

# Fellowship of Future Glory

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[ 0 : 00 ] John 17, verse 24-26.

The Lord Jesus, God in human flesh, the Creator of the universe, the Creator of the universe,! The Lord Jesus, God in human flesh, the Creator of the universe, the Creator of the universe, which you loved Me, may be in them, and I in them.

I've had the very great and humbling experience of worshiping with persecuted believers in China and Vietnam, Indonesia, Pakistan, Egypt, Turkey, Cuba.

I'm leaving some out. I've had the opportunity to share a word with brothers from Afghanistan, Colombia, Nigeria, Algeria, and Russia.

I've been with brothers and sisters in Christ, and some of them have been to our farm that spent considerable time in prison for their faith in Russia, Romania, Cuba, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, China, Indonesia, and in Vietnam.

[ 1 : 57 ] And there is a common denominator among persecuted believers throughout the world. They all have as their chief focus the glories of heaven.

There's not a lot of glory on earth for them. But they're looking at another home not made with hands. Nothing in this world captivates them as strongly as the possibility of going to an eternal home made by God Himself.

Their counterparts, the brothers and sisters in the West, and that's us, but the church in the West don't totally share some of these feelings, some churches.

The idea of heaven in times of good and with busy schedules and career goals and vacation plans, retirement plans is sort of an intrusion.

And we tend to think of it, we put those thoughts kind of off. For the most part, Westerners think in terms of heaven as a distant reality.

[ 3 : 22 ] After all, we've got a lot of living to do. We've got kids to raise. I'm still raising two boys, age 44 and 38. Diane says she's raising three boys.

I don't know where she's coming up with that. And of course, we have the thrill of grandkids. I have to confess, in good times, heaven is not necessarily my main focus.

My thoughts have ranged from building a room onto our house, turning our pond into a small lake. There's always one more little parcel of land I'd like to pick up.

I don't know why. And then, of course, to having more grandchildren. That doesn't bother me.

Heaven is sort of seen as a future blessing. And I think a lot of Americans feel that way.

Because we haven't had it tough. Now, there's a disturbing pattern, though, in this. And it's this.

When the church loses its heavenly focus, it has a tendency to become self-indulgent and self-centered, very materialistic, spiritually weak, and lethargic.

[ 4 : 39 ] I've had persecuted believers in several countries that don't know each other and have said to me, we're praying for the church in America. We don't know how you do it with the persecution that you're under.

I said, well, tell me what you mean by that. And they said, well, for instance, the persecution of materialism. You know, God blesses a member and he's well off enough, as Ed Saucers used to say, to buy a pontoon boat and a lake cabin and you never see them again.

God blessed them financially and they're gone. They're at the lake, you know, for then. A lot of times the energy of the church is consumed by the pleasures and even the problems of this world.

And we don't give a lot of contemplation to the world that is to come. Now, I don't personally recommend this book.

The author is certainly not orthodox in his theology. His book is not spiritual, but it is a bestseller among churchgoers today.

[ 5 : 54 ] If you want a copy, you can go to the Baptist bookstore Lifeway and buy it. Your Best Life Now by Joel Osteen. Now, there's a problem with that because if this is your best life now, you're going to hell.

I mean, there's a disconnect somewhere in here. The world is not our home. Let me say it again. The world is not our home.

We are not even citizens of this world. When we were saved, we received, by the grace of God, new citizenship in the heavenlies.

We are aliens and we're strangers in this world. Some of you are more strange than others, but we're all strangers in this world.

And the other thing, and we tend to forget this, but eternal life does not start at death. Eternal life starts at rebirth, at redemption.

[ 6 : 59 ] That's when your eternal life starts. When you're saved. You know, I read a deal not long ago. I can't remember who I read it by.

One of the old guys, the Puritans reformers from a couple hundred years ago. And he said, on Sunday, the church worships. We come together. And he said, we're worshiping here on earth. And the church in heaven is worshiping. And we tend to think, well, the church in heaven is trillions of light years away. You know, and he said, it's just another dimension.

And he said, it's just separated by a small stream. You could just hop over it, not even get your feet wet. And we have the church on earth, the church in heaven, same church.

I would add to that, that we tend to think of, when we think of the church, we tend to think of us here, now, on earth. We're the caboose of the church. We're bringing up the rear.

