



Greatest Moment of Your Life

Exodus 7:25-8:11

In this series we are exploring the fact that "God Is Closer Than You Think". It is about experiencing the presence of God, and not just believing in Him.

So far I have given you TWO GREAT TRUTHS that the Bible teaches, and they gave you two images to help you remember them.

If you remember, the first was Michelangelo's painting on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. The painting is called *The Creation of Adam*, but some scholars say it should be called *The Endowment of Adam* -- because Adam has already been given physical life, what is happening is that he is being offered life with God.

It pictures God, is as close as he can be. But having come that close, he allows just a little space, so that Adam can choose. He waits for Adam to make his move.

All Adam would have to do is lift a finger. God is that close.

That is the thought I want you to hold onto.

SECOND, I left you with another image, not so majestic. *Where's Waldo?* And what I wanted you to remember is, "Waldo is on every page." In these books, Waldo is hidden, he is harder to find on some pages, but he's always there. On some pages, you can be looking right at him without even knowing it. But He IS on every page!

Now, these two truths are crucial to believe if you are going to really

experience the presence of God. If you are a Christian, if you have placed your trust fully in Jesus Christ, that God is always no more than "the lift of a finger away." God dwells in you in the person of the Holy Spirit. He IS on every page of your life, your greatest days, and your worst.

What we need to do is to learn how to "see" Him and "hear" Him. Let's dig in.

THE GREATEST MOMENT OF YOUR LIFE

If someone were to ask you what was the greatest moment of your life, what would you say? What is the first thing that comes to mind?

I may not know you, but I know that there have been some extraordinary moments in your life:

- There was the moment you were born.
- There was the moment you took your first step.
- There was the moment you spoke your first word.
- There was the moment you learned how to read a book and a new world opened up to you.
- There was the moment you got your first job, made your first friend, went on your first date, experienced your first kiss.
- You may remember the moment you fell in love, the moment your child was born, the moment God became real to you.

But I want to offer another candidate.

I believe that the greatest moment of your life is this moment right here. This tick of the clock. This beat of your heart. **The greatest moment of your life is NOW.**

Not because it's pleasant or happy or easy, but because this moment is the only moment you've got. Every past moment is gone. It's never coming back. If you live there, you lose your life.

And the future is always out there somewhere. You can spend an eternity waiting for tomorrow, or worrying about tomorrow.

Most of all, this is the moment that matters because this moment is where God is. If you are going to be with God at all, you must be with him *now*—in this moment.

That is why the psalmist says, "*This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.*" (Psalm 118:24)

That is why the prophet says God's mercies never fail because "*they are new every morning.*" (Lam. 3:23)

That is why the apostle Paul says, "*Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity.*" (Eph. 5:15-16)

I believe this can be the greatest moment of your life because this moment is the place where you can meet God. In fact, this moment is the *only place* where you can meet God.

This moment is as God-filled as any we have ever lived. Where's Waldo? He's right here, right now.

THE GREATEST DANGER - Ex. 7:25-8:11

If this is the greatest moment of life, I want to suggest what might be the single most dangerous word in the English language. It is found in our passage of the book of Exodus.

The Israelites have been living in slavery for centuries. They want freedom. Pharaoh wants to keep them as slaves, and he has all the power. So God gives Moses some very powerful bargaining chips, known as the ten plagues, to even the playing field. First God turns the Nile to blood. The second plague is one of the most memorable: God sends an army of frogs. **Exodus 8:3-4** *³The Nile will teem with frogs. They will come up into your palace and your bedroom and onto your bed, into the houses of your officials and on your people, and into your ovens and kneading troughs. ⁴The frogs will go up on you and your people and all your officials.* "

Now God is deliberately painting a comic picture to ridicule the pretensions of Pharaoh. *Frogs in your house; frogs in your bedroom; frogs in your bed*—this is getting seriously disruptive. It is very difficult to get a good night's sleep or enjoy the royal harem with a bed full of frogs. *Frogs in the kitchen,*

on the royal salad, in the royal cereal. I would be very careful before using the royal bathroom.

