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There are many things in life that are important and valuable. There are many things in life that are urgent. But there are a handful of things that really matter. However, above all these things is the thing that really matters. If we have this one commodity we can know the greatest joy of life. Nothing compares to it. Nothing is like it. Our eternal destination is tied up in it. The only thing that really matters is the presence of God.

WHAT IS THE PRESENCE OF GOD?

It is to know, by ongoing experience, the living presence of God in your life. In this way we can enjoy God because He is real to us. The presence of God is also His glory. The presence of God is to know the companionship of God. I believe that we can know God in this way. We are told that we can be friends with God and this is what this is all about.
THE PRESENCE OF GOD IS OUR GREATEST JOY

To experience the presence of God is the greatest joy any human can know.

Psalm 21:6 You have given him the unquenchable joy of Your presence.

There is something very special about the presence of God. It is unlike any pleasure human life can generate. God’s presence is an exquisite pleasure.

Psalm 16:11 You have let me experience the joys of life and the exquisite pleasures of Your own eternal presence.

Nothing compares to the presence of God.

Psalm 84:10 Better is one day in Your courts than a thousand elsewhere.

The greatest joy you can think of, cannot compare to the joy of knowing His presence.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD SHOULD BE OUR DESIRE

This is what we should long for. This is what we should pursue. We should stop at nothing, until we know this as a reality.

Psalm 27:4-6 The one thing I want from God, the thing I seek most of all, is the privilege of meditating in His Temple, living in His presence every day of my life, delighting in His incomparable perfections and glory.

Nothing else really matters. This is the thing that we need to seek most of all. To be able to live in His presence every day of our lives.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD IS AWESOME

Isaiah 64:1 How the mountains would quake in Your presence!

Nahum 1:5 In His presence mountains quake and hills melt; the earth crumbles, and its people are destroyed.

The presence of God is not something light. The presence of God is not something you mess with. We need to long for and take the presence of God seriously. If the presence of God is going to be a reality there will be no place for sin. There will be no place for compromise or double standards. If you intend holding onto Your sin, I would recommend that you stay away from the presence of God.
THE PRESENCE OF GOD IS THE PLACE TO BE WHEN TROUBLE COMES

Psalm 27:4-6 The one thing I want from God, the thing I seek most of all, is the privilege of meditating in His Temple, living in His presence every day of my life, delighting in His incomparable perfections and glory. There I’ll be when troubles come. He will hide me. He will set me on a high rock out of reach of all my enemies.

If we know His presence and we stay there when trouble comes, we will be protected. God wants to rescue us. But we need to be in this place of His presence if we are going to experience His deliverance.

Psalm 9:3-4 My enemies will fall back and perish in Your presence; You have vindicated me.

LIVING IN HIS PRESENCE IS FOR NOW

Sometimes we think living in God’s presence is not for now. We think that that is something we will only experience in heaven one day. We think it is something we will experience during a season of revival. The presence of God is NOT seasonal.

Psalm 140:13 Surely the godly are thanking You, for they shall live in Your presence.

Psalm 116:9 I shall live! Yes, in His presence—here on earth!

God’s presence is for you and me. God’s presence is for now. God’s presence is ongoing – we should be living in His presence.

LIVING WITHOUT HIS PRESENCE

It is possible to live without His presence in our lives. But, it is miserable. Being without the presence of God is like living in labour. Does your life feel like a permanent state of labour?

Isaiah 26:17 How we missed Your presence, Lord! We suffered as a woman giving birth who cries and writhes in pain.
If we do not know the ongoing presence of the living God as a reality, we suffer. Nothing the world can offer can compensate for the lack of the presence of God in our lives. Only the presence of God matters!

THE TEST

There is a critical test that we need to put ourselves through. As Christians we should feel Christ’s presence within us. This feeling should be growing stronger and stronger.

2 Corinthians 13:5-6 Check up on yourselves. Are you really Christians? Do you pass the test? Do you feel Christ’s presence and power more and more within you? Or are you just pretending to be Christians when actually you aren’t at all? I hope you can agree that I have stood that test and truly belong to the Lord.

How did you fare in the test? Don’t settle for anything less than what God has for you. God wants to give us Himself, nothing less.

IT IS TIME TO CHANGE OUR MINDS

We need to become people who think differently. If you had thought that the presence of God was for the sweet bye-and-bye or that the presence of God was just for others, you are wrong. The presence of God is for you. It is all that really matters.

