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HIS PRESENCE, OUR FREEDOM

Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off! Acts 16:26 NLT

There are various passages in the scriptures that depict God as an entity that no god or man can stand against. Often referred to as 'The Almighty' which in Hebrew is the name *El Shaddai*. The Bible teaches us that as New Testament believers living in a dispensation of Grace, we now carry El Shaddai with us everywhere we go. 1 Corinthians 6:19 explains that our body is *"the temple of God,"* and Romans 8:11 further states that *"the same power that raised Christ from the dead lives in us."* What does this mean for we that are in Christ? No matter where we are and the circumstances we face, we can rest assured that we didn't turn up alone. El Shaddai – God Almighty – is with us.

Acts 16:25–30 describes to us an astonishing event that took place in a prison. A place of confinement and restriction imposed by human authority. The scripture makes us aware that Paul and Silas were thrown into prison for delivering a woman from the spirit of divination. As they were in the prison they began to pray and sing hymns to El Shaddai, and then an earthquake happened. We need to take note that Paul and Silas recognised who lived inside of them and everywhere they went or faced, God Almighty was with them. These two men were able to turn a prison into a revival centre!

Why? Because they understood how to bring Heaven on Earth. Through their praise and worship, they changed the state of the environment by allowing God's Kingdom to come into that prison as it is in heaven. As we learnt in week 2, God's Will is for us to worship, and we also know from Psalm 22:3 that God inhabits in the praises of his people. So God was present right there in the prison!

Heaven on earth was administered by two people in a prison, but the impact was experienced by many. Acts 16:28 makes us aware that all the prisoners' chains were loosed. The presence of God is not limited or exclusive to just those who know him. His presence can touch everyone in the room and beyond. Now, let's observe the prisoners in this moment of Heaven on Earth (a move of His presence). The Bible states that when the jailer started to panic, Paul shouted that they were ALL still there. How can this be? Prisoners who have been set free were sitting in the prison, not running out for their freedom. Why? Because true freedom is found in the presence of God. There was no better place to be, but in His presence.

I invite you to invite His Presence into your situation today; stop worrying about the things you have no control over and start focusing on the freedom He has given you.

Further Reading: Acts 16:25–30, 1 Corinthians 6:19, Romans 8:11, Psalm 84:10

PRESENT IN HIS PRESENCE

Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.” Genesis 28:16 ESV

We often fail to acknowledge God’s presence in our lives. To add some context to the focus scripture: Jacob, here, was on a journey and rested in a certain place, had a dream in which God appeared and spoke to him, and after the fact, he realised that he was in the presence of God. We see here that God was present before Jacob acknowledged it, and in many instances, it’s the same for us! The fact is He is omnipresent – whether we are seeking God’s face or He chooses to reveal Himself to us – He is and was already there before the point that we sensed or acknowledged Him. If you’re at work, at home, at church or even a social gathering, being consciously aware of this truth gives us the liberty and opportunity to feel and experience His presence wherever we are.

In scripture, we see the extent and reach of God’s presence; the psalmist puts it this way, *“Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!”* – there’s no getting away from God’s presence! At the same time, we also see scripture highlighting the many benefits of His presence: liberty, freedom, fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore. But, if God is omnipresent and blessings such as joy and freedom can be found there in His presence, then why aren’t these things seen everywhere? Because we need to plug in and be present in His presence!

We’ve had those instances in perhaps a Sunday service, Living Room or Glory Night where you feel the presence of God so heavily, and in the very same room, you have a bystander that doesn’t fully plug into what’s going on. You think to yourself: “how can they just sit there when God’s moving so mightily in this place?” Simply put – they’re present, but they’re not *present*.

To make more sense of this, we need to look at the varying definitions of the word “present.” The Oxford Dictionary provides these 2 definitions: “being in a particular place” and “being fully focused on or involved in what one is doing or experiencing.” In Genesis 28, we see that Jacob was present – in a particular place – in Luz (the place that he later named “Bethel”) but found himself fully involved in what God was doing during his dream – present in His presence. These varying definitions bring clarity to how God’s presence can be in a place but not manifested in people by way of freedom or joy – they may be physically present, but their minds or hearts are elsewhere. We need to actively choose to plug into God’s presence, be focused and involved in what God is doing and experience the transformation that comes with the mighty presence of God.

