

The Presence of God and the Power of God

by Paul Washer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking the presence and power of God in our lives, rather than just following principles and laws, in order to experience true spiritual maturity and holiness.

Duration: 30:09

Topics: "Media Discernment", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the use of television and media in the life of a Christian. He shares his personal experience of watching videos with his young son and expresses joy in finding good content to watch. However, he also emphasizes the need to be cautious about what we watch and how it can affect our relationship with God. The speaker mentions the debate surrounding the interpretation of the Song of Solomon and argues that it represents the love between God and His people. He also shares a powerful personal experience of seeking God fervently and passionately, demonstrating the importance of pursuing a deep relationship with Him. The sermon concludes with a reminder to be mindful of the media we consume and its impact on our spiritual lives.

Transcript

For more media content from Grace Community Church in San Antonio, Texas, go to gccsatx.com. Let's open up our Bibles to the Song of Solomon, Chapter 4. There is a debate in the evangelical community about whether or not the Song of Solomon should be preached as any other thing than a description of the love between a man and a woman. And a great many scholars today have rejected the idea that it represents in any shape, form, or fashion the relationship between God and His people, especially Christ and His Church. And they have a list of great and many arguments to back them up.

They say that this is simply a book about the love between a man and a woman. But if we were to take heed to all their arguments, everything they say, and if we were to approve of everything they say, we could still say this, If this book is only about the love between a man and a woman, then what is the love between a man and a woman about? And what I mean by that is, everything that God has placed in creation, everything, is a teaching tool, an illustration of something about God and His relationship with His people. So marriage itself has been given unto men to teach men of the relationship between God and His people.

So I believe their arguments are nullified. I believe this book sets for us many, many principles about our relationship with God, about the Church's relationship with Christ. And the key word here is relationship.

Relationship. This man that was mentioned from the pulpit, this pastor, if I were to be his counselor, the first thing that I would deal with him about would be this, whether or not he has truly ever been born again. One of the greatest problems for the rapid spread of pornography in the so-called church today is the so-called church today is not the church.

The true church of Jesus Christ is fully and completely regenerate. Men who are taught of God and kept by the power of God. Now that is not to say that a Christian cannot fall into a gross sin, but it is to say that that Christian cannot remain there in the style of life.

But another thing that I would go to and would go hard at is this. Now again, I want to say something. I am not antinomian by any means.

As a matter of fact, when Jesus says, Depart from me, I never knew you, you workers of iniquity. It's workers of lawlessness. And what he's truly saying, depart from me.

Every one of you claim to be my disciples, but you lived as though I never gave you a law to obey. If you've ever heard my preaching, you would know for sure that I've been called a legalist more often than an antinomian. But I'll tell you this, and I mean no disrespect, but it's a lot easier to learn principles than it is to tarry with the Christ.

I know so many little preacher boys, and some of them are 70 years old, that their whole life is nothing but little doctrines and principles, but they have never tarried before the Lord. They have spent no closet time. Their knees are not bare.

They know nothing of going out into the woods for seven, eight days and screaming at the gates of heaven. They'd honor the pilgrims and the Puritans all day long, but they know nothing. They know nothing of their zeal and nothing of their passion.

It is so easy to learn principles about holiness. It is so easy to learn attributes of God as they're set forth in statements. But how many men are so sick and tired of not being in the presence of God that they are willing to depart from absolutely everything? And if it means running like a wild man through the woods for a week, throwing rocks at heaven, they will not rest until the presence of God is real in their life.

I've warned college students all the time. Dr. Piper has a tremendous following among college students, and I'll hear college students preaching some of the things that, well, let's even go back farther, preaching some of the things that Edwards wrote. And I tell them, you're nothing more than a parrot.

You've memorized what Edwards says, but you don't know what he knew. And you've never been in the presence of God like him. You never tarried in prayer.

You know nothing of the life of David Brainerd. Do has never fallen on your head, even though you've read his diary a thousand times. And one of the greatest reasons why ungodliness, even among the people of God, is found, is because many times we're nothing, even though we stand in a pulpit, we're nothing but little boys parroting things we've heard from other men.

