

# Psalms 139:7-12

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[ 0 : 00 ] And turn back in your Bibles to Psalm 139 that we heard earlier.! Privacy. Our privacy is so precious to us, isn't it?

! A moment to get away from it all.! Our personal space is so precious to us, isn't it? Our personal space is like sacred space, isn't it? Particularly if we're British.

If we can afford it, we'll travel a long way to get away. Over the seas, over the hills, through the skies to a land far, far away. Do you wish you could fly away to the other side of the world? Far away from this life? Far away from others? Far away from God? To be alone with some privacy?

If you were here last Sunday evening, we saw, didn't we, that David's methodology in this Psalm as he thinks about God is that as soon as he thinks about something to do with God's character, he personalises it.

[ 1 : 19 ] So in verse 1 to 6, he thinks of the God who knows everything. And therefore, he must be the God who knows everything about David and about you and about me.

And the subject of God's character is a comforting one, isn't it? Or it's a very terrifying one. And that is the test of this Psalm.

We will feel the sweet truths of God's character throughout here, of his intrusion into our lives. And that will be a good thing.

Or we will kind of sweat under those truths. As David contemplates who God is further, though here, from verse 7, he thinks about where God is, as well as what God knows.

And David realises that privacy from God is a fantasy. It's only a figment of his imagination. But you can never stick a do not disturb sign on the door with God and him not come in.

[ 2 : 26 ] He is always there. So again, the Bible reads us, doesn't it, as we read it. The question is, how do we feel about that part of God's character?

Tonight, we're going to focus in on verse 7 to 12 of this Psalm. And here, David meditates on this about God. Firstly, God is always everywhere.

God is always everywhere. There are some stories going around about pranks that pairs of identical twins have been playing. So one twin said, my brother went to a job interview pretending to be me while I stayed in bed.

I, that is, he got the job and I've been working there for over a year now. Another gave the story of how his twin brother, and he went to different colleges and they didn't tell their friends that they had a twin brother.

And one day, a group of people approached one twin in the street, calling him by his brother's name and asking if he wanted to go to the pub. He said, I knew that my twin brother was already at the pub.

[ 3 : 40 ] So I bet them free drinks that I could beat them there and give them a head start at the same time. They agreed and ran off at top speed while I stood there casually, he said.

When they arrived at the pub exhausted, they found me standing at the door, drink already in hand. What took you so long? But every one of us, however those stories make us laugh, every one of us has got to say, haven't we, even if we're an identical twin, and how many times have you said this this week, I can't be in two places at once.

Not really. We are made as finite creatures. It just means we're limited. We're made to live in space and in time.

We're made with human physical bodies, aren't we? And every time we get on a bus or drive a car or walk to the fridge from one room to another, we are only ever in one place at one time, aren't we? If we're not here, we are there. And if we're not there, we're there. But David sees not so with God.

[ 5 : 01 ] And whilst God might not be apparent to us in every place, he is present in every place, all of the time.

This is his omnipresence. And David, he thinks about this, doesn't he, by imagining a series of places. And like in the first six verses, he picks a set of extremes.

And everywhere he thinks of, God is already there. He thinks, what are the furthest places that I can imagine? Places that are apart.

But, so verse 8, heaven. Or verse 9, the wings of the morning and the uttermost parts of the sea. It's not an easy verse to understand.

One suggestion is that he's talking there about the east where the sun rises in the morning, and the west where the sea is, from Israel's point of view.

[ 6 : 01 ] He can get on a cruise, can't he, across the Med or a plane across Asia. But God is there. The furthest places. And God is already there.

But not only that. He thinks of places where God shouldn't be. Where God doesn't belong.

A God of life surely won't be in Sheol. It's a Bible word for the place of death. In verse 8 there.

And a God of light, surely he won't be in the place of darkness. In verse 11 and 10. Yet somehow he is in those places without himself being darkened.

And without himself dying. Without contamination. He is truly everywhere all of the time. God has made space.

[ 7 : 06 ] He's made time. And anything that exists has been made, hasn't it, by God. And everywhere has been made limited by the idea of the one word, somewhere.

We are always somewhere, aren't we? And not at the same time somewhere else. But that language cannot be applied to God.

