

GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



GIG101 – The Presence Of The Lord

I have felt very burdened lately to do some podcasting about the Presence of the Lord. I think it is really essential for us to grasp our need for His Presence. Now I know when you talk about the Presence of the Lord, it can be confusing to some people. If we look at it from a theological standpoint, then we can say that God is omnipresent – He is everywhere. We know that He is the Creator of the universe, and therefore His Presence, His fingerprint, is in all creation, and we can see Him in all that He has made. But there is a Presence of the Lord that I think we must concentrate on seeing restored into the earth, or into our lives, during this age. When we talk about the Presence of the Lord, we recognize that it is something that we can experience, that we can have; but it is also something that we can lose. And that is part of why I am concerned about getting into this idea about the Presence of the Lord, for us as believers who are reaching in in this time to see real releases, or restorations, of His Presence into the earth.

When I think about the Presence of the Lord, one of the first Scriptures or stories that comes to my mind is about the dedication of the Temple that was built under Solomon. We know that he built the palace; we know that he built the Temple. But he went in to dedicate that Temple, and in the process of dedication, the Presence of the Lord came and filled that place. We see in First Kings 8, starting at verses 10-13, it says, “It happened that when the priests came from the holy place, the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord. Then Solomon said, ‘The Lord has said that He would dwell in the thick cloud. I have surely built You a lofty house, a place for Your dwelling forever.’” So we understand that it is one thing to build a building; it is one thing to have a physical or a geographical location; it is another thing to have that place filled with His Presence, or to have God dwelling in that place. This is what we see that happened during the first Temple. God said He would dwell there, and He did come and dwell; His Presence came and resided in that place to the point where it was a thick cloud – we call it the glory cloud, or the Sha·`khē·nah, Shě·`kī·nah glory in English. But this glory of the Lord filled the place, until the priests and those who were in the presence of this phenomenon were not able to stand and do the ministry that they were there for, because of the heaviness of His Presence dwelling there. So we recognize that there is this idea of His Presence. You can say, “Well, the Presence of God is everywhere. He dwells everywhere. He is omnipresent in the earth and around us.” That is true. But we also must recognize that there is a Presence of God that is very real, and something that we must be seeking in our lives in this day and age. It is not enough just to have a church – it needs to be filled with His Presence. He needs to be there; and to miss that or to lose that Presence of God is a very deep concern.

I want to read some Scripture verses about the Presence of God, and just get an idea of the fact that there is this unique thing of His Presence. I believe that in the days that we call the end time, His Presence becomes something very important for us, and very necessary for us, to make it through, to walk through the days that we are facing, days of trouble. I want to read out of Psalm 27, starting at verses 4-6: “One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His temple. For in the

day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle; in the secret place of His tent He will hide me; He will lift me up on a rock. And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me, and I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord." So we see that with David, there was this drive that he had, he was seeking the Presence of the Lord. Again, you can say, "Well, the Lord is everywhere. He is all around." But David was seeking a manifestation of the Presence of the Lord, and he was seeking to dwell in the house of the Lord in that kind of Presence. He recognized that in days of trouble, there was a concealing that was available – he could be concealed in the Tabernacle, in the secret place of the Lord. So there are these aspects to the Presence of the Lord. And this is what concerns me, because I do not think we can just lightly talk about the Presence of the Lord. We must recognize that there is something necessary in His Presence. In times of trouble we can be concealed in His Presence, as Solomon talked about: He comes and dwells in the thick cloud. That is a concealment that existed, and we know that the Presence of the Lord can dwell in that way. We know that Christ, when they were coming to take Him, He walked through their midst and was gone, because of He was able to pass through without them seeing Him. Was that not the Presence of the Father, the Presence of the Lord surrounding Him? David refers here to the secret place in His tent – there is a secret place of His Presence that we must seek to enter into, to find in this generation. And I am concerned as to whether or not there is enough of a drive and a hunger. David said, "I seek" – are we hungering? Are we seeking Him? Seek and you shall find. Knock and it shall be opened to you. There must be this persistent drive and hunger that we have to enter into the Presence of the Lord.

In Psalm 32:6-7, it says, "Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found; surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him. You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah." We should think about this. There is a way that His Presence surrounds us, dwells with us, dwells within us. We have these promises from Yeshua that He would come and take up His abode with us; the Father would, likewise; the Holy Spirit is to indwell us and surround us. We are to have a life as believers in the Presence of the Lord. I do not think that we really understand what it means, and I do not think there is the drive that we should have, like David, seeking this, to come into the Presence of the Lord. I want to loose in us this awareness that there is a Presence of God that is available. The Presence of God is there for us. In Jude verses 24-25, it also says, "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen." These things are available – His majesty, dominion, authority. We are to dwell with Him. He is able to make us stand in His Presence, in His glory, blameless; and this is what we should strive for as believers. In Psalm 16:11, it says, "You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever." We need to be those who dwell in the Presence of the Lord.

