



2 Cor. 3:18

Open Face

One interest will prevail, one subject will swallow up all others. Christ our Righteousness

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The Presence of God

David Clayton



From the very beginning of time, as men tried to develop an understanding of the God who created all things, certain words came to be naturally associated with Him. As the human mind began to get a glimpse of the height and depth and breadth that is God, words such as “omnipotent,” “omniscient” and “omnipresent,” came naturally to the lips when speaking of him, and these words seemed hardly adequate to describe a person, so beyond our capacity to comprehend. No created being has ever been able, nor will ever be able to fully understand God, but still, apart from atheists, all men have generally come to the conclusion that God fulfills all of those “omnis;” Omni-potent (all-powerful), “omni-scient (all-knowing)” and “omni-present (present everywhere).” We might also add words such as “immutable (unchanging)” and “eternal.”

The Bible gives us good reason to believe that all these omnis are legitimately applied to God. Verses such as the following are essentially telling us that these are the natural attributes of God:

Omnipotence

*And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for **with God all things are possible.** (Mark 10:27)*

Omniscience

*For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and **knoweth all things.** (1John 3:20)*

Omnipresence

*Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not **I fill heaven and earth?** saith the LORD. (Jer 23:24)*

Immutability

*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is **no variableness, neither shadow of turning.** (Jas 1:17)*

Eternity

*Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even **from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.** (Ps 90:2)*

If a person takes the time to simply meditate on the things of creation, he will come to the conclusion that God is a being far greater than our imagination can conceive. We think of the indescribable intricacy of microscopic

things such as atoms, molecules, cells, and the immense complexity of massive things such as galaxies, systems and stars. When we consider that all these things were created in an instant, just by the voice of the being we call “God,” we are lost for words to try to describe the kind of power and intelligence that this being must possess. All the knowledge, the wisdom that is involved in things like DNA, the systems which exist in the bodies of all living things, the harmony, beauty, interdependence of created things – all this was in the mind of God and sprang into magnificent existence with all the complexity which we struggle to understand – when God simply, spoke the word. Truly, from our perspective as humans, there is absolutely nothing that can be impossible for such a Being!

However, as with everything which is true, Satan has done his best to distort and confuse this reality of the amazing capabilities of God. In almost every pagan and false religion, the concept of God is defaced in such a way that God is presented, first of all, as a series of beings rather than one almighty, supreme person. In the religion of the Greeks, there was one supreme god named Zeus, with many other gods subject to him. The same thing can be seen in the legends of the Norsemen where

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Open Face is dedicated to the promotion and the restoration of apostolic Christianity. In particular to the restoration of those truths which have been cast down to the ground and trampled underfoot by the papacy, and adopted by her daughters.

Our purpose is to motivate our readers to commit themselves wholly to the task of personal preparation for the coming of the Lord, and to the taking of the final warning message to every nation, kindred, tongue and people.

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one supreme god called Odin, had many other gods under his control such as Thor and Loki. This distortion of truth has been widely propagated through comic books, popular movies and folklore, so that in the minds of many people God is nothing more than a glorified superman, a person with greater powers and abilities than humans, but fallible, limited, and subject to many of the weaknesses which we possess.

This is all well and good, but what is of real concern is that even among Christians, and even in the One True God movement, we see the same kind of incredible diminishing of God taking place as has long existed in the pagan world. I refer specifically to the concept now taking root in the movement where many not only deny the omnipresence of God, but actually state that such a thing is impossible! The idea that God is present everywhere is said to be unrealistic, since it is not possible for one person to be in two places at the same

time. In fact, such a belief is said to be spiritualistic and akin to pantheism!

Some have stated that they do not deny the “omnipresence” of God, but that they object to the idea of God being **personally** omnipresent. In other words, they believe that God is said to be omnipresent because he has agents present in all places and so, in a secondary way, he is present through others. So in this sense, God is said to be present wherever his angels are. It is not God himself who is actually present, but it is the attributes of God existing in His representatives. Those who believe this tend to have a great emphasis on angels and their ministry since they believe that this is one of the primary ways by which we are able to interact with God.

Along with this emphasis on angels there is also an emphasis on the written word, the Scriptures, as being the other means by which we obtain God’s presence. According to this theory, as we read the Scriptures and we internalize what we read, our thinking and our personalities gradually adapt to what we read, we become like God in our thoughts and behavior and so the “spirit” of God is formed in us through our attentiveness to his word. In this understanding the spirit of God is simply God’s thoughts, God’s way of thinking. When we adopt this, then we are said to possess the spirit of God and consequently, God is present with us in this sense.

This compels us to ask the question, is his word greater than God? Is his power greater than himself? Is God’s power separated from himself so that it can be present when he himself is absent? How can his strength be present, but not his person? It seems that some of us are dividing God up into sections with different aspects of him operating without the other parts.

THE MEANING OF “PRESENCE”

Let us remind ourselves again of what the word “omnipresent” means. The online dictionary, *dictionary.com* defines it as follows:

Omnipresent: - Present everywhere

at the same time.

Most dictionaries give essentially the same meaning, especially when the word is used with reference to God. So to say that God is omnipresent is to declare that God is present everywhere **at the same time**. However, in light of the ideas being presented, another question which arises is, what does it mean to be present?

