

“The Presence of God” (Exodus 33)(7.11.21)

Exodus 33 (NIV84)

33 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Leave this place, you and the people you brought up out of Egypt, and go up to the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’² I will send an angel before you and drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.³ Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. **But I will not go with you**, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way.”

⁴When the people heard these distressing words, they began to mourn and no one put on any ornaments.⁵ For the Lord had said to Moses, “Tell the Israelites, ‘You are a stiff-necked people. If I were to go with you even for a moment, I might destroy you. Now take off your ornaments and I will decide what to do with you.’”⁶ So the Israelites stripped off their ornaments at Mount Horeb.

⁷Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the “tent of meeting.” Anyone inquiring of the Lord would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp.⁸ And whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose and stood at the entrances to their tents, watching Moses until he entered the tent.⁹ As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the Lord spoke with Moses.¹⁰ Whenever the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance to the tent, they all stood and worshiped, each at the entrance to his tent.¹¹ The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young aide Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent.

¹²Moses said to the Lord, “You have been telling me, ‘Lead these people,’ but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, ‘I know you by name and you have found favor with me.’¹³ If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people.”

¹⁴The Lord replied, “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”

¹⁵Then Moses said to him, “If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here.¹⁶ How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?”

¹⁷And the Lord said to Moses, “I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name.”

¹⁸Then Moses said, “Now show me your glory.”

¹⁹And the Lord said, “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.²⁰ But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.”

²¹Then the Lord said, “There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock.²² When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by.²³ Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.”

The word of God for the people of God.

LET US PRAY.

Scriptural Prayer for Revival (from Praying with Fire)

Loving Father, revival is about Your presence being real in my life and in the church. Oh, Lord, let me know Your presence. Manifest Your presence in my life and in my church. Lord, send revival. Teach me to be sensitive to Your voice. When You tell me to depart, to get away from the ungodly influences of my world, enable me to obey quickly as Moses did (Exodus 33:1). Father, drive out the enemies of Your people, expose them for what and who they are. In my community, expose those who oppose and resist You. In the political arena, local governments, schools, and churches, expose those who oppose You and drive them out (v. 2). Show me how I am stiff-necked and stubborn. Enable me to yield those areas to You (v. 3). Show me that special place of meeting with You where I can run, that place where I can get

away from the distractions of life and be alone to meet You. Oh, Lord, let others see my devotion to You, not to brag or puff myself up, but for Your glory (vv. 7–8). Father, put a separation between me and the outside world, as You did with Moses. Put Your pillar between me and the distractions of life, so I can commune uninterrupted with You (v. 9). Speak to me as You did to Moses. Let Your Word, Your truth, be ever consuming my mind. Father, I long to be Your friend (v. 11). I long to know You. Let me find grace in Your sight (v. 13). I long for Your presence. Teach me to seek Your presence, and show me any substitutes I have made for You (v. 15). Father, just as You knew Moses' name, thank You for knowing my name. Thank You for hearing and answering my prayers (v. 17). Give me spiritual eyes, Father, to behold Your glory, just as You did Moses. Show me anything that hinders my walk with You and separate me unto You (v. 18). Teach me separation. Show me my place by You. Enable me to be still and wait on You. Let me know Your presence. Cover me with Your hand (v. 21). Place me on the rock that does not move. You are my Rock. In life, I may shake and quiver, but my Rock never does. Father, You are honey in the rock. Thank You (v. 22). Father, forgive me of my sin. Burden me to intercede for the church and give me joy in prayer and a desire to pray. Move in me and through me for Your glory. Let others see Your work in my life and in the church. Send revival to Your people. In Jesus' name, amen.

Title: **"The Presence of God"**

INTRODUCTION:

We know that God is omnipresent, present everywhere at all times. King David wrote in Psalm 139:7–10 (NIV84),

⁷ Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.

