

PRACTICING HIS PRESENCE

Enjoying the Person, Presence and Power of the INDWELLING CHRIST

Consider the fact of His presence

"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5).

"I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me" (Psalm 23:4)

"And the LORD, He it is that doth go before thee; He will be with thee, He will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed" (Deut. 31:8).

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isa. 41:10).

"Immanuel...God with us" (Matthew 1:23).

"...Lo, I am with you alway(s), even unto the end of the world (age)" (Matt. 28:20).

In this present dispensation His presence takes on even new meaning and new fullness. Not only is He with us but He is in us: "Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; *for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you*" (John 14:17).

Consider the fact of His indwelling

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but CHRIST LIVETH IN ME: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

"To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is CHRIST IN YOU, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost WHICH (WHO) IS IN YOU, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1 Cor. 6:19).

"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that THE SPIRIT OF GOD DWELL IN YOU. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. And if CHRIST BE IN YOU, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness" (Rom. 8:9-10).

"At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I IN YOU" (John 14:20).

Knowing the fact of His PRESENCE and His INDWELLING is essential but it is not enough. The

FACTS of God's Word are vitally important but they personally do us no good unless we claim them by faith: "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: **but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith** in them that heard it" (Heb. 4:1-2). Faith must fix itself upon God's facts so that those facts become precious and practical and personal to the heart.

It is one thing to know doctrine, but it is quite another thing to enjoy the doctrine that you know. In Revelation 2:1-7 the Ephesians knew doctrine. They were theologically sound and they could discern between truth and error. They could expose false teaching and false teachers (verse 2). However, they were guilty of no longer enjoying the personal Presence of the God who saved them and loved them (verse 4). They knew the FACT of their salvation but they lost the JOY of their salvation. **They left their first love.**

"Let us cultivate those fresh, vivid, and powerful affections which were created in our heart when first we knew the Lord. Let the beautiful blossom of our spring-time be succeeded, not by barrenness and sterility, but by those mellow clusters which spring from realized connection with the root. Too often, alas it is otherwise...The freshness, softness, simplicity, tenderness, and earnest affection of our young days, are rarely carried forward...Very frequently, one finds a depth of tone, a richness of experience, of moral elevation, in the early stages of the Christian life which too soon gives place to a chilling formalism in one's personal ways; or a mere energy in the defense of some barren system of theology" (CHM, Short Papers on Scripture Subjects, Vol. 1, pages 217-218).

True wisdom involves a heart full of faith, not a head full of facts. The facts are needed and necessary, but they are to no avail apart from faith. This is well illustrated by the unsaved chief priests and scribes described in Matthew 2:1-6. These men were theologically correct but practically bankrupt. They were asked a Bible question ("Where will Messiah be born?") and they had the correct answer. They correctly interpreted Micah's prophecy. Their answer was on target. Indeed, they were good "dispensationalists" because they interpreted the prophecy literally. They had mastered the facts of Micah 5:2. And yet in spite of all of this, the truth of Micah 5:2 meant nothing to them. It was not real to them. It did not grip them in their innermost being. They refused to travel the 6 miles to Bethlehem to honor the Saviour whose birthplace they rightly predicted. They had FACTS; they lacked FAITH. They were theologically correct but practically barren and bankrupt.

We need to know God's facts, but that is not enough. This is illustrated in the sixth chapter of Romans. Notice the emphasis upon knowing God's facts:

"Know ye not..." (verse 3)
"Knowing this..." (verse 6)
"Knowing that..." (verse 9)

All of these facts are of no avail apart from the RECKONING of verse 11 (claiming those facts by faith and making them our very own).

A.W.Tozer, in the introduction of the book *The Christian Book of MYSTICAL VERSE*, said the following:

The word "mystic" as it occurs in the title of this book refers to that personal spiritual experience common to the saints of Bible times and well known to multitudes of persons in the post-Biblical era. I refer to the evangelical mystic who has been brought by the gospel into intimate fellowship

with the Godhead. His theology is no less and no more than is taught in the Christian Scriptures. He walks the high road of truth where walked of old prophets and apostles, and where down the centuries walked martyrs, reformers, Puritans, evangelists and missionaries of the cross. He differs from the ordinary orthodox Christian only because he experiences his faith down in the depths of his sentient being while the other does not. He exists in a world of spiritual reality. He is quietly, deeply, and sometimes almost ecstatically aware of the Presence of God in his own nature and in the world around him. His religious experience is something elemental, as old as time and the creation. It is immediate acquaintance with God by union with the Eternal Son. It is to know that which passes knowledge.

CHM echoes this same sentiment:

A man may devote himself to what may seem to be the work of the Lord; he may seem to be a laborious student of Scripture; an active, earnest, self-denying evangelist; he may go forth to the fields of foreign mission, leaving his country, his kindred, and his home, in devotion to his work; he may do all this, and much more, and yet not exhibit one atom of true Christian devotedness, simply because Christ was not his object in all that in which he was engaged. All this is deeply solemn. We may be religious, devotional, benevolent, active in the Lord's work, in all its departments, whether as evangelists, pastors, or teachers, and yet not have Christ before our souls at all. A man may start in a work which, to all outward appearance, seems a real work of God, and he may seem to be most simple in his devotion to that work, and, yet, it may turn out in the end that his heart was engrossed with the work to the total exclusion of Christ as an object. True Christian devotedness is embodied in this brief sentence, "to me, to live is Christ" (Short Papers on Scripture Subjects, Volume 2, page 122).

