

April 30 2000 Morning Service

by David Ravenhill

The sermon emphasizes the importance of focusing on the whole of God's word, rather than just the parts, in order to have a complete and accurate understanding of His truth and to experience His presence.

Duration: 1:07:25

Scripture: Exodus 33:15, Job 26:14, Psalm 27:4, Psalm 42:1-2, Jeremiah 9:23-24, Matthew 6:33, John 15:15, Philippians 3:10, Colossians 2:9-10, Revelation 3:20

Topics: "Christian Life", "Intimacy With God", "The Presence of God"

Description

David Ravenhill emphasizes the significance of seeking the presence of God over the pursuit of worldly desires, using the analogy of a violinist's dedication to illustrate the importance of longing for a deeper relationship with God. He reflects on the story of Moses, who faced the choice between entering the Promised Land without God's presence or remaining in the wilderness with God. Ravenhill urges the congregation to recognize that true fulfillment comes from knowing God intimately, rather than merely focusing on the 'parts' of faith. He highlights the tragic reality that many congregations hear about God's works but fail to truly know Him. The sermon concludes with a call to prioritize God's presence above all earthly treasures.

Transcript

of people that can play, and especially the violin. I went week after week after week for several years and took our middle daughter to violin lessons and invested an awful lot of money that I wish I still had. It never paid off like that.

But anyway, praise God. When I get to heaven, I'm looking for some Stradivarius hidden away up there with my name on it, and the first thousand years or so, just leave me alone. I'm going to make up for lost time.

Amen. Can't wait. Let's just pray again, shall we? Father, once again, we turn and gaze upon you, Lord.

We say you and you alone are the author. You are the finisher. Father, come and have your way in this meeting this morning.

Father, we acknowledge these are your people. They don't belong to man. They don't belong to a denomination.

They were redeemed by the blood of the lamb. Father, they're your sheep. You're their shepherd.

You know every need that is represented here this morning. As the Lord minister to each and every one, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

I want to speak to you this morning on the presence of God. My wife and I raised our family. We have three daughters, and we raised them in the city of Christchurch in New Zealand.

If you know anything about New Zealand, it's a very beautiful country made up of two islands. The largest city in the South Island of that nation is called Christchurch. That's not the name of the church, but the name of the city.

It is a city of about 300,000. It's a very beautiful city. The River Avon flows through it.

There's mountains not too far away. Right in the very hub of that city, there is an old Anglican cathedral, a beautiful old stone building dating back to the turn of the century. And just a couple of blocks away, there is a museum called the Canterbury Museum.

Canterbury is a sort of a province that Christchurch is in. Again, it's an old building, stone, beautiful old building, gardens outside. And as you go in the main entranceway of that museum, there is a verse of scripture taken from the book of Job, Job chapter 26 and verse 14.

And it says, lo, these are a part of his ways, but how little a portion do we hear of him? Let me say that again. Lo, these are a part of his ways, but how little a portion do we hear of him? I've often wanted to find out who was responsible for that verse of scripture being there. Number one, it's taken from an obscure book.

Not everybody's into the book of Job. And here is this verse that has been sort of hidden away. And obviously somebody knew the word of God to be able to take that verse and apply it to a museum.

I've spent hours in that museum with the children, with my wife, going down all the corridors, looking in all the display cabinets, admiring all of God's handiwork. I've seen children take the hand of a parent and, you know, point to some animal or reptile or some other thing and just, you know, ask mom or dad what it is. They've never seen that sort of animal before and never seen the size of some snake or other thing.

There's drawer after drawer that you can open. There's birds' nests from around the world and birds' eggs and bugs and butterflies and all the other things that God has created. And yet in all the hours that I've spent in that museum, I don't ever recall anybody attributing all of that handiwork to God himself.

And so that verse is a fitting verse. These are a part of his ways, but how little a portion do we hear of him? And while that may be a good verse to put over a museum, it's a tragic verse to put over the house of God. And yet I think that we could put it over many, many, many congregations, not only in this nation, but other nations, that we hear all about the parts, but we hear very little about him.

I picked up a book a number of years ago. In fact, I think my father had sent it to me by Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones on the Sermon on the Mount. And in the preface of that book, he makes a statement that I have said is worth one semester in any Bible school in America.

And that normally gets the Bible school students' attention, I hope. But the statement he makes is this, there is nothing so likely to lead to error or to heresy as to begin with the parts rather than the whole. Let

me say that again.

There is nothing so likely to lead to error or to heresy as to focus or to begin with the parts rather than the whole. I was in India about 13 years ago now, ministering at a Bible college outside the city of Hyderabad. A friend of mine was looking after it for a number of months and invited me over.

And it was my first real experience there in India, apart from touching down once in Bombay, but to spend a little bit of time at least in that country. And one afternoon we were taken in this Jeep that belonged to the director of the school and shown around a little bit. But I noticed that the students were always eyeing this man's Jeep.

It was a brand new Jeep there in the compound of the school. And every time there was a break, you know, the students and especially the guys, you know, it's a guy thing, I guess, but looking at that car and, you know, sort of drooling a little bit, thinking, boy, wouldn't it be great to be behind the wheel. Most of these students obviously couldn't even afford bicycles.

But using that Jeep as an analogy, trying to get across the importance of that truth, I said to those students, I said, suppose I came to the school and for one entire year, all I do hour after hour, day after day, week after week, month after month, is stress the importance of the carburetor on that Jeep. I never talk about anything else other than the carburetor. And I go into great detail about the carburetor.

I talk about the whole evolution of the carburetor, you know, all the different types of carburetors, single barrel, two barrel, four barrel, six barrel, if you like drag racing. I talk about all the components that make up the carburetor. I talk about the Greek word for carburetor and the Hebrew word for carburetor.

I give you assignments on, you know, carburetors and you've got to do research about carburetors and so on and so forth. And so day after day after day, week after week, month after month, an entire year, all those students hear about is the carburetor. At the end of that year, of course, they're all enthused about going out.

