



HOW TO ENJOY THE PRESENCE OF GOD

Preaching and Teaching Resources

ADRIAN ROGERS





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How to Enjoy the Presence of God

SERMON REFERENCE: Exodus 33:1-3

LWF SERMON NUMBER: #1974

Our purpose is to know God intimately and to enjoy Him personally; we need nothing more and should settle for nothing else. We must learn how to enjoy the presence of God, and even more importantly, how to stay in it.

In Exodus 33, Moses has interceded for the nation of Israel. In response, God promises His protection and provision, but not His presence; He will not be with them.

Adrian Rogers says, "It is frightening to have success, possessions, and protection but not the presence of the Lord."

There are several reasons God withdrew His presence from His people.

Direct Disobedience

The Holy Spirit gives us the assurance of our salvation. When we knowingly and willingly disobey God, we grieve the Holy Spirit and quench Him. (See 1 Thessalonians 5:19.) If we are experiencing estrangement from the presence of God, we must first be assured that there is no unconfessed sin in our lives.

Divided Devotion

The people of Israel rejected a direct command of God, and as a result, their devotion was divided. Some of the nation committed the sin of idolatry.

We must remember: anything we love, fear, serve or trust more than God is an idol. God demands preeminence and He will take nothing less. And in examining our hearts, we should see if anyone or anything has taken precedence over God.

Displaced Dependence

Moses also detected the people's displaced dependence; they had placed complete trust and dependence on the work of their hands. This betrayed the One who had brought them through the Red Sea, provided for, and protected them.

When we begin to depend upon our own ingenuity, wit, and wisdom, we fail to give God the glory and, ultimately, fail ourselves.

Determined Defiance

Finally, Israel maintained its determined defiance.

"Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people" (Exodus 33:3).

Being stiff-necked is the opposite of being meek and pliable; God was inferring that Israel was no longer leadable or teachable. We must remember that when God gives us a specific revelation, we must obey Him.

Life Application

Is God real to you? Examine your heart today: is there any direct disobedience, divided devotion, displaced dependence, or determined defiance?



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1) INTRODUCTION

- a) Worship is enjoying the presence of God.
- b) The highest good and the most wonderful fulfillment is to know God intimately and to enjoy Him personally.
 - i) Do you know God personally?
 - (1) This is not the same as knowing about Him.
 - ii) Is He today, this moment, in your heart and life, a bright, living reality in your life?
 - iii) If so, then you know the deepest pleasure and have fulfilled the deepest need.
 - (1) You have attained that for which you were created: to know God personally.
 - (2) You need nothing more; you should settle for nothing less.
- c) There are many Christians today who do not have the conscience presence of God in their lives.
 - i) They go to church and sing songs, but there is a deadness, a dryness and a void in their lives.
- d) Exodus 33:1-3
 - i) "I'm not going with you" are frightening words.
 - ii) The Jewish people were out in the wilderness.
 - iii) God had given them a covenant and a promise.
 - iv) They were headed toward the Promised Land, and in the middle of that journey, they sinned terribly against God.
 - v) God said that He would keep His promise and give them the Promised Land, but that He would not go with them.
- e) It is frightening to have success, possessions and protection, but not have the presence of the Lord.
 - i) Don't settle for success without the Lord.
- f) Moses had gone up on Mount Sinai to get the Ten Commandments and instructions for the tabernacle.
 - i) While Moses was gone, his brother Aaron led the people in a revolt against Almighty God.
 - ii) Exodus 32:4-10
- g) When Moses came down from the mountain, he was so grieved by the people's behavior that he threw the Ten Commandments to the ground and broke those tablets of stone.
 - i) He then took the golden calf, had it ground up into powder, mixed that powder with water, and made the people drink it.
 - (1) Their greatest delight had become their greatest displeasure.
 - ii) Three thousand of the chief rebels were put to death.
- h) Moses knew this was a crisis.
 - i) Moses prayed, interceded, and put himself in the place of these people.
 - ii) Exodus 32:30-32