There’s a lyric to a song that we sing, which can bring joy, freedom and godly pleasures in our lives if we make it a heartfelt prayer: “Let us become more aware of your presence”.

Further Reading: Genesis 28:10–22, Psalm 139:7–8, II Corinthians 3:17, Psalm 16:11

DWELLING IN HIS PRESENCE

Then Moses said to him, “If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. 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?” Exodus 33:15-16

The promise of God’s presence is one of the most profound assurances in Scripture. When Moses received this promise in Exodus 33:14, it was during a time of great uncertainty. The Israelites, newly freed from Egypt, faced an unknown future in the wilderness. Moses didn’t ask for resources, strategies, or guarantees of success—he asked for God’s presence, understanding that without it, they were lost. He recognised that God’s presence alone could bring the guidance and rest they desperately needed. God’s presence brings comfort in pain, direction in confusion, and peace in chaos. It doesn’t promise a life free from difficulties, but it assures us we won’t face them alone. True rest is not found in our circumstances, but in the deep assurance that the Creator is with us, offering His strength and peace.

Moses knew that he could not lead the Israelites into an unknown land without God dwelling with them. This is because in Psalm 91, we learn that whoever dwells in the secret place abides in the shadow of The Almighty – in other words: abides in His presence. The Psalmist helps us understand that there is protection, salvation and deliverance in His Presence. It is the safest place we can be. God said to Moses in Exodus 33:14 *“My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”* When God’s Presence goes with us, it gives us rest and peace no matter the environment or place we are in. His presence is the source of everything we truly need. When we pray, “Your Kingdom come,” we are not only asking for God’s rule, but also

inviting His presence into every area of our lives.

His kingdom is where He dwells. His presence transforms us from within, but also affects the environment that we are in – the places we go to, whether work or university. Dwelling in God’s presence also means acknowledging His presence in the everyday moments – whether at work, during conversations, or in solitude. While God is omnipresent, there is a difference between knowing He is everywhere and experiencing His manifest presence and the power that it brings to the environment we are in. His Presence distinguishes us; that’s what makes the difference!

Moses modelled this dependence when he resolved not to take a single step without God, demonstrating his desperation to be led by His presence and glory. In Exodus 33:18, Moses boldly says to God, “Now show me your glory.” His plea shows his desire not just for God’s presence, but a deeper revelation of His majesty. Similarly, we are called to depend on God in every decision and season, trusting Him to guide each step. His presence is not just a promise, it is a lifeline: a source of strength and hope.

The same God who walked with Moses walks with you. His presence is your rest, your strength, and your hope, and His glory is revealed when we align ourselves with His will.

Further Reading: Psalm 16:11; Isaiah 41:10; James 4:8

STILL IN HIS PRESENCE

And Jesus answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.” Luke 10:41-42

We revisit this story of Mary and Martha from Week 2 in Luke 10. Many of us today are not so different from Martha. We are concerned and anxious about our children, our jobs, making wealth, buying homes – the list goes on. There’s nothing wrong with pursuing these things, but if we prioritise them over spending time in the presence of God, we run the risk of turning these things into idols. John 6:27 says *“Do not work for food that perishes, but for food that endures [and leads] to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you; for God the Father has authorised Him and put His seal on Him”*. The word of God that has been learned in the presence of God is food that endures forever, and when given the right priority, will cause us to excel in every other area of our lives.

Today, there are so many different things demanding our attention and pulling us in different directions, so we need to be intentional to carve out and protect time to be in God’s presence often; to have focused time, where you can be still and meditate on His word, so that you may know His will and live by it. In Psalm 46:10 it reads: *“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”* When we learn to be still in His presence, we then learn how to ward off anxiety and stress, and learn how to be still inwardly. It involves creating space to listen for His voice and be attuned to His leading; this cultivates a habit of waiting on God.