If a person stands at a great distance and looks at something through a telescope, can he be said to be present at the location which he is viewing? If a person is speaking to another on a cell phone or some other device, can he be said to be present at the location where the other person is? If a person sends a message to another person, can such a person be said to be present when his message is delivered? When I pray, does God actually hear or does an angel hear and then carry the message to God? When I am in trouble, does God actually see Himself, or do angels report the incident to Him later? When I need him, is he actually close by, or must he wait on his angels to first receive the message and then deliver a report to him?

Some of these questions may appear to be trivial or even silly but it is necessary that they be asked in order that we may fully understand the implications of the different ideas which are floating around.

When a person is in my presence, it implies that he is able to personally communicate and interact with me. He is able to touch me and vice versa. If God is not able to hold two-way communication with me, if he is not within touching distance of me, if he is not able to hear my words and to speak to me himself, but must carry out these functions through agents such as angels, then it is absurd to say that God is present with me. Using this kind of reasoning to define the word “omnipresent” would make people such as Donald Trump close to omnipresent at times too, because when they speak almost the whole world is watching by some agency such as the TV or the internet. I have heard and seen Trump many

times, but I have never been in his presence.

THE BIBLE TEACHING

So is God really present everywhere at the same time? Is it really true that nobody can be in two places at the same time – including God? We humans are good at speculating and philosophizing and from that kind of perspective, everyone can have a different answer to these questions. The real question then should be, what does the Bible say about this issue? Let us examine a few verses and see what conclusions we can come to.

Let's begin with the teaching of David in Psalm 139:7-10.

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. (Ps 139:7-10)

Notice how David understood the omnipresence of God; he understood that it was not possible for him to be somewhere where God was not present. Clearly, he equated the spirit of God with the presence of God, or in other words he recognized that the spirit of God was actually God Himself. So where the spirit of God was, it was God who was present. David seemed to have this constant sense of the presence of God and it is one of the main reasons why he was so fearless and became such an outstanding warrior in the cause of God. We see this recognition of the omnipresence of God expressed in the words of Psalm 23:

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. (Ps 23:4)

This is why even as a boy, David had no hesitation in doing battle with first a lion, and then a bear, and later on with the Philistine giant Goliath! He knew he was constantly in the presence of

God and that with such a privilege, no servant of God could ever be defeated. With such a faith he did things that seemed to be crazy and stupid, things such as fighting a lion with his bare hands, and facing a seasoned giant warrior who was armed to the teeth, with nothing but stones and his faith in God. The awareness of God's presence is a mighty reason to be courageous and David clearly was constantly aware of this presence.

In 1 Kings 8:27 we find an extraordinary statement made by Solomon:

But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded? (1Kgs 8:27)

This was the occasion of the dedication of Solomon's Temple. Even though Solomon in his prayer asked God to bless Israel when they prayed towards this house, he demonstrated his understanding of the true nature of God when he declared that the "heaven and the heaven of heavens," could not contain God. Notice what Solomon was really saying; he was not saying that he recognized that God really lived in heaven instead of in the temple. This is not his point at all! His point is that even though he had built this house for God's glory, he recognized that God could not be confined to this building. He came to this conclusion because he was aware that even heaven itself was incapable of containing or encompassing God! In other words he was fully aware that the form of God which could be seen sitting on the throne in heaven was by no means the fullness of what God was! God was such a being that he extended beyond that body, beyond heaven itself and in fact, he filled the entire universe!

So Solomon's point was that he knew God's presence would be in the Temple but he was fully aware that God's presence could not be confined to any single place, because God by his very nature could not be confined to any one location! In other words, He exists everywhere at the same time! This is what "omnipresence" means. It means that

at every moment God is simultaneously present in every place!

It is very clear that the Bible writers had a far more exalted concept of God than those who claim that he is not personally present in all places. In Acts 17:27,28, we find the apostle Paul making the following strange statement:

That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. (Acts 17:27-28)

In order that we might better understand the point that Paul is making here we need to consider the circumstances under which he made the statement. This was the occasion when Paul debated with the scholars at Mars Hill. What he was trying to say to them was that, even though they did not know God and referred to him as, "the unknown God," it was not hard to find him. Why was it not hard to find him? It was not hard because, "he is not far from every one of us." In fact, just by existing, we naturally live within Him, or in other words, he surrounds us on all sides! Paul puts it this way, "in him we live, and move, and have our being." He makes the same point in a different way in Ephesians 4:6.

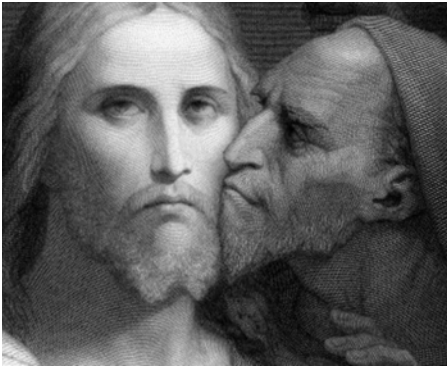
One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. (Eph 4:6)

How can we misunderstand the point that Paul is making here? God is above all, that is simple and easy to understand. He is superior in nature and authority to every other being in the universe, He is above all. But it also says He is, "through all," and "in you all!" We accept the first part of the first as meaning just what it says, what need is there to make the second part of the verse figurative, or to deny the plain, simple meaning of the words? God is through all, and in all of us Christians because he is omnipresent. He exists in all places at the same time, this is

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Worse than enmity



THE DANGERS OF FRIENDSHIP

Friend: a person with whom one has a bond of mutual affection, typically one exclusive of sexual or family relations.

