

# Psalms 139:7-12

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[ 0 : 00 ] Open up your Bibles to Psalm 139. We're meeting again this evening.! That God is somewhere.

The Bible says that God is everywhere. The Bible doesn't say that God is somewhere. The Bible says that God is everywhere. Theologians call it the doctrine of God's omnipresence. Last week we looked at God's omniscience, that God knows all things. This week we're seeing that God is everywhere. God knows everything there is to know. But not only is God omniscient, God is omnipresent.

That is, He is present everywhere. And so I want to kind of divide this up into kind of the classic preacher thing of stating the doctrine and illustrating the doctrine and applying it.

State, illustrate, apply. So let's try and state this doctrine of God's omnipresence. God's omnipresence means that He is present everywhere, all of the time, in the totality of His being.

[ 1 : 28 ] His circumference is nowhere, said Spurgeon. His center is everywhere. Isn't that great? His circumference is nowhere. His center is everywhere.

The Bible says God fills heaven and earth just as the ocean fills a bucket when it's been submerged in it.

Heaven and earth are submerged in God. There is nowhere that God is not. That's the teaching of these verses we've got in front of us this morning.

If you notice how He puts it in verse 8. He says, If I ascend to heaven, you are there. If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. He's not, I think, in that verse, thinking of heaven and hell.

Perhaps in the sense that we would think of it. He's not thinking of heaven as the state of the blessed and hell as the state of the damned. That's probably not in His mind. He's thinking more of the heights above and the depths below.

[ 2 : 30 ] We could paraphrase it like this. If I travel as far as I can into outer space, or I go down into the depths, right into the very center of the core of the earth, God is there.

He is everywhere. In verse 9, If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, that is, if I can travel faster than the speed of light, that's probably what he means.

When he talks about rising on the wings of the dawn, that's the fastest mode of transport you can take. The wings of the dawn, the sun that rises in the east and it sets in the west.

If I travel as far as the east is from the west, and if I travel at the speed of light as fast as I can go, God is there. If I go as far as I can, I can't get away from God.

He is there and He is everywhere. And David has to go up to the heavens and ascend into the depths of the underworld. He travels on the wings of the dawn.

[ 3 : 36 ] But God doesn't. God doesn't travel. He is there. He is omnipresent. Verse 11, If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night, even the darkness is not dark to you, the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.

And so, whatever direction I go in, whatever dimension I'm in, God is there. Do you see, David is saying, the height and the depth, the length and the breadth, east and west, darkness and light, God is there.

He is present everywhere in the totality of His being. So the psalmist says in verse 7, Where can I go? Where shall I go from your spirit?

Or where shall I flee from your presence? So that's the darkness stated. God is everywhere, present, in the totality of His being.

He's where I am now. He's where you are. And you might think, God is so immense, that He's got to be somewhere else.

[ 4 : 50 ] How can He possibly get into a building like this? Into a universe like this? The truth is, He's here, in the totality of His being. He's where you are.

Now, Augustine said in a lovely phrase, He's nearer than hands and breathing. In the totality of His being, with all His attributes, not just some part of God here, not just some vague idea of His presence passing through the building.

No, no. In the totality of His being, with all His attributes, God is here. He's everywhere present. That's the doctrine.

He's as near to me, as if I were the only person in all the world. But thank God, that doesn't make Him any further away from you. He's everywhere present in the totality of His being.

Now, let's try and illustrate it. Let's try and illustrate it from the Bible. Let me try and pick some passages that we could turn to in our Bibles. And I want to pick two or three. So let's think of the story of Jacob, the patriarch in Genesis.

[ 5 : 56 ] It's a really modern story, isn't it? It's got a modern ring to it. It's a story of a young lad. He's quarreled with his family. He's decided to run away from home.

He's going to stay with his uncle. And on the way to his uncle's home, he decides he's going to sleep out rough in the open. And he gathers together some stones for a pillow.

And out there, under the night sky, he puts his head down and he sleeps. Out in the rough. There's nothing special about the place.

Nothing to distinguish it at all. Just a place where he could sleep for the night. Out in the open air. A place like any other place. And do you remember what happened? He has a dream.

It's a marvelous dream. He dreams that he saw heaven opened and there's a ladder that comes down from heaven. And the angels ascend and descend on that ladder.

[ 6 : 57 ] And he wakes up the next morning. And do you remember what he says, Jacob? He wakes up and he says this. He says, surely the Lord was in this place and I knew it not.

He was afraid and he says, how dreadful is this place. This is none other than the house of God. This is Bethel. The house of God. It's the gate of heaven. Because God was in this place and I knew it not.