Acts 3:19 Now change your mind and attitude to God and turn to him so he can cleanse away your sins and send you wonderful times of refreshment from the presence of the Lord.

The refreshing we need comes from the presence of the Lord.

IT IS TIME TO EXPERIENCE HIS PRESENCE

Why waste more time? Why spend your life chasing all sorts of things when it is the presence of God that really matters.

Ephesians 3:12 Now we can come fearlessly right into God’s presence, assured of His glad welcome when we come with Christ and trust in Him.

Zephaniah 1:7 Stand in silence in the presence of the Lord.

Never settle for anything less. Only the presence of God matters. It is all you need.
Most obviously, the statement that Christ has conquered death refers to His resurrection. He who was dead is now alive (see Revelation 1:18). These three words—Christ conquered death—define the most important difference between Christianity and all other religions. No other religious leader ever predicted his own death and resurrection (Matthew 16:21), based his claims about himself and his teaching on that prediction (John 2:18–22; Matthew 27:40), and then kept that promise (Luke 24:6).

Jesus’ resurrection marks the first time in history that someone rose from the dead never to die again. Others who were resurrected eventually died a second time (see 1 Kings 17:17–24; 2 Kings 4:32–37; Mark 5:39–42; John 11:38–44). Jesus’ resurrection was a true and total defeat of death. As the Holy Son of God, Jesus overcame death once and for all, as Peter explained: “It was impossible for death to keep its hold on him” (Acts 2:24). The triumphant, risen Christ said, “I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades” (Revelation 1:18). Keys are a symbol of authority. Jesus is sovereign over death. Christ’s conquest of death was permanent and eternal.

Christ conquered death because He was sinless. The curse upon mankind in the Garden of Eden, brought about by their sin, was plainly stated: “You will certainly die” (Genesis 2:18). Ever since, we have seen the truth of Romans 6:23, “The wages of sin is death.” But Jesus Christ had no sin (1 Peter 2:22); therefore, death had no power over Him. Jesus’ death was a voluntary sacrifice for our sin, and, given His sinless perfection, His resurrection logically followed. “I lay down my life,” Jesus said, “only to take it up again” (John 10:17).

The news—the gospel—is grounded in Christ’s victory over death. Without the resurrection, there is no gospel; indeed, there is no hope for us at all: “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:7). But Christ has risen, and, as fellow conquerors with Him, Christians “have passed from death to life” (1 John 3:14). Christ “has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10).
The fact that Christ has conquered death means that believers have also been granted victory over death. We are “more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Romans 8:37). Christ is “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20), which means that Jesus’ resurrection is the first of many: believers who have “fallen asleep” (died) will be likewise resurrected. Jesus promised His followers, “Because I live, you also will live” (John 14:19).

The fact that Christ has conquered death is a fulfillment of prophecy. The psalmist predicted the Messiah would overcome death: “You will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay” (Psalm 16:10). Other prophets filled God’s people with the hope that the Lord would one day abolish death: “He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces” (Isaiah 25:8), and “I will deliver this people from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave, is your destruction?” (Hosea 13:14; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:54–55).

Death is the devil’s most powerful, terrifying weapon against us. At the cross, Christ defeated Satan on behalf of us helpless sinners: “Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out” (John 12:31; cf. Colossians 2:15). With the empty tomb, Christ destroyed the devil’s most powerful weapon, death. Satan, our accuser, is now powerless to condemn Christians. We will not share his fate (Revelation 12:9–11; 20:10, 14).

When Christ conquered death for us, He removed the “sting of death,” sin (1 Corinthians 15:56)—that is, we will not be judged by God according to our sins; rather, we will stand before God robed in Christ’s own perfect righteousness. That is why believers in Christ “will not be hurt at all by the second death” (Revelation 2:11), and “the second death has no power over them” (Revelation 20:6). Christ has received our death penalty for sin and, through His death, has conquered death (Revelation 20:14).

Believers “are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Romans 8:37). What can separate us from the love of God in Christ? “Neither death nor life” (verse 38). Christ has conquered death, and believers stand firm on Jesus’ words: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies. And everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die” (John 11:25–26, BSB).
Most of the Bible was originally written to those living in an agrarian society, people familiar with working the land, managing livestock, and raising crops. Many of Jesus’ parables involve the farming life. Not surprisingly, then, the Bible contains many references to sowing and reaping, and here are some of the principles we learn:

Sowing and reaping is a law of the natural world. On the third day of creation, God commanded the earth to bring forth living plants “bearing seed” and fruit “with seed in it” (Genesis 1:12). These plants were then given to man for food (verse 29). Ever since the beginning, man has understood the process of sowing and reaping and has applied it to his benefit.