One of the great blessings of life is the gift of friends. God designed us to be social creatures and from the earliest moments of life we are drawn to interactions with other people, we want to make friends. It's okay to have friends, in fact it's more than okay it's a necessity of life. Typically people who have few or no friends suffer from things like depression, feelings of low self-esteem and find it difficult to adjust to normal life. Yet even in something as desirable as friendship there are latent dangers which we need to be aware of and to guard against.

The psychological term used is, "peer pressure." The phrase refers to the influence exerted on a person by his friends and companions which makes him feel that he must conform to their values and adjust his life to fit in with their concepts of what is right or wrong. This pressure is usually very strong and makes a great impact on the life of a person. The problem is, it is usually an unconscious influence which is often unrecognized and can have very serious negative consequences.

We have heard the phrases, "a man is known by the friends he keeps," and, "birds of a feather flock together." The thought behind these phrases is that people who form friendships and asso-

ciate together are usually people who have the same kind of mindset, whose approach to life is similar. This is true, I have often sat in a room full of people and observed how they naturally congregate together in groups. On the most basic level we can see this division in terms of ages. The children gather in one corner, the teenagers in another and the older people tend to drift into the same area. However these groups are often subdivided as well into the kinds of interests that various people have.

This kind of congregating on the basis of likes and preferences is good in many ways. Through the exchange of ideas people with similar goals are able to develop in their way of thinking, are able to improve on their skills, to be exposed to the ideas of others and so improve in the way they approach life and function. However, as wonderful as friendship and companionship can be we have to be very careful because it can also be one of the greatest stumbling blocks in human experience. Over and over we hear of cases of people who made wrong turns in life, young people who ended up in prison, who made disastrous decisions because of following, "bad company." This desire to be accepted, to be in harmony with one's friends and companions has sometimes been the cause of some of the worst decisions that a person has made in his life. In fact sometimes it seems that friendship can be an even greater danger to a person than enmity. The apostle Paul says,

Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. (1Cor 15:33)

A modern version puts it this way:

Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." (1Cor 15:33 NIV)

The Bible has a few examples which illustrate this danger. Simon Peter is one of the outstanding characters of the Bible. Peter was known for his boldness

and his willingness to stand up for what was right. It was he who, on the night of Jesus's betrayal pulled a sword and smote the servant of the high priest. In the face of enemies he was fierce and uncompromising, ready to give his life and to stand for what he believed to be principle. Tradition has it that Peter died by crucifixion, but in the moment of his death he asked to be crucified upside down because he was not worthy to die in the same manner as his Lord. Peter was naturally a brave person, not afraid of the terrors presented by his enemies. Therefore it is surprising when we come across the following statement in the book of Galatians:

But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. (Gal 2:11-12)

Here we find what was perhaps the greatest moment of compromise in Peter's life. He betrayed the principles of Christianity and basically dishonored his faith. But why would Peter do this? What terrible danger caused him to step back from the principles which were foundational to the religion of Christ? Scripture is very clear, he was afraid of those who were of the circumcision, those who came representing his good friend James. In a moment of emotion, Peter's desire to be acceptable with his Jewish, "Christian," friends, made him forget his responsibility to be true to Christ. What his enemies could never have gotten him to do, he was induced to do because of the desire to be acceptable to his friends!

Another astonishing example which we have is that of the apostle Paul. Many persons including myself, consider Paul to be the greatest of the apostles. Not only did he have a deep understanding of the gospel, but he travelled all over

the then known world, constantly facing the greatest dangers in order to promote the good news. He tells of the trials which he experienced in his ministry and it is almost impossible to believe that one person passed through such horrific experiences:

Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. (2Cor 11:24-27)(NASB)

In addition to all of this Paul was a person who stood firmly for principle, he was not easily swayed from his purpose and was firm in his determination to obey Christ in all things. His statement in Galatians 1:10 expresses his approach to life.

Am I now trying to gain the approval of people, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a slave of Christ! (Gal 1:10) (NET)

yet in the book of acts, in chapter 21, we find the record where Paul acted contrary to his principles and went back to practicing the works of the law. These works of the law were something which he spoke against prominently in his preaching of the gospel as we can find expressed particularly in the book of Galatians. Not only were these works of the law unnecessary, but Paul regarded them as harmful to the Christian experience. In Galatians 5:2, he makes this statement:

Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. (Gal 5:2)

Yet we see, as recorded in acts chapter 21 that on the occasion of his last visit

to Jerusalem Paul acted in direct contradiction to his principles.

Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them. (Acts 21:26)

Astonishing! This seems to be an act of hypocrisy, it was behaviour contrary to Paul's teachings. What was the reason for this strange untypical behaviour? As we examine the passage we find the answer in verses 19 – 24.