[ 8 : 04 ] The vast majority of the church is in heaven. The vast majority of the church is in heaven. But our eternal life is now.

True believers are in their eternal life now. As the old saying goes, true believers are increasingly in danger, not of being so heavenly minded that they become no earthly good, but of becoming so heavenly, so earthly minded, we're no heavenly good.

We don't even think about the prospect. And yet, there's many believers that woke up this morning that are in heaven right now. And they didn't know this was the day for them.

They had no clue. Churches and individuals become worldly minded. And usually, you can find in there, in the background, some disobedience to the Lord and to His commands.

We who are worldly, anyone that is worldly in the church today, across the wide spectrum, is disobeying the command of Matthew 6, 20 and 21, Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys, where thieves do not break in or steal.

[ 9 : 24 ] For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. And you know, as I get older, and by the way, I'm, where's Jerry?

You're my only hope in here, you know. Jerry, for some reason, I can't catch Jerry. I'm two months less, less than two months of being 70. So, it's coming at me like a freight train.

I can't get it off the track. Let me read you a quote out of 1 John. Do not love the world nor the things in the world.

If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life is not from the Father, but is from the world.

The world is passing away. And also, it's lusts. But the one who does the will of God lives forever. Now, let me assure you, John, of course, writing by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in that first epistle there, he's not talking about rivers and mountains and streams and snow and fall leaves.

[ 10 : 36 ] That's not the world. He's talking about the world that is controlled by the world's spirit. Satan is the God, little g, of this world only through the permissive will of the true God for a period of time which is going to come to an end when the eastern sky opens up and the Lord Jesus returns.

But that's the world we're not to love, the world system, which is satanic. It's satanic. Paul told the Colossian brethren, therefore, if you've been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

The pattern in the Bible is that godly men longed for heaven. They longed for heaven. David wrote of his yearning for heaven and the joy of living in the presence of God.

Paul talked about his desire to depart and be with Christ. He looked forward to the day when he would be at home with the Lord. I think of Lazarus.

That poor guy, he was in heaven. He entered the kingdom, you know, and then the Lord said, I've got to send you back. You're going back. But he had to die all over again, you know.

[11:58] True Christians should pattern their lives and desires after David and after Paul. The thought of heaven was precious to them. It should be to us.

Peter said that we have an inheritance awaiting us there. Jesus told us that our reward was in heaven. Jesus told us that he's going to heaven to prepare a place for every believer.

I want to see that place. I want to see that place. What awaits us in heaven is the fellowship of future glory. There is a fellowship of future glory.

Diane was talking about our heavenly home and I said, you realize that we're not going to room together, don't you? It really bothered her, you know. John 17, 24, Father, I desire that they also whom you've given me be with me where I am.

This is the Lord Jesus Christ who has entered into his heavenly ministry. We've been saying that in here. His heavenly ministry is intercession. He ever lived to intercede for believers.

[13:09] He does that 24-7 as we like to say. Here he is making this final petition in the great high priestly prayer.

He's serving as the high priest. He's entered into the Holy of Holies to make intercession and we only have a human figure of that in Leviticus in the Old Testament, the Jewish high priest.

But here the real high priest is making intercession. He wants all that the Father has given to him for salvation to be with him. To be with him.

Now, our finite minds cannot fully grasp the staggering privilege of what eternal life in the presence of the triune God will be.

We can't get our hands around that, guys. Think of where we came from. Think of where we started. We were dead in trespasses and sin.

[14:11] We were on the broad way that leads to destruction. We were not seeking God according to Paul. We did not want to seek God according to Paul.

We could not seek God according to Paul and Jesus, by the way, in John chapter 6. We were living in the lust of the flesh. We were indulging our minds with thoughts of fleshly desires.

By our very nature, we were children of wrath destined for eternal hell. We were separated from Christ and without God in this world. We had all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

If that bothers anybody, just remember, I'm labor. You'll have to take that up with management someday. Take that up with the Lord. And then Jesus and God came in.

He loved us. God the Father loved us. Sent His Son to be the Savior of the world. He saved us. He adopted us. He justified us.

[15:12] He redeemed us. So great was His love for us that He calls us His children. He calls us His children.

