

**Introduction:**

- “And the Lord said, *“My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”*” (Exodus 33:14, ESV)
- A common question that is asked when we experience trials and difficulty is: “God, where are you?” “God where were you?”
- Another common experience of the Christian faith is: “What do I when God seems distant?”
- Difficulty and trials seem to fuel the asking of these questions and thinking of these thoughts.
- The series of messages that we have been in have been for the purpose of equipping you overcome in adversity. Equipping you not to drift away from God but to stay close to Him in every challenge and situation of life.
- Theme: The Presence of God will get you through anything.
- *“The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them,”* (Acts 16:22-25, ESV)

**I. What The Presence of God Is Not**A. What the Presence of God is not.

1. It is not incredible worship music. Music is music, it is not the presence of God.
2. It is not the busyness of activities for God. Being busy doing godly things is not the presence of God.
3. The presence of God is not equal to a good feeling. Good feelings are not the presence of God.
4. The presence of God is not good feelings. The presence is not activities. The presence of God is not good music and songs. Too many people seek the blessings of God, seek the touch of God, seek some great experience from God, but they don't seek God.

B. The Presence of God is about the person of God, God Himself. The presence of God is about the person!! **The presence of God in your life is directly related to your relationship with God.** I said a couple of weeks ago. **The fact is that you, yourself, decide what relationship you want to have with Jesus.** “You are as close to God as you choose to be.” The presence of God is God himself.

1. Before you can seek God you have to understand that the Presence of God is the person...of God.
2. Too many people seek the blessings of God, seek the touch of God, seek some great experience from God, but they don't seek God.
3. The presence of God is God himself! You can have incredible worship music and not have the presence. You can have the best organized activities a local church can have and not have the presence. You can sit on the beach and be at peace with the waves, salt air, sun and best feelings and not have the presence. Those things are good but they are not the presence!

- C. The presence of God in your life is directly related to your relationship with God.
  1. You can have good music, great activities and wonderful feelings but still not have God because you have no relationship with Him. Some of you think are thinking, "I like those things. They are good. But in crisis, in faith challenges, they will not cause you to stand. But the Presence of God will!!!
  2. Those good things without relationship with God will eventually lead to: "I am dry, I am tired, I am backslidden." The root problem is relationship! How can you say you want the presence but not the relationship?

## II. What The Presence of God Is

- A. What is the presence of God?
  1. It is the person of God.
  2. Because He is a person we can relate to and with Him. If you want the presence you must have a relationship with God.
  3. The Presence is the making visible or the manifestation of God. God revealing Himself! Heaven is the perfect picture of this manifestation. God is everywhere and there are no shadows. It is impossible to have any shadows in heaven... no darkness at all, at any level! Everything is alive. And everyone is celebrated. The call to us is... "On earth as it is in heaven!" The presence of God on earth as it is in heaven.
  4. "We honor who a person is by celebrating who they are." Bill Johnson So the angels in heaven sing, "All honor to Him now and forevermore." They are celebrating the person of God, who He is.
- B. The presence is the face. And the face is the person.
  1. Whenever you read the word 'presence' in the OT the word almost always is from the Hebrew word meaning face.
  2. Heb. פָּנִים (pānîm). Face. "This particular word always occurs in the plural, perhaps indicative of the fact that the face is a combination of a number of features...the face identifies the person and reflects the attitude and sentiments of the person." Hamilton, V. P. (1999). R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer Jr., & B. K. Waltke (Eds.), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (electronic ed., p. 727). Chicago: Moody Press.
    - a) Psalm 16:11 *You will make known to me the path of life; In Your **presence** is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.*
    - b) And, Exodus 33:15 *"Then he said to Him, "If Your **presence** does not go with us, do not lead us up from here."*
    - c) *"Cast me not away from your **presence**, and take not your Holy Spirit from me."* (Psalm 51:11, ESV)
- C. The presence of God or the nearness of God is two things: My experience of Him and His expression of Himself to me.
  1. The presence is our experience of God.