And now all over India, you have carburetor churches and carburetor churches perpetuate again the teaching on the carburetor because all they've ever known and all they've ever studied is carburetor theology, if you like. And then another lecturer comes to that school and he has a revelation on the distributor. And like the carburetor man, all he does, he talks nonstop about the distributor day after day and hour after hour and week after week and month after month.

Again, talks about all the different components in the distributor, what the distributor does and so on. The great distributor developers and, you know, the evolution into electronic ignition and so on and so forth. And once again, the Greek and the Hebrew word and now a new class.

And all over India, you have now the distributor movement. And then another man comes, takes out of his pocket a little thing the following year, about three inches long, white at the top, black at the bottom. He's from Tulsa or Detroit and he says, without this, it's impossible to start the car.

And he takes out a spark plug and he says, listen, you can have a brand new Ferrari, can cost you three, four hundred thousand dollars. May have beautiful leather seats, Pirelli tires, Bose stereo system, everything that you've ever dreamed of in a car. But if you take out this little plug or these little plugs, that car will not go anywhere.

It can have all the horsepower in the world, the biggest engine, a V12 engine. But if you remove these plugs, that car will not even go. Therefore, this is the most important part of a car engine.

In order to get across his point, of course, he says, there are some people, of course, who think that the carburetor is the most important. There are other people I've heard that are stressing distributors. I don't know what those are, but he says, I'm here to tell you that what God is saying to the church right now is right here.

Without this, it's impossible to start the car. And so once again, hour after hour, day after day and week after week and month after month, they have a constant diet of spark plug theology. And now you have another graduating class and all over India, you have the spark plug movement.

And of course, spark plug churches have spark plug conferences and they fly in spark plug teachers or preachers. And across town, you have a distributor conference and they have some, you know, big shots that are going on about the latest development in the distributor. Meanwhile, next month there is coming this great carburetor conference.

And that's what we've done. Unfortunately, with the word of God. I lived for 17 years overseas after my wife and I graduated from Bible school, 15 years in New Zealand, three years in New Guinea.

And periodically I would come back and during that course of time, there was always a new emphasis. One year it's discipleship, the next year it's faith, the next year is prosperity, the next year it's prayer, the next year it's the family, the next year is church growth, the next year is pageantry, the next year, you know, it's the prophetic, the next year is the apostolic, and all you got to do is take back issues of charisma magazine and you can thumb through and, you know, one year it's worship and one year it's this and one year it's that and one year. And there's nothing so likely to lead to error or to heresy as to begin with the parts rather than the whole.

You see, if you put all of those parts together, you have a person. His name is the Lord Jesus Christ. I am the way, the truth, not a part of the truth.

I am the truth and the life. And we are complete in Him. We're not complete in faith.

We're not complete in prosperity. We're not complete in this or that or the other. We're not complete with a part.

It leads to very serious error. But we are complete in Him. Paul says we are complete in Him.

He has made unto us wisdom and righteousness and all these other things. And as I've read the Word of God over the years and studied the lives of great men and women of God, I've come to this conclusion that there is one common denominator and that is that all of these men and women had an insatiable hunger for God Himself. They may have been men of faith, women of faith.

They may have operated in the miraculous and so on, but at the root and the crux of their lives, if you like, was this longing for the presence of God. We see it in the life of Paul that I may know Him. Not that I may know about Him.

Paul knew about Him, still sort of baffling the experts with his writings, Book of Romans and so on. What did he really mean by this and that and so on. But Paul says, I know what I have believed.

He knew that, but he says, I know in whom I have believed. And I am persuaded that he is able. And Paul has this longing again to know Him, forgetting all those things which are behind.

He says, pressing on. That's the cry. The longing in my heart, look, is to know you.

Jeremiah says, if you boast about anything, he says, don't boast about your might. Don't boast about your wisdom. Don't boast about your riches.

And I think if he was around today, he'd say again, don't boast about your faith and don't boast about this and that. He says, if you boast about anything, boast in this that you know and you understand me, saith the Lord. Only one thing, he says, worth bragging about.

Only one thing worth knowing about. And that is that intimacy, that knowledge of God Himself. And you go through again this wonderful word and you see men repeatedly crying out to God like David.

One thing have I desired of the Lord that will I seek after. That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, simply to behold the beauty of the Lord. David had, as somebody said, this magnificent obsession with God Himself.

All he wanted was God. Who have I in heaven but Thee? Very easy to agree with that, isn't it? The first part of that verse doesn't really challenge me that much. Who have I in heaven but Thee? I can say that and mean it.

But the second part of the verse is the tough part. And there is nothing on earth that I desire beside Thee. I wonder how many of us can honestly say that this morning, right from the very depths of our being.

Lord, as I look around this earth with all that the world would say I need, that new car, that bigger house, this and that, and so on and so forth. Look, there's nothing that I desire but Thee. Here was a king, had all the power, all the resources of the throne, could have had anything he wanted as he looked across that vast empire, if you like.

He says, Lord, there's nothing on earth that takes my attention. Nothing on earth, Lord, that I desire other than your presence. A day in your courts is better than a thousand outside.

I'd rather be a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. In other words, the world has nothing. I'd rather just serve in the house of God and dwell in all those tents with all their lavish items, all the gold and the silver and everything else, Lord, just to be in your presence.

Another place, and we sang about it this morning, David says, there is the heart of the deer pants after the water brook. So long as my soul after Thee, O Lord, my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. I was with a gentleman a number of years ago, a man by the name of David Minor out on the West Coast.

There's an East Coast David Minor and a West Coast David Minor, both older men, both the real fathers in the faith. But this was the one on the West Coast. And he was ministering as we were in this conference together.

And he touched on that verse in a way that I don't think I will ever forget. He said, you know, David was a shepherd and he would watch as the deer would make their way in the early hours of the morning at daybreak down into the water brook. And there they would drink their fill and then they would sort of saunter away into some thicket and hide out.

But he said, on this occasion, as David is watching the deer, the deer is panting. And he says, there's only one reason the deer is panting, and that is the deer is being pursued, it's being chased. And the deer goes by just flying by him and he can hear the heaving and the panting of that deer trying to escape from the one that is determined to bring its life to an end.