That's staggering. By the way, that sets us apart from the world's religions. Their gods are always angry, always standoffish. Can't be approached. He did this before the foundation of the world.

He saved us. He inscribed our names in the book of life. He gave us His Son as a love gift. The Son received us.

He's not lost a single one of us. He has even prompted our hearts to cry out, Your kingdom come.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Now, the glory of heaven is not going to be the gates of pearls or the streets of gold.

Yeah, those things are kind of intriguing. You know, I don't know what a 12-foot or a 25-foot pearl looks like. I don't know what transparent gold looks like. It is not even our reunification with past loved ones.

[16:26] I'm not saying that won't happen, but that's not the focus. The glory of heaven is being and living in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, the sovereign king of the universe, and the creator, God.

And another thing is, the glory of heaven is to live in the presence of a being so holy that sin has been eradicated from that place.

That's the lure of heaven. It's a place of no sin. Can you imagine a place devoid of sin?

And the king of heaven and earth, the Lord Jesus Christ, has petitioned the Father that all of his followers may one day be in that place with him.

And we will remember the words of King David that we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

And that's a long time. That is where and when we shall experience perfect fellowship with the Lord

and with the Lord's children forever.

[ 17 : 43 ] Well, what about the focus? If you ask believers what will be their focus in heaven, you're going to receive a smorgasbord of thoughts and ideas. Some will say, well, I'm going to focus on the physical attributes or the architecture of heaven.

I want to see these pearls. I want to see these gates. And they will examine, they think they're going to examine for eternity gates and walls and streets and rivers and trees of heaven.

And others say, no, I'm looking forward to seeing my ancestors. I want to meet my great-grandparents and I want to, you know, and I think that will happen. But again, that's not the focus.

I mean, I'm a student of history and I particularly like the Civil War. I'd love to sit down with Abraham Lincoln and Robert E. Lee and I think they're there and say, what was it like during the Civil War? But I don't think that's going to happen. It sounds good, has no basis in biblical revelation. Our focus in heaven is going to be the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 18 : 50 ] The Lamb of God seated on the throne. Isaiah high and lifted up and the hem of His robe filled the temple and it's a big temple.

It's a huge temple. That will be our focus. Jesus says, so that they may see my glory which you have given me.

That's an amazing thought. When you go to bed at night, talk about the glory of the Lord to the Lord. Lord, I want to see your glory. Nothing wrong with that prayer. When it was on earth, Jesus veiled His glory.

It was veiled in human flesh. It's a good thing. It's a good thing. A few times He permitted His glory to show forth.

And there were both amazing and disturbing results. The disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration briefly saw His glory and they passed out.

[ 20 : 01 ] I think the Father protected them. He knocked them out. Because the Bible says no man can see the glory of God and live. The soldiers who came to arrest Him when they heard His identity He said, Whom seek ye?

And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. He said, I am. The same words He spoke from the burning bush. I am. The great name of God. And they all took a step back and they passed out.

They all hit the ground. John, the beloved disciple, saw His glory on Patmos and fell at His feet as if dead.

So when Jesus was walking around on earth, He veiled that glory. If He'd put His glory on display during the first advent, human activity would have ground to a halt.

It would have just stopped. He tells us in Philippians chapter 2 verse 5 to 8 that His glory was veiled in His flesh. In heaven we will see His glory.

[ 21 : 15 ] Describe that in 25 words or less. I don't know how you do it. Amazingly, it goes on to say, we will share in His glory.

And I can't wrap my mind around that. But we will share in His glory. It says, our bodies will be transformed. We shall be like Him.

So my first change hopefully will be to be thin. And then the next major thing, I'm going to join the heavenly choir. I may have to take lessons. I'll get them from Paul. And what are we going to sing? Dan's going to lead. What are we going to sing? Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing to Him who sits on the throne and unto the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.

Amazing. All true followers of Christ are headed to a time when they shall behold the glory of the Lamb.

[ 22 : 29 ] I'm going to write a song, We Shall Behold Him. That'd be a good one. If it's already been done, I'm sorry. Well, what about future glory now?

There is no denying that we're looking for a time of future glory with the Lord. And some that were members of this very class are already there.