God. He is never just somewhere. He is everywhere. There's a moment in the Bible where King Solomon builds the temple.

I can read about it in 1 Kings 8. And just as they're about to open, well, kind of the opening ceremony, if you like, of the temple. King Solomon says, heaven and earth cannot contain God.

Let alone this little tiny building that we have made. Now what happens is incredible, isn't it? Because God does make his presence fill the temple in a special way.

[ 8 : 14 ] He makes his presence known in that tiny place. Solomon is not saying there that God is too big to fit into the temple.

He's too big to kind of fit through the door like an adult trying to get into a Wendy house. It's not that. Because to think of God in that way is to think of him like he's just a bigger version of us. Like he's spatial. Like he's finite.

But he is infinite. He is present in all places and yet confined to no place.

He is never confined to one place. He is in a sense nowhere. And yet he is everywhere. No place can contain him because he, as somebody said, contains all places.

[ 9 : 14 ] One writer puts it like this. God fills to repletion every point of space and sustains it by his immensity. Because he is outside of space, within his very self, he is holy everywhere.

God doesn't run the world with a remote control. There he is in heaven, pressing all the buttons, making things happen down here on earth. He is transcendent, isn't he?

He is outside and far above our understanding, far above time and space itself. But he is also imminent in his creation.

He is right here and right there and right there. God is distinct from his creation but he's not separate from his creation.

Paul says in Acts, doesn't he? In him we live and move and have our very being. If the Lord were not present in all of his creation in this way, we would simply cease to exist.

[ 10 : 25 ] There would be nothing. We would be like a mist that just vanishes. All parts of his creation in this way. All parts of existence. Every point of space requires nothing less than the immensity of God for their very existence.

And this is David's Lord. The one who is always everywhere. So there are two big applications from this.

The first application, God is always everywhere so you are never hidden from him. God is always everywhere so you are never hidden from him.

It's been said before, when it comes to privacy and accountability, people always demand the former for themselves and the latter for everyone else. We love our privacy, don't we?

As long as other people's sins are exposed, we're happy. We're experts at evading. We're good at hiding, aren't we?

[ 11 : 31 ] We're good at hiding our faults. Hiding from responsibility. Hiding from accountability. We love our privacy. And so you can read these verses in one of two ways, can't you?

The first way is that God's omnipresence then is very bad news. It is terrible news for playing hide and seek with God, isn't it?

Since he is everywhere, he always wins. Remember the picture in verse 5. You lay your hand upon me.

But that verse is deliberately ambiguous because what kind of hand is it? If a police officer lays his hand upon you, what does that mean?

Well, it depends on the situation you're in, doesn't it? It could mean that the long arm of the law has finally caught up with you and you're under arrest and you're in trouble and you're gripped and you're hemmed in and you're in custody and you're captured.

[ 12 : 33 ] Playing hide and seek with God. Playing hide and seek with God, evading God is nothing like it is with anyone or anything else.

David sees you're in trouble and you're in trouble and you're in trouble and you're in trouble and you're in trouble and you're in trouble. David sees you can't get away from the Lord. He thinks, doesn't he, about fleeing. See that word in verse 7?

Fleeing the Lord. The mood, it's hard to gauge actually as you read and meditate on the verses.

The mood could be frantic, couldn't he, if he's trying to get away from the Lord.

The urge is to hide and run, to get somewhere where God is not. Francis Thompson in 1890 wrote the poem, The Hound of Heaven.

And it pictures a man running from God. Running from his voice. It is a really powerful poem. I fled him down the nights and down the days.

[ 13 : 35 ] I fled him down the arches of the years. I fled him down the labyrinthine ways of my own mind and in the midst of tears. I hid from him and under running laughter, at this thy hopes I spared and shot precipitated.

A down at titanic glooms of chasm fears. From those strong feet that followed, followed after. He knows everything about you.

Without you. And with unhurrying pace and unberturbed haste, he is everywhere. You can't hide from him. You can spend all of life running, but he is everywhere.

There is no land far, far away from God. I think David is in two minds here. And the language limitations of English make it a bit difficult.

Because David is toying with the idea of escaping from God. But he doesn't really want to do it. He is just asking the questions. If I did want to do it, where could I go to do it?

