

Intro: What do we need at EBF this year? I believe that we need to be set on fire for God. I believe that I need to become impassioned for His glory and filled with His Spirit. The elders believe this, too. In fact, we believe that God has called us to be like Jesus. Disciples like our Master. Therefore, we are moving toward a more intentional approach to discipleship.

I believe that in order to truly live as a disciples, which all Christians are, begins and continues with being in the presence of God. We cannot merely will ourselves to zeal or obedience from the heart. Holiness, discipleship, comes from having Him strip away our sin in the light of His holiness, of coming to grips with our self-reliance and self-making of our own little worlds and repudiating them as idolatry and empty nothings. To walk in-line with the gospel, to be formed into the image of Jesus is to be transformed from glory to glory as we gaze into the face of Jesus (2 Cor 3:18). In light of this, it is imperative that strive to enter into God’s presence...into GOD’S PRESENCE...and have our hearts and lives reordered through the powerful magnitude of Him. In order to glorify God, to live lives of humility and honor to Him, we need to be humbled by His holiness. In order to become passionate for Him, which I hope that we all desire to do, though we fail to more often than not, we must begin with dealing with Him. Only then, in the light of His powerful presence, awesome holiness, magnificent purity and righteousness, will the gospel become sweet music to our souls that sets our feet to dancing for His glory in this city, being transformed through repentance and faith in Jesus until we are living like Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit is transforming lives and bringing many into the Kingdom of God with joy. That’s my resolution this year. Let us enter into the presence of God and let Him change EVERYTHING!!

1. Glory to God – The Ultimate Purpose

- a. This “glory” is used differently than in v19
- b. Here it means the active *giving* of glory to a greater from a lesser
 - i. All but God is lesser
 1. He created everything that exists and it only exists because of Him
 2. He particularly redeems humans, made in his image, in order to glorify himself to all creation as the Redeemer (Eph 1, “to the praise of His glorious grace”; 3:10 “through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenlies”
 - ii. He is worthy of glory
 1. Rev 4:9-11 (Creation and Infinity)
 2. Rev 5:8-14 (Redemption and Substitution)
 - iii. For God the Father to receive glory is to give Him all honor, power, authority that is consistent with the greatness of His character: to glorify Him according to and in proportion to His glory
- c. It is God’s distinctiveness that makes Him worthy of glory, His *holiness* (see Isaiah 6:1-8)
 - i. **Isaiah 6:3** – “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory”
 1. He is the HOLY GOD!!! Think about this
 - a. He is distinctively infinite, with no beginning and no end
 - b. He is distinctively powerful, He creates and He destroys according to His desire
 - c. He is distinctively righteous, all that He does is right, just, true
 - d. He is distinctively pure, sin is given no quarter in His presence
 2. Our sin, in the presence of His holiness, means terrible doom
 - a. “Woe is me” – a pronouncement of impending doom
 - b. “For I am ruined” – literally “undone”, to come apart, be torn asunder
 - c. “Because I am a man of unclean lips” – Isaiah sees his specific sin
 - i. not merely swearing or uncouth language
 - ii. It was the empty ritualistic motions of treating God lightly while going through the motions of worship
 1. prayerless prayers