Or do you remember Samuel? Samuel was a little boy. And Samuel was in bed one night. And he kept thinking that he heard a voice. He kept thinking he heard someone in the night.

And so he goes into the next room where Eli, the old priest who he lives with. And he says to Eli, did you call me? And Eli says, no, no, I didn't.

You're dreaming. Go back to sleep. And it happens again and again. And eventually Eli, the old priest, speaking to this little lad, Samuel, and he tells him, go back to your bed.

[ 7 : 56 ] And next time he speaks to you, you say, here I am, Lord. Speak. For your servant hears. Because he was conscious that the Lord was there.

In his bedroom. And little Samuel didn't even have to get out of bed. To know that God was in that place. Or you could go to Isaiah.

You could go to Isaiah chapter 6. That vision that Isaiah had. And he says, in the year that King Uzziah died, we're told, I saw the Lord high and lifted up and his train filled the temple.

And he was surrounded by these creatures crying out to one another, he is holy, he is holy, he is holy. Holy is the Lord God Almighty.

And so this morning, if you and I could only draw aside the veil this morning, we would see what Isaiah saw. And we would see that not miles from us, or even millimeters from us, is the throne of God.

[ 9 : 06 ] Do you believe that? That's what this doctrine is telling us. Do we believe that? As we come together to worship, we're not feet or inches away from us.

It's God's throne. And God is surrounded by angels. And He is worshipped. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. The whole earth is full of His glory.

And it's going on now. Not planets away. Not galaxies away. But here. And everywhere. That's why it's the great privilege of coming to corporate worship, isn't it?

What's the great joy of corporate worship? Is we gather with the saints all around the world, but we gather with the saints around the throne. We gather with the church triumphant and with the angels to worship Him.

And that's why, hundreds and hundreds of years later, John told, you know, that old man on the Isle of Patmos, he's got the same vision there in Revelation.

[10:11] That same thing. God is everywhere present in the totality of His being. Think of the Apostle Paul. In Corinth. It's a pretty godless place like London.

And he goes there to preach and he has his ups and his downs. And it's pretty discouraging at times and he's in danger of giving up. And God comes to him and speaks to him.

And God says to him in the night in a vision, do not be afraid. Keep on speaking. Why? For I am with you. I have many people in this city.

It's a godless place. No, it isn't. I'm here, God says. I'm here with you. And what Jesus says in the Great Commission, He speaks to His apostles.

And He says, go out into all the world and preach the gospel. Go on, get out. I'm sending you to get on with it. It's over to you now. It's your job. You're on your own now.

[11:17] No, that's not what He said, is it? He said, you go into all the world and you preach the gospel to every living creature and lo, behold, I am with you.

Even to the end of the age. Just before you went to Corinth, Paul preached in Athens. Do you remember? We've looked at it for four weeks before this series. They're a superstitious bunch and they believed in God and they had plenty of idols.

But they realized deep down, didn't they, that there was another God and so they had an idol to the unknown God. A God they didn't know. They were ignorant of who God was but they were aware He existed. And Paul came into that situation and he begins to preach to them about the unknown God.

And he says, I can tell you about this God. And the first thing he tells them, do you remember what it is? He's not far from any one of you. He's not far from any one of you because in Him you live and move and have your being.

Augustine was right. He's nearer the hands and breathing. You see, ever since the fall, we have thought that God is far away.

[12:25] And that is a sign of our fallenness. We've imagined that God is further away than the furthest star. And the truth of the matter is He's nearer to us than we are to ourselves.

That's the doctrine stated and illustrated. Now I want to try and apply it. Let me speak to you, to those who feel that God is distant and God is remote and God is far off.

And you've got no personal relationship with Him at all. And you don't really know Him as the living God of your own lives.

He's far off. He's remote. He's distant. And so what I want to say to you this morning is that the distance between you and God is not spatial. It is spiritual.

It's not spatial. God does not occupy space. God is a spirit. Where shall I flee from your spirit? God doesn't occupy space.

[13:40] It's not miles and kilometers but sin and unbelief that separate us from God. God is remote from you if you don't know Him this morning.

It's not because He's somewhere else. It's because you are somewhere else because of your sin and unbelief. The Bible speaks about men being far from God.

The Bible warns worshippers, doesn't it? These people, they worship me. They draw near to me with their lips but their hearts are far from me. And so it's possible, isn't it, to have two people who physically are very close to each other and there's no distance between them physically and yet they're far apart from each other in spirit and in sympathy.

It's true of this congregation this morning, isn't it? We're sitting, well, we're not sitting very close to each other. We're socially distanced from one another but I think a normal Sunday if you can remember that and you're sitting close to one another.