And he says that deer knows instinctively that there is only one place of protection, and that is in the water brook. Because if it can find its way into the water brook there, the predator cannot pick up the scent of the trail of that deer and it can find its way down the river bed and be able to get away. And so he says the water brook became a place of protection.

But he says not only that, but the water brook is also a place of satisfaction because there that deer can replenish that tired and exhausted body. And he said, I believe David wrote this when he was being pursued by Saul and day after day he's fleeing and one night in one cave, another night in another cave and running here and running there because Saul has made threats on his life and his men are hounding him, they're after him. He never knows when his life is going to be brought to an end.

And David just said, Lord, there's only one place of protection. It's the hard pans for the water brook. Lord, it's to come into the river of God that is full of water.

It's to come in, Lord, into your presence. And in your presence is that place of protection. But not only that, in your presence is that place of satisfaction.

It's there I can be restored. It's there, Lord, you can touch me again. It's there I can feel again your embrace and feel the security and the comfort of just being alone in the presence of God.

So many times David expresses again this deep, deep longing that he has for God's presence. If you have your Bible this morning, if you'd turn with me to the book of Exodus, Exodus chapter 32. And here we have another man, Moses.

And Moses has this deep longing after God in this chapter. Of course, he is in the presence of God already. He's seeking the face of God.

God is revealing to him the tabernacle, all the various parts of the tabernacle, the furniture and so on. In the meanwhile, the children of Israel have become restless, not only restless, but rebellious. And they go to Aaron, Moses' brother.

And they say to Aaron, listen, we want a God that will go before us, a God that will lead us. Obviously our leader is gone. We haven't heard of him for weeks now.

Something's happened. We need another leader. We need another God.

And of course, Aaron bows in that moment of pressure to the demands of the people. He gathers together all the jewelry from the women, throws it into the fire, and out pops the golden calf. That was his explanation.

It wasn't quite that simple, but they fashioned the golden calf. And around that golden calf is really nothing less than a sexual orgy that has taken place. If you understand, the gods of the nations in those days were fertility gods.

They weren't agricultural nations. I mean, they were agricultural. They weren't industrial nations like many of our nations are today.

And most of their gods, again, were gods that they relied upon in their mind anyway to be fruitful, fruitful in the fields and fruitful here and fruitful there. And they were basically fertility gods. I've traveled a little bit.

I've seen some of these idols that literally are made in the form of sexual objects. And around that, of course, was all of this passion that was just given over to the flesh. And God sees what is going on.

He's angry. He's angry at the idolatry. He's angry at the immorality.

He's angry at everything. And in verse 7, he says to Moses, I want you to go down at once, Moses, for your people that you brought up from the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. They've turned aside from the way in which I commanded them.

They've made for themselves a molten calf. They've worshipped it, sacrificed to it and said, this is your God, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt. You know, God, the Bible says, is a jealous God.

It's a righteous jealousy. But there's nothing that makes God angrier than to have all of his great attributes and all of these great miraculous events attributed to something that they've made with their own hands. This is the God that brought you out of Egypt.

This is the God that brought about all those miracles. This is the God that brought about all those plagues. This is God that parted the Red Sea.

This is the God that drowned the horse and the rider. This is the one that has been responsible. It's this God right here that did all of those miracles.

And God is angry. And he says in verse 10 to Moses, let me alone, Moses, just leave me alone that my anger may burn against them, that I may destroy them and I will make of you a great nation. Moses, don't try anything.

Forget about prayer, forget it, but just leave me alone. I'm angry. And he says, I want to start all over again.

I'll wipe out every single one of them. I will make of you a great nation. You know, this is every pastor's dream.

God comes, you know, it's been one of those rough weeks where the complaint box is full and the phone's been ringing off the hook and, you know, music's too loud or temperature's too cold or the service is too long or the lights are too bright or whatever it is. Or, you know, they weren't consulted when the color scheme went in, you know, all those things. And God says, listen, I've had enough as well, pastor.

I finally agree with you. Boy, they are a cantankerous, rebellious, stubborn, obstinate people, aren't they? And I've got this brilliant idea, pastor. I'm sure you'll like it.

When you're out of town on vacation, there's going to come this virus and every single one of them will be gone by the time you get back. And you won't have a thing to do with it. You'll be out of town.

And then pastor, I will make of you a great nation. God was into cloning back then. And he says, they'll think like you, they'll act like you.

If the temperature's right with you, it'd be right for everybody. If the music's right with you, it'd be right with everybody. If you like the color scheme, they'll like this color.

I mean, they'll be clones. They'll have your DNA. Moses, I will make of you a great nation.

You would have thought Moses would have said, God, this is the best news I've ever heard. After all, they complained about his wife. They complained about the lack of water.

They complained about the lack of food. They complained about the fact that they had as much power and authority as he had. I mean, they were always complaining, but Moses is a shepherd and he loves the people.

In verse 13, he begins to pray and he says, remember Abraham and Isaac and Israel, thy servants to whom you did swear by yourself. And you said to them, I will multiply your seed as the starvations of heaven. And all this land that I've spoken, I will give to you and your seed and they shall inherit it forever.

In other words, what Moses is doing here says, Hey God, just a minute now. What about those promises? What about the promise you made to Abraham? What about the promise you made to Isaac? What about the promise you made to Jacob? God, I thought you were a covenant keeping God. I thought you were the original promise keeper.

I thought you said, let God be true and every man a liar. I thought you, your word says that your word is steadfast in heaven, that heaven and earth will pass away, but my word will never pass away. God, are you going to give us promises and then renege on those promises? Are you a sort of a fickle God? Is that the God we have? You say one thing one day and change it the next day.

You make promises and then you just break those promises. You don't follow through. I thought you were steadfast, immovable.

I thought there was with you, no variableness, no shadow of turning. I thought you were constant. God, I didn't think you told lies.

