



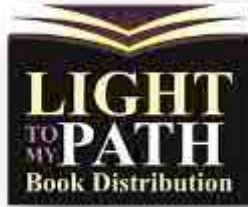
# BEYOND the VEIL

A OLD TESTAMENT CALL  
TO DEEPER INTIMACY WITH GOD

F. WAYNE MAC LEOD

# Beyond the Veil

A Call to Deeper Intimacy with God



F. Wayne MacLeod

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## Beyond the Veil

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## Foreword

The inspiration for this study is a quote from Andrew Murray. In his book, *The Promise of the Spirit*, Andrew Murray compares the Christian life to the tabernacle of the Old Testament. Commenting on Hebrews 10:19-22 he says:

Enter into the Holiest... This is a call to all lukewarm, half-hearted Christians to remain no longer in the outer court of the tabernacle; content with the hope their sins are pardoned. They should not even be satisfied with having entered the Holy Place and having there carried out the service of the tabernacle – not while the veil still hinders full fellowship with the living God and his love. They are called to enter through the veil into the Holies or Most Holy Place into which the blood of Christ has been brought and where he lives as High Priest. There they are to live and talk and work in the presence of the Father... For fifteen centuries Israel had a sanctuary with a Holiest of All into which, under pain of death, no one was allowed to enter. This showed in the clearest possible way that man could not dwell in God's presence and fellowship. And now, how changed everything is! There used to be a warning: "Do not enter!" Now there is instead an invitation: "Enter in, the veil is torn, the Holiest is open: God waits to welcome you into his embrace; from now

on you are to live with him. This is the message of the epistle: 'Child, my father longs for you to enter his presence, to dwell there and never again to leave.'<sup>1</sup>

The tabernacle of the Old Testament was divided into three sections. The outer court was where the children of Israel would gather to bring their sacrifices and offer praise. Beyond the outer court was the Holy Place open only to the priests. God called these priests deeper into the tabernacle to serve Him and His purposes. Still further into the tabernacle was the Most Holy Place. It was here that the Lord God revealed His presence over the cover of the Ark of the Covenant. A thick curtain separated the Most Holy Place from the rest of the tabernacle. It was penetrated, on pain of death, by anyone other than the High Priest, only once a year.

When the Lord Jesus died on the cross of Calvary the curtain that separated the Most Holy Place from the rest of the tabernacle was ripped from top to bottom (Mark 15:37-38). The work of the Lord Jesus ended the separation between God and His people. Through the work of the Lord Jesus, we now have access to the Most Holy Place and the presence of the Lord God. The writer of

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<sup>1</sup> Murray, Andrew, *The Promise of the Spirit*, London: Marshall Pickering, 1990, pgs. 62-63

the book of Hebrews challenged his readers in Hebrews 10:19-22:

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10:19-22)

The sad reality is that all too many believers have failed to understand the privilege that is theirs through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus on the cross. They still live like Old Testament believers, as if the curtain to the Most Holy Place still remained. They are content to remain in the outer court of the tabernacle when the way to the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place has now been opened to them through the work of the Lord Jesus.

In this study, we will examine this call of God to the Most Holy Place. We will look at the various rooms in the tabernacle to see what they teach us about the Christian walk. It is my prayer that each person who takes the time to read this short book will hear the call of God into deeper fellowship and intimacy.

F. Wayne MacLeod



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# The Outer Court

*A Picture of Salvation*



# 1

## A Sanctuary for God's People

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The tabernacle of the Old Testament was divided into three sections. The first of these sections was the outer court. The outer court was reserved for God's people. It was here that His people would gather to offer sacrifices and worship. No unbelieving Gentile was permitted into this court. It was unthinkable that the pagan would defile the temple by entering its outer court.

Grieving over the condition of the land of Israel, the prophet Jeremiah said in Lamentations 1:10:

The enemy laid hands  
on all her treasures;  
she saw pagan nations  
enter her sanctuary—  
those you had forbidden  
to enter your assembly.

Notice the reference to pagan nations entering the sanctuary of God. Imagine that one day you returned home

to find a total stranger in your house. What would your response be to this intrusion? Would you not be upset? You would likely call the police to have him removed from your premises. You would feel like your privacy had been violated. This individual had no right to be in your home. Your home is a sanctuary for you and your family. No one else has the right to enter without your permission. This is how it was in the tabernacle of the Old Testament. The outer court of the tabernacle was reserved for God's children only. This is why the prophet Jeremiah grieved when he saw that enemies had entered.

The Lord felt very strongly about this matter of foreigners not entering his tabernacle. Listen to what He said through the prophet in Ezekiel 44:6-9:

Say to the rebellious house of Israel, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Enough of your detestable practices, O house of Israel! In addition to all your other detestable practices, you brought foreigners uncircumcised in heart and flesh into my sanctuary, desecrating my temple while you offered me food, fat and blood, and you broke my covenant. Instead of carrying out your duty in regard to my holy things, you put others in charge of my sanctuary. This is what the Sovereign LORD says: No foreigner uncircumcised in heart and flesh is to enter my sanctuary, not even the foreigners who live among the Israelites.

To allow foreigners into the tabernacle was to desecrate or pollute it. The temple was a special place where God would meet His children. The unbeliever had no right to be there.

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul was falsely accused of bringing Greeks into the temple. Listen to the reaction of the Jews to this in Acts 21:27-28:

When the seven days were nearly over, some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the temple. They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him, shouting, "Men of Israel, help us! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against our people and our law and this place. And besides, he has brought Greeks into the temple area and defiled this holy place."

The Jews of Paul's day believed that the presence of an unbelieving Greek in the temple defiled it. It is clear from these passages that only those who belonged to the Lord God were given the privilege of entering the outer court of the temple.

The tabernacle or temple is often referred to in Scripture as a sanctuary.

Psalm 15:1 (NIV) LORD, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill?

Psalm 20:2 (NIV) May he send you help from the sanctuary and grant you support from Zion.

A sanctuary was a place of refuge. In Old Testament times, people would sometimes come to the outer court of the tabernacle for protection from evil. Located in the outer court of the tabernacle was an altar for burnt offerings. This altar was highly regarded by the children of Israel. While it was primarily used for offering sacrifices to the Lord God, individuals would sometimes flee to that altar and cling to it for protection.

Exodus 21:12-14 (NIV) “Anyone who strikes a man and kills him shall surely be put to death. However, if he does not do it intentionally, but God lets it happen, he is to flee to a place I will designate. But if a man schemes and kills another man deliberately, take him away from my altar and put him to death.

Notice in these verses, a reference to an individual seeking protection at the altar of the outer court.

David’s son Adonijah, after sinning against his father, ran to the altar for protection.

1 Kings 1:49-50 (NIV) At this, all Adonijah's guests rose in alarm and dispersed. But Adonijah, in fear of Solomon, went and took hold of the horns of the altar.

When the young prince Joash's life was threatened by the evil queen Athaliah, he was secretly taken to the temple where he was protected until the time was right for him to become king.

2 Kings 11:1-3 (NIV) When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she proceeded to destroy the whole royal family. But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram and sister of Ahaziah, took Joash son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the royal princes, who were about to be murdered. She put him and his nurse in a bedroom to hide him from Athaliah; so he was not killed. He remained hidden with his nurse at the temple of the LORD for six years while Athaliah ruled the land.

People saw the sanctuary as a place of protection. While some came to this outer court for physical protection it was more importantly a place of spiritual protection for God's people. The altar, located in the outer court, was where the priests offered sacrifices to the Lord for the sins of the people. Leviticus 1 tells us the requirements of the Lord God for the burnt offering made for sin:

Leviticus 1:2-5 (NIV) "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When any of you brings an offering to the LORD, bring as your offering an animal from either the herd or the flock. "If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he is to offer a

male without defect. He must present it at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting so that it will be acceptable to the LORD. He is to lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him. He is to slaughter the young bull before the LORD, and then Aaron's sons the priests shall bring the blood and sprinkle it against the altar on all sides at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.

Notice here that the individual bringing an offering for sin into the outer court was to place his hand on the head of his offering before it was slaughtered. In doing so he identified with the offering. By putting his hand on the head of the animal to be slain, he was saying in effect that this animal was taking on his sin and dying in his place. This sacrifice, made on his behalf, secured his protection from the wrath of God and restored his relationship with Him.

The outer court was a place of protection for God's people. It was here that sacrifices were made and a relationship with God was restored. The outer court is a symbol of the wonderful salvation of God. It was a place of protection for the children of God where sins could be forgiven and His people cleansed.

All around us are men, women, boys and girls who have never entered the outer court of salvation. These individuals have never stood before the altar of God in the outer court. Their sins still stand between them and their God.

The day is coming when they will stand before their Maker and hear him say:

Matthew 25:41 (NIV) "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels"

In this courtyard, God's people were forgiven and restored in their relationship with God. Here they are protected by the Lord God and the sacrifice made on their behalf. Those who enter this courtyard of salvation know the forgiveness and protection of the Lord Jesus. His sacrifice on the cross of Calvary is their protection and security. It covers their sin and cleanses them of their impurities.