2. worshipless worship singing
3. entering the Temple lightly, rote, without true reverence
- iii. Isa 29:13 – “people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lips, but they remove their hearts far from me and their reverence consists of tradition learned of men”
- iv. note also the communal sin he participates in: empty worship, not truly drawing near to the Lord, but offering empty lip service
3. God’s grace moves to end our doom through the altar
 - a. God removes our guilt through propitiation, the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus
 - b. Just like the fiery coal of the altar purified Isaiah’s lips, so does the sacrifice itself purify our hearts through the blood of Jesus
 - c. This forgiveness and grace *in the light of the crushing weight of His glorious holy presence* changes EVERYTHING!!
4. The encounter with the holy God moves Isaiah to life-changing action
 - a. “Here am I! Send me!”
 - b. Coming into the presence of God transformed Isaiah from a rote lip-server to a joyful volunteer for the Lord
 - c. Repentance of our sins in the presence of God and the grace of God poured out in forgiveness of that sin moves us to passionate and zealous obedience in an effort to glorify the gracious and holy God
- ii. We see the glory of God in the face of Jesus (2 Cor 4:6)
 1. According to John 12:41, Isaiah saw the Christ’s glory on the throne
 2. We need to see Jesus’ glory like Isaiah and be transformed to glorify the Father forever and ever
 3. All the change we want to see in us so that God is glorified by us, through us, and among us starts with seeing Jesus, being in His presence, stripped bare before Him so that His redemption is transformative through His Spirit
 4. This isn’t easy, conversion isn’t easy, it always begins with fright and terror in the realization of sin and the overwhelming power of His holiness and *then* moves to His grace and love and provision for such a potent problem as my sinful heart
 - a. Not only that, but even as a believer transformation begins with this similar experience of self-distrust and self-denial in the presence of the holy God
 - b. We need to, in a sense, *experience our conversion often*, and if anyone thinks it’s easy doesn’t understand the biblical metaphor of our hearts being fallow ground and God the plow (Bunyan)
- iii. It is not as if God needs more glory, it is rather that Paul recognizes, as other prophets and believers have, that He is so glorious that the only true response to His glory is to glorify Him forever and ever.
- d. It is our purpose, the reason that we were created, to glorify God
 - i. Discipleship is to glorify God in all that we do through loving obedience and submission to Jesus Christ
 1. It is what brings us, the created, the greatest joy because we were fit and made to worship and give him all of our weightiness, significance, all that we are: our glory
 2. Salvation begins with seeing Jesus and we grow into His likeness by being in His presence and transformed by His glory (2 Cor 3:18)
 - ii. When we see Him as he is, our response is similar to Isaiah’s: woe and terror that moves to grateful voluntary obedience to glorify him because of atonement for our sins (repentant faith)
 1. We need to find every way possible into His presence until we are overwhelmed by His magnitude and transformed by the power of His gracious provision of blood sacrifice for our sins into volunteers, cheerful, joyful, who say “Here am I, send me!”
 2. He has made us His sons, like unto Him, so that we call Him, “Father”
 - iii. Prayer is in the presence of the holy God

1. I fear that we blithely and lightly ask God to come near us when we don't fully understand (or we do understand, but we ignore the major consequences of His holiness) the magnitude of His presence
2. God's presence, His holiness, His immeasurable glory, changes EVERYTHING!!
 - a. It makes demands upon us
 - i. Be holy for I am holy
 - b. It reveals our nakedness, weakness, rebellion, our prayerless prayers (Miller) and our worshipless words of worship (Is 29:13)
 - c. It calls us to great risks, like we've seen in the Philippian church
 - i. Whom shall I send?
- iv. Do we really, functionally, foundationally, at the core of our being believe that God is REAL?
 1. If we do, functionally, then why do we enter His presence lightly, bored, distracted?
 2. Why do we not love our neighbor, or hide from the needs of the poor, or demand our rights and our glory to be noticed?
 3. I believe that we function much of the time not actually believing that God is real
 - a. We will not see the power of God displayed in our church until Christ becomes the controlling foundational reality of all that we see and perceive of ourselves, our community, and our world.
 - b. However, when He is the functional foundational reality, what power the Spirit possesses to transform and reform and reconcile men to Himself!!!
 - c. Let us pray as if God is real! As if God has made promises that He intends to keep! As if those promises are sure and His holiness is sure and His demands are sure and His grace is sure!

2. Greetings to the Saints – The Encouragement of Brotherhood

- a. Notice the title that Paul gives:
 - i. saints, i.e. "holy ones"
 1. Holy, distinctively like Christ
 2. Glorifying God the Father
 - ii. brothers
 1. not merely community, but family
 2. same spiritual genetic code
 3. like our Father, together
- b. "Greet" each other in Christ Jesus
 - i. "to draw one in" literally
 - ii. came to mean a greeting of kindness or to say goodbye, friendly, kind, somewhat intimate in its meaning
 - iii. The intimacy and inclusion of brotherhood is sandwiched between the two primary God-ward foci of this doxology (glory and grace), which points to the fact that the familial intimacy and love of the brotherhood of Christ is an important part of what it means to glorify God

