

The Power of the Presence of God

3-Year Bible Reading Plan

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So God, today may our ears be opened, may our hearts be receptive, may our eyes be attentive to your word and, God, may you touch us this day. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Well, today the day has come. Now I know some of you that are guests and visitors that say, "Well, what is the day? Why is it significant?" Today Job is gonna get off the ash heap, folks. Finally he's gonna make it off. We're gonna be in Job 42 but we're also going to find ourselves in the New Testament in 1 Timothy 5, so for those of you who are note takers and like to have a hand there in place, we are going to spend a little time in the New Testament but primarily today we're going to finish the life of a man whom we know as Job.

Now as we walk through our Bible reading plan, I understand, I realize that technically I'm going outside the lines. Typically as we gather together, we look back at the week past, we look at the readings that have led us up to this point, but today is the day in the Bible reading plan where God shows up. Today's the day where out of a whirlwind a man who's been on the ash heap, a man who lost his family, a man who lost his fortune, a man who had everybody who was somebody in his life betray him, finally he gets what he's been praying for, an audience with the Almighty, the ear of his Creator himself. Beginning in chapter 38 there is this dialog, really it's more of a monologue on the Lord's behalf, but nonetheless there is a dialog. When we get to chapter 42, we get to the place that we all hope for but often think we'll never see. As we walk through those difficult times in life, as we navigate the questions of life, we often wonder will we ever see the "proverbial other side"? Chapter 42 of the book of Job today, we get to see the other side and here's what we see. What does it look like? What is the power when we're in the presence of God? You see, up until chapter 38, he's been in the presence of family, he's been in the presence of his "friends," he's been in the presence of his critics but when we get to the end of the book of Job, God shows up and what happens when the presence of God is realized.

You know, I think oftentimes we think that we're in the presence of God just because we "go to a certain building on a certain day at a certain time," but you know, I have been in the presence of God probably more outside these walls than inside and that's not anything

against being in this place but I've discovered that you can be in the presence of God when you're driving, walking, at work, wherever you may find yourself. I've even discovered, now y'all gonna think I've just gone sideways here, I've been in the presence of God in Walmart. I don't know about you, but you've gotta pray when you go through that place. I mean, you've gotta pray for all kinds of stuff. But nonetheless, the presence of God is not respective to a geographical location, and so today we get the privilege of seeing what does it look like when the presence of God.

Job 42, beginning in verse 1.

1 Then Job answered the LORD, and said, 2 I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. 3 Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. 4 Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. 5 I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear [listen to this]: but now mine eye seeth thee. 6 Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. 7 And it was so, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. 8 Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job. 9 So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the LORD commanded them: the LORD also accepted Job. 10 And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. 11 Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold. 12 So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand donkeys. 13 He had also seven sons and three daughters. 14 And he called the name of the first, Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Kerenhappuch. 15 And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren. 16 After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations. 17 So Job died, being old and full of days.

Now we must confess that back in chapter 12 this didn't look like this the way it was gonna end. Back in chapter 19, back in chapter 26 when Job was struggling with his

physical condition, his family condition, his financial condition, his lack of friend condition, Job 42 seemed a distant future, if not even a reality at all. But in chapter 38, God shows up and when in the presence of God, there are some things that occur that cannot occur otherwise and here's the first thing: when you are in the presence of God, your posture changes. Now this is a good litmus test because a lot of times people like to play the God card. Y'all know what the God card is? It's when somebody gets in a disagreement with you and they have no ammunition, so to speak, so they just say, "Well, God told me." Can I be honest with you? I can't stand the God card. How do you come back after the God card?

So how do you know if somebody's really been in the presence of God? I can give you some evidence. In the book of Acts, these early apostles, the Peter's, the James's, the John's, the Nathanael's, they're going around and healings are taking place, miracles are taking place, souls are getting saved, and the critics begin to come out and I love what happens in the book of Acts 4, it says, "Oh, we perceive that these are ignorant men, these are unlearned men, but we also perceived that they had been with Jesus." In other words, when we've been in the presence of the Lord, things happen, our posture changes.

I want you to notice the posture that Job takes. Even though God says he was right and the friends were wrong, what does he respond by? "I abhor myself. I repent in dust and ashes." The proper position, the proper posture when we're in the presence of God is to confess it all, friends. Confess it all. You say, "Well, I don't know exactly what to confess." Yes, you do. You know it, you just may not have the words for it. In fact, Isaiah 6, a great illustration for us. Here's the prophet Isaiah walking with the Lord, speaking on behalf of the Lord, and all of a sudden he sees the Lord high and lifted up, you know what he says? "I am a man of unclean lips. I reside among people of unclean lips. I repent." You see, when you're in the presence of God, you don't declare your righteousness, when you're in the presence of God, there is no room for attitude or narcissistic behavior, in the presence of God, you fall on your face and say, "I'm not worthy to even be here."

