

In the Secret of His Presence

by F.B. Meyer

F.B. Meyer emphasizes the importance of recognizing and experiencing God's constant presence in our lives for peace, purity, and power.

Scripture: Job 23:3

Topics: "God's Presence", "Spiritual Awareness"

Description

F.B. Meyer emphasizes the ever-present nature of God, illustrating how His presence permeates all aspects of life, yet often goes unrecognized by us. He contrasts the experiences of those who feel God's nearness, like Brother Lawrence and John Howe, with the common struggle to perceive Him in our daily lives. Meyer encourages believers to cultivate a constant awareness of God's presence through prayer, purity, and obedience, asserting that true communion with God is only possible through Jesus Christ. He highlights that in the secret of His presence, there is peace, purity, and power, urging us to seek this divine closeness in our everyday lives. Ultimately, Meyer calls for a deeper commitment to recognizing and dwelling in God's presence, which transforms our spiritual experience.

Transcript

IN ONE SENSE God is always near us. He is not an Absentee, needing to be brought down from the heavens or up from the deep. He is nigh at hand. His Being pervades all being. Every world, that floats like an islet in the ocean of space, is filled with signs of His presence, just as the home of your friend is littered with the many evidences of his residence, by which you know that he lives there, though you have not seen his face. Every crocus pushing through the dark mold; every firefly in the forest; every bird that springs up from its nest before your feet; everything that is-all are as full of God's presence as the bush which burned with His fire, before which Moses bared his feet in acknowledgment that God was there.

But we do not always realize it. We often pass hours, and days, and weeks. We sometimes engage in seasons of prayer, we go to and fro from His house, where the ladder of communication rests; and still He is a shadow, a name, a tradition, a dream of days gone by.

"Oh! that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat! . . . Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him" (Job 23:3, 8, 9).

How different is this failure to realize the presence of God to the blessed experience of His nearness realized by some.

Brother Lawrence, the simple-minded cook, for more than sixty years never lost the sense of the presence of God, but was as conscious of it while performing the duties of his humble office, as when partaking of the Holy Supper.

John Howe, on the blank page of his Bible, made this record in Latin: "This very morning I awoke out of a most ravishing and delightful dream, when a wonderful and copious stream of celestial rays, from the lofty throne of the Divine Majesty, seemed to dart into my open and expanded breast. I have often since reflected on that very signal pledge of special Divine favor, and have with repeated fresh pleasure tasted the delights thereof."

Are not these experiences, so blessed and inspiring, similar to that of the author of the longest, and in some respects, the sublimest Psalm in the Psalter? He had been beating out the golden ore of thought through the successive paragraphs of marvelous power and beauty, when suddenly he seems to have become conscious that He, of whom he had been speaking, had drawn near, and was bending over him. The sense of the presence of God was borne in upon his inner consciousness. And, lifting up a face on which reverence and ecstasy met and mingled, he cried, "Thou art near, O Lord!" (Psalm 119:151.)

If only such an experience of the nearness of God were always ours, infolding us as air or light; if only we could feel, as the great Apostle put it on Mars' Hill, that God is not far away, but the element in which we have our being, as sea-flowers in deep, still lagoons:-then we should understand what David meant when he spoke about dwelling in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, beholding His beauty, inquiring in His temple, and hidden in the secret of His pavilion (Ps. 27). Then, too, we should acquire the blessed secret of peace, purity and power.

In the Secret of His Presence there is Peace. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," our Master said, "but in Me ye shall have peace." It is said that a certain insect has the power of surrounding itself with a film of air, encompassed in which it drops into the midst of muddy, stagnant pools, and remains unhurt. And the believer is also conscious that he is enclosed in the invisible film of the Divine Presence, as a far-traveled letter in the envelope which protects it from hurt and soil.

"They draw near me that follow after mischief," but Thou art nearer than the nearest, and I dwell in the inner ring of Thy presence. The mountains round about me are filled with the horses and chariots of Thy protection. No weapon that is formed against me can prosper, for it can only reach me through Thee, and, touching Thee, will glance harmlessly aside. To be in God is to be in a well-fitted house when the storm has slipped from its leash; or in a sanctuary, the doors of which shut out the pursuer.

In the Secret of His Presence there is Purity. The mere vision of snow-capped Alps, seen from afar across Lake Geneva so elevates and transfigures the rapt and wistful soul as to destroy all evil things which would thrust themselves upon the inner life. The presence of a little child, with its guileless purity, has been known to disarm passion, as a beam of light, falling in a reptile-haunted cave, scatters the slimy snakes. But what shall not Thy presence do for me, if I acquire a perpetual sense of it, and live in its secret place? Surely, in the heart of that fire, black cinder though I be, I shall be kept pure, and glowing, and intense!