And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come. Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them; Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law. (Acts 21:19-24)

Paul compromised because he was trying to please his friends! Paul's enemies could never have induced him to undertake such practices. In fact I am sure that if his enemies had tried to induce him to return to the works of the law they would have met fierce opposition and scathing rebuke from Paul, but the appeal of his friends was different! We desire to maintain a good relationship with our friends and this is especially true when we have many enemies. A man needs friends. Paul knew that what

he was being asked to do was wrong, but this is not just advice from one person, this was a gathering of many of his friends, many of his fellow apostles. These were people who had been called to the gospel ministry just as he had been and he was desirous of maintaining a good relationship with them. The consequence was that these friends induced Paul to do what his enemies could not, they persuaded him to practice something which was an outright denial of the gospel that he preached.

Truly, friendship can sometimes be more dangerous than enmity!

Satan even tried to use this ploy of peer pressure on Jesus himself! Jesus was unflinching against Scribes and Pharisees and all his opponents, so Satan tried to use his friend against Him. When Jesus outlined his mission to his disciples and he declared to them how he was to go to the cross and to be killed, the devil tried to step into the picture and induced one of his closest disciples, the outspoken Simon Peter, to try to dissuade him from his purpose!

From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. (Matt 16:21-22)

Notice Jesus's response to Peter, it consisted of the most scathing rebuke that he ever uttered.

But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. (Matt 16:23)

Jesus rebuked him most scathingly because his temptation was worst of all.

From time to time I have had to consider my own position carefully in light of this ever present danger. My personality is such that when people stand against

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The Presence of God

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why he is God and we are not. He is far superior to us and has abilities infinitely beyond ours. We cannot limit his capabilities just because we are limited.

In John chapter 4 we read of the incident where Jesus encountered the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. The discussion he had with that woman is of great interest because he was commenting on the same exact issue that we are now examining. The Samaritans were people who were greatly despised by the Jews. They were people of Hebrew ancestry, but their bloodline had become corrupted through intermingling with other nations. The Jews would have nothing to do with them and considered them to be no better than dogs. The Samaritans however insisted that their people were actually more favored than the Jews because they were located in the correct place of worship, where the people of Israel had originally gathered to worship God centuries before. In other words they felt that God was more present at their location than in Jerusalem. This is the argument that the woman presented to Jesus.

Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. (John 4:20-24)

Jesus responded to the woman's statement by making two critical points. First of all he declared that the moment had arrived when worship would be

centered neither in Samaria nor in Jerusalem. That was the first point, the special status of those two places was to be taken away. But the second point explained the reason why. The moment had arrived when the way men worshiped God was to undergo a great change. From this moment on the true worshipers would worship God in a way that was in harmony with his true nature! They would worship God in spirit and in truth. Let us notice that when they worshiped God in spirit and in truth they would no longer focus on either Samaria or Jerusalem as centers of worship. It is not that these places would change, it is that there would be a greater, a more true understanding of God and who he was and that this would lead to worshiping God in a more rational and reasonable way in keeping with who he really is.

Let us not misunderstand the main point: God is spirit, it is the understanding of this reality which takes away the focus on either Jerusalem or Samaria. God is of such a nature that he cannot be confined to one location. If a person thinks that he must go to Jerusalem or to Samaria in order to interact with God then this demonstrates that he does not understand the true nature of God. Understanding God's spiritual nature brings us to the realization that wherever we are, God is there! There is no need to go to specific, set apart places in order to meet with God. The true worshipers recognize this, and Jesus declared that with his arrival the time had come for this great change in the thinking and worship of God's people, because one of the reasons for his coming was to bring about this greater awareness of the true nature of God.

Another significant statement is Jesus' comment in Matthew 10.

Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. (Matt 10:29-30)

Let us consider the implications of this passage if God is not actually present

in all places. What would Jesus mean by this statement? Well, if God's omnipresence is by means of his angels, then what it would mean is that God has angels monitoring every bird, every insect, every minute thing, so that if a single bird dies, then the angel returns to heaven and reports it to God! Is this what Jesus meant by this statement? But some will insist that though he cannot be present in all places, still, God is able to see all things because he has something like telescopic eyes. He is able to sit in heaven and to look everywhere, though he cannot be everywhere. Amazing!

But the second half of the passage says even more. Jesus said that even the hairs of our heads are numbered! God is aware of every single hair on the head of every person, in a planet of eight billion people! How does God obtain this knowledge? Again we ask, does he have angels counting the hairs on our heads? When we lose one, do angels take note of it and report to God?

PERSONAL - NOT BY PROXY

It is difficult to understand how we can conclude that God is not personally present with us. There are some verses in the Bible which are so pointed in this regard that it is clear that the Bible writers were focusing on giving us a proper understanding of this very point. Look at the following examples:

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. (1John 1:3)

How is it possible to have fellowship with a person if we are not in personal communication with that person? How can we call it fellowship if our contact with someone is through a third party who acts as a messenger? The word itself, "fellowship," is focused on the experience of personal interaction. It is clear that this is the point that John was making in the verse quoted above. He was concerned that his readers should experience the same kind of personal relationship with the Father and

the Son which he had experienced. In order to experience it they first had to understand that this experience was available and this is the reason why John wrote this letter. In his own words, “that you also may have fellowship with us.”

