

God's Presence

He Promises Never To Leave Us

By Elder Akwa Angwafo Delivered March 21, 2021

Scriptures: Psalm 139:1-14; Psalm 23:31-6; Joshua 1:5-11; Exodus 33:12-19

Since we cannot come together as a community in-person to the house of the Lord because of the pandemic to worship God, sing His praises, fellowship together, more ever, we long for presence. We are grateful for the technology that helps us to see, talk, and hear each other. But it is not the same as presence.

That day will come. It will. Until then, I am striving to focus on God's presence. As we just sang the song "Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place," This place refers to wherever we are all worshiping God through prayers, through shearing the word of God, and through song of praises. What happens? In this place, you can feel His mighty power and His grace. You can see glory on each face because of the presence of God.

The presence of God in our lives begins at conception and birth. In Psalm 139: 13-14, we read, "13 For you created my inmost being, you knit me together in my mother's womb. 14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made, your works are wonderful. I know that full well".

We see one of the most significant passages about the miracle of human conception and birth. David declares that God is present at conception and birth and because we are made in the image of God, he has a unique purpose and plan for who is born. When we feel worthless or even begin to hate ourselves, remember that God's spirit is ready and willing to work within us. We should have as much respect for ourselves as our Maker has for us.

One of the characteristics of God is His Omnipresence. Psalm 139:7 says, "where can I go from your spirit? where can I flee from your presence?" He is present everywhere. There is no hiding from God. He is with us. He is not isolated, even with the Coronavirus. He is here, right here. With me, with you. Because this is so, you can never escape from the spirit. This is good news to those who know and love God because no matter what we do or where we go, we can never be far from God's comforting presence. God is all-seeing, all-knowing, all-powerful, and everywhere present. God knows us, and God is with us, and His greatest gift is to allow us to know Him.

We cannot restrict our God to some small rooms, or we cannot limit our God to some spaces and time zone. No. God's presence fills the earth. Jeremiah 23:24 "Who can hide in secret places so that I cannot see them?" declares the Lord. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" declares the Lord. What a great word. This is the great God that we serve. And how many times do we think we are doing things in secret that no one will know? We make the same mistakes when we assume God doesn't know or care about the situation in our lives or when we question His ability to handle things beyond our control. How big is the God you worship? God and His presence fill the earth. God watches, and this God is with us. He leads us, and he is mindful of us.

The presence of God is one of deep intimacy with our father. It is that place of knowing Him and being fully known by Him. The presence of God is what makes the difference in anyone's life. There is nothing as glorious as a child of God carrying the presence of God with them wherever they go. The secret of success, victory, and fulfilling the purpose of one's life lies in the fact that the presence of God is with them. Do you want to experience divine victory in your life? Do you want to be an overcomer? If so, you need the presence of God in your life.

Our focus today is on how God promises never to leave us. We can find this example in the life of Moses as we read our focal scripture. In these scriptures, Moses is in the presence of God as God has been telling him to lead the Israelites. Moses is seeking the face of God on behalf of these people. Moses is pleading with the Lord to teach him His ways, so he may know Him and continue to find favor with Him. When God's presence is not with us, it is useless for us to attempt anything at all. When Moses spoke face to face with the Lord, he said in verse 15, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here." He said, Lord if your presence is not with us, we are not going anywhere. We will not take a single step unless we are assured that you are with us. And Moses knew the secret. He knew that it was the presence of God that made a difference in their lives and the lives of the people around them. If we see the world today, the same is true of us. If you are a child of God, there is a definite difference between you and the people around you. Because when God is with you, when His presence is with you, he leads you, guides you, protects you, preserves you, and is very mindful of you.

Moses was not bothered by how the nations around them got their guidance or formed their armies. But He said, Lord, as much as I am concerned, I want your presence to go before us. I need your counsel to be my guide because I am sure if you go with me, I receive God's victory in my life. When the presence of God is with us, no enemy can harm us, but without him, we are reduced to nothing.

The nations of this world can trust in their armies, in their iron chariots, their horses, or their skilled warheads, but we will trust only in the presence of God. In verse 14, The Lord replied, "my presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." What a fantastic promise. No matter what trials each one of us faces in our lives, if we have the presence of God immersed in us, we

can be in our absolute best. We do not have to be worried; we do not have to be tensed. The Lord will not hide His face from His people but will cause it to shine on them.

The other example I want to bring to the congregation this morning is from the life of Joshua.