We've got promises that go back that have kept us going hundreds and hundreds of years. 400 years you made promises to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob that have kept us going. The promise that one day we will go in and possess our own land.

One day you would bless us. One day you would make up for or to us all those years that we were never unsalary. When we were exploited by the Egyptians and so on.

What about it God? God says you've got me. Verse 14, the Lord changed his mind about the evil that he said he would do to his people. And then you go into the next chapter now it is God's turn to remind Moses that he is a covenant keeping God.

And verse 1 it says the Lord spoke to Moses, depart or leave here you and the people that you brought up from the land of Egypt to the land which I swore to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob saying to your seed I will give it. Moses this is the day. I will keep my promise.

I remember those promises. I want you to remember that I made a covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, with Jacob. That I would give you your own land.

A land that flows according to verse 3 with milk and honey. A land of blessing, a land of prosperity, a land of abundance. And I want you to blow the trumpets.

I want you to rally the people. I want you to tell them to get their belongings packed because I want you to take them in and possess the land. This is the day we're going in to possess the land.

That was good news. Here was a nation of slaves, a nation that had suffered incredibly. The Bible calls it the iron furnace of affliction.

400 years of servitude, 400 years of bondage, 400 years of pain and sorrow and hardship. When God came to Moses at the burning bush he says I've seen their suffering, I've seen their affliction, I've seen their oppression. And you look into the sort of the root meaning of those words and it seems to imply that one is physical, one's emotional, one's spiritual.

You see there was an oppression over that nation. Why? Because they were involved in the occult, they were involved in witchcraft. When Moses threw down his rod, Pharaoh wasn't especially impressed.

He just called some of his men and they threw down theirs and they had incredible power. There was a darkness over that nation and then they had the physical suffering as they were beaten day after day after day in order to raise the production of bricks in order to build the cities for Pharaoh. So there was physical pain.

In fact the psalmist talks about I have relieved your shoulder of the burden. They were stooped over as they carried these bricks, men and women, young men. And the whole body's just bent down again under the load.

God says I've seen the torment of all of them. But then there was the emotional suffering. You have a generation who remembers little boys and little girls ripped out of their arms and thrown into the Nile.

You have mothers and fathers that watched as their daughter began to mature and the taskmaster began to look at her and honey you're coming home with me. Never knowing where that girl went, never knowing all the abuse that she was subject to, physical, sexual. Can you imagine the emotional pain? The Bible calls it the iron furnace of affliction, suffering, hardship.

And the one thing that kept them going through all those years was the fact that way back in the history God says one day I'll bring you out. One day you'll have freedom. One day you'll have your own land.

One day you'll no longer be under the taskmasters. You'll have houses, vineyards, olive trees, all of these things that you've longed for that you were deprived of for all those centuries. I'm going to make them up to you.

In fact you can read about it there in Deuteronomy chapter 6 just very quickly. Let me read you a little bit of God's description. Verse 10.

It shall come about when the Lord your God brings you into the land which you swore to your fathers to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob to give you great and splendid cities. P.S. Which you did not build. Boy was that ever good news.

Listen these cities you don't have to build. They'd spent their life building cities. That's all they remember.

Cities, cities, cities, building cities for the Pharaoh. And God says listen I will make up to you great cities, splendid cities that you don't have to build. Houses he says full of good things.

Not just empty houses, not houses that are full of stuff that should be carted off to you know goodwill, give them the teen challenge. They get all you know they get all the bad stuff unfortunately. You know as much as you've done it unto the least of these.

No we won't go there. But houses full of good things that you didn't have to fill. And then he says not only that but hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant.

I mean this was good news. God says Moses this is the day I'm going to fulfill my covenants. Can you imagine the children of Israel getting that message again finally.

We're going to hunt you know some father gathering the kids. Guess what we're going to have our own house. We're going to live in a beautiful city and that house is going to be full of all the things you've ever wanted.

You know bicycles and rollerblades if we modernize it. You know it'll have a computer and a television. You know everything we've ever wanted.

Darling's going to have the most incredible kitchen. And God then says to Moses P.S. I have no plans on going with you. Notice there in verse 3. Go to a land that flows with milk and honey for I will not go with you because you're an obstinate people unless I destroy you along the way.

God is still angry. God says listen I will keep my covenant but you're not having my presence. I'm a covenant keeping God but I'm not going.

If I go I'll destroy you. I'm still angry at what you've done. You're still stubborn and obstinate but I'll keep my promises.

Now what would you do if you were in this situation? Here is Moses now. He has a major choice. One of two things he can do.

He can go in. After all he's got around a million people that have longed for this particular day. And he can go in and he can possess the land.

I mean really this is the American dream here isn't it if we modernize it. Isn't the American dream to have your own land. A little few acres maybe.

Have your home paid for. Again no mortgage payments. In the back of that house to have some vineyards and olive trees.

To have your well in case Y2K kicks in a little late. I mean this really is the American dream isn't it? And not only to have a house but a house loaded with good things. I mean that's the American dream.

You know the kids have grown up now. We paid for their college and we've still got a little bit of a nest egg. We've made some good investments or whatever and you know now we can refurbish the house the way we want it now that the kids have gone and you know we can put in the carpet and you know get the piano

we always wanted and get that stereo system and you know update this and modernize that a little bit and we can travel now you know because retirement's coming in a couple years.

I mean that's the American dream isn't it? And here now they are faced with that but no presence of God. On the other hand choice number two is to stay where you are. Let me describe where you are.

The bible calls it a waste howling wilderness. Dry, barren, arid, nothing grows there. There's no olive trees.

There's no vineyards. There's no wells. The water was supernatural.

The food was supernatural. Apart from that as far as the eye could see it's just sand. Dry, barren, wilderness.

I saw a documentary recently in that part of the world where it says the temperatures can soar to 130 degrees. That's why the bible says the sun will not smite thee by day nor the moon by night. It can drop to extremes.

You can have such a incredible diversity that you can freeze together, freeze rather at certain times. No wonder God provided a canopy over the children of Israel as they wandered through it. A divine umbrella.

