

CHIEF MINISTRIES

July 2018

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. (Genesis 3:8 ESV). Then he said to them, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." (Nehemiah 8:10 ESV)

Jonathan Edwards believed that every generation has a responsibility to discover where the sovereign Redeemer is moving, then to move in that direction. Likewise, the task of every child of God is to discover in which direction the Holy Spirit is moving in our lives, and then to embrace the manner in which He chooses to unveil His presence and direction. As God may or may not repeat the precise manner in which His glory was revealed in a previous generation, so too God may be pleased to show up in our lives in a way of which you and I have not remotely thought. Prison for example. *Eye has not seen nor heard the things God has prepared for those who love Him, who wait for Him (Isaiah 64:4; 1 Corinthians 2:9).*

Honor the blood; Honor the Holy Ghost. Honor the blood by extolling its power – and recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Not every manifestation of God's presence is exactly the same. Not every manifestation of His presence is the "same old, same old." You may say: but did not God say, "*I am the Lord, I do not change?*" (*Malachi 3:6*) And doesn't Scriptures say that "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday today and forever?*" (*Hebrews 13:8*). Absolutely.

But God loves to show up in unpredictable ways – He is the same God but manifests in multitudinous ways. There are reasons for this. One reason is to challenge our faith when He shows up in a way He has not manifested Himself before. If all manifestations were the same, no faith would be required to accept His ways. We would take Him for granted, whether He manifested as the unprecedented fourth man turning up in the burning fiery furnace (Daniel 3:25) or through the Angels shutting the mouth of the lion (Daniel 6:22). According to Hebrews 11, some people by faith "*escaped the edge of the sword*" (*v.34*) while others "*were sawn in two.....were slain with the sword*" (*v.37*). The opposites were accomplished by faith. If God did the same thing every time He chose to manifest Himself we would have no need for faith. Some might even get tired of the supernatural. This is what happened with the children of Israel in the desert. The manna was supernatural food and the people got tired of it (Numbers 21:5). Think of that – getting tired of the supernatural! Do not think it could not happen to you and me.

In the great Welsh Revival of 1904 – 1905, there was little preaching and much singing and many conversions! Furthermore, there were staunch evangelicals who objected to the Welsh Revival because they said it was un-biblical. Nevertheless, an estimated 150,000 people were saved. During the height of the revival even the pubs closed down and the jails were largely empty. One man was criticized for keeping his six-year-old out of school and sending her by train to see the move of God. When asked why?, He replied, "She can always go to school, but she may never see revival again." The Welsh Revival was an undoubted manifestation of God's presence. But God may or may not manifest that way again.

God may show up in the future right there in the prison you're in in an unprecedented manner. And yet all the manifestations of the true presence of the Lord will cohere with Scripture even if there is no exact similarity in Scripture.

It is impossible to know what the presence of God was like – or what fellowship with Him was like – before the fall in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve had unbroken fellowship with God before the fall. For how long? Who knows? But they experienced it in a way you and I could not experience today. The difference between experiencing the presence of God

before the fall and experiencing His presence in heaven is this: before the fall humans were able to sin, but after we are glorified, believers will not be able to sin.

Adam and Eve heard the “sound” of the Lord God (Genesis 3:8) I wonder what that was! Was it His voice? Probably. They literally heard the Lord God “*walking in the garden in the cool of the day*” (v8). What was the “cool of the day” like? It sounds so perfect. But the sound would have made them ashamed now that they had not kept their faith with their Creator. God called out, “*where are you?*” (v9). It was as though God did not find them where they normally were. What was the “sound” of His voice? Had it changed? Did His voice sound angry? Or did His voice sound sad? We only know that Adam and Eve hid themselves among the trees of the garden (v8). They were very ashamed.

One thing we do know about the effect of God’s presence on Adam and Eve; when they sinned, they were ashamed. They were naked before the fall with no sense of shame or embarrassment, but when they sinned, they felt the need to hide themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Their reaction shows the connection between the Lord’s presence and holiness. God’s presence will have an effect on our lives. According to Jesus, the first thing the Holy Spirit does when He comes to the world is to convince of sin because people do not believe (John 16:7 – 9). People by nature will never – ever – see their sin. Only the Holy Spirit can make people conscious of sin.

