

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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How Do You See Him Whom No Man Can See?

Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen. (1 Timothy 6:15–16, KJV 1900)

Who only hath immortality.... Many old confessions of faith contain reference to man possessing an "immortal" soul. The word "immortal" simply means not subject to death. How do we reconcile the confessional idea with this passage that attributes immortality to God alone? Consider one simple point. Man in his complete being is altogether mortal. In First Corinthians 15:53, Paul teaches that we shall put on immortality at the resurrection of our bodies at the Second Coming.

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. (KJV 1900)

Consider the true miracle of this resurrection passage. We, who are now wholly mortal, subject to death, shall be so changed in the resurrection that we shall live again, never to die—ever. Secondly, the confessions that use this reference appear to be dealing specifically with the Biblical teaching that the immaterial part of man, referred to by them as the soul, does not die. At the moment of death, the body clearly demonstrates its mortality, its subjection to death. However, Scripture consistently teaches that the immaterial part of man does not "die" at that moment. Ecclesiastes 12:7 describes this event.

Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. (KJV 1900)

Notice that the spirit does not die. It returns to God who gave it. Jesus in the gospels teaches more about this truth than we find perhaps in any other major section of Scripture. What happens when the rich man and Lazarus die? Do they both cease to exist? Or do they continue their conscious existence in two separate places, even without their material bodies? (Luke 16:19-31) As Paul contemplates his dilemma, to die and be with Christ or to remain and labor to bless the Philippians, does he consider existence versus non-existence, or does he consider two very real and conscious options, one far better for him and the other far better for the Philippians?

How do we reconcile these points with our passage? Whatever we now possess of

immortality, or whatever we shall receive of it in the resurrection, we have because of God. It is not something that we as "mortal" beings naturally possess. However, God alone inherently possesses immortality. He did not receive it from another. He does not rely on another for it. It is an essential component of His being. He alone is inherently immortal. Isn't that what our passage states? Man either received that quality of soul in his creation, and subsequently through birth, or in body at the resurrection. Albert Barnes makes this point quite clearly.

Creatures have immortality only as they derive it from him, and of course are dependent on him for it. He has it by his very nature, and it is in his case underived, and he cannot be deprived of it. It is one of the essential attributes of his being, that he will always exist, and that *death* cannot reach him. Comp. the expression in [Joh 5:26](#). "The Father hath life in himself," [Cmt. on Joh 5:26](#).¹

Of all the things in this broken, fallen world that constantly change and die, we can rely on God to do neither. Praise Him for such reliability.

...dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto.... Consider one small part of God's natural creation, our solar system's sun. Our planet is strategically positioned in the solar system so that it receives precisely the correct amount of light and warmth to nurture life as we enjoy it. If this much of a good thing is so beneficial, why don't we consider the impact of reducing the distance between our planet and the sun by half? What would happen? Would life thrive with more heat and light from the sun? No, it would wither and die immediately. Often Scripture uses light to refer to glory, particularly when God and light appear in the same passage. Since man's banishment from the Garden of Eden, fallen man no longer possesses the ability to approach God, to walk with God daily, and to talk with God as with a respected superior. If the dear people who teach that man must do something,

¹ From Barnes' Commentary on this verse, copied from the electronic edition of the commentary in SwordSearcher Bible Study software.

anything, in order to entice God to save them would consider the simple truth of this statement, they'd understand the impossibility of their belief. They believe that they must do something that this passage says they cannot do. When Moses pleaded with God to see Him, God warned Moses that none could see Him that intimately and live. However God hid Moses in a rock ("...and that rock was Christ..." 1 Corinthians 10:4), and, from that safe shelter, God permitted Moses to get a glimpse of His glory. Is it not the same with us? If we were able to approach God directly, the glory would vaporize us. However, safely sheltered in the cleft of the Rock of Ages, the Lord Jesus Christ, we may call upon God as our Father and approach His throne of grace with our prayers and praises.

... *whom no man hath seen, nor can see.* We now arrive at the central dilemma of the passage. Throughout Scripture, we read of people "seeing" God in one way or another. Yet Paul says this cannot be. Here is an example of a passage that makes the counterpoint.

*By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as **seeing him who is invisible.*** (Hebrews 11:27 KJV; emphasis added)

This verse also resolves our dilemma. Only by faith can we **see him who is invisible.** As we ponder this principle truth regarding faith, we also discover the basis from which to debunk a common errant idea about faith. Did you ever hear someone talk about taking a "Leap of faith"? They effectively describe a mindless and rather hopeless action that they take out of desperation, remotely hoping for a good outcome. Folks, this situation describe the mirror opposite of Biblical faith. Biblical faith holds onto solid reality. The objects held tightly by true faith, though not seen, or even seeable for that matter by our natural senses, are as real and factual as the most basic reality that you take for granted. Consider a highly personal passage that makes the same point.

Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. (1 Peter 1:8 KJV)

You haven't seen Him; yet you love Him. The word translated love in this passage is the action word for love. Peter does not intend a sentimental feeling. The point he makes is that his readers have never seen the Lord Jesus Christ, but they transformed their lives because of Him. His love constrained and transformed them. Despite not being able to see Him, yet they believed Him—and in Him—a trait that put their lives at risk. Instead of shirking into the shadows, trying to hide their faith in Him, or trying to avoid the persecutors' fires, they openly

rejoiced in Him, giving no thought for the danger they faced.

We talk about our faith in God with casual thought. The worst possible outcome might be that an unbelieving work associate will think less of us or make a cutting comment about our being a Christian. In the first century, a believer in Christ could face loss of life or property in a heartbeat. Did such dangers intimidate these noble believers? No. Why? They saw "...him who is invisible..." just as Moses saw Him in Egypt, rejecting the treasure of Egypt for the life of a penniless nomad. Penniless nomad though he was, yet he lived in the rich treasure of his God, considering that treasure far greater than Egypt's silver and gold.

Our culture is presently struggling with severe economic loss and instability. Countless numbers of hard working people watch their retirement investments vaporize with little or nothing that they can do to stop their losses. They thought that money that came out of their paycheck was real, and it was, but that real money is vanishing before their eyes. We can claim absolute grip of nothing material in this world. Left to our natural abilities, we might embrace some vague sense of God, but we would know nothing of His true nature or grace, and, based on Scripture's teachings, we would have no interest in knowing anything about Him.

Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. (Job 21:14 KJV)

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:14 KJV)

Paul's point that no man has seen God, and cannot see Him, deals with the kind of people described in these passages. What makes the difference? How do we bridge the gap? We don't! That's right. God alone bridges that gap.

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. (John 1:18 KJV)

All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. (Matthew 11:27 KJV)

No mortal possesses the innate ability—or desire—to see God. And faith responds to what God has already revealed to us and in us. The "faith equation" deals with God's revelation to us, not with our pulling ourselves up to God.

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Worship service each Sunday
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.
Pastor