

Experiencing the Presence of God

by Steve Stutzman

Steve Stutzman's sermon emphasizes the necessity of experiencing the genuine presence of God in worship and life.

Duration: 1:25:56

Scripture: Acts 19:11

Topics: "Spiritual Freedom", "True Repentance"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of surrendering to God and breaking free from strongholds like witchcraft, rebellion, and the fear of man. It highlights the need to allow the Spirit of God to work in our lives, convict us of sin, and lead us to true repentance and freedom.

Transcript

OK, does that come through there now? It sounds like it's coming through. I would like to start out tonight maybe in a little bit different way than you are normally used to doing things. I would like to start out tonight by just having us bow our heads and close our eyes.

I don't know tonight what worship means to you. I don't know what it means to you to worship. We were singing, we were clapping our hands some, we were having a good time rejoicing in the Lord.

And that's good. I don't know what worship means to you. But tonight I would like to go together into the throne room of heaven.

And I invite you to come with me up to a great curtain of darkness that separates man from God. And to put your fingers in that curtain where it was rent from the top to the bottom and pulled apart. And if you would walk with me into the very throne room of heaven, you would see this place that is, in my mind, much like a big football stadium.

A huge stadium full of thousands upon thousands of people who have gone on before. In the center is a glorious throne of God with light blazing out in every direction. Glorious light that just permeates everything.

And the thousands upon thousands of saints are praising his name and shouting together in ecstasy and in just in praise and in adoration. And clear up around the top all the way around, there are thousands of thousands, tens of thousands of angels. And as we come into that place tonight, the whole stadium goes

silent.

And a pathway opens up where the saints who have gone on before step to the side and allow you and I, who are still in time, to begin to walk down that pathway. And we begin to walk down that path toward the throne of the living God. In front of the throne and on the sides, there are wheels of fire with wheels turning in wheels.

And the wheels roll off to the side. Behind that, there are huge guarding angels. And the guarding angels step back.

And they join their wings over the top of the throne over the top of the throne of Jesus Christ at the right hand of the Father on the mercy seat. The four and 20 elders fall in silent and step to the side. And they allow you and I together as one to come right in front of that throne and to kneel down before Jesus Christ.

With the splendor of the rainbow over the top of the throne and light shining through us in every direction, we worship. Here in front of his throne, we fall down. And we declare that he is right, and that he is righteous, and that he is beautiful.

And right now, everybody, right where you are, I want you to just start talking out loud and telling him that he's beautiful. Lord Jesus, you're beautiful. You're wonderful.

You are the beginning and the ending. You are the way and the truth and the life. You are holy, and you are full of righteousness and peace.

You are the balm of Gilead with healing in your wings. You are the truth. You are the way.

You are the life. You are everything that we seek and cannot find. You are everything that we try to be and cannot be.

You are peace and holiness and righteousness, and we worship you. You are our salvation. You shed your blood that we could live.

And you're the one who tore the curtain so we could come into this place. And together, we could just sing. Alleluia.

Thank you that you, the King of Heaven, have invited us to come into this throne room. Thank you that you, as peace and life and truth and blessing, have made a way. We worship you, Lord Jesus.

Would you have your way in us tonight and open our hearts and minds to who you are and to experience your presence in the name of Jesus. We bless you, Lord Jesus. I want to talk a little bit tonight about experiencing the presence of God.

I have looked forward for a while to being here and to fellowshiping with a whole bunch of you gathered together. And it was wonderful. Loved the worship times, singing.

It's good to see a whole bunch of you again that I don't get to see very often. And I want to open my heart tonight a long ways to you about where I am at and what it is that I see and what it is that I want in my life and what I think that God wants to lay as a foundation for our life. In Philippians chapter 3, it says this, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable unto his death.

That I may know him, the Bible says. Do you think for a moment that Paul did not know Jesus? The Apostle Paul is the one writing this in Philippians. When he was writing it, do you think he did not know Jesus? And yet he says that I may know him and the power of his resurrection.

And everybody's like, yeah, amen, we want to know him. We want to know the power of his resurrection. And then he says, and the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable to his death.

I am going to take you right now to one of the saddest verses in the Bible. First Samuel chapter 3, verse 1, and the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli, and the word of the Lord was precious in those days. And there was no open vision.

God, I pray today in the name of Jesus that you would open our hearts and our spirits to you. You are the King in Jesus' name. And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli, and the word of the Lord was precious in those days.

And there was no open vision. Somebody tell me, which is more precious, iron or gold? Why? Because it's rare. The thing that makes gold more precious than iron is there is a lot of iron and only a little bit of gold.

And the Bible says the word of the Lord was precious in those days. And there was no open vision. And I want to tell you a little bit what I see when I see that and what it does to me.

You remember when the children of Israel were back there in the land of Egypt and God brought them out by a mighty hand and they got out there by the Red Sea and they're trapped in there between the Red Sea with the mountains on both sides and the Egyptians coming behind them. Remember that scene? The Egyptians coming behind them. And all of a sudden, this cloud showed up.

There was this huge cloud that got between them and the Egyptians. And during the day, it was a cloud. And at night, it was a pillar of fire.

And it stood between them and the Egyptians. You remember that? Well, then they go through the Red Sea. And all the things that happened there, the Egyptians are killed.

They go out into the wilderness. And as they go through the wilderness, that cloud and that fire was there for 40 years. Whenever they set up the tabernacle and they put the Ark of the Covenant in that tabernacle and they set up that tabernacle, wherever they set it up, on top of that thing was a flame of fire.

During the day, there was a pillar of cloud. And at night, there was a pillar of fire on it. And wherever you were, you could go out of your tent and you could look over there and you could say, God is here.