Our ears have heard about him, but our eyes have not seen him. Now, that will be offensive to you only if it's true. How much time do you spend in the presence of God? How much time do you lay before Him? How much time do you pull away from everyone else, and even from your studies, dear brother, to throw yourself down before Him and seek His face? Even to the greatest scholar, some that I deeply cherish,

Martin Lloyd-Jones constantly warned his brethren in England, you're going to become nothing but a bunch of cold principles if the presence and the power of God is not in your life.

In the Song of Solomon, chapter 4, verse 8, Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon. Look from the top of Ammanah, from the top of Sinir and Hermon, from the lion's den and from the mountains of the leopards. The first call to holiness is a call here in this text in our King James.

He says, first of all, come with me from Lebanon and look from the top of Ammanah and from the top of Sinir and Hermon. What is actually being said here in the text is this, looking from the top, but come down to me. Come down from the den of lions.

Come down from where the leopards live. Come down from those high, proud, independent places of yours where danger lurks. And come down to me and be with me.

We're so quick to be with His Word. We're so quick to be with His people. We're so quick to be so many things in so many places.

But how quick are we to come down and just be with Him and to dwell in His presence? First of all, come down from dangerous places. There are so many places that are so very dangerous. So many places that are so dangerous.

It's like I tell young men, a young man came to me a while back, a very godly young man going to seminary at this moment, very godly fiancé. He came into my office weeping. And I know that he's a man's man.

He's a strong man. He came in and he was weeping. I said, son, what's wrong with you? He said, I try so hard, my fiancé and I, we try so hard to be pure and holy and we pray and we fast, but every once in a while when we're together, something happens.

We've never had sex together, but we've often gone too far and it's made both of us miserable and hating ourselves and it's destroying us. And what can I do? And I said, well, what do your counselors tell you to do? He said, well, they've told me this is a hard situation. It's a hard thing to be young.

It's a difficult, dangerous thing to be in love. And we need to pray more and fast more. And I said, do me a favor.

Go back to your counselors and tell them Paul Washer said they're a bunch of idiots and should keep their mouth shut. And he said, what do you mean? I said, I'm serious, young man. You tell them to do that.

He said, why? I said, because they give vain counsel. I said, young man, are you more spiritual than me? He probably was. But I said, are you more spiritual than me? Have you been followed by terrorists through the jungle while preaching the gospel? Have you risked your life for Christ? He said, no, brother Paul.

I said, if you're not more spiritual than me, then why are you trying to do things I would never do? He said, what do you mean? I said, young man, the Bible says you're in hand-to-hand combat, face-to-face combat with the devil himself. But when it comes to youthful lust, he says flee. That means to tell me what's in you is more dangerous than the devil himself.

And I said, young man, those counselors of yours ought to be telling you that you should never be alone with that girl. You should never be alone with any girl unless it's your mother, your sister, your bride, or

your daughter. And until the day that hand of hers by her father's own authority is placed in yours, stay away.

You cannot beat this. And that's the same thing I tell you this morning. You cannot fight against this immorality.

You cannot fight against this impurity. You cannot arm yourself with a boatload of principles and think that you can walk among danger and walk away safe. It's impossible.

You have to come down from these haunts. Come down from these dangerous places. You have to.

Do you have a television? I do. It's not connected to anything. We watch tapes, videos of my two-and-a-half-year-old boy and I. I was so happy the other night.

We sat down and watched Through Gates of Splendor together. He watched the whole thing. I was so happy.

Are there some good things out there that I could see in that television? Yes, there is. I can. Can I make use of it? Yes, most certainly.

I can. Can I watch ABC, CBS, and NBC? Absolutely not. Don't tell me you want to walk with God and you want the Holy Spirit to fall down on this place and yet you'll watch things before you get in the pulpit that grieve the Holy Spirit, or when you come out of the pulpit, standing before your people, telling them you want the Spirit to move, you finish, you're tired, you go home, you turn on the television and grieve the very Spirit you have cried for.

I'm sorry, but it's true. There was an old violinist, a master in Europe, and he played before a crowd. And when he was done, a young man, a young violinist came up to him and said, Sir, I would give my life to play like you.

And the old man said, I have given my life to play like me. Old Leonard Ravenhill, Wesleyan holiness, Arminian. I could have fellowship with him because he was a man of God.

I didn't agree with him on all points, but he was a man of God. And I've sat under him and listened to him preach. He had a track that said, Others can, you cannot.

