

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – May 21, 2020

The Lord be with you.

Is there a time in your life when God's presence has been especially real to you? A time when you could just feel God right there with you?

That's a precious time when God's presence is more than just an assumption in our heads, but an awareness in our heart.

There came a time in my walk with God, when I longed to know I had to know God with me, in the way I'd been taught to sing as a boy about how God walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am his own.

I needed that to be more than just a song I needed to know that it was real for my life. It was through a Bible verse that David taught me something about the daily practice of the presence of God who was always present to us and I wonder if David learned practicing God's presence when he was alone tending sheep or alone in some wilderness cave.

I really think that one of the things that made David the man after God's own heart, that so enabled David to stand up to the Goliaths was that he cultivated the practice of God's presence. Today, I'm looking at yet another Psalm of David, in Psalm 16 verse 8, where David says I keep the Lord always before me because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

Look at two words here, keep and always, I keep the Lord always before me. David is not saying that he goes around with some plaster image of God, but rather he is practicing a moment by moment awareness that God is right there with him not way up in heaven that God is right there with David.

Let me see if I can illustrate. Psalm 63 a psalm that David says he wrote when he was the wilderness of Judea and I was in the wilderness of Judea last year. And let me tell you, it makes the Arizona desert look green and lush. And in the wilderness of Judea, as David is hiding out from Saul, in Psalm 63 verse 5, David says, My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast and my mouth praises you with joyful lips. When I think of you on my bed and meditate on you in the watches of the night.

That is practicing the presence of God, even in the wilderness of Judea and David, so practices, the presence of God that in Psalm 23, David says that when he comes to the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil because you were with to me. There was a moment years ago, as I was walking away from my wife's open grave, that I felt like my world at ended and then I had this sense of God saying to me, Tim, I'm still here, I'm still here with you, I'm at the center. And David so practice the presence of God that in Psalm 139, He rejoices. If I send to heaven, you were there. If I make my bed and she... You were there. I cannot get away from your presence. And what a wonderful way for David and for you and me to go at life, the daily practice of God's presence. As David here resolves I keep the Lord always before me because He is at my right hand I shall not be

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moved. In Bible times, the person at your right hand, I'm gonna call him your right hand man, the person at your right hand that was a symbol of power of protection of presence, and I believe that here, David is thinking like the soldier that he was, and that the person who was at His right hand, that person was positioned there to defend David.

Today, we might call this person you're wing man, he's there to help you, protect you, watch your back. I keep the Lord always before me because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved... Because David lives in a daily moment-by-moment consciousness, awareness, alertness, to God as it is right and David is steady, he is not shaken he is not moved by the things that happen to him.

David makes it a priority to practice God's presence so that when David is leading the procession that is bringing the Ark of the Covenant up to Jerusalem in First Chronicles 16:11, David says to Israel, seek the Lord and his strength seek His presence continually.

Now if David lived this in the Old Testament, practicing God's presence, then how much more can you and I, as New Testament Christians practice God's presence when we are in Christ, and Christ is in us and our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

How much more can we say that even David could say I keep the Lord always before me because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved... And I found that for me to practice God's presence, I have to start first thing in the morning when I wake up, the first thing in the morning, to start with God and to take a few moments to become aware of God's presence with me, and then in various times throughout the day, I keep the Lord always before me, as you would stop during a day to think about people that you love so you stop and think about God. He is at your right hand to defend you, to care for you, to guide you.

And then at the end of the day, I like to think back over my day and to remember and to savor those moments when God's presence was so real to me. I leave you the prayer of Saint Patrick for you to rest in the presence of Christ with you in Christ's presence in you.

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right Christ on my left, Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down, Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me, Christ in the eye that sees me, Christ in the ear that hears me, I arise today through a mighty strength the invocation of the Trinity through a belief in the threeness, through a confession of the oneness of the creator of creation.

I'm Tim Smith, a fellow traveler in the pilgrim way.

Thanks for listening, until next time...

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