Isaiah found this out too. When he was given a glimpse of the glory of the Lord, the result was a profound conviction of sin, “*Woe is me; for I am undone because I am a man of unclean lips*” (Isaiah 6:5). When Peter saw how Jesus caused so many fish to be caught, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, “*Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord* (Luke 5:8).

A lesson from church history is this: the greatest saints always saw themselves as the greatest sinners. Tragically, one of the most ominous omissions in the church today is a sense of sin. When King Josiah read the book of Law, he “*tore his clothes*” and said, “*Great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book by doing according to all that is written concerning us*” (2 Kings 22:11 – 13).

You can’t work up this kind of remorse; the Lord’s presence does it.

And yet as I said, God may be pleased to manifest Himself in a different manner than before. The same David who said, “*Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin*”, and “*My sin is ever before me.*” (Psalms 51:2 – 3) also said, “*In Your presence is fullness of joy*” (Psalm 16:11)

In Nehemiah’s day when the people “*wept when they heard the words of the law,*” Nehemiah stepped in to say: “*Go your way. Eat the fat, drink the sweet drink.....this day is holy to our Lord, do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength*” (Nehemiah 8:9 – 10). Then the Levites calm all the people, saying, “*Hush! Because today is holy you should stop being so sorrowful*” (v11).

God does not want us to continually beat ourselves black and blue because of sin. He is very displeased when we do not acknowledge our sin (1 John 1:8), and He tells us that we must “*not sin*” (1 John 2:1). But no sooner does He say that then He adds, “*If anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father - Jesus Christ the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins.*” (v1-2).

The sin is cleansed by our walking in the light (1 John 1:7. The result: Joy. The conviction of sin may precede joy, yes, but the sense of sin continues alongside the knowledge that God has accepted us for the sake of His Son. We do not outgrow the sense of sin simply because the joy of the Lord comes in. The two apparently opposing states are normal in Christian life.

David wrote, “*For His anger endures but a moment, in His favor is life; weeping may endure for a nights but joy comes in the morning*” (Psalms 30:5). God gets our attention by convicting us of our sin, but He does not leave us in that state without coming to our rescue. Read Psalms 51:3, 7 – 8. Continual conviction of sin is paralleled with the joy of the Lord.

What is the joy of the Lord? It is two things! 1) The Lord’s own joy - what He feels, and 2) the joy we get from seeing His joy over us! It’s like John 5:44; we get our joy from knowing we have sought God’s praise, not the praise of people, and

knowing how much this pleases Him. Likewise, the Spirit of the Lord was on Jesus to “*comfort and preserve those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness*” (Isaiah 61:2 – 3, and Luke 4:18).

The second fruit of the Spirit that Paul lists is joy: “*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy...*” (Galatians 5:22). The disciples were “*filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 13:52). “*The Kingdom of God does not mean eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*” (Romans 14:17). “*Though you do not see Him now, you believe and you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*” (1 Peter 1:8).

One manifestation of God’s presence is that of healing. Luke 5:17 says, “*On a certain day as He (Jesus) was Teaching, Pharisees and Teachers of the Law Were Sitting Nearby, Who Had Come from Every Town of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem. And the Power of the Lord Was Present to Heal the Sick.*” Such a presence is sovereignly given. Humans cannot make it happen.

God is sovereign. He said to Moses, “*I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion*” (Romans 9:15) see Exodus 33:19. *God decides. He decides who will be healed. He decides who will be the next person to be saved (John 3:8) The prayer of faith shall save the sick (James 5:15).* The prayer of faith is present or it isn’t.