You see, one of the things you do when you're in the presence of God is you confess what we call the sins of commission. You say, "What are the sins of commission?" That's the stuff you know that you did that you know you shouldn't have done, and you know what it is. We all got it tucked away in the back of our minds. We know the things we've done we shouldn't have done, said we shouldn't have said, thought we shouldn't have thought. When you're in the presence of God, you just lay that all out and say, "You know it all. I confess it." But then there's what we call the sins of omission. You say, "What are the sins of omission?" James 4 says to know to do good and not to do it is sin. Sometimes we know we should help and we don't. We know we should give and we don't. We know that we should be merciful and we're not. You see, when we're in the presence of God, let me tell you what happens: you confess that what you know, that what you don't know, and that which you have no idea just in case you miss something.

That's exactly what Job is doing, he's saying, "God, I am an open book before you. I abhor myself." Notice what he says, in dust and in ashes. Where has he been the whole

time? On an ash heap. What has he despised the whole time? The ash heap. He is literally taking that which he has resided on for all this time and saying, "I'm not even worthy of this." You see, when we truly find ourselves in the presence of God, it's not about rationalization, it's not about justification, it's about realizing that he is God and we're not and we respond with a particular posture, we abhor ourselves.

Here's a thing that's interesting in the book of Job. What happens if we actually follow suit? Now remember what the Lord has said about Job. "Job, you were right, they were wrong." The Lord has told him, "You're justified in the things that you said," but yet Job still says, "I probably should have said it better and/or differently." So what happens? What is produced? What are the products? What are the absolute guarantees? If we find ourselves in the presence of God, there are two things that take place in this passage that are beautiful to the ear but sometimes not seen with the eye. The first thing is this: God rebukes the friends. Haven't you been waiting on this for about 40 chapters? When was the Lord gonna intercede? When was the Lord gonna take Eliphaz and Zophar and Bildad and say, "Enough with you"? What does the Lord do? He rebukes them. You see, when we're in the presence of God, we discover that the Lord will rebuke those that are in error, he will rebuke those that are in sin, he will rebuke those that are in rebellion. One of the things that you can guarantee is that when the Lord is in your presence, sin will not only be acknowledged, it will be called out.

God rebuked but also God did something else: he rewarded. Notice toward the middle of this chapter, the end of verse 10 he says, "Job prayed for his friends the LORD gave him twice as much as he had before." Now let's put this in New Testament empty tomb terms. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 3 there is no foundation whereby that we can lay but that which is Christ Jesus. "If any man add unto this wood, hay, stubble, gold, silver, precious jewels, the day will come it shall be tried by fire yet you shall be saved." Here's what the Bible speaks of, the Bible says that as a believer in Jesus Christ, when you sow those works of righteousness, when you do those acts of service that get overlooked and not rewarded, don't worry, the Lord sees it and he shall reward. Hear me clearly, we live in a culture today, this is one of those Meyersisms, you can write it down in pencil or you can etch it in concrete, I think it's that good, we become a world – listen to me – we reward the rebellious and we overlook the obedient. That's our culture today. I've got news for you: God rebukes the rebellious and he rewards the obedient.

Now I know what you're thinking, "I'm running out of chapters in my life. I'm running out of days, I'm running out of opportunities. I've been like Job, the problem is it's been decades, it's been years. When's the truth gonna come out?" This is where 1 Timothy 5 comes into play and this is one of those verses, I must confess, I go to it a lot. This is one of those verses in the Bible that we need to hang that proverbial hat on because if we've ever wondered when's the rebuke gonna come, if we've ever questioned when's the reward going to come. Notice what it says in verse 24 of 1 Timothy 5, it says, "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid." Let me tell you what the Lord is sharing with us. We've all observed it in other people's lives and our own, that they have committed trespasses

against the things of God, the ways of God, the word of God, and they didn't just "get away with it," the world rewarded them. And we've also seen people that have been faithful to the things of God and every time they turn around, they just get bludgeoned by another blow of life and we begin to question, saying, "How can this be? What is the economy that God is working?" And according to what we just read, sometimes the rebuke is on this side of death but sometimes it's on the other side. Sometimes the reward is on this side, sometimes it's on the other.