How can we enter this courtyard of salvation to have this protection and forgiveness? We have seen that only the children of God were given access to the outer court. In the Old Testament, it was generally those born as Israelites who were considered children of God and given access to the outer court. This is no longer the case today. Listen to what the Gospel writer tells us in John 1:11-13:

John 1:11-13 (NIV) He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

This verse gives us wonderful hope. We don't have to be born of Jewish descent to become children of God today. John 1:11-13 tells us that those who receive the Lord Jesus and believe on His name are given the right to become His children.

In John 10, Jesus compared the Christian life to a shepherd taking care of his sheep. In Biblical times the shepherd would gather his sheep into the fold and then place himself at the entrance to protect it. He would in reality be the door to the fold. Nothing could come in or out except through him. Using this illustration from his day the Lord Jesus said:

John 10:7-9 (NIV) "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.

The Lord Jesus is the only way into the courtyard. He is the gate and the door through which we must all pass if we wish to enter. By receiving Him and believing on His name, we become children of God. As His children, we have the right to enter the outer courtyard and know its protection and privileges.

There are many who try to enter the courtyard by other means. They think they can enter this courtyard on the

basis of their good works and behaviour. Some are involved in Christian service believing that somehow they can prove their worth. Jesus warned us about these people and their destiny in Matthew 7:21-23:

Matthew 7:21-23 (NIV) "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

You can be a faithful servant of the kingdom of God and never enter outer court of salvation. Entrance into the outer court does not depend on our motives, intentions or character. All that matters is that God has accepted us as His children.

Let me return to the illustration I used at the beginning of this chapter. You come home to find a stranger in your home. When you ask him what he is doing in your home he replies: "I know your son and I live just as good a life as him. I don't see why I am not as worthy as him to enjoy the privileges of your home." What would be your response? Would you not tell him that while this may be true, he is not your son and has no right to be in your home?

This is how it is with the Lord God. The privileges of the outer court are reserved for God's children. You can live a good life and serve the kingdom of God, but if you do not belong to Him you have no right into this courtyard. You cannot trust in any effort of your own. Your only hope of entrance into the courtyard of salvation is to be accepted by God as His child. Come to Christ and seek His mercy. Tell him that you recognize that your only hope is in His accepting you as His child. Ask Him to forgive your sin and make you one of His children.

All who enter the courtyard must come through the gate. Jesus is that gate. Whomever he accepts will pass through but none will enter who do not belong to Him. Are you a child of God today? Do you know the salvation of which this outer court is a symbol? The judgment of God is very real. The outer court is a place of security and protection for God's children.

*Father God, I thank you that you have provided, for all who come to you, a place of security and protection. I realize that you are a holy God who will judge the sinner. I thank you that you are also a loving God who provides a way of escape for all who will come through your Son into the outer court of salvation. Today I recognize that I am a sinner in need of a Saviour. I cry out to you today to forgive my sin. I ask you to accept me as your child and grant me the privilege of entering this outer court of salvation where I can know your protection and forgiveness.*

## 2

# The Altar and the Basin

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In the last chapter, we saw how the outer court of the tabernacle was reserved for the children of God. We compared this outer court to the salvation experience. Many around the world today have accepted the Lord Jesus and entered the courtyard of salvation. Those who have received this salvation have been forever changed. They have experienced what the apostle Paul spoke about in 2 Corinthians 5:17:

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

There were two pieces of furniture in the outer court of the tabernacle. In this chapter, we will examine both the altar and the basin and see what they teach us about living in this wonderful salvation offered to us through the Lord Jesus.

*The Altar*

The first piece of furniture in the outer court was the altar of burnt offerings. Leviticus 1 describes the requirement of God for any offering made on this altar.

Leviticus 1:1-5 (NIV) The LORD called to Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting. He said, "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When any of you brings an offering to the LORD, bring as your offering an animal from either the herd or the flock. "If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he is to offer a male without defect. He must present it at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting so that it will be acceptable to the LORD. He is to lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him. He is to slaughter the young bull before the LORD, and then Aaron's sons the priests shall bring the blood and sprinkle it against the altar on all sides at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting."

Notice here that the person bringing an offering to this altar was to lay his hand on the head of the animal before the priest slaughtered it. By this means, the individual identified himself with the sacrifice by symbolically laying his sins on the animal to be slaughtered on his behalf. In reality he was saying, this animal is taking my place.

As long as sin stood between God and His people no relationship was possible. In the Old Testament, the priests offered daily sacrifices for the sin of the people on the altar in the outer court. The problem with these sacrifices, however, was that they could never take away sin or fully satisfy the demands of God for its punishment. This is why they had to be repeated day after day.

Hebrews 10:1-4 (NIV) The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

The altar of the outer court was a symbol of a greater sacrifice to come. Those who enter the courtyard of salvation today do not place their confidence in the endless sacrifices of bulls and goats. The Lord Jesus laid down His life as an offering for sin. Unlike the sacrifices of the Old Testament, His sacrifice never needed repeating.

1 Peter 3:18 (NIV) For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.

The sacrifice of the Lord Jesus on the cross, according to Peter was “once for all.” It paid the penalty in full for all my sins, past, present and future. It completely satisfied the just demands of the Father for the penalty of sin. The death of the Lord Jesus removed the barrier between God and His people for all time. There never again needs to be another sacrifice for sin. Comparing the work of the Old Testament priests with that of Christ the writer to the Hebrews says:

Hebrews 9:24-28 (NIV) For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Jesus was sacrificed only once. His one-time sacrifice dealt with the problem of sin forever. If the believers of the Old Testament placed their confidence in the sacrifices made continually by the priest on the altar of the outer

court, how much more can we have confidence in the work of the Lord Jesus whose sacrifice accomplished what no other sacrifice could?

Every time a believer came into the outer court they stood before the altar of burnt offerings. This altar was a reminder to them that a sacrifice had been made on their behalf. That sacrifice was their confidence. Those who stand in the court of salvation today, stand before the even greater sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.

Because our salvation is based on the sacrificial work of the Lord Jesus, we can be confident that it is complete and nothing can take it from us. The apostle Paul put it this way:

Romans 8:38-39 (NIV) For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

If Paul trusted his own efforts, he would not have had such confidence. He was fully aware of his weakness and unworthiness. He saw himself as the worst of all sinners because of how he had persecuted believers.

1 Timothy 1:15-16 (NIV) Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I

am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

Paul's confidence was in the work of the Lord Jesus. He knew that because his salvation rested fully in the work of Christ, hell itself could not take it away.

Those who enter the courtyard of salvation stand confidently before the altar of burnt offerings, a symbol of the work of Christ on the cross. His work alone is their security. When He opens the door into that outer court, no one can shut it:

Revelation 3:7 (NIV) "To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.

As I enter the court of salvation, there before me is the cross of Christ. This cross is my hope and confidence. The penalty for my sin has been paid. No matter what happens, I have assurance in what Jesus has done. When I fall, His sacrifice, as my hope and security, covers my sin. When the enemy tells me that I am not worthy of such a salvation, I look to the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus and remind myself that He makes me worthy by what He has done.

*The Basin*

The second piece of furniture in the outer court of the tabernacle was a basin filled with water. The Lord commanded Moses to build this basin and place it in the entrance of the outer court. This basin was used by the priests who entered the court to wash their hands and feet before making an offering to the Lord God.

Exodus 30:17-21 (NIV) Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a bronze basin, with its bronze stand, for washing. Place it between the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and put water in it. Aaron and his sons are to wash their hands and feet with water from it. Whenever they enter the Tent of Meeting, they shall wash with water so that they will not die. Also, when they approach the altar to minister by presenting an offering made to the LORD by fire, they shall wash their hands and feet so that they will not die. This is to be a lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants for the generations to come."

While the altar was where blood sacrifices were made for sin, the basin was used to wash off the dirt and defilements that had accumulated each day. It should be noticed here that the washing of the hands and feet was not simply for hygienic purposes. The Jews considered this practice to be a very important spiritual one. In fact, in the passage quoted above, the Lord told Moses that the

priests were to wash their hands and feet so that they would not die.

We need to see here that the Lord God made two provisions for cleansing of sin. The first was a legal provision. The sacrifice made on the altar paid the penalty for sin. In a similar way, the Lord Jesus paid the price for all my sin on the cross. Legally nothing separates me from God because the full payment has been made for my sin. This does not mean that I will never sin again. Even believers fall into sin. Every day brings new temptations. Sinful thoughts, attitudes and actions are not only possible for the believer but they are inevitable in this sinful body. These sinful thoughts, attitudes and actions hinder our fellowship with God. It is for this reason that the Lord God also made provision for a daily cleansing.

The second provision of God for our cleansing is a practical one. Each day, the priests would enter the tabernacle and wash their hands and feet from the defilements and impurities of the world. There was no shedding of blood in this act of cleansing.