PRESENCE VS FELLOWSHIP

We should note that just because God is present everywhere, this does not mean that everyone has fellowship with God. Yes, “fellowship,” means close, personal interaction, but there has to be an emphasis on the word interaction, and we might add, in a friendly, loving way. These are also aspects of true fellowship. This is why if you pass through a crowd in the streets, you do not claim to have fellowship with those people. Fellowship is more than simply being physically near, but it also includes interaction. Consider the following verse:

And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden. (Gen 4:16)

This seems to be a contradiction of David’s statement in Psalm 139 where he claims that there was no place where he could go where he would not be in God’s presence:

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. (Ps 139:7-8)

But the point is, although Cain could never go anywhere where God was not present, yet he left the presence of the Lord in the sense that he no longer had fellowship with God. God’s presence was everywhere but he might as well have been a million miles away because from that day Cain had no more communion with him. The same thing happened to Jesus on Calvary; though the presence of God was surely surrounding him in a practical way, yet there was no communion between him and God, no ray of light, no fellowship and so he was as utterly alone as if God was billions of light years away.

DWELLING IN ANOTHER PERSON

The Bible does not only teach that God is present in all places, but it goes further in teaching that God actually dwells in His people. There can be no mistaking this message in the Bible, it is clearly taught in several places.

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (2Cor 6:16)

A temple is the dwelling place of a deity. In this case God specifically declares that we are his dwelling place,



the place where he lives. How is this possible if God is not omnipresent? But does this not mean that he is present in the sense that we have His word in our hearts and minds? Does God’s presence come to us in the form of the attitude and the character which we possess which are a reflection of God’s character? Some passages may give us the impression that this is how it is, that what we really have is the words of God and in this sense we may be said to have him living in us. However, there are other passages which may not be interpreted in this way. Look at Jesus’ promise of the Comforter for example:

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter,

that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. (John 14:16-17)

In this striking statement Jesus presents several unmistakable facts. First of all, he speaks of the Comforter as someone who is to arrive at some time in the future, someone who was not yet present with God’s people, but who would come in response to the request of Jesus. In John 7:38,39 John clearly tells us that this Comforter (here referred to as “the holy ghost”), had not yet been given at the time when Jesus was still here on this earth, and would not come until he was glorified after returning to heaven. If this had reference to some experience with the word of God, then in what sense could it be said that the Comforter was still a future experience, since God’s people had always had the word of God? Clearly, Jesus was not saying, “I will pray the Father and he will give you a new set of words, or a different understanding of the word of God.” He was speaking of a person, or a personality, a living, intelligent entity to whom He referred as, “he.”

Secondly, Jesus stated that this Comforter was already dwelling with them, but in the future would be in them. If the Comforter referred to an experience with the word of God, then how could the word be said to be living with them, but not in them, yet when Jesus was glorified it would be in them? Careful examination makes it clear that Jesus was referring to Himself. He was with them, but not in them, yet in the future, after his return to heaven, He would be glorified, re-invested with all the powers of divinity (including omnipresence) and therefore, He would return to live not simply with his people, but actually to live in them!

Some try to counter this clear biblical teaching with human reasoning. They claim that it is not possible for one person to literally live inside another. I am not sure where they obtain the authority to make such a dogmatic statement

when there is no Scriptural basis for it. It seems to be purely based on human reasoning and speculation. In fact, the Bible makes it absolutely clear that it is possible for a spiritual being to literally live within a human being. Not only is it possible, but there is the record of it happening over and over in the Bible. Here is one instance:

And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time? (Matt 8:28-29)

Here we find evil spirits (not just one, but a legion of them) living inside two men. They literally lived in the men and when it was clear that Jesus was about to cast them out, they asked permission to enter into a herd of swine and were given that permission. If it is possible for evil spirits to live inside the bodies of human beings, how can we say that God is unable to do the same thing? Evil spirits take possession of human beings against their will, yes, this is true. But God can do the same thing with our permission and the Bible tells us that this is what He does. He

does not take over and compel us to act contrary to our will as evil spirits do when they come in, but he lives His life through us just as fully, when we give him the right to live in us and to carry out his will in us.

POWER IN GOD'S PRESENCE

The presence of God is the greatest element in the life of a Christian. Jesus said that the key to entering into the kingdom of God is to have the experience of the new birth (John 3:3-6). In this new birth, the spirit of God comes to us and brings the presence of God and Jesus to live in us. In this way we are made a part of the divine family and are acknowledged as the children of God. This is the key not only to receiving eternal life, but is also the key to living the life of victory here and now in this earth. This is the point that Jesus was making when he spoke the following words:

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. (John 15:5)

John repeated the same truth when he wrote:

Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. (1John 3:6)

We live the life of victory and no longer have our lives dominated by sin when Jesus lives in us. But we should recognize that Jesus lives his life through us with our cooperation. The experience is not like that of demon possession where a human being loses control of his faculties and is completely dominated by the spirit entity. With Jesus, it is by our cooperation that he lives through us, he is not an invader, not a compelling tyrant. So he tells us of the need to abide in him, and to remain in the relationship where he abides in us. In this relationship we bring forth much fruit and live above sin. Paul puts it another way when he admonishes us,

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. (Gal 5:25)

This article is far from comprehensive. The evidence in support of God's omnipresence is overwhelming and it is most remarkable that Christians should be the ones to try to limit God and in fact, in my opinion, to belittle him and to diminish his attributes! The God of the universe cannot be brought down to the level of human limitations and capabilities. Let us not join with those who hold unworthy ideas of God.

Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. (Ps 78:41)



Jamaica Campmeeting Reminder

April 9-13

Just a few weeks to go!

Is your tent (and other camping equipment) ready?

Have you put aside funds to take care of your traveling and camp fee?

Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. (Mal 3:16)

This year the Jamaican Campmeeting will begin on Thursday evening, April 9 and end on Monday morning, April 13. As usual this will cover the period of the Easter week-end when we have two public holidays in Jamaica, on the Friday and the Monday.

We have been steadily working at improving our campsite and our male and female dorms are now ready. Each dorm can accommodate up to 20 people but space is still limited. Those who get to camp early will have an advantage! However, married couples who wish to stay together will still have to pitch

a tent or make other arrangements.

For those coming from overseas, we will make arrangements for your accommodation if you let us know beforehand.

As always, the camp fee is a nominal one, just enough to take care of food expenses.

For more information email us at info@restorationministry.com or call 1 (304) 932-4543.

In Jamaica, call (876) 361-8555

Worse Than Enmity

Continued from page 5

me it hardens me in my purpose, there is little danger that I will succumb to pressure when people try to use force, threats or compulsion to persuade me to compromise my principles. But when friends ask me to tone down, to avoid creating division, it fills me with conflicting thoughts and creates more pressure.

Over the past 35 years, from the time when I was put out of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, this is the strongest weapon that the devil has tried to use against me. I remember the day when I was ordained as an elder: I stood up to ask a question about something which I considered wrong in a decision taken by the leaders of the church. It created an awkward moment for the ministers who were there and on the way home, as I traveled with the pastor of my church, he said to me,

“David, now that you are a leader in the church, these are not the kinds of questions that you are expected to ask.”

I sat there for a moment in stunned silence with the blood rushing to my face as I realized the implication of what he was saying. Then I retorted,

“Pastor, if this is what it means to be an ordained elder in the church, then you can take it back right now!”

We drove the remainder of the way home in silence, but I have never forgotten that moment and I have tried to continue to live by the principles which made me respond that way, that day.

I have faced the same kind of pressure many times since that day. As the Lord has led me to a deeper understanding of the gospel and of the plan of salvation, I have constantly met upon these moments when well-meaning friends have warned me of the perils of where I was heading. Some have pleaded with me to back from some of the things I am now teaching. They have appealed on the basis of unity, they have appealed

on the basis that there is safety in the multitude of counselors, they have appealed to me on the basis that I will cut off my influence if I don't conform to the majority opinion, they have appealed to me on the basis that it will make it impossible for them to continue to work with me. I am sure that there are others who have faced the same kind of pressure and that this kind of situation is not unique to Howard Williams and myself. It has continued to be true that the greatest temptation to compromise has arisen because these appeals have come from friends. The end result is that many of them are no longer friends.

I cannot pretend that it has not been a series of painful experiences, but I have been able to rejoice with every friend I lost because I was able to keep my conscience clear before God. I hope that I have learned from the mistakes of Paul and Peter; I would not like to end up in a Roman dungeon because of listening to Christian friends. I would not like to end up denying Christ because I was respecting the advice of my Christian brethren. I do not want to be a person who thinks that he knows it all, but I have to constantly examine the question of what to do when I see something clearly in the word of God, when I ask the Lord for guidance and direction and come to a conclusion, and then someone else comes along and advises me differently. What am I to do then? I understand the desirability of unity, but at what cost?

When all things are considered I believe the best course is still that expressed by the apostle Paul:

Am I now trying to gain the approval of people, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a slave of Christ! (Gal 1:10) (NET)

May God bring unity among all his people, but may it be on the basis of us all hearing the one voice of the true Shepherd, and not on the basis of us putting man's counsel above God's.



Incomparable

He came from the bosom of the Father to the bosom of a woman. He put on humanity that we might put on divinity. He became Son of man that we might become sons of God. He came from Heaven where the waters never freeze, winds never blow, frosts never chill the air, flowers never fade and no one is ever sick. There are no undertakers and no graveyards, for no one ever dies, no one is ever buried.

He was born contrary to the laws of nature. he lived in poverty, he was reared in obscurity; he did not travel extensively, in fact, only once did he cross the boundary of his native land, and that was in childhood. He had no wealth or influence and had neither training nor formal education. His relatives were inconspicuous and not influential.

In infancy, He startled a king; in boyhood, He puzzled doctors and in manhood, He ruled the forces of nature, walked upon the billows as if they were pavement and hushed the sea to sleep. He healed the multitudes without medicine and made no charge for His services. He never wrote a book, yet not all the libraries of the country could hold all the books that have been written about Him. He never wrote a song, yet He has furnished the theme of more songs than all writers combined. He never founded a college, yet all the schools together cannot boast of having as many students as He has. He never practiced medicine, and yet He healed more broken hearts than doctors have healed broken bodies. He never marshalled an army, drafted a soldier or fired a gun, yet no leader ever made more volunteers who have, under his orders, made rebels stack arms or surrender without a shot being fired.

