

The Reality and Experience of God's Presence

In the past you may have heard much concerning the truth about 'Christ in you'. You may have considered passages like: Col 1:27 which speaks of ... *"the mystery ... which is Christ in you, the hope of glory"*, and Gal 2:20 ... *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."*

But now I would like to focus on the **practical** side of this reality. *"Christ lives in me"*. The ever present Almighty God in all His fullness, right **here**, right **now** and always. Do we fully comprehend what this means, who He is, and what it really means to **live** in and by the life of Christ? As a believer the only life you have is His life.

Col 3:3 ... *"For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God."*

God is here – we live in His presence and by His life

We all face struggles of one form or another as life goes on (aches and pains, ill health, financial difficulties, mental or emotional stress, persecution, family issues, trouble at work and so on). Often this causes us to become concerned or even fearful. Just think, some bad news hits you ... what is your immediate response ... concern and fear?

But here's the truth which I would like to present today, along with some practical suggestions: In the midst of all our difficulties and in all our fears **we are not alone**. Our trouble is that we very often think of ourselves as being alone. We think of our situation as a **ship out at sea** that's hit a reef and about to sink with no help anywhere in sight. Or possibly some distance away, but we fear help won't get to us on time. We cry out for help, we send SOS messages, with some hope that help may be close enough and that our messages and cries will be heard, and that someone will respond.

Don't we often treat God like this? Trouble hits us, we think we are alone, and then we cry out to God as if He is somewhere out there some distance away. We wait. We may not hear an immediate response so we cry out again ... another SOS message is sent. Intellectually we understand and say He is here, but in reality we treat Him as if He is "out there somewhere" and we're not sure if He's heard us.

I think we all understand that God is omnipresent, he is everywhere, but do we fully comprehend the amazing paradox of Him being everywhere and yet living right here in you and me?

The reality, the truth, is that the river of Christ's presence flows from within and right through us. He is here, and He is here always.

John 4:19-20 ... *"because I live, you will live also. In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you."*

Heb 13:5 ... *"I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you."*

You see, we cannot think rightly of God and we cannot comprehend the reality of living by His life until we begin to think of Him as always being right here, and here first. That's what all the saints of old – Peter, John, Paul and all the others down through the ages – had to learn.

With all these warriors of the faith we can see and learn that wherever unquestioning faith was in action, wherever it proved itself to be real, it invariably had upon it a sense of the PRESENT God.

Psalm 23:1 ... *"The Lord **IS** my shepherd*

He IS ... and He IS here, NOW and always. Christ IN YOU, the hope of glory.

If we want to live and respond the way God originally planned for us to live (living by His life) then we must come to the place where we **KNOW experientially** without any doubt, concern or fear, that He is right here in you and in me, and where we **so know Him** and what He is thinking and wanting in our, or someone else's, situation that the words and actions – the responses to whatever we are facing – coming from us are simply the very present Christ in us speaking and acting. This is what enables us to have and give "a Word" to someone we meet.

How do we get to this point? Well God's word is clear:

John 17:3 ... *"This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."*

Hosea 6:3 ... *"So let us know, let us press on to know the Lord. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; and He will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain watering the earth."*

If we want to **know** God we must give time to Him. It's a matter of priority.

Now, what I have to say next, if not heard correctly will just bring confusion. Please listen to what I am saying, and not to what I am not saying.

You or I may say, "I read my Bible regularly and pray regularly". Well that's good and very important. However, and I say this very cautiously, it's possible to read and pray and in a manner that there is little or no life in it. Many "religious", very sincere, but unregenerate folks may read by rote or pray by rote and experience no life change whatsoever. There's much evidence of this particularly among non-evangelical folks with their ritualistic readings and prayers, and yet no life. Look at the Pharisees. They could quote the scriptures verbatim, which means they spent a lot of time reading and learning the scriptures, but Jesus called them "whitewashed tombs" and "sons of the devil". Further, I dare say, sometimes many believers, evangelicals, sincere people, can and do also operate in this fruitless manner. Remember Paul's words to the Thessalonians:

1 Thess 1:5 ... *"for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction."*

We can even memorise the scriptures and quote ones relevant to a particular situation we or others face, and yet they will only be "religious clichés" if they come from head knowledge rather than a heart that intimately KNOWS the Source, the Author, the One Present in them, and Who speaks through them – turning the written word into a rhema or God breathed word.

You see, to seek our divinity merely in books or writings is to seek the living among the dead.

