

The Local Church That God Blesses - Power in the Local Church

by Peter Brandon

The local church that God blesses is one that experiences the presence of God, characterized by awe, peace, joy, and love, and is controlled by the Lord Jesus.

Duration: 54:48

Scripture: Genesis 35:1

Topics: "Presence of God", "Power in the Local Church"

Description

Peter Brandon emphasizes the significance of the local church that God blesses, focusing on the need for power within the church. He draws parallels between the Old Testament Bethel and the New Testament church, highlighting the importance of God's presence, which brings awe, peace, joy, and love among believers. Brandon stresses the necessity of cleansing from idolatry and the importance of being under God's sovereign control to experience true revival and power. He encourages the congregation to seek a deeper relationship with God, leading to a transformative impact on their community. The sermon concludes with a call to action for the church to arise and dwell in the presence of God.

Transcript

Now we have been looking at the subject, the local church that God blesses, and we have seen our objective, Acts 1 and 2. We've also seen in order to reach that objective, we must get back to functional New Testament Christianity. Therefore, we have considered Romans 6 and Ephesians 5. Then we have seen that we must get back to New Testament home life. We cannot basically have New Testament church life without New Testament home life, and therefore last evening we discussed the subject of preparation for marriage, the permanence of marriage, the principles that shall control married life, and then we saw the practice of a New Testament home.

Now tonight we're going to move into the realm of power in the local church. I'm not going to speak so much about the principles. I believe most of us are familiar with them from the New Testament, but I want to emphasise power in the local church.

Now I'm going to do a strange thing tonight. I'm going to turn you to the Old Testament, because in the Old Testament we see some lovely preparation for the very presence of God. But when I speak of Bethel, I will not be speaking about an Old Testament Bethel, but I shall be speaking about a New Testament Bethel.

Now why? The way into the holiest was not open in the Old Testament, therefore quite frankly they knew a very little about the experience of a life in the holiest. The holiest was only opened through the cross of Christ, and the presence of God is not a little place that we find on earth, it's heaven itself. That's the tabernacle that the Lord pitched.

And we're going to look at features of that, and then we're going to see how those features can be revived in this modern day. Now shall we turn to Genesis 35, and we'll read from verse 1. Genesis 35, reading from verse 1. And God said unto Jacob, Arise and go up to Bethel, and dwell there, and make there an altar unto God that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments, and let us arise and go up to Bethel, and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.

And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears, and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem. And they journeyed, and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob. So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan, that is Bethel, he and all the people that were with him.

And he built there an altar, and called the place El Bethel, because there God appeared unto him when he fled from the face of his brother. But Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and was buried beneath Bethel under an oak, and the name of it was called Alambacca. And God appeared unto Jacob again when he came out of Paranarum, and blessed him.

And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob, thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name. And he called his name Israel. And God said unto him, I am God Almighty, thee fruitful and multiply, a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins.

And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land. And God went up from him in the place where he talked with him. And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone.

And he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon. And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Bethel. Now notice the first clause of verse 16, And they journeyed from Bethel.

Now I'm sure God will bless to us the reading of the Bible. I think it's true to say, beloved friends, that we can have a right pattern, but have a very little pattern in that power. The word of God speaks of a wineskin.

But what is a wineskin without the wine? When God made Adam, he made him in good shape and form. But what was shape and form without life? And therefore he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Now we can have good shape and form, and we think it may be scriptural.

But what is shape and form without the power of God? So what I want to do tonight is to speak on the characteristics of Bethel. And I want to show that when we come to the Bethel of the New Testament, it is not just the house of God, but if you look at it very carefully, it is the experimental manifestation of the presence of God among his people. Secondly, we shall go back to the Old Testament and we shall note the preparation which Bethel demands.

And we shall see that beautifully outlined in the 35th chapter. And then we shall see again the blessings which Bethel bestows, and what blessings they are when we experimentally get there. Now first of all, the characteristics of Bethel.