In numbers, God told them, they will tell it to the inhabitants of the land, for they have heard that thou, Lord, art among this people, that thou, Lord, art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and thou goest before them by daytime in a pillar of cloud and by night in a pillar of fire. When these people moved, when these people woke up in the morning, they would look out here at the tabernacle. And if the pillar of fire was moving, everybody started packing their bags, because they're moving with it.

And for 40 years, that pillar of fire led them around the wilderness. Wherever that pillar of fire went, they went. When it stopped, they stopped.

When it moved, they moved. When it stopped, they stopped. You follow that? Then they come up to the land of Canaan and they go into the land of Canaan and they are in there for a couple hundred years.

They're in there for a long time. All the years of the judges, they are sitting in there in the land of Canaan. And wherever they have the tabernacle set up, the pillar of fire is upon it during the day.

And at night, there's a pillar of cloud. At night, there's a fire. In the daytime, there's a cloud.

I'm sorry. You couldn't see the fire during the day. So during the day, there's a cloud.

At night, there's a fire. When the people would get together to do their feasts, when they got together to do their stuff, they said, ah, God is here. We better go listen to what God says.

And they would come over there and they were very respectful of that presence. One day, when the people woke up, fire was gone. And so was the cloud.

One day, when the people woke up, the cloud was gone and so was the fire. And nobody knew what to do. So they kept right on doing what they were.

They kept right on going to the tabernacle. They kept right on sacrificing their sacrifices. They kept right on doing everything just like before.

And the reason I think this is one of the saddest verses in the Old Testament is because the manifest presence of God left and nobody missed it. The obvious presence of God left and nobody even missed it. I don't know how familiar you are with the story and with what happened after that.

But the enemies of Israel came against them and they went out to fight. They went out there to fight with the Philistines. And as they were fighting with the Philistines, they were beaten.

They got whipped pretty bad. And so they started scratching their heads and they said, we have a problem. Yeah, you do.

We need the presence of God. Yes, you do. Well, let's go get it.

It's not that easy. Well, it's in the tabernacle. It's back there in the back in that little box.

Let's go back there and get it. As long as this fire and this cloud were on top of the tabernacle, nobody dared to go back in the Holy of Holies, except for the high priest once a year. But when that fire disappeared and the cloud disappeared, the people went running back in the back and they grabbed this Ark of the Covenant, which represented the presence of God.

And they took it out in the battlefield. And when they got out in the battlefield, they had the first Pentecostal church service. The Bible says they jumped up and down and shouted until the earth rang.

That's what it says. They were excited. They had lots of emotion.

They jumped up and down and shouted and howled, we have found the presence of God. We have brought it right, and we are going to have all kinds of fun with the presence of God, and we're going to win. And the Philistines heard about it, too.

And the Philistines remembered this thing. And they said, guys, we're in trouble. You better fasten your sword on a little bit extra tight because we are in trouble.

And you better really be ready to fight hard because we're in trouble. These people have brought their God into the camp. And the next day they fought and they overcame Israel and they took off with the Ark.

Remember that story? This thing concerns me today. My heart burns for that presence. My eyes run with tears over that presence more than anything else.

I see people in churches. I see people gathering together and sitting in benches. I see people going to church Sunday after Sunday after Sunday.

And you ask them, what is the presence of God? And they say, isn't God everywhere? And as soon as somebody says that, I know that they do not understand this. I have only been privileged a couple of times in my life to sit in a place where, well, OK. There was a period of time.

I'll get to that a little bit later. But to sit in a place where there's a whole bunch of people that don't really know what's going on, what's happening. They're not really tuned into this that much.

And all of a sudden, the presence of God comes in a room. And one of the last times that that happened for me, we were doing an event, some stuff up in Canada. And one night, just a little ways into the thing one night, all of a sudden, there was just this thing.

Somebody gave an invitation. And people started coming up to the front and kneeling on the floor. And they started crying.

And pretty soon, everybody in the room, it was just like a wind came in, and everybody began to sob. People laying up in the front on the floor, kneeling on the front on the floor, just weeping and sobbing their eyes out. And almost everybody in the whole room was either up there kneeling down, or they were back in their seat kneeling down.

There was a few guys still walking around with their hands up in the air. And they were all crying. And the poor guy that was hired to run the sound was sitting back at the sound booth.

And he just pushed himself back from the thing because he didn't want to get snot and tears all over the sound board. There was something going on in that room that was not human. There's something going on in that room that cannot be manufactured.

You can't make it happen. I can't make it happen. It was a supernatural presence that came into the room and began to smite people's hearts.

And I have a question for you today. Have you ever been there? Have you ever seen that happen? How many people are living in Lancaster County in the great Mecca of Mennonites and Amish, grow up from the time they are wee little until the time that they get to be 75 years old and have never seen anything like that happen once in their life? Do you realize tonight that God intended for that to not just be a one-time event? He intended for it to be a way of life. It seems like instead we have erected in the place of that pillar of fire, we have lifted up a golden calf.

We have made golden calves, calves of gold. And when we get done making a golden calf, we say tomorrow is a feast unto the Lord. Did you know that? After they made the golden calf, that their next statement was tomorrow is a feast unto the Lord, capital L-O-R-D.

They fully intended to worship the Lord through their calf. It was something that they made with their hands. They formed it and they fashioned it.

And they said we're going to come to this thing and it is through this thing that we're going to worship God. And my friend, that is what most of us, and I'm going to be pretty blunt with you tonight, that's what most of us have done with church. We have formed our church according to the image that we have in our mind.

We have made a church and when we get done, we tell people the only way to get through God is through this church. And we've made it in our own image. And we don't understand that the purpose and the design of the calf is to take people back to Egypt.

We make a brazen serpent. People get bit by snakes. We're not sure what to do.

So we make a brazen serpent and we put it on a pole. And people look at the brazen serpent and they are healed. And then other people come along and they say, my, isn't that a nice serpent? And so they keep that thing around and they set it on a pedestal and they say, this thing saved my great granddaddy.