In today’s fast-paced world, it’s easy to overlook the importance of being still in God’s presence. Our schedules are full, and our minds are constantly multitasking, even during prayer. Think about your life: are you still in God’s presence, or are you simply acknowledging it from time to time in the busyness of your life? Imagine what could change if you kept your mind stayed on Him and lived with an awareness of His nearness in every moment. Your decisions would be wiser, your relationships more grace-filled, and your peace more enduring. You would stop striving to do life on your own and start walking in step with the Spirit, letting His presence lead and sustain you. The love, joy, peace, and patience that mark a Spirit-filled life come not from striving, but from remaining.

So, what’s keeping you from dwelling fully in His presence? Is it distraction, self-reliance, or misplaced priorities? Ask God to help you identify and remove anything that hinders your connection with Him. Remaining in God’s presence isn’t just an ideal—it’s essential. Today, reflect on whether you’re truly abiding in Him. Let His presence fill and sustain you, and be intentional about finding space in your life to be still in His presence, so when that fateful day comes, you will still be found in His presence.

Further Reading: Psalm 27: 4; Revelation 3:20; Matthew 6: 25-34

CARRIERS OF HIS PRESENCE

“...the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.” John 14:17

ESV

There is power in God’s presence: when the Israelites left Egypt, the evidence of God’s presence was displayed in His power. The Israelites witnessed the Red Sea part, manna fall from heaven and water flow from a rock – we are reminded of this in Psalm 114:5–8.

“Why was it, sea, that you fled? Why, Jordan, did you turn back? Why, mountains, did you leap like rams, you hills, like lambs? Tremble, earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob, who turned the rock into a pool, the hard rock into springs of water.”

Nature recognises God’s presence and responds to Him. This should give us confidence that there is nothing that God cannot do. Jesus – God in flesh – demonstrated the same power by calming the storms with the command: ‘peace be still,’ by walking on water and cursing a fig tree. All of creation responds to the presence of God and we have access to the same authority and power as we have God living in us – the Holy Spirit.

Jesus declared the promise of God’s presence through the Holy Spirit in John 14, as believers of the Lord Jesus Christ have been given the Holy Spirit, we now have the privilege of being carriers of His presence.

As carriers of God’s presence, we are vessels of His power but we need to believe it and act upon it. When we think of the examples above, Moses had to lift his staff and Jesus had given a command. Jesus said when you say to this mountain move, it will then respond to your authority. Don’t allow the power of God’s presence to be dormant in your life because of your reluctance or hesitance to act.

The disciples received power when the Holy Spirit came upon them in Act 1. Paul wrote to the Church in Ephesus who were faithful followers of Jesus Christ and prayed that they would understand the incredible greatness of God’s power that was available to them, and it was this same power that raised Christ from the dead (Ephesians 1:19–20).

So, when you are faced with a challenge, or you are in a stormy season in any area of your life, you need to understand that you carry the presence of God and the same authority and power we read in the scriptures is in our hands. All we need to do is believe and act.

Further Reading: Psalms 114, Mark 11:12–25, Matthew 14:22–33, John 14:15–27

BEARING FRUIT THROUGH HIS PRESENCE

“Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.” John 15:4 NIV

Are you truly living in God’s presence, or are you trying to live for Him without staying connected to Him? Jesus’ words in John 15:4 challenge us to evaluate our relationship with Him. This is not a casual suggestion but a foundational truth. Without remaining in Him, dwelling in His presence daily, we cannot bear fruit. Yet how often do we attempt to live life, pursue goals, or serve others while disconnected from the very source of our strength? Remaining in God’s presence isn’t about proximity; it’s about intimacy. A branch may be near the vine, but unless it’s fully connected, it cannot draw life. Many of us attend church, read devotionals, or pray occasionally, thinking these moments are enough to sustain us. But are we abiding in Him throughout the day? Abiding comes with perseverance and endurance in its very meaning. Are we consciously staying in His presence, or do we drift into self-reliance, seeking Him only when we feel desperate? Isaiah 26:3 says *“You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.”* Don’t you want to live in perfect peace? Is your mind stayed on Him?