[ 14 : 54 ] The interesting thing is that he picks up on something here. That our fleeing is not just about physical places.

Actually, more often than not, we flee from God in a state of mind. Or in our own experience.

Someone asks you, how are you doing?

Sometimes you might say, well, I'm not in a good place right now. It doesn't mean I'm in another place from where we are speaking. Because it's metaphorical.

It means something is happening to me. Something's happened about me, or with me, or inside me.

My experience is like this. I'm not in a good place mentally, or spiritually, or emotionally.

And the places that we more often than not flee to from God are places like that. Places in our own perception.

[ 15 : 59 ] Places within ourselves. I want you to get this here. It's not just about travelling around the globe, is it? But entering into another mode of experience.

Does it work if I change my experience? If I close my eyes, can he still see me?

He thinks, what if I go to Sheol? What if I enter into death? What if I enter into the dark?

Surely God won't be in those places, will he? He won't be in the place of death, or in the dark. He can't follow me there. Perhaps we think, maybe I can escape in death.

If I die, I will outrun God. People feel there is no justice, don't they, when sex offenders or criminals die before they get a jail sentence, don't they?

[ 17 : 08 ] That they can outrun justice. And what about the dark? Well, the dark is a great time, isn't it? If you want to live immorally.

If you want to just do what you want to do, and no one will say anything. That's why it's a good time for crime, isn't it? And immoral behaviour. You can't be seen. So what if I go there?

What if I go into the darkness? What if I enter into a life of darkness? And I lose my sense of God. If I just forget him. Will that mean he will lose his sense of me?

The lesson is though, isn't it, that even when we lose our consciousness of him. In death. Or in the dark. Dying and living denial of his existence in the dark.

And if we think like that. That we can run from God. It is like thinking, isn't it? That a good hiding place in a game of hide and seek. Is to simply close your eyes.

[18:16] A great definition of sin. Is something that you can do. Only by pretending God is not there. But God is always present everywhere.

Even when he's not apparent to you. You could lose yourself in drink. You could lose yourself in music. You could lose yourself in entertainment.

You can numb your senses even in death. In death we can evade everything, can't we? Everyone and everything. Apart from God.

He will be there. Privacy. What privacy? Says God. This could mean very bad news for you tonight, couldn't it?

In Amos chapter 9. Prophet Amos. The Lord uses the same imagery in these verses. To describe God's pursuit of people who are running from him.

[19:19] And running from his justice. Amos 9. If they dig into Sheol. From there my hand shall take them. If they climb up to heaven. From there I'll bring them down.

If they hide themselves on the top of Mount Carmel. From there I'll search them out and take them. If they hide from my sight at the bottom of the sea. There I'll command the serpent. And it shall bite them.

And if they go into captivity before their enemies. There I'll command the sword and it shall kill them. I will fix my eyes upon them for evil and not for good. The Lord uses the same imagery from these verses.

To describe this fact that you cannot outrun him. You can't go anywhere. You can't have privacy without accountability with God.

It's good that you're here. In this place. It's the best place to be right now isn't it? In church. No doubt about it.

[20:19] And in a sense you are physically closer to God. As you are with his people. Hearing his word. But in yourself. Where are you?

What place are you in? Might it be true of you that actually if you're honest. I might as well be on the other side of the world. Because you know deep down that you're fleeing him.

You're closing your eyes and thinking that God can't see you. But whether it's apparent to us or not. God is everywhere. You can run but you just can't hide.

But I want you to see in the third and last point tonight. That whilst you flee from him. You are actually fleeing from the one that you are seeking.

Ironically. Without knowing it. And this is the second application. God is always everywhere. So that you can never be hidden from him. But secondly that you might never be lost by him.

[21:21] God is always everywhere that you might never be lost by him. There's a real difference isn't there between privacy. And loneliness.

We love our privacy. But to be lonely is something that we want to avoid. And in truth we deeply always want someone who is there.

Someone who is everywhere we are. Being in the place where God is. In the Bible is a terrifying prospect actually. People sometimes pray don't they.

Lord let us see your glory. But in the early life of God's people. You did not want that prayer to be answered. God had said. You cannot see my glory and live.