One thing we must understand is that the Presence of the Lord is something that can be lost. I bring this up because I feel like, to a great extent, in this day and age that we live in, we have lost His Presence in a real way. I think we have become conditioned to doing things without His Presence that is available to us. And sometimes when you have lost something for such a long period of time, you are not even aware that it is available. But we must recognize it is available – His Presence is available. Moses stood in the Presence of God, and when he came down from the mountain, his face shown because he was filled with that Presence, surrounded by that Presence. At some point, that Presence waned. You can lose the Presence of God without even being aware of it. And I ask us that question: as the body of Christ, as the Church in this generation, have we lost His Presence? Have we lost the availability that we should have

to be able to stand, as Jude talks about – He is able to make us stand without stumbling in the Presence of His glory? Are we in His glory? Are we surrounded by His glory as they were in the Temple when it was dedicated, and there was such a glory present that they were not even able to stand in that glory?

We have seen this before, in restorations that have happened. We have seen it at Azusa Street, at the outpourings of His Presence. We have seen it at many other manifestations of the Presence of the Lord and outpourings of His Presence, where His Presence was so thick that people were not able to stand, and many things happened; and there was the miraculous that took place just as a response to His Presence. We should not be seeking signs, or gifts, or ministries – they should be results of the fact that we have entered into His Presence.

We know that there are several places in the Scriptures where it talks about the fact that His Presence is something that can be lost. One of them is in Genesis. We see in the third chapter, in verse 22, the Lord talks about the fact that man had eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; and because of that, because of his disobedience, the Lord put him out of the Garden. In verse 24, it says, “So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life” – because God was concerned that they would lay hold, and come into, eternal life while they were yet in their sin. But we know that when He talks about the Garden, that was the place of His Presence. He walked with them every day; they had His Presence with them. So to be removed from the Garden, they were removed from the Presence of God. They no longer had that ability. And at some point, they began calling out to God, because they were not with Him any longer.

We see in Ezekiel, in the tenth chapter, in the eleventh chapter, the story of the glory departing. I started this by talking about the glory of God that came at the dedication of the Temple. But in Ezekiel, we see that that glory departed because of their sin, because of their apostasy from the Presence of God. And in Ezekiel 10, it talks about that. In verses 18-19, it says, “Then the glory of the Lord departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim. When the cherubim departed, they lifted their wings and rose up from the earth in my sight with the wheels beside them; and they stood still at the entrance of the east gate of the Lord's house, and the glory of the God of Israel hovered over them.”

We see being expressed here this progressive departing of the Presence of God. He lifts up off of the mercy seat, over in the Holy of Holies, and He moves out to the door of the Temple. Finally, He moves off of the Temple Mount and goes over the Mount of Olives, and His Presence stays there for a while. Then pretty soon His Presence departs from the Mount of Olives, and it departs Jerusalem. So they lost the Presence of God. And we need to recognize, this is a reality. The fact that we do not strive for His Presence is one thing; the fact that we may have experienced His Presence is something else; but to not recognize that our actions and our lifestyle can be the reason that we lose His Presence is of great concern. In Ezekiel 11, it says in verse 23, “The glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city and stood over the mountain which is east of the city.” And so the glory of the Lord departed Jerusalem. How much do we live in a day when the glory of the Lord has departed? How much are we seeing things like Azusa Street – His Presence over that place could be seen for miles away. That is what drew people to come in and find out what was going on. It was a visible, it was a physical, it was a tangible Presence of God that was restored to the earth. And once again, we know that it was lost. You can go to Azusa Street today and His Presence is not there as it was before. It is something that we should weep over, the loss of His Presence.

I want to give another example out of Exodus 33, where we see that the Presence of the Lord was not going to go with Israel into the land of promise because of their sin. In verses 1-3 of chapter 33, it says, "Then the Lord spoke to Moses, 'Depart, go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up from the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, "To your descendants I will give it." I will send an angel before you and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst.'" Because of their sin, God was not going to go up. And we need to recognize that at times we can possess promises that God has given, but what good is that if we end up being without His Presence?

