

RT Kendall: Why You Don't Feel God's Presence Right Now

God's presence may be understood in two ways: His unconscious presence and His conscious presence. Many of us tend not to appreciate God's unconscious presence; rather, we long for His conscious presence—when He clearly shows up.

The theological term that is relevant to both ways we experience God's presence is the *omnipresence* of God. God is everywhere; there is no place where He isn't (see Ps. 139:7-12).

Theologians speak of the “three big O's”: God's *omnipotence* (that He is all-powerful), His *omniscience* (that He knows everything) and His *omnipresence* (that He is everywhere)—His glory fills the universe and all He has made—but it also means that we cannot run from God. Jonah found this to be true. God told him, “Go to Ninevah.” Jonah said, “No.” He rose to flee “from the presence of the Lord” (Jonah 1:2-3) but found such a notion impossible to fulfill. Wherever Jonah went, there was God!

Are you trying to run from God? Give up! It is a hopeless venture.

The fact that you may not *feel* God does not mean that He is not there. The fact that you don't even *believe* in God will not cause Him to go away. If we believe not, said Paul, God “remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim. 2:13). Let's look at some Scriptures pertaining to God's omnipresence:

“‘Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I do not see him?’ says the Lord. ‘Do I not fill heaven and earth?’ says the Lord” (Jer. 23:24).

“The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good” (Prov. 15:3).

“But will God indeed dwell on the earth? See, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less can this house that I have built?” (1 Kings 8:27).

Never underestimate how near God is to you when you feel nothing. I first met missionary Jackie Pullinger in Hong Kong, she described how she decided to pray in the Spirit for 15 minutes every day “by the clock.” She added: “I felt nothing. But those were days when I began to see conversions in the Walled City. When I saw the Lord changing people, then I was full of feeling.”

Jacob was no match for his grandfather Abraham. He could not have known that one day the phrase “the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” would become a cliché in Israel—and that Jacob’s new name, *Israel*, would become the name of a great nation. It all began at Bethel, where Jacob at first felt nothing, only to realize that God was there and he did not know it.

Jacob became a symbol of the sovereign grace of God in more ways than one. He was an example of a scoundrel who was loved by God. “I have loved Jacob” (Mal. 1:2; see Rom. 9:13). There was absolutely nothing in Jacob that deserved to be loved by God. He had done everything wrong. He knew it and was running scared. The last thing he expected was for God to show up and then reveal wonderful plans for Jacob.

Are you running scared? Are you afraid for God to show up? Do you fear that if God were to show up, He would certainly judge you?

God told Jacob to go back to Bethel when his heart had become cold and detached from God’s purpose. Jacob obeyed and announced to his family, “Put away the foreign gods that are among you. Purify yourselves and change your clothes. Let us arise and go up to Bethel, and there I will make an altar to

God, who *answered me* in the day of my distress and has *been with me* wherever I have gone” (Gen. 35:1-3, emphasis added). Note the two phrases I have italicized in Jacob’s words. The first is “who *answered me* in the day of my distress.” That is how we know Jacob was actually praying when he came to the previously mentioned “certain place.” The second phrase, “[who] has been *with me* wherever I have gone,” is Jacob acknowledging God’s presence with him—no matter what he went through.

This tells me that if the church today would go back to Bethel, a sense of the fear of God would fall on the world, which at the moment does not respect the church as it might.

God demonstrated to unworthy Jacob the truth of His sheer mercy and grace. The faithfulness of God seems too good to be true. I sometimes say, “Unless the gospel you have heard preach seemed ‘too good to be true,’ you haven’t heard it yet. But when you say to yourself, ‘That’s too good to be true,’ that is when you heard it.” This means we are saved apart from works and kept apart from works (Eph. 2:8-9). Yes, we are loved with an everlasting love (Jer. 31:3).

Do you need to return to Bethel? Have you wandered far from God? Do you feel God has deserted you? Is God calling you back to Bethel?

Bethel is a symbol of hope. It symbolizes the manner in which God shows up when you feel absolutely nothing. Bethel symbolizes the God who surprises, the God who will never leave us. Many think there is no hope, but there is—there is hope for you.

Jacob’s experience shows that when we don’t feel God, He is nevertheless here, and it demonstrates the awesomeness of the unconscious presence of God.

✠ *Adapted from The Presence of God by R. T. Kendall, copyright 2017, published by Charisma House. This book*

invites you to discover what it means to be in the presence of God, and helps you explore everything from the omniscience of God to the tangible manifestation of His presence. To order your copy, click on this link.

Prayer Power for the Week of Oct. 29, 2017

This week thank God for those He led in the past who stood for His Word, truth and righteousness, regardless of persecution. Continue to lift up those in leadership over us and ask God to pour out His Spirit on this nation and around the world. Pray for the next generation and engage in spiritual warfare for their souls. Ask the Lord send more laborers into His harvest fields (Eph. 2:8-9; Jer. 31:3; Ps. 139:7-12).