So many in this church, and I go back to 1980, some of you, Johnny, long before that. We've got members there now.

But the joy of our life in Christ is that we can experience a portion of that glory now. O righteous Father, although the world has not known you, yet I have known you, these have known that you sent me.

I have made your name known to them. I will make it known so that the love with which you love me may be in them and I in them. When Jesus prayed, He knew that the Father heard and would respond favorably.

[ 23 : 36 ] He knew that. Would that we prayed with that same confidence? We really do need to develop a boldness and a tenacity in prayer much like that of George Mueller.

And if you don't know who George Mueller was, shame on you. I'll bring some books so you can read about him. Mr. Mueller, a German, like half of my wife is, founded an orphanage in England. At one time, it had like 18,000 kids. He founded an orphanage in England. The orphanage operated, and it's still in operation, by the way, and this was 150 years ago, it operated solely on the power of prayer.

solely on the power of prayer. When the children, who as I say, eventually numbered in the thousands, went to bed, there was no food on sight.

Anything to eat. It had all been consumed at supper time. George Mueller would arise at 3 a.m.

[ 24 : 58 ] and begin to pray. He told the father, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, that the children had no food, and that they were totally dependent upon His grace to sustain Him.

Day after day, month after month, year after year, George Mueller would get up, and he'd go toward the front door, because he knew someone was going to knock, and sure enough, as the sun came up, the local milk company would show up, and they said, Mr. Mueller, we have an extra hundred gallons of milk that's going to spoil if it's not consumed.

Could you use it? Well, could he? A few minutes later, a local baker came in, and he said, you know, Mr. Mueller, this morning, I accidentally made 300 extra loaves of bread.

Could you use those? And so it went. When the breakfast was over, the children went to the on-site school, and Mr. Mueller went to the prayer closet.

Why? Well, to thank the Lord for breakfast and to pray for lunch, because he knew the kids were going to be hungry. And then he would pray for supper. And this went on for years and years.

[ 26 : 21 ] And the history that has been written of the orphanage is that no child ever missed a meal and every morsel of food was donated on time.

Every one. Now that is a life of faithful prayer. A dependence upon God. I can't hold a candle to that.

But I will tell you this. Saturday, we loaded a truck down in Clifton, Texas, with my mother-in-law's belongings.

They had a going-away party at her nursing home in Texas. And then we started north. My goal was to get to Gainesville, 20 miles from the Oklahoma line.

And there's a Hampton Inn there that we stayed at many times. We stopped and had, we ate at the boundary of Burleson and Fort Worth.

[ 27 : 25 ] Sun went down. Heavy traffic on 35. Diane's having to follow me. I'm in a rental truck, U-Haul.

She doesn't see well at night with the glare of lights. And I've got a bad feeling about this. I am very uneasy about getting on that interstate and heading north.

Got my 85-year-old mother-in-law with me and poor health. And so I told Diane, I said, look, there's a Hampton Inn right behind here. We've stayed there before.

I'm going to go over there and see if they've got a room. I don't want to get on the interstate. So I went over there and went up to a little woman named Amy and she said, I'm sorry, we're full.

And I've turned down dozens of people and I've called and there's nothing between here and north of Fort Worth.

[ 28 : 24 ] Nothing in Denton. I said, would you try the Hampton Inn up in Gainesville? That's about two hours. And she said, let me give them a call.

She did and they said, we're turning people away. They're coming in here. I found out yesterday the Texas Motor Speed it was the last race for Dale Earnhardt Jr.

And people were flooding in. They were flooding in. Well, Amy says, for some reason, I've got a light flashing on my computer, which means a room is vacant, but we don't show any vacancies.

We've been turning people away. She said, let me check on that further. Well, I'm standing there while she calls the manager at home, and I'm saying, Lord, please have mercy.

I need mercy. I don't deserve it, but I don't want to go on that road. I have a foreboding. Please give us mercy.

[ 29 : 33 ] And she came back and she said, manager says, let you have the room. And we jumped at it. We jumped at it. And it was a handicap room, huge, about as big as this deal here.

And so we got the room. So, now I've got to figure out where I was at. So Jesus prays to the Father. And He says, I'm not praying for the world. I'm not praying for the world. But I'm praying for those who believe, or someday would believe, down to our generation.