- (1) After this intercession, God said that He would not destroy the people and that He would fulfill His promise, but that He would not go with them into the land.
 - (a) Exodus 33:1-3
- i) Do not settle for protection, provision and a Promised Land without the presence of God.
 - i) When you have the presence of God, you need nothing more, but you should settle for nothing less.
- j) There are many Christians today who have salvation and eternal security, but they're not walking in joy or victory.
 - i) God is not real to them.
 - ii) They do not have the manifest presence of God in their lives.
 - iii) They have God's protection, His provision, His promise, but they do not have His presence.
 - (1) Don't think that because you have His provision and protection that you're right with God.
 - (2) You may be on your way to Heaven, but you're traveling second class.
 - (3) Even a non-believer has certain provisions:
 - (a) Food
 - (b) Air
 - (c) Clothes
 - (d) Housing
 - (4) We can become so preoccupied with getting that provision, protection and claiming that promise that we fail to have His presence.
- k) Exodus 33:4
 - i) It is an evil thing to have gifts without the Giver, to have blessings without the Blessor, and to have the promise without the Provider and the manifest presence of God.
- l) Is God real to you?
- m) What made Israel different from other nations?
 - i) The manifested presence of God in the midst of them.
- n) The message today will share four things that caused God to withdraw His manifested presence from His people.
 - i) These are the same four things that will rob us of the manifested presence of God in our lives.

2) DIRECT DISOBEDIENCE (EXODUS 32:7-8)

- a) They disobeyed God.
 - i) Because they disobeyed God, the manifested presence of God was withdrawn from them.
- b) The problem with many Christians today is that they have confessed the Lord Jesus, but they don't have the presence of God.
 - i) They don't even have the assurance of their salvation.
 - ii) It is the Holy Spirit of God who gives us the assurance that we belong to Him.
 - (1) 1 John 4:13
 - (2) Romans 8:16
- c) When we knowingly, willingly and with eyes wide open disobey God, we grieve the Holy Spirit.
 - i) Ephesians 4:27



- ii) Ephesians 4:30
- iii) We can only grieve someone who loves us.
 - (1) "Grieve" is a love word.
 - (2) The Holy Spirit loves us, but we can so grieve Him when we disobey God that He closes up.
- iv) 1 Thessalonians 5:19
 - (1) The word "quench" means "to pour cold water on a fire."
- v) Ephesians 5:18
- d) The Holy Spirit of God is to us in this age what the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire were to the children of Israel in that day.
 - i) He is the Shekinah glory of God.
 - ii) He is the manifested presence of God in our lives.
- e) When we willfully, knowingly, and deliberately disobey God, we quench the Spirit and God ceases to be real to us.
 - i) We can even wonder if we're saved or not.
- f) John 14:21
 - i) When people truly love God, you don't see it just when they stand in the congregation and sing hymns, but they obey Him.
 - ii) The Bible links the manifest presence of God with keeping the commandments of God.
- g) The Holy Spirit is in us to make God real to us.
 - i) Many Christians are settling for eternal security rather than the manifest presence of God.
 - (1) Some Christians are disobedient in their tithing.
 - (a) Malachi 3:8, 10
 - (2) When we choose not to tithe we are stealing from God.
 - (a) We are saying to God that we don't trust Him to take care of our needs.
 - (b) We are disobedient.
 - (3) When we are disobedient in tithing, why would we think that God would bless us with even more financial resources?
- h) Aaron encouraged the people to disobey God.
 - i) Aaron was a priest, a religious leader.
 - ii) There will always be plenty of people, including some religious leaders, who will give us an excuse to disobey God.
- i) If God is not real to you, then ask yourself if you have rejected a direct command of God.
- j) God loves us too much to manifest Himself to us in glory and joy and, yet, have us to live in disobedience.

3) DIVIDED DEVOTION (EXODUS 32:4)

- a) The children of Israel had divided devotion.
 - i) They claimed to be Israel, yet they made a golden calf.
 - (1) The word "Israel" means "the people of God."
 - ii) They made for themselves a god that was no bigger than their imagination.
 - iii) Rather than trusting Almighty God, they began to trust the work of their hands.
 - (1) This is idolatry.



- b) When people make an idol, they become like the idol.
 - i) First, the man molds the idol, and then the idol molds the man.
- c) An idol is a magnified sinner.
 - i) A man takes his own ideas and puts them into the work of his hands, and then he begins to worship it.
 - (1) What he is really worshipping ultimately is himself.
- d) Anything that you love more, fear more, serve more and trust more than God is an idol.
 - i) G.K. Chesterton: "When we cease to worship the true God, it is not that we worship nothing, but it is that we'll worship anything."
- e) If God is not real to you, then ask yourself if there is anyone or anything that takes precedence over God in your life.
 - i) God doesn't want a place in your life.
 - ii) God despises prominence in your life.
 - iii) God demands preeminence in your life.
- f) God's throne is not a duplex.
 - i) Is there a relationship that means more to you than God?
 - ii) Is there anything that gets more of your attention than God?
 - (1) If so, then that is a golden calf in your life, and God will say, "I'm not going with you."
 - (2) There are certain relationships in our lives that are wonderful relationships, but none can take the place of an undivided relationship to Almighty God.
- g) Idolatry is the sin of all other sins.