Nothing can take the place of the touch of God in the soul and the sense of Someone there. Real faith brings such realisation, because real faith is never the operation of reason upon scripture texts. Where true faith is, the knowledge of God will be given as a fact of consciousness altogether apart from the conclusions of logic. It will be a Heart to heart matter – and inward knowing.

True Christian experience must always include a genuine **encounter with God**. When we go to God's Word, or go to Him in prayer, go expecting an encounter with Him. Go knowing that He is right here, Christ in you, talk to Him and Hear Him speak back to you. Listen as the Holy Spirit reveals more and more of Christ to you. That will make it a powerful experience, a life changing encounter.

From way back and to the present, the people we see as spiritual giants are people who became actually conscious of the real **presence** of God and maintained that consciousness 24/7 for the rest of their lives. They experienced God. They were changed men and women forever.

They walked in conscious communion with the real Presence and addressed their prayers to God with the artless conviction that they were addressing Someone actually there. They talked with God. Two way communication. They spoke and they listened. They chatted and enjoyed fellowship with Someone right there. They lived 24/7 in communion with Him.

The eternal life which was with the Father is now the possession of believing men and women, and that life is not God's gift only, but His very self.

What's more, an **infinite** God can give **all** of Himself to **each** of His children. Another amazing paradox! He does not distribute Himself that each may have a part, but to **each** one He gives **all** of Himself as fully as if there were no others. **All** of who He is, He is in you right **here** and right **now**.

So our encouragement today is: Get to know Him and let Him live in and through you as your ALL.

Psalm 73:25 ... *"Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth."*

Deut 6:5 ... *"You shall **love** the Lord your God with **all** your heart and with **all** your soul and with **all** your might."*

The first and greatest commandment is to love God with every power of our entire being. Where love like that exists there can be no place for a second object. Whatever that may be, including fear. How are we doing?

Bernard of Clairvaux (A French Abbot from way back) put two statements, a question and an answer, in his little treatise: Why should we love God? And answers: Because He is God.

God is the Alpha and Omega and everything in between. He is the All Sufficient One. There is no one greater; otherwise He would not be God. He is Father ... Originator. God is Author of our salvation, He in all His fullness is our very life. Do you know God? Have you a good understanding of who He is? What is your concept of God? Because that will influence everything in your life.

The more you get to **really experience** and **know** Him and realise He is in you **right here** and right now, and that He is your All, the more you'll love Him and be drawn to Him and live in His Presence.

Psalms 34:3 ... *"O magnify the Lord with me, And let us exalt His name together."*

Worship (love expressed) rises or falls depending on the attitude we take toward God, whether we see God big or whether we see Him small. The truth is that most of us see God too small. So we are encouraged to: ... "Magnify the Lord"...

Magnify does not mean that you make God "big". You can't make God big. You can't change Him, He is immutable. But you can see Him big.

The more we draw near, (that's what a magnifying glass does – draws us closer to the detail) the more He will reveal of Himself and the more we will get to know Him, to experience Him in reality, right here, and the more we see of who He is the more we will love Him. And like the Psalmist we will say, "*Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.*"

Our concept of God will dictate our worship (loves response and expression) of God.

John 4:23-24 ... "*But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*"

Truth here is simply "real experience". He seeks those who experience and know Him and from that intimate experience overflow with love and adoration – that's true worship.

Each and every day we should seek a fresh encounter to experience God more and more. Like Jacob, let us approach God who is right here (Christ in you) and say, "I'm not leaving, I'm not giving up, until you give me a deeper revelation of Yourself. I want to KNOW You, intimately. I want to know and experience you as my ALL, right here, right now, and always".

We have an amazing Almighty, All Sufficient, Loving, Gracious, Merciful and Faithful God who has given ALL of Himself to each of us, and the more you **intimately know Him** and let Him live through you the more you'll face each day's situations and circumstances without fear and without a shadow of doubt that **He is right here, in you and in full control.**

Be Thou My Vision

Be Thou my vision O Lord of my heart
Nought be all else to me, save that Thou art
Thou my best thought, by day or by night
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true Word;
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;
Thou my great Father, I Thy true son;
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.

Be Thou my battle Shield, Sword for the fight;
Be Thou my Dignity, Thou my Delight;
Thou my soul's Shelter, Thou my high Tower:
Raise Thou me heavenward, O Power of my
power.

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,
Thou mine Inheritance, now and always:
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,
High King of Heaven, my Treasure Thou art.

High King of Heaven, my victory won,
May I reach Heaven's joys, O bright Heaven's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all.