What he's basically saying, if you want the power of God on your life, if you want the unction of God on your life, then others can do things that you cannot do. They can. Let them do it.

Let them run. There are even good things that I cannot do because they are not the excellent things. I have learned from success, victory, and failure that to the degree I come down from these dangerous places, to the degree that I separate myself from that which is evil, the power of God abides upon me.

And to the degree that I give myself to compromise, the power of God does not abide upon me. Not only these dangerous places. These are high places, very high places.

I praise the Lord for all the things that He has done in my life to break me in two and grind me to powder. Everything emotionally, everything spiritually, and especially in my case, everything physically that He has done. That's why I hate the doctrine of those TV preachers that say physical ailment is a work of the devil.

It has been the most precious work of God in my life. Anything it takes, you have to literally be before the Lord. Lord, anything it takes, anything it takes, anything it takes to bring me down from those high places.

There have been times when I have stood in the pulpit after very little prayer and preached with great power. There have been other times when I have given myself to long times of prayer and then stood in the pulpit and preached like a babe with bricks coming out of my mouth. No power.

Walked down from the pulpit absolutely humiliated. And I bless the Lord for those times. I bless the Lord for everything that He has worked in my life to show me that apart from His power, apart from His grace, apart from His mercy, I'm a goner.

And to be afraid, why can't I watch that television? Do I not have a television? In that sense, because I'm more spiritual than you. No, it's because I am more afraid. I know what that thing will do to me.

It will grab me. I am not strong enough. I'm not as strong as you.

I'm not as powerful as you. I can't look at even one little bit of that thing because if I do, it will grab me and suck me in. It is being afraid.

As I've told you, I'm an outdoorsman and I love the outdoors. And my little boy, he loves the outdoors. And he'll get wandering out there in the backwoods with me and he'll stray farther and farther.

I tell him, come back, come back. He'll stray farther and then I'll just let him go. I'll hide behind trees.

I'll keep track of him. I'll make sure that a coyote can't get him. But sooner or later, he begins to realize he's alone.

And he calls out to dad and dad does not answer. And he gets very, very afraid. And you say, you're a cruel father.

No, I'm a good father. I'm teaching him something. I'm teaching him what the Lord has often taught me in nights of silence.

Oh, we run so bold. And then we run a little bit farther and a little bit farther because we're always thinking we can run back. But you don't realize there is one like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

And he is not afraid of the sheep. He's afraid of the shepherd. And you had better cling to that shepherd.

I can recall how many times my boy, when I would finally appear behind the tree, would run up and grab me by the leg and just hold on to my pants leg. You couldn't have pried him off with a crowbar. That's the way I want to walk with the Lord because that's the only safe place.

That is the only safe place. Come down. You see, every time you think, I can do this, every time you stray away, you've gone to high places, you've become proud, you've become independent, and you're walking in a dangerous place.

Do you want the power of God? More importantly, do you want the presence of God in your life? Well, then you have to come down. How dependent are you upon God? Talk to me about your prayer life and I'll be able to tell you how dependent you are upon God. Now, there's something very important here.

Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse. With me from Lebanon. Look down from the top of Amman and from the top of Sinai and Hermon, from the lion's den and from the mountains of the leopards.

If we just think of this call as separating from the world, we're going to be in trouble. It is not that he's just saying separate yourself from the dangerous places, but what he is saying is this, come with me. Come with me.

It is easier to be a legalist than a lover of Christ. It's much easier. Get all your principles and go to the seminars that tell you exactly what not to look at and everything else and what to wear and how to act and where to go and who to hang around with.

Get all the stuff and get it right. Boy, it's easy. It's even fun.

It's interesting. But if you stop there, you know what's going to happen? Let me tell you something. Romans 7 is a frightening book.

It's a frightening chapter. And I'll tell you why. You get all the biblical principles that you need from great teachers to be holy.

And if that's all you have, you will become a two-fold son of hell because I want you to know law, principles, and wisdom without the presence of God is legalism and legalism always ends in immorality and sensuality. You find legalistic people in any denomination, people given over to legalism and when you get in among them, you will find the grossest sensuality and immorality behind closed doors that you could have ever imagined. And why is that? You put the law upon someone without the working of grace and it will encourage them to sin.

It will lead them to sin. It really will. You get all your principles, but you do not seek God.