God uses the law of sowing and reaping to bestow His blessing. God’s blessing comes generally to the whole world as He sends sun and rain to the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45). In some cases His blessing comes more specially to those of His choosing, such as Isaac. Genesis 26:12 says that Isaac sowed a crop and received a hundredfold in one season because the Lord targeted him for blessing.

Israel’s gratefulness for God’s yearly blessing was expressed in the Feast of Firstfruits, when the first of the harvest was brought to the Lord as an offering (Exodus 23:19a; Leviticus 23:10).

God warned Israel that, if they forsook Him and pursued idols, the law of sowing and reaping would be suspended and their crops would fail (Leviticus 26:16b). This happened to disobedient Judah on a couple occasions (Jeremiah 12:13; Micah6:15).

Sowing and reaping is also a law of the spiritual world. It is more than just an agricultural principle. It is an axiom of life that we reap what we sow. Galatians 6:7 says, “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.” There are natural consequences to our actions. The world operates under the law of cause and effect. There is no way around it: every time we choose an action, we also choose the consequences of that action.
Sowing and reaping implies a wait. Nothing good grows overnight. The farmer must be patient in order to see the fruit of his labors. When the Bible likens the ministry to planting, watering and reaping (1 Corinthians 3:6), it suggests a length of time. God will bring forth fruit to His glory in His time. Until then, we faithfully labor in His field (Matthew 9:38), knowing that “at the proper time we will reap a harvest, if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9; see also Psalm 126:5).

We reap in kind to what we sow. Those who plant apple seeds should expect to harvest apples. Those who sow anger should expect to receive what anger naturally produces. Galatians 6:8 says, “Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.” Living a life of carnality and sin and expecting to inherit heaven is akin to planting cockle burrs and waiting for roses.

This principle works both positively and negatively. “The one who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward” (Proverbs 11:18b), but “whoever sows injustice reaps calamity” (Proverbs 22:8a).

We reap proportionately to what we sow. The rule is, the more seed planted, the more fruit harvested. The Bible applies this law to our giving. Those who show generosity will be blessed more than those who don’t. “Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously” (2 Corinthians 9:6). This principle is not concerned with the amount of the gift but with the spirit in which it is given. God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7), and even the widow’s mites are noticed by our Lord (Luke 21:2-3).

We reap more than what we sow. In other words, the law of sowing and reaping is related to the law of multiplication. Jesus spoke of seed that brought forth “a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown” (Matthew 13:8). One grain of wheat produces a whole head of grain. In the same way, one little lie can produce an out-of-control frenzy of falsehoods, fallacies, and fictions. Sow the wind and reap the whirlwind (Hosea 8:7). Positively, one kind deed can result in a blessing to last a lifetime.

Sowing and reaping is used as a metaphor for death and resurrection. When Paul discusses the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, he uses the analogy of planting a seed to illustrate physical death. “The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15:42b-44a). A seed may “die” when it falls to the ground, but that is not the end of its life (John 12:24).

Found throughout Scripture, the idea of sowing and reaping is an important principle imparting wisdom for both this world and the next.
THE DAY STARTED WITH A MIRACLE

Matthew 21:1-3 Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied there and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to Me. ‘If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.”

The miracle included:

a. A Divine instruction. – ‘Go into the village opposite you’

b. Divine Knowledge. – ‘immediately you will find a donkey tied there and a colt with her’

c. Divine Provision. – ‘untie them and bring them to Me.’

Remember that ultimately the earth and everything in it is the Lord’s.

1 Corinthians 10:26 "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it."

d. Divine Protection. - “If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.”
Here prophecy was being fulfilled before their very eyes and the vast majority did not even realise it. I would how many times things happen in our lives that are a fulfilment of something the Lord has spoken, but because it comes in an unusual packaging, we don’t even realise it? You are not a mistake. Even our own lives a part of His divine plan and purpose.

THE DAY WAS MADE POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF OBEDIENCE.

Matthew 21:6 The disciples went and did just as Jesus had instructed them, and brought the donkey and the colt, and laid their coats on them; and He sat on the coats.