We go on and see in many areas of the Scriptures where the actions and the sin of the people provoked God to the place where He rejected them out of His Presence. In Psalm 78, verses 58-60, it says, "For they provoked Him with their high places and aroused His jealousy with their graven images. When God heard, He was filled with wrath and greatly abhorred Israel; so that He abandoned the dwelling place at Shiloh, the tent which He had pitched among men." This is a story that we see repeating itself, the example of Shiloh. We see it again in Jeremiah, the seventh chapter, where he talks about it. He says, "Go back and visit Shiloh, and see what happened." And many times, we do not recognize that the Presence of God, and the Tabernacle that was built in the wilderness, dwelt at Shiloh longer than the Temple stood on the Temple Mount, after Solomon built the Temple. It really was the first place where God chose to dwell and have His Presence in the midst of Israel as they possessed the land. But because of their sin, He rejected them, and He destroyed Shiloh.

In Jeremiah 7, verses 11-14, it says, "'Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your sight? Behold, I, even I, have seen it,' declares the Lord. 'But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I made My name dwell at the first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel. And now, because you have done all these things,' declares the Lord, 'and I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear, and I called you but you did not answer, therefore, I will do to the house which is called by My name, in which you trust, and to the place which I gave you and your fathers, as I did to Shiloh.'" So God's Presence is something that must be sought after; and once we receive it, it must be retained.

One of the great concerns for me personally is the fact that we have seen revivals down through history; over the last hundred-plus years, we have seen amazing revivals and outpourings of His Spirit; and people once again are crying for revival. But there is something that we must recognize: if we are going to receive His Presence, and if we are going to seek Him and enter into His Presence, that Presence is something that can be lost just as it has been lost from every revival that I am aware of. I do not see today the kind of reality of His Presence that Solomon had at the dedication of the Temple. I do not see the kind of Presence and miracle existence of God in the earth as we saw in Azusa Street. When God came to deliver Israel out of Egypt, He said, "I have come down because I have heard the cry of My people." That cry needs to be restored in this generation, a cry that makes Him come down, brings His Presence back into the earth. Let's not just say, "Oh, yes, His Presence was in the service this morning. It was so delightful." No, I want His Presence so powerfully sitting in the place where we are that we cannot stand to minister, that we are overwhelmed by His Presence.

There is a promise that His Presence will be restored. Ezekiel 43 speaks about it. In these verses, starting at verses 1-2, it says, "Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing toward the east; and behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east. And His voice was like the sound of many

waters; and the earth shone with His glory.” These verses are so tremendous, because it is the reversal of what Ezekiel saw when the glory of the Lord departed the Temple, and departed Jerusalem, and departed Israel. Now we see the promise and the prophecy that the glory of the Lord will return, and so Ezekiel sees that return. And I encourage you, read it out of Ezekiel 43, verses 1 to 5. You see that there is the prophecy, the promise, that the glory of the Lord will return.

We see it again in Ezekiel 37. At verses 24-25, it says, “My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them. They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons' sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever.” He goes on to talk about the covenant and the peace and His Presence that would be with them, and that He would dwell in the midst of His sanctuary forever. So the Lord has departed, but the Lord is returning. And we have the prophecies and the promises of His return.

Isaiah 55:6-7 says, “Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts.” This is a time of real repentance. If we are going to seek for the Presence of the Lord to return in our generation, then there needs to be this forsaking of our wicked ways. There needs to be the getting rid of our unrighteousness in our midst, our unrighteous thoughts. There must be a returning “to the Lord, and He will have compassion..., and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” So His Word will be fulfilled, as He talks about. Read through these verses again, because it brings about the promise of His return, and that is important. One reason it is important is because a lot of people get stuck with these verses into an antisemitic mindset that says, “Well, the Jewish people, they failed and they sinned, and God rejected them.” No, keep reading, because He returns. He comes once again, and He restores His Presence to Israel, and to His people. He pours out a new heart and a new spirit, and they seek Him with all of their heart, and He is found of them; and His Presence is restored to His Temple forever, and forever.

These prophecies of His return are prophecies for us as believers in Yeshua, believers in Christ. They are prophecies of His return and restoration. He came to restore us into the Presence of the Lord. I know we talk about the fact that He came to forgive our sins, and that is very important, but it is not all that He did. He did not just come to forgive this sin and that sin. He came to restore us into this Presence of God that was lost. We lost our ability. We, as Gentiles, “were in the world without God,” it says. We never had the Presence of God as the Jewish people had. But when Christ came, He opened the door for us to enter that. In Second Corinthians 5:17-19, it says, “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.”