He is the Star of astronomy, the Rock of geology, the Lion and the Lamb of zoology, The Doctor of biology, The Master of theology, the Harmonizer of all discords and the Healer

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February 2020

Sleep Deprivation: A Serious Threat

Lenworth Frankson



A significant number of people get less than seven hours of sleep per night and in fact, it is reported that more than 83 million adults in the U.S. are sleep-deprived. If you work long hours, have a sleep disorder or spend a lot of time in front of electronic screens, you may be sleeping five or fewer hours per night. Sleep deprivation is associated with a number of serious diseases, including Alzheimer's disease, cancer, diabetes, heart disease, mental illness, obesity and stroke.

It is important for us to know that sleep plays an important role in memory formation, and also that chronic sleep dysfunctions such as sleep apnea have been shown to accelerate memory loss. Most adults need about eight hours of sleep per night to function well. Children and teenagers, because they are still growing and developing, require nine or more hours of rest. As you might be aware, it is also common for them to sleep even longer on weekends.

The dangers and pitfalls of too little sleep have been well documented but there are also risks of sleeping too much, which is generally defined as more than nine hours per night. Excessive sleep, along with long midday naps especially, may increase your risk of stroke, according to a Chinese study involving 31,750 people. The report showed that the greatest risk of all occurred among those who both slept for nine hours or more at night and napped

for more than 90 minutes. This excessive sleep combination increased stroke risk by 85% compared to moderate sleepers and nappers. It is unclear exactly why excess sleep increases stroke risk, but long nappers and sleepers are more likely to have an increased waistline and inactive lifestyles. Both of these factors are risk factors for stroke. Matthew Walker, Ph.D., professor of neuroscience and psychology, founder and director of the Center for Human Sleep Science at the University of California, Berkeley, defines sleep deprivation as "sleeping less than seven hours a night."

ENEMIES OF SLEEP

Long work hours:

The business environment, increased global competition and longer commuter times are just a few of the factors contributing to the increase in work hours and stress-related burnout.

Over-commitment:

Schedules are filled from morning to night, and many people are unwilling to trade entertainment or socializing with family and friends for sleep.

Alcohol and caffeine:

According to research, alcohol does allow healthy people to fall asleep quicker and sleep more deeply for a while, but it reduces rapid eye movement sleep. (REM)

REM sleep is especially fascinating because it increases brain activity, promotes learning, and creates dreams.

Alcohol may seem to be helping you to sleep because it helps induce sleep, but overall it is more disruptive to sleep, particularly in the second half of the night. Researcher Irshaad Ebrahim, the medical director at The London Sleep Centre in the U.K. said: "Alcohol... suppresses breathing and can precipitate sleep apnea." It can cause pauses in breathing that happen through-

out the night.

Caffeine has been called the most popular drug in the world. It is found naturally in over 60 plants including the coffee bean, tealeaf, kola nut and cacao pod. All over the world people consume caffeine on a daily basis especially in coffee, tea, cocoa, chocolate, some soft drinks, and some drugs.

There is no nutritional need for caffeine in the diet, but because caffeine is a stimulant, most people use it after waking up in the morning or to remain alert during the day. However, caffeine cannot replace sleep, it can temporarily make you feel more alert by blocking sleep-inducing chemicals in the brain and increasing adrenaline production.

Once in the body, caffeine will persist for several hours, taking about 6 hours for one half of the caffeine to be eliminated. There are numerous studies to support the idea that caffeine causes physical dependence. Caffeine is a stimulant. In moderate doses, it can increase alertness, reduce fine motor coordination, cause insomnia, cause headaches, nervousness and dizziness. It has also been known to cause anxiety, irritability, rapid heartbeat, excessive urination, sleep disturbance and "caffeine crash" once the effects wear off.

Artificial lighting

We have effectively electrified the night. Light at night damages your health by degrading your sleep. Artificial light, such as light from cell phones, alarm clocks, television, tablets etc., can wreck havoc on our sleep cycle. Our circadian rhythm, which is our body's 24-hour sleep/wake cycle, is heavily influenced by environmental light. During dark hours, our brains are triggered to produce melatonin, a hormone that helps induce sleep. Due to modern technology, we are increasingly exposed to artificial light during nighttime hours. According to one study,

artificial light before bedtime has a profound suppressive effect on melatonin levels and “shortens the body’s internal representation of night duration”. According to The National Sleep Foundation, disrupting the body’s circadian rhythm has been shown to affect things like “brain wave pattern, hormone production, and cell regulation” and has also been linked to medical issues like depression, obesity, breast and prostate cancer, and cardiovascular diseases. In addition, when our quality of sleep is affected it can negatively impact our brain’s ability to retain information as well as to do a particular task.

Anxiety and Stress:

Stress and anxiety may cause sleeping problems or make existing problems worse. Having an anxiety disorder only makes the problem worse. Abnormal sleep patterns that interfere with physical, mental, and emotional functioning characterize sleep disorders.

Other common sleep disorders include sleep apnea (loud snoring caused by an obstructed airway), sleepwalking, and narcolepsy (falling asleep spontaneously). New research suggests that sleep deprivation can cause an anxiety disorder. Studies also show that people with chronic insomnia are at high risk of developing an anxiety disorder. The risks of inadequate sleep extend way beyond tiredness. Sleeplessness can lead to poor performance at work or school, increased risk of injury, and health problems.