In John 13, the Lord Jesus was washing his disciple's feet. Peter did not feel the Lord Jesus should be doing this and objected. Jesus told him, however, that if He did not wash him, Peter could not be part of Him. Jesus was referring to Peter's salvation when He spoke about washing him. When Peter heard this, he insisted that Jesus wash his whole body and not just his feet. Jesus replied:

John 13:10 (NIV) “A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.”

Imagine you are an Israelite invited to your friend's home for a meal. In preparation for this meal you have a bath and put on clean clothes. When you are ready, you walk down the dusty streets to your friend's home. By the time you arrive, your feet are dirty from the dust on the roads. Your friend welcomes you into his home. His servant greets you with a basin of water and stoops down to wash the dust off your feet. When the servant has washed your feet, you are clean again. You did not need another bath. You just needed to have your feet washed.

As children of God, washed in the blood of Christ, we are living in a sinful world. As we walk on this earth the dust of sin splashes up on us. The sinful nature rises up and we sometimes surrender to its lusts. We say things or think things that dishonour the Lord who has saved us. Each day brings its temptations. Sometimes we resist but other times we fall. This is why we need daily cleansing in the basin.

Writing to believers in his epistle, the apostle John says:

1 John 1:9 (NIV) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Notice here that the apostle John challenged believers to confess their sins so that they would be forgiven and purified. There is no need for another sacrifice here. A simple washing is sufficient.

The apostle James says something similar when he writes:

James 5:16 (NIV) Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

When the disciples asked the Lord Jesus to teach them to pray, he gave them a model and taught them to pray:

Luke 11:4 (NIV) Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.”

Jesus also taught that those who worship him would sometimes need to reconcile with a brother or sister before bringing their offering.

Matthew 5:23-24 (NIV) “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

These verses make it clear that even believers need forgiveness from the ongoing daily defilements of sin in their lives. While Christ's sacrifice on the cross pays the penalty for all our sin, it does not keep us from sinning.

The Lord Jesus paid the legal penalty for our sin in full. He did more than this however. The basin we stand before today is a symbol of His ongoing forgiveness and cleansing. Those who enter the courtyard of salvation recognize that not only has the penalty been paid for their sin but also there is sufficient provision, in Christ, for their everyday failures and shortcomings.

The outer court of the tabernacle represents the wonderful salvation the Lord has provided for us. His sacrifice on the altar pays our legal debt to God in full. His cleansing blood in the basin covers all our daily defilements and guarantees that we can be clean in his presence. As the apostle Paul said:

Romans 8:1 (NIV) Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Those who live in the outer court have become children of God through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus on their behalf. They are confident in their new relationship with God. Christ's work alone is sufficient to keep them and pays their penalty in full. As His children, they come regularly to wash in the basin of His forgiveness, wanting nothing to stand between them and their Saviour. They

know His cleansing and they live each day with a clear conscience before their God.

The outer court is a symbol of salvation. Those who live in this outer court must remember two things.

First, they must keep the altar of Christ's sacrifice before them at all times. They must continue to place their full confidence in what He has done for their salvation. They must make it their life goal to worship and honour Him for what his work has accomplished in them. When we daily place the cross of Christ before us, it radically changes how we live our lives and the decisions we make. Do you make every decision in light of the work Christ has done for you? Those who enter the outer court stand regularly before the altar and remember the sacrifice made on their behalf.

Second, those who have entered the court of salvation must live every day with a clear conscience before their God. This means coming to Him regularly for cleansing and forgiveness in the basin of His wonderful love and mercy. The priests were required, on pain of death, to cleanse daily in the basin of the outer court. Do you need a fresh cleansing today? Has the sinfulness of this world and the old nature come between you and your Saviour? He has made every provision for your cleansing. If you want to live in the outer court of salvation, you need regular cleansing. Come regularly to Him for this cleansing.

There needs to be a difference between those living in the outer court and those who are outside. Those who live in the outer court live lives that are clean and pure before their God. Christ has made every provision for this to be a reality. The lives of those who live in the outer court of salvation are a testimony to the wonderful work of the Lord Jesus for their forgiveness and daily cleansing. Does your life reflect the provision that Christ has made for your forgiveness and daily cleansing?

*Father God, we thank You for the wonderful salvation You have provided through the work of the Lord Jesus on our behalf. Thank You also that You have made a provision for us to live each day with a clean conscience. We ask You Lord God to help us to live lives worthy of our calling as children of God. Forgive us for the times we have failed You. Help us to live each day in light of the cross and what it has accomplished in our lives. We know the temptations of this world and the weakness of our own human flesh. We ask that You would burden our hearts to live in daily, unhindered communion with You as our Saviour and God. May we come often to the basin of Your forgiveness and mercy to be cleansed so that we may enjoy unhindered fellowship with You as our God.*



# The Holy Place

*The Fellowship of Service*



# 3

## Anointed and Called of God

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Beyond the outer court of the tabernacle was the section called the Holy Place. This section was reserved for the priests who carried out their duties on behalf of the people. The priests of the Old Testament had a special call on their lives. God specifically chose the descendants of Aaron to be His priests and to represent Him before the people. As priests, they had the right to enter the Holy Place to perform their duties. Anyone other than a priest who dared to enter this part of the tabernacle was put to death.

Numbers 3:6-10 (NIV) “Bring the tribe of Levi and present them to Aaron the priest to assist him. They are to perform duties for him and for the whole community at the Tent of Meeting by doing the work of the tabernacle. They are to take care of all the furnishings of the Tent of Meeting, fulfilling the obligations of the Israelites by doing the work of the tabernacle. Give the Levites to Aaron and his sons; they are the Israelites who are

to be given wholly to him. Appoint Aaron and his sons to serve as priests; anyone else who approaches the sanctuary must be put to death.”

Not only was the call of God on the lives of these priests but God also told Moses to anoint them for their special role.

Leviticus 8:30 (NIV) And Moses took of the anointing oil, and of the blood which was upon the altar, and sprinkled it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon his sons' garments with him; and sanctified Aaron, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him.

The priest could enter the Holy Place on the basis that they were specially called of God and anointed for ministry. Notice from Leviticus 8:30 that the priests were anointed with oil. Oil, in Scripture, is often a symbol of the Holy Spirit. We have an example of this in 1 Samuel 16:13:

1 Samuel 16:13 (NIV) So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power.

Notice that when the prophet Samuel poured oil on David's head, the Spirit of God came on him in power. What

Samuel symbolized with oil, God made real in David's life.

The anointing of the priests of the Old Testament was not an empty ceremony. The Lord asked Moses to perform this anointing for a purpose. With this anointing, God gave a measure of His Spirit and authority to the priests to equip them in the service they would render for His people.

Because these priests were called and anointed of God, they had the right to enter deeper into the tabernacle. While the courtyard is the place of salvation, the Holy Place is the place of service.

There is an important point I want to emphasize before proceeding further with this thought. There are those who feel that God actually needs us for the work He wants to do on this earth. This cannot be further from the truth. God created this earth without us and He can certainly sustain it without us. He is fully able to accomplish His purpose on his own if He should choose to do so. God does not choose us for service because He needs us. He does so because He delights in us.

A number of years ago, I was refinishing the stairs in my house. As I was scraping the old paint off the stairs, my one year old grandson, Joshua, came crawling up to be with me. He watched me for a while and then took a tool and began imitating me as I scraped and sanded. To be honest, he was more of a hindrance than a help. In fact, I

spent most of the time protecting him from falling down the stairs. Despite this, however, it was a delight to have him with me. I enjoyed watching him imitate what I was doing. At that point, it was not so much about the job getting done as it was about having time together with my grandson.

This is how it is with God. He doesn't call us into service because He needs us. He is fully able to do the job Himself. He calls us into service because He loves us and wants time with us. Our efforts are often feeble. We frequently fail in what God has called us to do. God knows this will happen. The fact of the matter, however, is that there is a level of fellowship that only comes through service. True love is refined through shared struggles and experiences.

The priests of the Old Testament had the wonderful privilege of working with God in His purposes. The Holy Place was a place of service but it was much more than that. It was a place where these priests could meet with God in a deeper way. They would become His instruments. They would experience God's empowering and enabling in a way that those who remained in the outer court would not.

In the Old Testament, the privilege of entering the Holy Place was reserved for a special group of people. In the New Testament, however, the Holy Place is open to all believers. What was it that separated the priest from the

believer in the outer court? It was a special call of God on their lives and an anointing of the Spirit for service.

In 1 Peter 2:9 the apostle says:

1 Peter 2:9 (NIV) But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Notice what Peter says here. Writing to ordinary believers in his day, he told them that they were a chosen generation and royal priesthood. Peter boldly declares in 1 Peter 2:5 that, as believers in this New Testament period, we are a “holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ”:

1 Peter 2:5 (NIV) You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

It cannot be any clearer than this. God has put His call on my life. As a believer in the Lord Jesus today, I am called to be His priestly representative on this earth. This truth applies to all who belong to the Lord Jesus today.