The frogs are out of control. Ken Davis puts it like this:

"Pharaoh can't even back his chariot out of the garage without killing a hundred frogs. His pizza is covered with frogs. If his home is anything like mine, his wife and oldest daughter have been standing on chairs screaming ever since the plague began. His youngest boy has run out of jars in which to collect and accidentally suffocate them. Frogs are everywhere."

And guess what Pharaoh's magicians do to show their power? Make more frogs! **Exodus 8:7** *⁷But the magicians did the same things by their secret arts; they also made frogs come up on the land of Egypt.*

By now Moses has Pharaoh's attention. Pharaoh asks Moses to say a "frog-removal prayer." **Exodus 8:8** *⁸Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Pray to the Lord to take the frogs away from me and my people, and I will let your people go to offer sacrifices to the Lord."*

Moses replies with exaggerated courtesy in **v.9**, "*I leave to you the honor of setting the time for me to pray . . . that you and your houses may be rid of the frogs.*"

And Pharaoh answers in a single word: **v. 10** "*Tomorrow.*"

There's the dangerous word: *tomorrow*. "Let's wait until tomorrow." Anyone reading this story wants to scream at Pharaoh: "What are you thinking!?"

Moses says, "You don't have to live with the frogs anymore, Pharaoh. I've got *Frog-Be-Gone*. Say the word—they're history. Ready?"

And Pharaoh thinks, "*Well, but then I'd have to give up my labor force. I'm not ready for that. Maybe if I wait, the frogs will decide to go away by themselves.*"

Pharaoh has learned—he can live with the frogs. He can tolerate a "frog-saturated life." It's not great. There's not much joy in it. But he can survive it rather than give up the Israelites as his slaves.

"I'll try another night with the frogs."

ETERNITY IN DISGUISE

So *tomorrow* may be the most dangerous word in the English language, and a lot of ways. It may cause us to mismanage finances; it may mean

constant problems at work; it can damage relationships. But none of these scenarios gets to the root of the problem.

What matters most is this: God is present in *this instant*, offering to partner with us in whatever we face. **The failure to embrace "the present moment" will keep us from being fully present to God right here, right now.**

We know that "God is just a lift of our finger away." We know that, "God is on every page of our lives." But in our lives, there is a tendency to just say "Tomorrow." Spiritual *akrasia*. Another night with the frogs.

Instead of working on "hearing" and "seeing" God in our lives, we settle for less - an occasional glimpse once in a while, but that's it

One writer of Scripture puts it like this: *"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts. . . . But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called 'today.'"* (Heb. 3:13)

"God is closer than you think" means he is available in this moment right now. *Always* now. *Only* now. As much now as ever.

However, like Pharaoh, the tendency to wait till "tomorrow" -- the choice to keep God at a distance, rather than to experience his presence, while crazy, usually results from certain things. Two are paramount.

1. A LOVE FOR SIN

Sometimes we don't have much of a sense for God's presence in our lives, but there's no mystery to it at all. The truth is that our desire for God can be pretty selective. Because, when we sin, we don't want God to be around.

Dallas Willard writes about a two-and-a-half-year-old girl in the backyard who one day discovered the secret to making mud (which she called "warm chocolate"). Her grandmother had been reading and was facing away from the action, but after cleaning up what was to her a mess, she told little Larissa not to make any more "chocolate" and turned her chair around so as to be facing her granddaughter.

The little girl soon resumed her "warm chocolate" routine, with one request posed as sweetly as a two-and-a-half-year-old can make it: *"Don't look at me, Nana. Okay?"*

Nana (being a little codependent) agreed.

Larissa continued to manufacture warm chocolate. Three times she said, as she continued her work, *"Don't look at me, Nana. Okay?"*

Then Willard writes, *"Thus the tender soul of a little child shows us how necessary it is to us that we be unobserved in our wrong."*

Any time we choose to do wrong or to withhold doing right, anytime we choose to sin, we choose hiddenness as well. It may be that out of all the prayers that are ever spoken, the most common one—the quietest one, the one that we least acknowledge making—is simply this: *"Don't look at me, God."*

- It was the very first prayer spoken after the Fall. God came to walk in the garden, to be with the man and the woman, and called, *"Where are you?"* Response: *"I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid, . . . so I hid."* *"Don't look at me, God."*
- A businessman on the road checks into a motel room late at night. He knows the kind of movies that are available to him in the room. No one will know. His wife won't find out; his kids won't see. First he has to say a little prayer. It goes something like this: *"Don't look at me, God."*
- An executive who's going to pad an expense account
- An employee who is going to deliberately make a coworker look bad
- A student who looks at somebody else's paper during an exam
- A church member who looks forward to the chance to gossip

—All first must say a little prayer. We don't say it out loud, of course. We probably don't admit it even to ourselves. But it's the choice our heart makes: *"Don't look at me, God."*

After a while this prayer can become so ingrained that we're not even aware of it.

