

Spirit-Filled Pastor Asks, 'What Extinguishes the Presence of the Lord?'

Many wrongly assume that God's presence has to do with judgment rather than blessing. Is God's presence good or bad? Both ... It's frightening in regard to judgment, "The idols of Egypt will totter at His presence" (Isa. 19:1, NKJV) but it's very good in relation to His presence in the life of a believer.

Although some have misrepresented His presence through weird behavior, there is nothing weird about experiencing the presence of God. In the midst of pain, there is relief. In the midst of suffering, there is sweet surrender. In the midst of fear, there is incredible joy. In the midst of uncertainty, there is a God who will never leave nor forsake. In the midst of confusion and chaos, there is stability and hope.

Spiritually Dead or Alive?

Although God is everywhere (what theologians call His omnipresence), there is a stark difference between a believer who is spiritually dry and dead and the one who is full of passion, desire and fire. The great devotional writer, Oswald Chambers, is a good example of this. He wrote these words before he received a mighty downpour of God's presence, "God used me during those years ... but I had no conscious communion with Him. The Bible was the dullest, most uninteresting book in existence."

A few years later, he wrote, "If the four previous years had been hell on earth, these five years have truly been heaven on earth. Glory be to God, the last aching abyss of the human heart is filled to overflowing with the love of God." Heaven was rent; the downpour came to his parched heart.

Sadly, those who are spiritually dry make excuses as to why they can't experience more of God. The argument goes something like this: "I received *all* of the Holy Spirit at conversion." That is true but it begs the question, "Has He received *all* of you? Have you humbled yourself and surrendered everything, including your pride?"

No Such Thing as a Painless Pentecost

Experiencing God cannot always be rushed. The disciples waited days in an upper room before they received a downpour: "He acts for the one who waits for Him" (Isa. 64:4, LEB). Leonard Ravenhill once said, "There is no such thing as a painless Pentecost." There is a price to pay to truly experience God. Here are just a few points to consider, taken from the sermon mentioned above:

1. Sin must be crucified, not coddled. As R.A. Torrey reminds us, "The gratification of the flesh and the fullness of the Spirit do not go hand in hand." Evil rarely looks wrong until it accomplishes its purpose—it fascinates before it assassinates. To truly experience God's presence, we must starve the source of sin. Paul instructs Christians to "make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" (Rom. 13:14, NKJV).

2. Fear quenches faith. Fear is a lack of trust in God. Fear will quench His power and presence in our lives if we fail to act courageously. When we fear men, circumstances or loss, we run the risk of becoming ineffective. In the same way that the DMV offers a certificate of non-operation when a vehicle is not working properly, fear makes us ineffective, unproductive, negative, angry, depressed, disgruntled, discouraged and critical. It drains the spiritual life from us.

3. Lack of desire. A.W. Tozer once said: "It's hard to get people to come to church when the only entertainment is God." Spiritual hunger, or a lack thereof, speaks volumes: If prayer

is boring, worship dead and church irrelevant, we are dying spiritually. A lack of desire for God will surely extinguish His presence. If we don't seek Him, we won't find Him.

4. What you don't know can hinder you. As stated earlier, although we receive all of the Holy Spirit at conversion, He often doesn't receive all of us. The Message translation of Acts 19:1-7 puts it this way: "Did you take God into your mind only, or did you also embrace him with your heart? Did he get inside you?" Full surrender is fertile soil for God's presence to flourish.

5. Ungodly anger hinders God's presence? James 1:20 (ESV) reminds us that "the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God." Anger can prevent us from knowing God's will and experiencing the fullness of the Spirit in ministry.

6. Pride extinguishes the power of the Spirit. A heart filled with pride says, "I don't need more of God ... I'm good. I've been a Christian all of my life. I read the Bible every day." God isn't impressed with our Bible trivia score. You can know the Bible but still lack God's presence. You can know the Scriptures but still be unloving and arrogant.

There is Power in His Name

Be encouraged: If you're barely holding on, make sure it's to the hem of His garment. Many times, you can be back in the center of God's will, repent, overcome fear and experience His power and presence again (or for the first time). There is power in His name! Remember the God you serve . . .

- *What nation is above Him?*
- *What army can defeat Him?*
- *What country can control Him?*
- *What kingdom can contain Him?*
- *What leader can conquer Him?*
- *What difficulty can perplex Him?*
- *What plan can stop Him?*

- *What problem can confuse Him?*
- *What situation can finish Him?*
- *What devil can destroy Him?*
- *What weapon can harm Him?*
- *What setback can hinder Him?*
- *What obstacle can delay Him?*

Take time now to examine your life and repent of any destructive attitudes that have crept into your mind and heart. Repentance always brings hope. What sin is so great it can't be forgiven? What stronghold is so deep it can't be destroyed? What failure is so final it can't be overcome? He is faithful to refill, restore and renew if we refocus on Him.

Special Note: I started a YouTube channel filled with encouraging sermons and podcasts to help in this area of boldness and courage. You can subscribe here. The sermon, The Battle for Courage—A Hill to Die On, will also be posted there.

Hear this life-changing sermon here. {eoa}

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