

NOTES FOR SPEAKING

Meeting: Freshwaters Christian Fellowship 10.30am

Date & Time: 4th December 2011

Title: Present and Presence Reality

Introduction

Let me begin this morning by asking how many people here have heard of the concept of 'virtual reality'? It's a thing that has been developing more and more as technology has developed. There is the physical tangible world that we live in day to day, but there is also this 'virtual world' somewhere out in cyberspace, which we can connect into via technology and where **we can develop friendships**, where we can **play games**, where we can live out lives that may be very different from our own. **In this virtual world we can accomplish things that we would consider impossible in the 'real world' – we can be superheroes or super villains, we can be endowed with power way beyond our natural abilities, we can explore strange new places.** It can be a place of dreams and fantasy, **like the real world we can pursue things which are good and helpful and righteous, and we can pursue things which are sinful and violent and degrading**, but somehow we feel able to do things in this virtual world with less inhibitions because it is anonymous and because we feel it is separate from the real world.

Increasingly, however, there is recognition that this 'virtual world' is not so separate from the 'real world' as we may once have thought. **The line between virtual and real is being blurred**, whether it be to do with '**virtual communities**' being drawn together for either positive or negative action, like the 'Arab Spring' movements around the World, or the riots around Britain not so long ago. There is recognition that some of **those who become addicted to violent or pornographic material in the 'virtual world' go on to mimic such actions in the 'real world' with dreadful consequences.**

Consider how the concept of '**virtual wars**' so popular in the gaming world, are now being used by the United States and others to launch surveillance and assassination missions in the 'real world' – it is a mistake to believe that the two worlds are separate, we need to understand how one affects and influences the other, we ignore it at our peril.

Physical and Spiritual/Presence and Present Reality.

What we are beginning to understand in terms of the relationships between these two 'realities' is also true of the two realities that are described from Genesis to Revelation in the bible and that are as real to us today as to Moses, Abraham, David, Jacob, Jesus, Paul, or James, this is the reality of the spiritual world and the physical worlds.

For too many people, too often there has either been denial of the existence of a spiritual world beyond what our physical senses can discern, or there has been a dangerous deception that the two are entirely separate and one does not affect the other.

What I want to explore this morning is how important it is for us as Christians to recognise that the world of the physical and spiritual are intimately intertwined and that more specifically there is a **realm of God's presence filled with glory and wonder and power that can be released into the day to day reality of our lives with amazing and wonderful repercussions**, to borrow a phrase from a talk I heard some years ago, there is a 'Presence Reality', relating to that part of the spiritual world dominated by God's presence, and the 'Present Reality' of our day to day lives in this physical world in which we live.

In the beginning

In the beginning, or perhaps more accurately before the beginning of our physical world was the Spiritual World where God existed. In fact God exists in eternity, where past present and future are one, our time line, what we know as history, is suspended in the space of eternity.

Genesis 1:2 describes that time before the creation of the universe, **‘The earth was formless and empty; and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God hovered over the surface of the waters’**. There is the Spirit of God, hovering, waiting – for what, God to speak.

From the meeting of God’s Spirit and God’s word the physical world was created, or from the Presence Reality of God the Present Reality of earth and waters and sky that we understood came to be.

At that time there was no separation between the present and presence reality, God spoke, it came to be and God said good, **Gen chapter 3 v 8** says **‘when the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the Lord God walking about in the Garden’**. This wasn’t the exception, this was the norm, God walked in the Garden with Adam and Eve and all He had created, present and presence reality together in perfect harmony.

As sin entered the worlds separated

The remainder of the verse tells a terrible story, **‘So they hid from the Lord among the trees’**. There it was the first separation between Presence and Present Reality, because of their sin man and women hid from God. From that moment the Presence and the Present reality moved apart, God no longer walked on the earth with people routinely, however, through men and women who sought God from that day to this, Presence and Present reality has come together. Whether that be **Enoch who walked with God**, or **Moses who spoke to God face to face**, or **David who had a heart after God**, or **the prophets who received from God and proclaimed their message to the world** – taking that which existed in the Presence Reality and speaking it into being in the Present Reality.

Christ Unites

Through Christ the two are dragged back together – we are able to enter into God’s Presence. Let’s read **Heb 10:19-22**.

At Christ’s return the two will again become one as evil and sin is vanquished and a new heaven and earth established.