When we talk about witnessing to people, reconciling them, bringing salvation, it is not just the forgiveness of sin – it is bringing them back into this Presence of God, restoring God's Presence to man, to this earth. That is what Christ opens the door for. So when we get to Matthew, the sixth chapter, He is talking to us about prayer. He says, “Listen, don't pray like the hypocrites, who stand and pray in the synagogues and on the corners of streets; they have their reward.” See, there is no Presence in that any longer. He says, in verse 6, “But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret” – remember, the secret place of His Presence – “and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.” There is this idea that Christ brought about prayer: prayer

is part of our seeking Him. And when we pray, we go into His Presence. We enter in through the door, which is Christ, into the Presence of the Father, and we seek to dwell in that Presence. That is what our prayer life should be an expression of.

Christ said, in John 14, verses 2-5, “‘In My Father's house there are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 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. And you know the way where I am going.’ Thomas said to Him, ‘Lord, we do not know where You are going.’ Verse 6: “‘Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.’” We are to enter through Christ into the Presence of the Father. He went into the Presence of the Father to prepare a place for us, and He is opening the door. The door is there. It is standing open. It is waiting for us to seek Him with all of our hearts, until we are able to enter in and to be with Him.

John 17:24-26 says, “‘Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory’” – see, here we go, this dwelling in the glory, as Jude was talking about – “‘My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.’” In John 12:26, He says, “‘If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.’” There is this reality in Christ that the door is opened – it is open for us as Gentiles to enter into this Presence, into this glory, into the secret place of the Most High God. And we should strive to enter in. We should seek to enter in with all of our hearts.

It is important that we learn to come into His Presence. It is important that we see His Presence restored to us in this earth. And I think the further we go into the days that are ahead of us, the more important it becomes, because I think that our very survival may depend on being able and having learned how to enter into His Presence, into that thick cloud of His glory. Psalm 91:1-10 says, “‘He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.’” We are to dwell in His Presence. “‘I will say to the Lord, ‘My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust!’ For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark.” Christ cried this to Jerusalem: “‘How I would have gathered you under My wing as a hen gathers her chicks!’” We are to be gathered into His Presence. We are to be dwelling under the shelter of the Almighty, abiding in the shadow, dwelling in His Presence. It says in verse 5, “‘You will not be afraid of the terror by night.’” People are so fearful of the end days; and one of the reasons is because we do not know yet how to live in His Presence, how to enter His Presence, as we should. “‘You will not be afraid of the terror by night, or of the arrow that flies by day; of the pestilence that stalks in darkness, or of the destruction that lays waste at noon. A thousand may fall at your side and ten thousand at your right hand, but it shall not approach you. You will only look on with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked. For you have made the Lord, my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place. No evil will befall you, nor will any plague come near your tent.’” Why? Because you are in His tent, the secret place of the Lord. Read on through Psalm 91; see what the reality is of dwelling in His Presence, of calling upon Him, of seeking Him.

Isaiah 26:20-21 says, “‘Come, my people, enter into your rooms and close your doors behind you; hide for a little while until indignation runs its course. For behold, the Lord is about to come out from His

place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; and the earth will reveal her bloodshed and will no longer cover her slain." We see that we are to enter into His Presence at the time of His coming, at the time of His return. Many things will take place; but we are to enter into the secret place of the Most High God, and we are to close the doors behind us and hide in Him. Do you know how to hide in Him? Do you know how to enter His Presence in a way that is real, in a way that is an immunity from what is going on in this world and in this age? I think we need to learn it.

I know in the book of Revelation, people flee from His Presence. Revelation 6:15-17 talks about it, how people flee at His coming. We must be those who enter into Him at His coming, who dwell with Him at His coming. First John 2:28 says, "Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming." To dwell in His Presence, we must practice being in His Presence; because as we are in His Presence, we will know the truth about ourselves. We will know fully as we are known. And without practicing step-by-step to enter in and dwell in this Presence, and be transformed into His image, His appearing will be something that makes us shrink away in shame. We do not want to be those who shrink away; we want to abide in Him. I encourage you, learn to abide in His Presence.

Just some thoughts at the end of this. Yes, we know that God is omnipresent. He is everywhere, and He is in all things. But that does not mean that you are really in the Presence of the Lord. We know that we must strive to enter the Presence of the Lord. As Luke 13:24 says, "Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able." In John 17:24, Yeshua prayed to the Father that we would be with Christ in the Father's Presence, and that is what we should strive for. In times of persecution and trouble, our refuge will be in the secret place of His Presence; so we better know how to enter His Presence and dwell there. We believe for this to be a blessing, and I believe for you to be able to walk in His Presence, to dwell in His Presence, and live in His Presence. Amen.