And they worship that thing. And we begin to worship the brazen serpents. The things that we say, this worked for my dad and it worked for my grandpa and it worked for my great grandpa and it's good enough for me.

And Moses, or not Moses, one of the leaders in 2 Kings finally came along and he removed the high places and broke down the images and cut down the groves and break in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made. He tore that thing up. He ground it into powder for in those days the children of Israel did burn incense into it and he called it Nehushtan.

And it's time for us to take some of the things that we have worshipped for way too long and grind them up into powder and call them Nehushtan. It's a little piece of brass. It's time for people to call out idols for what they are.

I want to show you a scripture in the New Testament now. 1 Corinthians 14, 24 says this. But if all prophesy and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all, and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest.

And so falling down in his face he will worship God and report that God is in you of a truth. When you get together to worship, when you get together as a fellowship, when you get together as a group, do you have an ongoing testimony that the presence of God is there? I don't know how many of you are familiar with a video that came out a number of years ago, somewhere back in the 80s actually I think. There was a video that came out and the name of it was How to Get to Heaven in Montana.

Anybody familiar with that? Some of you are familiar with that video. There was a Hutterite colony out in Montana and about half of the people from the colony had went to town. One of the ringleaders there, he went to this thing to see all the pretty girls.

He wanted to go party and they had lots of pretty girls at these tent meetings. So he went to tent meetings to see the pretty girls and something got a hold on him. Praise God.

And the next thing he knew he was walking down the aisle of the sawdust trail and kneeling up there and he got born again. And a whole bunch of them got saved in that colony. So all of a sudden about half of

them are saved and half of them aren't.

And this colony is in terrible turmoil. Nobody is quite sure what to do with it but these people just get together and they worship God and things are happening. Well, it was a beautiful thing.

Then somebody came over from BBC, British Broadcasting Company, came over here and they said we're going to go out here and we're going to film this colony. So they came out there with all their cameras and all their equipment and they came out there and said we want to film this colony. And so they had to work for a while to get permission and finally they sat down with the people that were Christians and the Christians that were there, the ones that got born again.

They said to them, okay, but there's two things you got to do. Number one, you have to let us say anything about Jesus that we want to say. And number two, you will not for any reason interrupt our services.

Because when we have services, the presence of God comes down. And no amount of money you can give us will interrupt that presence. It's an awesome thing.

If you've never seen it, you should get a hold of it and look at it. Anyway, the people came in with their cameras and they got all their stuff set up and this group went to worship and the presence of God came down. And the presence of God descended on that place.

The people running the cameras couldn't focus their cameras anymore. They're too busy blowing their nose and wiping their eyes. They're all messed up.

And for 13 years, that place had a testimony that if you wanted to experience the presence of God, all you had to do was show up there and walk in and sit down in one of the services. If somebody comes to me and says, where can I go in Lancaster County that I can walk into a church and sit down and the presence of God will be there? What should I tell them? Most of you kind of know the story about my wife there and some of the stuff that happened with her when she was set free from a whole bunch of depression and mental problems and being all messed up and bipolar and everything else and how God reached down in one day and set her free. And we were so excited.

We were just, yeah, we're just excited about Jesus. You know, just couldn't believe that God was this real and that he does this stuff today. And we had got together with some other people and we started meeting in these living rooms.

And I remember one of the first times we got together, there's four or five families, and we got together in this, and we're all just real young. We got together in this living room and we started to worship and the presence of God came down. And we completely lost track of time.

All of a sudden we look at our watches at six o'clock in the evening. And we're like, what just happened? What just happened? And we didn't know what was going on. And so the next week we get back together again and we're doing this again.

And the time just disappeared. We didn't really know what happened to it. What happened? We were in there for four hours.

What just happened? And the children were quiet. I had two little girls. And these little girls, when they started growing up, would play church.

That was the favorite game. They would get together. Every morning they would get up and they would come out dragging their dollies by the arm and they're ready to play church.

So they would sit down there with their babies. And then of course they had to take them out to change them and spank them and whatever else. They were playing church.

And then I had a little boy. And the little boy grew up and he started to get to a place where he could walk and he would walk around. And they said, well, you have to preach.

So they got him a little stool and he would step up on that stool and he would. And then they would sit by him and they did this over and over and over. So when daddy came home from work, they're like, daddy, we're going to play church.

Okay. So I go sit down with them and then I get up to preach. And then anyway, they played church all the time.

It's one of the things that I remember about that period of time in our life is they just played church all the time. I said, play church. Until Wednesday afternoon.

Wednesday afternoon when they got up from their nap, they would say, is it time to go yet? Is it time to go yet? Is it time to go? Because they knew that when we went to that building and we walked in and we sat down, that a holy presence was going to come down. And they would just sit there. And a friend of mine comes by.

He calls me up and he says, hey, I'm pushing this 18-wheeler down the highway and I want to know if I can stop at your house. I said, absolutely. Pull in over here.

The big place to park. And I went and got him and brought him to the house. They got showers and everything.

And I said, now you understand that we're going to church. Oh, that's fine. They'll go along.

He and this girl that he was living with, that they were not married, and they were living together there in the truck and driving truck together. I don't think they were married at that point in time. Anyway, they went along to church with us.

And they sat there in this church service and this presence came down. And they just sat there and their eyes got really big and they looked around. And when it was over, they got up and walked out and they got in their truck and left.

About a week and a half later, he calls me again and he says, hey, we're coming through there again. Can we stop again? I said, sure. We have a shower and bed down here.

So they stopped in, went in their basement, showered, whatever. And I said, but we got a special event tonight. There's a speaker coming through.

I know it's a Friday night, but we're going to church. And they said, oh, we were kind of hoping that would happen. Good.

