

Break Free...

*A Thought for the Week From Patrick Kemper at
No Strongholds Ministries*

Week 14

Answer A Question From the Past

Psalm 27:4 (TLB)

4 The one thing I want from God, the thing I seek most of all, is the privilege of meditating in his Temple, living in his presence every day of my life, delighting in his incomparable perfections and glory.

I was engrossed in worship the other day and was copying that verse. And just like most other days, with most other verses, I wrote it a little differently to remain true to the condition of my heart...

"...There are two things that I seek most of all, 1) To hear and recognize Your voice, understanding, so I can choose to be obedient and, 2) The privilege of meditating in Your temple, living in Your presence every day of my life, delighting in Your incomparable perfection, glory and Fatherly inclinations."

I have always been in awe of the idea of what God's temple looks like. What must it be like to be in the one place where there is nothing dishonest, sinful or imperfect?

Isaiah 6:1-4 (ESV)

1 In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" 4 And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke...

Are you starting to get the picture?

While thinking about this, I remembered something Max Lucado wrote in his book, "3:16." He talked about how we sometimes find ourselves envying the Old Testament prophets (like Isaiah, who had this vision), the people through whom God worked, and to whom He spoke... audibly.

Then he made a point I had never considered.

He proposed that, while we think it would be awesome to have God speak to us in an audible voice (the way He did to them), those folks would probably have something to say to us. He suggested they would say we have it better than they did – we have the Holy Spirit – the Spirit of the Living God - living inside us every day.

Frequently, I get caught up in the thought of what it would be like to be in His physical presence. I wouldn't even need for Him to speak to me. Just let me kneel and worship close enough to smell Him. I try to imagine what would happen, being that close to the One who created me.

This reminds me of a story in the Bible.

In the seventh chapter of the book of Luke, there is an account of Jesus going to the house of a Pharisee for dinner. While reclining at the table, a woman (who was widely known to be a prostitute) came into the house (without an invitation, during a dinner party in the house of this prominent religious leader) and knelt down behind Jesus.

It doesn't take much imagination to visualize the scene. I would suspect the house was very presentable – much ado for the receiving of this man who was making such a stir in the community. There were other guests, too, I'm certain. This wasn't your typical holiday party or backyard barbeque.

This was political.

And not just from the position of the man who owned the house and had extended the invitation, but also for those who were there to witness the interaction. They were here to pick sides.

The Bible doesn't provide any specific details, but assumptions can be made.

This was like the gathering at the playground after school. There was an agenda for this gathering but it wasn't to talk about summer homes or investment strategies. The Pharisee was intent on probing. This was possibly meant to be a calling out of Jesus. I imagine the room was well decorated, the food was plentiful and spectator seating was at a standing room only status.

Sometime, during the middle of dinner, this woman strolls through the door and, without a word, kneels down on the floor behind Jesus.

But there is no way she came in unnoticed.

As the conversations quickly began to fade, and attention continued to shift, she lets down her hair, weeping. She had lowered herself so close to the floor, her tears were dripping, silently, from her face to Jesus' feet. With sorrow that can only be described as devastation, she begins kissing His feet and wiping her tears from His feet, with her hair.

At this point I'm sure that only a select few were still oblivious to the scene that was unfolding beyond their own narcissistic prattling. The din of the masses had receded and had been replaced by the faint, guttural sobs of the woman as her body shook and her hands continuing to wipe His feet. When at last her hair, and her kisses, had removed the evidence of His travels (the host of the party had not provided water for Jesus to wash before dinner), she broke open an alabaster box of expensive perfume and poured it on His feet. This soul – the one who was recognized by all as less than acceptable - was the only one in the room to recognize Jesus for who He really was.

She didn't care whose house it was.

She didn't care who had been invited. She didn't care what any of them had been talking about or that they were all staring at her, criticizing her actions and accusing her of being wasteful.

She didn't care.

Nothing mattered to her more than this opportunity to embrace, and offer all she had, to the One she recognized as her Creator. She wasn't willing to allow the environment (which could be only hostile to a person like her) to prevent her from worshiping the One who didn't live within her, but had suddenly made Himself available.

It did not matter whose house it was, what she had to do to get in there or what they would think of her when she did. She wasn't about to pass up the opportunity that would come around only once in her lifetime.

What is it like to have the Spirit of the Living God reside inside you?

Application

In the deep recesses of your heart, do you wonder what it must have been like to hear the audible voice of God? I think Max is right – the prophets would want to know.

“What is it like to have the Spirit of God reside in you, guiding you and leading you, available to you any time (if) you choose to interact?”

Here's another piece of the pie:

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NIV)

19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

This reveals another truth you must own.

You have the opportunity to worship God, in His temple, and be that close whenever you choose. The only issue is, what is the condition of the temple... now that you have been put in charge of it?

Do you spend more time trying to make sure God knows how badly you are wanting to worship and be sincere, than actually doing it. Have you learned to label shooting yourself in the foot, as target practice, then wonder why you are in pain all the time?