When we come right into the presence of God, and when we are truly conscious of God, now don't misunderstand me, in the New Testament Bethel was a place until it became full of idolatry, and then God rejected it. But in the New Testament Bethel is not a place but where his people are gathered together in his name. Now when they are truly gathered, and when they are truly gathered to that name, so that they do not have a mechanical meeting, but a spiritual gathering, then the presence of God becomes real.

And when the presence of God becomes real, the first thing that strikes the heart is the awe, the majestic awe of God. Everyone in the Old Testament that had a glimpse of the glory of God was smitten with awe and majesty. For instance, you will recall when Moses came to that bush that burned without being consumed, and when he heard that great claim of divinity, the I Am was speaking, he was told to remove the shoes from of his feet.

Why? Because of the awe, the overwhelming awe of his presence. Again some of you remember when the Ten Commandments were given, and the corresponding laws, when God came upon that mount that we call Sinai, the mount shook with his presence, and the children of Israel were afraid to come near. Why? Because of the awe of his majestic presence.

One of the most holy men of the Old Testament was Isaiah, at least the greatest prophet in the scripture, and probably the greatest poet. And when that particular man caught a vision of the glory of the Lord in the year that King Isaiah died, such was the glory of the Lord, he must have fell upon the floor in that abiding room where he saw him and cried out, Woe is me, I am undone. When we come to the New Testament, and the insignia of divine majesty shone from the face of the Lord Jesus on the mount of transfiguration, his disciples were prostrated with fear.

Why? The awe of the Lord. When John the Apostle, who had often pillowed his head upon the breast of the Lord Jesus, saw the Lord Jesus in all the glory of his high priesthood, there in Revelation 1, he fell at his feet as dead. He almost expired.

Now when God's people come together, and there is the experimental manifestation of his presence, there will be that same awe. Our spirits will be prostrated. Now beloved, I must not be critical because when you're critical you never help the people of God.

But we have almost lost that. I remember old Samuel Rodgers Tellemere when he came into fellowship in 1864. Such was the awe of God's presence.

People walked into the building, not that they thought the building was God's presence, but in view of God's presence, they walked in tempter. Now somewhere along the line, perhaps because of our unbelief and materialism and worldliness, we have lost the glory of the awe of his presence. And that must return if we're going to see real revival.

Secondly, with the presence of God when it is manifested, there is peace. Now I'm not referring so much to peace with God, because that is judicial. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God.

And that peace is made on the grounds of the blood of Christ. But I'm thinking of something deeper than that. Nor am I speaking of the peace of God that garrisons our minds when we are totally thrown upon

him.

Thank God for that peace that will protect our minds from every form of anxiety. We praise him for that. But I'm thinking now of something deeper.

It's the God of peace dwelling among us. The word peace in the Old Testament is quite beautiful. It means the binding together.

Now what does that mean? Sin always disintegrates. If you watch the action of sin very carefully, you will see it disintegrates personality. And would you believe it in these modern days, it can even disintegrate the body physically.

And then if you look at society very carefully, it disintegrates society. Look at all these broken marriages and even trouble in industry. You see basically it's the result of sin.

But God's peace binds men together. You see he takes the body and soul and spirit through the incoming of the Holy Spirit and makes man one as God intended him to be, so that he can have communion with God. And then that great barrier that existed between Jew and Gentile through the cross and through the great baptism of the Spirit, he binds those two societies together and makes them one man.

And in every local church where God's presence is manifested, there should be the overwhelming sense of peace. Out there in the dark, dark world, there is no peace. I do not know about Australia, but in my country, in some of our cities, 25% of the people are living on tranquilizers because of anxiety.

But when unsafe people come among us, they should sense the peace of God. In other words, they should come into the very building where the saints are gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus and they should be able to say this, there's a peace here that's absolutely near. It's the binding together.

That is why there must never, never be division among the people of God. Why? Because it spoils the exhibition of God's peace among his people. So you can see already Bethel is a lovely place, isn't it? Or, peace, but there's more.

The third characteristic of Bethel, and you'll find this all over the scripture, is joy. David, the psalmist, he knew so much about this. He could say, in thy presence there is the fullness of joy at thy right hand pleasures forevermore.