They walked into church and this presence came down again. When that presence came down, all the little children are sitting there like this. And we worshipped in that presence.

And when we were done, I looked over there and they're sitting there. There's snot and tears everywhere. They are just crying.

She's about out of control. And I went over there to her and I said, would you like to know this Jesus that we're talking about? And she said, I don't know. Just whatever you're going to do, just do it to me because I got to have something.

So I need something. I don't know. I just need something.

So we sat there that night and started explaining to her that God wants her to pour out her life and he's going to put his life inside. And she told me later, she said, I honestly believe that night that you guys were going to take me out behind the building and you were going to slit my wrists and my blood was going to flow out in the ground. And I said, you said yes? When that presence grips you, nothing else matters.

And that night they got born again and God put their feet on a rock and started them walking down a pathway of knowing him and revamped their life. And I can't begin to tell you the stories like that that happened. Sunday, we'd get together on Sunday.

We're sitting there and somebody walks in. We've never seen him before, don't know his name, don't recognize anything about him. In the middle of the service, he would stand up sobbing and he would say, I don't know who you people are and I don't know what you believe, but this is the presence of the living God.

We'd come to church and somebody would get up and they'd say, well, I'm supposed to share today and I don't have anything to say. And everybody would be like, good. Because we knew that that meant that God was going to come in and do something.

And the very presence of the living God would come into that place and people would begin to weep and repent. Somebody would start a song. Somebody would start giving a testimony.

Somebody would start repenting. And the service just went on and on and on and on. All of a sudden you're like, oops, our roast is burning.

You know, it's the middle of the afternoon. We don't really know what happened. We don't know where the time went.

And then one day came a day that slashed at the very core of my heart when one of the little girls got up, walked across the bench to my wife, and she said, Mommy, let's go home. God's not here anyway. During that time when the presence of God would come down there every Sunday morning, every time we got together, the presence of God just came down on us like a blanket.

During that time I had purchased a vehicle. It was one of the only few times in my life that I bought a new vehicle. And I remember sitting, we were driving, my wife and I were driving this pickup.

We're trying to figure out if we want to buy it or not. And this salesman just kept looking at us like, what is wrong with you guys? What is with you? What is with you? So I laughed and I said, well, I'll tell you what. When we get together, the presence of God comes down and we are excited about it.

And he says, the presence of God? I said, listen, I'll make you a deal. I'll buy the pickup from you if you and your wife come to church on Sunday. And I said, here's the deal.

I'll get a pickup out of it, that's my side, and on your side, you will never argue with me about the presence of the living God again, ever. And he did. I bought the pickup, he came to church, and that presence came down, and he and his wife just sat there and held onto their chairs.

When you have once been there in that kind of a thing, nothing else satisfies. And I walk around and I go into these places and I see so much form and so little life, and I wonder how the people can put up with it. How do people put up with it? Anyway.

I'm gonna talk a little bit about this idea of God putting his life inside of us. To whom God would make known, Colossians 1:27, to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. What is Christianity? If somebody comes to you and says, I wanna know what Christianity is, I wanna know what does it mean to you? If somebody comes to you and they start crying and they say, I really wanna be changed, I know there's something out here, I don't know what's wrong.

What would you tell them? What's Christianity? What would you say is Christianity? In one line, in one sentence, what would you say is Christianity? Well, I go to church. People tell me, oh, we go to church. Well, that's great.

I like when people go to church. Somebody says, well, I'm an elder. I put money in the offering.

I do this, I do that, I do the other thing. What's being a Christian? What's Christianity? What does it actually take to be a Christian? How do you know if you're a Christian, how do you know if somebody else is a Christian? What's Christianity? What even is it? And we have, in this room, we probably, we may have 40 different churches represented in this room alone. So who's right? And what is Christianity? And how are we supposed to make sense out of everything that's happening in today's world? And in the middle of this, and I just, I want to look at this thing, this verse right here.

To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. That's what Christianity is. A lot of times, you and I have this idea in our mind that we grow up with, that Christianity is a certain way you act.

Now this guy right here, when this tree was growing up, he bent it and he tied it in position. And then he bent another thing and he tied it in position. He would wait till it grew a little while, and it grew a little while, and then he would bend it back and tie it in position.

When he got all done, he had effectively grown a cherry tree. A cherry tree. And sometimes that's kind of the idea that we have, that what we need to do is force people into a certain position.

If we force them to act a certain way and have a certain kind of a concept and a certain mentality, if they do all this kind of stuff, then when they're done, they'll grow up and they'll be a Christian. We kind of think that somehow or another, if we could take that pig and put the right kind of boots on him, we could keep him clean. Doesn't work all that well.

Now the Bible says, the word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow and is a discerner of

the thoughts and intents of the heart. So we're going to look just a little bit before we get too far into this at what that means to separate between soul and spirit. The Bible says that we are made body and soul and spirit.

We are made in three pieces, body and soul and spirit. And I think that we probably understand that fairly well. The Bible says that the word of God has to pierce in here to divide between soul and spirit.

Now which one of those do you suppose is the least important? The body is the least important. Which one do we spend the most time focusing on? Oh, we're already in trouble. Let's start over.

Which one is the least important? The body. And which one do we spend the most time on? So we're already focusing the most on the part that's the least important. No wonder we're in trouble.

Our soul is made of our mind, will and emotions. And our bodies out here is the least important of all. This part in here that lights up is what the Bible refers to when it talks about your heart.

Now, what is Christianity? Well, Christianity, and this is where I'm going to be going with this, so we might as well start with this right away at the beginning. Christianity is when God takes this part right here, this part right here from him, and he puts it in. Christianity is when God reaches into himself and he pulls out his life and he puts it in your human flesh.