Allow me to illustrate. Some years ago, and I know we're very familiar with this event because we just celebrated another anniversary, September 11, 2001. It's one of those days that will live in infamy for every one of us who was cognitive at that time, yet I found myself in a very precarious position. I was in a local church in a revival season in life, that night I had to get up and preach. It was also a night where the doors were open and the crowd was overflowing because none of us knew what the next day would behold. I remember that I called some of those in my life that were wiser voices, I wanted to know, I mean, I know the gospel's the gospel but it's how you package it at a time like that. Everybody's emotions, everybody's sensitivities, we didn't know what the next day would hold and that night, less than 12 hours after those towers came down, I would stand up with the word of God and preach the word of God and I just wanted some wisdom in my life.

I'll never forget, I called one individual, one who had more experience than I, more wisdom than I, one of those friends, you have these in your life where you see the phone number or you see the name, you don't even have to say hello, you just jump to the conversation. I'll never forget this as long as I live. I called this individual and here's how he answered the phone. Are you ready? "They believe in Jesus now." Let that sink in for a moment. Those individuals who spent their entire life rebelling against the one true God, those individuals that actually thought it was honoring God to kill others in his name, they got rewarded in this life, did they not? Untold amounts of bank account to do the deeds they did. Untold of frivolity the days before. Oh, they did but guess what? There came a day when this life ended. I promise you according to 1 Timothy 5, they got a rebuke and it's one you don't want to walk into. They got rebuked. Here's the problem: we struggle with the fact that we want our Zophar's to get it now. The problem is this: vengeance is mine, saith the Lord. We don't oftentimes get to see the rebuke with our own eyes but according to what we just read, oh, it will come and guess what? We don't always get to see the reward, do we? You see, there's some of you, you're debating whether to stay faithful. "I've been doing this for so long. I've been just, I've been to the grindstone and I'm not seeing, I'm not reaping anything." Hey, it may not be on this side but wouldn't it be great on the other side?

You see, here's the product: when we are in the presence of God, sin is rebuked, righteousness is rewarded, it's the timing that's the issue. The other thing I want to address are the possibilities. Now when I use the word "possibility," I mean that by a literal definition. Something is possible is something that may occur but it may not, and if it does not occur, you can't hold it against the one who rebukes and rewards. You'll see what I mean here in just a moment.

Verse 11, it says, "Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house." Do you see what's happening here in verse 11? We call it restoration. You do realize that everybody listed in verse 11 had been pointing their finger at him. Everybody in verse 11 had written Job off as one of those. They had distanced themselves. Let me put it in our terms: they unfriended him because they were scared to be associated with him. But what happens in verse 11? It says all of a sudden those who found themselves in that position came unto his house and they ate bread with him. You know, a lot of times in our own lives we really seek restoration more than we do forgiveness and it should be the reverse. God promises to forgive, what we know as restoration is a possibility.

You see, there's two things that have to happen for restoration to take place. The first thing is this, that you have to repent, the second thing is they have to repent. Job had already repented in sackcloth and ashes. He said, "Man, I'm good, God. I abhor myself." Here's what we see in verse 11, so did his family, so did his friends. Let me give you some advice: you cannot control how other people respond in life. You can't do it. I know what some of you are thinking, "But I have repented. I've fallen on the sword. What's wrong with them?" Guess what, they're in rebellion and the rebuke will come one day. You see, restoration doesn't just fall all on you, it is on you and them, whoever they may be.

Here's one of the problems: we seek restoration so much in our life that we're willing to compromise to get it. You know what compromise is, right? It's when you trade an eternal truth for a temporary blessing. In other words, "It doesn't matter if they've repented or not, I just want to have Thanksgiving with them. It doesn't matter if they've come clean or not, I just want the family to stay together." You've said that, haven't you? We have at times. Why? Because we just want it to be – hear me clearly, if this isn't a COVID statement I don't know what is – we just want it to be like it was. We just want it to be – listen – like it never happened. You see, it's a possibility. It's not a guarantee. Rebuke is guaranteed, reward is guaranteed either in this life or the next, but restoration is not. I think the Bible is very clear in verse 11, his family came to him. His friends came to him. He had already abhorred himself. He had already confessed his sins, the rest was "in their court." You see, restoration is a possibility because you can repent but there's no guarantee they will.