Now I know sometimes we use that scripture when a person dies, and that is true, but you know it's deeper than that. It's finding joy in the presence of God. Do you remember when David brought back the ark of God in the Levitical way? Not on the new cart.

The priests were bearing it back to the place of its original setting. He danced with all his might before the Lord. That was to show to God that he was absolutely joyous in the presence of God.

Mind you, David only did that once, and I'm so glad he didn't do that often. Brothers and sisters, I want joy in the presence of God, but I'm afraid of all these modern knees ups and bumps of days and swinging on chandeliers. I do not believe that is of God, but we do want the real joy of the Lord.

So when you go through the Psalms, you will find this. At least 10 to 15 of his Psalms have to do with the presence of God. And when he was in the presence of God, he was jubilantly happy.

When we come to the New Testament, it's the same thing. When the Lord Jesus was born, the angels were jubilantly happy and praising and worshipping. When the prodigal son came back to the father's house, which is a lovely demonstration really of Bethel, they began to be mirrored.

Not miserable, mirrored. Again you will recall when the disciples came, when the Lord Jesus came among his disciples on that lovely resurrection evening, when they saw the Lord, they were glad. Some of you will recall that as you go through the book of the Acts, they were praising God.

The disciples in Acts 13 were filled with the Spirit, and so they were filled with joy. When you come to Acts 16, and I think this is a lovely chapter, when Saul and Silas were in prison, and their backs were bleeding at midnight, man's weakest point, they were praising and praying to God. And the prisoners heard them praising joy.

When we read the Philippian epistle, we discover this, that the man who wrote it was in prison, that 18 times in that one epistle, he uses the word joy. In fact he almost sums it up, rejoicing the Lord. Again I say, rejoice.

And when you come to the revelation, and note this, if you read it carefully, you will find this, there are scenes in heaven, scenes on earth, scenes in heaven, scenes on earth, scenes in heaven, scenes on earth, and the last scene is in heaven. Now note, every scene in heaven is one of exquisite joy. They are praising and worshipping the Lord.

Now can you see what's being developed? First of all, in the presence of God there's awe. We can't do what we like. In the presence of God there is binding peace.

In the presence of God there's the fullness of joy. What a lovely place Bethel is. But there's something more.

In the presence of God there is love. You see, love is not an attribute of God. God is love.

God is light. And therefore, when God's presence is manifested, there is the presence of agape love. That is why when we read Corinthians, in Corinthians chapter 12, he gives us the pattern for the local church.

In Corinthians chapter 14, the practice of a local church. But in Corinthians 13, he gives us the power of the local church. And what power is that? The power of love.

Oh, I wish I could really develop this theme, but we haven't got time. But when God's presence is manifested, there is all-pervading love. Can you see how we have wandered from the Lord? How many local churches do you know that if you were to go in it, there would be an overwhelming sense of awe? Unrivaled peace, exquisite joy, and the abundance of divine love.

You see, I'm sure of this, beloved. Souls are not just saved by mechanical preaching. Souls are saved in an atmosphere where God is.

And when we're in the presence of God, it's in that presence that souls are born again. But then, you will notice here, and there's just an inkling of it, in verse 7, he built there an altar and called the place El Bethel, and that means the God of the house of God, or if we may put it in the New Testament sense, the Lord of the house of God. You say, what does this mean? It means he's not only there in presence, but he's total president and sovereign among his people.

Now, what does it mean when the Lord is sovereign among his people? Well, there are two kinds of sovereignty. There is the realistic sovereignty of the presence of God, note this, and there is the puppet, imitated sovereignty of God. For instance, I think everyone in this room reveres Queen Elizabeth II, but she's only a puppet sovereign, and that's a fact.

If you go along to the houses of commons, you will see all the MPs debating. They make all the rules, and then the Prime Minister goes along to the Queen and says, stamp it ma'am, and she stamps it, but you see, all the decisions are made in the houses of commons, and the Queen just puts the stamp on as a symbol. Don't you think we've been like that for years? We make all the decisions, and then after we have made the decisions, we say, Lord bless us.

