



Practicing the Presence

by Desmond Ford

his kitchen work. He did everything as unto God—that God who was with him in the monastery serving room. Thereafter he was conscious of no difference between the hours of prayer and all other hours, for he lived continually in the presence of the Almighty. One of the most famous little books ever printed is his, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, which has been read by millions to their great profit.

The Testimony of the Prophets

The Bible speaks of this reality throughout its pages. "...He be not far from everyone of us for in him we live, and move, and have our being..." (Acts 17:27-28). "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Mt 28:20). Moses "endured as seeing him who is invisible" (Heb 11:27). Because Nehemiah believed in the presence of God, we find him speaking to God in the very act of serving an earthly tyrant in his throne room (Neh 2:4). Jeremiah testifies concerning God: "Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee; thou saidst, Fear not" (Lam 3:57). The same prophet announced to a rebellious people that the Creator fills heaven and earth (Jer 23:24).

Neither was this truth news to the Psalmist. Consider the one hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm where David sings of his Lord as One who has searched him and known him even to the syllables of his speech and the thoughts of his heart—a Winnower of all his ways. So Israel for three thousand years has sung the shepherd king's rhetorical questions:

Whither shall I go from thy spirit?
or whither shall I flee from thy
presence? If I ascend up into
heaven thou art there; if I make my
bed in the grave, behold, thou art
there. If I take the wings of the
morning, and dwell in the utter-
most parts of the sea; even there
shall thy hand lead me, and thy

HE CAME OF peasant stock, but he has contributed more to lasting joy and peace than most aristocrats. He lived in the seventeenth century, but his philosophy is more modern than anything that can be found in today's newspaper. He spent many years as a soldier, but he has helped millions end the war devastating their personal life. "A great awkward fellow who broke everything" (his own description), he has been responsible for enabling many to walk life's tightrope and to put together the disparate fragments of daily experience.

They called him Brother Lawrence when he entered a Carmelite monastery after the first fifty years of his life. He served in the kitchen, and after an experience he had in the Black Forest of Germany, that kitchen became to him as the house of God and the gate of heaven.

It was this way. Walking amid the leafless giants of the woods one day, the thought struck him that these trees, which now in the winter seemed so dead, would in a few months be transformed. Death would give way to life, and barrenness to fertility. "God is here," Brother Lawrence whispered to himself. "God is everywhere." That truth changed his life. No longer did he feel the drudgery of

**God is
here...
God is
everywhere.**

right hand shall hold me. If I say,
Surely the darkness shall cover me;
even the night shall be light about
me. (Ps 139:7-11)

So confident is the Psalmist of God's
omnipresence and omniscience that he
declares God's thoughts about him to
be more in number than the sand
grains of the earth's mighty oceans
(see v. 17-18). Having said so, he adds:
"When I awake I am still with thee."

Last century, Harriet Beecher Stowe,
abolitionist and author of *Uncle Tom's
Cabin*, echoed the thought in a
beautiful hymn:

Still, still with Thee, when purple
morning breaketh,
When the bird waketh, and the
shadows flee;
Fairer than morning, lovelier than
the daylight,
Dawns the sweet consciousness,
I am with Thee!

Alone with Thee, amid the mystic
shadows,
The solemn hush of nature newly
born;
Alone with Thee, in holy adoration,
In the calm dew and freshness of
the morn.
As in the dawning, o'er the
waveless ocean,
The image of the morning star

doth rest,
So in this stillness Thou beholdest
only
Thine image mirrored in my
peaceful breast.

When sinks the soul, subdued by
toil, to slumber,
Its closing eye looks up to Thee
in prayer;
Sweet the repose beneath Thy
wings o'er shading,
But sweeter still, to wake and
find Thee there.

So shall it be at last, in that
bright morning,
When the soul waketh, and life's
shadows flee;
Oh, in that glad hour, fairer than
day dawning,
Shall rise the glorious thought,
I am with Thee!

To practice the presence of God con-
tinually is to bring rest of soul, peace
of mind, and happiness of spirit. It
grants freedom from undue anxiety,
and wisdom for the way. Satan
strives to make us doubt the divine
presence (see Ps 42:10,6,7,9). But in
answer, God exhausts the synonyms
of language to assure us of his
abiding nearness.

*Shall rise
the glorious
thought,
I am with
Thee!*

Devotional Exercise

- (a) Ps 125:2 God is _____ me to _____ me.
- (b) Dt 4:39 God is _____ me to _____ over me.
- (c) Dt 33:27 God is _____ me to _____ me.
- (d) Ex 13:21 God goes _____ me to _____ me.
- (e) Is 52:12 God is _____ me to _____ me.
- (f) Is 41:10 God is _____ me to _____ me.
- (g) Ps 56:9 God is _____ me to _____ me.
- (h) Is 41:13 God _____ to _____ me.
- (i) Ps 67:1 _____ is shining upon me to make me _____ in Him.
- (j) Ps 33:18 His _____ is upon me to _____ me.
- (k) Ps 34:15 His _____ are open to _____ me.
- (l) Ps 145:18 God is _____ to me to _____ me.
- (m) Is 57:15 God _____ in me by his Holy Spirit, to
make my life _____ in him (Col 1:27,28).

Best of all, hear the words of Jesus:

If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and
we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. (Jn 14:23)

No wonder that amidst persecution and trial the ancient Christians sang:

He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly
say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.
(Heb 13:5,6)

