

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a man in silhouette, standing in profile and facing left. He has his hands clasped in front of him in a prayerful or contemplative gesture. The background is a dramatic sunset or sunrise, with a bright sun low on the horizon, casting a golden glow across the sky and illuminating the clouds. The overall mood is peaceful and spiritual.

The Power of His Presence

Dr Cecil Stewart OBE

The Power of His Presence

People sometimes feel powerless in the face of so many uncertainties in today's world, but the truth is we are not powerless when we live in the power of His presence and this is possible even in the most turbulent times.

Romans 5:17 states 'For if by the one man's offence death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ'.

The key is to receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness then we can reign in life through Jesus Christ. Remember we have a choice to live troubled and afraid because of our circumstances or reign in life because of what Jesus has done for us on the cross. Now we can meditate on the glorious reality of redemption that has opened the door for us to live in the power of His presence. See **Colossians 2:6-7**.

I remember listening to a BBC Radio interview soon after the news of the coronavirus broke and the man who was being interviewed said 'I'm so afraid that this will spread to Northern Ireland and so many of us will be overcome by it'. Fear will always weaken us but faith in God will strengthen us, so the best thing we can do in these challenging times is to meditate in God's word and speak life over our present and future. Remember, it is those who received the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness that reign!



I found that when I focused and meditated on the fact that Jesus took my grief and carried my sorrows that anxiety over the bad report on my health soon lost its power and my mind was renewed.

Proverbs 4:23 says 'Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life'.

This is vital in today's world with so many negative things trying to get into our hearts and minds that would steal our peace. **Jesus said in John 14:27** '... Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid'. Knowing that our loving, heavenly Father has a plan for our lives gives us great confidence.

Philippians 4:6-7 says 'Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus'.

This is what made all the difference in my life when I suffered severe anxiety in my early twenties and then again in 2003 when the specialist advised me that I had an aggressive, cancerous tumour and he could promise me nothing.

1 Peter 5:7 says ‘casting all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you’.

You may ask ‘how then can I experience the power of His presence?’ The answer is revealed in the following journey that Jesus took to Jerusalem. Read carefully **Matthew 21:1-16**. Jesus sent 2 of His disciples to go and bring a donkey and a colt to provide transport for Him. They laid their clothes on them and set Him on them. A very great multitude spread their clothes on the road and others cut down branches from the trees to spread them on the road. Then the multitude who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: ‘Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!’ When He entered Jerusalem all the city was moved saying ‘Who is this?’ The multitude said ‘This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee’. Then Jesus went into the temple and drove out those who bought and sold and overturned the tables of money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. Verse 13 tells us ‘Then He said, “It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves”’.

Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple and He healed them. The religious people were angry when they saw the wonderful things that He did and heard the children crying out in the temple saying ‘Hosanna to the Son of David’.

SO WHAT BRINGS HIS PRESENCE?

1. They prepared for His presence

They responded to His word and lifted Jesus up where He could be seen. There was unity. **James 2:17** says 'faith without works is dead'. Notice the 2 disciples who brought the animals had to inconvenience themselves and give their undivided attention. Preparing for His presence involves repentance and faith – see **Acts 17:30** and **Hebrews 11:6**. Then we can line up our thoughts, words and attitudes to harmonise with His.

Philippians 2:5 reminds us 'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus'.

2. They lifted their voices

Praise, thanksgiving and worship should be a way of life for every believer. **Hebrews 13:15** tells us 'Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name'.

An attitude of gratitude will bring us into the presence of God! **Psalms 118:15** says 'The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous; The right hand of the Lord does valiantly'. See also **Acts 4:24** and **Romans 12:2**.

3. The city was moved

When we honour the Lord His presence is manifested and lives are transformed. Notice, Jesus was brought to the market place – now is the time to reach out to our wider world to the hurting, offended and broken people.

2 Corinthians 4:3 reminds us this – ‘But even if our gospel is hidden, it is hidden to those who are lost’.

What a wonderful opportunity we have every day to shine the light of eternal life to the lost and those who live in darkness and deception.

Ephesians 2:8-9 reminds us ‘For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast’.

If salvation had been available through our efforts then the death and resurrection of Jesus was in vain. But the greatest news of all is Jesus paid it all! Now all we have to do is receive the free gift of eternal life by faith – see **Romans 10:9-10**.

4. The temple was cleansed

Matthew 21:13 – Jesus said ‘It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it into a den of thieves’.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says 'Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's'.

5. Honour restored to the house

The temple had been used for selfish gain only, now honour was restored. It became a house of prayer and healing again.

Psalms 66:2 – 'Sing out the honour of His name, make His praise glorious'.

We truly honour the Lord when we follow His word and the leading of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives and in how we worship in His house – see **Acts 2:46** – 'So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart'.

6. Broken lives were healed

When Jesus cleansed the temple the hurting and broken came and their lives were changed forever.

Jesus said in **John 14:6** 'I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me'. When we acknowledge Jesus as the only way to the Father and

receive Him as our Saviour and Lord then we can walk in truth and enjoy His presence.

7. Children sang praises

When we live in the power of His presence our children will discover who Jesus is and want to sing His praises. Children and family are precious to Jesus and we have the privilege of pouring God's love into them day by day. When the family honours the Lord they will become a mighty influence in the home, schools and the community.

We need to be bold and strong to pray and speak up for parents and families. See **Proverbs 22:6** – 'Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it'. See also **Joshua 24:15** – '... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord'.

When the atmosphere is right singing will return and the power of His presence will be manifested. So get with His plan and you will have His presence!

I trust you will follow through and apply what I've shared with you. It's like taking exercise daily in order to keep fit - it can be uncomfortable but persistence pays off. The same is true in doing spiritual exercises. Be assured there is nothing to compare with experiencing the power of His presence. It has life-changing benefits now and for eternity.

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