You have all this understanding about what it means to be holy, but you do not seek the presence of God. God will leave you there with your principles and allow you to see just what you can do with them by yourself. It is seeking Him.

It is seeking Him. Now, something else. Why are we so given to sensuality? Fallenness? Why are men so given to pornography? Fallenness? Well, not just fallenness, but actually it is a good thing gone wrong.

You see, and I do not know how to explain this, we were created and especially recreated to behold the glory of God. We were created with these hearts and recreated with these hearts to behold the glory of God, infinite beauty, the infinite awesomeness of God. And such beauty that it would throw us in such ecstasy that unless we were strengthened, we would be destroyed by our own joy.

When you are not getting that from God, you are going to seek to get it somewhere. They tell me that when a man looks at pornography, there are chemicals released in his body more powerful than any type of illegal drug he could even think about getting on. That rush, that feeling of ecstasy, that feeling of otherness, that feeling of awesomeness, all these things that ought to be met in God, but when you got a bunch of dead preachers preaching a dead gospel and not telling people because they themselves do not know that you actually can enter into the presence of God here on earth and you can sense His wonder and you can sense His joy and you can sense His power, when all that's left to church is a sound doctrinal sermon, people are going to look for what they desire someplace else.

They're going to take godly desires and twist them around. They really are. You know, it is such a shame.

I don't know if everyone here is Baptist. I'm Baptist or Baptistic or whatever you want to call me. Baptist theology.

I'm a Baptist because of our historical theology, not so much our theology in contemporary times. But much some Baptist theology is reactionary. And what I mean by that is this.

It's not so much biblical as it is a reaction against the heresies that we see all around us. For example, there is a doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Bible, but because of all the wild heresies of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, sometimes you and I are afraid. You know, if a Jehovah Witness or a Jehovah-less Witness comes to my door and they say, we're Jehovah Witnesses, I say, well, come on in.

So am I. I'm not going to let them steal that name from me. I'm the Jehovah Witness. They're a liar.

Charismatic? Yes, I am. As a matter of fact, if you're not charismatic, you're lost. Because charismatic just means gifted.

Now, I don't have anything to do with what's called charismatic today, but I'm not going to let them steal that word from me. Another thing I want you to know, this God of ours, I spend hours a day studying doctrine. I teach doctrine.

I love doctrine. But I want you to know something. Doctrine is not an end.

It is a means. It is a means to knowing God. It is a means to knowing God.

Now, I'm going to share with you something I've never shared in a conference. It's a personal testimony. And it might cause many of you to be very disappointed in me and not even hear anything I have to say.

So be it. I preach in a lot of places once. As a young man in the ministry, I was privileged of being around a lot of very, very old and very, very godly men.

And they would talk to me. Now, these were men of God. Baptists.

Very staunch. Reformed, some of them. People not given to enthusiasm or emotions or any other thing like that.

Sound men. But they would talk to me about the power of God. They would talk to me about the presence of God.

Not as men quoting stories that they had read, but men who themselves had seen with their own eyes the working of God. And I would go out on the streets in Austin, Texas and preach. I was afraid.

There was no boldness. There was no power. There was nothing.

But I would always hear the voices of these old men. And one day I decided enough is enough. I will seek Him until I find Him or until I die.

I went into a closet and I said, I will not leave this closet until I know God. Fifteen minutes later, I fell asleep. My roommates came home and found me in the closet.

So I took an alarm clock with me. And please, I am not saying this for any other reason except I feel like I am supposed to. Took an alarm clock with me.

Set it for every fifteen minutes. I would pray for maybe five or ten minutes. Fall asleep.

Alarm clock go off. Set it again. This was my prayer.

I did not pray for China. I did not pray for the presence of God. In the sense of my ministry, I asked one thing.

I said, Lord, You said if I seek You, I will find You. You said it, Lord, that You would reveal Yourself to me. You would let Yourself be found by me if I seek You.

Night after night after night after night for months. Two and three hours a night simply sitting there like this on my knees. Lord, it has been four months now.

It has been five days now. And You still have not come and just sit there. Lord, I have been here three hours and You have not come.

Day after day and night after night. And then one day, our church was spring break and all the college students were going to go on a Bible study ski trip type thing in Colorado. And I felt like the Lord wanted me just to go out into west Texas to the hill country.

Pretty barren. And I walked on top of those hills for three days like a wild man. If You would have seen me, You would have thrown me in an asylum.

