

Bob Kauflin

# ENCOUNTERING GOD'S PRESENCE: WHAT SHOULD WE EXPECT?

## I. Introduction

## II. God's presence in Scripture

- A. It has always been God's purpose to have a people among whom he would dwell.
1. **Adam and Eve in the garden**
  2. **The Israelites (Ex. 29:45) (tabernacle/temple)**
  3. **Jesus, the Word made flesh who dwelt among us (Jn. 1:14)**
  4. **The church (Eph. 2:21-22)**
  5. **Heaven (Rev. 21:32)**
- B. Forfeited at the fall, reestablished through the tabernacle and temple, forfeited in the demise of Israel, but recovered in the New Covenant through the outpouring of the Spirit.
- C. God's presence is a distinguishing characteristic of God's people (Ex. 33:14-15)
- D. **Our response to God's presence uniquely defines us as God's people.**

## III. Trust God's Promised Presence

- A. Scripture reveals the reality, both comforting and sobering, that God is everywhere. (Ps. 139:7-10)

*"Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me." (Psalm 139:7-10 ESV)*

- B. God has promised to be present at specific places and times as well:
1. **in individuals (1 Cor. 6:19)**
  2. **as we gather (Eph. 2:21-22)**
  3. **as his word is preached (1 Cor. 2:4)**
  4. **in the Lord's supper (1 Cor. 11:27-32)**

C. Sometimes we're aware of God's promised presence, sometimes not. But trusting God's promised presence has specific effects.

1. **Comfort (Ps. 73:23)**
2. **Fear of God (Heb. 4:13)**
3. **Confidence (Heb. 13:5-6)**

D. Important to realize that we don't "make" God appear. No one can "bring" God's presence. We trust that he has promised to be with us.

"Christian musicians must be particularly cautious. They can create the impression that God is more present when music is being made than when it is not; that worship is more possible with music than without it; and that God might possibly depend on its presence before appearing. (Harold Best, *Music Through the Eyes of Faith*, p. 153)

#### IV. Pursue God's Experienced Presence

"The Spirit makes known the personal presence in and with the Christian and the church of the risen, reigning Saviour. . . . He empowers, enables, purges, and leads generation after generation of sinners to face the reality of God. And he does it in order that Christ may be known, loved, trusted, honored and praised... The distinctive, constant, basic ministry of the Holy Spirit under the new covenant is . . . to mediate Christ's presence to believers." (J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, pp. 47, 49)

One of the Holy Spirit's "primary purposes in the new covenant age is *to manifest the presence of God*, to give indications that make the presence of God known." (Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, pg. 641)

A. Desperate Dependence

There can be no substitute for that manifested presence of God which is always a biblical possibility for the people of God. When it is not being experienced **they should humbly seek him for it**, not neglecting their ongoing duties, nor denying their present blessings, but recognizing that there is always infinitely more with their God and Father who desires fellowship with those redeemed by the blood of his Son and regenerated by the work of his Spirit. – (Graham Harrison, *Worship and the Presence of God*,

[http://www.banneroffruth.org/pages/articles/article\\_detail.php?111](http://www.banneroffruth.org/pages/articles/article_detail.php?111))

B. Eager Expectation

1. **God tells us that the Spirit sovereignly empowers "each one individually as he wills."**

2. **Trusting in God's sovereignty is no reason to think He won't move in miraculous ways. (Acts 4:27-31)**
3. **Eager expectation involves listening and watching for the Spirit's leadings and promptings.**
4. **The Holy Spirit helps us plan, but our plans are not the Holy Spirit.**

C. Humble Responsiveness

1. **Often the Spirit's work has been despised because people have responded to it proudly. (no one can correct me, my gift is the best gift, this makes me better)**
2. **Do what you sense the Lord is saying. Listen carefully for the Spirit's leadings, don't simply dismiss them.**
3. **Leaders**

D. What if we don't "feel" God's presence?

1. **Could be a result of disobedience (grieving the Spirit mentioned in Eph. 4:30, quenching the Spirit mentioned in 1 Thess. 5:19)**
2. **Could be God withholding evidence of his presence so that we might trust Him more completely, and desire Him more eagerly.**

## V. Anticipate God's Unveiled Presence

- A. The Bible speaks of heaven as a place where God is uniquely present. (Heb. 9:24; Luke 1:19; Jn. 17:5)

"We might find it misleading to say that God is "more present" in heaven than anywhere else, but it would not be misleading to say that God is present in a special way in heaven, present especially there to bless and to show forth his glory. We could also say that God manifests his presence more fully in heaven than elsewhere." (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, pg. 176)

- B. God's unveiled presence motivates us to holiness. (1 Jn. 3:2-3)

- C. What an incredible privilege and joy it will be to take our place among the throngs of heaven, made up of people from every tribe, language, people and tongue, who have been purchased by the blood of the Lamb.

*"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." Rev. 21:3-4 (ESV)*