

# Our Omnipresent God

Psalm 139:7-12

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Tonight we're looking again at our study of the doctrine of God. We have looked at the nature of God and now we're considering His attributes. It's clear that the only way we can know what God is like is to discover what He has revealed about Himself in the Bible. It is true that there are things we can learn about God in His creation but the best source is His Word—the Bible. The Bible is the only Book that reveals God.

As we look again at our Bible on the doctrine of God, our subject tonight is God's omnipresence. Last time we saw in Psalm 139 His omniscience and now we're looking at His omnipresence. The prefix "omni" comes from the Latin word *omnis*, which means "all." That prefix attached to the word "presence" means "all-present." When that prefix is attached to the words "knowledge" and "power" it means "all-knowledge," and "all-power." Our God is "all-knowing," and as we will see tonight He is "all-present." Omnipresence means that "God is everywhere present." This is not the same as pantheism which teaches "that the universe is God" (Believer's Bible Commentary) or that God is "identical with His own creation" (Barclay). The conclusion pantheism draw is "since God made me as part of His creation, then God is obviously to be found also in me" (Barclay). An eastern Guru put it, "each of us is in fact God Himself" (Barclay). Many in the charismatic and Word Faith movement believe this. Televangelists like Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, Charles Capps, Paul and Jan Crouch, Kenneth Hagin, Fredrick Price, Benny Hinn just to name of few believe this. The Bible never teaches that you are a little god or that you are God Himself! Samuel Storms in *The Grandeur of God* said, "Although God is wholly present throughout all things, He is yet distinct from all things. The universe is the creation of God and thus, in respect to essence, no part of Him. So although all things are permeated and sustained by God (Col. 1:16-17; Acts 17:28), God is not all things" (excerpt from the September/October 1989 issue of Masterpiece magazine, pp. 8-9).

God is infinite. There is no end to Him. His being fills up endless eternity and yet He is distinct from His creation. In Jeremiah 23:24 God says, "Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?" (NASB). In 1 Kings 8:27 Solomon says, "Will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain Thee, how much less this house which I have built!" (NASB). Throughout history people have tried to confine God. Although Solomon correctly said that God could not dwell in the heaven and earth—let alone in the Temple—many of the people believed He dwelt in the actual structure of the Temple. People today believe that about the church. They will even misapply Matthew 18:20 which says, "For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst" and apply that to a prayer meeting or a church service.

The Syrians worshiped the god of the valleys and assumed the God of Israel was the god of the mountains (1 Kings 20:23). God does not dwell in manmade structures, nor is He confined to any location. He dwells in the hearts of His children. Jesus said in John 14:23, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him" (NASB). Ephesians 3:14-17 says, "I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (NASB).

Certainly from this subject spins various teachings about God. But many are false. Tonight I want us to return to Psalm 139 and see this great doctrine as it is penned in verses 7-12.

“Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? 8 If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. 9 If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, 10 Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me. 11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," Even the night shall be light about me; 12 Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You.

As we looked at verses 1-6 we saw how *God searched* and *knew David*. *God searched* David with a penetrating search in verse 1. He says, “O LORD, You have *searched* me.” This was deep search of David’s very being. “David said God’s knowledge came as if He had scoured every detail of [his] life” (Bible Knowledge Commentary). From this David said *God knew* him. If He searched or dug deep inside of Him He certainly knew him. In verses 2-6 David is now specific regarding *how* God knew Him. In verse 2, He said God knew his actions. He said, “You know my sitting down and my rising up” (v.2a). In other words, “Every movement I make You know.” Then he says, “God knew all of his thoughts” (v.2b). He said also in verse 2, “You understand my thought afar off.” This means God knew his thoughts while having them as well before they were made. In verse 3, he continues by saying that “God knew the direction of his life.” He said, “You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.” Whether he chose the direction or God chose it for him, God knew his “path and...lying down” and was “acquainted with all [his] ways.”

David gives us his response in verses 4-6 by telling us that “For there is not a word on my tongue, But behold, O Lord, You know it altogether. 5 You have hedged me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me. 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it.”

Now as we look at verses 7-12, with those thoughts in mind, David offer two questions. Notice *the first question* in verse 7.

### **I. The First Question (v.7a)**

“Where can I go from Your Spirit?”

#### **A. Since God Knows Everything About Me Where Can I Go that He Would Not Know?**

The Hebrew word “go” (*halak*) refers to “movement” (Vine’s). When used of persons it means to “go, proceed, move, walk” or “depart, go away” (Abridged BDB).

“Where can I *move, walk or go away* to that you wouldn’t know?”

#### **B. Since God is Omniscient He is Also Omnipresent**

##### **1. One flows out of the other**

“If He knows everything, then everything He knows is because He is everywhere and if He is everywhere at all times then He knows all things.”