You cannot be where I am. It's what David asks in the psalm that we open the service with. Isn't it? In Psalm 24. Who shall enter his holy place?

[22:26] The place where God is. Answer. He who has clean hands and a pure heart. So who really can sing Psalm 139.

And it be good news. There is one isn't there. There is one who can sing Psalm 139.

With a sweet tune. One who is safe in God's presence. One who can stand in God's presence. Right in front of him. Who relishes the truth.

That God is everywhere. Who relishes his presence. Which man can do that? Well the greater son of David.

The son of God. In whom God is well pleased. The Lord Jesus Christ. And this sweetness. Of God's presence. Extends from.

[ 23 : 20 ] David's greater son. To a whole generation of people. Who stand in the line of his blessing. In God's presence. This is the man.

In whom. All the fullness of deity. Dwells. Bodily. In Jesus Christ. In the place of Jesus Christ. All the presence of God. Is available to you. As good news. That is the gospel. And when we come to Christ.

God's presence. Is for us. Not against us. If you know the word. In verse 7. Presence there. It's there isn't it.

Where shall I flee from your presence. You might not realise. That you actually hear that word. Every Sunday. It's declared to you. Every Sunday morning. It's the same word.

[ 24 : 17 ] That can be used for face. The Lord bless you. And keep you. The Lord make his face. To shine upon you. And be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance. Or face upon you.

And give you peace. Face and presence. Get swapped around a bit. In the Old Testament. And so in Christ. As Christ's people.

We do not need to fear God's presence. But we are gifted with God's presence. And the one that you are running from.

All of your life. In Christ. Is actually the one that you are seeking. A Lord who loves you with immense love. Who is everywhere you go.

Who is with you. And no place. Can keep you from his love. Charles Milne wrote.

[ 25 : 13 ] The children's song. In 1914. And Emma says. We should have done this with the kids. She's probably right. It's a classic at Club 16. The words go like this.

Wide. Wide as the ocean. High as the heaven above. Deep. Deep as the deepest sea. Is my saviour's love. I though so unworthy. Still am a child of his care.

For his word teaches me. That his love reaches me. Everywhere. We can think. Can't we. Of people throughout the Bible story.

Who have been in places. Where they thought. God did not belong. Where God was not. Where he wasn't. Apparent to them.

And yet he was present. We think of God's people in Egypt. We think of. Daniel in Babylon. We think of Ezra. And Nehemiah. If you're in Christ.

[ 26 : 11 ] There is no place. Where you can go. Where God cannot access you. For your good. Even in death. Even in the dark.

Not one of his children. Can be in a lost place. Because God is in every place. Proverbs tells us. Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the Lord.

Paul puts it like this. Doesn't he. I'm sure that neither death nor life. Or angels nor rulers. Nor things present. Things to come. Or powers. Or height. Or depth. Or anything else.

In all creation. Will be able to separate us. From the love of God. In Christ Jesus our Lord. He says. To live is Christ. To die is gain. To die is to be with Christ.

A child of God. Traveling throughout the world. Your problems may not go away. But you can bet. Neither will your God. Let me close with Augustine.

[ 27 : 15 ] Augustine said. When you want to do something bad. You withdraw from the public. And hiding in your house. Where no enemy may see you. From those parts of the house.

That are open and visible. You remove yourself. To go into your own private room. But even here. In your private chamber. You fear guilt. From some other direction. So you withdraw into your heart. And there you meditate. But is God even more deeply. In width in your heart. Hence.

No matter where you flee. He is there. You would flee from yourself. Would you? Will you not follow yourself. Wherever you flee. But since there is one.

Even more deeply inward. Than yourself. There is no place. Where you may flee from. An angered God. Except to a God. Who is pacified. There is absolutely.

[ 28 : 15 ] No place. For you to flee to. So do you want to flee from him? Rather flee to him. How are you going to sing.

How are you going to sing this psalm. As you go home tonight. It should be sung. Shouldn't it? With a stutter. And a cold sweat. But you can sing this psalm.

Sweetly. Knowing the Lord is everywhere. Is good news. And that is to run to the one. That you cannot outrun.  
And when you do that. He won't lose you. Wherever you go. Because he is everywhere. Let's pray.