

Esteeming God's Presence

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

“Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people. And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence” (Exodus 33:13-15).

Esteeming God’s presence is the key to some of the greatest things that could ever happen to us, individually or corporately. Moses was determined not to move unless God’s presence was with him, and the Lord honored his request (Exodus 33:17). David and Jonathan were determined to always have the presence of God between them (1 Samuel 20:42).

For a moment, think only of God’s presence. He promised us, in Hebrews 13:5*b*, that He would never, no never, no never leave us nor forsake us. In Matthew 28:20, Jesus said that He would

be with us always, “even unto the end of the world.” Every Christian, once he has been saved, regenerated, and sealed by the Spirit, has the promise of God’s presence.

As you consider these thoughts, you will begin to cultivate a high esteem for the Person of Jesus Christ. As you do, you will stop limiting the Holy One of Israel (Psalm 78:41). There’s nothing you can do to qualify to receive God’s provision; you simply have to trust in His character to implement all that He is, in your life.

Chapter One
ONE LIVING FAITH

“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, *one faith*, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (Ephesians 4:4-7).

“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith” (Romans 12:3).

There is great value in understanding the “one faith” of Jesus Christ. From these verses, we see that every person is given common grace and a measure of faith. Every Christian has saving grace. But it is crucial for each of us to understand the power of *one faith*—a faith that

comes from hearing the Word of God, trusting God, and highly esteeming His presence.

This faith is not the faith of the atheists, who believe there is no God. It is not the faith of the Jehovah's Witnesses, who say that Jesus Christ is a "little" god, not *the* God. The faith of Jesus Christ isn't the faith of a hard worker who trusts in natural things. This one faith is a faith that grows from a grain of mustard seed, from the incorruptible seed of the Word of God.

In His presence is fullness of joy (Psalm 16:11). The angel of His presence saved the people of God (Isaiah 63:9). The power of the Lord's presence was there to heal (Luke 5:17*b*). The key to God's manifestations of this faith lies in having high esteem for His presence.

The Meaning of His Presence

What does it mean for us to have God's presence? According to Exodus 33:13-17, we see that through His presence, God shows us His way, we find grace, and He gives us rest. This is the presence of living faith. It is the presence of a God who is waiting to be gracious to us, of a God whose mercies endure forever. It is the presence of a God who loves us to the end, of a God whose forgiveness can never remember

anything we've done in the past, who won't stop working in us until He has made us perfect.

Moment by moment, we need to esteem God's presence. Coming to His throne of grace and mercy, with dignity and honor, we can count on His presence. In any state we are in, we can come boldly to this throne to obtain mercy and find grace to help in our time of need. God can be present with us *now* because He imputed His righteousness to us at the point of salvation; our faith was counted unto us for righteousness (Romans 4:5).

When His presence is available, why would anyone want to experience the presence of the old sin nature with all that it produces? Why would anyone want to experience the presence of someone who is alienated from God—because of indifference, incompatibility, and reaction—when he can have God's presence?

Being Still, in His Presence

In Psalm 46:10a, God said, "Be still, and know that I am God." He could very well have said, "Be still, and know that I am *present*, as I was with Elijah. I may not be in the earthquake, the thunder, or the wind, but I will be with you in my still, small voice."

Regardless of how you are feeling right now, it is crucial that you begin to witness and practice the presence of God. Have high esteem for His promises, for His indwelling Spirit, and for His Word. When this happens, you will be transformed by God's presence in the operation of love—without ever being self-conscious. Whenever you experience His presence, you will have a beautiful understanding of one living faith.

Chapter Two

WALKING ON WATER

“Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. Who passing through the valley of Baca [weeping] make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from *strength to strength*, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God” (Psalm 84:5-7).

I must execute a vision in order to go from faith to faith (Romans 1:17). I must not wait for strength or for faith to start a ministry. I must not wait for faith to start a vision. God’s Word makes it possible to have a wonderful vision that is realistic, objective, and true. As I step forward in the vision, God will give me the strength and the faith to accomplish it.

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that dili-

gently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). In this beautiful passage, God makes a great promise: "You can please me with your faith, but you must believe that I am who I say I am: present with you. If you diligently seek me, I will reward you. You will find grace, and I will show you my way. My presence will be with you, and you shall find rest. Then you will begin to have high esteem for my promises."