Not only have we been called by God to be His priests but we have also been anointed by God’s Holy Spirit for

this task. Writing to the believers in Rome the apostle Paul says this:

Romans 8:9 (NIV) You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

Clearly, we need to understand from these words of Paul that the Holy Spirit of God now lives in each of God's children.

The apostle John reminded the believers of his day that they had received a special anointing from the Holy One.

1 John 2:20 (NIV) But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth.

1 John 2:26-27 (NIV) I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him.

Writing to the Ephesians, Paul commanded them to be filled with the Holy Spirit of God.

Ephesians 5:18 (NIV) Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

These passages make it clear that the New Testament believer has received an anointing of the Holy Spirit. If we belong to the Lord Jesus today, we are called of God to be His priests and His Spirit empowers and enables us to do what God has called us to do.

Beyond this calling and anointing, however, the Lord God has particularly gifted each believer for a specific ministry. Paul reminded the believers in Rome of the spiritual gifts for service God had given each of them.

Romans 12:6-8 (NIV) We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

Serving God is not an option but a requirement for all believers in the New Testament. Just like the priests of the Old Testament, God has called, anointed and gifted each of us for a particular role in the kingdom. This means that we do not have to remain in the outer court.

God now calls us deeper into fellowship with him in the Holy Place.

Now some might say, "My role is insignificant. I don't feel that my gifts are very important." Let me remind you, however, of the role the priests of the Old Testament played. Some devoted themselves to slaughtering and skinning animals. Others packed and carried the articles of the tabernacle on their backs from place to place. Still others spent their time playing musical instruments and leading God's people in worship. The priest who returned home at night smelling of blood and guts may have wondered about the importance of his role. Whether the role is big or small God is calling us to be faithful.

Not everyone wants to enter the Holy Place. Service in the Holy Place is not always easy and glorious. We only have to look at the lives of the prophets and apostles to see what they had to suffer in service of the Lord their God. Consider for example what entering the Holy Place cost the apostle Paul.

2 Corinthians 11:23-28 (NIV) I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the

move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.

Jesus made it clear that those who want to serve Him in this Holy Place will have to pick up their cross just as he did.

Matthew 16:24 (NIV) Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

The Holy Place is a terrifying place for many. They are not sure they want to leave the comforts and securities of the outer court. There will be struggles in the Holy Place. Those who step into this place risk rejection and persecution. Jesus promised great blessing, however, for all who would move beyond the outer court into the place of service.

Luke 6:22-23 (NIV) Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. "Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because

great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets.

There is a level of fellowship and intimacy we will never experience until we are ready to move beyond the outer court and into the Holy Place of service. God is calling us deeper into the tabernacle. He has anointed us for ministry and gifted us with particular gifts to serve Him in a special way. Admittedly this will not be easy. For some, the cost of service is too great. They are not willing to pick up their cross. They allow their spiritual gifts to lie unused. These individuals will never experience the fellowship of the Holy Place. The fellowship of the Holy Place is only for those who will step out in service of their Lord. Though all believers are called, anointed and gifted, not all will take up the challenge and move beyond their initial salvation experience into the deeper fellowship that comes through service in the Holy Place.

Acts 7 tells the story of Stephen who took his call and anointing for service seriously. On one occasion, he was called before the Jewish ruling council to give an account of his faith. Stephen shared boldly his belief in the Lord Jesus. His testimony upset them so much that they decided to kill him. What is of particular importance in this story is what took place when they were stoning Stephen. We read the following account in Acts 7:54-56,

Acts 7:54-56 (NIV) When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to

heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

Notice how, in the midst of his trial, the Lord God revealed his presence to Stephen in a powerful way. God opened the heavens and showed Himself to His faithful servant that day.

Daniel's friends Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were willing to take a stand and serve their Lord as well. When the king demanded that they bow down to a false idol, they refused to obey. As a result, they were cast into a fiery furnace. Daniel 3 recounts the story of how the Lord God met Daniel's friends in that fiery furnace.

Both Stephen and Daniel's friends met God in a special way because they were willing to step out in obedient service. In their trials, they experienced the wonderful fellowship of the Holy Place.

Jesus promised to especially be with those who move beyond the outer court into the place of service. Listen to his promise in Matthew 28:

Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV) Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I

have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Notice the connection between service of the kingdom and the presence of the Lord God with us. God does not send us out alone. He promises to be with us. God does not call us to service because He needs us but because serving Him draws us into deeper and more intimate fellowship. There is a level of fellowship with God we will never know until we move beyond the outer court to the Holy Place. There in that Holy Place God uses us as His instrument. We know His special power and enabling. We experience His comfort in the struggles of ministry. We see His provision and protection. We are drawn closer to Him and experience the reality of His presence in ways we could never experience if we remained in the outer court.

As wonderful as our salvation experience was, it is not the end. All too many Christians remain in the outer court of salvation content to know their sins are forgiven. The call of God, however, is to an even deeper fellowship and intimacy with Him in the Holy Place. He has called, anointed and gifted us so that we can partner with Him in the expansion of the kingdom. He doesn't need us to accomplish His purposes but He delights in the fellowship He experiences with us as we are joined together in service. There is a cost to pay for the fellowship of the Holy Place but Stephen, and Daniel's friends remind us that the deeper fellowship and intimacy with God is well worth any price we might have to pay.

*Father, I have been content to know that my sins are forgiven. Today, however, I recognize that the outer court of salvation is not an end in itself. I see that You have called me, anointed me and gifted me for service in Your kingdom. I realize that You are calling me into a deeper fellowship with You. This is a fellowship I can only experience as I step out in faith into the service of the Holy Place. Help me to see what You have gifted and called me to do. I ask that You give me courage today to step into that ministry no matter how small or insignificant it may seem. I thank you that You promise to meet in the Holy Place. I thank You that you give me the privilege of serving so that I can enter more deeply into fellowship and intimacy with You.*



## 4

# The Bread, the Lampstand and the Altar of Incense

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We saw how the furniture in the outer court pointed believers to the need of living daily in the cleansing of the Lord God. The furniture of the Holy Place also gives us an idea of what it means to live each day in the place of service. Let's now take a moment to examine the furniture in the Holy Place to see what God expects of all who enter deeper into the fellowship of service.

### *The Table of Bread*

The first piece of furniture in the Holy Place was a table. God commanded His people to make this table in Exodus 25:23-30. The table was made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold. It was about 3 feet (0.9 meter) long, 1 1/2 feet (about 0.5 meter) wide and 2 1/4 feet (about 0.7 meter) high. Leviticus 24:5-9 teaches us the requirements of God concerning this table and the bread that was placed on it.

Leviticus 24:5-9 (NIV) “Take fine flour and bake twelve loaves of bread, using two-tenths of an ephah for each loaf. Set them in two rows, six in each row, on the table of pure gold before the LORD. Along each row put some pure incense as a memorial portion to represent the bread and to be an offering made to the LORD by fire. This bread is to be set out before the LORD regularly, Sabbath after Sabbath, on behalf of the Israelites, as a lasting covenant. It belongs to Aaron and his sons, who are to eat it in a holy place, because it is a most holy part of their regular share of the offerings made to the LORD by fire.”

Twelve loaves of bread were set on the table in two rows of six. Incense was placed along each row of bread. This bread was set on the table every Sabbath. We learn from Mark 2:25-26 that this bread was holy and only the priests could eat it.

Mark 2:25-26 (NIV) He answered, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions.”

What is the significance of the bread? Speaking to the people of his day the Lord Jesus said:

John 6:48-51 (NIV) I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

Jesus called Himself the Bread of Life. Ordinary bread satisfies our physical hunger. Jesus, as the Bread of Life, satisfies the hunger of our souls. Physical bread will sustain life for a time but those who eat of the Bread of Life receive eternal life.

There is another symbolism for bread in the Scriptures. Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 16:5: "be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." The disciples did not understand what Jesus was telling them. In their simple way of thinking, they thought he said this because they had not brought bread with them on their journey. Hearing what they were discussing among themselves the Lord explained:

Matthew 16:11-12 (NIV) How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

This shows us another dimension to the symbolism of bread. In Scripture bread also represents teaching and doctrine. The bread on the table in the Holy Place symbolized the Lord Jesus and His teaching. The apostle John speaks of the Lord Jesus as "the Word."

John 1:1-2 (NIV) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.

Jesus is called the Word here because He taught and reflected perfectly the person and purposes of the Father.

The priests who entered the Holy Place stood before the table of bread that represented the life giving work of the Lord Jesus and the truth He taught. Those who enter the place of service today must also stand firmly on the truth about Jesus and His Word. They must be a people who live and walk in the truth Jesus taught.

Not all believers are ready to make this commitment to the Lord Jesus and His Word. Churches are filled with people who are not living according to the teaching of Christ. Even church leaders are willing to compromise the truth to suit their own needs. You don't have to look far to find believers who have fallen into sin and wandered from the truth Jesus taught.

Christians are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. This means that they must accept what He says to be their standard for life and belief. Following the standards of the

Lord will not always be easy. Many saints before us have had to lay down their lives for Christ and the truth He taught. Unwilling to compromise, they paid the ultimate price.

