

Women & More

His Present Presence

Lesson 17: **March 5, 2015**—*integrity*

If we really understood and believed that God's very presence was with us every moment in every way right now, we would act accordingly, but the fact is that we do not give His present presence enough thought or prominence. Oh, we see Him very present in Scripture; we hear about Him being present with other believers in the most frightening situations, and we know He is with us at certain times in our lives because His word tells us so—our conception and at our death. We also know that Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father on high, so we tend to think in error of two Persons of the Trinity as being occupied or remote. And that is just what the devil wants us to think!

We have the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit—the breath of God—*Who* hovered over the face of the waters in Genesis and *Who* came upon believers in power in the book of Acts. And in the Person of the Holy Spirit is the Son and the Father—three in *One*! Matthew 1:23 promised: “*The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel*’—which means, ‘**God with us.**’” We need to recognize and relish that we have God's full and undivided present presence every moment, and that it is God's will for us to operate in that position—the *integrity* of the Trinity. We will need to take God at His word and know that we do not live by explanations, but by His every promise! We need to allow Jesus—the Truth—and the Holy Spirit of truth to guide us.

In John 7:3-8, Jesus brothers—siblings—tried to coax Him, saying, “***You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do.*** ⁴*No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world.*’ ⁵***For even his own brothers did not believe in him.***

⁶“*Therefore Jesus told them, ‘**The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right.**’* ⁷*The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil.* ⁸*You go to the Feast. I am not yet going up to this Feast, because **for me the right time has not yet come.**’* ⁹*Having said this, he stayed in Galilee.*”

Ever since Jesus had healed the paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem, His enemies wanted to kill Him, and their hatred had grown. Verse 5 says that Jesus' own brothers by birth—4 younger and at least 2 sisters—did not believe in Him. No one but His mother was at the crucifixion and none of His family came to the tomb. Siblings who came to know Him as Savior and Lord and Son of God did so after His resurrection. The Father had a time for Jesus to attend this feast—of Tabernacles—one of three annual feasts at which attendance was required by all Jewish men. We don't know how sincere his brothers were in urging Him to go, but we know that it was not His time. Verse 10 says, “*However, after his brothers had left for the Feast, he went also, not publicly, but in secret.*”

The Expositor's Bible Commentary says this about Jesus: "He did not live by the chance of casual opportunity but by a divine calendar predetermined by the Father." And there is a divine calendar for us—everything that God will do in us and through us and to us; and everything He will have us do for others will have a particular timing. And Scripture says He will never leave or forsake us!

We won't have to know where we are going if we know who we are following. And we won't have to know the when; we certainly won't have to know the why, but we absolutely must know the *Who!* How is it that some Christians live in victory and some do not? The answer is that not all who call themselves Christian are following the Lord implicitly and waiting upon His leading. It's more an issue of position than possession: yes, we must possess the salvation that God offers—we don't have a relationship with Him until we do. But then we need to keep in **right position with Him**.

For those who say they want the presence of God in their life every day but they are living in opposition to God's will, thereby not having integrity, the result will be that His 'manifest' presence—His 'felt' presence—will remove when we're guilty of any of the following four things:

1. Direct disobedience (Exodus 32:1—the Israelites wanted another god);
2. Divided devotion (Exodus 32:4) **ISRAEL means devoted to God!** An idol is anything or anyone we love, fear, trust or serve more than God. God demands preeminence in our lives;
3. Displaced dependence (Exodus 32:7-8—depending on their idol), and
4. Determined defiance (Exodus 32:9—God called this stiff-necked).

God Almighty was still Israel's God—He possessed them still—but their **position** in the relationship had changed: God had not moved, they had; but now because of their veering away into sin they would not have His manifest presence. They had tampered with the integrity of their relationship to God! Charles Spurgeon said, "Let us not pretend to a fellowship which we do not feel, nor hide convictions which are burning in our hearts."

The manifest presence of God is promised to the one who has God's commands and keeps them—John 14:2—"*Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.*" God had given Moses instructions to have the people bring specific offerings for building the tabernacle in Exodus chapters 25-30, because **worship is enjoying the presence of God**. But while Moses was on the mountain of God, Aaron (the priest of God) led the people into idolatry (Exodus 33:1-3). After their intense disobedience, God said he would not go with the Israelites, and He called them stiff-necked people.

Verses 13-14 record Moses pleading with God and asking “*teach me your ways. The LORD replied, ‘My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.’*” Moses had integrity with God (verses 15-16). In Exodus 35 through 39 God repeated His instructions for the materials and the building of the tabernacle—Exodus 39:32 “*So all the work on the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, was completed.*”

We’ve often talked about having a ‘know so’ faith, and have therefore minimized the value of feeling. But in our moment-by-moment relationship with God, through Christ and the Holy Spirit we will feel or sense His presence when things are right—when we’re walking in integrity. But when we sin by omission or commission, we will not feel or sense His present presence. God will remove our ability to do so, not because He has moved but because we have. A good example is that of child to parent: When we disobeyed as a child, we no longer felt the closeness to our parents until we confessed what we’d done or not done and repented. They remained our parents, present and caring for us and even hovering over us, but the relationship was compromised.