As Paul told the Athenians, Acts 17:28 (NIV84) 'For in him we **live** and **move** and have our **being**.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'

Clearly, this omnipresence was not the relationship that Moses and God enjoyed. They were close friends that had intimate conversations face to face. Of course there were limitations on the revelation of God. God's fullness, God's face could not be shown to Moses. Like Moses, we should pursue the Presence of God to the fullest extent possible. We should desire God to go and guide us everywhere. Today, in fact, ever since Pentecost, every follower of Jesus, has been blessed by a special presence of God – God the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 3:16 (NIV84) Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?

John the Baptist declared, Matthew 3:11 (NIV84) "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. The Baptist was referring to Jesus and Jesus promised to send another Comforter, Counselor, or Paraclete – the Holy Spirit.

Well, if we have the Holy Spirit, where is the fire? There should be heat. We should be able to sense it somehow. Fire is contagious. With the proper conditions, it will spread quickly. But it seems, too often the Holy Spirit's fire has been quenched.

BODY:

In your bulletin, there are some reflection questions about experiencing the Presence of God. I took these questions from the book *Praying with Fire: Seeking His Presence through the Revival Passages of Scripture* by Mark D. Partin. Let's look at them now.

1. Have you ever experienced the manifest presence of God? In your church? If so, how would you describe that experience?
2. Is being aware of God's presence important enough to you that you refuse to go through a day without it? What do you need to do today to secure God's presence?
3. Is there something or someone else's presence acting as a substitute for God's presence in your life? What or who is it? Why do you allow it?
4. Are you content as you are? Is merely being "religious" enough for you? In Romans 8:29, we are told that God's will for us is to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. When you are in God's presence, He is best able to make you like Jesus. Is that happening in your life? Why or why not?
5. What is God saying to you today?

Now, we are going to shift gears and spend some time in some basic science lessons. Why? Romans 1:20 from the Amplified Bible tells us - For ever since the creation of the world His [God's] invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through His workmanship [all His creation, the wonderful things that He has made], so that they [who fail to believe and trust in Him] are without excuse *and* without defense.

Everything that science studies was made by God. All natural forces were created by God. When we learn all about the finely tuned universe and its magnificent design, it not only validates God's existence, but can reveal things about God too.

Let's start with magnetism. You all know that the earth has a magnetic field. For hundreds of years people have used a compass to navigate from one place to another. How many of you have a compass app on your smart phone? Please take them out now and open the compass app. Which way is north? Does anyone's smartphone give a different answer?

What this world needs is an app that points to Jesus!

Compass functionality in phones and tablets is enabled by a sensor called a magnetometer, which is used to measure the strength and direction of magnetic fields. By analyzing Earth's magnetic field, the sensor allows a phone to determine its orientation pretty accurately. Can anyone here see or feel the magnetic force? No, we cannot. Nevertheless, we know it exists by its effects.

My grandchildren in Port Republic have been clamoring for a trampoline for quite some time now. My son has been resisting, but finally, all of his objections had been overcome. A little over a week ago, they purchased the backyard trampoline. The grandsons put it all together. The grandchildren are delighted and have already spent hours jumping on it.

The other day, I visited and watched them jumping on the trampoline. Every time they jumped up, they came back down and hit the bouncy surface, to be lofted into the air again with big grins on their faces. What kept bringing them back down? Of course, it is gravity. I could not see the gravity. I could only see them coming back down, the effects of gravity.

If you have ever ridden a roller coaster, you have experienced gravity. As the roller coaster makes that first steep climb, you can feel your back press against the seat. That is gravity. As the roller coaster reaches the top, slowly slips over, and rapidly accelerates to the bottom, that is gravity. The sense of weightlessness you felt in your stomach is the result of the gravitational effects.

When you have observed a beautiful full moon, have you ever noticed the cables holding the moon to the earth? Of course not; it is because of gravity. Our solar system and the whole universe is held together by gravity. **Gravitational Force is defined as an attractive force between any two objects** with non-zero mass separated by a distance.

Hopefully, by now, you have already made the connection yourself. We cannot see the Presence of God, but we know it exists. We see the effects of the Holy Spirit. People are converted. Lives are changed. Paul tells us in Romans 8:16 (NIV84) The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Our spirit acts like the magnetometer in our phones.