All who enter this Holy Place must make it their commitment to stand firmly on the truth about Christ and His Word. There can be no compromising in this matter. It may cost you dearly to follow Christ but that is the price of fellowship in this Holy Place. All too many believers are influenced by the world and its ways. As morals in our society decline, so often do the morals in the church. If you want to enter this Holy Place, God is calling you to a different standard. He is calling you to turn your back on the world and its ways and look to the Lord Jesus and to His Word alone.

Do you want to enter this Holy Place and experience the fellowship of service? You must commit yourself to doing things God's way. His Word must be your authority and guide. Everything else must be rejected. All who enter the Holy Place must stand before the Table of the Bread of the Presence, a symbol of Christ and His Word. They must make Christ and His Word their standard for life and belief. They must be a people of truth. This is the first requirement for those who enter the Holy Place.

*The Lampstand*

The second piece of furniture in the Holy Place was the lampstand. Exodus 25:31-32 tells us that this lampstand had six branches, three on each side with a centre piece. God told Moses that these lamps were to be lit from evening until the morning.

Exodus 27:20-21 (NIV) “Command the Israelites to bring you clear oil of pressed olives for the light so that the lamps may be kept burning. In the Tent of Meeting, outside the curtain that is in front of the Testimony, Aaron and his sons are to keep the lamps burning before the LORD from evening till morning. This is to be a lasting ordinance among the Israelites for the generations to come.

The lampstand too was symbolic. Speaking about Himself in John 8:12 the Lord Jesus said:

John 8:12 (NIV) “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

Darkness, in Scripture, often represents sin. Paul, in particular, used this illustration of darkness to speak about sin and evil. Writing to the Ephesians he told them that their struggle was not against flesh and blood but against the powers of a dark world.

Ephesians 6:12 (NIV) For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

In his epistle to the Romans, the apostle spoke about individuals who had given themselves over to sin. He told the Romans that those who had done so had hearts that were darkened.

Romans 1:21 (NIV) For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

The Lord Jesus came as light to this dark earth. He came to offer hope and salvation to all who would look to Him and receive His forgiveness.

Jesus also calls us, as His representatives, to be a light in this world. Listen to what he told His followers in Matthew 5:14-16:

Matthew 5:14-16 (NIV) “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Jesus challenged all who would follow Him to be a light of his truth. Those who move beyond the outer court into the Holy Place must be willing to let their light shine.

Have you ever had someone shine a light in your eyes on a dark night? To those who are used to the dark, the light is not comfortable. Jesus reminded His disciples that the people of this world hate the light.

John 3:19-20 (NIV) This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

Followers of Jesus have been persecuted from the beginning. They have been beaten, mocked and killed by those who hated Christ. Jesus is calling us to be a light in a world that hates light. This has serious implications for those who want to enter the Holy Place of service.

Many in the courtyard are not ready to make the commitment to be a light in a dark world. They are afraid of what this will mean for them personally. They are like the people the Lord Jesus spoke about in Luke 11:

Luke 11:33 (NIV) "No one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden, or under a

bowl. Instead he puts it on its stand, so that those who come in may see the light.

These individuals do not want people to know that they are Christians. They are ashamed to be different. They don't want to stand out. To these individuals the Lord Jesus says:

Mark 8:38 (NIV) If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

If you want to experience the fellowship of the Holy Place you will need to be willing to declare your commitment to the Lord Jesus and His ways. You can't be ashamed of the Lord Jesus and experience the fellowship of the Holy Place. The apostle Paul told the Galatians that if he were trying to please people he could never be the servant of God.

Galatians 1:10 (NIV) Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Many will never move beyond the outer court and their initial salvation experience because they are afraid to be a light. They love the approval of friends and loved ones more than they love the approval of God. They are afraid

of being persecuted or mocked for the sake of the Light they represent.

Others feel unworthy to be a light. They don't feel that they would be a very good light and prefer to remain in the courtyard where they are less likely to fail. In Matthew 25 the Lord Jesus told a parable about a man who went on a journey. Before he left, he gave to each of his servants a sum of money to invest so that on his return he would have his money back with interest. One of the servants was afraid that he might fail to earn the interest the master desired so he buried his money in the ground. When the master returned the servant gave him his money back without interest. When the master saw that he had not invested his money he said to him:

Matthew 25:26-30 (NIV) "You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

You cannot serve if you are given over to the fear of failure. Those who come to the Holy Place have been called, anointed and gifted by the Spirit of the Lord Jesus. They serve in His strength and authority. As His chosen and anointed servants they are to be bold in service. Listen to the advice of Paul to his young spiritual son Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:7-8:

2 Timothy 1:7-8 (NIV) For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God,

The lampstand of the Holy Place represented the Lord Jesus as the Light of the World. It also represents the call of God on our lives to be a light in a dark world. Are you ready to take your stand? The Holy Place is not for those who are ashamed of the Light. It is for those who have died to what others think and have committed themselves to follow the Lord Jesus and His ways no matter the cost. Are you willing to pay the price to be a light for Christ?

*The Altar of Incense*

The final piece of furniture in the Holy Place was the altar of incense. God commanded Moses to build this altar in Exodus 30:1-6. Aaron was to offer incense on this altar every morning so that it burned regularly before the Lord.

Exodus 30:7-8 (NIV) “Aaron must burn fragrant incense on the altar every morning when he tends the lamps. He must burn incense again when he lights the lamps at twilight so incense will burn regularly before the LORD for the generations to come.

In the Scripture, incense often represents the prayers of God’s people. In Psalm 141 the Psalmist compared his prayers to incense rising up to God.

Psalms 141:2 (NIV) May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.

In Revelation 5 the apostle John saw golden bowls full of incense in his vision. He told his readers that this incense was the prayers of the saints.

Revelation 5:8 (NIV) And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a

harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

Writing in Revelation 8 the apostle spoke of an angel who was given incense to offer with the prayers of the saints.

Revelation 8:3-4 (NIV) Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel's hand.

These verses make it quite clear that incense was a symbol of prayer. The presence of the altar of incense teaches us that those who enter the Holy Place must be people of prayer.

The ministry to which the Lord God has called us is not done in human strength and wisdom. Those who enter the Holy Place are people who understand their weakness. Consider the apostle Paul. In 1 Corinthians 2:3 he told the believers that he came to them in weakness, fear and with “much trembling.” In fact, Paul learned not only to accept his weakness but to rejoice in it. Writing to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 12 he said:

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 (NIV) But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast

all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

The apostle Paul had no notions of great strength and power in himself. He was a simple vessel in which the Lord God lived and chose to work.

2 Corinthians 4:7 (NIV) But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

Those who enter the Holy Place know full well that they are not strong or wise in themselves. They know that if they are going to be useful in this Holy Place of service they need to draw their strength and wisdom from the Lord God. The key to obtaining this strength is prayer.

Knowing his weakness, the apostle Paul often asked for prayer for empowerment and strength. In Romans 15 he asked for prayer that his service in Jerusalem would be acceptable to the saints there.

Romans 15:31 (NIV) Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there.

He asked the Ephesians to pray that whenever he opened his mouth he would be given words to speak. He knew

that God would give him words and empower him to speak because of the prayers of the believers in Ephesus.

Ephesians 6:19-20 (NIV) Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

The apostle James told his readers that they did not have the things they needed because they had not asked God (James 4:2). He also reminded them that God answered the prayers of his saints for wisdom.

James 1:5 (NIV) If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

The key to obtaining the blessings of God for service is to ask. Those who enter the Holy Place are a people who understand their need of strength and empowering. They also know that God is willing to give to those who ask for strength, provision and wisdom to do what He has called them to do. If you want to enjoy the fellowship of service you need to be a person of prayer. I am not saying that everyone is called to pray for hours every day. What I am saying, however, is that we need to be a people who depend on God and call out for wisdom, strength and enablement in each situation that presents itself in the course of the day.

It should be understood that prayer is not only asking God, it has also to do with hearing Him and following His leading. God is willing to lead and direct those who enter the Holy Place but they must be ready to listen. King David is a clear example of this in the Old Testament. Over and over again David “inquired of the Lord.” When he needed to know if he should go to battle he would seek the Lord in prayer. Consider the following two examples from 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles:

2 Samuel 2:1 (NIV) In the course of time, David inquired of the LORD. “Shall I go up to one of the towns of Judah?” he asked. The LORD said, “Go up.” David asked, “Where shall I go?” “To Hebron,” the LORD answered.

1 Chronicles 14:13-16 (NIV) Once more the Philistines raided the valley; so David inquired of God again, and God answered him, “Do not go straight up, but circle around them and attack them in front of the balsam trees. As soon as you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, move out to battle, because that will mean God has gone out in front of you to strike the Philistine army.” So David did as God commanded him, and they struck down the Philistine army, all the way from Gibeon to Gezer.

Notice that God answered David’s prayer and gave him specific guidance for his battles. Speaking to the people of Israel, the prophet Isaiah said:

Isaiah 30:21 (NIV) Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

God promised His prophet Jeremiah that if His people called out to Him, He would answer them and show them things they did not know.