Jesus makes it clear that apart from Him, we can do nothing (John 15:5). It’s a convicting reminder that all our efforts, no matter how well-intentioned, are fruitless if they are not rooted in Him. How much of our daily lives is spent striving on our own, trying to produce results, fix problems, or chase goals without seeking His guidance?

When we operate this way, we may achieve temporary success, but we miss the lasting fruit that comes from living in alignment with God’s presence and purpose. Dwelling in His presence begins with acknowledging that we need Him. It means choosing to abide in Him not just during morning devotions, but throughout the day—in decisions, conversations, and even the mundane tasks of life. When Jesus invites us to remain in Him, He is calling us to a life of continual dependence. This dependence is not weakness; it is the pathway to spiritual fruitfulness, peace, and joy. The distractions of life can easily pull us away, leaving us spiritually depleted. Consider a phone that runs out of battery when disconnected from its charger. In the same way, when we disconnect from God, we lose the power and guidance we need to navigate life. How often do we try to “charge” ourselves through busyness, entertainment, or even religious activity, rather than drawing directly from Him?

Let today be the day you stop settling for proximity to God and start living in true intimacy with Him. Abide in Him, and you will experience the fullness of His presence—not as a fleeting feeling, but as a daily reality that transforms your life.

Further Reading: Psalm 91:1; Acts 17:28; Galatians 5:22–23

PURPOSE OVER PREFERENCE

“Samuel said to Saul, “You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you, for [if you had obeyed] the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever.” 1 Samuel 13:13 AMP

In this life we all have preferences, for example some people like white bread, some brown and some love a sourdough loaf. Our personal preferences, if not submitted to God's Will, will ultimately lead to self-ambition. Once we commit to Christ and are walking this journey of life with Him we must come to understand that our preferences will fade away because His purpose will preside. However, this is not easily done, and without the Holy Spirit, our natural disposition is to choose our preference which is the easy route. But, purpose supersedes how we feel and pushes us to do as God wills, with the perspective that purpose will outlive us because God has the bigger picture in mind; if we choose preference over purpose, we will miss His presence.

In 1 Samuel 13 after Saul takes the throne as king, Israel is at war with the Philistines. Saul was instructed to wait 7 days for the prophet Samuel to arrive. When this time passed and Samuel didn't arrive, Saul, due to impatience with God, felt that he was losing his authority over people, and the desire for self-ambition made him choose his own preference over God's purpose. Saul made offerings to the Lord which he was forbidden to do, Samuel then arrived and reprimanded Saul as we read in our anchor scripture. It was over for Saul - fear and judgement had clouded his judgement and he made a decision that suited himself, and ultimately the cost of his disobedience was losing the presence of God: *“Now the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him”* (1 Samuel 16:14).

When we live daily with God's presence in our life, it not only makes us aware of our humanity and our limitations, but also God's purpose which goes beyond our self-ambition. Walking with God shifts the way we live our life and we become purpose-driven rather than preference-driven. We begin to think about the bigger picture, and the purpose of our lives in the context of God's purpose for His people. The story of Abraham is a great example of this. God calls Abraham out of his father's house to walk with Him, and God reveals His purpose and His plans. In one conversation, approximately 10 years after Abraham left home and the first mention of God's promise to make him a father of many nations, Abraham approaches God in frustration and vents to Him (Genesis 15:2-3). God's response to Abraham sharing his preference based on his current situation, was to remind him of His promise to him, but also to share the detail of His plan that demonstrated the bigger picture and the purpose of God (Genesis 15:13-16). This is mind-blowing! That one conversation with God made Abraham shift from preference to purpose and spurred him on to continue to trust in God: that even though after 10 years the promise hadn't yet come to pass, it was surely going to.

Where you are walking in preference, as we close out this time of fasting and prayer, seek God to reveal His purpose for that area of your life. Even if it seems overwhelming or scary, lean in, stay in the Word, remain obedient and determine to choose God's purpose over your preference.

Further Reading: 1 Samuel 13, Genesis 15-17, Exodus 33