4) DISPLACED DEPENDENCE (EXODUS 32:7-8)

- a) The people began to put their dependence in the work of their hands.
 - i) No longer was their dependence upon Almighty God, who brought them through the Red Sea.
- b) When God gives us a victory and we give the glory to something or someone else and then depend upon that rather than the God who gave the victory, then we will lose the presence of God.
- c) When we begin to depend upon our ingenuity, our wit, and our wisdom, we will lose the presence of God.
 - i) The children of Israel took the earrings off their own ears.
 - ii) They took the bracelets off their own wrists.
 - iii) With a graving tool, they made a god of a golden calf.
- d) Isaiah 42:8
- e) It is no wonder that we don't have God's presence in our lives when we have displaced dependence and begin to give credit where credit is not due.
 - i) We fail to give God the glory for bringing us through a storm and for giving us blessings.

5) DETERMINED DEFIANCE (EXODUS 32:9)

- a) "Stiffnecked" is the opposite of being meek and pliable.
 - i) God wanted to lead them, but they were like a horse with a stiff neck, who rears up and will not yield.



- b) If you want God to be real to you, then you must not be stiffnecked.
- c) If God gives you a specific revelation, if He speaks to you about what He wants you to do, then obey Him.
 - i) Has God told you that there's someone He wants you to witness to?
 - ii) Has God put it on your heart to serve in the church?
 - iii) Has God laid on your heart something He wants you to give?
 - iv) Has God laid on your heart someone you need to apologize to?
 - v) Have you told the Lord, "No"?
 - (1) If so, then you have a stiff neck.
- d) Thankfully, Moses refused to go forward without God's presence.
- e) Worship is enjoying the presence of God.

6) CONCLUSION

- a) Is God real to you?
 - i) He wants to be.
- b) John 14:21
- c) The children of Israel found grace long ago, and so may you today.
- d) If you are already saved, then ask the Lord's forgiveness for any direct disobedience, any divided devotion, displaced dependence, and any determined defiance.
- e) If you do not know the Lord Jesus as your personal Savior and Lord, then surrender to Him today.
- f) You can pray to Him now, and ask Him to come into your life.
- g) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
 - i) Romans 3:23
 - ii) Romans 10:9-10
 - iii) Romans 10:13
 - iv) Acts 16:31
 - v) John 3:16



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Would you be finding the book of Exodus chapter 33, as we continue our study on worship? If you were to give a definition of worship, what would it be? Is worship enjoying God? I believe it is. I think that worship is enjoying the presence of God. Just put it in a sentence: worship is enjoying the presence of God. And that's what I want to talk to you about today, how to enjoy the presence of God. Now folks, the more I study, the more I experience, the more I realize that that is the bottom line, the highest good, most wonderful fulfillment, to know God intimately and to enjoy Him personally. Enjoying the presence of God.

Now let me ask you a question. Do you know God personally? I'm not asking if you know about Him. You might know about George Washington. I'm asking, "Do you know God personally? Is He today, this moment, in your heart, in your life, a bright, living, vital reality?" If so, you know the deepest pleasure. You have fulfilled the deepest need. You have attained that for which you were created, to know God personally. Because, you see, worship is enjoying the presence of God. You need nothing more, you should settle for nothing less. You need nothing more, you should settle for nothing less. Now there're many Christians today who do not have the conscious presence of God in their lives. They show up at church, they sing the songs, they may muster an, "Amen," but there is a deadness, a dryness, and a void in their life.

Now let me tell you some of the most frightening words in all of the Bible. They're found here in Exodus chapter 33 verses 1 through 3, "And the Lord said unto Moses, 'Depart and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt unto the land which I swear unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, 'Unto thy seed will I give it.' And I will send an angel before thee and I will drive out the Canaanite and the Amorite and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite, unto a land flowing with milk and honey. For I will not go up in the midst of thee, for thou art a stiff-necked people, lest I consume thee in the way.'" What are the frightening words? God says, "I'm not going with you. I will not go up in the midst of you."

Now what is the situation? The Jewish people, the sons of Abraham are out there in the wilderness. God has given them a covenant and God has given them a promise. And they're headed toward the Promised Land, and in the middle of that journey they sin terribly against God. And God says, "All right, I promise that I'm going to give you the land; a land that flows with milk and honey. I will give you an angel escort into the land. And when you get there the land will flow with milk and honey. But," God says, "I am not going with you."