Christianity is Christ in you. It is God reaching into himself, pulling his life out and putting it inside of you. God will reach into himself and he will pull his life out and he will put it inside of a drunk.

He will put it inside of an Amish man. He will put it inside of a black man. He will put it inside of an Indian.

He will put it inside of somebody in China. God will take his life and pull it out and put that life inside of anyone who opens themselves to it. Amen.

That's called being a Christian. When God takes his life and puts it inside you. We were talking about this earlier.

Forgive me for using this kind of an illustration, but I just think it's so good that I'm not sure how to avoid it. A woman that's pregnant is walking around and her belly gets bigger and bigger. It's sticking way out here.

And there's a life in there. There's a life in there. There's something growing in there.

There's a body growing in there. There's an entire being growing in there that is not her. It is, for all intents and purposes, a foreign life.

It's not hers. Follow that? It gets bigger and bigger and bigger. And by the time that she gets to be about nine months pregnant, she's walking around with her hand on her tummy.

It's like her head is in the clouds somewhere. And she's barely conscious of what's going on because she's thinking about that life. God wants to take his life and put it inside of us.

And he wants us to be pregnant with Christ. He wants us conscious that there is a life from somewhere else inside of us. And that we think about that life and we put our hand on that life, if you please.

And that life becomes the center of everything for us. It's that life. It's not ours.

It's from somewhere else. It's a life from outside. I'll demonstrate it this way.

Somewhere out here, in a place where there is no place, outside of time, where there is no consciousness of time, there is no consciousness of space, somewhere in a place where there is no place, is only God. A hundred million years ago, outside of time, there is only God. Now, if you would talk to a Jewish person, you would find out pretty fast that they have this idea that inside of God is this element of life.

There is an element of life inside of God. That element of life that is inside of God, they have a word for that life and that word is Christ. Here is John chapter 1. In the beginning was the... And the word was... And the word... The same was in the beginning.

All things were made by... And without Him was not. Anything made that was made. In Him was life.

And that life was the light of man. And the light shined in the darkness and the darkness comprehended it not. You follow that? Here is what he is saying.

Once upon a day, God opened His mouth and Christ came out and creation happened. Of all kingdom principles, that is number one. Open mouth, Christ comes out, creation happens.

Whoever is going to be talking on prophecy tomorrow, remember that. And take people back to it. Because that is a principle.

God opens His mouth, Christ comes out, and creation happens. And in today's world, I am just going to jump ahead a little bit. In today's world, God takes His life and He pulls it out and puts it inside of you.

And when He wants creation to happen, He sits down there and turns that life on and that life comes out of your mouth. Thank you. God opens His mouth and Christ comes out and creation happens.

You and I are created on this earth then. And there is this beginning of time and end of time thing. We know that there is time there.

We don't really understand time. But we know that there is time there. And we know that there is a place out here where there is no beginning and there is a place out there where there is no end.

And out there in that place where there is no beginning and no end is God. God is out there in the realm of eternity but we are trapped inside of time. We are living down here inside of time.

And whether you realize this or not, every religion on the face of the earth is man trying to reach out here. Every religion on the face of the earth has this thing in common, man trying to reach out here. Men are trying to reach out.

There is something inside of us that is trying to reach out there. Today there is some woman in India somewhere that went down and took one of her children and threw it in the river to the alligators and then she went home and curled up in a fetal position and she hates herself and she cries and screams and has nightmares. But she believed that she had to do that to be able to get out here.

Do you follow that? Yesterday there is 2 million people walking towards some shrine somewhere because they are all supposed to walk towards this thing and if they all do that they can reach out here. The problem was somebody spooked the crowd and the whole crowd took off running and they killed 800 people. What are they trying to do? They are trying to reach out here.

One day God took that life. God took that life. And he wadded it up if you please and he put it in a virgin.

And the baby grew and she brought forth her first born son and we called his name He was the life of God in human flesh. Without understanding what we were doing we took him by wicked hands and we put him on a cross. Even though we did not understand that when that was happening he was offering up the perfect blood of heaven onto earth for sin.

Today people simply turn back to that blood and they say Lord I believe that blood is for my sin. And when they do that they they are seated in heavenly places in Christ. They are born again.

They are translated into a heavenly kingdom. They are seated with Christ in heavenly places. And something happens.

I don't know for sure what all goes on. I just know that something happens. Amen.

And there may still be a body. There is a body down here in the earth. Your body is down here in the earth.

But your identity is in heavenly places. And somehow or another that identity up there just wants to jump up and down. I don't know why.

It just wants to jump up and down. Am I the only one that sometimes just wants to jump up and down? I mean the idea that the God of heaven would reach into himself and he would pull out his life and put it in human flesh. Can you imagine the God of heaven taking divine life pulling it out and putting it in your human body.

And then the Bible, Paul sits there and says we have this treasure in earthen vessels. That the excellence and the power may be of God and not of us. And it says for this reason he is not ashamed to call them what? Brethren.

You know what makes two boys brothers? Got the same daddy. Amen. So if you if God takes his life and he pulls it out and he puts it inside of this guy and God takes his life and pulls it out and he puts it inside of this guy they don't need to know each other's name but buddy they are brothers.

And I don't know how aware you are of this. I'm traumatized I suppose by the amount that I feel like this is getting lost out of the culture and out of the consciousness of Evangelical Christianity in America and out of the Anabaptist groups of people. Because when you make no mistake about it those people back there that gave their lives where somebody would take them and they would take them out and tie them to a stake and pour oil over them and light them on fire and they would sit there and sing praises to Jesus while their body burned.

There was a reason for that. You know what the reason was? They were 100% conscious that the God of heaven had taken his life and put it inside and it wasn't gonna burn. The body can burn but that life's not gonna burn and that's what they would tell them just spit it out.