3. Grace is With You – The Final Promise and Prayer

- a. While the initial doxology for God's glory is somewhat directive "may He be glorified" and a desire that Paul wishes to be fulfilled, the final doxology emphasizes a present reality "the grace of the Lord Jesus IS with your spirit"
- b. Grace is the final thought that the apostle leaves:
 - i. God's kind and undeserved gifts and blessings
 - ii. When there was nothing that would draw us to Him, rather only that which would repel us from Him by our defiant rebellion, He drew near and gave Himself for us
 - iii. This attitude, this...GRACE..., is what lies at the heart of Christ for you.
 1. It is fitting that Paul begins (1:2) and ends his letter with the greeting and salutation of God's grace in and from Jesus.

2. We, too, should center our relationships upon the reminder of His grace, the sufficiency of His grace, prayers for His grace, and speaking the promises of His grace to each other
- c. With your spirit
 - i. Christ, in this attitude of kind and unmerited provision, is with you, near to you,
 - ii. Not merely near in proximity to your situation or condition or circumstance, but near to your spirit
 1. corporate unity of spirit
 2. at the core...the center of what makes you you
 - iii. Whether it be our desires, our emotions, our will, our actions, our sorrows, our joys, our fears, our faith... His grace is near
 - d. Grace becomes transforming and powerful grace when the Spirit of God leads us into the presence of God to know the glory of God through the Son of God
 - i. In the light of such holy power and awesome righteousness, His grace becomes sweet, electrifying good news
 - ii. To hear of what God has done for us...for us... is to be freed from slavish fear and set on fire to go forth for His glory with boldness, conviction, passion and zeal, in humility without self-reliance, but wholly leaning on the everlasting arms of Jesus
 - e. Grace is the foundational characteristic of how God relates to His people whom He calls into His presence and have come undone

Just as Isaiah saw His glory and melted in fear, proclaiming that he had come “undone”, so when we are in the presence of the holy God our sins betray us in the searing light of His holiness and we, too, come “undone”. However, that is the point. It is not “doing” in the presence of God that brings peace, but the “undoing”. Because the grace of Christ meets us here at the point of our undoneness and the fire that consumed Him on the altar satisfies the burning wrath of God, we can stand in His presence without being consumed. It is the dual work of glory and grace that leads us to true and deep repentance for our sins, of coming undone of ourselves and our self-trust and our fearful anxiety over “us. It is this dual work where we find that our sins, though real as sin, are condemned in Christ and no longer bring us to be slain by Holy Justice and where the love of God is revealed in the fullness of His self-substitution for us.

In this glorious good news we find the passionate boldness of a worship that proclaims to God’s desires: “Here am I, send me!” Be glorified for you are glorious! Whether that be God’s call to holiness and purity, “here am I, send me!” or the call to go to the untouchables, the enemy, the outsiders, or even to our own people to proclaim God’s glory, “Here am I, send me!” A call to holy prayer, “Here am I, send me!” and a call to go out for God, “here am I, send me!”

All transformation that glorifies God begins with the weighty glory of God’s presence plowing up our fallow ground and then brings us to His grace by which Christ left His throne above to die our death of wrath upon the cross, and back to the glory of His resurrected life and rule over all the earth.

For this reason, we must see Jesus, brothers and sisters. This year, ripe with promise and expectations but begin and continue with coming into the presence of the Almighty God. We must draw near to Him. If we are to glorify Him and be who He desires us to be, then we need to be with Him. No program, no series, no webinar is going to transform us into Christlikeness. Only being near to Him, in His holy presence, has the power to reorder our hearts and our lives. We need to see Him and for Him to reveal Himself to us, to reorder our understanding of everything. And here is the great promise: He has graced us with such access to Himself. He has dealt with us graciously and continues to deal with us graciously, even when we work out our salvation with fear and trembling it is because He has graced us with His Holy Spirit to work within us according to His holy, sovereign, and perfect will until we behold His glory and are transformed into His image and move outward into the world to glorify Him forever and ever. Amen