Obedience to the instructions we receive from God are always important. When we open it opens up the door for the next miracle to happen and it gives us the opportunity of being used by God. Sometimes the things the Lord gives us to do may appear simple and unrelated to anything greater, but as we obey, it will happen. They did more than just fetch the donkey. The prepared the donkey: ‘The disciples went and laid their coats on them; and He sat on the coats.’ The Lord will always use what you do for Him. Jesus did not tell them to do this or what His intentions were with the animals, but they used their initiative and prepared them anyway. Jesus made good use of what they had done because He sat on the coats.

IT WAS A DAY ON HONOUR

Matthew 21:8 Most of the crowd spread their coats in the road, and others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in the road.

The crowd spontaneously start doing what they can to honour Jesus. You and I should do what we can to honour the Lord in any and every way possible. What can you do to honour Him today? The people humbled themselves and honoured Jesus. We should live lives in which we humble ourselves and surrender what is important to us so that our Lord and Saviour can be honoured in every situation and in every circumstance.

THE DAY CONTINUED WITH THE FULFILLMENT OF PROPHESY

Matthew 21:4-5 This took place to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet: “SAY TO THE DAUGHTER OF ZION, ‘BEHOLD YOUR KING IS COMING TO YOU, GENTLE, AND MOUNTED ON A DONKEY, EVEN ON A COLT, THE FOAL OF A BEAST OF BURDEN.’”

Nothing Jesus ever did was by mistake or by accident. Every word and ever action was a fulfilment of prophesy.
IT WAS A DAY OF PRAISE

Matthew 21:9 The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David; BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Hosanna in the highest!”

The living Bible says that the crowd surged on ahead and pressed along behind. We should always be ready to move ahead with God and continually be pressing into His presence and all He has for us in our lives. We should not withdraw, lose interest and step back. Keep on moving forward with God and keep on pressing in.

IT WAS A DAY OF STIRRING

Matthew 21:10 When He had entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, “Who is this?” And the crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee.”

Our lives should constantly be stirred because of the fact that the very presence of Jesus is with us. Let His presence here today stir you. Don’t just sit on the sidelines in complacency and observe. Press in and allow His presence to touch you and to stir your heart, your soul and the lives of your family.
IT WAS A DAY OF DESTINY!

Matthew 21:12-13 And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves. And He said to them, “It is written, ‘MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER’; but you are making it a ROBBERS’ DEN.”

The temple was His destination and His destiny. He now was where He belonged – in His Father’s house. Today, we are the temple of the Holy Spirit and He wants to come and make His home in us. He wants to remove those things that hinder and stop us, so that we can know, enjoy and experience Him in the very core of our lives, a place that only He can fill.

THE DAY ENDED WITH MANY MIRACLES

Matthew 21:14 The blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them.

Our Lord is a miracle working God. If we open the door and give Him space, He will come into any situation and miracles will be part and parcel of His presence. You can trust Him today with Your needs and the miracles you are trusting Him for. He will come and meet your need. May you day also end with miracles out of His faithful and mighty hand.
Empowered
By God

By: Andrew Roebert

How often we live our lives in our own strength. We run around doing what ‘seems good unto us’ and in the process we get exhausted, tired, stressed, pressurized, weak, depressed and worn out. I know a lady who carried so much with her. One day I spoke to her and asked her how she handled the weight of the burden she carried in life? She retorted by saying: ‘I’ve got broad shoulders’. Many of us have this ‘broad-shoulder approach’ and we are sure we can handle whatever comes our way. This is great, until one day, when things just get too much and we need help. It is then that we discover that we need God and His strength in our lives. The Bible tells us that we are ‘earthen vessels’. This means that we are not as strong as we think we are and we need God more that we realize.

QUOTATION

I heard someone make the following statement: ‘Everything we do in our own strengthen wears us down, everything we do through God’s strength enables (encourages, strengthens, builds us up) us!’

DEFINITION: Power – is the capacity to effect (do) something!
THE POWER OF GOD IS AVAILABLE TO US

Romans 8:11 And if the Spirit of Him Who raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, [then] He Who raised up Christ Jesus from the dead will also restore to life your mortal (short-lived, perishable) bodies through His Spirit Who dwells in you.

With God, we have the capacity, ability, endurance and perseverance to be able to really have an effect. This verse tells us that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead can live within us. In addition this power that is available to us will come and restore to life our physical bodies. When this happens everything changes. We are no longer the same. Our lives and the way we live our lives changes. We are no longer running on our own strength. We can switch over to His power in our lives.

WE CAN KNOW HIS POWER IN OUR LIVES

His power can be 'at work' within us. We can experience His power in our lives. We can live, behave and walk in this dimension on a daily basis.