His Presence in the Storms

Between what I desire God to do in my life and where I am today, I must give space for a living faith to work. I must give space for God to perform a miracle, space for God to give power and strength.

In Matthew 14:25-31, the disciples were on a ship that was being tossed by the waves in the midst of the sea. The wind was contrary and they were fearful. "And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear."

To the disciples, Jesus appeared to be a ghost, and they were fearful. But He said, "Don't be afraid; I am present! I am present to give you

grace, to show you my way, and to give you rest.”

Peter said, “Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.” Jesus said, “Come.” At that moment, Peter gave space to God’s grace, to a living faith, and to God’s strength for the way. Without self-consciousness or fear, Peter gave a place for God to intervene as he began walking to Jesus, on the water.

Then the wind came upon him and the waves grew rough. As he took his eyes off the Lord, Peter became fearful and began to sink. Still, he knew enough to cry, “Lord, save me!” and the Lord saved him. But before the Lord saved Peter, He dealt with Peter’s faith.

Jesus always dealt first with faith. Let me illustrate it. In Matthew 8:23-26, the disciples followed Jesus onto a ship. After going out to sea, a great storm arose and the waves began to fill the boat with water. Yet, Jesus was on the boat, *asleep*. “And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.”

Before Jesus rebuked the storm, He rebuked the *disciples*. He rebuked them because they didn’t have that one living faith: the faith of the Lord

Jesus Christ, faith to trust Him, faith to rest.

In the midst of the storms of our lives, Jesus speaks to us: "Don't be afraid. I am present to give you grace, so you can find My way. I am present so that you can find rest."

Believing the Word

A Roman centurion came to Jesus and said, "Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him" (Matthew 8:6-7). Jesus was ready to go to the centurion's home, but the centurion stopped him, saying, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel" (Matthew 8:8-10).

The centurion said, "Just speak the word." He esteemed God's presence; he esteemed the Word of God. And, of course, the servant was healed: "And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go

thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour" (Matthew 8:13).

In Luke 8, a woman with an issue of blood touched the hem of Jesus' garment. "And Jesus said, Who touched me?" (Luke 8:45). Peter said, "We have all touched you." But Jesus said, "No, you haven't; just *one* person touched me here today. And that one person had the one faith—a single-eyed faith—to trust me and to touch me."

The Scriptures describe her response: "And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. And [Jesus] said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace" (Luke 8:47-48).

Jesus turned to this woman and said, "Your faith has made you whole." She had a high esteem for His presence and she was healed.

Chapter Three

LEAVE SPACE TO TRUST HIM

Esteem God's presence. There, grace, mercy, forgiveness, and power are always with me. In His presence, there is power over demons, power over the old sin nature and power over circumstances. He says, "I go with you for one reason: to deliver you." God said to Jeremiah, "And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee" (Jeremiah 1:19).

He is not with us so we can be religious. He is with us to bless us, as He was with Abraham: "For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee" (Hebrews 6:13-14).

We must begin to realize that everything we do must be done by the one faith that leaves a

space to trust Him, a space for His presence, and a space for His promises. As a person exercises, he becomes stronger. In the same way, as a person loves, he receives more love. As he has compassion on others, he receives more compassion. Even as a person takes on a vision, he receives more strength to go on to the next thing. But, the one who doesn't have a vision loses even the strength that he had for his present task.

We must leave space for God's presence, for His miracles. God is present to work in our lives to reveal the manifestation of His resurrection power, the compassion of His nature, and the precious provision of His promises. He wants us to highly esteem His presence. This is why the six-winged seraphims cried to one another: "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6:3). The angels esteem God's presence.

Throughout the Bible, whenever Christians esteemed God's presence, they were occupied with Christ. They did not focus on anxiety, insecurity, lust, fear, or people's faults. They focused on the presence of grace, mercy, love, forgiveness, and power. They focused on the Word of the living God, and it produced a living faith in them. It is so important, in the opportunities we

have in this life, that we wake up every day with His presence and continue to meet Him moment by moment.