Now that's frightening, to have success, to have possessions, to have protection, but not to have the presence of the Lord. "I'm going to give you an angel to take care of you," He says, "I'll get you into the land, but I am not going with you." That would be like people getting married and the husband taking care of the wife, but they're living in separate bedrooms. Don't settle for success without the Lord. Or seeming success without the Lord. As a matter of fact, it has well been said, "In whatever a man does without God, he will either fail miserably or succeed even more miserably."

Now let's get the background a little bit. Moses had gone up on Mount Sinai to get the Ten Commandments and instructions for the Tabernacle. While Moses was gone, Aaron, his brother, led the



people into a revolt against Almighty God. What Aaron said is, “We don’t know what’s happened to Moses. He’s been up there a long time. Maybe he’s never coming back. We need some guidance, we need some help, we need some leadership. You people give me your bracelets and your earrings, and we will make a golden calf. And we will worship that golden calf,” and that’s what the people did.

Just go back to chapter 32 and look in verse 4, “And he received them at their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool, after that he had made it a molten calf and they said, ‘These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.’” Now, the people there are having a Bacchanalian feast, an orgy, verse 6 through 10, “And they rose up early in the morrow and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings, and the people sat down to eat and to drink and rose up to play, and the Lord said unto Moses, ‘Go, get thee down, for thy people, which thou broughtest up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them, and they’ve made them a golden calf and they have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto and said, ‘These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.’ And the Lord said unto Moses, ‘I have seen this people and behold it is a stiffnecked people. Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them and that I may consume them, and I will make of thee a great nation.’”

Now what happens is this: when Moses comes down off the mountain, he sees this charade, this orgy, this feast, they made themselves naked; they are committing immorality; they’re doing terrible, horrible things, dancing around a golden calf. Moses is so grieved that he takes the Ten Commandments and casts them to the ground and breaks those tablets of stone. Then he takes that golden calf and has it ground into powder and mixes that powder with water and makes the people to drink it. And their greatest delight now, has become their greatest displeasure, and then 3,000 of the chief rebels are slain and put to death.

Moses knows that this is a crisis. So Moses goes to God to intercede, and look if you will now in chapter 32 and read verses 30 through 32, “And it came to pass on the morrow that Moses said unto the people, ‘Ye have sinned a great sin, and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.’” Moses goes up to stand between God and judgment, he goes up to intercede. “And Moses returned unto the Lord and said, ‘Oh, this people have sinned a great sin and have made them gods of gold, yet now if Thou wilt forgive their sin,’” it’s sort of an unfinished sentence, his heart is just broken, “yet now if Thou wilt forgive their sin, and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of the book which Thou hast written.” And Moses is praying and interceding and putting himself in the place of these people.

Now after this intercession is the text that I’ve just read to you in Exodus chapter 33 verses 1 through 3. God says, “All right, I won’t destroy them. All right, I’ll not destroy them. Moses, for your sake, I will bring them into the land. I will give them an angel escort. I will give them protection. I will give them provision. I will fulfill My promise, but I will not go with them into the land.”

Now, look up here and let me tell you something folks. If you’re a brother and sister in Christ, do not settle for a deal like that. Do not settle for protection; do not settle for provision; do not settle for a Promised Land without the presence of God. Just don’t do it. Now I’m telling you, when you have the presence of God, you need nothing more, but you should settle for nothing less.

You say, “How does that apply to me this morning, Pastor?” Well, there are a lot of you today who are saying, “I have salvation. I have eternal security. I’m not walking in joy. I’m not walking in victory. God is not real to me. But I honestly expect to go to Heaven.” And when the pastor asks how many of you know if you



were to die today you'd go to Heaven, you lift your hand. But if you would be honest with me, you would say, "Pastor, God is not real in my life. I do not have the manifest presence of God in my life. I have His protection, I have His provision, I have His promise, but I do not have that presence of God in my life." Now don't think just because you have provision and protection you're right with God. Don't think that for just one moment. Oh, you may be on your way to Heaven, but I'm going to tell you one thing, you're certainly traveling there second class. I remind you that even a nonbeliever has certain provisions: food and air and clothes and houses. And you know, we can be so preoccupied with getting that provision and that protection and claiming that promise that we fail to have His presence.