Jeremiah 33:3 (NIV) 'Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.'

Those who come to God in prayer not only admit their need of His guidance and empowering but also commit themselves to following His leading and direction. This means that they are willing to put aside their own ideas and plans. When David went to the Lord for wisdom and God told him what to do, he listened to God.

There are people who pray for guidance but don't like what God tells them so they run like Jonah in the other direction. There can be no fellowship with God in the Holy Place if we are unwilling to listen to and follow His specific guidance in our lives. Those who come to the Holy Place must be a people who put aside their own way of thinking. They must not depend on their own wisdom but seek the guidance of the Lord, in prayer, on a moment by moment basis.

The fellowship of the Holy Place is for those who seek God's direction, empowering and wisdom in each new

situation. When confronted with a difficult decision, they seek His wisdom. When facing a powerful obstacle, they cry out for His strength. When they see His hand, they give him thanks. They follow His leading when He answers their prayers and surrender to His will. Their prayers rise up constantly before God like incense from the altar. This is the source of their strength and wisdom. Prayer is the most basic way of showing our submission to God and His ways. By prayer we turn from our own ideas and seek God's heart. By prayer we make a conscious choice not to trust in our own strength and accept His. This is the attitude of those who stand before the altar of incense in the Holy Place.

Do you want to move beyond the outer court of salvation into the fellowship of the Holy Place? You must first stand before the Table of bread that represents the Lord Jesus as the Bread of Life. Are you willing to be a follower of the Bread of Life? Will you renounce all other ways to follow Him and His Word alone? Are you ready to stand before the Lampstand and accept your responsibility to reflect His light in a dark world? Will you continue to shine even when the darkness crowds in and threatens to snuff out your life? Will you recognize your need of God's strength and enabling as you stand before the altar of incense? Will you commit yourself to be a person of prayer, seeking His will and His direction in all you do? The fellowship of the Holy Place is for those who will make this commitment. The path of service in the Holy Place will not be easy but it is a path of deeper fellowship with the Lord our God.

*Heavenly Father, I hear Your call today to enter the Holy Place. I recognize that there is a cost to pay for this deeper fellowship. You are the Bread of Life and I stand before You today. I commit myself to following You alone. I choose to walk in Your way, even when it seems inconvenient. I recognize that as a follower of Jesus, this is my solemn obligation and duty. I ask You to forgive me for the times I have been too ashamed to take my stand as a light in a dark world. Give me greater boldness so that I may reflect Your light more brightly. Open doors of greater service and give me courage to step through them. Thank you for the lifeline of prayer as my connection to You, Your wisdom and enabling. Teach me to seek You in all that I do. Give me grace to lay down my own ideas in favour of Yours and to trust in Your enabling more than my own reason and ability. Thank You that Your great desire is that I experience You and Your grace in a deeper way. Thank You for the privilege of service and the deeper fellowship I experience in serving you.*



The Most Holy Place

*The Place of True Intimacy*



## 5

# The Curtain and the Ark

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Beyond the Holy Place was a place so sacred and holy that it was separated from the rest of the tabernacle by a great curtain.

Exodus 26:33 (NIV) Hang the curtain from the clasps and place the ark of the Testimony behind the curtain. The curtain will separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place.

It was here in the Most Holy Place that the Ark of the Covenant was kept. The Ark was about 3 3/4 feet (about 1.1 meters) long and 2 1/4 feet (about 0.7 meter) wide and high. It was overlaid with pure gold and had rings on the side for carrying. It had a cover on it called the atonement cover. This cover had two golden cherubim facing each other with outstretched wings. These wings touched above the centre of the cover. The Lord God made a promise to His people in Exodus 25:22:

Exodus 25:22 (NIV) There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of

the Testimony, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites.

Because this was the place where God revealed His presence, the Most Holy Place was considered so holy that only the high priest could enter once a year.

Hebrews 9:6-8 (NIV) When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance.

The punishment for entering the Most Holy Place at any other time was death.

Leviticus 16:2 (NIV) The LORD said to Moses: "Tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain or else he will die, because I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover.

Throughout the Old Testament the Lord God hid His real presence from Israel in a great cloud:

Exodus 16:10 (NIV) While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud.

When God spoke to His people in the days of Moses He did so through fire, cloud and deep darkness:

Deuteronomy 5:22 (NIV) These are the commandments the LORD proclaimed in a loud voice to your whole assembly there on the mountain from out of the fire, the cloud and the deep darkness; and he added nothing more. Then he wrote them on two stone tablets and gave them to me.

When Moses asked God to show him His glory, God told him that no one could see His face and live.

Exodus 33:18-20 (NIV) Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory." And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."

When He descended on Mount Sinai in Exodus 19 God gave instructions to put limits around the mountain so that no one would approach. Anyone or anything that came near the mountain when He descended on it would die.

Exodus 19:12-13 (NIV) Put limits for the people around the mountain and tell them, 'Be careful that you do not go up the mountain or touch the

foot of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. He shall surely be stoned or shot with arrows; not a hand is to be laid on him. Whether man or animal, he shall not be permitted to live.' Only when the ram's horn sounds a long blast may they go up to the mountain."

These verses show us that there was a great distance between God and His people at this time. Sin formed a real barrier to fellowship and intimacy with God.

It is important that we understand that while true intimacy with God was not possible, God's people did have a certain experience of God. They heard His voice and saw manifestations of His glory in ways that none of us have ever seen. God made the sun to stand still, stopped the mouths of lions and made barren women conceive. He protected and provided for His people feeding them day after day with manna from heaven. He opened the sea to let the whole nation pass through unharmed. He caused the walls of Jericho to fall at the sound of a trumpet. In His strength, God's people conquered enemies many times stronger than themselves. Who among us has ever seen such powerful manifestations of God's presence? Despite these wonderful demonstrations of God's power and might, the curtain still remained and separated His people from true intimacy.

This tells me something important. It tells me that I can experience the power and enabling of God for service and not be in the Most Holy Place. The joy of salvation in

the outer court and the fellowship of service in the Holy Place are wonderful but there is something more. The outer court represents the salvation we receive from the Lord Jesus. The Holy Place is the place of service. To enter the Most Holy Place, however, is to enter the presence of God. It is a place of deep intimacy.

There is wonderful fellowship in service of God in the Holy Place. God draws near to those who serve Him faithfully. All too many people, however, are content to serve God and know His empowering. They are happy to remain in the Holy Place and know that their lives have made a difference. They delight in being used of God and partnering with Him in expanding His kingdom but they do not delight in God Himself.

Mark 15:37-38 tells us that when the Lord Jesus died on the cross of Calvary something happened to the curtain in the Most Holy Place.

Mark 15:37-38 (NIV) With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

When Jesus died, the curtain of the Most Holy Place was ripped from the top to the bottom. This was nothing short of a miracle. God ripped that heavy curtain and opened the way for us to enter deeper into the tabernacle; into His very presence.

Commenting on this incident, the writer to the Hebrews told his readers:

Hebrews 10:19-22 (NIV) Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

The death of the Lord Jesus changed everything. The barrier separating God and His people was broken down. God's people can now enter boldly into the Most Holy Place.

Commenting on Hebrews 10, Andrew Murray says this:

“Enter into the Holiest... This is a call to all lukewarm, half-hearted Christians to remain no longer in the outer court of the tabernacle; content with the hope their sins are pardoned. They should not even be satisfied with having entered the Holy Place and having there carried out the service of the tabernacle – not while the veil still hinders full fellowship with the living God and his love. They are called to enter through the veil into the Holies or Most Holy Place into which the

blood of Christ has been brought and where he lives as High Priest. There they are to live and talk and work in the presence of the Father... For fifteen centuries Israel had a sanctuary with a Holiest of All into which, under pain of death, no one was allowed to enter. This showed in the clearest possible way that man could not dwell in God's presence and fellowship. And now, how changed everything is! There used to be a warning: "Do not enter!" Now there is instead an invitation: "Enter in, the veil is torn, the Holiest is open: God waits to welcome you into his embrace; from now on you are to live with him. This is the message of the epistle: 'Child, my father longs for you to enter his presence, to dwell there and never again to leave.'"

There is something more wonderful than the salvation of the outer court and the fellowship of the Holy Place. Through the work of the Lord Jesus, however, the Father calls us yet deeper into the tabernacle. He calls us beyond our initial salvation experience into the fellowship of service and from there to true intimacy with Him in the Most Holy Place.

How many men and women, faithfully serving the Lord their God, have cried out for something more? They have known God's empowering for service. They have experienced the joy of partnering with God in the Holy Place but their heart longs for God Himself. Service of God, as joyous as it is, will never fully satisfy the longing of the

heart. Intimacy with God alone can bring this satisfaction.

The way to the Most Holy Place, where God is, is now open to us as believers through the work of the Lord Jesus. The curtain has been ripped from top to bottom. We are called now to enter boldly into the presence of God. Don't be content to remain in the Holy Place when Christ has done so much to open the way for true intimacy in the Most Holy Place. We will examine this more fully in the next chapter.

