

GOD IS PRESENT WITHIN US
John 1:14

March 24, 2023

If God called me to save rats, there are two basic ways to accomplish that task. Either I could, as a human, seek to communicate the Gospel to the rats, which, of course, would be impossible, or I could ask God to send me to be born a rat. Born a rat, I could communicate with, think like and in every other way live the life of a rat. You may conclude that it would be a drastic choice to make. However, if I loved rats and wanted them to be saved, I would make the sacrifice to become a rat, be present with rats and ultimately save rats.

This fully describes Jesus' love for us. Imagine Jesus, God's Son, the second person of the trinity, in all of His glory, choosing to become a human so that He could save humans. That is love. Jesus became a human, was present with and lived among humans so that He could save humans.

The text says that Jesus dwelt or had his Tabernacle among us. The Tabernacle was the dwelling place of God and represented God's presence among the people. Under the Old Covenant (Exodus 33:7-11), the people went to the Tabernacle to meet God. Under the New Covenant (Ezekiel 37:26-28), God, through the Word [Jesus], came to Tabernacle with us. Even more, when Jesus went back to the Father, he sent the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 17) to dwell or Tabernacle within us. Therefore, we are the Tabernacle, that is, the dwelling place of God. Every day, all throughout the day, God is present within us because Jesus came to dwell or tabernacle with us.

JESUS HAS YOUR BACK
Acts 18:5-11

March 25, 2023

When I worked for a medical manufacturing company, I had the opportunity to travel to Sweden for an international trade show. Because of the company's goal of creating a positive image on the world's stage, I was granted authority to do whatever was necessary to establish and maintain that image. I was told, "Do whatever you need to do. We have your back."

Paul, although having a very productive ministry, had a very challenging ministry. Paul endured physical, mental and emotional abuse as a result of his faithful fulfillment of his calling. After a negative encounter with the Jews, Paul concluded, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent of it. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." Even after that, many Corinthians believed and were baptized. Even more, Jesus encouraged Paul, "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you..." Jesus was saying to Paul "Keep on doing, I have your back."

Whereas ministry is productive, many have experienced the challenges that are sometimes a part of it. In our flesh, there is a desire to quit, give up or go in another direction. Praise God when we receive the affirmation that our ministry yet remains productive. Even more, praise God when Jesus visits and encourages us to continue doing what we are doing. Praise God for that warm feeling of Jesus' arm around our shoulders as he says, "I have your back."



*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; For You are with me*

THE LORD IS THERE
(JEHOVAH SHAMMAH)

RELEASE FEELINGS; EMBRACE FACTS
Psalm 23: 4

March 19, 2023

When our children first saw the giant slide at the State Fair Park, they were amazed. Like most children, their first thought was to slide down. However, the closer we came to the slide, the larger the slide became. As we stood at the foot of the slide I asked, "Do you want to go down the slide?" Their mouths said, "Yes." However, their fear-filled faces said, "No way!" Their mom and I compassionately looked at them and said, "We will go with you." I could see the relief and calm come over them as they were assured they would not have to journey down the slide alone. Although it remained a giant slide as the size of the slide was not reduced. Nevertheless, they did not fear because we were there with them.

While thinking through the distressing and fear-filled times of his life, David remembered that in every situation God was there and he had no reason to fear. For this reason, David declared, with confidence, "Even though I walk through the darkest valley [of the shadow of death], I will fear no evil, for you are with me." David declared that God's presence has a way of alleviating the fears of life. David's not fearing was not because the dark valleys were made brighter – because they were not. It was because God was there.

In your distressing, depressing and fear-filled times of life, know that God is there, present with you. You do not have to feel that you are journeying through those times alone. Release your feelings and embrace the facts. God promised to never leave you nor forsake you and Jesus promised to be with you all the way to the end. Every day, all throughout the day, God is there.

THE LORD IS THERE
Ezekiel 48:30-35

March 20, 2023

After disobeying and thereby dishonoring my father, it placed a strain on our relationship. I was still his son. I knew that he loved me and desired the best for me. Although we were close in physical proximity, it felt as if his presence was far removed from me and we were distant. There was no intimacy with the presence. When I repented and pursued forgiveness with him, it not only brought restoration to the relationship, it also brought restoration to his presence in my life.