Recently on a trip to Darrington to get a wisdom tooth pulled which never happened as the computers went down. I was the celly of a man who said he was in the upper echelon of the notorious street and prison gang. He was looking despondent and I heard the Spirit say to me: “Ask him if he has faith to believe I can heal him, and if he does, I will!” So, I asked him. He thought for about 30 seconds and said “yeah”! I asked, “what’s the problem?” He said “doctors just gave me six months to live.” I thought okay Lord, you know what you’re doing. I said, “I want to pray for you”. He said, “okay”. I reached out and put my hand on his heart and began to pray. It was like a bomb went off. He caught on fire! He started gasping for air and I could hear him say as I prayed, “what is that?” “What is that?” Well, all I know is God radically touched him there and I believe healed him. I also helped find his lost family members so they could begin to communicate again. God is good! After losing my cubicle, being in 10 different cells in the last 100 days, taking two trips to Darrington with nothing happening (the second trip the dentist went on vacation and didn’t tell anyone). Just this past Friday the 22nd I went to the new Eastham dentist who looked at it and said, “I can pull that.” I said, “What! No oral surgery?” She said, “no, I think they were looking at the x-ray wrong.” It literally came out in three minutes, no pain, no soreness, nothing. Sometimes - in fact most of the time - when you’re really serving Him and ministering to others, what you have to go through is not necessarily for you! It’s for someone else! We can’t work things up. We can’t make things like that happen. God gives the faith; faith is the gift of God. We may or may not appreciate this aspect of God’s sovereignty, but this fact of the character of God needs to be recovered today. It is a far cry from the thinking of those who presume they can demand God to do things or that they are entitled to things. One of the curses of our age is the feeling of entitlement. It is in the world, and it is in the church. The belief in the sovereignty of God has virtually perished from certain places in the church. We need instead to go to God on bended knee for “mercy” (Hebrews 4:16). The man with leprosy understood the sovereignty of God. He said to Jesus, “*Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean*” (Matthew 8:2). A healing presence set in. “*I will*”, said Jesus. “*Be clean*” (v.3). Immediately the man was cured.

All the people healed, cured, delivered or helped in any way by Jesus in the four Gospels - or disciples in the Book of Acts - can be explained by the sovereign healing presence of the Holy Spirit.

The first thing Jesus’ disciples did after He ascended was to meet in the upper room. One thing is for certain - they prayed. There waiting. Turned out to be a ten-day prayer meeting. “*These all continued with one accord in prayer*” (Acts 1:14). You may have thought that after the Holy Spirit fell on the hundred and 20 disciples they wouldn’t need to pray anymore, but that would be wrong. Prayer became more special than ever now that the Bridegroom had been taken from them. The first description of the earliest church after Pentecost showed them doing four things: teaching, fellowshiping, breaking bread (the Lord’s Supper) and praying (Acts 2:42). A welcome manifestation of the Spirit of the Lord is a consensus, or agreement, of God’s people to pray. You could call it a prayer presence, a time when people want to do nothing but pray. Have you ever felt like that?

There is a planned prayer presence and an unplanned spontaneous prayer presence. The early church had a specific time presence when they prayed. Peter and John were on their way to the temple mount because at “the 9th hour”, there was a

set “hour of prayer” (Acts 3:1). This was no doubt set by the apostles. And, as soon as the disciples were released from the Sanhedrin - having been warned not to speak or teach in Jesus’ name, “*they lifted their voices in unity to God and prayed*” (Acts 4:24). This kind of praying broke out again when it appeared that King Herod was going to put Peter to death. He was kept in prison, “*but the church prayed to God without ceasing for him*” (Acts 12:5). There is nothing like an emergency to precipitate a prayer presence.

Either kind of praying is effectual - planned or unplanned. Prayer honors God, God honors prayer - Planned prayer would include one’s daily quiet time. I have a caution for you; if you don’t plan to give God a certain amount of time each day, you probably will never get around to it. Spontaneous prayer comes when, suddenly - possibly at the last minute - you feel the need to put everything aside and pray.

Prayer is vitally important to the person in full-time ministry. The need for deacons in the early church came about so that the apostles could give themselves “*to prayer and to the ministry of the word*” (Acts 6:4). Note the order: They spent time in prayer first, then ministry of the Word. It is not good when people in the ministry rush to teaching or preaching before they have spent adequate time alone with God. I’ve lived with too many teachers here at “Ham” that, not once while living in the dorm with them, did I see them on their knees. For too many of us, prayer gets our attention last. It should come 1st. One day Peter went up to a roof to pray (acts 10:9). Little did he know that he would have a vision that would lead to the gospel being taken to Gentiles.

The slightest impulse to pray is a prayer presence. Grab it. Go for it. Often, when people say, “Please pray for me,” I say, “let’s pray now” -and do so. Praying is never wasted time.

Sometimes we just want to praise the Lord! The Holy Spirit grips us, the result is spontaneous praise to God. Praising God should not only come easy, it should feel natural to the lover of God. We don’t have to force it; it flows.