Joshua succeeded Moses as Israel's leader. Joshua's new job consisted of leading more than two million people into a strange new land and conquering it. Because Joshua had assisted Moses for many years, he was well prepared to take over the nation's leadership. What a challenge, even for a man of Joshua's caliber. Every new job is a challenge. Without God, it can be frightening. With God, it can be a great adventure. We read in Joshua 1:5, "No one will be able to stand against you, all the days of your life. As I was with Moses so that I will be with you, I will never leave you nor forsake you". God tells Joshua, no enemy can stand against him because God's presence is with him. God's promises are true, and He is faithful to carry out all His pledges to every one of His children. Just as God was with Joshua, He is with us as we face new challenges every day. We may not conquer nations, but we face challenging situations, difficult people, and temptations every day. God promises that He will never abandon us or fail to help us. By asking God to direct us, we can conquer many of life's challenges.

In Joshua 1:9, the Lord commands Joshua, "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid, do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go". Joshua had to be strong and courageous because the task ahead of him would not be easy, but God's presence was with him. When God's presence is with us, we can be strong; we can be courageous because He gives our minds to be at rest, and we have to leave our battles to Him. He will lead us, He will direct us, and He will give us victory, no matter what.

In a chaotic and uncertain world, it is easy to fear, especially when evils rage. Psalm 23: 4-6 tells us to "fear no evil." And that God is with us even when life gets complicated. David reminds us

that even in the shadow of death, the Lord offers comfort. When we seek the Lord, we can find His will and live in His love. It is through seeking that we find a loving God who is always willing to sustain us.

One of the most significant promises in the Bible is the verse "I will never leave you nor forsake you." This verse is written 83 times in the Bible. God watches over His people. Moses told the Israelites before they entered the promised land in Deuteronomy 31:8, "The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you, He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be discouraged". They could not see God, but he was with them, nonetheless. This verse is written so that we can be encouraged and at the same time be exhorted to seek the face of God. For God is not only with us but residing in us. Sometimes difficult things happen that we may not understand, but we can also reflect on the number of times that God has preserved us without us every being aware. People may leave us, abandon us, and ridicule us, but God will never leave us nor forsake us. But if we seek the face of God as Christians, we will have guidance that we need for our lives. We will experience God's presence wherever we go. He will never leave you nor forsake you even when your faith wears thin or when you fall into sin or turn away from His loving truth.

As Christians, how are we in the presence of God? Is our relationship with God steady? Are we experiencing the presence of God in a steady manner or are we neglectful of the presence of God? It is a significant danger to be outside the presence of God. Sometimes Christians are so occupied with so many things around them, and they neglect God. Sometimes, we want to have our stubborn ways; sometimes, we are so stubborn as the Israelites. What did they do? They sinned, went into idolatry and the presence of God was not with them. Are we in such a situation? How can we come back to the presence of God?

We need to come back and ask God for forgiveness, directions, and guidance. He is faithful to be with us. As Christians, how can we experience this practical presence of God. We can experience Him in our lives by abiding in Him, remaining in Him. If we are separated from God, we cannot produce a thing. John 15:4-5 "Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vein. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. 5. I am the vein and you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit, apart from me you can do nothing".

The psalmist puts it squarely in Psalm 42: 1-2 "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. 2. My soul thirst for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?" As the life of a deer depends upon water, so our lives depend upon God. We have to deeply desire the presence of God as one desires food and drink. Those who seek Him and long to understand him, find eternal life. Does your soul thirst for God?

We have to seek the presence of God daily in our lives and ask the Lord to enable us to have His presence at all times in our lives. We do not want to be found where His presence is not with us. Being in the presence of God equips us with blessings, joy, and peace.

If there is one thing you want to take from today's sermon, God's presence is not merely a theory, it is a fact and you can depend on it.

Amen.

Our Challenge.

As we go through the week, let us ask ourselves?

- Are we earnestly and diligently seeking God?
- Do we really hunger and thirst for God's presence?
- Do we set aside time to wait in God's presence, spend time in prayer, be in His word and praise and worship Him?
- Have we become too complacent, busy, and involved with our personal desires that we no longer take time to stay in God's presence until His power and glory are manifested in our lives?

Our Assurance comes from Matthew 6:33

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

- Seeking the kingdom of God brings peace
- Seeking the kingdom of God brings joy
- Seeking the kingdom of God strengthens us
- Seeking the kingdom of God gives rest.

Amen.