It wasn't just a cloud that went up. It was a mushroom if you like and they were under the shelter of that thing otherwise they'd have fried to death. And then I believe the fire was not only for light.

I believe the fire was for warmth. But nothing else. Not exactly the American dream.

It's not the thing that you want to do is you know go out there somewhere where you can buy land for \$100 an acre out in the you know deserts of New Mexico somewhere miles from anywhere else. I mean that's not exactly a retirement place. But they had one other thing.

Presence of God. What would you do if you had that choice? You had to cash your ballot on the way out this morning. You could have the house that you've always longed for.

Full of everything you've ever desired. You say well this is Sunday morning and we're doing our best to be spiritual you know. We're carnal the rest of the week.

Give us a break. You know don't stir up those carnal desires. Those fleshly desires.

We're just trying to at least for an hour or so this morning we're just trying to you know be spiritual. And you're messing around with our minds here. Getting us to think about the world and all the things we think about the rest of the week and all the things that we put in so many hours of work to get.

But let me sweeten the deal for you because I know it sounds very carnal. Notice in verse 2 I'll send an angel before you and I'll drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, the Jebusite. So God said listen I will not go with you but I will provide an angel.

Not a demon. And this angel will do signs, wonders and miracles. That sounds good.

Not quite carnal now. I mean now you can have the big house and the big car and all the carping, all the furnishing, the clothes, the jewels. And also an angel.

Angels are popular these days. Have their own television program. And they do all sorts of things don't they? So here's an angel that will go before you when the going gets tough and it's beyond your natural capability.

Angel, would you take care of this situation? So you're going to have signs, wonders, miracles. I mean that should satisfy. If anything should satisfy, the miraculous should satisfy.

But God says you're still not having my presence. I'm convinced that there are some promises in the Old Testament that excel the New. I know theologically that's not true.

Hebrew says we have a better covenant, better promises, better priesthood and so on. But you know I still haven't quite believed that yet. I still struggle a little bit you know.

It's like the new Christian who had some problems you know really believing the Word of God, all the miracles and so on. He's still struggling. Finally he went to the pastor one day.

He said you know pastor, he said I finally believe, he said that Noah made that ark. He said it's taken me a long time to really believe that Noah made that ark. But he said I'm still struggling over the fact that the children of Israel carried it for 40 years in the wilderness.

You see I'm still struggling because I haven't found a verse yet that gives me permission to go into any sort of subdivision. Let's assume we're the nation of Israel this morning. And God says to us after this meeting's over I want you to get in your cars, follow pastor into the fanciest subdivision in all of Cedar Rapids.

You know where all the homes are six, seven hundred million dollar homes on the golf course there. And that's the promised land. And you can just drive in and pick out whatever home you want.

You know you take your wife and you walk down the streets there and you see these beautiful homes. You say darling which one do you want? I say boy I really like that one over there. I say well I sort of fancy this one.

I say but look at that one you know. The swimming pool, tennis courts. I say but you know this one's got a couple of Lexus and you know.

You know you go up and you knock on the door and you say listen I'm one of God's children and he's told me this house is mine. And you have exactly 30 seconds to vacate it. And you can't take a single thing.

You've got to leave it loaded with good things. You can imagine that the door would close faster than it opened. But you know you stick your foot in there and you say angel we've got a problem here.

Would you take care of this couple? They don't seem to get the message. And I don't know what the angel would do but all of a sudden you know they'd evaporate and you go in. There's the house that you I mean the house you you never ever thought you would have.

I mean it is loaded. It's lavish. There's that beautiful grand piano you know.

I mean beautiful furniture. If you like antique furniture it's loaded with antiques. If you like modern contemporary you know.

Here you go in your wife's already in the closet trying on the clothes you know. Old Neiman Marcus you know. Meanwhile you're in the garage you know checking out the Jag and the Beamer you know.

Son's already moved the Rembrandt aside and trying to figure out the combination for the safe and you know. God gives him a word of knowledge and you know it opens and all the stocks you know. I mean you know I mean it's hard to come up with a New Testament equivalent to God giving an entire nation to his people.

Splendid cities. Great cities. Houses loaded with good things.

Vineyards. Olive trees. But no presence of God.

And so Moses now faces a choice. Moses of course has had a few choices he's had to make as a young man. 40 years of age at least.

He chose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than all the treasures and pleasures of Egypt. Here he was groomed no doubt to be another pharaoh. All the finest education.

All the wealth. You see Moses had houses of lands and vineyards. He was a man of privilege.

He was raised again having all the privileges of Egypt but they didn't satisfy. And he made a decision long ago. Lord there's something about you that all the money in the world and all the treasures and pleasures can't even begin to compare to.

But he has this choice to stay in this wilderness. A waste howling wilderness. Can you imagine how miserable that is? I had the privilege a couple of years ago of being over in Spain ministering for the assemblies and they flew me down to the Canary Islands.

Canary Islands are just a little group of islands 150 miles off the northwest coast of Africa. And the missionaries wife was telling me there are times when the winds are so powerful on the continent of Africa that it will stir up the sand from the deserts there. The Sahara.

And it will bring that sand all the way out into the ocean. 150 miles out into the ocean. That sand gets into everything.

It infiltrates. It just you know it's like sandpaper. She said you can dust one day.

These storms will come. And then that sand is literally everywhere. Can you imagine living not 150 miles away but in the midst of a waste howling wilderness.

A land of scorpions the Bible calls it. But you have the presence of God. Well Moses does what Moses does so well again he begins to pray.

Verse 13. Now therefore I pray thee if I have found favor in your sight let me know your ways that I may know thee so that I may find favor in your sight. What a strange prayer don't you think? It's not the way I would pray given the circumstances.

All Moses said is God I want to know your ways so I can know you. Lord it's all about knowing you. That's that's all I'm interested in God.

I just want to know your ways so I can know you. And here is this deep longing again this insatiable hunger that this man has. He's touched God on numerous occasions.

He's been in the presence of God. He's had that encounter with God at the burning bush. But here again a longing.