And yet, if truth be known, if the secrets of our hearts were laid bare on some kind of screen, what a distance there would be between some of you and others.

[15:08] That's what Jesus says, doesn't it, in Matthew 24. He refers to His own return. And He says, this is what it's going to be like when the Son of Man comes. There'll be two people in a field physically, they'll be close to one another, they'll be in close proximity working together on the same job.

There'll be two in the field, one will be taken and one will be left. There'll be two women working, grinding at the mill and one will be taken and one will be left. And that's how it'll be when Jesus returns.

What if He were to come this morning? He'll come suddenly and when He comes, we're all here together. But if He were to come, who would be His and who would be not?

Physical closeness, but what a distance in sympathy and in spirit. And it's true, isn't it, that there are many people that go to church on a Sunday morning and they draw near with their lips, but their hearts are far from God.

You see, it's sin and it's unbelief that separates you from God. It makes Him feel remote and far from us.

[16:25] And that leads me to another point of application. Do you see what a dreadful thing sin is in the light of this doctrine? What a dreadfully and terribly serious thing sin is that it's done in the presence of God.

That God is not only an observer, but He's actually present. And so David, he came to understand that, didn't he?

In Psalm 51. And David came to understand this when he became convicted of sin. Do you remember, his sin was very private.

He committed adultery, he'd wanted to keep it kind of covered over and keep it quiet and cover it up and as he tried to do that, part of his cover up ended up having a man killed.

And he lied about it. And it was on his conscience. And it was all very hush, hush. And then Nathan the prophet comes to him and exposes his sin and says to David, actually you are the man, David, aren't you, that has sinned in this way.

[17:35] And Nathan speaks to him from God. And do you remember how David confessed his sin? David says in Psalm 51, verse 4, against you, you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.

Stepped with Bathsheba, he'd murdered Uriah, he'd lied to his people about it, and yet he says, against you, Lord, you only have I sinned. My sin is against God. And it isn't only against God, it's before God.

It's committed in his presence before his very face. Can you imagine the impact that truth had on him? The impact that that truth would have had on David as he realized it. Oh God, you were there when I did it.

I thought that no one knew I thought that there was no one in the room but you were there. It was in your presence, it was before your face.

And so when you speak oaths and cursings, when you blaspheme and you take the name of the Lord your God in vain, with the very breath that he puts in your body, you insult him to his face.

[18:52] And we say to people, don't we, you'd never say that to their face. I'd never say that to their face but you do it to God. And God doesn't just get to hear about it.

He's there when we do it. And we do it in his very presence. And if only we realized what a difference it would make to the way that we live our lives, that we live before the face of God.

When I was in school, the sixth form common room was just around the corner from the headmaster's study. And we kept being told it was designed that way deliberately.

And the headmaster, he'd wear these kind of hobnail boots, big boots. There were stone floors and you would always hear him coming. And when you heard him coming in the sixth form common room, if you remember when you were in sixth form, you heard the boots coming, everything would change.

You'd get your feet off the desk. The telly would go off. You'd tidy up the room. Everything changed because you realized you could get away with things in his absence that you would never do in his presence.

[20:07] You would get away with things in his absence that you would never do in his presence. Do you see what a dreadfully serious thing sin is? what a humbling truth it is to know that when I sin, he is there.

And this is a fallen world and all of us get into trouble and we find ourselves in deep trouble. And here's the flip side of this truth. That when I get into trouble, he is there.

And the psalmist says, God is our refuge and our strength. Do you remember how that psalm ends? He is a very present help in trouble. And so some of you have gone through deep waters in the last few months.

Some of you have gone through great troubles and he is there in our troubles. You don't have to go and find him. He is there. He is a very present help. You know, it's like when you're in London

sometimes, you have that thing where there's an accident and there's a cyclist who's come off his bike.

He's been hit by a car. And the cyclist is lying there and everyone is standing around. And it's so frustrating, isn't it? Because when the cyclist is lying on the road and they're trying to keep him as still as possible, there's absolutely nothing you can do.

[ 21 : 23 ] There's somebody lying there in the road in need of urgent medical attention but you can't move him because the risks are too great. And what's the only thing you can do?

The only thing you can do in that point is as the cyclist is lying on the road you say hang in there, help is on the way. Help is on the way, hang in there. But I don't have to say that to you this morning.

I don't have to say to you this morning, help is on the way. Because whatever troubles weigh you down. I don't have to say to you help is on the way, help is here because God is here.

And Spurgeon said I can pray without ceasing because he's here without ceasing. And so we all know Psalm 23, don't we? And we love it.