1 Corinthians 6:14 And God both raised the Lord to life and will also raise us up by His power.

Ephesians 3:20 Now to Him Who, by (in consequence of) the [action of His] power that is at work within us, is able to [carry out His purpose and] do superabundantly, far over and above all that we [dare] ask or think [infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes, or dreams].

God’s power is at work within us. He often uses what we are going through, to bring about His purposes. We must not resist His working in our lives, but we must embrace it. God’s power wants to bring us through any current difficulties and challenges to a place where He wants us to be. God has great things in store, things that are super-abundant, far above what we could ask or think.
HIS POWER MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE

His power gives us what we need.

2 Peter 1:3 His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue.

We can only go so far in our own strength. Sooner or later we will need HIS POWER. Life can be like quicksand. It can swallow us up and the devil wants this to happen. We can struggle and fight this in our own strength and end up sinking even further. But when HIS POWER comes into play we can overcome and come out on top. One day I saw an old Western movie. In this movie the hero landed in an area of quicksand. As he struggled to keep from sinking, he kept sinking further in, until all that was out of the mud was his head. Then along come someone on a horse and threw him a rope and tied it to the horse and the horse began to pull and slowly he emerged effortlessly out of the mud. All he had to do was to hold on to the rope and the power of the horse would work within his situation and bring him back to life, from a sure death.

GOD IS THE ULTIMATE SOURCE OF ALL POWER (STRENGTH)

Ephesians 1:19-20 And [so that you can know and understand] what is the immeasurable and unlimited and surpassing greatness of His power in and for us who believe, as demonstrated in the working of His mighty strength, which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His [own] right hand in the heavenly places.

In a sense we have to come to the end of ourselves, to the point where we realize that we need God totally. At this point we get to a place of ‘desperate dependence’ as opposed to ‘partial dependence’. When we live our lives without this ‘desperate dependence’ we live life standing on a banana peel, ready to slip when the next hurdle comes our way. Often we look everywhere but to God for our strength. We will look to others, to our ability and skill, to our qualification and career, to our finances and resources, to our beauty or strength when we need to be looking to God. All these other things have the capacity to let us down – they are not sure things. But God and His power is what we can completely depend on. Don’t look to other places for your strength and happiness, look to God and find your peace in Him.
WE HAVE NO POWER APART FROM GOD!

There is a song: ‘I HAVE NO POWER OF MY OWN’.

*John 15:5* I am the Vine; you are the branches. Whoever lives in Me and I in him bears much (abundant) fruit. However, apart from Me [cut off from vital union with Me] you can do nothing.

We have to stay vitally connected to God. Our strength flows from God as we remain connected to Him. If we cut ourselves off we will last for a while, but ultimately we will run out of strength. Often when people face difficulty they get disappointed with God and become disillusioned and turn to their own ways. We must learn to hold onto God and realize we need Him and His power in our lives to bring us out on top. (See quicksand story above)

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE KEY!

The song goes on: ‘I have no power of my own – Holy Spirit come and help to realise that I have no power of my own!’

*Acts 1:8* But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

*Romans 8:11* And if the Spirit of Him Who raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, [then] He Who raised up Christ Jesus from the dead will also restore to life your mortal (short-lived, perishable) bodies through His Spirit Who dwells in you.

The Holy Spirit makes this all possible. It is for this reason that we so desperately need the Holy Spirit. Before the Holy Spirit fell on the disciples they were scared, timid and cowards (so much for their own strength) but after the Holy Spirit came upon them they were bold, fearless and courageous even in the face of opposition and threat! We need the Holy Spirit in every aspect of our lives. We must invite Him and give Him right of way in our lives. Some years back Phil Driscoll wrote a song and the words went: “Welcome Holy Spirit. I am in Your presence; fill me with Your power. Move inside of me.’ This needs to be our cry as well!

IT’S TIME TO STEP UP INTO A NEW REALM OF LIFE AND WALK IN HIS POWER!

*Romans 6:4* Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious [power] of the Father, so we too might [habitually] live and behave (walk) in newness of life.

There is another dimension of life to which we should arise. It is a newness of life into which we must step as we realize and take hold of the power and strength of God that is available to each one of us. I believe that God wants us to live on an ongoing basis (habitually) as it were addicted to this aspect of God. As a result it should affect our lives, our behavior and walk and we will never be the same! Are you ready to step up to and into this newness of life, where we depend on His power and not on our own?