Nothing is more miserable than the restless efforts of a soul out of communion. We may be very busy; our hands may be full of work; our feet may run hither and thither; the head may be full of knowledge; but if the heart be not livingly occupied with the Person of Christ, it will, it must be, all barrenness and desolation so far as we are personally concerned; and there will, there can be, no "rivers of living water" flowing out for others (Short Papers on Scripture Subjects, Volume 1, page 142).

It is greatly to be feared that there is an appalling amount of antinomianism amongst us -- an unhallowed traffic in the doctrines of grace, without any godly care as to the application of those doctrines to our practical conduct (Short Papers on Scripture Subjects, Volume 1, page 173).

The truth of God being WITH ME and IN ME must be personally appropriated. I must make these facts my very own. It must be a reality to my own heart. It cannot be a mere doctrine that we give mental assent to, but it must be a truth that reaches to the very innermost fiber of our being. We need to be practicing God's presence and enjoying His indwelling. As the hymnwriter says,

*"Emptied that Thou shouldest fill me,
A clean vessel in Thy hand;
With no power but as Thou givest
Graciously with each command...
Jesus fill now with Thy Spirit
Hearts that full surrender know;
That the streams of living water
From our inner man may flow.
CHANNELS ONLY, blessed Master,
But with all Thy wondrous power
Flowing through us, Thou canst use us
Every day and every hour."*

Abraham was told to practice the presence of God: "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; WALK BEFORE ME, and be thou perfect" (Genesis 17:1). Abraham was to walk before the Almighty, that is, he was to walk being conscious of His Presence and His Person. God was to be very real to Him, an ever present Companion.

The believer in Christ is commanded to practice the presence of God. We are commanded to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). We are to maintain an attitude of God-consciousness and God-dependence, finding in Him all that we need all of the time.

Consider Ephesians 3:17--"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." This is Paul's prayer for the Ephesians. He wanted this to be true of them. Indeed, God wanted this to be true of them. But is it not true of every believer? Does not Christ dwell in our hearts? Indeed He does. If He does not dwell within, we are not saved (compare Romans 8:9). But Paul's prayer goes deeper than the mere fact of Christ's indwelling presence. Christ dwells in our hearts, but He needs to dwell in our hearts by faith. The indwelling of Christ is not enough. The fact of His indwelling must be appropriated by faith. Faith grabs on to the fact and makes it real. Apart from faith, His glorious indwelling does us no good. Only by faith can we enjoy His indwelling. Many believers live as if there were no such thing as an indwelling Christ. The indwelling One is grieved and His power quenched. The proper "faith connection" has never been made. "O ye of little faith."

The truth of God's personal Presence and Power in the believer can be illustrated by a flashlight (this illustration was used in Pastor Parson's message, Evening Service 6/18/95). The unsaved person may be likened to a flashlight which has no batteries. The flashlight was designed to contain batteries, but it has none. The batteries are not present within. There is no POWER and no dynamic and because of this the light will never go on. The purpose of the flashlight will never be fulfilled unless batteries can be obtained. Likewise the purpose of a person can never be realized until Christ is received (John 1:12). He is the believer's source of life and light and power.

A saved person may be likened to a flashlight containing batteries. There is a wonderful Source of Power present within. The batteries are ready, willing and able to do their work, but there must be the proper CONNECTION. If the switch is not turned on there will be no light, even though the batteries are present. Often believers are not connected to the Christ who is with them and in them.

It is a fact that Christ is present in the believer. His power is available. He is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Ephesians 3:20). He is SUFFICIENT for every SITUATION: "that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (2 Cor. 9:8). We are complete in Him (Col. 2:9-10). The question is whether or not we have the proper LINK and CONNECTION to our Saviour. Is His Presence real and precious and practical and personal?

Ask yourself: Am I enjoying the presence of the One who comforts and encourages me (2 Cor. 1:3-4)? Am I enjoying the presence of the One who meets my every need (Phil. 4:19)? Am I enjoying the presence of the One through whom and in whom I can do all things (Phil. 4:13)? Am I enjoying the presence of the One who keeps me by His power (1 Pet. 1:5)? Am I enjoying the presence of the One who cares for me (1 Pet. 5:7)? Am I enjoying the presence of the One who ever lives to intercede for me (Heb. 7:25)? Am I enjoying the indwelling presence of the One who gives me victory over the evil one (1 John 4:4)? I know He is with me and in me, but what am I doing with this truth? Do I show by how I live that I *really believe* these truths?

"Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). Is this merely a phrase to memorize or is it a truth that is very precious and very real? As you go through each day, how conscious are you of Christ living within? Do you know, personally and practically, the God who is with you and in you: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (Phil. 3:10).

"Reader, have you faith in God? Do you know Him? Is there a link [connection] between your soul and Him? Can you trust Him for everything? Are you, at this moment, consciously leaning upon Him – upon His Word – upon His arm?" (CHM, Short Papers on Scripture Subjects, Volume 2, p. 109).

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