

The Fruits of God's Presence

In **Leviticus 26:11-12** the Lord says, *"I will live among you, and I will not despise you. I will walk among you; I will be your God, and you will be My people."* Have you ever wondered what happens when God arrives on the scene? What effect His presence has on people and the natural world we live in? Today we are going to examine the Fruits of God's Presence. However, before we start let's try to define "presence."

In a natural sense, **presence** is the invisible "impact" a person, a place or a thing has on us. If you've ever stood at the edge of a mountain range and gazed across the vast expanse, you would probably have felt a great 'presence'. When travelling through a ravine, with hills on either side, you become distinctly aware of the 'presence' of your surroundings. I remember driving with Loraine and the family to Forth William in the northwest of Scotland, and the road took us past Ben Nevis, I was totally astounded by its awesome 'presence'. Also, have you ever stood next to someone really famous, or a person with great influence? If you have, you would have noticed that such a person carries a unique 'presence' with him/her.

In a similar but greater manner, God too has this invisible quality called 'presence'. When He intervenes in a person's life, visits a congregation, or meets with someone during the worship, we know it! While we may respond in different ways, we nonetheless know that God Almighty is present! On numerous occasions, and in different settings, I have experienced God's 'presence', and I was profoundly touched and deeply moved by His Spirit.

- In those moments I have wanted to lay down before Him with my face to the ground, in total surrender.
- Other times, like Moses, I've felt as if I needed to take my shoes off - for the ground on which I'm standing is so holy.
- Again, in such moments, I've simply wanted to worship Him.
- Sometimes I would rejoice.
- Sometimes I would feel like being still - quiet before the Lord.
- Sometimes I would feel almost drunk in the Spirit.
- There have even been other occasions where I felt as if there are angels all around me.
- However, most of the time, I've just wanted to stay and never leave.

Remember, I'm not wishing to imply that everyone who enters into God's presence will have similar *"divine encounters."* But I do want you to must see the difference between simply receiving something from God (some sort of blessing) and actually coming into His divine presence. While both are great experiences, however, one is distinctly different from the other.

Please turn with me now to **Isaiah 6** and let's read the first 8 verses: *"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above Him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory.' At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. 'Woe to me!' I cried. 'I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes*

have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.’ Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, ‘See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.’ Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’”

This was an incredible occasion for the prophet Isaiah! He experienced God’s presence and three extraordinary things happened. Let’s look at them one-by-one.

(1) ISAIAH SAW THE LORD

“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple.”

Here we get a broader view! Isaiah didn’t just see a king on the throne such as Solomon or Hezekiah did, rather, he saw “the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords” seated in His majesty upon the very throne of God! His train (His glory) literally filled the temple. Yes, king Uzziah had died, however, the Lord wanted Isaiah to know that the real King was still very much alive, seated in glory, and in complete control of everything. Something many of us forget!

What exactly did Isaiah see as he looked at Him who was seated on the throne? Maybe this passage from **Revelation 1:12-18** will help us with that question: *“I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw... Someone ‘like a son of man,’ dressed in a robe reaching down to His feet and with a golden sash around His chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though dead. Then He placed His right hand on me and said: ‘Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.”*

This is a snapshot of Jesus Christ as He is now, and quite possibly, as Isaiah saw Him in his vision. Back to our first passage...

As the prophet continued to watch, *“the temple also was filled with clouds of smoke.”* Once again, this scene is astounding. In fact, Isaiah thought he had seen God, even though it was just a vision. For that reason, he was convinced that he was going to die - right there and then! Next, notice how the vision zooms in a little closer... Verse 2 says that the prophet saw the seraphs - superhuman angels - that were above the throne of God. They were speaking back and forth (verse 3). And as they spoke, *“The doorposts and the thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.”* That’s quite impressive, don’t you think? The volume at which they conversed shook the posts of the door! Those of you who don’t like loud noises better be careful when you get to heaven.

(2) ISAIAH SAW HIMSELF

“Woe to me!” I cried. ‘I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the “King, the Lord Almighty.” Isaiah was an aristocrat, a man who knew his way around Jerusalem. Most of the other prophets were farmers or ordinary common people, such as Amos and Micah. But Isaiah, on the other hand, lived close to the king. He was well educated and probably enjoyed the highest privileges of his time.

He may have even belonged to the king’s cabinet. His prophecies dealt repeatedly with problems of government and international relations. Isaiah was also known as Judah’s most holy man. He carried on his prophetic ministry for perhaps four or five decades. He was more than likely serving in the temple at Jerusalem in some official capacity when he experienced this special visitation from God – when he experienced the awesome presence of the Lord. Isaiah had an impressive CV.