*Father God, I have been content with too little. I have been happy to work and serve You but know so little of You personally. I confess that my faith has often been about serving and doing things for You but I have failed to delight in You and in Your presence. Deep down my heart longs to know you in a deeper and more intimate way. I thank You that the Lord Jesus has removed the barrier. Forgive me for living as if that curtain still remains. Teach me what it means to enter beyond the veil into Your holy presence.*

# 6

## The Place of True Intimacy

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All too many of us live as if the way into the Most Holy Place still remains closed. We see God as so holy and distant that true fellowship and intimacy with Him could never be a reality. We fail to live in the understanding that the barrier between God and His people has now been broken down. Even for those who have entered the Holy Place and experience the fellowship of service, God can still be distant. We can serve Him and know His empowering but never really know the delight of His personal presence. We can preach the truth about God and His love and never experience the beauty of intimacy with Him.

In Revelation 2 we read the words of the Lord God to the church in Ephesus.

Revelation 2:1-5 (NIV) “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands: I

know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

Notice in this passage how the Lord God commended the church of Ephesus for their deeds, hard work and perseverance. This was a church that had faithfully served the Lord God. Notice also that they were commended for remaining faithful to the truth of God's Word. They had tested those who claimed to be apostles and had found them to be false.

The problem with the church of Ephesus was not in their preaching or service. Revelation 2:4-5 tells us that the problem was that they had lost their first love. While the church of Ephesus excelled in truth and service, they had lost their passion for Christ. For them, the Christian life had become about preaching and defending the truth. They were hard workers for the sake of the kingdom but intimacy with Christ had faded. They served Him but they did not love Him as they once had. Their delight in Him had diminished. The Lord told them that they

needed to repent or else He would take their lampstand away.

Has this been the case for you? Have you been busy in the service of the kingdom of God but lost your passion for Him. We can love the truth more than the person of Christ. We can delight more in serving the kingdom than loving God. This has been where many people have fallen. They are quite content to remain in the Holy Place where they can serve the Lord. They do this faithfully but their passion and delight in the person of Christ has dwindled. How it grieves the heart of God that we find more joy in our ministries than we do in Him. The call to the Most Holy Place is a call to intimacy.

The writer to the Hebrews challenged his readers to draw near to God in the Most Holy Place with full assurance.

Hebrews 10:19-22 (NIV) Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

The writer to the Hebrews is not calling his readers to salvation in this passage. They were already believers.

Nor is he calling them to serve the Lord. He is calling them to a deeper fellowship and intimacy with God Himself. We can make our faith about many things. It can be about defending truth and traditions. It can be about reaching the lost or making disciples. The apostle Paul, who did this more than any other apostle, summarized his faith in Philippians 1 when he wrote:

Philippians 1:21 (NIV) For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

It can't be any simpler than this. For Paul, the Christian life was about knowing and fellowshiping with Christ. He explained this more fully when he said:

Philippians 3:7-8 (NIV) But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.

Paul had a powerful desire to serve and was willing to lay down his life for the cause of Christ. He is a beautiful example of what it means to enter the Holy Place. Paul was not content to serve however. Paul's ultimate goal in life was not to serve God but to know God. Every other goal paled into insignificance compared to this one great desire of his heart.

All too many believers feel unworthy of entering the presence of the Lord in the Most Holy Place. They fail to understand the longing of God's heart for them. Listen to what the prophet Zephaniah tells us about God's heart for His people:

Zephaniah 3:17 (NIV)

The LORD your God is with you,  
he is mighty to save.

He will take great delight in you,  
he will quiet you with his love,  
he will rejoice over you with singing.”

Do you see what the prophet is telling us in this passage? He is telling us that God is mighty to save us. More than this, however, God takes great delight in us, quiets us with his love and rejoices over us with singing. Personally I find this passage to be overwhelming. How could the creator God take great delight in me? Does the thought of me really cause His heart to sing?

The prophet Isaiah told his people that God longed to be gracious to them:

Isaiah 30:18 (NIV)

Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you;  
he rises to show you compassion.

For the LORD is a God of justice.  
Blessed are all who wait for him!

The word “long” is a powerful word. It shows us that the passion of God’s heart is to be gracious and compassionate toward us. He delights in this. We often get the wrong idea about God. We see Him as a harsh and holy God whose love is distant. Isaiah paints a very different picture of God in this verse.

Ezekiel compares God to a shepherd who commits Himself to care for His people by protecting them, bind up their wound and strengthening them.

Ezekiel 34:12-16 (NIV) As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.

Moses saw God as a father who, with great tenderness and compassion, carried His children through the wilderness.

Deuteronomy 1:29-31 (NIV) Then I said to you, "Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. The LORD your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, and in the desert. There you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place."

These Old Testament passages show us that the Lord God longs for us and delights in us as His children. He rejoices over us, He protects us like a good shepherd. He binds up our wounds and picks us up when we fall. Like a loving father He carries us when we are weak and afraid. How He longs for fellowship with us. His arms are open to receive us. He wants to draw us close. He longs to touch us and speak tenderly to us. He sacrificed His only son so that we could be with Him forever. Will we grieve his heart by becoming so busy with the duties of the kingdom that we have no time for Him personally? Will we refuse His embrace? Will we doubt His desire for us?

Listen to the cry of the Psalmist in Psalm 85:

Psalms 85:6 (NIV) Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?

Is this not a prayer we need to pray today? We have seen great revivals of truth in the history of the church. We have also seen revivals of Spirit. Is it not time for us to see a revival of delight in God? The church has defended the truth and advanced the kingdom but has she delighted in God? What about you personally? Does the person of God delight your soul? Is it your greatest desire to know Him and enjoy Him or have you been caught up in lesser pursuits?

Those who enter the Most Holy Place must learn to delight in the person of God. The Most Holy Place was as far as a person could go in the tabernacle. There was nothing beyond this. In a similar way, there is nothing more for us as believers. There is nothing greater. The goal and purpose of our life is to know and delight in God. There is nothing that will satisfy us more than intimacy with God. To be in His presence and experience Him is the ultimate goal of life.

There are those who believe that the call to intimacy with God in the Most Holy Place is reserved for heaven. They feel that the best we can do here below is to serve Him in the Holy Place. This view calls us to live as if the curtain of the tabernacle is still in place. It fails to see any real present application of the work of Christ in removing the barrier between God and His people. The call of Scripture is to a deeper relationship with God now. The apostle Paul did not wait until he reached heaven to enter the Most Holy Place. He had learned to delight and enjoy God during his life on earth. He experienced wonderful

fellowship each day with his Lord. His heart delighted in God and he lived each moment in the joy of his presence. This is God's call for our lives as well.

Some years ago the Lord was speaking to my heart about this issue of intimacy with Him. As I reflected on this He gave me this poem. Let me humbly share it with you as I conclude this chapter:

I set my mind to seek and find  
My faith's most noble prize.  
I sought with all my heart to place  
This goal before my eyes.

The road of self-denial was  
The road on which I tread.  
I did without my daily food  
To know His will instead.

My wealth and all I had were His,  
I freely gave it all.  
My only real desire was  
To listen to His call.

I pushed myself to do the things  
I never thought I could.  
I only ever did the things  
I really knew I should.

I served with all my heart and soul  
My neighbors in their need.

To each and every one of them  
I was a friend indeed.

In meetings at the church I proved  
How faithful I could be.  
In all I ever was to do  
Promoting unity.

Untainted and unsullied were  
The doctrines that I owned.  
Unlike the scholars of my day  
Who falsity enthroned.

I gave myself with all my heart  
Never to look back.  
Yet somehow deep within my heart  
Was something I did lack.

“My God,” I cried, “what can it be  
I’ve given you all I own.  
I know that deep inside my heart  
You occupy the throne.”

“I’ve served you with my every breath  
I’ve done for you my best.  
You are for me my strength and power  
In each and every quest.”

“Why does my heart cry out for more,  
Why does my spirit yearn

For something greater, something more  
What have I yet to learn.”

Never will I e’r forget  
The answer that He gave  
It burned me deeply to my soul  
My fault indeed was grave.

“A faithful servant you have been.”  
The Lord, He said to me.  
“To serve and do great things for Me  
This was your greatest plea.”

“But oh,” He said, “My heart has longed  
For him who wants but this  
To know Me and to walk with Me  
In fellowship and bliss.”

“As years have passed, your greatest joy  
Was found in what you did.  
By virtue of your busyness  
My face to you was hid.”

“When will you ever hear the call  
To come aside and rest.  
To lay aside your efforts grand,  
Be folded to my breast.”

“My child, My son, your greatest joy,  
If only you could see,

Is not found in what you do  
Or what you give to Me.”

“Your heart, it longs for nothing less  
Than fellowship with Me.  
It will not rest at all, you see,  
Until it rests in Me.

“So come aside My son, My friend,  
Yes, come aside, be blessed.  
It’s all been done at Calvary  
It’s time for you to rest.”

