

IN HIS PRESENCE

L. O. Sanderson wrote one of my most favorite songs and it is Hymn #40 in our Praise for the Lord song book:

BE WITH ME, LORD

VERSE 1

*Be with me, Lord – I cannot live without Thee,
I dare not try to take one step alone,
I cannot bear bear the loads of life, unaided,
I need Thy strength to lean myself upon.*

VERSE 2

*Be with me, Lord, and then if dangers threaten,
If storms of trial burst above my head,
If lashing seas leap everywhere about me,
They cannot harm, or make my heart afraid.*

VERSE 3

*Be with me, Lord! No other gift or blessing
Thou couldst bestow could with this one compare –
A constant sense of Thy abiding presence,
Where e'er I am, to feel that Thou art near.*

That 3rd verse is my very most favorite.

That "constant sense of the Lord's abiding presence" is essential to our spiritual well-being ... our peace of mind ... and our happiness.

I also appreciate the thoughts expressed in the hymn, In His Presence – Hymn #939 in our Praise for the Lord song book:

IN HIS PRESENCE

*In His presence there is comfort, In His presence there is peace.
When we seek the Father's heart We will find such blessed assurance
In the presence of the Lord*

FOR ANYONE WHO BELIEVES IN GOD AND LOVES GOD, THE FEELING OF BEING SEPARATED FROM GOD IS THE WORST FEELING THERE IS

Example: David

- a. *Psa 22:1 – "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning? 2 O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; And in the night season, and am not silent."*

Example: Jesus, just before He died on the cross.

- a. *Matt 27:46 – "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"*

Most of us ... maybe all of us ... are going to feel that way at one time or another.

- a. We will not always have a sense of God's abiding presence ... We will not always feel that God is near ... We will not always feel close to God – that is a simple reality.
- b. The same David who was so confident in saying, *"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; . . ."* (Psa 23:4) also said, *"How long, O Lord? How long will You hide Your face from me?"* (Psa 13:1)
 - ▶ And whoever wrote Psalm 10 penned these imploring words, *"Why do you stand afar off, O Lord?"* (Psa 10:1).

The times when we are most likely to feel separated from God are:

- a. When we are in terrible distress
 - ▶ As when Jesus was dying on the cross . . . experiencing excruciating pain, and crying out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?"(Matt 27:46)
- b. When we are in trouble and we feel helpless to do anything about our troubles.
 - ▶ Psa 22:11 – "Be not far from Me, For trouble is near; For there is none to help."
- c. When we have sinned and we are feeling a terrible sense of guilt.
 - ▶ Isa 59:1-2 – "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. 2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear."
 - ▶ Eph 2:1-3, 12 – "And you . . . were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, . . . 12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and **without God in the world.**"

But the question inevitably arises ...

HOW CAN WE COME TO HAVE THAT SENSE OF GOD'S ABIDING PRESENCE? HOW CAN WE COME TO FEEL OR SENSE THAT WE ARE IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD?

After all: God is in heaven ... and we are on the earth.

- a. Eccl 5:1-2 – "Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil. 2 Do not be rash with your mouth, And let not your heart utter anything hastily **before God**. For **God is in heaven**, and **you on earth**; Therefore let your words be few."
 - ▶ **NASB:** "Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter **in the presence of God**. For **God is in heaven** and **you are on the earth**; therefore let your words be few."

Before I answer this question I need to point out that there are 3 senses in which we can be "in the presence" of the Lord

- a. **Number 1:** We will actually be "in the presence of the Lord" when we are with Him where He is – in heaven.
 - ▶ This is the ultimate goal of everyone who truly loves God.
 - ▶ The angels and other spirit beings are "in the presence of the Lord" in this literal sense.
 - Lk 1:19 – "And the angel answered and said to him (Zacharias), "I am Gabriel, who **stands in the presence of God**, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings."
 - Zec 6:5 – "And the angel answered and said to me, 'These are four spirits of heaven, who go out from their station before the Lord of all the earth.'
 - + **NIV:** "The angel answered me, "These are the four spirits of heaven, going out from **standing in the presence of the Lord** of the whole world."
 - ▶ Jn 12:26 "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and **where I am**, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.
 - ▶ Jn 14:2,3 "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that **where I am**, there you may be also.
 - ▶ Jn 17:24 "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me **where I am**, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world."

