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## Twisted Thinking

### The Practice of the Presence of God

- I. We practice the presence of a God who is both transcendent and immanent.
- A. The transcendence and immanence of God indicate how He relates to the world and to us.
- ?? Jeremiah 23:23-24 ***“Am I only a God nearby,” declares the LORD, “and not a God far away? Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?” declares the LORD. “Do not I fill heaven and earth?” declares the LORD.***
1. In His transcendence, He is the sovereign presence ordering the Universe and our lives.
    - a) He loves us.
    - b) He has a plan for our lives.
  2. In His immanence, He is present in history and active with us and within us.
    - a) He enters into the plan He has for our lives.
    - b) He also enters into us.
- B. We are to practice His Presence as both high and holy (transcendent) and also as with the contrite and lowly (immanent).
- ?? Isaiah 57:15 ***For this is what the high and lofty One says – he who lives forever, and whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.***
1. By practicing His Presence as high and holy we are assured He is other than us and not bound by the limitations of this world.
  2. By practicing His Presence with the contrite and lowly we are assured He is with us in our deepest needs.
  3. Jeremy Taylor in Holy Living, writes, *That God is present in all places, that He sees every action, hears every conversation, and understands every thought is no strange thing to a Christian ear. We have been taught this truth not only with right reason and the consent of all the wise men of the world, but also by God Himself in Holy Scripture.*

II. Jesus is Emmanuel God with us.

- A. Jesus is the presence of God come to us.
  - 1. He descends into us.
  - 2. He makes his home with us.
    - ?? John 14:23 ***If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him.***
  
- B. The pattern of the life of Jesus applies to our lives.
  - 1. In His Incarnation Jesus comes to us through the womb of Mary.
  - 2. In His Baptism He identifies with us in our need to be washed of our sins.
  - 3. In His death on the Cross, He sets us free from our sins.
  - 4. In His Resurrection, He gives us the victory over death.
  - 5. In His Ascension to the Father, He intercedes for us.
  - 6. At Pentecost, He and the Father sent the Holy Spirit to indwell us.
  
- C. The Cross is the greatest act of God in salvation history.
  - ?? Romans 6:10 ***The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.***
  - 1. The Cross atones for our sins and brings God's presence.
  - 2. In Matthew 27:45-53 the tearing of the Temple curtain signifies the releasing of God's presence from the Holy of Holies into the world in a new way.
  - 3. The One on the Cross is both God and man.
    - a) As God, Jesus mercifully pays for our sins.
    - b) As man, Jesus suffers the effects of our sin.

III. Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, God is within us.

- A. Jesus is the baptizer of the Holy Spirit.
  - ?? Luke 3:17 ***He Himself will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.***
  - 1. Baptism in the Holy Spirit is not an option, but not a "method."
  - 2. Baptism in the Holy Spirit is not to be equated with gifts of the Spirit.
  
- B. Through the Holy Spirit God abides within us.
  - ?? 1 Corinthians 6:19 ***Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?***

***You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body.***

- C. The Holy Spirit indwells us, like light shining through a lamp.  
?? Luke 11:36 ***Therefore, if your whole body is full of light, and no part of it dark, it will be completely lighted, as when the light of a lamp shines on you.***
- D. When demonic attacks come, know that He indwells you.
1. The indwelling presence of Christ comforts us when we are under attack.
  2. When St. Catherine of Sienna was under a demonic oppression she heard the Lord say to her, *It is because I indwell you that this displeases you so.*
- E. When sufferings come, know that He indwells you.
1. Felicitas, an early Christian was enabled to suffer martyrdom because she knew the Holy Spirit indwelt her.
  2. Historian Justo Gonzalez quotes her, *“Now my sufferings are only mine. But when I face the beasts, there will be another who will live in me and will suffer for me since I shall be suffering for Him.”* (From Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas 5.3. The Story of Christianity p. 84).
- IV. Yielding our hearts to God’s presence with us and within us is key to healing.
- A. To yield is to slow down in such a way that we come present to what is in our hearts.  
?? Josh. 24:23 ***Now then throw away the foreign Gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the Lord the God of Israel.***
1. In the Bible the heart is the controller of the whole nature.
    - a) There are over 50 different kinds of hearts according to the Bible.
    - b) uncircumcised, hardened, willing, troubled, foolish, etc.
  2. What kind of heart do you have?
- B. In His presence, our hearts cannot deceive us nor condemn us.
1. We ought not to live from our heart’s feelings because these can deceive us.  
?? Jeremiah 17:9 ***The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.***

2. The Lord, not our hearts, will show us the difference between condemnation and conviction.  
?? Romans 8:1 ***There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.***
  - a) Beware of the heart's ability to condemn us.  
?? 1 John 3:19-20 ***This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence, whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts and knows everything.***
  
- C. In His Presence, we meet God's kindness that leads us to repentance that includes contrition over our sin and turning from it.  
?? Romans 2:4b ***Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance.***
  1. Repentance from sin means being sorry.  
?? 2 Corinthians 7:10 ***Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.***
  2. Repentance from sin means turning away from sin.
  