“These efforts grand, these gifts so great,  
Important as they be  
Are not an end unto themselves  
They’ve taken you from Me.”

There is nothing more wonderful than fellowship and intimacy with the Lord God. No earthly relationship can compare. There is no greater joy and satisfaction than in the presence of God. The great weakness of the church of our day is that it has failed to delight in God. We are content to know our salvation. We are happy with having a small ministry for the Lord, but where are those who will not be content until they know the joy of fellowship with God Himself?

*Father God, it is hard to imagine Your desire for fellowship and intimacy with me. I do not feel worthy of such affection. I have often busied myself with lesser pursuits. I have defended the faith, served You faithfully and lived in obedience to your commands. I admit, however, that You have not been the focus of my delight. I have lived my life as if the curtain to the Most Holy Place was still in place. Help me to boldly enter Your presence. Rekindle the passion I once had for You. Teach me to enjoy You. May You become my heart's supreme delight and my faith's greatest prize.*



# 7

## Where do you Stand?

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Over the course of the last few chapters we have examined the tabernacle of the Old Testament as a picture of the Christian life. By way of conclusion let me summarize what we have seen.

The outer court of the tabernacle was open to all who belonged to the Lord God. We saw that this outer court represents the initial step that each of us must take in our spiritual walk. The Lord Jesus is the door through which we must enter the outer court of salvation. In Old Testament times, those who entered this courtyard stood before two important symbols. The altar was a reminder of the sacrifice that was made for the forgiveness of sin. It represented the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus on the cross of Calvary. His sacrifice did what no Old Testament sacrifice could do. Through it, we were made right with God forever. Unlike the Old Testament, no further sacrifice is required. God's righteous requirements for the penalty of sin have all been met in this one-time sacrifice of the Lord Jesus on our behalf.

This does not mean that we will never sin again. The basin of water, also located in the outer court, was where the priests would cleanse themselves from their daily defilements and impurities. We too, will have to come regularly to the Lord Jesus for cleansing. Every provision has been made for this. Those who live in the outer court have the privilege of living each day with a clear conscience before God.

Beyond the outer court was a place reserved for the priests who were specially called and anointed for service. These priests partnered with God in the service of the tabernacle. They experienced a fellowship with God that only those who have entered into His service can experience.

The Lord promises special enabling, provision and His presence to those who will move beyond their initial salvation experience into service of the kingdom. As believers today, we have all been called and anointed by God's Spirit to be His priestly representatives in this world. There is a price to pay for being a servant of God but the Lord draws near, in a special way, to those who are willing to walk in faithful and obedient service.

The priests, who served in the Holy Place, stood before three pieces of furniture. The Table of Bread reminds us of the words of the Lord Jesus when He told us that He was the Bread of Life. Those who enter the Holy Place must commit themselves to follow Jesus and His Word.

The Lampstand reminds us that the Lord Jesus is the Light of the world. It also shows us that we too are lights in a dark world. Being a light in a dark world is not an easy task. The unbelieving world hates the light. Those who enter the Holy Place may suffer for the Light they represent.

Finally, the altar of incense reminds us of the source of our strength. The incense that rose from the altar was a symbol of the prayers of the saints. Those who enter the Holy Place are weak but they trust in the Lord and His enabling and leading through prayer to conquer.

Beyond the Holy Place, separated by a heavy curtain, was the Most Holy Place where God made His presence known. While serving the Lord brings wonderful blessings, it is not an end in itself. Ultimately, what our heart longs for is the person of God. Only God will satisfy the longing of the heart. He longs for us and delights in us. Through the work of the Lord Jesus, the curtain that separated God from His people has been torn down. Today we can have access to God through the forgiveness of our sins. Here in this Most Holy Place we can know true and full satisfaction. We were created for God and will never know full and lasting satisfaction until we rest in unhindered communion with Him.

I have not written this study for intellectual purposes. My goal has been to challenge each reader to examine his or her own relationship with God. Where are you today in your spiritual walk? Have you opened your heart to the

Lord Jesus and accepted His offer of salvation and forgiveness or are you outside the tabernacle with no relationship with Him at all? If this is your situation, you need to come to the Lord Jesus and seek His forgiveness and cleansing. He is willing to open his arms to you and accept you as his child. Ask him to forgive you and give you access to the outer court.

Maybe you have entered the courtyard of salvation through the work of the Lord Jesus. You know that He has forgiven you and made you His child. He has done much for your forgiveness. Make it your priority now to live in the cleansing He offers. Cling to the sacrifice that has been made on your behalf as your only hope. Come to Him often for ongoing cleansing. Let no sin stand between you and your Saviour as long as the altar and the basin are available to you in this outer court.

Some reading this book have moved beyond their initial salvation experience to the Holy Place. They have committed themselves to serve the Lord and use the gifts He has given them. They have experienced His enabling and empowering for service. They have taken their call to service seriously. If this is where you are today let me ask you three important questions:

1. Are you following Jesus as the Bread of Life and have you committed yourself to walk in total obedience to His Word no matter the cost?

2. Have you unashamedly taken your stand as a light in this dark world and are you ready to pay the price to be a light exposing darkness?
3. Are you living each moment in prayerful communion with God, seeking His enabling and wisdom for service or are you trusting your own wisdom and strength?

These three points merit another book but I am convinced that the Spirit of God will reveal their truth to all who will prayerfully seek His wisdom and guidance. It has been disturbing to me to see how many believers rest for years in the outer court. How we need to see men and women in our day who make it their commitment to serve their Lord and know the fellowship of the Holy Place. Will you take this step today? May the gifts and calling He has placed on your life not be wasted. May this be the day you step beyond the outer court into the fellowship of service.

Having stepped into the Holy Place let us not be content to remain there alone. God has paid the price of His only Son's life to give us the privilege to draw even closer. He calls us into fellowship with Him beyond the torn veil. God alone can satisfy the longing of our heart. We were created for Him and will only know true contentment in fellowship with Him. Nothing less will do. Don't be satisfied with anything less than God Himself. The call of the Most Holy Place is a call to rejoice and delight in God. It is a call that all too many of us miss.

Let me conclude with one final word. True fellowship with God includes all aspects of this study. We must learn to walk daily in the fullness of our salvation and cleansing. We will be also called daily to minister in the Holy Place of service for our Lord. Our obligation to serve will not end in this life. Remember, however, that in all this God also calls us to Himself and to deep intimacy and love for Him. We must learn to walk in all aspects of our relationship with God. At the end of each day we should ask ourselves these three questions:

1. Did I walk today in the cleansing offered in the outer courtyard so that no sin stood between me and my Saviour?
2. Was I faithful to the call and anointing of God to serve in the Holy Place, walking in tune with Jesus the Bread of Life, living as a light for Him and relying on His strength and leading through prayer?
3. Did I purposefully and boldly entered the Most Holy place to experience and enjoy deep and personal fellowship with Him?

May God give us grace to live in the reality of every aspect of this study.

*Father God, I thank You for the work of Your son on the cross of Calvary for my salvation. Thank You that through Him a relationship with You is fully possible. Thank You*

*that no sin will ever be held against me because the Lord Jesus has covered all my sins in His one-time sacrifice on the cross of Calvary. I ask Lord that you would help me to live each day in Your cleansing. I ask, however, that I would not be content just to know that my sins are forgiven. May my gratitude to you be demonstrated in willingness to offer myself as a living sacrifice for Your kingdom. I thank You for the privilege of knowing the presence of Your Holy Spirit and His call on my life to be your servant. I praise You for the privilege of representing You in this world. I thank You for the wonderful fellowship I experience in serving You. May my life be devoted to Your service. May I faithfully use the gifts You have given me. When I stand before you on the final day may I hear you say, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21). Lord, my deepest desire is that I would know You personally and intimately. The cry of my heart is to rejoice in You. Thank You that despite my sinfulness, You love me and delight in me. Teach me to delight in You. Satisfy me with Your fellowship. It is for this that I was created. It is only in this that my heart can be truly happy. Draw me into the Most Holy Place where I can know and rejoice in You.*



## Light To My Path Book Distribution

Light To My Path Book Distribution (LTMP) is a book writing and distribution ministry reaching out to needy Christian workers in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Many Christian workers in developing countries do not have the resources necessary to obtain Bible training or purchase Bible study materials for their ministries and personal encouragement. F. Wayne MacLeod is a member of Action International Ministries and has been writing these books with a goal to distribute them freely to needy pastors and Christian workers around the world.

To date thousands of these books are being used in preaching, teaching, evangelism and encouragement of local believers in over sixty countries. These books are also being translated into a number of languages. The goal is to make them available to as many believers as possible.

The ministry of LTMP is a faith based ministry and we trust the Lord for the resources necessary to distribute the books for the encouragement and strengthening of believers around the world. Would you pray that the Lord would open doors for the translation and further distribution of these books?

For more information about Light To My Path visit our website at [ltmp-homepage.blogspot.ca](http://ltmp-homepage.blogspot.ca)