

A Promise of God's Manifest Presence

by Brian Long

The promise of God's manifest presence is for those who value God's presence, seek God diligently, and are willing to go and share the good news with others.

Duration: 27:23

Scripture: Isaiah 59:1

Topics: "Presence of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of seeking the Lord diligently and wholeheartedly. He uses the example of Moses, who earnestly sought the face of God through fasting and spending 40 days and nights on the mountain. The preacher highlights the promise in Isaiah 44:3 that God will pour out His Spirit on those who are thirsty for His presence. He also emphasizes the need to value God's presence above all else, even material abundance or earthly blessings. The sermon concludes with a reminder of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, where Jesus promises to be with His disciples always as they go and make disciples of all nations.

Transcript

Brother Edgar asked that we stay with the theme of 2 Chronicles 7.14, and I felt led tonight to take the part of, and speak on the part of seeking His face. And I believe that seeking the face of God and seeking the manifest presence of God are synonymous. So I want to specifically share tonight about a promise of God's manifest presence, a promise that God makes to manifest His presence.

So I'm going to read from Exodus chapter 33, and I'll be reading verses 12 through 18. Then Moses said to the Lord, See, you say to me, bring up this people, but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, I know you by name, and you have also found grace in my sight.

Now therefore, I pray, if I found grace in your sight, show me now your way, that I may know you, and that I may find grace in your sight. And consider that this nation is your people. And he said, that is God said, my presence will go with you.

And I will give you rest. Then he said to him, if your presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here. For how then will it be known that your people and I have found grace in your sight, except you go with us? So we shall be separate, your people and I, from all the people who are upon the face of the earth.

So the Lord said to Moses, I will also do this thing that you have spoken, for you have found grace in my sight, and I know you by name. And he said, please, show me your glory. The promise of God's manifest presence is found in verse 14.

God said, my presence will go with you, and I will give you rest. Now, what is the manifest presence of God? We all know that God is omnipresent. He is everywhere all the time.

So in that sense, He is always present. But you and I both know there is a big difference between just the omnipresence of God and the manifestation of God's presence. The manifest presence of God is when we suddenly become aware of His presence.

It's when God meets with us, when God meets with man and man meets with God, and when a person speaks with God face to face as a man speaks with his friend. And that's what we read also in this 33rd chapter of Exodus. Moses spoke with God face to face, even as a man speaks with his friend.

It's when God's presence is revealed. The manifest presence of God is when we are made consciously aware of God's presence. The manifest presence of the Lord, I don't think can be explained or described, because God can't be explained or described.

But we all know when His presence is manifested. You know when His presence is in a place, and you know when it's not. You know when God manifests His presence on a prayer call like this, and you know when He doesn't.

Anybody that's experienced the manifest presence of the Lord knows when God is manifesting His presence. But what I would like to share first of all tonight is that there are conditions to this promise. God made a promise to Moses when He said, My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.

But notice the condition of the promise. The promise that God made to manifest His presence to a man was made to a man who valued the presence of God. It was a man who hungered for the presence of the Lord.

It was a man who would not and could not settle for anything less. A man I think who couldn't even bear the thought of living one day without God. And I wonder if we have such a hunger.

Do we have such a hunger for the manifest presence of the Lord that we can't even bear the thought of trying to have a prayer call or meet as a church or even go one day without Him? Do we hunger for His presence? The promise of God's manifest presence was given by God to a man who wouldn't settle for anything less. Only those who value the presence of God will God manifest His presence to. Now, probably most everybody on the call knows this, but obviously before chapter 33 is chapter 32 of Exodus which is about the golden calf.

It's when the children of Israel and Aaron created an idol. They built a golden calf because they got tired of waiting on Moses who was up on the mountain meeting with God. And they actually called that image of gold their God.

They called it God, the God who delivered them which was a wicked, wicked sin. And God was very angry with these people. He was very grieved and very angry.