God I still I don't know you the way I need to know you. Lord teach me your ways that I may know you. I say it's a strange prayer because my prayer would not have been that way.

My prayer would have been one of compromise. My prayer would have been one of God isn't there some way we can sort of come to some sort of compromise here. In fact Lord I think this is a good time to take you up on that suggestion that you had where you said let's let's reason together.

So let's sit down and reason together man to man face to face. You know the other day you talking about annihilating us and you are angry. I don't ever recall you being that angry.

And Lord I know that when we get angry we say things we regret later. And now that you've been able to settle down have a good night's rest you know don't be so rash. I mean you said to us that we were stubborn and obstinate and you know if you don't mind me saying so Lord I think you're a little stubborn yourself on this point.

Lord all my life I've wanted one of these houses. All my life I've wanted to have this freedom. Houses and lands and vineyards and olive trees and so on but Lord there's a part of me too that wants your presence.

So isn't there some way we can sort of strike a bargain here. I mean just come once in a while. You don't have to hang around us all the time.

I can tell body language you know you're uptight sometimes and you know you're still on edge. I can see that but but Lord why don't you come once in a while. Like on the Sabbath at least for a couple of hours in the morning.

I mean we've learned to get along pretty well without you. We don't need you during the week Lord. I mean I hate to say that but you know we're educated and we can sort of fend for ourselves.

We don't really think about you that much to tell you the truth but you know it's nice to know that you're there on Sunday morning when we all get together with our friends and so Lord how about some sort of company. I mean that would have been my prayer something like that. Moses never mentioned cities.

He never mentions vineyards. He never mentions houses. He never mentions lands.

All he mentions is God. It's all about you. I just want to know you.

You see we've settled for everything but God haven't we. I went to a huge conference a number of years ago in Dallas Texas. It's one of these conferences where they brought together a number of streams and all the great big ministries and I was invited to go along with a friend of mine.

We made it into an afternoon session. Here was a well-known evangelist. I won't mention his name.

He spent an entire hour talking about God's covenants. All the promises of God. All the covenants of God and you know what you could basically reduce it down to this that if you get a hold of one of God's

promises and sort of twist his arm and remind him of that promise you can extract from God on the basis of his covenant whatever you want.

Prosperity, faith, you know healing, deliverance but there was nothing about the presence of God. God says I'll keep my covenant. I won't renege on my promises.

I'll keep them. You can go in. You can claim my promises.

I'll heal you. I'll provide for you. I'll do this.

You don't get my presence. Moses said Lord there's no substitute for your presence and God says to him in verse 14 my presence will go with you. No house in the world, no clothes, no car, no possessions can even begin to compare with your presence and if you don't go God we stay right here and then he makes this statement.

I love this verse. It's possibly one of my favorite verses. How can it be known that I found favor in your sight I and thy people is it not by thy going with us so that we I and thy people may be distinguished from all the other people who are on the face of the earth.

He said God there's only one thing that distinguishes us. Only one thing that sets us apart. Only one thing that makes us unique.

It's not the dresses or the clothes that we wear. It's not the way we have our hair. It's not the food we eat or don't eat.

It's not even the ten commandments. It's not those wonderful feasts that you've given to us. It's not even the tabernacle.

As good as all of those things are there's only one distinguishing thing. That is your presence and if you remove your presence we're no different than anybody else on the face of the earth and no doubt maybe in Moses mind he was looking around and thinking of all the nations. Thinking to himself you know this nation has got a beautiful temple.

That nation's got its temple. They've got their holy days. They've got their feast days.

They've got their sacrifices. They've got their songs. They've got their priests.

But we have the presence of God and Lord if you withdraw your presence all we have is just a form of godliness. Just ritual like all the other nations. Just religion.

Just going into these various meeting places. Going through some sort of program. Singing our songs.

Going through our routine. That's all we have God. If you take your presence away we have nothing.

We're no different. No different than this church. No different than that cult.

No different than that religion. No different whatsoever and then of course he goes on he said God show me your glory. Again this this man has got this insatiable longing for more and more of God.

I want you to turn now as we close over into Song of Solomon because what we've been looking at so far we've been seeing men crying out to God. Wanting to know God. Wanting to have this intimacy.

This relationship with God but what if God is not interested in having a relationship with us? Pretty hard isn't it to have a relationship with somebody that maybe isn't interested in having a relationship with you. Let's say there's a young man here in this congregation this morning and he's got his eye on some young gal. Everything about that girl just causes his heart to sort of flutter and yet he's a little shy and he longs to be with her.

Longs to get to know a little bit. Would love to ask her out and you know he's got a sister and sister of course has got a friend who has a friend who knows this girl and you know how those things work. And so word gets out you know that John is crazy about Susie and Susie finds out that John is crazy about her but she's not sure which John.

So she says now which John is it? You know the guy that normally sits over on that's you know that side of the church you know about three or four rows back. Oh I can't stand that guy. Pretty hard to have a relationship with somebody that doesn't want to hang around you isn't it? Can't stand you, doesn't like you, not interested in you.

I mean hear a man crying out God I want to know you. And here we have this beautiful story Song of Solomon in which we if you like have the rest of the story. The other side of the coin it's a beautiful love affair between the bride and the bridegroom.

It typifies of course our relationship with Christ. We're the bride he's the bridegroom and it begins there in chapter one in verse two where she says may he kiss me with the kisses of his mouth for your love is better than wine. In other words she said Lord I found something in being in your presence being alone with you that exhilarates, intoxicates, satisfies more than wine.

Wine of course is what the world turns to when it can't cope. When there's bad news the world has no answer. That's why we have so many drugs to somehow take the edge off but wine of course has been that drug of choice for centuries.

Down goes the wine and somehow at least you know it relaxes you a little bit or whatever it does. And she says listen I found something that the world has nothing to compare to. It's your presence, it's the kisses of your mouth, it's your embrace, it's being with you.

Draw me let us run together and so begins this romance this relationship they skip over the hills together. Verse 15 how beautiful you are my darling. Verse 16 how handsome you are my beloved.