No wonder some of the assemblies are declining. What we must get back to is not only the presence of the Lord, but the realistic presidency of the Lord, so that he is really controlling all the activity. Now, allow me to say this, beware of brethren that write to you for meetings.

Judge it. It may not be of God at all. It may be just that they want a few meetings with you.

We must have all our meetings under the control of God, and when they're under the control of God, we shall see blessing. Now, let's go over to the New Testament in order to see this. 1 Corinthians 12.

1 Corinthians 12, and we read from verse 4, 5, and 6. Now, there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. In other words, it's the Holy Spirit that gives the gift. Now, you will notice in Scripture there are three kinds of gifts.

There are the gifts of God mentioned in Romans 12. There are the gifts of the Spirit mentioned in Corinthians 12, and there are the gifts of the Risen Lord that are mentioned in Ephesians 4. Now, the gifts of the Risen Lord are men. An apostle is a man.

A prophet is a man. An evangelist, a man. A pastor, teacher, a man.

But the gifts of the Spirit are not men, but some supernatural manifestation that works in a man. While the gifts of God refer to the gifts of the Risen Lord, and then the gifts of the Spirit, then some additional gifts that we haven't got in the epistles. But you will notice that it's the Holy Spirit that gives them, and the Lord Jesus that gives them, and God that gives them, are not men.

Now, that's important. Secondly, as you go on, you will see there are differences of services or administrations, but the same Lord. Now, what does that mean? The person who controls the evangelist would not be an oversight.

No oversight is there to control the meeting. To care for the meeting, but not to control. The controller in every meeting or assembly that's spiritual should be the Lord himself.

And therefore, the Lord is there to control the services. Now, what does that mean? When an evangelist is functioning, that's one kind of service, but the Lord controls him. When a prophet is functioning, that's one kind of service, but the Lord is controlling.

When a pastor teacher is in operation, that's one kind of service, but the Lord is controlling. That means all the meetings should be controlled by the Lord. And therefore, we must come together often at the feet of the Lord Jesus and ask the Lord, are our meetings mechanical? You see, it's so easy for us to become

traditional and just turn a handle and go through a process of meeting.

What every generation must learn is to get at the feet of the Lord so that all the activity is controlled by him. And if someone sends you a letter and he wants a series of meetings, just don't accept it. Get before the Lord.

And that's beginning to happen in a new way in Britain. And this is what I love. I'm getting a few letters now that say something like this.

Brother, we do not want an arranged mission. We want one directed by God. Does this invitation appeal to you as coming from the Lord? That is lovely.

So can you see we must get right to the feet of the Lord to see that all the services are controlled by him. Now a person might receive a gift, that's good. The Lord might be controlling those who are gifted and all the services, but we need something more.

What is a teacher without power? What is a preacher without power? What is a prophet without power? What is a pastor without power? Therefore if you look at verse 6, there are diversities of operations. That means powerful activities. But it is the same God which works it all in all.

In other words, the Spirit gives the gifts, the Lord controls them and God anoints them in the power of the Holy Spirit. Now beloved, let me ask a question, not critically, but just to help. Haven't we gone far from that? And the Lord wants to bring us back to that.

Then you will notice as you go down to narrative, and we shall discuss this in a few moments, in verse 5, as they journeyed that means to Bethel, the terror of God was upon the cities and that speaks of power. And therefore, the third element that marks the presence of God is unrivaled power. When the Holy Spirit came, he came in the form of a rushing mighty wind.

We discussed that the other night. And every chapter in the book of the Acts, you feel that mighty wind blowing. Take for instance that first recorded prayer meeting when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, the power of the Spirit.

Take for instance the first case of hypocrisy that we get in the Acts of the Apostles. Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead in the presence of God, power. Take for instance Acts chapter 8, Philip went down to Samaria and preached Christ unto them and the whole city believed and rejoiced in the Lord.

And there was great joy in that city, power. If you were alive in the first century and someone said to you, who is the last person you could ever imagine to become a Christian, you would say without hesitation, Saul of Tarsus. He was diametrically opposed to all the claims of Christ.