Jesus Meets Us Where We Are

In John 21, the disciples were backslidden. They had already witnessed Jesus in His resurrected state. Yet, Peter said, "I go a fishing," and the others responded, "We also go with thee" (John 21:3). In their fear, discouragement, and insecurity, Peter led them *all* back to fishing.

They caught nothing that night. Their fishing expedition had failed. But, in the presence of God's love, Jesus was there waiting on the shore. "Children, have ye any meat?" Jesus called out. "They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes" (John 21:5-6). Then John realized who it was on the shore and told Peter, "It is the Lord" (John 21:7).

Jesus wasn't concerned over the disciples' backslidden condition. He was concerned with only one thing: showing Peter and the other disciples the purpose of His presence by feeding them fish when they were weary and by fellow-

shipping with them, even after they had gone back fishing.

After Jesus fed the disciples on the shore, He took Peter aside and recommissioned him to preach the gospel. He wanted Peter to know that sin could never hinder God's grace, even after Peter had denied Him three times (John 18:17-27); negative reaction couldn't stop God's love, and negative presumptions couldn't restrict God's mercy. Where Peter's sin did abound, grace did much more abound (Romans 5:20*b*). He would never, never leave Peter, and He will never, never leave us.

In Isaiah 5:4, God asked Israel, "What could have been done more to my vineyard [Israel], that I have not done in it?" During their seventy years of captivity in Babylon, the Lord said to His people, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3). Under the New Covenant, God would remember their sins no more (Hebrews 8:12); He has cast them behind His back (Isaiah 38:17). God speaks in human terms here, likening Himself to us who only see what's in front of us.

Still, many of the Israelites cast the Word of God behind them (Psalm 50:17)—where their

sins were—and, because they didn't set God's presence or His Word before them, they were overpowered by their sins.

Hebrews 11:37 makes reference to believers who were "stoned,...sawn asunder,...slain with the sword." "Destitute, afflicted, tormented," they were rejected and hated. "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise" (Hebrews 11:39). These saints never saw the fulfillment of the promise, but they had faith to obtain a good report. They highly esteemed God's presence.

Recently a man in New England told me, "My mind hasn't been the same since I was in a car accident, but I love Jesus more than ever. I love Him with all my heart."

I know a woman who reached into a fire to rescue her son. She was seriously burned on one side of her body, and her face still bears some of the scars. Though her son has been an alcoholic for fifteen years, this lady will not give up on him. "I claimed a promise for my son and he *will* get saved," she told me. "One day, my son will love me." She is trusting in the character of God's presence.

If you have a vision, I hope you realize that you don't have to wait to receive strength for

your task. Take on your task without strength. Respond to God's promises in faith and give God an opportunity to provide strength in weakness. When we seek God diligently and esteem His presence highly, He will reward our faith. Sometimes it is faith with patience (James 1:3-4), and sometimes it's spontaneous faith. Whatever the case, God will come through, keeping His promise. Everything He has said shall come to pass.

"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

Don't let your faith become shipwrecked. Don't ever cast away that one faith that esteems His presence. God is waiting to be gracious to us. He is waiting to bless us in our vision. He wants us to have power over sickness and disease. He wants us to have power over ourselves, over our minds, and over our friendships. God wants us to have the "faith unfeigned" of 1 Timothy 1:5, a wholehearted faith that overcomes the devil and makes us winners in every round of life as we go forward in His presence.

CONCLUSION

We must exercise faith by esteeming God's presence. Our church needs room to grow. We need a bigger building, and we need to believe God for it. We want to have missionaries in 220 countries and, at the same time, remain thorough in our ministries to the local area. We are not going to wait for natural strength to do it; we are going to go on without strength.

In our weakness, we're going to walk on the water of faith by esteeming God's presence. And as we go, God will give strength for the journey. We don't need strength to keep from having a burden; rather, we need *God's* burden so we can receive strength to bear it.

As we esteem His presence, God will teach us about the diversity of His faith. It is a faith that can bring healing, a faith that can bring deliverance, a faith that reveals God before the fallen angels and before His holy angels, to

show what happens when a man completely trusts in His character and esteems His presence regardless of the circumstances. It's the faith that comes from God's nature, from His presence, and from His provision. We can trust our heavenly Father wholeheartedly, and we can please Him as children of one living faith, knowing that He will always reward those who diligently seek Him.