Israel, however, knew better than that, and thank God that they did. Look in Exodus 33 verse 4, "And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned." And I want to say to you today that it is an evil thing to have gifts without the Giver, to have blessings without the Blessor, to have the promise without the Provider and the manifest presence of God. Again I want to ask you this question: is God real to you? Is the presence of God, the Shekinah glory of God, this moment very real to you, or are you just simply fulfilling your duty sitting in church Sunday morning, listening to some pastor bum away, and really, very frankly, you're not very interested. This message is for you, because worship is enjoying the presence of God. We're going to show you in a moment you need nothing more, you should settle for nothing less.

What made Israel different from the other nations? It was the manifested presence of God in the midst of them. It was the Shekinah glory. I wonder, are there some of you who once knew the glory of God, and now that glory has departed and that glory has faded, and the glory of God is gone and your life is dry.

What caused God to withdraw His manifested presence from His people? I want to mention four things. Those four things are the same four things that will rob you, denude you of the manifested presence of God in your life, and will be the arch enemy of worship. Worship is enjoying the presence of God. Now what were these four things? What happened to Israel where God said, "Well, I'll not destroy them, I'll send an angel, but I will not be in their midst." Number one; **they disobeyed God**. Look if you will in Exodus 32 verses 7 and 8 again. Go back to it, Exodus 32, "And the Lord God said unto Moses, 'Go, get thee down, for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves.'" Notice God calls them, "Moses, your people," now. And notice verse 8, "They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them." Just underscore that. "They have turned quickly out of the way which I commanded them." And because they disobeyed God, the manifested presence of God was withdrawn from them.

Do you know the problem with a lot of people? You've walked down the aisle, you've confessed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have subscribed to the authentic doctrines of the church, you've followed the Lord in believer's baptism, but you do not have the presence of God. You don't even have the assurance of your salvation. And I have people come to me and say, "Pastor, could you help me? I don't know whether I'm saved or not." Well let me tell you, I can't tell you whether you're saved or not. That's not my job, that's not my responsibility. Do you know whose responsibility it is to tell you that you're saved? It's the Holy Spirit. It's the Holy Spirit of God that gives you the assurance that you belong to Him. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. Listen to these verses and put them down. First John chapter 4 and verse 13, "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him and He in us because He hath given to us of His Spirit." Could anything be more plain than that? Listen to it again. First John 4:13, "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him and He in us because He hath given us of His Spirit." That's plain. How do we know that we belong to Him? The Holy Spirit.



Let me give you a companion verse. Romans chapter 8 and verse 16, "The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." Now those two verses make it crystal clear that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to give us that assurance that we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. John says and Paul says, "Because of the Holy Spirit we have the assurance of our salvation."

"Pastor, what does that have to do with the manifested presence of God, and what does that have to do with disobedience that you just read about?" Simply this; when you knowingly, willingly, with eyes wide open, disobey God, do you know what you do to the Holy Spirit? You grieve the Holy Spirit of God. That's the reason the Bible says in Ephesians 4 verse 27 that you're not to, "Give place to the devil." And grieve the Holy Spirit of God. Ephesians 4 verse 30, "Grieve not the Spirit of God." Grieve not the Holy Spirit.

Did you know that you can only grieve somebody who loves you? Let me illustrate this and you'll understand what I'm talking about. The neighbors' kids may vex you; your own children grieve you. What's the difference? Grieve is a love word. The Holy Spirit of God loves you, but you can so grieve Him when you disobey the commandments of God that the Holy Spirit just closes up. Again, the Bible says in First Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 19, "Quench not the Spirit." Do you know what the word quench means? It means to pour cold water on a fire. The Holy Spirit is like a gentle dove; the Holy Spirit is like a glowing ember. You can frighten away that dove; you can pour water on that ember. The Bible says in Ephesians 5:18, "Be filled with the Spirit," then the Bible says, "Grieve not, quench not." Be filled, grieve not, quench not.

Now listen again. I want to ask you this question. Who gives you the assurance of your salvation? The Holy Spirit of God. Who is it that manifests the life of God in you? The Holy Spirit of God is to you in this age what that pillar of cloud and that pillar of fire was to those people in that day. He is the Shekinah glory of God. He is the manifested presence of God. The Holy Spirit of God is the manifested presence of God in your life! The Holy Spirit of God is the manifested presence of God in your life! Now listen to me. If you willfully, knowingly, deliberately disobey God, you grieve the Spirit, you quench the Spirit, and when you do, God ceases to be real to you. You can even wonder, "Am I saved?" I've met many people who doubt their salvation that I believe are truly saved, but they're living in direct disobedience to God, and as a result of that, they do not have the manifested presence of God.

