

~Other Speakers M-R: Thomas Reade:

### 53. REALIZING THE DIVINE PRESENCE

And he said, "My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest." Exod. 33:14

Happy is the man who daily lives under the guardian care of the Almighty, who can say; "My beloved is mine, and I am his." "This God is our God forever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death." "You shall guide me with your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." "My flesh and my heart fails; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever."

O! what a mercy it is, to have such a gracious God to look to. Lord, be pleased to draw my heart wholly to yourself, and enable me to place my trust under the shadow of your wings; to realize your presence at all times. Cause the light of your countenance to shine upon me, then will sorrow flee away at your presence, and joy spring up in my heart.

We live in a world which abounds with sin and grief; the latter ever growing out of the former, as its natural fruit. But, the blood of Christ can remove the one, and the Spirit of Christ can alleviate the other, so that all things shall work together for good. Oh! for a living faith, which can appropriate to itself the Savior's merits, and extract sweetness from the bitterness of affliction.

Soon, very soon, must this frail tenement be laid in the silent tomb; shut out from the eye of man, and all the changes of this passing scene. Oh! that my soul may then be shut in with Christ, where sin and sorrow can never enter. My happiness will then commence; my bliss will be completed, when my raised body, spiritualized and refined, shall be reunited to my redeemed spirit on the morning of the resurrection of the just. Oh! blissful and glorious period! How every earthly thing fades before it, as shadows before the rising sun.

"How vain are all things here below,  
How false, and yet how fair;  
Each pleasure has its poison too,  
And every sweet a snare."

Our most endeared enjoyments are transitory, and mixed up with many cares. If we cultivate the rose and admire its blushing leaves, and sweet perfume, the prickly thorn protects it; if we would possess the honeyed hive, it is guarded by a thousand stings. Truly our comforts are entwined with crosses. This world is not our rest.

The child of God can see wisdom and love in all this dispensation. Before Adam fell, there was no annoyance. In Paradise all was delight. But now the earth is covered with thorns and thistles, emblems of the Fall. We are daily taught, that it is through much tribulation we enter into the kingdom. This world is a school of discipline to the children of God, and afflictions are sent as medicine to heal the diseases of the mind, through the power and skill of the heavenly Physician. This world is a place of trial; but thanks be to redeeming love, "There remains a rest to the people of God;" a purchased inheritance, a kingdom reserved, for them.

In Scripture, we find that promises are in general made to characters. "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." If we ask, who shall see God? the promise replies; "the pure in heart." There are some broad and indefinite invitations which include within them the greatest blessings, as "Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth." "Him who comes to me I will never cast out." And yet, even here, faith is included; for who will look to Christ, or come to Christ, but those who are led to feel their need of him through the secret grace of the Holy Spirit on their hearts; and who, like the bitten Israelites in the wilderness, cast their dying eyes upon the remedy provided for them?

It would be presumptuous to expect the glory of beholding Christ, and the felicity of dwelling forever with him, if we continue in a state of unbelief and impurity. Antinomianism is one of the depths of Satan; a most deadly poison to the soul. Salvation by grace, through faith in the blood of Christ, includes three great blessings—

I. A deliverance from the guilt, condemnation, and punishment of sin, through the death and righteousness of the Son of God.

II. A deliverance from the love, power, and pollution of sin, through the operation of the Holy Spirit.

III. A restoration to the divine image, which was lost through the Fall; and a realization of the divine presence in the soul, as the foretaste and pledge of future glory.

This is the nature of Christ's salvation, which, while it cuts up the roots of self-righteousness, makes the believer righteous before God; and while it humbles him in the dust, makes him an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ. Oh! what a glorious salvation is that which destroys the image of Satan, and renews us after the image of Christ.

There is much information in the nominally Christian world; many go to and fro, and knowledge is increased; but does genuine piety, heart religion, true humility, keep pace with the growing expansion of our intellectual powers? Knowledge is power. It is a weapon which cuts two ways. If sanctified, it becomes a blessing; but if it is knowledge without piety; if it be knowledge drawn only from human science, to the neglect of the Book of God, it only sharpens the mind, and fits the agent for deeper works of darkness. Unsanctified knowledge is closely allied to Infidelity, as mental blindness is to Popery.

Nothing but the light of God's word, through the illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit on the understanding and heart, can preserve us from being carried away by the sophistries of the infidel, the superstitions of the Papist, or the solicitations of the worldly and profane. Our hearts are naturally prone to evil. Our minds are naturally dark. Hence arises the necessity of reading diligently the Scriptures of truth with humble prayer for divine teaching, that we may know God, and his dear Son Jesus Christ, which is life eternal; that we may know ourselves, and the world around us; that we may know the way of life, and realize the presence of God while journeying to his courts above.

Oh! that I could daily realize the presence and providence of God. This would make me watchful and submissive. Did I continually feel the truth of Hagar's declaration; "You God see me," what a holy fear would fill my heart. To realize the divine presence, to live as seeing him who is invisible through the medium of his word and works is to walk as Enoch, Noah, and Abraham walked. It is to walk by faith. It is to walk so as to please God.