But there is more: 2 Corinthians 1:22 (NIV84)

²² [God] set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

2 Corinthians 5:5 (NIV84)

⁵ Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Ephesians 1:13-14 (NIV84)

¹³ And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

1 John 3:24 (NIV84)

²⁴ Those who obey his commands **live in him, and he in them**. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by **the Spirit he gave us**.

Kris Kristofferson was a big star in Country Music and also appeared on TV and in movies. He was a singer-songwriter known for his rough ways and party lifestyle. But it was this classic country gospel song that would become the biggest hit of his career. "Why Me Lord" or "Why Me," as it's sometimes called, was written by Kristofferson during a low period in his life, after he attended a religious service conducted by the Rev. Jimmie Rogers Snow.

Connie Smith took Kristofferson to the church service. He says he had a profound religious experience. When Rev. Snow asked if anyone was lost, Kristofferson involuntarily raised his hand. When Kristofferson gives his testimony, he kind of stumbles through it. He has difficulty remembering and explaining exactly what happened. Kristofferson found himself walking down to the front with other people. He begins weeping uncontrollably over his sense of guilt. Then he felt a forgiveness he didn't even know he needed beforehand.

That my friends, is God the Holy Spirit. Kris Kristofferson felt the Presence of God. (Play song)

Author and Wesleyan Methodist minister, William Arthur wrote this in *The Tongue of Fire or, The True Power of Christianity*:

"The Way to Obtain Power:

If the source of our power, and the way to obtain it, be so plain, how can it be that the "tongue of fire" is so rare? *What are the hindrances?* Is it because, as many would seem to think, nothing is so difficult to obtain as the grace of the Holy Spirit?

We often hear it said, All effort must be unsuccessful without the blessing of God, without the accompanying power of the Spirit; and the tone used, indicates that it is therefore proper not to look for any great results, **as if the accompanying power of the Spirit was the only thing NOT to be counted upon**.

The recognition of our impotency without the Spirit, and of the absolute necessity of **His presence** and His power, is as needful as the recognition of the fact that, without sunshine and rain, all labor and all skill would fail to preserve the human race for one season. But the sunshine and the rain are precisely the things which cost nothing, and on which we may constantly depend.

So it is with the baptism and the power of the Holy Spirit. Freer than the air we breathe, freer than the rich sunbeams, freer than any of God's other gifts, because it is the one which has cost Him most, and which blesses His children most, that gift is ever **at hand**;"

CONCLUSION:

The Upper Room Daily Devotional-JULY 7, 2021

On the Train by Susan Cospers (Maryland, USA)

The train whistle blew as we headed out of the metro station toward the city. I looked out the window until I could no longer see the platform. Then I opened my Bible and began reading for my 20-minute ride to work.

Many commuters prefer a certain car, so it isn't unusual to see the same people every day. After several days, I noticed more and more people reading their Bibles. After a few weeks, our car came alive with soft chatter and laughter and discussions about church, sermons, and scripture.

One day a young man in traditional Jewish dress boarded the train. He continued to stand even though the seat next to me was empty. The next day he seemed reluctant but sat down beside me and began to scroll through his cell phone. When we stopped, he hurried off the train. On the third day, despite other empty seats, he sat down beside me. I smiled and then went back to my reading. Out of the corner of my eye I saw him pull out his cell phone, and as he slowly scrolled he began praying out loud in Hebrew. Since then, he has sat beside me every day. He prays out loud while I read my Bible.

As Christians, we are called to be witnesses of Christ's love for the world. In just a short month our car had transformed from a somber space into a vibrant place of worship.

I ask you, "Do you think the Presence of God was there?"

Before Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father, He promised His disciples, "And, surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." The Apostle Paul affirms, (1 Cor. 6:17) "He who is joined to the Lord is one with Him in spirit."

Let us pray the words of Jude 24–25 (NIV84)

²⁴ To him who is able to keep you from falling **and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy**— ²⁵ to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

Amen and amen. Let us pray.