I was picking up rocks and I was throwing them, literally, physically, throwing them at the sky. I was screaming. I was saying, God, I must know You.

You must come. You must. I can't live like this anymore.

I can't live just reading books. I can't live just reading about revivals and about people who knew somebody who knew somebody who knew somebody who knew You. And nothing happened.

And I went home. And another several weeks passed. And one night, He came.

He came. I just said, Oh, Father, I can't. Please come.

And He came. I was thrown down on the ground. I don't know how long in a fetal position, covering my head, thinking God's come to kill me.

The presence of God in a way that in one second, more of my sin and my need and His glory and power was revealed. And then all of a sudden, every bit of fear was taken away. And I was filled with such joy.

And my mouth shot open. Now, don't be afraid. Verse after verse from songs and from everywhere else, passages I had read just started coming forth.

Praises unto Him, the Word of God. Such joy. And I can tell you, it has been 20 years.

The presence of Christ is more real to me in this room than any one of you. And one of the things that is so bad today is many of you men here, you also have known the presence of Christ. But now most of your

prayer life is nothing but praying just a little and then just realizing He hasn't come and getting up and walking away instead of staying there until He does.

It's just prayer of going through the motions. You want holiness in your life? Run to Him. And stay there.

Stay there. My little boy, whenever I'm putting my shoes on and he realizes my bags are packed, he goes, Daddy, stay with Ian. Daddy, stay with Ian.

Or Ian, go with Daddy. I find myself, even this morning in prayer, going, Father, stay with Paul. Father, stay with Paul.

Or Paul, go with Father. I see so many boys today in the pulpit. They're boys.

Because as those old men told me, the mark of a man of God is God upon the man. And I don't want to sound... I don't want to sound arrogant. I don't want to sound anything else.

I just want to say this, that we have the desperate need to be men marked by the presence of God. We have the desperate need. Now there are those extremes, you know.

You have these men who, you know, don't care anything about doctrine and they're just all Holy Spirit. Well, they have nothing to say. But I want you to also know that just doctrinal teaching about the presence and power of God brings death many times.

And He says, Come down. But not only does He say, Come down. He says, I don't like and I don't teach quiet times.

The idea of, you should have a quiet time. I know that's a big part of discipleship. I don't agree with it and I don't like it.

I don't see the Puritans having quiet times. Is it like me going home, putting my wife in a closet and 30 minutes a day I pull her out and talk to her and then stick her back in there? Well, I've went through my checklist now of a good husband, therefore, now go back in the closet and here I go again. Our entire life, every moment of our life should be one of being with the Master.

It is very hard to call up pornography sites on the computer when Jesus Christ is there. It's very hard. And you need to realize, those of us who are Baptists, we need to realize we have been so influenced by Popish, Roman Catholic ideas of piety, it's unbelievable.

There is no such thing in the New Covenant of secular and sacred. It is all sacred. Even the pots and pans are sacred.

Everything is sacred. Someone asked me one time, do you want to go to the Holy Land? I said, everywhere I bow my knee is the Holy Land. Everywhere Christ is, is holy.

And it's not just learning things about holiness and learning things about principles, but it's also coming down and just walking with Him. Walking with Him. I remember after I was born again and the love of God had been shed abroad in my heart.

You know, there's that time that you seem to walk with God when everything is God. Everywhere you look, you just can't even stop thinking about Him. And I remember several, probably two or three months went

by and it was just like that after my conversion.

I mean, just everywhere. All I could think about was Jesus. And then I remember one day walking into a store thinking about buying some new boots.

And I walked out of the store. I have never been so broken in all my life. I realized that I walked into that store and Christ was not in every thought.

Christ was not in just every... And I thought, what happened? Do you know what's terrifying? Is when that becomes so common it no longer even bothers us anymore. That's when unholiness and immorality and such things can creep in. When Christ is not real.

Christ is not real. I didn't even want to come out of the prayer thing. Just wanted to stay there.

Why? That's what we need. You men, most of you know more than I'll ever know. The thing about it is are we seeking Him? Are we seeking Him? Are we seeking Him? Do we pray and nothing happens and we get up and we realize, well, we've been obedient.

We've prayed. Two or three are gathered. He's here.

I need more than that promise. I want His presence. I want His presence.

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