

"The Unlimited Presence of God"
(Psalm 139:7-12)

Introduction: **As** we noted last week, God never reveals truth about Himself in the abstract. It is always relevant, always applied. You will remember that here in Psalm 139, the psalmist meditates on God in the face of some adversity. He begins by meditating on God's intimate and comprehensive knowledge of his ways. Secondly, on God's guiding presence wherever he may go. Thirdly, on God's sovereignty in ordaining his days from conception to death. And lastly, on God's justice which will vindicate him and deliver him from the hands of evil men.

The central theme of this psalm is security in the midst of adversity: God encircles him with His knowledge, God is ever present to sustain him, God's purpose for him fashioned him and ordained all his days, and God's justice vindicates him from evil men.

Verses 7-12 comprise the second stanza of this Psalm of trust, and what I want you to see from this evening's text is,

Because God's presence extends endlessly throughout all creation and beyond, there is no place where the Christian can go where His gracious hand does not reach.

- I. *God's Presence Is in All Places At All Times* (vv. 7-9, 11-12).
 - A. *There is no limit to His Presence.*
 1. God is a limitless spirit (v. 7).
 - a. *Where can I go from Your Spirit? And where can I flee from Your presence?*
 - b. The questions are an emphatic way of declaring that God is everywhere (VanGemeren 837).
 2. His presence extends in all directions (v. 8-9, 11-12).
 - a. The psalmist uses *two opposites* to express comprehensive dimensions.
 - (i) *Heaven and Sheol*: the highest heights of heaven and the lowest depths of the earth.
 - (ii) *The wings of the dawn and the ends of the sea*: from one end of the earth to the other.
 - (a) *Wings* speak of the swiftness of the flight of light.
 - (b) The *ends of the sea* refers to farthest west.
 - (c) Flying on the wings of the dawn [the speed of light], he could not escape the Lord's presence.
 - b. He then contemplates darkness as a covering where God might not find him.
 - (i) But darkness does not hide from God's presence.
 - (ii) Remember that God is not a physical Being.
 - (iii) He does not need light as we do to see.
 - (iv) To Him, light and darkness are the same.
 - (v) Nothing can hide from His gaze.

- c. There is no place where His presence is not.
- B. ***This is expressed in two ways: first, as God's Immensity.***
1. It is defined as: ***"that perfection of the Divine Being by which He transcends all spatial limitations."***
 - a. This is ***the negative side*** of God's unlimited presence.
 - b. It denies that there is any limitation to God in space.
 - c. That is, He is not surrounded by space.
 2. It is taught in Scripture.
 - a. <1 Kings 8:27>.
 - b. <Is. 66:1>.
 3. This emphasizes His transcendence.
 - a. This means that God is distinct from the world.
 - b. God is not coextensive with the creation.
 - c. His Being is not the stuff that the world is made of.
 - d. This refutes pantheism [all-is-godism).
 4. Man, on the other hand, is a finite creature.
 - a. He is a creation, not the Creator.
 - b. He is limited to one place at one time.
 - c. We are surrounded by space, we occupy a definite spot.
 - d. But God's presence cannot be bounded; it is boundless.
- C. ***And Secondly, as God's Omnipresence.***
1. The two terms are roughly synonymous, with a different emphasis.
 2. ***Omnipresence may be defined as that perfection of the Divine Being by which He is present in every point of space with His whole Being*** (Berkhof 60).
 - a. This is the ***positive*** side of God's unlimited presence.
 - b. He is ***not diffused*** through space.
 - (i) One part is not one place and another somewhere else.
 - (ii) He is not absent from any place.
 - (iii) He is not more present in one place than another.
 3. This too is Scriptural.
 - a. <Acts 17:24- 28>.
 - b. <Jer. 23:23, 24>.
 - c. Our passage tonight focusses on this aspect.
 4. This emphasizes His immanence.
 - a. God is present in the world, not absent.
 - b. The deists believe that God is present with His power, but acts from a distance.
 - c. This ***refutes deism*** in that it asserts that God is indeed present in His essence. He is here.
 - d. God is ***distinct from*** His creation, ***yet*** He is ***present in*** every part of it.
 5. But He is not present in the same sense in all His creatures.
 - a. His ***essence and knowledge are present*** everywhere the same.
 - b. But the nature of His indwelling is in harmony with

that of His creatures (Berkhof 61).

