

## The Power of His Presence



David Wilkerson April 1, 1984

"And all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground." (Ezekiel 38:20).

There is an ominous Scripture in the Bible that is a source of comfort to many Christians. It is Matthew 7:22,23: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

This comforts those who can say, "That cannot be me, I have never prophesied, I have never cast out devils, never done many wonderful works." In fact, I don't know of a single Christian who has ever felt this warning was meant for him. But there is a warning from the heart of Christ that no believer can put aside. It has to do with everyone who has ever eaten the Bread of Life or drunk the wine of the Spirit. It is directed to all who have ever taken communion or sat under the teaching of God's Word.

Hear Luke 13:25–27: "When once the master of the house is risen up, and has shut the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." Was Christ speaking primarily to corrupt healing evangelists or charismatic hypocrites in this passage? No. Those who are denied entrance into the Master's house are among the well-fed, the well-taught — those who have eaten spiritual bread and drunk spiritual drink in the very presence of Christ.

These warnings are proof enough that it is possible to heal the sick and cast out demons and still not be intimate with Christ. It is possible to raise up great works in His name, to build churches and ministries, to evangelize and sacrifice, and still not know Him as He should be known. It is possible to feast on His Word, to drink His living water, to hear revelation truth, and still not enter into the power of His presence.

What was the iniquity of those denied entrance into the Master's house (because Jesus did call them workers of iniquity)? Here it is: They did not tremble in the holy presence of Christ! Devils trembled, but they did not. The earth shook, the hills melted like wax, walls crumbled — but they stood in His presence unbending and unbroken. They refused to be melted, smitten, or convicted.

David, the psalmist, cried, "Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord..." (Psalm 114:7). When Israel lost her fear of God and no longer trembled in His presence, she became brazen, self-centered, and wicked. Her preachers became bags of wind. The prophet Jeremiah recorded God's indictment of His people. "Israel has dealt treacherously against me, saith the Lord... They say, evil shall not come upon us; we will not suffer sword nor famine: And the prophets shall become wind, and the word is not in them... They have a rebellious spirit... As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become successful and grown rich... They are waxen rich... they overlook the deeds of the wicked... they care not for the poor or fatherless; yet they prosper. The prophets are lying... and my people love to have it so" (Jeremiah 5:11–31). The Lord God asked them, "Why will you not fear Me? Why will you not tremble in My presence?" (5:22). They did not tremble because their hearts were

fixed on prosperity, and not on His presence.

I will not rail against God's people, but I must comment on the flippancy and lightness now so prevalent in God's house. Where is the awe, the majesty, the trembling in His holy presence? How dare we call the almighty King of the universe "daddy"? Why do we come into His exalted presence with our filthy rags of flesh, applauding Him rather than falling at His feet?

When Isaiah came into His presence, he was humbled and smitten. When the Lord's glory filled the temple, even the seraphims covered their faces with their wings. One of them cried out, "Holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts..." (Isaiah 6:3). The posts of the door moved at the sound of His voice. Isaiah cupped his face in his hands and cried out, "Woe is me! for I am undone...unclean...God's people are unclean!" (Isaiah 6:5).

What does this say to you and me, when a holy prophet of God is brought into the Lord's brilliant presence and must confess the sin in himself?

For three weeks Daniel mourned, fasted, and prayed — confessing his sins and the sins of Israel. Then the Lord appeared in His glorious garments. His face had the appearance of lightning, His eyes were as lamps of fire, and His arms and feet shone like polished brass. His voice shook the earth. This was not "daddy" standing before him! Daniel was not a King's kid asking for blessings. No one was applauding, "...but a great quaking fell upon them..." (Daniel 10:7). Daniel's knees buckled. He said, "There remained no strength in me: my vigor was turned into corruption, and I retained no strength...my face was toward the ground" (Daniel 10:8–9).

What does it say to you and me when a beloved man of God sees the Lord's flaming eyes and cannot even stand or hold his head up?