One light, one voice and he was converted, power. And when you go through the latter chapters of the book of the Acts and you see Paul and his team at work being controlled by the Spirit of God, you see unrivaled power. Ah but you say brother Peter that's the first century, wait a moment.

In the 18th century God raised up two men, one was called Whitfield and one was called Wesley. And on one day there in Bristol 20,000 people were saved, one day. In fact the power of God was so great and the awe of God was so overcoming they rolled in the dust under such conviction.

And all over Britain the mighty power of God was seen so that we were saved from that awful blood French revolution. Ah what about the 19th century? God raised up mighty men in 1859 and it actually started with a little group of brethren praying in Ireland and as they prayed the little hut where they were praying was shaken and they went out from that room and started to preach and the whole of Britain was shaken again. When child Finney came over he was such a man of God he went into one factory and two girls laughed at him and he being filled with the Spirit looked at them and they fell on their knees and cried out to be saved.

And that man had to stop his factory for three days because they were crying to God for mercy. Power! Ah but you say brother Peter that was in the 19th century. All right what about 1904 in Wales? God raised up a group of young people in Leckham and they were burdened about the sin of their country and they cried all night to God that there would be a mighty move of the Spirit.

And ever robbers came out of that prayer meeting and started to preach and the whole of Wales was swept so that one professional football team and its stadium had to close down and they were pouring the beer down the gutters. Nobody went to a pub. One man actually said to me one night they asked me to preach in a public house there in Cronastley and he was then 85 years of age and this was many years ago and he said I was in this pub 1904 when the revival was on and this place was filled with men drinking and all of a sudden something came upon them and they all went into that hall of yours and every one of them got saved all except me.

What swept them in? The mighty power of God. But wait a moment in China in the last 10 years it's believed that nearly 50 million Chinese people have been saved. You see the power's there and beloved friends I do not want to be dramatic.

I do not want to exaggerate what the Spirit can do but he's just the same. He hasn't lost his power and if we got back to the experimental presence of God we could see the power of God again in Sydney. But you see he didn't say go up to Bethel and have an excursion there.

Have a three weeks holiday there. Go up and dwell there. Shall we pray that God will do a lasting work? Not just a three weeks mission where we all crowd into a building and then go back to our respective spiritual homes.

Let's pray there'll be one or two places that will be stamped with the presence of God so that long after the mission God's presence will be manifested in power. So that is the nature of Bethel. Well I won't get through it tonight.

Look at that time it's 10 to. Now we'll look at the preparation which Bethel demands. Would you look at verse 2 of chapter 35.

Then Jacob said unto his household and to all that were with him put away the strange gods that are among you and be clean and change your garments. Now quite frankly if we had time to go through the Old Testament we would find a similar expression to this in four or five great revivals in the Old Testament. So you can see this is not really an isolated section of God's work.

Now notice the first thing he says. God says to him go up to Bethel and dwell there. And immediately Jacob turns to his household and says put away the strange gods.

Now if my memory serves me right I believe that there are 24 different idols mentioned in the Old Testament. But all those idols can be divided into two. There were those idols related to Astaroth.

There were those idols related to Balaam. And the idols that were related to Astaroth were idols of fertility that people looked at and they produced within them sensual desires. Whilst the Balaam worship although very wicked and blasphemous had attached to it ethical desires.

So we might say there are idols that are sensual and there are idols that even can be ethical. Now if I may say this quickly if we are going to have restored to us the real presence of God we must deal with every form of idolatry. Now what is an idol? The idol is that thing that you love most in your life.

The idol is that thing that comes between the preeminence of Christ and you. An idol basically is your passionate devotion. That's why the Old Testament and the New Testament puts a negative commandment into the positive.

Thou shalt not have any other gods beside me. That is translated thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, with all thy strength and thy neighbour as thyself. So when we are going up to and all of us are included including your preacher we must go over our lives carefully and all those things that come between us and the Lord we must put away.