- (i) He does not dwell on earth as in heaven.
 - (ii) In inorganic as in organic.
 - (iii) In animals as in man.
 - (iv) In the wicked as the pious.
 - (v) In the Church as in Christ.
 - (vi) There is an endless variety.
- c. His self-manifestation and exercise of power differs endlessly.
- (i) God is present to the church as not to the world.
 - (ii) He is **present in hell** in the execution of His righteous **wrath**, while **in heaven** in the manifestation of His gracious **love and glory** (Hodge 141).

6. Man, on the other hand, has a very limited presence.
- a. If our bodies were spread throughout the universe, they would produce a very thin layer.
 - b. If our souls were spread out into all the universe, there would be great gaps between our spiritual molecules.
 - c. We must not think of God as a finite spirit stretched endlessly through space.
 - d. Rather, God extends throughout all creation and beyond and is everywhere present in His whole Being.
 - e. There is no thinning of the Divine presence.

7. So, God is present everywhere in space and is present in His wholeness.

11. ***The Practical Implications of that Presence (v. 10).***

This doctrine holds much dread for the unbeliever and much hope for the believer.

A. For the Unbeliever.

1. God is present to behold your evil works.
 - a. There is **no place that you may flee** to escape His scrutiny.
 - b. Every sin you commit is done in His presence.
 - c. Because there is no place where He does not dwell.
2. There is no place that you may hide from His wrath.
 - a. In the day of judgment, the unbeliever will seek to hide from God and His wrath, but will be unable.
 - b. **But there is no place to flee where God will not find you.**
 - c. Even the dark places are as light as the day to Him.
3. When His wrath is manifested, the common blessings His presence now gives you will be removed.
 - a. God's presence in the world results in a measure of blessing.
 - (i) God restrains evil to work out His plan of redemption.
 - (ii) **God gives to the good and evil good gifts:** food, clothing, shelter, family, friends, etc.
 - (iii) While you are in this world, you enjoy these good gifts of God.

- b. But *God's presence in hell results in greater wrath.*
 - (i) In hell there are no common blessings from God.
 - (ii) In hell God is present to render punishment and to pour out His wrath.
 - (iii) And His presence is eternally there in all His fury and anger poured out for all eternity.

B. *For the Believer (v. 10).*

1. He is always present to lay hold of us to guide us.
 - a. Synonymous parallelism.
 - b. There is no place we go that we escape His watchful eye.
 - c. Wherever we are we have the assurance of security.
 - (i) The psalmist took comfort in the fact of God's presence.
 - (ii) He could be assured of God's right hand of favor.
 - (iii) Wherever in God's providence he might sojourn, or wherever adversity might overtake him, he was always in the presence of Almighty God.
 - d. There is no place that the righteous can be separated from His gracious presence.
2. He is also present to behold *our* sin.
 - a. The Lord sees our transgressions of His law as well.
 - b. Yet His presence does not manifest itself in wrath.
 - (i) Our sins do deserve all His wrath and fury.
 - (ii) But it was fully vented upon Jesus Christ.
 - (iii) He took our place and received the unmixed wrath of God for us.
 - c. Rather, He is present to discipline us for our sin.
 - (i) As a father does his children.
 - (ii) That we may share in His holiness.
 - (iii) But it is out of fatherly love and nurture, not retribution.
3. Because He is everywhere, He forever abides in His people.
 - a. We are His Temple.
 - b. He abides in us by His Spirit.
 - c. Because He is omnipresent, He can abide in us all at the same time.
4. Wrap up.
 - a. There are no spatial boundaries for God.
 - b. He is present in all creation and beyond.
 - c. And because He is, we need never fear that we may step outside of His gracious presence.
 - d. But He will always have His gracious hand upon us to lead and direct us into all righteousness. Amen. Let us pray!