What distinguishes us from the lost world—how are we peculiar? Spurgeon said, “It now becomes a serious question how far those who abide by the faith once delivered to the saints should fraternize with those who have turned aside to another gospel.” Notice the 5 questions in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18—“*Do not be yoked together with unbelievers.*

- 1) *For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common?*
- 2) *Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?*
- 3) *15What harmony is there between Christ and Belial?*
- 4) *What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?*
- 5) *16What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols?*

For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.’

*17“**Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord.** Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. 18‘I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters,’ says the Lord Almighty.”* It is as we obey the Father’s known will, as Jesus did, that we will develop discernment between falsehood and truth.

Isaiah 46:8-9

- 1) **“Remember this,**
- 2) **fix it in mind,**
- 3) **take it to heart, you rebels.**

4) **Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.”** Brother Lawrence reminds us that “Praying unceasingly means practicing God’s presence—developing a constant awareness of God’s presence all the time. We pick up a conversation with God at any given moment...seeing everything against the backdrop of His presence.”

I. Not having integrity will definitely cost: It cost David when he took Bathsheba into his bedroom, impregnated her, and had her husband killed. 1. The son born to he and Bathsheba died; 2. the sword never left his house, and 3. David's own son Absalom would lay with his wives publicly and try to tear the kingdom from him. God asked David through Nathan the prophet in 2 Samuel 12:9—*“Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes?”*

II. Having integrity will often cost as well: It cost Uriah the Hittite, Bathsheba's husband, his wife and his life. When David summoned Uriah and encouraged him to sleep at home with his wife, the king was trying to cover up his impregnation of Bathsheba so Uriah would think the child his. 2 Samuel 11:9 and 11 *“But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all the master's servants and did not go down to his house.”* Verse 11 says, *“Uriah said to David, ‘The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my master Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open fields. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and lie with my wife. As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!’”* Look at this soldier's integrity. But David made sure Uriah was killed in battle.

After repentance and restoration, David penned: Psalm 16:11 *“You will fill me with joy in your presence,”* and Psalm 51:11 *“Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.”* And David worshipped God in Psalm 31:20 ***“In the shelter of your presence you hide them from the intrigues of men; in your dwelling you keep them safe from accusing tongues.”*** Worship is for God and it must be done in the way He has determined—Deuteronomy 12:4 and 8a—*“You must **not** worship the LORD your God in their way...8aYou are **not** to do as we do here today, everyone as he sees fit.”*

In Judges 17 right after Samson had died, we are introduced to a man named Micah; Scripture says he was from the hill country of Ephraim—central Palestine—north of Jerusalem by some twelve miles. Micah had stolen a large sum of money from his own mother, who, not knowing he was the culprit placed a curse on the thief. In fear of that curse, Micah confessed his crime, and his mother immediately blessed him. Now, in gratitude, she wanted to dedicate the silver to the Lord (Exodus 28:38); sounds good, huh? But she took only part of the returned silver—two hundred shekels and gave them to a silversmith, and Judges 17:4 says *“who made them into the image and the idol”*. They were put in Micah's house. Her motive and her actions were both in question.

So Micah made a shrine (the term rendered shrine means “house of God” or “house of gods”). And though the House of God Almighty was not far away in Shiloh in the same tribal area (Joshua 18:1), he made his own house of worship, contrary to and in disobedience to God. Micah's practice was self-made; not God-ordained (Deuteronomy 12:1-5).

In addition to having gods before Almighty God, Micah owned a priestly garment—ephod—so he made his son a priest who was not a Levite. Micah violated three of God’s commands in one fell swoop: not to have any god before the One true God; not to use graven images for use in worship and allowing someone other than a Levite to act as priest. Just a reminder from Numbers 18:7—God to Aaron, the descendent of Levi—“*I am giving you the service of the priesthood as a gift. Anyone else who comes near the sanctuary must be put to death.*” Later, when he had the chance, Micah hired a Levite from Bethlehem to be his priest in the shrine with the idols. Did he fix his idolatrous situation?

God must be worshipped in the way He has outlined in His perfect word. God’s present and persistent presence with us is promised when we are careful to obey Him. Integrity permeates God; He imbues integrity—what He has said, we can believe. In 2 Chronicles 6, when Solomon and all Jerusalem finished building the temple of the LORD, the king prayed a prayer of dedication. In verse 18 he asked: “*But will God really dwell on earth with men?*” The answer was and is yes! The Almighty did so in the Old and New Testaments and He does so today.

Sarah Young’s book, *Jesus Calling*, has become a favorite devotional for many, because God’s presence is stressed. It is full of expressions from God’s word about His assured presence with us and inviting us to stay in His Company. *Jesus Calling* and Spurgeon’s morning writings for February 27 record: “an abiding home in their God” Moses said: “*Thou hast been our dwelling place throughout all generations.*” Young encourages us, “Do not long for the absence of problems in your life...do not seek your heaven on earth...**the best equipping is My living Presence, My hand that never lets go of yours.**”

“I met God in the morning
 When the day was at its best,
 And His **presence** came like sunrise,
 Like a glory in my breast.

All day long the **presence** lingered,
 All day long He stayed with me
 And we sailed with perfect calmness
 O’er a very troubled sea.

So I think I know the secret
 Learned from many troubled ways,
 You must seek Him in the morning
 If you want Him through the day.”

Anonymous