Now put this verse in your Bible, John 14 verse 21. It's one of the key verses in enjoying the presence of God. Now listen to it, Jesus said, "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." Now folks, when people truly love God, you don't see it just when they stand in the congregation and sing, "O How I Love Jesus." But they obey Him. "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me, and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father," and watch this, "and I will love him and will," what? "manifest Myself to him." Aren't we talking about the manifest presence of God? Do you see how the Bible links the manifest presence of God with keeping the commandments of God? Because when we disobey God, we grieve the Holy Spirit, we quench the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit of God is in us to make God real to us; and when we do that, we might have eternal security, we might go to Heaven, God might send an angel escort to bring us to Heaven when we die, but would you settle for that rather than the manifest presence of God? Many Christians are.

A man came and talked to his pastor and he said, "Pastor, I don't know what's wrong with me, but God is not real to me anymore. I don't have any joy, the presence of God is not real in my heart, in my life, like it used to be." This wise pastor asked him a direct question. He said, "Is there any known sin in your life? Any unconfessed, any repented of sin in your life?" That moment, that man in a moment of honesty, said, "Well,



Pastor, let me tell you something.” He said, “I used to bring a tithe of my income to God. I believe the Word of God in Malachi 3:10, when the Bible teaches that we’re to bring all the tithe into the storehouse. But,” he said, “some time ago I got the idea that perhaps God didn’t need that as much as I needed it.” And he said, “Yes, Pastor, I have ceased to be honest with God.” And you know what this pastor told him? The pastor said, “Do you know what you’ve done? You’ve begun to steal from God.” He said, “Sir, you wouldn’t put your hand in the offering plate, would you, when the offering is passed? Put your hand in the offering plate and take some money out that other people had given to God? Would you steal from the offering plate?” And then he said, Malachi says in Malachi 3 verse 8, “When a man is not faithful in stewardship, he’s robbing God.”

Now he said, “What do you think God does when His child does that?” When God sees His child willingly disobeying Him? Will God say this; ‘My child has chosen to disobey Me. Number one, he’s stealing from Me. Number two, he cannot trust Me to take care of his needs, he cannot trust Me with his resources. Number three, he will not obey Me. Now this week I think I will bless him with even more financial resources and I will make My presence very real to him.’” Do you think God would do that? And God says, “I’m going to display Myself; I’m going to give him a deeper sense of My presence and My approval.” No. No, why? Because here was a man in willing disobedience to Almighty God.

Now I want to say something else. Do you know who it was that encouraged these people to disobey God and lose the manifest presence of God? It was Aaron. Do you know who Aaron was? Aaron was a priest, a religious leader. And I’m going to tell you something else. There will always be plenty of people who will give you a reason, an excuse to disobey God. And it may even be a religious leader. They’ll lead you into an unscriptural marriage, some immorality, some transgression of the commandments of God, and they’ll say, “Well, that’s all right. Times have changed and things are different.” But I remind you one more time that Jesus says in John 14 verse 21, “He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loves Me, and he that loves Me shall be loved of My father and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him.” Now if you want an angel escort and if you want to go to Heaven without having the presence of God in your life, that’s your business, but I don’t. I want the manifested presence of God in my life. I need nothing more, I will settle for nothing less.

So ask yourself this question, if God is not real to you. Ask this question in your heart this morning, “Have I rejected a direct command of God? Am I right now living in disobedience to a known command of God?” If you are, there’s no reason that I can think of in all of the Bible where you ought to have a sense of the manifest presence of God. God loves you too much to manifest Himself to you in glory and joy and yet have you to live in disobedience, because I cannot think of a worse lesson that He would teach you. So question number one; can I discern any direct disobedience to God?

Let me ask you the next question, if God is not real to you; **can I discover any divided devotion to God?** Not only direct disobedience, but divided devotion. Look again in Exodus chapter 32 and look in verse 4, “And he fashioned them at their hand and he received them at their hand and fashioned it,” that is the golden calf, “with a graving tool, after that he had made it a molten calf and they said, ‘These be thy gods, O Israel.’”

Now what had these people done? They had divided devotion. They claimed to be Israel. The word Israel means the people of God, and yet they made a golden calf. They made for themselves a god that was no bigger than their own imagination. And then rather than trusting Almighty God, they began to trust the work of their hands. This was idolatry. As I’ve told you before, that the Bible says when people make an idol,



they become like the idol. First the man molds the idol and then the idol molds the man. What is an idol? An idol is just a magnified sinner. A man just takes his own ideas and puts them into the work of his hands and then he begins to worship it, and what he's really worshiping ultimately, therefore, is himself. You say, "Well, Adrian, I'm not guilty of idolatry." Well, let's check up and find out whether you are or not. Maybe there might be a golden calf in your life.