I've heard it said the orthodox Jews many of them would not permit their children the young people to read this book. They felt it was too intimate until they were at least approaching marriage or till they were betrothed. But it's a love relationship, it's a very intimate book, very revealing book.

But as this relationship progresses we come to chapter 5 and here in this chapter we have a little bit of a setback. In verse 2 this is the bride now I was asleep she said but my heart was awake. Her voice my beloved was knocking open to me.

My sister, my darling, my dove, my perfect one for my head is drenched with dew and my locks with the damp of the night. Here her beloved has shown up unexpectedly. She's gone to bed, she's tired, maybe she's again just longing to be alone have a little bit of a break and she's almost in that place of just dropping off into a deep sleep but she's still a little conscious and all of a sudden there's the knocking open to me.

My darling, my dove, my perfect one. And she has a choice to make. Do I stay where I am? I'm comfortable the way I am? I'm clean the way I am? Or do I get up and meet with my beloved? And in her mind I believe is going through this thought, I don't believe she vocalizes this, verbalizes this in any way.

Verse 3, I've taken off my dress, how can I put it on again? I've washed my feet, how can I dirty them again? In other words she hears him knocking, she knows he's there, he's whispering all this wonderful, these wonderful words trying to draw her, my darling, my dove, my perfect one open to me. My head is drenched with the dew of the night and she thinks to herself, man I've just had a shower, I've just washed my feet, I've just taken off my dress, I've just got ready for bed, I don't want to get up right now, it's just comfortable the way I am, you know I'm nice and clean, I know I'm clean, I'm not conscious of any dirt in my life, any sin in my life if you like, but I'm also very comfortable and I just like to stay where I am, I'm not interested in going taking this relationship too much deeper, I know you know you love me, we've had some wonderful times together in the past, but and she hesitates. Verse 4, my beloved extended his hand through the opening and my feelings were aroused for him, he's trying to get in, he knows she's in there.

And we don't know how many minutes go by here, you see you can read this in a matter of seconds, but maybe she's the sort of girl, maybe he's come before and she's taken a little while to get ready, to get presentable, she's one of those gals that every hair has to be right and you know everything has to be in its right place and that could take five minutes, 10 minutes, 15 minutes, do I have any higher bid? We'll be gracious this morning, I have one on the front row. But finally verse 5, I arose and I opened to my beloved, my hands drip with my fingers with liquid myrrh on the handles of the bolt, I opened to my beloved but my beloved had gone. What a tragedy, she's waited just a little bit too long, she hasn't responded where there was the knocking and the wooing and the drawing and he's been wounded, he's been grieved, you know what it is when you're in love, that the person you love the most is capable of inflicting the most pain, isn't that right? Oh who cares what your neighbor thinks but when your wife or your husband says something or your boyfriend or your girlfriend's got a little bit of an edge to it, you know what that's like, it's like a knife going in and they're deeply in love, at least he thought they were and she doesn't respond to him and after waiting he goes and he just leaves and she now has a choice, search or go back to bed.

You see I am absolutely convinced that we are in a season right now where it seems to be so easy to open the door to the presence of God. The Bible talks about seasons of refreshing, there are seasons in God and I've lived long enough to know those times when almost all across the country hardly anything's happening, a few souls getting saved here and there but there's no real moving of the spirit but we've been in a season now and I trust that it will continue where it's so easy to just sort of open the door and the Spirit of God seems to be so readily available but if we miss it he'll leave and then we have to begin seeking all over again and God says I'm a God that hides myself. He did that with Hezekiah, it says he withdrew from Hezekiah to see what was in his heart, not because Hezekiah had any sin necessarily but to see if he had that deep longing and hunger, God I miss you, I need you.

She says my heart went out to him as he spoke, I searched for him, she doesn't go back to bed, thank God for that, she realizes she's made a mistake, she realizes that she's blown it big time. I searched she says but I did not find him, I called but he didn't answer me. See just a little while ago she could have opened the door and he was right there and now she's got to search all over again and really search, she's got a call but there's no answer, there's been a grieving if you like of the Spirit of God.

I think the Holy Spirit is, if I can put it this way, don't make it too hard on me theologically but I think the Holy Spirit if you like is the feminine part of the Godhead. After all he says let us make man in our image,

male and female he created them. God is El Shaddai, the breasted one, there's a feminine quality about God but the Bible says you can blaspheme the Father, blaspheme the Son but if you blaspheme the Holy Spirit it won't be forgiven in this life or in the life to come.

There's a sensitivity about the Holy Spirit, there's that feminine quality and even though he's obviously the bridegroom here, there's been a grieving, there's been a quenching and he's gone. But she begins to search and in verse 7, the watchmen who make the rounds of the city found me, they struck me and wounded me, the guardsmen on the wall took my shawl away from me. I mean here's this girl now, she's all broken up, bruised, maybe bleeding, she's been wounded, maybe she's limping, maybe she's got a black eye, her shawl now has been taken from her, she's exposed to the elements of the night, he says my hair is drenched with the dew of the night, now again you know the mascara is running and everything else, she's out there but she's determined.

