

Body, Soul, and Spirit/The Tabernacle

By Don Potter

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After leading praise in some conventional and unconventional places I have generally found that the flow of it seems to rise to a high place and then comes back down. Though that sounds elementary, I can remember when any kind of rise in the Spirit was welcome. Now it is *almost* common for the Spirit to be present during times of praise and worship. In many cases there would be one rise in the Spirit and if the people wanted to go farther they would just stay engaged in the Spirit and soon another wave started and up we all go again. This can happen many times and sometimes does at conferences and special praise events.

This is not always the case on regular Sunday meetings, but there are reasons for that. I won't try to list all the natural reasons I think this happens, but there is a spiritual reason that is worth facing. Though the praise seems high and His presence is real; is there more? One might ask, "Is there a higher place than the presence of the Lord?" Should we even be trying to get somewhere during praise other than His presence?

I'm aware of the fact that God is unsearchable and no one praise time will get Him praised, but I want to ask a question and then try to answer it myself and hope I make sense while doing it. Are those who worship God, coming into His presence or just facing it? I hope this question has gotten you excited or mad enough to read further and I'll show you what I mean.

COMPARISON

Imagine for a moment that entering into praise is like entering the Tabernacle of David. There are three parts to the tabernacle and there are three parts to our praise. The third part of the tabernacle and praise is entering His presence. The presence is the great part of this, but the first two parts are where all the interesting differences are. I also want to make a comparison between the experience of entering the tabernacle of David with the body, soul and spirit of man. Since three is one of God's favorite numbers it is little wonder that the tabernacle would have three parts; praise would have three parts as God comes in three parts and we are triune beings as well.

We all know that man is made up of **body soul** and **spirit**. The tabernacle is 1) the outer court, 2) the holy place and 3) the holy of holies. The apostle Paul referred to man as the temple of God, (1 Cor.3:16) and with that in mind, look at the similarities. This would make the outer court the body or flesh; the holy place is like the soul; and the holy of holies like the spirit. I believe the Lord has given us a word picture through the tabernacle and temple, of what our praise experience and walk with Him can be like. Though entering the holy of holies was only for the high priest in David's time, it was always God's intention that we would all be apart of a Holy Priesthood. (Ex.19:6)

BRONZE ALTAR AND LAVER

The first place one comes to when entering the tabernacle was the bronze altar and the bronze laver. The word “bronze” means a metal but also represents filthiness, lust and harlotry. Before we enter into praise our lusts and idolatry need to be put on the altar. In simple terms, that means getting real about yourself with God.

I always felt safe about idol worship because I don’t have a statue in my house. But the Lord reminded me that idol means image. I definitely have an image of myself and have always wanted others to feel good about me. My image is to look like a spiritual man. I love Jesus and I want everyone to think that of me so I work at that image. It may seem noble to desire to be seen as spiritual but in the end it is just idol worship. I wish it were the only idol that was trying to control my life. The bronze altar is the place to confess your sins and that is the best way to start praise off. (See Ps.51:16-17)

The bronze laver is next and that is where we wash our hands and feet. This washes away the desire to be in power over others. In other words, be free from the spirit of control. I said that because the laver has another meaning besides a pot full of water. Laver is also translated *stage* or *pulpit*. Ah—the stage; the place we all fear the most and want the most. When I hear the statement, “You’d never get me on a stage,” I know it requires a platform to make the statement and presumes someone is asking you to get on the stage. Let’s face it; everyone has some kind of fantasy about the stage even if it is only a platform for our opinions.

The desire for the pulpit is the same except with a religious spirit attached. Don’t confuse the desire to preach the gospel with the desire to be in the pulpit. They are very different and I don’t want to cast any aspersions on a Spirit-led desire to preach the good news. I’m referring to the power that comes from being in front of others and the control that gives you over their lives and thoughts for that hour.

The stage and pulpit have their qualities especially when the Spirit is the reason it is entered, but when the stage *is* entered a desire to control or manipulate the reaction of others becomes overwhelming. When you have the full attention of another and they love what you are doing, you can spend a lifetime trying to regain and hold that kind of attention.