What is an idol? Anything that you love more than God is an idol. What is an idol? Anything that you fear more than God is an idol. What is an idol? Anything that you serve more than God is an idol. Anything that you trust more than God is an idol. G. K. Chesterton said it well, he said, "When we cease to worship the true God, it is not that we worship nothing; it is that we'll worship anything." Is there any direct disobedience? Is there any divided devotion? Is there something that you love more, fear more, serve more, or trust more than Almighty God? If there is, no wonder God's presence is not real in your heart and in your life. Divided devotion.

Now answer this before God. Don't answer to me out loud, but answer it. If the glory of God is gone in your life, if God is not real to you, ask this question: Is there anyone or anything that takes precedence over God in your life? You say, "Well I give God a place in my life." God doesn't want a place in your life. You say, "Well, I give God prominence in my life." God despises prominence in your life. God demands preeminence in your life. He will take nothing less. God's throne is not a duplex. Is there anything that is a greater controlling factor of your behavior? Is there a relationship that means more to you? Is there treasure that means more to you? Is there anything that gets more of your attention than Almighty God? Then, friend, it should not come as a surprise to you that because of that golden calf in your life, God says, "I'm not going with you. I'll not be in the midst of you. I just won't do it." Any direct disobedience, any divided devotion.

My wife knows that I love her with all of my heart. But she knows she's second place, not first place in my life. And she doesn't mind being second place, because she knows that when God is first place, I will love her with a love that I could never love her with if she were first place. Now friend, there are certain relationships in your life that are wonderful relationships, but none can take the place of an undivided relationship to Almighty God. Idolatry is the mother sin, the father sin, the sin of all other sins.

Now here's a third question that you might ask yourself if God is not real in your life, if you do not have that manifested presence of God, and worship is enjoying the presence of God. Do you, thirdly, **detect any displaced dependence?** Direct disobedience, divided devotion, displaced dependence. Look if you will again in Exodus 32 verses 7 and 8, "And the Lord said unto Moses, 'Go get thee down, for thy people, which thou broughtest up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves, they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I've commanded them, they've made them a molten calf.'" All right, there you have direct disobedience and divided devotion. Now watch this, "And have worshiped it and sacrificed thereunto and said, 'These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.'" Now they began to put their dependence in the work of their hands; their ugly god that they've made with their own hands. And now no longer is their dependence upon Almighty God that brought them through the Red Sea. Do you know what happens when you do that? When God gives you a victory, and you give the glory to something else or someone else and then depend upon that rather than the God who gave you the victory? You're going to lose the presence of God.

I was thinking about these buildings that we worship in today. I love this land, I love these buildings. I'll tell you, these walls are saturated with prayer and these carpets are saturated with the tears of God's



people. And I want to tell you about this place. This place is the place that prayer, faith, and obedience built. Somebody said, "Rogers, you're doing a good job out there; you've really built a great thing out there." I thought, "Dear God, it's a lie, and dear God help me never to believe that kind of a lie." God has done this. God has done this.

But suppose after God has done it, then we get to saying, "You know, we had a pretty good building committee. You know, we really did give our money. You know, we're pretty smart folks. Look what we have done." At that moment God says, "All right, now you've got it. I'm out of here." When we begin to depend upon our ingenuity, our wit, our wisdom, and say, "Look what we have done." You see, they took those earrings off their own ears. They took those bracelets off their own hands, and with a graving tool, they made a god. And then they said, "That's our god, and that is what is delivering us!" And God says, "All right I'm not going with you anymore." I can remember, we used to get in those building committee meetings and cry and weep before God and say, "God we don't know what to do. There's no way we can do it!" And yet God did it. God did it.

Not long ago when George Bush was the president of the United States, our nation came up against what we thought was an implacable foe, Saddam Hussein. And you know they basically say in any kind of a war you cannot defend your life against the man who's not afraid to lose his. And these fanatical republican troops were marshaling for desert war. I can remember staying up at night and watching those missiles fly in the air, and those patriot missiles. I can remember this church after that happened. I can tell you my dear friend, that Sunday morning our attendance it seems to me was up twentyfive percent. People across the land, not just at Bellevue, but all other places, they filled the land! They filled the churches of the land. And they cried out to God. And there were prayer meetings, fasting and prayer, saying, "Oh, God, we don't want to get bogged down in the Middle East in some desert war. And you know, what could be germ warfare, could be atomic warfare, could break up in the Middle East, where they're shooting those missiles, the SCUD missiles into Israel, and Israel may retaliate with atomic bombs, and who knows but what it's all about to blow up right in our face?" Do you remember those times or have you forgotten? And our boys were going off, and we were praying, "Oh, God! Help us! Oh, God, deliver us!