And so He says beginning in the first verse of chapter 33, knowing what had just happened in 32 about the golden calf, the Lord says to Moses, So, in essence, God is saying because I made this promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, I'm still going to give you this land. You see, God never breaks His promises. He'd already made a promise to give the children of Israel a Canaan land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

So He said I'm still giving you this land. I'm keeping my promise. And I'm going to send my angel to lead you, to go before you.

He said, but I'm not going with you. And I ask myself and I ask you tonight, I wonder how many would have been satisfied with just that? How many would be satisfied with, you know, God sending an angel to lead us? God's leading us into a land flowing with milk and honey that is a land where we will never lack. It will be a land of abundance, of prosperity, of plenty.

We'll have our families, we'll have our homes, we'll have plenty to eat. And we'll even have an angel to lead us there. But there's something else, He said.

Yes, you have all of that, but I'm not going with you. How many would be satisfied with just the blessing of God, but not the actual presence of God? There's a big difference between seeking the face of God and seeking the hand of God. Seeking God for who He is or seeking God for just what He can do for me.

Today it would be like God promising you a good job. You have the job, you have the car, the house, you have the blessings of family. And even an angel or let's say a minister to give you guidance here and there.

How many would say, yes, praise the Lord, I have all of these things. And be satisfied with that and yet not have the presence of the Lord. And I believe I can say honestly tonight that I would rather be in a prison.

I would rather be in a death camp. I would rather be in a dark dungeon with the presence of the Lord than to be on a mountaintop or a place of prosperity without Him. I think we all need to ask ourselves, how much do we value the presence of God? Moses was a man who was not satisfied with the land flowing with milk and honey.

Not even satisfied with an angel. Because he knew there was only one thing that set the people of God apart from all the people of the world. And that was the presence of the Lord.

He said to them, Moses said in verse 15, if your presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here. In other words, if you're not going with us, I'm not going. I don't want to go anywhere.

He says in verse 16, for how then will it be known that your people and I have found grace in your sight, except you go with us. So we shall be separate, your people and I, from all the people who are upon the face of the earth. That's the only thing that distinguishes God's people from all the people of the world, is His manifest presence.

If we don't have the presence of the Lord with us, we have nothing to offer this lost generation. And in the New Testament it says in verse Peter 2, 9, that we are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, God's own special people. And what makes God's people peculiar? It's His presence.

It's His manifest presence. I remember hearing a friend tell a story about being on an elevator. And he was on the elevator with some other people and suddenly this woman just began to weep.

And somebody asked her what was wrong and she pointed to this man and said, it's him. It's him. Well, he didn't know what he had done, so he asked, well, what have I done? And she said, no, what it was was the presence of the Lord.

Just the glory of the Lord radiating, the love of Jesus radiating from this man's face. Without him saying a word, this woman was aware of that. Brothers and sisters, that's what sets us apart.

And I hunger for God's presence and I know many on this call do also. That's what sets us apart. That's what makes us a peculiar people.

Do you value the presence of God tonight? Moses did. Moses did. You know who else did? David.

A man after God's own heart. In Psalm 51, which is a prayer of repentance and confession after his sin with committing adultery with Bathsheba, and you know the story, but here's the heart cry of David. He's crying out to God for mercy and repentance.

He says in Psalm 51, verse 1, Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your lovingkindness, according to the multitude of your tender mercies. Blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

For I acknowledge my transgression and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done this evil in your sight. And then if we skip over to verse 9, he says, Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. And listen to this. Do not cast me away from your presence.

Do not take your Holy Spirit from me. That was David's greatest fear, greatest concern. Lord, do anything, do anything you have to do, but do not withdraw your presence from me.

Do not take your Holy Spirit from me. David was a man who knew the manifest presence of the Lord, and he valued God's presence more than anything. I think he was willing to lose everything else as long as he knew God would not depart from him.

And the person who valued the presence of the Father more than anybody who ever walked the face of the earth, of course, was Jesus. Jesus valued the presence of the Father. You remember that dark night in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus said to Peter, James, and John, My soul is exceedingly sorrowful even to the point of death.

He was gripped with grief and agony inside because of the cup that was set before him. What was in that cup? In that cup, of course, was the wrath of God. The judgment and wrath of God that would be poured out upon the Son of God.