In the Secret of His Presence there is Power. My cry, day and night, is for power-spiritual power. Not the power of intellect, oratory, or human might. These cannot avail to vanquish the serried ranks of evil. Thou sayest truly that it is not by might nor power. Yet human souls which touch Thee become magnetized, charged with a spiritual force which the world can neither gainsay nor resist.

Oh! let me touch Thee! Let me dwell in unbroken contact with Thee, that out of Thee successive tides of Divine energy may pass into and through my emptied and eager spirit, flowing, but never ebbing, and lifting me into a life of blessed ministry, which shall make deserts below like the garden of the Lord.

But how shall we get and keep this sense of God's nearness?

Must we go back to Bethel, with its pillar of stone, where even Jacob said, "Surely God is in this place"? Ah, we might have stood beside him, with unanointed eye, and seen no ladder, heard no voice; while the patriarch would discover God in the bare moorlands of our lives, trodden by us without reverence or joy.

Must we travel to the mouth of the cave in whose shadow Elijah stood, thrilled by the music of the still small voice, sweeter by contrast with the thunder and the storm? Alas! we might have stood beside him unconscious of that glorious Presence; while Elijah, if living now, would discern it in the whisper of the wind, the babbling of babes, the rhythm of heart throbs.

If we had stationed ourselves in our present state beside the Apostle Paul when he was caught into the third Heaven, we should probably have seen nothing but a tent-maker's shop, or a dingy room in a hired lodging-we in the dark, while he was in transports; while he would discern, were he to live again, angels on our steamships, visions in our temples, doors opening into Heaven amid the tempered glories of our more somber skies.

In point of fact, we carry everywhere our circumference of light or dark. God is as much in the world as He was when Enoch walked with Him, and Moses communed with Him face to face. He is as willing to be a living, bright, glorious Reality to us as to them. But the fault is with us. Our eyes are unanointed because our hearts are not right. The pure in heart still see God, and to those who love Him, and do His commandments, He still manifests Himself as He does not to the world. Let us cease to blame our times; let us blame ourselves. We are degenerate, not they.

What, then, is that temper of .soul which most readily perceives the presence and nearness of God: Let us endeavor to learn the blessed secret of abiding ever in the secret of His Presence and of being hid den in His pavilion (Ps. 31:20) .

Remember, then, at the outset, that neither you nor any of our race, can have that glad consciousness of the Presence of God except through Jesus. None knoweth the Father but the Son and those to whom the Son reveals Him; and none cometh to the Father but by Him. Apart from Jesus the Presence of God is an object of terror, from which devils wish to hid themselves, and sinners weave aprons, or hide among the trees. But in Him all barriers are broken down all veils rent, all clouds dispersed, and the weaker believer may live, where Moses sojourned, in the midst of the fire, before whose consuming flames no impurity can stand.

"What part of the Lord's work is most closely connected with this blessed sense of the Presence of God?"

It is through the blood of His cross that sinners are made nigh. In His death He not only revealed the tender love of God, but put away our sins, and wove for us those garments of stainless beauty, in which

we are gladly welcomed into the inner presence-chamber of the King. Remember it is said, "I will commune with thee from off the mercy-seat." That golden slab on which Aaron sprinkled blood whenever he entered the most Holy Place was a type of Jesus. He is the true mercy-seat. And it is when you enter into deepest fellowship with Him in His death, and live most constantly in the spirit of His memorial supper, that you shall realize most deeply His nearness. Now, as at Emmaus, He loves to make Himself known in the breaking of bread.

"And is this all? for I have heard this many times, and still fail to live in the secret place as I would."

Exactly so; and therefore, to do for us what no effort of ours could do, our Lord has received of His Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, that He should bring into our hearts the very Presence of God. Understand that since you are Christ's, the blessed Comforter is yours. He is within you as He was within your Lord, and in proportion as you live in the Spirit. and walk in the Spirit, and open your entire nature to Him, you will find yourself becoming His Presence-chamber, irradiated with the light of His glory. And as you realize that He is in you, you will realize that you are ever in Him. Thus the beloved Apostle wrote, "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit" (1 John 4:13).

"All this I know, and yet I fail to realize this marvelous fact of the indwelling of the Spirit in me; how then can I ever realize my indwelling in Him?"