- a) Meaning that we taste, feel, or realize the nearness of God more directly, authentically and more satisfyingly and convicting. If I am in a right relationship with God it is pleasurable. If not, the Presence makes me uncomfortable.
  - b) Meaning I experience Him close to me or absent from me.
  - c) IE. Elijah, experience still small voice, John fell at His feet as though dead. Peter jumped out of the boat to swim to shore to be near Him.
2. The presence is God's expression of who He is.
    - a) Meaning He manifests Himself to us in joy over us,
    - b) Meaning He draws near to reveal Himself to us – through His voice, His touch, His miracles ie. Miracle of the new birth.
    - c) IE. God was in the still small voice Elijah heard. God was in the lightening and thunder on Mt Sinai. God stopped the issue of blood in the woman.

### III. Responding to the Presence Of God.

- A. Worship is the most common response to our experiencing of God.
- B. Responding To His Absence
  1. He is never absent to the believer! We are always in the Presence of God. *"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own..."* (1 Corinthians 6:19, ESV) He promised to never leave or forsake us.
  2. He may feel absent:
    - a) He may feel absent when we are in sin or out of fellowship with Him.
      - (1) *"Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus,"* (Acts 3:19-20, ESV)
      - (2) Presence Gr. προσοπον - prosopon – face.
      - (3) Israel did not want to see the glory on Moses face and asked him to cover it. Christians, however, see with uncovered face the glory of the Lord and are changed from glory to glory (cf. also 2 Cor. 4:6).
    - b) He may feel absent when He desires that we discover truths about Him. When I do not sense the nearness of God it leads me to seek Him. Three basic ways of getting into the Presence of God. Most believers do not understand that people must actively enter the Presence of God. In fact Joshua stayed behind in the tent of meeting when Moses would leave. The art of lingering.
      - (1) We experience the Presence of God through scripture. Heb 4:12. The Word is living and active.
      - (2) We experience the Presence of God through prayer. Talking to Him...and just as important we listen to Him. To much of our 'rushed prayer' is telling Him what we need and then running off.

- (3) We experience the Presence of God through fellowship with each other. *"For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."* (Matthew 18:20, ESV)
- c) He may feel absent when He knows that there are certain things we will never find unless He is silent, so that we will seek Him. If you interpret His silence as 'you are in trouble' or as punishment you will not seek Him.
3. Three ways that God's absence is for our joy:
- a) Pleasure in pursuit. We do not pursue what we already possess. We do not chase that which we already hold close. God uses the distance of his full presence to provoke us to strive for him. Running after God is one of the great joys of the Christian life. *"The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing."* (Psalm 34:10, ESV)
- b) The wonder of waiting. I miss my wife when I am not with her because I love her. We miss this logic when it comes to God. We desire to be close to God but confuse this 'distance' with absence. Many Christians confuse that concept with God. When they miss Him or want Him they think they have done something wrong. Your desire, or wanting, is not necessarily proof that God is far from you in a bad way. It is for our joy to wait for Him.
- c) The enjoyment of mystery. Most people love a good mystery. They like discovering new things. When the mystery is solved the thrill of it fades. But in God, there are unsearchable riches, judgments and ways. (Ro 11:33) This is for our joy that we would keep searching in Him.
- C. Ministering Out the Presence
1. So much of our ministry is done out of teaching and out of principles. This is good. Don't get me wrong. Principles will lead to success. But there is more. If the principles are backed up by the presence, our ministry will be powerful and satisfying.
2. "Jesus ministered out of the presence not out of the principles. We can learn the principles of ministry and see success.
- a) But it is far greater to minister out of the presence than the principles.
- b) Principles are what you turn to when you can't discern the presence.
- c) Sometimes he shuts down our capacity to discern him so we are force to live out of what He has taught us." Bill Johnson

### Conclusion:

- So many in the word were hungry for the Presence of God.
- Moses if your presence does not go with us then we will not go.
- David cast me not away from your presence
- Peter, Repent that times of refreshing may come.

*"Psalm 27:8, ESV You have said, "Seek my face." My heart says to you, "Your face, Lord, do I seek.""*

*Gen 28:16 "Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it."*

*Luke 1:19 "The angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news."*

*2 Thessalonians 1:9 "These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,"*

*Psalm 51:11 "Do not cast me away from Your presence And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me."*

*Acts 3:19 "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;"*

*James 4:10 "Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you."*

*Luke 15:10 "In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."*

*Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, ' Surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it.' And he was afraid and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the home of God and this is the gates of heaven.*