

THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD

PSALM 139: 7-12

Introduction:

The word for presence has the basic idea of “face”. The theologians have a word that sums up this stanza—omnipresence.

Psalm 139:7–12 gives us the clearest expression of God’s presence being everywhere. But this truth is sometimes misunderstood. One theologian has written a warning for us: “We must guard against the error of thinking that if God is everywhere, then he must be in all things. We are wrong if we listen to those who say that all things and all beings have a part in the nature of God himself. The Old Testament never supposes that the Creator is also by creation developing and extending his own personal nature. It always pictures the Lord in relationship with his people, but we should avoid thinking that in some sense he includes his people within himself. He has authority over creation which the Old Testament always sees as distinct from him.”

¹Hinson, D. F. (1976). *Vol. 15: Theology of the Old Testament*. Includes index. TEF study guide (31). London: SPCK.

This truth is built on some special things about the nature of God. If God is to be everywhere, then He must be spirit. This is what Jesus affirmed about God—"God is Spirit." This means that He does not have a body like we have a body. A body would naturally confine Him to one place so He is Spirit.

But the Psalmist does not worry about the theories; rather he focuses on the personal aspect. What does the omnipresence of God mean to me?

I. THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD IS INESCAPABLE.

"Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me." (Psalm 139:7-10, NKJV)

1. This means His correction is inescapable.

The experience of Jonah provides us with a beautiful illustration of this truth about God. Jonah thought that he could escape the presence of the Lord, and tried, but in vain--"But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord." (Jonah 1:3, NKJV)

The experience of Jonah is an example of this.

2. This means His care is inescapable.

Even Jonah discovered that the Lord pursued him because He cared. When Jonah found himself trapped in the stomach of a big fish in the bottom of sea, God was there. God was there to give him a new opportunity.

Thompson's poem embodies this truth about the loving presence of God.

Francis Thompson put this truth into verse—

“I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;

I fled Him down the arches of the years;

I fled Him down the labyrinthine ways

Of my own mind; in the midst of tears I hid from Him, and under running
laughter.

Up vistaed hopes I fled;

And shot, precipitated;

A down Titanic glooms of channeled fears,

From those strong Feet tht followed, followed after.

But with unhurrying chase,

And unperturbed pace,

Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,

They beat, and Voice beat

More instant than the Feet—

All things betray thee, who betrayest me.”

The truth we carry from all of this is that the presence of God is inescapable.

If you leave home and move as far away as possible, God will be there when you arrive—and will be around you every step of the journey.

II. THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD IS PROTECTION.

"Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me."

(Psalm 139:10, NKJV)

1. His presence guides.

Remember the experiences of Joseph? "So it was, when his master heard the words which his wife spoke to him, saying, "Your servant did to me after this manner," that his anger was aroused. Then Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were confined. And he was there in the prison. But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who were in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing.

The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's authority, because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper." (Genesis 39:19-23, NKJV)

2. His presence sustains.

The writer of the Hebrews understood this truth—"Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"" (Hebrews 13:5-6, NKJV)

Just as the children of Israel experienced His presence in the wilderness!

"So they took their journey from Succoth and camped in Etham at the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night." "He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night from before the people." (Exodus 13:22, NKJV)

This is the God that we serve. Blessed be His name.!

III. THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD IS LIGHT.

1. He understands the dark mysteries of life.

"This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." (1 John 1:5, NKJV)

"Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

(John 8:12, NKJV)

2. He will work in the dark moments of life.

"Who among you fears the Lord? Who obeys the voice of His Servant? Who walks in darkness And has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord And rely upon his God." (Isaiah 50:10, NKJV)

The testimony of Bret Hume on C-Span. When his son died, he was discovered that everything he had believed was true. His son committed suicide because he has been arrested for driving drunk. When life is the darkest, God is there.

This is what our Lord did. "For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed

no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth”; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness— by whose stripes you were healed." (1 Peter 2:19-24, NKJV)

"Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So we may boldly say: “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”" (Hebrews 13:5-6, NKJV)

SOME QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Has there ever been a time in your life in which you felt forsaken of God? What did you do? Have you read about the experiences of Mother Teresa, the Catholic saint?
2. Does the truth of God’s omnipresence frighten you or comfort you? Is it not a comfort to know that you will never be alone?
3. Why is it difficult for us to “practice the presence” of the Lord?
4. Can you recall a time when God led you without you asking Him to lead you?

5. Can you recall a time when God protected you without your asking for His protection?
6. Can you recall a time when you experienced the presence of God?