The sins of the people had caused the glory of the Lord to leave. The glory of the Lord, which represented the intimacy of God's presence, moved from the Cherub to the threshold of the Temple (Ez. 9:3) from the threshold of the Temple and stood over the Cherubim (Ez. 10:18, 19) and from the midst of the city and stood on the Mount of Olives (Ez. 11:22, 23). Although they were still God's children and God loved them, their sins placed a strain on their relationship with God and a break in the intimacy of God's presence. God was present because God was, is and always will be present. Nevertheless, the intimacy of God's presence was removed. In Ez. 48:35, God returned and restored intimacy to a repentant people, then declared, "The name of the city from that day shall be: The LORD Is There."

Many of us know the feeling of separation from God's intimate presence. We have experienced the emptiness of knowing that God is there yet not sensing God's intimate presence. After we repent, God will restore the intimacy of our relationship and declare, "The LORD Is There."

GOD GOES BEFORE US AND IS WITH US
Deuteronomy 31:1-8

March 21, 2023

When our children were young, we would walk to a nearby store. Often, there were dogs out running loose on the streets we walked. The children would stop and remain reluctant to go forward for fear the dogs would attack them. I would place the children behind me and go before them, affirming that the dog would have to get through me to get to them. At the same time, I was close enough to them to affirm that they were not alone and I was with them. They walked in confidence because I walked before them and was with them.

After 40 years of leading the Children of Israel through the wilderness, Moses announced that he would not take them across the Jordan River into the promised land. We can imagine their reluctance to go forward for fear of the potential challenges they may face without Moses being there with them. Moses calmed their fears by affirming that they would not walk alone. God would go before them and God would be with them. Even more, no matter what, God would not leave them nor forsake them.

At times, we have to walk down paths that are filled with dangers. God's promises are still available for us today. God will go before us and God will be with us. Even more, no matter what, God will not leave us nor forsake us.

GOD WILL NOT LEAVE YOU NOR FORSAKE YOU **March 22, 2023**
Joshua 1:1-9

When I pause to consider my experiences observing my mom and dad, I consistently saw God at work in their lives. All of my life until the end of their lives, I witnessed God's presence in their lives and the multiple blessings that overflowed to their family, friends, church and community. When I became an adult and began to face my own troubling encounters in life, I reached out to the God whom I witnessed being present in their lives, questioning if I could expect God's similar presence in my life. I heard God confirming, "As I was with your parents, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you."

Although having witnessed God's presence in Moses's life and the multiple blessings that overflowed to the Children of Israel, Joshua is now in charge. I can imagine Joshua questioning if he could expect God's similar presence in his life. God confirmed, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you."

Many of us have amazing testimonies from our parents, grandparents and other ancestors who have gone before us. Those testimonies reveal God's presence in their lives in miraculous and supernatural ways. We, too, sometimes question if we can expect God's similar presence in our lives. Rest assured and be comforted to know that God is confirming, "As I was with your parents, grandparents and ancestors, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you."

JESUS IS GOD WITH US
Matthew 1:18-25

March 23, 2023

The President of the United States selects and sends ambassadors to other countries to represent the President and the United States for diplomatic purposes. Accordingly, wherever ambassadors are present, the United States is present. When the ambassadors speak, the United States speaks. Whatever ambassadors do, they are doing in the authority of the United States. United States Ambassadors do not represent their own interests. Instead, they represent the interests of the United States, the country that sent them.

After discovering that his fiancé, Mary, was pregnant, Joseph chose to divorce her privately rather than expose her to public disgrace. God, having another plan, sent an angel to explain to Joseph what God was doing. The angel revealed that Mary's pregnancy was Holy Spirit conceived. Additionally, God sent the child, who would be named Jesus, to save his people from their sins. Another name given to the child was, Emmanuel, meaning, God with us. Jesus is sent to this world to represent God, the Father.

Jesus is the Father's representative in my life. Jesus speaks on behalf of the Father and fulfills the interests of the father. As some may imagine the Father far away from us in heaven, through the person of Jesus, The Father came to be present with us. Considering the full scope of what the Father does, what love the Father has for us to come and be present with us in Jesus.