The story of **Samson** is the tale of the man with enormous potential for good, who became a poster boy for *impulse control problems* that led him to break every vow he had ever made to God. At the

end of his life comes this sad sentence: *"But he did not know that the LORD had left him."*

There is a connection between our character and our ability to perceive spiritual and moral reality.

Sin always has the consequence of damaging our ability to perceive God in the present moment. Every choice to sin—no matter how small—diminishes my capacity to experience God.

2. WRONG MOTIVES?

Now there is a second reason too. The reality is that God is in this place and we are constantly showered with messages that simply go right through or past us because we are not attuned to God's voice. We have not learned how to "hear" it.

Some of Jesus' deepest teachings are about hearing. One of his most repeated sayings was, *"If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."*

This brings us to the second source of difficulty for those who today say, "God just doesn't speak to me." Here a bit of honest soul-searching may be required. *Possibly it may be that they could make no good use of a word from God if they did hear it.*

The question must be asked, *"To what use would I try to put a word from God?"*

God is not a snob, and he is not trying to make it hard for us to hear his voice. But when he speaks, it is to accomplish HIS GOOD PURPOSES in our lives and through our lives.

You see, God's guidance is not a gimmick that we can keep on tap for our gain. It is not there to enable us to beat our competitors. We cannot invoke it to help us win bets on football games or to prove that something is theologically correct.

While it is available to every person who walks with God, it is not at our disposal as we see fit. Good thing, for that would be very dangerous.

We pray, *"Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."* Hearing God—as a reliable, day-to-day reality—is for those who are devoted to the glory of God and the advancement of his kingdom. It is for the disciple of Jesus Christ who has no higher desire than to be like Him.

Are you ready to be in business with God? If you find yourself in a position where you can honestly say, *"God has never spoken to me;"* then you well might ask, *"Why should God speak to me?"*

- *What am I doing in life that would make speaking to me a reasonable thing for him to do? Are we in business together in life?*
- *Or am I in business just for myself, trying to 'use a little God' to advance my projects, my motives?"*

When our lives are devoted to the will of God, he has reason to speak to us. When they are not, He doesn't. If our lives are not devoted to his purposes, he still may speak to us, even use us for his purposes, if we are strategically placed. After all we are his creatures no matter how misguided or rebellious. But if you want to have a conscious, loving ongoing relationship with God, you must come to grips with the issue, "What him I living for?"

It may well be that you have never come to the place where you can truly say, "I am living for one thing and one thing only—to be like Christ, to do his work and to serve Him in this world."

If you have not come to that place, then rather than ask the question "How do we hear the word of God?" we ought to ask, "What would we do if we heard the word of God?"

CONCLUSION

Today, this moment, is the most greatest moment of your life.

- Sometimes we do not hear the voice because at times we do not want to hear it. We enjoy our sin. And to that, we need to repent.
- Then again, perhaps we do not experience the voice of God because it would be an unwelcome intrusion into our plans. Because our motives are not God's motives. We need to commit our lives to Him, to consecrate ourselves to Him.

HOMEWORK

1. Continue to do what I asked you to do last week. Each day, maybe when you go to bed at night, or the first thing you do when you wake up in the morning, review the scenes of your life for the

day that has just passed and stop and ask yourself couple questions.

- What am I thankful for in the previous day?
[thank him]
- Can you identify an event, a conversation, a moment where it now seems clear that God had a hand in? [thank him again]

2. Begin to cultivate becoming aware of your life, moment by moment. “Live in the present.” Try to begin each day with the awareness that God is with you moment by moment. Ask him to help you recognize him through the activities of your day. Try to converse with him in informal prayer all throughout the day.