- D. When we confess our sins to another Christian or to a pastor, we encounter God's presence.
  1. Confessing your sins to a mature brother or sister in Christ can bring release as they proclaim the forgiveness of sin to you, especially if your sin was against them.  
?? James 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other that you may be healed.
  2. Going to someone in pastoral authority, such as a pastor, can bring a special release from previously unconfessed sin as well as reception of forgiveness through absolution.
  
- V. The Holy Spirit empowers the believer to become like Jesus, to obey Him and to change for good.
  - A. Sanctification is the process of becoming like Jesus over our lifespan by picking up our cross daily.
    1. The goal of life is to become like Jesus.
    2. The daily task is *die to self and live for Christ*

3. The true-self is discovered by a daily application of the Cross to our lives.  
 ?? Matt. 16:24,25 NEB ***If anyone wishes to be a follower of mine, he must leave self behind; he must take up his cross and come with me. Whoever cares for his own safety is lost; but if a man will let himself be lost for my sake, he will find his true-self.***
  - a) To daily pick up one's Cross means to apply the work of the Cross to our souls.
  - b) This implies a daily application of the forgiveness of sin.

- B. We are empowered for obedience because we are partakers of His divine nature.  
 ?? 2 Peter 1:3, 4 NKJV ***His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.***

1. Oswald Chambers, My Utmost For His Highest, writes:  
*There is no possibility of questioning when God speaks if he speaks to his nature in me; prompt obedience is the only result. When Jesus says, "Come," I simply come; when He says, "Let go," I let go; when He says, "Trust God in this matter," I do trust. The whole working out is the evidence that the nature of God is in me.*
2. The nature of God in me redeems my nature in me.
  - a) I am righteous because His righteous nature dwells within me through the Holy Spirit.
  - b) Knowing theological truth about His righteousness in me does not make me righteous; He does.
3. The Lord Jesus changes our desires and redirects them toward goodness.  
 ?? Titus 2:14 ***Jesus gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.***

- VI. Rationalism, wrong ideas and seeking after experiences may block us from practicing the presence of God.

- A. Conceptual rational knowledge about God's presence has pushed out our living encounters with the Presence.
  1. "I think, therefore I am."
  2. The Cartesian spirit of the age wrongly elevates reason as man's highest principle and devalues faith.
  3. The result is a split between the head and the heart.

- B. Wrong ideas about God's love alienate us from His presence.
1. Robert Frost, Our Heavenly Father, writes, *A faulty concept of God's love will weaken our walk of faith and obedience and thereby limit our life in the Lord . . . If we endeavor to obey God for any reason or from any motive outside His divine purpose and love, we will find ourselves continually living under a cloud of fear and frustration. Our so called 'walk in the Spirit' will seemingly degenerate into a forced march, directed by a divine dictator.*
  2. "Abba" implies a deeply personal closeness to the Father.
    - a) "Abba" does not mean "Daddy."
    - b) "Abba" might be better translated "Dear Father" denoting a mature yet personal relationship.
  3. Have you ever heard the Lord quieting you with His love or singing over you?  
 ?? Zeph. 3:17 ***The Lord your God is with you, He is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you. He will quiet you with His love. He will rejoice over you with singing.***
- C. Seeking after an experience of the Lord's presence may get in the way of recognizing God's presence as a gentle whisper.  
 ?? 1Kings 19:11-13 ***The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD for the LORD is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountain apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"***
- VII. Practicing the presence of God is a discipline of invoking the Name of Jesus moment to moment.
- A. We begin practicing His presence by invoking the Name of Jesus.  
 ?? Romans 10:13 ***All who call on the name of the Lord will be saved.***
1. A Monk of the Eastern Church writes in On The Invocation of The Name of Jesus,  
*The invocation of the Name of Jesus must bring Jesus to our mind. The Name is the symbol and the bearer of the Person of Christ. Otherwise the invocation of the Name would be mere verbal idolatry. 'The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.' The presence of Jesus is the real content and the substance of the Holy Name. The Name both signifies Jesus' presence and brings its reality.*

2. Resolve to call on Jesus' Name once every hour, then every half hour, then every fifteen minutes, and so on.
  3. Brother Lawrence called his spiritual discipline of practicing the presence of God "games with minutes."
- B. Do not berate yourself when you forget.
1. Just start over.
  2. Wearing a Christian symbol will help you to remember to call upon His name.
- C. As Christians, we practice the presence of Jesus Christ with us and within us.
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**Group Ministry**

1. In prayer, invoke the Name of Jesus, and there, in His loving presence, confess your sins and receive forgiveness.
2. Then, pray with the laying on of hands for an empowering and new infilling of the Holy Spirit.

**Bibliography**

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