We love it because when I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will not fear, says David. Why will I not fear? Because you are with me, your rod and your staff they comfort me. God is there in our troubles.

[ 22 : 29 ] And he says to you, doesn't he? He says to his children, call on me in the day of trouble and I will answer you. And even in the dark he's there. That's what David is saying.

He's not a fugitive. He's not on the run. He's rejoicing in the truth, isn't he? He's saying, see the tone of the words. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the utmost part of the sea, even there your hand will hold me.

Your right hand shall hold me. He's not saying I've got to get away from this dreadful God that if I travel at the speed of light, perhaps I can get away from him.

That isn't the meaning of it at all. That's the way that the sinner feels under conviction of sin. But David is rejoicing and marveling in it. It's like the child.

Children, isn't it? When you wake up in the dark in the middle of the night and it's pitch black and you're afraid and you cry out. And at that point in your fear and in your terror in the dark you become aware of the presence of one who loves you.

[ 23 : 38 ] Your dad or your mom. That's the picture here. We say a word to those who are seeking after God.

And you feel like you've not found him. And you don't know him you feel and you've not come into a relationship with God. And I want to say to you this morning that the Apostle Paul says God is not far from any one of you.

You don't have to go on a sort of pilgrimage to the Middle East to Makkah or Jerusalem or to the Middle East to find him he's here this morning. You don't even have to come to the front of the church to find him.

He's nearer to you than that. He's nearer than the person sitting next to you. He's nearer than hands. He's nearer than breathing. The word is near to you says Romans. And so call on the name of the Lord and you will be saved.

The God who you seek is here. The God who you need is here. And you called him and you will be saved. And you don't need any special rituals or special place or clothes to wear to find him he is here.

[ 24 : 50 ] You only have to say sorry and mean it and turn from your sins and trust in the Savior. because it is sin that separates you from God not miles and not distance but sin and unbelief.

Augustine again says there is no place you may flee from God angry except to God reconciled.

There is no place you may flee from God angry except to God reconciled.

And if your conscience makes you feel like Adam you feel like you want to run away from God the only place to run is to run to him. Jesus is called Emmanuel isn't he?

God with us. And in Jesus Christ God is to be found by you. He died for that reason.

Peter tells us that he died the just for the unjust so that he could save us from hell. Well that's part of it. He died to forgive our sins. Well that's part of it too. He died that we could become part of his church.

[ 26 : 06 ] That's true. But Peter says he died the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God. And we says Paul we were hostile and we were alienated in our minds but we've been reconciled.

We've been brought back together with God through the blood of the cross. There's a lovely story in Wesley's journal. Let me tell you a story. Methodists. The Methodists in the sack.

Do you know the story? Some of you have heard it. And so the Methodists in the old days they were persecuted in the 18th century. In some places and there was a particular village in which the Methodists they had to meet in a barn because they were afraid of being persecuted.

And they kind of all gathered into the barn kind of quietly and undercover and they got into the door the barn they locked the door and on one occasion one of the locals decided he was going to get in and disrupt the meeting.

And so he got to the he got to the barn early he arrived in the barn and he hid in a sack and he decided to hide in the barn and wait for the service to begin.

[ 27 : 17 ] Well the people began to arrive the service and they began to sing a hymn and as they began to sing this hymn the man thought well I call it like the tune and he decided to stay where he was in the sack and as he stayed there somebody began to pray and as this man began to pray and to lay hold of God the man in the sack well God began to deal with him he began to deal with the sinner in the sack and this man was hiding away in the dark and he thought that nobody could see him but God began to deal with this man and the sack began to sob and the congregation looked around and in amazement to find a sinner in a sack seeking the saviour because even the darkness is his light today and if you're seeking the saviour this morning the God whom you're seeking is here he's here you don't have to go away to look for him he's here he's every place he's everywhere present in the totality of his being and you can call upon him in Christ and you can find him today and finally as I finish a word to Christians to believers

I'm not sure there's a greater spur to holiness and to living all out for God than this doctrine people say to me we need kind of less doctrine that's rubbish isn't it because there's no greater encouragement encouragement to you I can't think of a greater encouragement or an incentive to holiness than to know that God is here and so that when you come to worship God is here and when you go to work you remember that God is there and when you go to school God is there and when you're trying to talk about the Lord Jesus with people and you're really struggling God is there and so we practice the presence of God old writers used to talk about that and that's the practical outworking of the presence of God isn't it to appropriate this doctrine is to take this truth of God's word and to realize that it is true and to live accordingly in the light of it where shall I go from your spirit or where shall I flee from your presence we thank God this morning that there is nowhere I can go and there is nowhere that you can go he is everywhere present in the totality of his being let's pray to Thank you.