The truth is, what you choose to see and hear is what God sees and hears. The things you watch, listen to and say, are the things that go on inside the temple where God resides (if you have an authentic relationship with Him).

Would the people of biblical times look at you and wonder what is wrong with you?

Are you wasting your opportunities – minute by minute for all the days you have been assigned – to consult and listen to the God of the Universe? Are you passing over, without so much as a thought, the privilege offered to you to interact with the One who

created and commissioned you? Are you failing to approach the throne of grace with confidence and receive grace and mercy in your time of need?

What would they say to you if they were to observe the way you do (or do not) appreciate the access God has granted you to His throne room to submit, worship and receive direction?

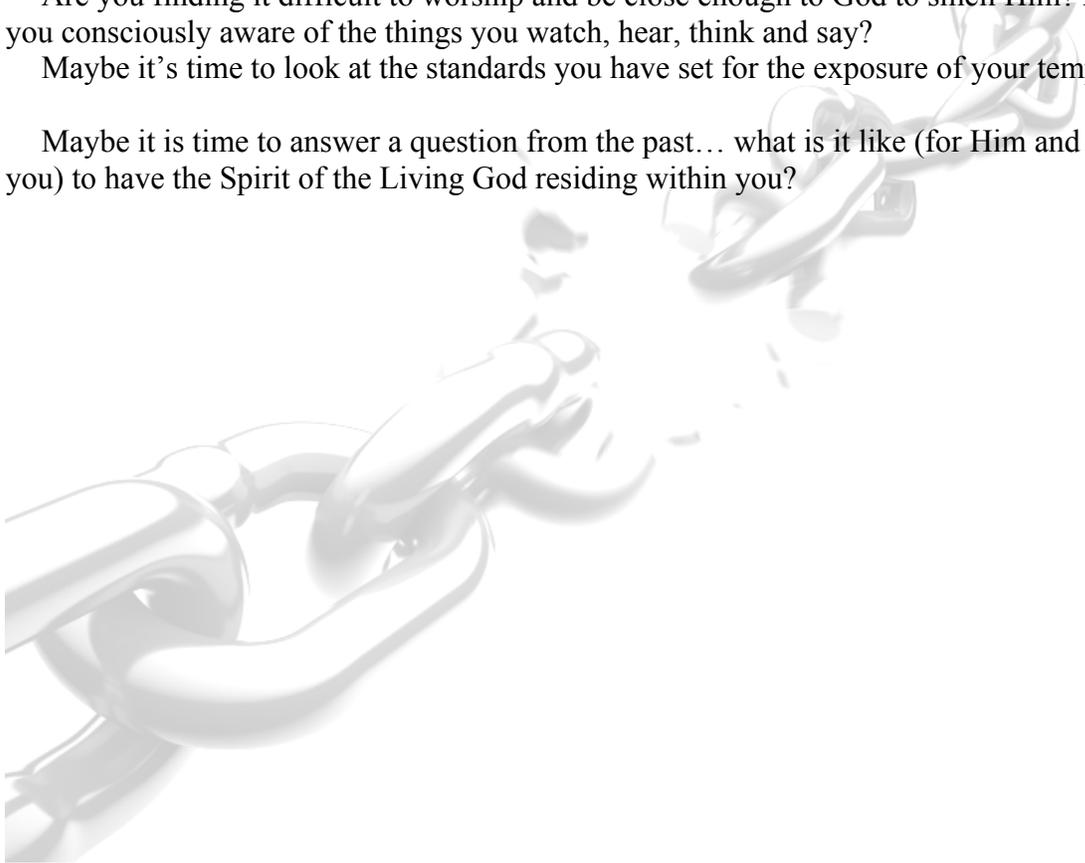
Maybe it's not that you are ignoring the access.

Maybe you are fully aware of your permission to enter the temple, but you are struggling to get through the door because of all the rubble that has turned the sanctuary of the Spirit into the landfill of your life.

Are you finding it difficult to worship and be close enough to God to smell Him? Are you consciously aware of the things you watch, hear, think and say?

Maybe it's time to look at the standards you have set for the exposure of your temple.

Maybe it is time to answer a question from the past... what is it like (for Him and for you) to have the Spirit of the Living God residing within you?



Homework for the Week...

1.) How do you answer that question if asked by one of the Old Testament prophets? Do you become all animated when describing your personal worship time? Can you put into words what it is like to have a conversation with God in prayer? What is it about the things you see, hear and say that could be affecting your entrance to the temple? What needs work, and what methods will you use to begin accomplishing this? Ask God to give you opportunities to improve. Who can you contact to help you? Be specific.

2.) Mid-week check. List the opportunities you have had and how you responded (this is your obedience indicator). If you are still posting a doughnut, more than likely you weren't all that truthful when you asked God for chances to respond and improve. Check your heart; be authentic. Ask God to show you the way through what is blocking you from submitting in obedience.

3.) How are you doing compared to the way you started the week? If you still need improvement, refuse to move on to the next session. Stay here, submit, and choose to be obedient no matter what it takes. Explain how you have improved, or make a commitment to continue working. When you are operating in obedience in this area of your life... turn the page and move to the next session.