In the meantime it is up to us to link the two realities and to unlock the potential of the Presence Reality into our Present Reality.

The battle between Presence and Present Reality

Exodus 17:8-13

Here we have a situation described where a battle was imminent, a very real, day to day, ‘Present Reality’ battle. Moses had a great plan that he relayed to Joshua – ‘I’ll tell you what Joshua’, Moses said ‘I have a great plan, I will go up this mountain overlooking the valley while you go into the valley to fight the battle’. Now Joshua could have said, well I have an even better plan, you go and fight and I’ll go up the mountain – but he doesn’t. **Moses and Joshua knew this was a good plan, Joshua would not have wanted to fight without Moses interceding and Moses would not have wanted to intercede if there was no-one willing to fight the battle.**

They knew that there are two realities, the realm of God’s Presence in the spirit and the day to day world where the battle raged. They also knew that these two worlds are intimately linked and that through prayer and intercession the power of God’s Present Reality could breakthrough and critically influence the Present Reality where the battle was being fought.

We too face our battle’s in our Present Reality, battles of **temptation**, battles of **sickness**, battles for the **salvation** of neighbours and friends and family, battles of **financial hardship** – I am sure we can all think of at least one or two battles that we face in our ‘Present Reality’. What we need to recognise is that these battles need to be waged as much through prayer and intercession as

through practical action. **We need Moses on the hill and Joshua in the valley.** If we fight and do not pray then we will find that very soon we come to the end of our natural resources, our own best efforts are not sufficient for complete victory. If we spend all our time in prayer and never get out and do anything then we become just as ineffective. Both are important.

Using **salvation as an example** – it's no use just praying for someone to be saved if no-one ever shares with them the gospel. But equally you can share the gospel until you are blue in the face, but if the ground has not been prepared in prayer you will be wasting your time.

As well as bringing together the two realities in our own lives, being people of prayer and action, we see in this passage a great partnership at work. Moses said, on this occasion I'm going to go up the mountain and pray while you go out to fight. **We need to re-ignite the idea of prayer covering.** Those who are involved with Street Pastors will know that they do not send people onto the streets unless there are others in the base and at home praying for them.

As we are looking at Crossing over we need to recognise that we need to take practical steps and to pray. In the meetings I have with Councillors and others in the coming weeks I want to know that people are praying for me. We need to be determined and not to give up when we get setbacks, instead we need to keep encouraging one another in prayer until we see results. Determined prayer and action will bring victory!

Have the right focus

Then there was that staff that Moses held over his head, what was that all about? Well all the people knew the miracles God had performed through this staff, from Moses throwing the staff to the floor and it turning into a snake, to calling the plagues down on Egypt, to bringing forth water from the rock. It was a symbol to remind the people of God's mighty power. As Moses lifted the staff, not only did the people know Moses was praying for them but they were also reminded of the way's that God had miraculously intervened to help them in the past.

We need to approach the battles we face with a confidence that our wonderful, mighty, miracle working God is with us. We need to find what our staff is, what Miracles God has worked in our own lives and the lives of those around us that will stir faith that what God has done before He will do again. **Whether you are in the prayer room or out in the battle, lift up the staff, focus on God's power and not your own weakness and be encouraged – God will save the day!**

Strengthen one another in prayer

There is something else that I want you to notice from this passage. Joshua did not fight alone and Moses did not pray alone. Joshua did not fight the army of the Amalekites alone – he was surrounded by other warriors ready to engage in the battle. In the battles we face it is good to know that there are others who will fight for us and with us. That's what the church is all about, when you face difficulties don't keep people at a distance but ask for help – not just 'Presence Reality' help but 'Present Reality' help, practical help.

Notice also, however, that Moses this great man of God had help from Aaron and Hur. Moses became tired and Aaron and Hur supported him, helping him to keep his hands raised in prayer. It is good to pray alone, but it is also good to pray together. As we pray in groups we encourage and support one another – it helps to keep us focussed and to keep pressing in. How often to you find that when you come to pray on your own after a few minutes you are beginning to waver, to get distracted, to get sleepy. In a group we can stir one another in prayer, we can hold one another's hands up – we can press through until the victory is won!

Conclusion

Most of us as Christian's recognise the existence of a spiritual and a physical reality, but too often we merrily carry on as if there was no connection between the two. There is, however, and part of

our calling gifting is to be those who will, as Christ's representative, bring together Presence and Present reality and to enjoy the incredible results!