But in response to God’s visitation, the prophet repents:

- Had he lied at some point in his life? We don’t know.
- Did he have problems with pride? I can’t say.
- Did he covet? The Bible seems to be silent in this regard.

Nevertheless, we do know this, even though he was a holy man, when he found himself in the presence of the one true and Holy God, he could do nothing but cry out in repentance and shame. In effect he was saying, *“I have been found out! Lord! You win!”* His righteousness, quite simply, was nothing more than dirty rags in comparison to God’s holiness!

Note, if the angels themselves acknowledge God’s **holiness**, it is not unreasonable to expect that we too should do the same. We must fall down before Him, in all humility and repentance, whenever we come into contact with His divine presence. Let me make a rather frank statement here. I’m convinced that this is the very reason why there is so much unconfessed sin in the body of Christ. We’ve been so preoccupied with the “blessings of God” that we have forgotten the presence of God. In neglecting His *presence*, we have lost sight of His **holiness** (and our personal lack of it). In neglecting His *presence*, we have forgotten the fear of God. In neglecting His *presence*, we have lost sight of who we really are!

The truth of the matter is, all of us are at fault. Each and everyone of us has blown it! And there is no one here today who has not lied, or cheated, or thought vile thoughts, or been guilty of unrighteous ways. All of these things are offensive to God. Yet, all of them drove God’s Son to the cross! Therefore, we should all be real and transparent before God. Hear me, please. **Romans 8:1** declares that there is *“no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.”* If the Lord isn’t into condemning you, then I certainly don’t want to do it either. But condemnation is not the point here. God’s divine presence is the point! Quite simply, His blessings testify of His loving-kindness. On the other hand, His **presence** represents His holiness. So when people enter into His presence they will willingly and freely “repent” – even if they are holy and righteous men like Job or Isaiah!

In our text, Isaiah dedicates himself afresh to God: *“Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’”* Notice:

- Isaiah offered no excuses.
- He said nothing in his defence.
- He simply laid himself on the altar of commitment.

When Moses encountered the presence of the Lord at the burning bush, he took off his shoes for he knew that he was standing on holy ground. However, that is not all that he did. He then agreed to become Israel's deliverer! The voice of the Lord called to Isaiah differently, *“Declare to Judah the destruction that is certain if her people do not turn from their evil ways. They will not change, but preach my word any-way.”*

But he still obeyed! Here, Isaiah was told that the people he was sent to, would reject his message. The outcome, however, was not his problem. He was simply called to **go** (to obey), and God would take care of the rest. I lesson we should all learn from!

In this passage we can see the “fruit” of God's presence. Namely - **VISION**:

- Isaiah was able to see God.
- He was able to see himself.
- He was able to see the needs of others.

However, being able to see (having vision) is not the only fruit that God's presence can produce. Here are some other fruits that we can expect:

1. **REST** - *“My Presence will go with you, and I will give you **rest**” (Exodus 33:14).*
2. **POWER** - *“He brought you out of Egypt with His Presence, with His mighty **power**” (Deuteronomy 4:37).*
3. **FEAR** - *“Therefore I am terrified at His Presence; When I consider this, I am **afraid** of Him” (Job 23:15, Genesis 3:8; 4:16).*
4. **VINDICATION** - *“Let my **vindication** come from Your Presence” (Psalm 17:2).*
5. **GLADNESS** - *“You have made him exceedingly **glad** with Your Presence” (Psalm 21:6).*
6. **ANGELS** - *“And the **Angel** of His Presence saved them” (Isaiah 63:9).*
7. **REFRESHING** - *“So that times of **refreshing** may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19).*
8. **MIRACLES** - *“When You did awesome things for which we did not look, You came down, The mountains*

shook at Your presence” (Isaiah 63:4).

9. **LOVE** - *“God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:16).*

As with Isaiah, having the reality of God’s presence is not dependent on our being in a particular circumstance or place, but is only dependent on our determination to keep the Lord before us continually. Our problems arise when we refuse to place our trust in the ‘reality’ of His presence. The experience the psalmist speaks of, *“We will not fear, even though...”* shall be ours once we are grounded on the truth of the ‘reality’ of God’s presence. Not just a simple awareness of it, but an understanding of the **reality** of it. Then we will proclaim, *“He has been here all the time!”*

And remember, whatever “fruit” His presence manifests is exactly what you need to see you through. To gain the victory!