Now what about these ethical idols? Could you turn please to Luke 14. I'll just read it so that we can see the import of that particular section. Luke 14 just the reading will explain the meaning here.

Verse 25 and there went great multitudes with him and he turned and said unto them if any man come to me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters yet in his own life also he cannot be my disciple and whosoever does not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. Now first of all we're up against the problem. The Lord uses here a word to hate father, mother, wife, children.

Last night I preached on the little phrase husbands love your wives and we noticed the word was agape which basically means calvary love and therefore the problem comes how can we hate and love at the same time? It's a problem isn't it? The Lord obviously is using the Hebrew idea of the word hate. As most of you know the Hebrew connotation for love means first. The Hebrew connotation of hate is not a malicious hate but it means basically second.

Jacob have I loved? Esau as I hated. It doesn't mean to say that God had in his heart a malicious freak for that poor Esau. It means Jacob first, Esau is second.

Therefore what he is basically saying is this. The Lord's love must come before father, mother, wife, children, brethren, sister and his own life. Now I know this seems rather jagged but quite frankly the Lord deserves our wholehearted love and when we lay everything on the altar he'll give us everything back and when Abraham was prepared to slay the dearest object in his life God blessed him.

So beloved in the Lord may I say this as nicely as I can. Let's put away every strange God so that the Lord is sovereign in our lives. And then he uses the word be clean.

Now I'm not going into the details of that tonight because we should look at that tomorrow when we discover the subject evangelism in depth. But the cleansing there of course would be physical cleansing but for us it's inward cleansing so that there is nothing in our life that's unclean. The idea to change your

garments in the new testament is to put off the old man all that's associated with your unconverted life.

Put it off. And all that's associated with your new life that is the life in the Lord Jesus. Put it on once and for all so that you show in your life the righteousness of Christ.

Now can you see what they did? First of all Jacob gives this stirring message. Can you hear him? Put away the strange gods that are among you. Be clean.

Change your garments and let us arise and go up to Bethel. Now what did his wife say? They could have said that was a challenging message you gave us. Oh I've never heard you speak like that before.

And do nothing about it. They didn't do that. The moment they heard that message they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods.

They were terrapins that they were sitting upon when Laban came and they hid them in their tent. And now the whole thing is exposed and they gave the strange gods that were in their hands and they gave them to them. Now with these strange gods there were earrings and these earrings denoted what kind of god that they were worshipping.

Therefore the earrings came out and they gave them to Jacob. And of course they cleansed themselves and put on their new garments. And what did Jacob do with the idols? Did he fiddle with them? Did he put them back in his own tent? Did he try and melt them down and use them again? Not a bit of it.

He hid them under the oak that was by Shechem at the tree and buried them there once and for all. Now that is a very important lesson. You see it's so easy to hear messages but so difficult to put them into practice.

We say that unsafe people are hard. Why you say it's hurt the message for a year and it's not saved. Think of the messages that we hear and do so little about.

Dear friends let me say this to you from my heart. Wouldn't it be lovely if we put all these messages into practice and we had one or two nights of confession and brokenness before the Lord. That would be the sign of real revival.

Now I'll close with this. The blessings which Bethel bestows. Look at verse 5 and they journeyed and what a journey it was.

They were going up to Bethel and the terror of God was upon the cities. Now what did that mean? If we had time to go through the 34th chapter we would find that the terror of the Canaanites was upon Jacob. In fact he said that his own sons because of their sinful behavior had made him to stink among the inhabitants and they were all afraid.

But now this man is moving towards Bethel. The idols had been judged. Their bodies had been washed.

Their clothing was on them and they were going back to God and we read this that terror of God fell upon those cities. Now to me that's a lovely picture of the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. Do you remember the Lord Jesus said when he the Holy Spirit is come he will convict the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment.

Of sin because they believe not on me. Of righteousness because I go to my father. Of judgment because the prince of this world is just.

Now we must ask ourselves a very awkward question. Why isn't he convicting people of sin today? Why? I'm sure you will agree with me we have our missions and we have the professions but many of those people go back. What's the missing link? It's the convicting power of the Holy Ghost.

