King, our citizenship was transferred to His kingdom age, and the devil no longer has authority over us. He will still try to mess with us, and attack us, if he can, ...but he has no real authority over us. **It is important for us to know who we are and what we have been called to. The kingdom of Jesus is HERE, and our kingdom-calling is NOW.** So, even though we live in this overlap, our allegiance, calling, and our resources for living center around the kingdom of God.

The passage from 1 Thessalonians 2 is an exhortation to walk worthily of God. Walk in such a way as to honor Him and bring Him glory. Why? Because He has done so much for you already, but He also has much in store for you. **He is calling you, inviting you, to the kingdom and glory that belongs to Him. He is calling you to experience and walk in His radiant glory,** ...the outshining of His nature, just like Jesus did.

2 Peter 1 tells us that He has already granted to us everything we need to live the Christian life, and to have a well-centered walk with God. It comes through getting to know Him. The kind of knowledge described here is a “flash of insight” or revelatory knowledge that typically comes as we seek God and are obeying him. **Note again the same theme: He has called us to experience and walk in His glory. He wants to share His radiance with us. He has invited us to share in His manifest-power,** ...that means *power that is seen or made evident in a clear way.*

These two passages are about the “here and now overlap”, ...the presence, power and provision of the kingdom of God made available for living right here, right now, in the midst of the present evil age. We are to be radiating lights. People ought to be able to see the glory of God shining from our lives, ...full of grace and truth. **This is God's strategy:** He has put within you the glory of His Presence, through the Holy Spirit. As you respond to the Holy Spirit, God will reveal Himself through your life. **He has shone the light of the knowledge of Him into you, a clay pot, so that when the light is visible, they will know that it is God in you, ...not just you** (2 Cor. 4:6,7).

How do you get “charged up”? You focus on God. **You do as Jesus did: You spend time with your Father in heaven.** Paul wrote: “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18). **As we draw near to God, invest in our relationship with Him, worship Him and obey His promptings, we will find ourselves being transformed.** The word in this passage is actually “transfigured”. God's glory will become plainly visible to others.

The passage from Matthew 13 describes what will happen at the end of the age, when Jesus returns. He will send out His angels, and they will remove all the people who have been stumbling blocks and resistant to God, those who are lawless, and He will cast them into the furnace of fire, their place of punishment. With them gone, and with the fullness of the kingdom of God having come, then the righteous will shine like the sun. **When the Already-but-not-yet-Kingdom finally comes in power, the evil age will pass away, and the full radiance of the Holy Spirit will fill and shine out of each one of God's people, without restriction.** It will be *glorious*, ...because it will be *the glory of God* at work through His people, as He has always intended.