TO REDUCE ANXIETY AND STRESS:

- **Pray and Meditate.** Make time daily to talk to God about you being stressed and anxious. Trust Him more in every aspect of your life, including the little things that are worrisome. Believe in His promises! Too often we pray and ask for help yet we are unwilling to let go, thereby hampering divine work. Focus on your breathing. Breathe in and out slowly and deeply throughout the day and visualize a serene environment such as a deserted beach, a grassy hill or lying

beside still waters.

- **Exercise.** Regular exercise is good for your physical and mental health. It provides an outlet for frustrations and releases mood-enhancing endorphins.
- **Prioritize your to-do list.** Spend your time and energy on the tasks that are truly important, and break up large projects into smaller, more easily managed tasks.
- **Play music.** Soft, calming music can lower your blood pressure and relax your mind and body.
- **Get adequate sleep.** Sleeping recharges your brain and improves your focus, concentration, and mood.
- **Direct the anxiety and stress elsewhere.** Lend a helpful hand to a relative or neighbor, or volunteer in your community. Helping others will take your mind off of your own anxiety and fears.

TO SLEEP MORE SOUNDLY:

- Try to wake up at the same time every day, including weekends.
- Establish a regular, relaxing bedtime routine. Avoid stimulants like caffeinated beverages, chocolate, and nicotine before going to sleep, and never watch TV, use the computer, or pay bills before going to bed. Read a book, listen to soft relaxing music, or meditate on Bible promises.
- Make sure your bedroom is cool, dark, and quiet. Consider using a fan to drown out excess noise, and make sure your mattress and pillows are comfortable.
- Get into bed only when you are tired. If you don’t fall asleep within 15 minutes, go to another room and do something relaxing.
- Regular exercise will help you sleep better, but limit your workouts to mornings and afternoons.
- Avoid looking at the clock. This can make you anxious in the middle of the night. Turn the clock away

from you.

RISK FOR ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

Many people with Alzheimer’s disease have trouble sleeping. Recently, researchers have found evidence that the reverse is also true. The findings show that a chronic lack of sleep may worsen the disease and its associated memory loss. The new findings center on a protein called tau, which accumulates in abnormal twisted knots in the brains of people with Alzheimer’s disease. In the healthy brain, active neurons naturally release some tau during waking hours, but it normally gets cleared away during sleep. Essentially, your brain has a system for taking the garbage out while you are sleeping. The study which includes mice and people, suggests that sleep deprivation upsets this balance, allowing more tau to be released, accumulate, and spread in toxic tangles within brain areas important for memory. While more study is needed, the findings suggest that regular and substantial sleep may play an unexpectedly important role in helping to delay or slow down Alzheimer’s disease.

OTHER RISKS FROM LACK OF SLEEP

- Reduced ability of your immune system to fight off bacteria, viruses and other foreign substances
- Increased levels of inflammation
- Higher levels of the stress hormone cortisol
- Increased levels of other biomarkers related to fatigue, pain and poor health
- Insufficiencies in physical functioning

SLEEP APNEA

Millions of people suffer from sleep apnea, a serious health condition that causes you to stop breathing while you are sleeping. Depending on the severity of your condition, these breath interruptions may occur just a few or numerous times in an hour. During these moments without breath, your brain and the rest of your body are literally being starved of oxygen. If you have sleep apnea, you may be unknowingly

putting yourself at risk for diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and stroke. In addition, sleep apnea can contribute to depression, insomnia, impotence, pregnancy complications and weight gain. Clearly sleep apnea is not something to be taken lightly. Sleep apnea can often go unnoticed because doctors don't routinely screen for it and you may be inclined to dismiss daytime sleepiness as "a bad night's sleep" or stress. If you suspect that you may be suffering from sleep apnea, you should seek the help of a qualified sleep specialist. Ask your doctor for a recommendation, as well as do your own research.

Most adults need seven to nine hours

of sleep, and children and infants need even more although the needs vary from person to person. Some incredibly rare people can actually get by on a few hours of sleep per night, while others need more than 10 hours nightly to function properly. Regardless of your body's clock, a lack of sleep will cause your physical and mental health to suffer. Matthew Walker, the neuroscientist who is an expert on sleep was reported to have said that: "The shorter your sleep, the shorter your life." and in the Bible Psalm 127:2 clearly tells us:

*"It is vain for you to rise up early,
To sit up late, To eat the bread of
sorrows; For so He gives His be-
loved sleep"*



Incomparable

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of all diseases. Proud statesmen, archaeologists, scientists, philosophers and theologians have come and gone, yet He lives on. Herod could not kill Him, Satan could not seduce Him, death could not conquer Him, even the grave could not destroy Him.

He laid aside His linen robe for a peasant's gown. He was rich, yet for our sake He became poor. How, poor? Ask Mary! Ask the Wise Men! He slept in another's manger. He cruised the lake in another's boat and He rode upon another man's ass. He was buried in another man's tomb. Yet All failed, but He, never! He is the ever Perfect One, the Chief among ten thousand, the lily of the valley, the Bright and Morning Star, the Prince of Peace.



Open Face

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