- ▶ 2Th 1:9 – “These shall be punished with everlasting destruction **from the presence of the Lord** and from the glory of His power,”
- b. **Number 2:** We can and should feel that we are “in the presence of the Lord” when we are living our lives in conscious realization that He sees and knows everything we do (“in the presence of” = “in the sight of”)
 - ▶ “in the presence of” is a translation of *enopion* (*en-o'-pee-on*)
 - The KJV translates *enopion* “before” in 64 occurrences, “in the sight of” in 16 occurrences, and “in the presence of” in 7 occurrences.
 - Thayer and Bullinger define *enopion*: in the presence of, in the sight of, before.
 - ▶ Ac 10:33 – “So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all **present before God**, to hear all the things commanded you by God.”
 - ▶ 2Co 2:17 – “For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak **in the sight of** God in Christ.”
 - ▶ 2Ti m 4:1 – “I charge you therefore **before God** and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:”
 - ▶ The righteous are always conscious of the fact that God sees and knows all that we do.
 - Heb 4:13 – “And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account.”
 - Also: Jas 4:10; 2Cor 2:17; 1Th 1:3; 1Tim 6:13; Ac 8:21; Ac 10:31
- c. **Number 3:** We can and should feel that we are “in the presence of the Lord” when we meet together with Him for worship.
 - ▶ Ex 23:17 – “Three times in the year all your males shall **appear before the Lord GOD.**”
 - ▶ Psa 95:2 – “Let us **come before His presence** with thanksgiving; Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.”
 - ▶ Psa 100:2 – “Serve the LORD with gladness; **Come before His presence** with singing.”
 - ▶ Matt 18:20 – “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, **I am there in the midst of them.**”

Now, for the answer to the question: How can we come to have that sense of God’s abiding presence? How can we come to feel or sense that we are in the presence of the Lord?

The key is in the connection between “living for the Lord” and “being in the presence of the Lord”.

It is important ... all important ... that we make that connection.

- a. 2 Cor 5:14 – “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; 15 and He died for all, that those who live should **live no longer for themselves, but for Him** who died for them and rose again. ... 17 Therefore, **if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation** ... 21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, **that we might become the righteous-ness of God** in Him.”
- b. Tit 2:11-12 – “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live **soberly, righteously, and godly** in the present age”

Living our lives for the Lord ... living soberly, and righteously, and godly ... is the key to having that “constant sense of God’s abiding presence” ... it’s the key to having the sense of being in the presence of the Lord.

- a. Col 1:21-23 – “And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled 22 in the body of His flesh through death, **to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight** – 23 **if** indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.”

- ▶ NASB: "And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, 22 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order **to present you before Him** holy and blameless and beyond reproach – 23 if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister."
- ▶ WEY: "And you, estranged as you once were and even hostile in your minds, amidst your evil deeds, 22 He has now, in His human body, reconciled to God by His death, **to bring you**, holy and faultless and irreproachable, **into His presence**; 23 if, indeed, you are still firmly holding to faith as your foundation, without ever shifting from your hope that rests on the Good News that you have heard, which has been proclaimed in the whole creation under Heaven, and in which I Paul have been appointed to serve."

Earlier in the sermon we considered the 3 ways in which the phrase, "in the presence of the Lord" is used in the Scriptures.

- a. Now I want you to see the connection between them:
 - ▶ **If** we are living "in the presence of the Lord" day by day in this life – living with the continual realization that He sees and knows all that we do ...
 - ▶ **And if** we are joyfully worshiping "in the presence of the Lord" in this life – worshiping with the awareness that He is with us in spirit ...
 - ▶ **Then**, we will ultimately come to actually be "in the presence of the Lord" ... where He is ... forever.
- b. Another way of saying it would be this:
 - ▶ Those who have lived soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world" (Tit 2:11) ... and have worshiped the Lord "in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:24) ... will ultimately be "in the presence of the Lord" ... where He is ... forever.

Conclusion

Ac 3:19 – "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from **the presence of the Lord**,

Those who will not repent and obey the gospel: "These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from **the presence of the Lord** and from the glory of His power," (2Th 1:9)

We need to be in the presence of the Lord in every sense, and we ought to long to be in the presence of the Lord in every sense.

- a. Psa 42:2 – "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?"
- b. 2Cor 5:8 – "We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be **present with the Lord.**"