How sublime are the words of Jehovah; "Am I a God who is only in one place?" asks the Lord. "Do they think I cannot see what they are doing? Can anyone hide from me? Am I not everywhere in all the heavens and earth?" David lived under the sanctifying influence of this truth; "I can never escape from your spirit! I can never get away from your presence! If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the place of the dead, you are there. If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans, even there your hand will guide me, and your strength will support me. I could ask the darkness to hide me and the light around me to become night—**but even in darkness I cannot hide from you. To you the night shines as bright as day.**"

"If I take," says David, "the wings of the morning;" If I could even fly upon the wings or rays of the morning light, which diffuses itself with such velocity over the globe from east to west, instead of being beyond Your reach, or by this sudden transition be able to escape Your notice, Your arm could still at pleasure prevent or arrest my progress, and I should still be encircled with the immensity of Your essence.

Oh! my soul, seek for grace thus to walk day by day as in the presence of your God and Savior. Are you washed from your sins through the blood of Christ? Then do not fear. He, who fills all space with his presence is your Friend. His arm encircles you. His power protects you. His eye is ever upon you. His ear is ever open to your cry. Nothing can harm you without his permission; nothing shall harm you by his command; for, if, you are united to Christ by a living faith, He will make all things work together for your good; he will supply all your needs, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Do you love God? Then rejoice in the sweet assurance, that nothing shall be able to separate you from his love. He is engaged in Covenant to keep you in all your ways; to keep you unto life eternal.

As the Head of the Church militant is now in glory, so shall all the members of Christ's mystical body be united with their Head, as the Church triumphant, in the kingdom of heaven. Nothing is so sure as the glorification of the persevering believer. "He that endures to the end shall be saved." "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life!" The Word of Truth has said it, and it cannot be changed; "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

Oh! how safe, how happy is the true believer in Jesus. He may have trials, temptations, afflictions, griefs, and sorrows. This is the lot of God's saints in every age, whom he calls his jewels, his peculiar treasure. They are chosen in Christ "before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy, and without blame before him in love." They are "from the beginning chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." They are "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit;"

therefore they continue faithful even unto the end, being "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."

According to the word of Christ, "My sheep shall never perish." They are called in time by the Gospel. They obey the calling, and suffer willingly the hatred of men, and the malice of devils. They confess Christ boldly, and have to endure the contradiction of sinners, the rage of persecution, and sometimes a painful death. But still they are safe in the Ark of the Covenant; they are happy in the love of God. Christ and heaven are theirs. A glorious immortality awaits them. Soon they will be in the presence of the Savior whom they love; translated into that world of bliss, where the Lamb is the light thereof, and God its glory.

O! my soul, cease not to pray for an increase of faith, and love, and holy obedience; an increase of patience, resignation, and hope; an increase of peace, and joy, and gratitude; an increase of every grace, by which God may be glorified, the Savior honored, and yourself fitted for the participation of those blessings which abound in the Paradise above.

The excellent Henry observed; "He who eyes providences, shall never lack providences to eye." This was David's experience. He was an accurate observer both of Providence and Grace; therefore he never lacked motives either for humiliation, confidence, gratitude, or praise. The fifty-first Psalm is expressive of the deepest self-abasement, and of humble hope in the divine mercy, after the message of God to him by Nathan the Prophet. The sixty-second Psalm declares his trust in God at all times, as the God of his salvation, the rock of his strength, and his refuge. The one hundred and third Psalm is a song of thanksgivings for mercies, countless as the sands. The one hundred and seventh Psalm is a beautiful survey of the Providence of God, with a call on all men to praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men. Indeed all the songs of the sweet Psalmist of Israel, have cheered and comforted the Church of God in every age. Like David, in our humble measure, may we glorify God, and solace the Christian pilgrim on his way to Zion.

Are we the children of God? Then we may rest calmly under all providences, whether of a comforting or bereaving nature. How precious are the words of Christ; "What is the price of five sparrows? A couple of pennies? Yet God does not forget a single one of them. And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to him than a whole flock of sparrows." As if our Lord had said; If your heavenly Father remembers the little birds of the air, to protect and feed them, will he forget you, for whom he gave his only begotten Son?

Paul answers this question by the Holy Spirit; "What can we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? Since God did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't God, who gave us Christ, also give us everything else?"

Blessed Lord, "you will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you." Oh! may I ever feel a confidential reliance on your power and grace, through faith in your promises in Christ Jesus. You will never forsake those who make your word their trust. Give me a strong faith to glorify you under all circumstances, whether of trouble or of joy. Let not the things of time obscure the views of eternity. Wean my heart from earth. Fix my affections on Yourself. Be my Center and my Crown. May all my fresh springs of happiness be in You; all my hopes of glory flow from You. Prepare me for Your kingdom, and oh! make me there an everlasting monument of Your love.

Happy the man, who, in this world of woe,  
Where troubles spring, and bitter waters flow,  
Enjoys the presence of his pardoning God,  
And lies submissive 'neath his chastening rod.  
While journeying homeward through a desert land,  
He trusts the guidance of a Father's hand  
Though darkness often overspread his earthly scene,  
His soul is ever peaceful and serene.  
Midst swelling waves, and on a boisterous sea,  
From fearful doubts and sad forebodings free  
With joy, at length, he lands upon the shore,  
Where sin and sorrow shall be known no more.  
Oh! blessed Lord! your people's Guide and Guard,  
Their present Portion, and their great Reward,  
O be my Hope, my Help, my Joy, my Crown,

**Realizing the Divine Presence**

**O keep me- save me- seal me for Your own.**