I don't believe at all that it was the physical death that Jesus was so sorrowful about. We know that many martyrs rejoice as they're being even burned at the stake. It wasn't that as precious as that physical death of Christ is to us, of course.

But more than that, it was what was in the cup. It was the fact that Jesus Christ on the cross would be separated from his Father. The wrath of God, the judgment of God that would be poured out upon the Son would be the first time ever.

If you think about this, from all eternity past, the Father and the Son have perfect fellowship and communion. They have never been apart. There has never been a separation there.

There has never been anything to divide them. And yet on the cross, when Jesus was paying for our sins, for the first time ever, he cried out, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And that's the thing that absolutely crushed him. He valued the presence of God.

And even if it was just to be separated from the Father for however long it was on the cross, three hours, Jesus could not even bear the thought of being separated from the presence of the Father for one moment. He valued the presence of God. Do you value the manifest presence of the Lord? Moses did.

David did. Jesus did. David said in Psalm 42 verse 1, As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for you, O God, my soul thirsts for God, for the living God.

Psalm 63, he says, O God, you are my God, earnestly will I seek you, my soul thirsts for you. He thirsted for God. And remember that Jesus did not say, let any man come to me and drink.

He said, if any man thirsts, let him come to me and drink. And brothers and sisters, that's where it all begins. If we don't have the hunger and the thirst for the presence of God, then that's what we need to even be praying about tonight.

God, give us a hunger. Give us a thirst. Open our eyes to how lost we are and undone we are without your manifest presence.

Well, the other condition to this promise, it's given only to those who value the presence of the Lord, this promise of God that says, my presence will go with you and I will give you rest. But the other condition is, it's to those only who would seek him. And immediately after receiving this word from the Lord that he would not go with them, he would send his angel instead.

Moses' immediate response is found in verse 7. It says, Moses took his tent and pitched it outside the camp, far from the camp. And he called it the tabernacle of meeting. And it came to pass that everyone who sought the Lord went out to the tabernacle of meeting, which was outside the camp.

The promise is for those who will go outside the camp and seek the Lord. There is a time when we must cut off and get away from anything and everything that competes with the presence of God. There's a time when we must leave the camp, get outside the camp, get alone with God, go out from that place of defilement.

A time to repent of anything and everything that is contrary or unbecoming of his holy presence. The Lord says in the next chapter, chapter 34 and verse 12, he says, Take heed to yourself, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land where you're going, lest it be a snare in your midst. But you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images.

For you shall worship no other God, for the Lord whose name is Jealous is a jealous God. Anything that is unbecoming of the presence of the Lord, and you don't really have to search for that. When you come into

the presence of the Lord, those things are exposed immediately in the light of his holy presence.

And what God is saying here, as we seek his face, and he reveals to us anything in our lives, anything in our life that is unbecoming of his presence, we must immediately repent of that. Be done with it, depart from it, just as Moses went out from that place of defilement. We must leave it.

We must turn away from our wicked ways. Turn away from anything, everything that grieves the heart of God. Repent of it.

The Bible says in Isaiah 59, verse 1 and 2, Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither is ear heavy that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you. That he will not hear.

When God causes his face to shine upon a people, it's the same as him manifesting his presence. When God hides his face from a people, it's the same as him withdrawing that manifest presence. And the reason every time is sin.

We must depart from it, we must forsake it, and we must seek him outside the camp. And we must seek him diligently. The Bible says that God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.

Moses pleaded with the Lord not to take his presence from them. David also did the same. The Lord must be sought earnestly.

We know what the Lord thinks about apathy from what he said to the church in Laodicea. It literally makes him want to vomit. He said to the lukewarm, I will spew you, I will vomit you out of my mouth.

There's no place for apathy or half-heartedness when it comes to seeking the Lord. He must be sought diligently. And we know that Moses sought the Lord diligently, for he rose early in the morning, he was on the mountain for 40 days, he had fasted.

I don't think anybody fasts like that, 40 days and 40 nights, without having a yearning, earnest, thirsting desire to seek the face of God. But again, the point is we must seek him earnestly, with a thirst. The promise in Isaiah 44-3 is, For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.