But there's another possibility and this is where it gets good, we call it resurrection. Now I want you to go to verse 13 of Job 42 and I want you to see something that takes place here and we're gonna enter into one of those "could it be" moments. Those of you who have been around me long enough, you know what a "could it be" moment means, that means we're gonna go off script for just a moment but I think there's evidence thereof. Verse 13, it says, "He also had seven sons and three daughters." Verse 14, he names the daughters. I got through it the first time, I'm not bold enough to read them a second time. But those of you who have walked through the book of Job with us, do you notice a similarity here? You see, in chapter 1 Job had 10 children. He had seven sons and he had three daughters. We get to chapter 42, he has seven sons and three daughters. Here's the

thing that's interesting: there in chapter 2 of the book of Job, remember his wife said, "Curse God and die," did you see anything about her in verse 11? The sisters came back, the brothers came back, the friends came back, where's his wife? There's no mention. I know what some of you are thinking, "Well, that's okay. I'm sure he had a 'new wife.'" There's no mention of her anywhere. You would think if we're gonna name the children, then surely, I mean, what a picture of this one that said, "Curse God and die," now here's one that's faithful there's no mention at all.

Here's the other thing I find interesting. He gets twice as much stuff. Twice as much cattle. Twice as much money. So wouldn't it stand to reason he'd get 20 kids instead of 10 if he's gonna get twice as much? You see, I'm of the belief these weren't newborns in his family, I think God raised them from the dead and here's why: any of you who have raised children biologically, adopted, fostered, whatever you want to "categorize it" by the world, at the end of the day you want yours, right?

Now my wife and I play this little game occasionally. I'm sure you've done this at one point. It's not necessarily a fun game but it can become humorous and after 25 or almost 25 years of marriage, we have a little good time with it. It's one of those games where you say what would you do if something were to happen to me? You know, what we really want to hear is, "Oh, I couldn't live. I couldn't live." But what we hear is usually the opposite, right guys? Let me tell you my wife's answer to that question. You say, "Tracy, if something were to happen tragic to Jeff, do you think you'd find somebody else?" You know what her answer is? "No." You say, "Why?" And you know what she says? "Because I don't want anybody else's kids." She's a schoolteacher. She knows them. She's gotten the trial run. She gets this. But though that is humorous, it's serious, isn't it?

Let me put myself in the shoes. I hate to even speak this but I'm going to. I've got three young men that I adore in my life, they're my children. If something in my life happened like what happened in Job's life, you think I'd want six babies in my house? Forget the diapers. No, no, no. You know what I would want? I'd want the ones that were taken from me. You see, you can replace a house with another house. You can replace a car with another car. But you can't replace your children with other children.

So Job gets to the end, the house is double, the bank account doubles, don't you think he's wondering, "What about my kids?" He's probably thinking, "Well, I guess I gotta get a bigger house, now I'm glad I've got two because I'm gonna have 20." And then all of a sudden, seven boys and three girls. Now I don't think when I get to the gates of heaven one day the Lord's gonna say to me, "Meyers, sorry. You missed that one. Job really did get 10 new kids." But don't you see there's the possibility? God can raise from the dead. He raised the son of the widow in Elijah's ministry. He raised Lazarus. He raised others. But I've got something for you, you know what sometimes the Lord raises? Dreams. Hopes. Businesses. Finances. Relationships. You see, there's some things in your life that you're thinking it's dead in the water and it'll never be raised again. Let me ask you a question: if you get in the presence of God, you repent before God, there's a possibility he'll raise it up. I can give you a guarantee: he won't raise it up until you get in his presence. He won't raise it up until you repent in his presence. You see, this is the

formula: we abhor ourselves, we repent, he rebukes and rewards on his time, but then there's the possibility that he restores and he raises.

Last but not least. I love the last statement here. Job 42, "So Job died being old and full of days." I just have a funny feeling that when people came to visit Job in light of his story that you know was well-published, I'm sure they asked him, "Job, how are you?" I don't know if these are the words he used, it would be the words I'd use, "I'm good. I'm good." He died old and in his age. You see, the last thing that happens in the presence of God is we enter into his rest. In Hebrews 3 and 4, 12 times tells the Israelites, it tells the people of God, "Just desire to enter into his rest." Let me unpack that on this side of the empty tomb. It doesn't matter how many houses we gain, it doesn't matter how many children we have, it doesn't matter whether people acknowledge us or dismiss us, one day we're gonna step into eternity and the big question is where do you step, because the reward may not happen here, the rebuke may not happen here, the restoration may or may not happen, the raising from the dead may or may not happen, but I will give you an absolute guarantee: you're going to step into eternity one day and the question will be can you say, "I'm good"? You see, the only way you're good is if you've come to that understanding that like Job, you've sinned at some point in your life purposefully and maybe unwillingly it just took place, and like Job have you come to that place where you have abhorred yourself, you have repented and confessed? Leave the rebuking to him. Leave the reward to him. Leave the restoration to him. Leave the resurrection to him. But the rest, it's in your hands. You see, Jesus Christ has done all the work. He gave his life. He shed his blood. The Bible says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. You and I are all gonna step into eternity one day and the question is gonna be will it be a "good day" or much the opposite?