Such a praise presence happened a number of times during Jesus’ earthly ministry. When Jesus came into Jerusalem riding on a donkey, a very large crowd of people spread their cloaks and branches on the road. Crowds went ahead of Him, and others followed and shouted. “*Hosanna the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!*” (Matthew 21:9). Even the children were involved in this spontaneous praise (v₁₆). This offended the Pharisees. Praise to the Lord Jesus Christ in a noisy and spontaneous manner always offends self-righteous people. The Pharisees said to Jesus, “*Teacher, rebuke your disciples!*” (Luke 19:39). He replied, “*If these should be silent, the stones would immediately cry out*” (v₄₀).

Loud noisy praise has a long history. People forget this nowadays. When the wall of ancient Jerusalem was dedicated in Ezro’s day, they celebrated “*with thanksgiving song and singing, accompanied by symbols, harps and lyres*” (Nehemiah 12:27). “*From far away the joyful celebrations of Jerusalem was heard*”. (v₄₃).

This kind of praise erupted frequently in the early church. *Continuing daily with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people.*” (Acts 2:46 – 47).

And yet praising God is not always easy. This is why the writer speaks of “*the sacrifice of praise*” (Hebrews 13:15), praising God when you don’t feel like it. Don’t wait until you are “led” to give praise - or until it is spontaneous and easy; do what when you are low, feeling terrible, and have no sense of God’s presence. This is a good time to praise God. And I can tell you what often follows: a sense of God’s presence. He inhabits the praises of His people. Do it and find out for yourself!

Sometimes God grants and expectancy presence - a strong sense of hope that something good is at hand. The New Testament talks about hope as a sense of expectancy that lets you know you will not be disappointed. “Hope does not disappoint”, said Paul because the immediate and direct witness of the Holy Spirit has been given to us (Romans 5:5).

Many events in Acts were preceded by sense of expectancy. An extraordinary example was when “*people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter’s shadow might fall on some of them as he passed*

by” (Acts 5:15). This is an extraordinary sense of expectancy. And what followed? Were these people disappointed? “Crowds also came out of the city’s surrounding Jerusalem bringing the sick and those who were afflicted by evil spirits, and they were all healed” (v16).

When Paul was in Corinth, he met opposition from the Jews. He was wondering whether to stay. God said to him: stay. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, *Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent. For I am with you and no one shall attack you and hurt you, for I have many people in this city.*” (Acts 18:9 – 10). The phrase “I have many people in this city” refers to God’s elect not yet saved, but who would be saved. So for a year and 6 months he “Paul” sat among them, teaching the Word of God” (v11). The only way people will be saved is by hearing the word. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17)

Gideon was a weak man. He was always in need of encouragement. (See Judges 6:36 – 40). God knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust (Psalms 103:14). God knew how to encourage Gideon and give him a spirit of expectancy. Gideon happened to overhear a man telling his dream to someone, which pointed to certain victory for Gideon. This set him ablaze with expectancy. “When Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he worshiped” (Judges 7:15). He returned to the camp of Israel and charged his men to take the next step in defeating the Midianites. The result was a smashing victory (v15-25).

God knows we all need a sense of expectancy from time to time, and He knows when to provide it. He grants and expectancy presence never too late, never too early, but always just on time.

You will recall how Herod intended to kill Peter as well as James. He put Peter in prison. He was guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. The night before Herod was to bring him to trial - with Peter sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains - “an angel of the Lord approached him, and a light shone in the prison. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up, saying, ‘rise up, quickly’ and the chains fell off his hands” (Acts 12:7). Peter was miraculously delivered, passing guards and going through a gate that had opened by itself (v8-10).

Nothing is too hard for the Lord. With God all things are possible. God, by His presence can make anything happen. He has a way of showing up when you least expect Him but need Him most.

So I challenge you - true man of God to discern where the Holy Spirit is moving and move with Him. Many of you need to be filled with the Spirit marked by the evidence of speaking in tongues. There is an added dimension of His supernatural power to go and do. And for the naysayers that will tell you there is no such thing or that’s died out, just smile and pursue Him and find out for yourself. I can guarantee you these people are speaking from a lack of experience. Good man, just missing something. The Holy Spirit doesn’t want you to miss anything.

Pursue Righteousness. Pursue Holiness. Pursue Him. Expect Revival!

I’m praying for all of you

Chief

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Christ’s

Heart

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