And she comes across in verse 8, the daughters of Jerusalem and she says, I adjure you, I ask you or demand of you, oh daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved as to what you will tell him, I'm lovesick. In other words, if you see my beloved, tell him I'm lovesick, tell him I'm sorry, tell him I can't believe I did what I did, if you get a glimpse of him, would you please convey to him how desperate I am to find him, I can't live without him, I can't believe I did that, please let him know that I've repented, please let him know that I've got to find him again, I've got to renew that relationship, there's nothing more precious than that relationship I've had and now he's gone, I can't seem to reach out, I can't seem to find him anywhere, presence of God just doesn't seem to be there anymore and I've got to find that again. And they say to her, verse 9, their response, what kind of guy is this? Oh, I'm paraphrasing but I believe that's the essence of it, what sort of, what kind of beloved is your beloved or most beautiful among women, what kind of beloved is your beloved that thus you ask us or adjure us? I mean, what's so special about this guy? I mean, what sort of guy is he anyway? Now, I want you to picture this situation, here you are in a city going back two, three thousand years ago, no electricity, maybe the moon is bright enough so you can see, maybe a few oil lamps here and there but the rain is coming down, it's drizzly, it's the middle of the night, here is this girl all alone, she's somewhat anxious, maybe a little bit hyper, she's limping, maybe she's bleeding, maybe she's got a black eye and her shawl has been taken from her and you meet her and she's all, you know, have you seen my boyfriend basically, have you seen him? I mean, what would go through your mind? I know what would go through my mind, another case of domestic violence, here's this beautiful young girl, she's living with some guy, they've, he's come home drunk, they've had an argument and he's beaten her up a little bit, slapped her around, she's left the house and he's left the house and now she can't wait to find him again and you know, the big word these days, codependency and they basically say to her, listen lady, you're a beautiful woman, what sort of guy is this anyway? Oh, most beautiful among women, listen, get your act together, you could have any man you want, have you lost all self or any sense of self-worth? Let me tell you, as another woman, you are gorgeous, you're the most beautiful woman I've ever seen, why don't you just go back home, go to bed, you could have any guy you want, what's so special about this guy? And all of a sudden she begins to open up and she describes him in verse 10, my beloved, she said, is dazzling and ruddy, outstanding among 10,000.

She said, listen, if you had 10,000 men in the city, all eligible young bachelors and you put my beloved in that line up again, he would be so striking, so handsome, I mean, he would just simply eclipse everybody else, you won't even notice anybody else, that's how incredible it is, he's the fairest of 10,000. His head is like gold, like pure gold, his locks are like clusters of dates, as black as rain, his eyes are like doves, his cheeks are like beds of balsam, his hands are like rods of gold, his abdomen is like carved ivory, his legs

like pillars of alabaster. Now notice what she's doing, she's describing him, not his assets.

Oh, that's so important. What sort of guy is your beloved? Ever heard of Bill Gates? Ever heard of Donald Trump? My beloved would make those two guys look like paupers. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills.

My beloved is just dripping in wealth. You know that beautiful home on the outskirts of town there, that one that's just been completed a little while ago, that big huge sort of castle, that's my beloved's. You know all the banks in the city, my beloved is the chairman of all those banks.

You know when we get married, I'm going to have all the luxuries, all the fineries, I'm going to be able to satisfy every desire, we're going to be able to travel. No, you see, she's not describing his assets, she's describing him. She's been with him, she knows him.

Let me tell you about his hair, his eyes, his legs, his abdomen. Listen, everything about him is desirable, she says. Notice in verse 16, his mouth is full of sweetness, he's wholly desirable.

This is my beloved and this is my friend. She says, I never had a friend like this friend. Oh, I come from a wonderful home, but I've never had a friend like this friend.

I remember the day he said to me, darling, you know, we've got a relationship that you look at me almost as though I'm your master. He says, I don't want that. I want a friend.

I don't want you referring to me anymore as master. I want you to be my friend because I want to share intimately with you. A master just sort of barks out orders and people don't understand why he's doing it, but a friend knows.

And she said, you know, everything changed from that moment on. And this is a friend, he sticks close to her brother. Oh, I love my parents, but there's something about this man.

I can't believe I did what I did. I can't believe I grieved him so badly. Can't believe I sort of stood him up when he came wanting to be with me, me of all people with my background.

Oh, I remember the day he said, darling, the past doesn't matter to me anymore. I'll forgive you. And ever since that day, he's been my best friend.

He's wholly desirable. Now notice what happens. Chapter six and verse one causes no chapter divisions.

Where is your beloved gone? Almost beautiful among women. Where is your beloved turned that we may seek him with you. Do you mind if we tag along? Would it be all right with you lady, if we joined you and you're seeking him? I mean, something's happened to these women that begins with what sort of guy is this anyway? I mean, you're a crazy woman to pursue somebody that would beat you up like that.

Misunderstanding obviously what happened. What's so special about it by the time she gets through describing him right from the very heart of this woman that flows out this incredible love. And they said, listen, could we join you? We don't have a friend like that.

We don't have a relationship like that. We've never known somebody as wonderful as the way you described this person. We've just come back from a night in town.

Oh, we've had a little bit of religion. You know, we joined that group for a while. It didn't satisfy.

We tried this. We've tried drugs. We've tried sex.

We've tried drink, but you know, you just radiate when you talk about it. I mean, you've got something that we want. Could we join you? Would you introduce us to him? Is there a chance that your friend could become our friend? You see, I'm convinced that's what God is doing in the body of Christ today.

He's coming back for what? A bride, a passionate bride, a pure bride, a bride that just sort of lights up at the very mention of his name. Oh, I've married a lot of people in my day. I've never seen them come down the aisle sad and crying and reluctant.

You know, never seen the husband dragging them. Oh, not the husband, the father, you know. Come on, honey, you've got to do this.

Some of us are like that, aren't we? How much do you love him this morning? Is he really a friend? You spend time with him? You know one thing about friends, they love to be together, love to hang out together. This story very quickly is repeated one more time in the Bible. Revelation chapter three.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. Would you open the door? I want to come in, darling. My darling, my dove, my perfect one.

I want to sit with you. I want to sup with you. I want to be with you.

I want to hear your voice. I want to spend time with you. Darling, do you hear me? Open the door, please.

And her response is, well, sorry, Lord, we don't really need you now. We're rich. We're increased with goods.

Oh, remember when we struggled, we used to hang out together and we really needed you back then. But, you know, we've got all these techniques now. We've been to the church growth seminars and, you know, we've got banners and flags and all sorts of substitutes now.

You know, we don't need it anymore. You know, we sort of like the prophetic now more than you. And we sort of, you know, the apostolic's coming on the scene and we're sort of pursuing that and, you know, a little bit of faith and prosperity.

And, you know, Lord, we try next door. Sad, isn't it? These are a part of his ways, but how little a portion we hear of him. Let's close in prayer.

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