And I want to tell you something, friend, God answered prayer. And do you know what happened as soon as Desert Storm was over? Rather than giving God the glory, do you know what we did? We began to say, "Boy, Schwarzkopf, what a general. Colin Powell! What a strategist. What about those patriot missiles? Boy, we showed him, didn't we?" I heard all that kind of talk. Isn't that true?

I want to tell you, we failed to give God the glory. We failed to have national revival. We failed to continue to follow God and love God and serve God, and since that time our nation has gone down into a cesspool of rottenness and filth. Never, since I've been preaching have I seen a nation take a nosedive like this nation has taken since Desert Storm. Never did we have a more glorious victory I don't believe. Never did God protect a people and in mercy move into us and let us get out of a mess like we got out of with such blessings. But then we made a golden calf, and we said, "Look what brought us out of Desert Storm." Just like they made a golden calf and they said, "These are our gods that brought us out, brought us through the Red Sea." And they failed to give God the glory.

And I'm going to tell you something, precious, sweet friends, you listen to me. God has said in Isaiah 42:8, "I will not share My glory with another." And when God gives you a blessing, and when God is good to you, and God brings you through the storm, whether it be Desert Storm or any other kind of a storm, and then



you have that displaced dependence, you begin to give credit where credit is not due and fail to give God the glory, is it any wonder that His presence is not real in your life? Is there any direct disobedience? Is there any divided devotion? Is there any displaced dependence?

One last question quickly, and I'll close this message this morning. Is there any **determined defiance**? Listen, look if you will in Exodus chapter 32 and verse 9, "And the Lord said unto Moses, 'I have seen this people and behold, it is a stiffnecked people.'" What does that mean? Stiffnecked is the opposite of being meek and pliable. God was wanting to lead them, but they're like a horse with a stiff neck, who rares up, who will not yield. You want God to be real to you? Don't be stiffnecked.

If God gives you a specific revelation, God speaks to you about what He wants you to do, then obey Him. Has God told you there's somebody He wants you to witness to, has God been laying somebody on your heart and you're not witnessing to that person? No wonder God's not real to you. Has God been putting some impulse in your heart to serve in this church, perhaps to work in the preschool, the nursery, perhaps to be a youth worker, perhaps to work on the parking lots, perhaps to serve in the kitchen, but you say, "I don't want to do that." Has God been laying on your heart something He wants you to give, some sacrificial gift, not even to a need but for the glory of God? Has God been laying on your heart somebody that you need to go to and apologize to and reconcile with and make things right? Has God been telling you there's a relationship that you're in that you need to break off, young lady, and get out of it, or young man, that it is a wrong relationship? Has God been speaking to your heart and calling you into missions or fulltime Christian service? Has God been telling you to do something, go somewhere, be something, give something? And you have said, "No." You've had a stiff neck?

And then you say, "I wonder why God is not real to me? I wonder why God says, 'All right, I'm going to take you on to Heaven, I'm going to give you an angel escort all of the way, but I'm not going in the midst of you.'" Thank God, Moses had enough sense to say "No deal." He said, "God, if You don't go with me, I ain't going. I am not going without You, the manifest presence of God in my life!" What is worship! Singing songs? No! Saying prayers? No! Coming to church? No! Giving money? No! Worship is enjoying the presence of God.

Is God real to you? He wants to be real. Again, Jesus said in John 14:21, "He that has My commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves Me, and he that loves Me will be loved of My father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him." Lord Jesus, manifest Yourself to us. Be real to us. Amen? Amen. Let's bow in prayer.

While heads are bowed, no one stirring, don't gather your books. As you've listened this morning, have you discovered any direct disobedience? Have you discerned any divided devotion? Have you detected any displaced dependence? Have you displayed any determined defiance? Well, these people found grace long ago, and so may you. As a child of God, right now why don't you say, "Lord Jesus, I want You to manifest Yourself to me. And if I have disobeyed You, willingly, forgive me. Lord, if I love anything more than You, from now on, You will be number one in my life. Lord, if I'm trusting the work of my own hands or my own ingenuity, I quit it right now. And Lord if there's anything You want me to do, I'm available, here I am. And now, Lord, as I go, go with me, Lord. Go with me." Father, I pray in the name of Jesus that You'll seal this to our hearts. Amen.



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