Spit that life out we'll let you live. If you spit the life out we'll let you live otherwise we're gonna have to take your head off and they'd say the neck is right here. Because that life is not for sale.

Listen if God takes his life and puts it inside of you it's the most important thing you will ever have. Amen. Nothing else even comes close.

Do you follow that? That's why Jesus said you be careful if I've taken my life and put it inside of this guy be a little careful how you treat him. Because whatever you did to him ouch. And we get awfully slap happy.

And we take somebody that we know God has taken his life and put him inside of. That life inside of him. We know that.

And we say I don't have anything to do with you. How do you think that looks to God? I wish I could explain to you today how non personal life is supposed to be after that. Think with me of Philippians chapter 3 verse 1. Colossians chapter 3 verse 1. If ye then be risen with set your affection on things Now I already messed it up.

How does it go? If you then be risen with Christ seek those things which are above. Seek those things which are above. Set your affection on things not on things for ye are dead.

He does not say you should feel dead. He does not say you should pretend like you're dead. He says ye are dead.

And your life is hid with Christ and God. Look when you walk into a Walmart if you walk into a Walmart and you're sitting in there in Walmart and you're trying to figure out what you want to buy and all of a sudden you look around and there's 25 people around you that are just looking at you and their eyes are big and they're down on the floor and they're weeping and crying and they're saying Oh God I'm so wicked! And you look around at that and at that point you can either say I'm a pretty good guy. Or you can recognize that the God of heaven has done something with his life inside and those people have seen that life and they feel wicked.

Do you follow that? And you stand back out of the way and you say God look what your life did. That is neat. You really ought to do that more often.

And it's not personal. Do you follow that? So if there's a whole group of people that get together and they say we're going to excommunicate this guy and we are not going to have anything to do with him. Then you just stand back out of the way and say God I don't think they like you.

I'm not sure why but they don't like you very good. It's not personal. It's not about you.

It's about him. Here's what Jesus said about it. That day ye shall know that I am in my Father and ye in me and I in you.

On that day he says you're going to know that you're going to know that I am in my Father and ye are in me and I have taken a piece of this and put it in you. Amen. To whom God would make known what is the riches of this mystery among the Gentiles which is Christ in you the hope of glory.

I don't know what you think about today when you think about that. Does something inside of you hop up and down or not? Is there something inside of you that jumps up and down and you say I know that's me. God has put his life inside of me.

Or are you living your own life? I would like if you would bow your heads right now and I want to ask you some questions before we go on. Has there ever been a time in your life where God took his life and put it inside of you? Have you ever lived in a place where you are conscious that the God of heaven, right here I know that the God of heaven reached into himself and he pulled out his life and he put it inside of me?

God I pray tonight that you would open our hearts and I pray that by your Holy Spirit you would move across this place and that any person in this place who has never opened their heart to you to allow you to put your life inside of them that your word would lay hold of them today and would begin to germinate inside of them and would begin to lay hold of their spirit and draw them to you that they would fall down before you and say I'm lost and I want you to put your life inside of me.

I would like tonight for all of you if you could just follow me in a prayer Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus I come before your throne I want you as my father and my daddy and my God I invite you to pour your life all over me to take your spirit and wash over me to take residence inside of me I lay down my life and I ask you for yours in the name of Jesus that I might truly know that you are within and that it is not I that live but Christ liveth in me open my heart God and make it plain in Jesus name 2 Corinthians 6.16 says for ye are the temple of the living God as God has said I will dwell in them and walk in them and I will be their God and they shall be my people he says there is a place coming and a time coming when I am going to take my life and I am going to pull it out and I

am going to put it inside of them and I will be their God and I will dwell in them and I will walk in them and I will be their God Romans 8.9 ye are not in the flesh but in the spirit if so be that the spirit of God dwell in you now if any man have not the spirit of God he is none of his again back to this word Christ he is saying that Christ is the life of God God takes that life of Christ he pulls it out he puts it inside of your flesh and he says Christ is dwelling in you and if Christ is not dwelling in you you are not his it is not rocket science it is very simple now here is what I find happen a lot of times we go around a lot of different places and we sing and we get involved in ministry in a lot of different places and I see some of this happen I don't know what you see is wrong

with this picture can somebody tell me what is wrong with this picture what is happening there yeah Nelson Copeland used to say sometimes you tell people are you filled with the joy of the Lord and they say yeah but it looks like they were weaned on a dill pickle it is a little bit the way it is sometimes the joy if you have the joy of the Lord in your heart you need to notify your face amen and so people come up after service and they say well I was just so excited I just wanted to jump up and down and shout hallelujah and I am saying did somebody stop you well I just wanted to jump up and shout somebody tell me if there is something inside of you that just wants to jump up and shout hallelujah what do you think that is a devil well well what do you think that is the spirit of Christ

amen the spirit of God now if the spirit of God is in there and he wants to jump up and shout and you say no I am not going to do that what is that called we get all kinds of answers stubbornness and pride and rebellion and a whole bunch of other things but at the very least you are going to have to agree that it is quenching the spirit isn't it so I am sitting there trying to understand this we are singing somewhere we are going to worship God we are having a wonderful time praise God somebody comes up to me and said wow I was so excited about that service I was quenching the spirit your what hurts where did we get that idea by the way you think about this again I have got enough stuff here to keep going all night I don't want to do that to you but I want you to think about this a little

bit God likes Jesus Christ amen and when we agree with Jesus Christ it is known in scripture as righteousness and there is consequences there are consequences for righteousness you follow that over here we are going to have the devil and making an agreement with the devil in scripture is called sin and there are consequences for sin do you follow that agreement with Satan is called sin sin has agreement with Jesus Christ is called righteousness righteousness also has ok now follow me with this we go to