I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring. Now, briefly, I want to share one more point about this promise. It's for those who value his presence.

It's for those who seek him diligently, who go outside the camp. And there's a time to come out. There's a time to come out.

Jesus said in Revelation 18, referring to Babylon, Come out of her, my people, lest ye be partaker of her sins. So there's a time, and I'm not going to try and define that tonight, but we all need to listen to the Lord, and know when he calls us outside the camp to come out to seek his face. But finally, one more point I want to leave with you.

The promise of the manifest presence of God is only for those who are willing to go. Notice what he says, again in verse 14, My presence will go with you. We can't ignore that two-letter word, go.

My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest. In other words, as you go, my presence will go with you. Yes, there is a time to be still.

God said be still and know that I am God. But there's nothing self-centered about the Christian life. When we seek God's face, and he manifests his presence, the end is never so that we'll just sit and soak in his presence together forever.

It always leads to God giving us his heart for a lost world. As you go, my presence will go with you. Let us not forget why we're here, brothers and sisters.

We've been commanded by God to go. Go to a lost and dying world and bring them the gospel of Jesus Christ. When you encounter God, you want others to know him like you do.

You have a longing for others to know his presence once you've tasted his presence. Paul the Apostle said in Romans 10, Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. He had a longing for the people of Israel to come to know this God that he knew.

But he said, How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him in whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And I want to say tonight that you are that preacher. If someone says, Well, I can never do that. I can't witness.

I struggle with all of that. You can if God goes with you. You can when you've been in the presence of God.

When God goes with you, there's no excuse. When God goes with you, you will want to open your mouth and proclaim his good news. And I'll close with this, another promise from the New Testament that you probably are very familiar with.

Matthew 28, 18, this great commission. Jesus said in verse 18, Jesus came and spoke to them saying, All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations.

Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. And lo, listen to the promise, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Who is that promise of his presence for? Those who are willing to go. Those who will go. Those who will go and serve him.

And Jesus said that his servants would follow him. And so, God's manifest presence is for those who are willing to go. We've got to be willing to go.

And to share the good news with others. Now, Heavenly Father, I want to just thank you so much for the promises of your word. And especially for this promise tonight.

When you said to Moses, My presence will go with you. I believe it's not only for Moses. Because you're no respecter of persons, Father.

This promise is for everyone. Who will hear your voice tonight. And who will hunger and thirst for you.

Everyone who values your presence. Everyone who will seek your face. Everyone who will go beyond just seeking your hand.

Just seeking your face, Lord. Not just what you do for us, but who you are. And what is the revelation of your heart.

We want to know you. We want to walk with you, Lord. We hunger and thirst for your presence tonight.

And I pray, if there's not that hunger. And there's not that thirst. Like the deer would pant for the water.

Then, God, I ask you to give it to us tonight. I ask you to give us hungry hearts. And thirsty hearts.

To bring us back to the simplicity of this. You, Lord God, are everything. And apart from you.

And apart from your manifest presence. We are nothing. And we dare not go anywhere.

Unless we know, Lord, you are with us and you are leading us. And I'm also asking you tonight for a fresh touch. That you would touch our eyes.

That you would break our hearts. That you would cause us to see those, Lord, who are outside of you. Who have never known your manifest presence.

Who are lost. And if they die, Lord, without you. Who will be cut off from your presence for all eternity.

I'm asking you, Lord, tonight. To break my heart. To break our hearts.

Lord, forgive us for self-centeredness. Forgive us for having inward focus. And I pray, God, that you would give us the courage and the boldness to go.

To make us like that early church. Who could not help but speak of the one they had seen and heard. Lord, would you reveal yourself to us.

Even tonight as we come to seek you. We have not come to listen to one another pray. We have come to pray to you.

And to seek your face, Lord. We meet with you. And we ask you, Lord, to change us.

Even as we behold your glory tonight and seek your face. We ask you to give us more of your heart. Show us your glory.

And send us out. It's my prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

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