We see today a very little in the western world of people being broken under the sound of the preaching of the gospel. Now why? Because of the lack of the conviction of sin. Therefore we must all ask the question why isn't the Holy Spirit convicting? Has he withdrawn his power? No.

But this is where we go wrong. We believe that the Holy Spirit is operating in the local church that we call the assembly and then we believe that completely apart from us he's operating out there in the world. Now that is completely unscriptural.

The Holy Spirit has not been given to the world. The Holy Spirit finds his habitation in the church. Now when local churches have been cleansed and purged and all the idols have been dealt with then the Holy Spirit will move out to the area ungrieved and you will see conviction of sin.

Let me illustrate. I was in Stapleford having some meetings in the gospel hall and one day I went into a local shop to get some nice apples. I wanted them because they were apples that came from Tasmania.

Lovely apples. We don't often see them in the old country. We have those French delicious and they're not so nice.

And as I was standing in the shop the lady looked at me she says you're a stranger. I said that's right. She said what are you doing here? Oh I said I'm having some meetings in the gospel hall.

Oh. She says I hope you're not like those people in the Anglican church. I said what do you mean? Well she said last year they had a mission and it frightened the whole of Stapleford.

I said so why? Well she said they had prayer and fasting for 14 days. I said how many? 14 days. And people who were my customers hardly came in for 14 days.

I was very annoyed with them she said. She said and then they had a man by the name of Michael Green. She said do you know him? I said no I don't know him.

Well he came with a team of students from Oxford and he had the mission and it was terrible. Terrible. I hope that never happens again.

I said what happened? Well she said you could feel the presence of the man upstairs. This was her language in this shop. And the people could say they could feel his presence in their homes and they were all terrified.

I'll give you a case in point she said. There's a man that works in that factory been working there for 30 years and he comes in every day for two packets of players cigarettes. And he came in as white as a sheet and I said what's wrong with you Bert? And this is what he said.

Oh I'm terrified. Why are you terrified? Well he said I've been looking at those great big castings that are going over my head on that crane and I only thought if one of them fell where would I be? And I'm terrified.

And he was as white as a sheet.

And he went to that mission and he was converted. Do you know what I mean by that she said? I said yes I do. And would you believe it he hasn't smoked a cigarette.

And I've lost another customer she said. Now can you see the point? That local church had a cleansing a time of prayer and fasting. Furthermore I must tell you this.

One or two who are there who are in the ministry take all the converts and this is every six weeks to the gospel hall to baptize them by immersion. So you can see there's a movement of the spirit going on there can't you? And God is beginning to work. But you see the church was cleansed and the spirit of God moved in part.

Wouldn't it be lovely if we could see that here? The terror of God coming upon the people. A man there working in the factory and the thought of God comes to him. Someone in their home watching the television the thought of God comes.

And the spirit of God beginning to move through the believers in the local church out to the area. And then the blessing of the Lord came. And what blessing it was.

There was the blessing of his presence. There was the blessing on his name. There was the blessing of fertility.

There was the blessing on the land. But the sad thing was this. After being blessed he journeyed from Bethel.

Beloved can I encourage you? And when I use that word beloved I mean this. That's not sentimentalism. I mean that.

Dear friends can we figuratively join hands together? And can we say tonight let us arise and go up to Bethel and dwell there. And may God give to this local church and other local churches an overwhelming sense of his presence and power in these last days. Let's pray.

Lord we do pray that thou wilt not only give us two weeks of good meetings and a few saved. We pray most earnestly that thou wilt restore to us the presence and the presidency and the power of God. Oh God grant this so that it might be rumored that the Lord Jesus is in the house.

Grant this we pray in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen. So tomorrow night we're going to look at this vital subject evangelism in depth.

If you can try and bring a few more. It's a lovely to see a good night on your shopping night. I believe that sir.

But let's ask the Lord to fill the place tomorrow night as we speak on this vital subject. And do start praying that God will bring many non-Christians into this place. That we might see many genuinely saved.

And then the blessing of God continuing. Thank you.

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