church on Sunday morning we walk in and we say hi how are you I am fine fine everybody is fine do you believe that because if you believe that you are dumber than you look ok everybody is not fine do you follow that if we walk in and we say everybody is fine and everybody is not fine what

is that called lying does lying sound to you does it sound to you like an agreement with Jesus or an agreement with Satan ouch agreement with Satan is and sin has just stay with me here we get up in the morning and we wonder hmm I wonder what I am going to wear well if I wear this color then she is going to say this and if I wear this color you are going to say that do you know what that is called the fear of man does the fear of man sound to you like an agreement with Satan or an agreement with Jesus ouch then we go downstairs and we get upset with the children and we say and we get all upset and we start shouting at them and we get angry which is an agreement with then we start yelling at our husband or we start scratching at our wife because she is not ready and I have the buggy all

hitched up and you are not ready we are ready to go and you are not ready to go so we get all upset and we start to get all kinds of anger in our heart which is an agreement with agreement with Satan is and sin has so far today we are not doing too well do you follow this so we go to church we get to church and we have a Sunday morning miracle we reach deep in our pocket and we pull out an artificial grin what is that called hypocrisy and pretending agreement with ouch an agreement with Satan is and sin has then we go inside and we say hi how are you I am which is which is an agreement with an agreement with Satan is and sin has so far today we have made 1 2, 3, 4, 5 a whole list of agreements with Satan and get this now we are going to worship do you know what the word worship means the

word worship means to fall down in agreement with no it just means to fall down in agreement with Jesus is not the only thing we can worship do you follow that so far today our life has been a big long list of agreements with ouch and now we are going to worship what exactly are we worshipping and we already just got done saying we are shaking hands with people saying I am fine we know it is not true and that is a lie and you know where liars go Washington DC oops we have all these different things going on in our life that are agreements with Satan and then we wonder why the presence of God doesn't come down listen one of the things that God is fascinated with and that he demands is he demands honesty and if you go back to when the spirit was given when the Holy Spirit came down there in

the book of Acts do you remember those two people that were killed right there in the room and they get carried out Ananias and Sapphira what was the reason they lied and one of the reasons in today's world that the spirit of God and the presence of God is not coming down in our worship services is because we are dishonest anyway here is one of the reasons I think this happens that people jumping up and down on the inside but are not jumping up and down on the outside is because believe it or not we have a whole bunch of things in our life that are chaining us down to planet earth things that are holding us down our lust, our anger, our disagreements our arguments, our fussing our witchcraft, there is all these things in our life that are chaining us down and even though this piece up

here might be jumping up and down this one here is not moving not happening again back to this idea that we are body soul and spirit, the spirit of God is in here he wants to come out and communicate with our soul, our mind and well and emotions and give us direction but if there are wounds in our soul when he comes out and hits that wound our response is twisted he does not want to do that it is not difficult to get the spirit of God into people it is difficult to get him out a lot of times there is no where for him to turn because we have so loaded our life up with wounds and if we do not allow the spirit of God wants to come out and touch those wounds and bring healing to them but if we do not allow him to bring healing to them

then they end up forming a stronghold on the outside of us

that fuses a whole bunch of emotion into us and this emotion begins to explode into us and all kinds of feelings and we become servants of the stronghold instead of servants of the spirit we cannot be servants of both the bible says no you not to the whomsoever you yield your servants, your members servants to obey his servants you are if your members are obeying this you are his servants if your members are obeying this you are his servants it is not really all that complicated now I want to turn if you have your bible I want to turn to for a little bit to Acts 19 and I want to show you what the original thing that we were going to be talking about tonight had to do with witchcraft and strongholds in people's lives so I want to show you what this looks like in the new testament now there

is again we do all kinds of seminars about this and so it's probably easy for me to get carried away with it because I've got hundreds of slides on it but we end up with strongholds in our lives strongholds that keep us from knowing God and I believe that one of the primary strongholds that goes on in our lives today that we do not understand in a lot of our communities is witchcraft and we are going to look at that here in Acts chapter 19 came to pass that when Paul was at Corinth Paul having passed through the upper coast of Ephesus to find certain disciples he said unto them have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed and they said unto him we have not so much heard as whether there be any Holy Ghost and he said unto them unto them what were you baptized and they said unto John's

baptism and Paul said John barely baptized with baptism of repentance saying unto the people that they should believe on him which should come after him that is on Christ Jesus when they heard this they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Paul laid his hands on them and the Holy Ghost came on them and they spake with tongues and prophesied and the men were about twelve so we've got twelve men sitting in Ephesus and they're prophesying and they're filled with the Spirit and they're all excited Paul goes into the synagogue he begins to preach to the people and he's preaching to the people in the synagogue, people some believed but eventually they throw him out so he goes out into a school and he begins to teach in the school for two years, he's gathered together with the people for

two years in this school and he's teaching during this time there's a lot of people that come through the school, people from all around the countryside, they come into the school they listen to what's going on for the day and then they go home and they go home and talk about what they're hearing they're discussing everything they're hearing and he's talking about Jesus so everybody in that part hears about Jesus well God begins to do mighty miracles through the hands of Paul and Paul begins to touch people and they're healed and he begins to cast out evil spirits now he got to casting out evil spirits and people got this idea and they said that is just really something, somebody's being troubled by something they have an evil spirit, we'll just go to Paul and we'll get his hanky and they

would take his hanky home and lay it there beside the person and the spirit would run away, well there was some other guys around there that like they were exorcists, they were Jewish guys, they were exorcists and an exorcist is somebody that just knows how to make a devil miserable so they come around to somebody and they would just sit there and irritate the little devils until they got miserable and left, well they heard about Paul they heard about Paul and they said Paul really makes devils miserable yeah he does so they heard about this guy over here that's troubled with the devil and they went over there to this guy's place and they stood around him and they said in the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches, we command you to come out the devil started talking back to him and said hey,