How different it is today. We hear our well-known speakers preaching their powerful sermons, and we applaud. In one meeting, a charismatic conference gave an evangelist a five-minute standing ovation at the conclusion of his message. Shouldn't that audience have been on its face before God's holy presence? Shouldn't we be quaking when He appears to judge sin? Shouldn't our self-righteous vigor be completely drained, and shouldn't our human strength go right out of us?

But where — in what meeting — do you find knees buckling and Christians crying out, "Woe is me!"? Where is the church or conference where the speaker is no longer seen, but instead the flaming eyes of Christ appear and His voice causes hearts to tremble? Where God's people see their corruption and fall prostrate, smitten by His presence?

It is true we are to come boldly into His presence with praise and thanksgiving. But that does not mean frivolously or presumptuously. Darius, a heathen king, had more respect for the Lord than many modern Christians. He declared, "All that dwell on the earth...that in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for he is the living God...having dominion..." (Daniel 6:25–26). We should tremble and fear before His almighty majesty and greatness — not because it is arrayed against us, but for us! We tremble in the presence of so great a power revealed on our behalf to support and deliver us.

The child of God who truly knows Him develops a growing sense of His majesty and grandeur. He becomes less concerned about rights and blessings and more enthralled by His presence. Casualness gives way to dignity. Haphazardness and informality give way to reverence and holy esteem.

I want to make three important statements concerning the power of Christ's presence — one negative and two positive,

1. God's People Become Powerless When They Get Away From the Presence of the Lord.

The believer who is out of the Lord's presence puts himself in a position to be swallowed by adversity. He becomes a coward — he runs even when he is not being pursued. He lives in constant fear of "...the lion without, who will slay me in the streets" (Proverbs 22:13).

Our example is Jonah. This prophet must have enjoyed the presence of the Lord, otherwise, he would not have been in a position to hear such a clear word of direction: "Arise, go to Nineveh, and preach to that great wicked city" (Jonah 1:2). In the past, being in the Lord's presence had been an exciting, exhilarating experience. Jonah had enjoyed hearing of the restoration and healing of God's people. It was glorious to share God's secrets

concerning the future.

But now the presence of the Lord was making a personal demand on him. He was to rise up and preach against sin. He was to threaten an entire society with immediate judgment unless they repented. Instead of obeying the Lord's direction however, "Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord." (1:3). No doubt he would have accepted a call to preach prophecy to some remote Israeli tribe — perhaps even a call to preach about the prosperity of Israel to the heads of state. But to preach hell fire, to denounce sin, to threaten people with divine judgment — and all that to a corrupt and godless society! Not for Jonah. He refused the call.

Please keep in mind he was running from Him whose train of glory fills the temple. From Him whose face is as lightning. From Him whose eyes are a flame of fire, whose mighty arm is as polished brass. He was running from Him whose gaze buckles the knees, whose voice shakes the earth, whose visage smites all flesh.

Why does a man of God flee from the One he loves? Was Jonah afraid of the Ninevites? Was he too proud to go? Too stubborn?

If you really want to know why Jonah fled the presence of the Lord, just take a good look inside your own heart. Why does any Christian avoid the presence of the Lord? Why do we not want to look into His flaming eyes? Just like us, Jonah couldn't face the demand that holy presence made on him. It was not the sins of the Ninevites that scared him — it was the sin in his own heart he could not face. He had a controversy with God in his inner man!

How many ministers of the gospel will not pick up the trumpet of God and cry out against the sins of the people because they themselves cannot face Romans 2:21–22? "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery?"

How many Christians do not dare raise a voice against corruption or lust in God's house because the lust of their own hearts condemns them to silence? They are cowards about sin because they are not victorious themselves. Many parents see their own sins breaking out in their children, and they are helpless against it. Dad smokes, so he can't condemn his kids when they are caught smoking pot. Mom drinks, then watches in horror as her daughter becomes an alcoholic.

I grieve over the times in past years when I refused God's call to prophesy against the sins of saints and sinners because I was terribly condemned by a fox eating away in my own vineyard. I knew I would be dishonoring God by preaching a message of holiness while my own garment was spotted. My thunder turned to a whimper; my sword became a stick. There was a time I could not look the Lord in His flaming eyes. A time I was uncomfortable around a holy man for fear he might see through me. A time I simply had to be satisfied with devotions and Bible study because I knew very well that once I committed myself to go into the holy of holies, I could not stand. There would be a purging. Demands would be made on me that I didn't think I could fulfill.