I’ve been reading Henri Nouwen’s book “In the Name of Jesus,” and it is worth quoting. “It seems easier to be God than to love God; easier to control people than to love people; easier to own life than to love life.” This desire to control others is more apparent when we are faced with obeying the Lord’s commandment, “**Love one another...**” (John 13:34) The love He is talking about will require vulnerability, honesty, confrontational skills and Godly patience—just to mention a few. Under those conditions, it does seem much easier to control than walk this kind of thing out with others. Still the call on a believer’s life is to have a relationship with God and with others. (Matt.22: 37-39) The

reason we must wash our hands and feet of the stage and pulpit is because it is a poor substitute for the relationship-oriented life the Lord continually calls us to.

All these things are to do with the body or flesh of man. I know what you're thinking, "If we had to walk through all this before we could enter into the praise, He would never be praised again." Don't get discouraged, it gets much worse.

THE HOLY PLACE

The next encounter is the holy place which is represented by the soul. In this place the lamp stand, the altar of incense and the table of show bread are present. The lamp stand represents the church (Rev.1:20); the incense is the worship (Mal. 1:11); and the show bread means food and facing the presence or the bread of the Presence. (Ex.25:30 NAS) This is also the place where many of us stop.

The reason many stop at the holy place (the soul) is, the experience of praise with an encounter with the Holy Spirit is all we feel we need. I must admit, when the presence of the Lord comes into a meeting and I'm leading praise, I think we have arrived. What I have slowly learned is there is more. When the Spirit is present we are only facing it, not entering into it.

While the Lord was hanging on the cross, the veil was rent, making it possible for all to enter the holy of holies. With that truth staring back at us, why don't we enter?

HOLY OF HOLIES

It has been my experience that many people, especially men, have a hard time embracing the idea of intimacy with God. This is not a new thing in their lives but something that has managed to keep them from being vulnerable, open to others about short-comings and a basic sense of fear concerning deep spiritual matters. The comforting thing about the holy of holies or entering the presence of God is, it was dark in that place. No one could see in there and no one was looking. Nothing is done as a show.

There is a sign that is on those who have entered the holy of holies. It is the power to heal the sick; the faith that God will always provide; they will have mercy as well as give mercy to others; they will know and walk in the promises of God.

I have seen people with healing ministries, evangelistic outreaches where thousands get saved, prophetic gifts, words of knowledge and the like and the one common denominator is they have entered the holy of holies. Beyond the torn veil is where the mercy seat of God awaits us. It's in this secret place that the power of God is available. (Aaron's rod) Here is where the constant provision of God is. (Golden jar of manna) And it is in this intimate place that the promises of God and the hope of glory, Christ Jesus, await every man who enters.

It is my belief that entering the holy of holies is much harder to do in a church setting than it is at home along with the Lord. That is because the praise in the holy place is processional and boisterous but when in the holy of holies you see the cherubim with their heads bowed low before the Lord. A procession in this place would be inappropriate as would bowing low in the outer court would only be a show of humility for man to see. This does not mean we can not humble ourselves before God publicly; in fact David did this all the time. I'm only referring to trying to make a show of your humility.

ALL ARE TO ENTER

'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel." Ex. 19:5-6 (NAS)

God intended for all to be priests, thus qualifying us all to be a holy nation. Now that we are the temple of God the holy of holies is represented by our spirit. If we live with the Spirit of God guiding our spirits, then we will be Spirit-led. A Spirit-led life will lead you right to the intimate place we long for in the Lord.

It is the spirit that needs to be in control of a man's life not the flesh and not the soul. The spirit cannot control the body unless the soul comes into agreement with that idea. Is this not the place where all men fall? Is it not the flesh and its lusts that cause so much internal strife in man? It is in the holy of holies that this is all settled.

What would happen if we were Spirit-led through our lives? What would church be like if it were led from the holy of holies and not just from the soul place or the holy place? If the Spirit of God was free to do whatever He wanted and not what I think He wants?

To imagine a Spirit-led life seems like a delusion to some and a dream to others. To wake up one day and say, "I'm going to be spirit-led from now on" is easier said than done. Our spirits must be guided by the Holy Spirit. If we are willing go through the first two parts of the tabernacle then living a Spirit-led life will follow.