we know Jesus, which is not necessarily amazing of course they would know Jesus he was there from before the beginning of time right, so they said they know Jesus, but then they said something interesting, they said and Paul we know Paul's only been around 50 or 60 years maybe 70, I doubt it, probably 50 or 60 years and they know him by his first name, they said we know Paul Jesus we know and Paul we know do the devils around you know you by your first name, are they worried about you and are you a constant source of irritation to them do you live your life so that every morning when you wake up the devils say oh crap he's awake well here's these devils talking to him and they're saying Jesus we know and Paul we know but who are you and they jumped this devil inside this guy, they jumped

on these 7 Jewish guys and they tore all their clothes off and they wounded him and these guys took off running out the door and down the street and down main street of Ephesus went 7 Jewish streakers, can you imagine news channel 8 was there apparently because the bible says that everybody in those parts heard about it, everybody around there heard about these 7 Jewish streakers and they got all worked up about it and they were like looking at each other going dude this spiritual stuff is real yes it is I wonder if dude maybe we better get rid of our witchcraft, you think I mean Paul's sitting there preaching to these people for 2 years and they still got books about witchcraft in their house and all of a sudden they're like hey I wonder if maybe we should go and get rid of that this is

a brilliant deduction so they got together and they carried all their books of witchcraft out into the street and the bible says how many hundreds of thousands of dollars these things are worth and they piled all these books up and they burned them they didn't have a book sale and they didn't take them to the second hand store and they didn't have a garage sale they burned them, do you follow that now a very interesting thing happened after that you see in this area where they were at, there was this principality, this stronghold in that area, and the name of that principality in that area was Diana Diana of the Ephesians and everybody was all worked up about Diana of the Ephesians and when these people repented when the Christians not the unbelievers, the Christians when the Christians

got together and repented of their witchcraft Diana of the Ephesians fell out of the sky and immediately all the people around there stopped buying images of Diana see they all had these little images in their house they'd take this image and they'd set it up and they'd go and get their food and put it in front of it and all of a sudden when the actual demonic entity fell out of the sky, when the stronghold was gone over the area the unbelievers stopped buying the images Amen and the silversmiths got mad and they said we are in trouble, we can't make anymore little idols, nobody will buy them and they got emotionally stirred up, do you remember here this thing right here, let me go back here remember this all of a sudden the strongholds that were on them began to give them emotional

rushes and they got emotionally stirred up and their emotions got so worked up they went running and they grabbed a couple guys and they hauled them into a big building and they began to jump up and down and scream and they screamed for two hours without stopping and it wasn't even an eagles game, two hours they jumped up and down without stopping and they yelled and you know what they were yelling? the whole time, what were they yelling? you know what they were trying to do? they were trying to take that stronghold and put it back up and they would go GREAT!

GREAT! GREAT! and they tried and tried and tried to stand that stronghold up but they could not stand it up because it had been torn down and slammed to the ground when the Christians repented we are in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania and we don't have any strongholds here, do we? here's what the Bible said happened after that so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed so mightily do you suppose that

means their Bibles got bigger? how does the word of God grow? how does the word of God prevail? so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed I'll throw it out here to you see if you can get this I can go somewhere today and I can preach my heart out and there's a crowd of 200 people or 400 people and when I'm all done 3 of them get it the other 197 are too worried about what the person beside them is thinking and they're worried about what somebody at home is going to think and they're worried about what their neighbor is going to think what's that called? do you suppose that there is any kind of a stronghold over the Lancaster area called the fear of man? what do you think we would need to get together and burn? to make that stronghold fall out of the sky so that when you would start talking the word of God would just go out over the top of people and prevail on them he's suggesting up here we could all get together and burn the bush off true when we take our own way God says I want you to go this way and say no, I'm going to go this way what's that called? if God tells us to do one thing we do another thing, it's called rebellion that's not rocket science, right? rebellion is as the and stubbornness as iniquity and idolatry do you suppose there's any of that around? how many decisions do you make in a day or a week or a year that are colored not by what God tells you but by your fear of what other people are going to think does anybody do that?

I would like today for you to stand up and I want to go through a prayer together and we're just going to tell God God, sorry about that because I don't think today that we want to sit here and be a slave of a stronghold you see what happens is these things in witchcraft especially in witchcraft and rebellion become a huge wound in our life but we do not feel them and those wounds have a stronghold that throw all kinds of feelings into us but the spirit of God never shows it to us I don't know if you're aware of this or not but when something reaches a level of witchcraft in scripture you have a hard time demonstrating that the spirit of God ever gives conviction for that he doesn't have access to it look at this there's an area in the life that is completely black and it's a blind spot if you go out and tell a lie the spirit of God will convict you and say, you told a lie you need to go make that right if you go out and get involved with somebody immorally or do something like that the spirit of God will convict you most of the time if you've been involved in witchcraft that will not happen somebody else is going to have to show it to you or there's going to have to be seven Jewish streakers I just want to pray today and ask God to break this off of us and I'm going to ask him while we're at it if he would reach out with the mighty sword of heaven and cut that yoke off of this county pray with me, heavenly father in the name of Jesus we come before your throne your king of kings and lord of lords heavenly father we have grown up and been around this whole thing all our life to be afraid of what other people think being afraid of our neighbor's opinion has been with us all of our life we recognize today that that keeps us from hearing you from hearing your voice clearly because we're afraid of what other people think so we're looking at them instead of you today God I want to repent of the fear of man I repent of the fear of man I repent of the spirit of fear you have not given me a spirit of fear but of power and of love and of a sound mind that fear that I have lived in that I have lived under and that I have allowed to influence my decisions is my rebellion and I repent of it I renounce it I renounce rebellion through the blood of the cross I renounce rebellion and the fear of man in my life in my Father's life

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