Thank God the Spirit purged me. Thank God He stripped away all the dross and sin and made me fit to come into His presence, faultless and accepted in the Beloved.

You can be sure of this: The man out of God's presence ends up in a crisis of adversity, a captive of the Lord. Did I say "captive" of the Lord? Yes! Listen to what happened to Jonah. "Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights" (Jonah 1:17). Scripture tells us it was the Lord who prepared the fish! It was the Lord who had the sailors throw Jonah overboard! To Jonah it was "the belly of hell" (2:2); to God it was the woodshed.

God was not about to turn His man over to the devil. He seems to have said to Satan, "It's My fish; Jonah's My servant. You can give him a ride — take him down and give him a glimpse of hell. But you can't hurt him. And when I know the sin question is settled, you will drop him off on the shore of obedience. He has work to do!"

It was in the crisis that Jonah dealt with the sin in himself — once and for all. All along it had been a lying vanity. He had been living a lie. The Word says, "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy" (Jonah 2:8). God saw in Jonah a spirit of lying pride. He was under deception, ignorant about his own spiritual condition. There were blind spots in him, unexposed until now. He had been walking as the Gentiles of Ephesians: "...in the vanity of his mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in him, because of the blindness of his heart" (Ephesians 4:17–18).

Why are so many sincere men and women of God in crises today? Why is there such adversity? Why such deep spiritual exercises? Why such exposure to enemy forces? It is God at work! He has permitted these crises to get us back into His presence. To produce obedience in us. To show us how blind we have been to what is really in us. To expose the pride, the lying vanities, the double life.

The Lord told us to go into all the world and proclaim His righteousness. We looked inside ourselves and withered. The people of God became cowards. Ministers became weakened by sin. So the Lord prepared a great whale. Multitudes are even now in its belly. There is loneliness, fear, restlessness, doubt. It's a time of seaweed and swirling dark waters.

But even in the midst of crisis there is great hope for the Christian. It was by reason of affliction that Jonah cried out to God, prayed and confessed, and was renewed. If you are truly God's child, He will not turn you over to Satan. He will not leave you nor forsake you in your crisis. Let the Spirit melt you. Let Him reveal the ugliness in you. Let your sins humble and crush you. Then reach out and come back into His holy presence to be restored.

2. It Is in God's Presence the Power of Sin is Exposed and Expulsed!

"...As wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God" (Psalm 68:2). "The enemies shall fall and perish at thy presence" (Psalm 9:3). The heart cry of the church today should be for a supernatural manifestation of Christ's presence. A manifestation is "a display, a revelation, a demonstration, a presentation."

Consider what happened to Simon Peter when Christ supernaturally manifested His presence before his eyes. "Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught" (Luke 5:4). Keep in mind that Simon had been in Christ's presence all through His discourse. He had obeyed His command to cast out, even after a fruitless night of fishing. He had seen Christ, heard Him, perhaps even touched Him. He was within sight — arm's length — yet the Word did not convict him, because Christ had not yet revealed the power of His presence.

But suddenly Christ displayed His presence. He made Himself manifest. He was suddenly there in supernatural power. "They enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net broke. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship...and they filled both ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it [the manifestation of His presence], he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:6–8).

Peter, along with his partners James and John, were all exposed in their sins, because they were witnessing the supernatural power of His presence. Christ committed Himself to them. They did not respond by dancing, applauding, shouting, or laughing. They were smitten with conviction over their sins. They were on their knees, unable to stand before that holy presence being displayed.

What would happen in our churches today if Christ supernaturally manifested His holy presence — perhaps through anointed prophecy from His very throne? Would not all our secrets be brought to light and exposed? And so, falling down on our face, we would worship. The apostle Paul told us that is what should happen (1 Corinthians 14:25). Could any of us remain unbroken? Could any of us conjure up our sins and justify them in His presence? Would we not join in a thunderous voice, all as one, crying out, "I am undone! Unclean! I cannot stand in Your presence! My lips are defiled!"

