

Parson to Person

Experiencing God

We all experience God at all times. He created us and the world we live in. Psalm 118:24 says, “This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.”

While this is true, there are times when we feel God’s presence more strongly than others. And truthfully, we all have preferences in the ways we like God to speak to us or move in our lives. Sometimes that preference comes from emotion, and sometimes it’s simply because we are more comfortable experiencing God in certain ways.

However, we must be careful not to limit God to our preferences, because He far surpasses them.

Exodus 15:22–16:5 says:

“So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people complained against Moses, saying, ‘What shall we drink?’ So he cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree. When he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet.

There He made a statute and an ordinance for them, and there He tested them, and said, ‘If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the

diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you.'

Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there by the waters.

And they journeyed from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt. Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. And the children of Israel said to them, 'Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.'

Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not. And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.'"

The Israelites continually complained against Moses, but in reality, they were complaining against God and blaming Him for what seemed like a lack of provision.

On one level, this may seem like simple forgetfulness. Each problem in front of them felt so overwhelming that they forgot the miraculous ways God had already provided for them. But on a

deeper level, they wanted God to provide according to their preferences and expectations rather than trusting Him to provide in His own way.

We see this more clearly in Numbers 11:4–6:

“Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: ‘Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!’”

This pattern continues throughout Scripture, even to the rejection of Jesus by many of the Jews. They rejected Jesus because He did not meet their expectations of what the Messiah would do. They expected Him to destroy evil, defeat their enemies, and establish Israel as the preeminent kingdom on earth.

Instead, He came to suffer, to serve, and to wash feet—and they did not want that kind of Messiah.

Luke 23:20–21 says:

“Pilate, therefore, wishing to release Jesus, again called out to them. But they shouted, saying, ‘Crucify Him, crucify Him!’”

Now, bringing this into our own lives, we must learn to separate the presence of God from our personal preferences about how He should move. If we fail to do that, we may reject the very ways God is trying to connect with us simply because they fall outside our expectations.

When we insist that God only speak or move in ways we prefer, we are indirectly saying that we know better than God what kind of relationship we should have with Him.

A personal example for me is music. As a musician and someone who has always loved music, worship through song is one of my favorite ways to connect with God. There are times when I am deeply moved and even brought to tears while worshiping Him through music—but not every time.

If, during those moments when I do not feel moved emotionally, I assume God is not with me, then I may completely miss the way He actually is speaking to me in that moment.

The truth is that God speaks to each of us in different ways, and no one way is better than another. Some experience God most deeply through His Word, some through music, some through prayer, and others through serving people around them. As I said earlier, we are all experiencing God at all times.

But when our expectations are misplaced, we can end up wondering, just like the Israelites did, whether God is with us at all.

Exodus 17:7 says:

“...they tempted the Lord, saying, ‘Is the Lord among us or not?’”

But when we seek God intentionally, something special happens.

While we sit at the feet of Jesus, we experience Him in powerful and life-changing ways. His Word says, “Draw near to God and He

will draw near to you” (James 4:8). Scripture also says that He is “enthroned in the praises of Israel” (Psalm 22:3).

My closing encouragement to you is twofold:

1. Do not limit God to your preferences. He may be speaking in a quieter way than you expected—or perhaps in a more miraculous way than you imagined.
2. If you hunger and thirst for more of the Lord and His presence, then seek Him. Spend time at His feet, and you will be filled!

I love you all,
Pastor Thomas