See, the world doesn't know the true God. Even many in our country that think they're pillars of a church don't know the real God. To many in our culture, God is a cosmic genie.

You pick up the genie and you rub him the right way and he's willing to do your bidding. That is not the God of the Bible and that's not the God to whom the Lord Jesus prayed.

[ 30 : 42 ] Now Jesus, of course, had been with the Father for eternity. He now wants to make the Father known to his children. Jesus came to save lost sinners and lead them into a relationship with the Father through him.

And He gave them this very powerful guarantee when He departed. He made a deposit like a bank deposit inside us.

What was that? That's the Holy Spirit. He said, to prove to you that all this is real, I'm going to give you of my spirit.

I'm not going to leave you like an orphan. I'm going to give you an escrow account. Some translations call it the escrow account or the deposit of the Holy Spirit and He will live in you, never leave you, never forsake you, and then one day I'll be back.

Well, when do we know the Father? We are first introduced to the true God at the moment of salvation. That is called the moment of justification. We're going to talk about that in the coming weeks.

[ 31 : 51 ] Justification is a legal declaration that you are innocent. You have no sin. That's hard to think about, isn't it?

Because it's all been put on the Lord Jesus Christ. If you've been justified, the Father has declared you just. People like to say, well, it's just as if I'd never sin.

No, it's just like you're Jesus, His own Son. That's how He treats us. That's hard to wrap our hands around, isn't it? God makes us just in His sight by imparting to us the very righteousness of Christ. Now, our justification is a single instant in time. But justification leads to the next step, and we're going to be talking about that in the weeks and months ahead, in a process called sanctification. It is there that we know the Father better and better, and we are being steadily, hopefully, recreated in the image of Christ. Christ. In other words, we become more like Christ through prayer, through the intake of Bible truth, through living a holy life, and many, many other things.

[ 33 : 06 ] Then when we die, or we go to the Lord in the return, in the rapture of the church, the death of a Christian is, by the way, a mini rapture. At death, we enter into our eternal physical presence before the eternal God.

We're going to see Him as He is. Amazing. It's amazing. And by His presence, we are granted by grace glorification.

When we see the Lord as He is, we become instantly like Him. We are equipped to worship the Father in the fullness of Christ. We've never worshipped at that level.

At the fullness of Christ. We're going to worship the Father as the Lord Jesus worships the Father. So, we've been doing this a long time.

We've only been in John 17 for eight weeks, but remember guys, we started in John 13 a year ago, or a year and a half ago. This was all in the upper room that we've been studying.

[ 34 : 20 ] So, how do we close this? How do we summarize this high priestly prayer? Well, I'm going to do it the best way I know how.

I'm going to steal from John MacArthur and use seven words that the Lord Jesus Christ prays for His elect children. And this puts us on holy ground, guys.

We're on holy ground. first of all, the Lord prays for preservation. For preservation. Verse 11, Holy Father, keep them in your name.

He wants us preserved in the name of God. That's preservation. Jubilation. Verse 13, that they may have joy, my joy, made full in themselves.

Liberation. Verse 15, keep them from the evil one. Sanctification. Sanctify them in the truth.

[ 35 : 35 ] Your word is truth. Verse 17, unification. Verse 21, that they may all be one. Association. Verse 24, Father, I desire that they also whom you have given me be with me where I am. Associated with the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then glorification. Verse 24, that they may see my glory. It's all there, guys. preservation, jubilation, liberation, sanctification, unification, association, and glorification.

And now I will put my shoes back on because we've been on holy ground. It's been a delight to work through these chapters.

Let's pray. Father, I thank you that you are indeed a God of grace and a God of mercy and a God who keeps His word.

[ 36 : 43 ] I thank you, Lord, that Jesus paid it all. All to Him we owe. He paid the price in full.

He told us that from the cross. Paid in full. God. And that we're going to see Him. I remember the great black preacher Harold Jackson from Maryland that I heard in Kansas City and he said, speaking to 8,500 people, who are these?

These are they who have dipped their robes in the blood of the lamb. And he said, where are they going? And he said, we're going to see Jesus. Any day now.

Any day, Lord. Thank you for these men, Lord. May you lead us into even deeper studies as we await your return. I pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.