It is because your life is so hurried. You do not take time enough for meditation and prayer. The Spirit of God within you and the Presence of God without you cannot be discerned while the senses are occupied with pleasure, or the pulse beats quickly, or the brain is filled with the tread of many hurrying thoughts. It is when water stands that it becomes pellucid, and reveals the pebbly beach below. Be still, and know that God is within thee and around! In the hush of the soul the unseen becomes visible, and the eternal real. The eye dazzled by the sun cannot detect the beauties of its pavilion till it has had time to rid itself of the glare. Let no day pass without its season of silent waiting before God.

"Are there any other conditions which I should fulfill, so that I may abide in the secret of His Presence?"

Be pure in heart. Every permitted sin encrusts the windows of the soul with thicker layers of grime, obscuring the vision of God. But every victory over impurity and selfishness clears the spiritual vision, and there fall from the eyes, as it had been, scales. In the power of the Holy Ghost deny self, give no quarter to sin, resist the devil, and thou shalt see God.

The unholy soul could not see God even though it were set down in the midst of Heaven. But holy souls see God amid the ordinary commonplaces of earth, and find everywhere an open vision. Such could not be nearer God though they stood by the sea of glass. Their only advantage there would be that the veil of their mortal and sinful natures having been rent, the vision would be more direct and perfect.

Keep His commandments. Let there be not one jot or tittle unrecognized and unkept. He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me, and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My father, and I will love him, and will manifest My self to him. Moses the faithful servant was also the seer, and spake with God face to face as a man speaketh with his friend.

Continue in the spirit of prayer. Sometimes the vision will tarry to test the earnestness and steadfastness of thy desire. At other times it will come as the dawn steals over the sky, and, or ever you are aware you will find yourself conscious that He is near. He was even accustomed to glide, unheralded, into the midst

of His disciples through unopened doors. "Thy footsteps are not known" (Ps. 77:19) .

At such times we may truly say with St. Bernard "He entered not by the eyes, for His presence was not marked by color; nor by the ears, for there was no sound; nor by the breath, for He mingled not with the air; nor by the touch, for He was impalpable. You ask, then, how I knew that He was present. Because He was a quickening power. As soon as He entered, He awoke my slumbering soul. He moved and pierced my heart, which before was strange, stony, hard and sick, so that my soul could bless the Lord, and all that is within me praised His Holy Name."

Cultivate the habit of speaking aloud to God. Not perhaps always, because our desires are often too sacred or deep to be put into words. But it is well to acquire the habit of speaking to God as to a present friend while sitting in the house or walking by the way. Seek the habit of talking things over with God-thy letters, thy plans, thy hopes, thy mistakes, thy sorrows and sins. Things look very differently when brought into the calm light of His presence. One cannot talk long with God aloud without feeling that He is near.

Meditate much upon the Word. This is the garden where the Lord God walks, the temple where He dwells, the presence-chamber where He holds court, and is found by those who seek Him. It is through the word that we feed upon the Word. And He said, "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him" (John 6:56).

Be diligent in Christian work. The place of prayer is indeed the place of His manifested presence, but that presence would fade from it were we to linger there after the bell of duty had rung for us below. We shall ever meet it as we go about our necessary work: "Thou meetest him that worketh righteousness." As we go forth to our daily tasks the angel of His presence comes to greet us, and turns to go at our side. "Go ye," said the Master; "Lo, I am with you all the days." Not only in temple courts, or in sequestered glens, or in sick rooms, but in the round of daily duty, in the common-places of life, on the dead levels of existence, we may be ever in the secret of His presence, and shall be able to say with Elijah before Ahab, and Gabriel to Zacharias, "I stand in the presence of God" (1 Kings 17:1; Luke 1:19) .

Cultivate the habit of recognizing the Presence of God. "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest, and causest to approach unto Thee, that he may dwell in Thy courts." There is no life like this. To feel that God is with us; that He never leads us through a place too narrow for Him to pass as well; that we can never be lonely again, never for a single moment; that we are beset by Him behind and before, and covered by His hand; that He could not be nearer to us, even if we were in Heaven itself. To have Him as Friend, and Referee, and Counselor, and Guide. To realize that there is never to be a Jericho in our lives without the presence of the Captain of the Lord's host, with those invisible but mighty legions, before whose charge all walls must fall down. What wonder that the saints of old waxed valiant in fight as they heard Him say, "I will be with thee; I will not fail thee nor forsake thee" (Josh. 1: 5) .

Begone fear and sorrow and dread of the dark valley! "Thou shalt hide [me] in the secret of Thy presence from the pride of man; Thou shalt keep [me] secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues" (Ps. 31:20) .

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