It is not just a matter of being clear in God's eyes. It's a matter of seeing how short of His glory we have fallen. How terribly we have missed the high calling of God in Christ. How lazy and foolish and weak we have become. It is what we see about ourselves that brings us down.

John, the revelator, saw a day in which the whole world will witness a mighty, supernatural manifestation of Christ's presence. It will begin with a great earthquake. The sun will become as black as sackcloth. The moon will become as blood. The stars will fall like figs shaken in a mighty wind, and the heavens will open like a scroll. Every mountain and island will move out of its place. And there, before the eyes of all mankind, Christ will be manifested, sitting on His throne (Revelation 6:12–16).

"And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of

the Lamb" (Revelation 6:15–16).

The Old Testament prophets tell us our Redeemer is coming to His church in the last days in supernatural manifestations of His presence, to purge His people and ready them as a bride. We hear the same word from both Isaiah and Paul. Isaiah prophesied, "and the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression..." (Isaiah 59:20). The apostle foretells of a time when "there shall come out of Zion the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob...He shall take away their sins" (Rom 11:26–27).

Another Old Testament prophet, Malachi, described the manifestation of Christ in this manner: "And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple...and who will abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness...And I will come near to you in judgment..." (Malachi 3:1–5).

Christ is going to come near us with supernatural manifestations of His presence! He will, with the power of His presence, judge sorcery, adultery, false witnesses, and all sin in His house. All shall melt like wax before His presence. He will lay the ax to the root, blow away all the chaff, and root up all wickedness. He will expulse the enemy and purify every child.

Sadly, many believers are going to miss out on these supernatural manifestations of His presence. Christ will not commit Himself to those who seek only signs and miracles. "Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men...he knew what was in man" (John 2:23–25). He knew they were enthralled only with miracles, and not with Himself alone. He sees this in all mankind. Mark this well: There will be very little manifestation of the Lord's awesome presence where Christians focus on power rather than on Christ.

3. The Power of His Presence Will Transform the Beholder Into His Own Image!

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18). We become what we behold! The focus of our attention spreads its influence all through our lives. What we behold with our spiritual eyes obsesses us! It takes over. Paul chose to be obsessed with Christ. The Savior alone became the object of his thinking, his preaching, his doctrine. "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). He kept his eyes on the Head of the body, and not on the disease in the body. He called it...holding the head...coming into the fullness of Christ...that we may grow up in all things, which is the head, even Christ...that he might fill all things...Unto him be glory in the church."

A true Pentecost is the lifting up of Christ! I fear we are not holding the Head. To hold means "to stick fast to, to cling to, to lock into." Preach Christ! Hold onto the doctrine of Christ. Cling to it, stick fast, lock into it. We have so few living for Christ today because there is so little preaching about him. Pastors and teachers must hold Him up so that people may look into His face and become like Him.

God's desire for us is that we be clothed with Christ's presence. Do you want victory over sin? Do you want total freedom and deliverance from all the power of the enemy? Then pray diligently for a supernatural manifestation of Christ's presence to you. I have had such an experience in recent months. If you are serious about it, you will break. You will face your sins. Those flaming eyes will pierce you! Then stay for cleansing.

That same fiery presence of the Lord will then become the very heart and life of your soul. You will not want to leave His presence. It will become your joy and pleasure forevermore. His eyes will become bright with love and mercy. You will rejoice at the sight of His face. You will lean on His arm of brass. All fear will go. Perfect peace and rest will flow. You can face sin and Satan clothed in the glorious power of His presence. God's Word promises, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my father, and before his angels" (Revelation 3:5).

The church goes into the last days as "a woman clothed with the sun..." (Revelation 12:1). This is Christ! He is our white raiment. We have put on Christ; we are abiding in His presence, above all principalities and powers.

It is not really complicated. It can be summed up simply like this: STAY CLOSE TO CHRIST! Live in His presence. Take your seat beside Him in heavenly places. Behold Him standing at the right hand of the Father. Then, like Stephen, the stones of Satan cannot hurt you. Nothing can hinder you. You will be above it all, beholding Him in

heaven.

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