

Rule 7: Seeing God present in the Trial

Thus far, Gods plan for the people of Israel has only been partially revealed to the people of Israel, but now He will give the full revelation to Moses to share with His people.

Exodus 14:16-17

God explains to Moses that He will split the Red Sea that they might pass in safety. Afterwards, He will harden the hearts of Pharaoh and the army so as to pursue them then He will crush them in the sea.

If you were the people of Israel, how would you feel about hearing these plans?

In a simplified sense, God has told them that He is going to rescue them all from an absolutely hopeless situation that He is going to place them in. It's not exactly a situation that we'd be excited to enter into!

What's more, God chooses Moses to execute His plans, and Moses isn't exactly a popular figure right now. For some time, many of the people have been complaining about him and accusing him of taking them out here to die.

Maybe even worse, God is going to allow their enemies to come right onto their very heels before He plans to destroy them.

Finally, He plans to do all this for the renown of His own great name.

God isn't being extreme here. He wants these people to trust Him and enjoy relationship with Him. He is totally in control here. The next 2 verses tell us that God moved in the pillar of cloud so that He was behind Israel to protect them from Pharaoh. On the side of the enemy, the cloud blocked out all light and provided only darkness, but on the side of Israel, the cloud provided light for them to see even during the night.

All too often, we don't want to act and move for God when things are going bad because we somehow believe that He is not with us, that we have sinned and put ourselves on his bad side for some reason. Conversely, we often only feel like acting and moving for God when everything is going well because we somehow believe that He is more present and more for us due to our faithfulness or some other reason.

God is going to disprove to the Israelites, and to us, that He is truly with them and that He is powerful, that He has not departed and left them alone.

Hebrews 13:5-6 tells us to be content with what we have - not just our material belongings but also our circumstances - because of one simple truth: Jesus will not forsake us. He is for us and helping else. What then can work against us?

Can a Christian, then, cultivate God's presence?

Absolutely! But now in the way you would think. We don't force greater relationship with God through our hard work. Rather, we work alongside God and wait for Him to act to bring about a change in us that brings us closer to Him.

One such way is to practice the presence of God. How can we do that?

1. Make sure that you are in Christ.

We must be sure that we are saved, that we truly know God and have become disciples of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Without this fundamental work of God, there can be no growth. You will forever question the presence of God precisely because He actually isn't with you. Similarly, we will effectively abandon God when things are going well because we never had true relationship with Him in the first place. Unbelievers who think they know God practice a counterfeit faith that desires God's acts only to improve short-term difficulties then dumps Him to the wayside when circumstances improve.

2. Remind yourself that God is with you.

You can only find these reminders in the Word of God. All too often, we know these Scriptures but do not meditate on them. Passages like Psalms 23: "Though I walk through the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me...." Psalm 18:2: "The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer...." God is an immovable force in our life, demonstrated in all 66 books of His Word. We will never enjoy that security, however, if we do not constantly remind ourselves from that Word.

Secondly, we can remind ourselves of the presence of God by simply thanking God for His presence based on His Word. The truths of Scripture are never so complete as when we pray them back to God. 1 Thessalonians 5:17, "...pray without ceasing...."

Often, we're going to find ourselves in the same situation as the people of Israel, absolutely hemmed in. What would pray and thankfulness look like during these times?

"Lord, thank you for your faithfulness to me so many times in the past. Thank you for not allowing me to drift away throughout all this time. It is wrong for me to be afraid. You are always between me and my enemies. Your plans are always good. Give me strength to trust your awesome power and plan even though I can't predict them or even understand them."

"God, you are amazing. You're prepared for everything, and I bring nothing to the table. You're not confused or confounded although I'm both these things. Though I have feared and fretted, I am perfectly secure in your presence. Right now, I am in the perfect place because I trust that you are sovereignly working in order to bring about the most glory for your name and my best good. Teach me to respect and trust your judgment."

It isn't hard to practice the presence of God and to rest in His presence if you want to. Like the old saying, "You'll only be as close to God as you choose to be."

Take your eyes off the circumstances that scare you and place your sight on the God that loves you.

2 Corinthians 9:8, "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always have all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work."

Psalms 87:7, "Both the singers and the players on instruments say, 'All my springs are in you.'"