##### **2. To “go from Your Spirit” could refer not to the Holy Spirit (as the translators have**

interpreted by capitalizing the letter “S” in “Spirit) but His “breath”

“Spirit” Heb.ruach, is translated “breath, wind, Spirit” throughout the Old Testament. The context determines its use.

I believe translating it “breath” would go with the next question.

## II. The Second Question (v.7b)

“Where can I flee from Your presence?”

A. Since God Knows Everything Where Can I Suddenly Run To that He Would Not Know

“Flee” Heb.barah, means to “run away, escape, make linear movement away from something” (DBL Hebrew). But more specifically it means “to bolt, flee suddenly, run away” (New Strong’s Dictionary). It first occurs in Gen.16:6 where Hagar “fled” from Sarah.

W.E. Vine says, “In describing flight from a person, the Hebrew idiom ‘from the presence of’ (lit. ‘from the face of’) is often used.”

David asked, “Where can I suddenly run to that You wouldn’t know?” or “Where could I suddenly run to away from Your face?”

Jeremiah 23:24 says, “‘Can a man hide himself in hiding places, So I do not see him?’ declares the LORD. ‘Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?’ declares the LORD” (NASB).

B. Whether I *Walk* or *Run* Quickly I Cannot Escape the Knowledge and Presence of God

1. Psalm 145:5 says that God’s “understanding is infinite.”

“Nothing escapes His notice, nothing can be hidden from Him, nothing is forgotten by Him” (A.W. Pink, Gleanings in the Godhead).

2. Hebrews 4:13 says, “And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” (NASB).

3. Since that is the case, where can you walk, run or hide that He wouldn’t know?

a) Jonah made a futile attempt to run “from the presence of the Lord” (Jon.1:3).

b) Job asked, “Does He not see my ways, and count all my steps?” (Job 31:4).

c) Job 34:21-22 answers this question when it says, “For His eyes are upon the ways of a man, And He sees all his steps. 22 "There is no darkness or deep shadow Where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves” (NASB).

A.W. Pink says, “Though He be invisible to us, we are not so to Him” (Gleanings in the Godhead).

### III. David Answers His Own Questions (vv.8-12)

#### A. God’s Presence is in Heaven (v.8a)

“If I ascend into heaven, You are there.”

##### 1. Heaven is God’s *throne*

Ps.11:4 says, “The LORD is in His holy temple; the LORD 's *throne is in heaven*; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men” (NASB).

##### 2. Paul referred to heaven as the *third* heaven or *paradise*

2 Cor.12:2-4 says, “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the *third heaven*. 3 And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows—4 was caught up into *Paradise*, and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak” (NASB).

#### B. God’s Presence is in Sheol (v8b)

“If I make my bed in hell (sheol), behold, You are there.”

“Hell” Heb.sheol, “is derived from a root-word meaning "to ask," "demand;" hence insatiableness (Prov. 30:15, 16). It is rendered "grave" thirty-one times (Gen. 37:35; 42:38; 44:29, 31; 1 Sam. 2:6, etc.). In thirty-one cases in the Authorized Version this word is rendered "hell," the place of disembodied spirits.

Sheol is described as deep (Job 11:8), dark (10:21, 22), with bars (17:16). The dead "go down" to it (Num. 16:30, 33; Ezek. 31:15, 16, 17). The Greek word *hades* of the New Testament has the same scope of signification as *sheol* of the Old Testament. It is a prison (1 Pet. 3:19), with gates and bars and locks (Matt. 16:18; Rev. 1:18), and it is downward (Matt. 11:23; Luke 10:15)” (Smith’s Bible Dictionary).

The Hebrew people regarded *sheol* as a place to which both the righteous and unrighteous go at death (Gen. 37:35; Ps. 9:17; Is. 38:10; death, NIV; Deut. 32:22; the realm of death, NIV), a place where punishment is received and rewards are enjoyed” (Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary).

Leslie Allen says, “The accessibility of Sheol (v 8) to Yahweh receives a dual treatment in the OT. It is often denied in the context of emphasis on fellowship with God and enjoyment of divine blessing being confined to this life (Ps 85:6 [5]; Jonah 2:5 [4]). While Sheol is not within Yahweh's sphere of blessing, it is within the sphere of divine sovereignty” (Word

Biblical Commentary, Vol.21, Psalm 101-50).

1. Proverbs 15:11 says, "Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the LORD, How much more the hearts of men!" (NASB).
2. Job 26:6 says, "Naked is Sheol before Him And Abaddon has no covering" (NASB).
3. Jonah 2:1-2 says that "Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the fish's belly. 2 And he said: 'I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction, And He answered me. 'Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, And You heard my voice.'"
4. Amos 9:1-4 - (Although Amos identified himself as a Judean prophet, God directed him to deliver a message intended for the northern tribes of Israel (7:15). Amos confronted Israel during a time of extended prosperity and security. King Jeroboam II had followed his father Jehoash's example and "restored the territory of Israel" (2 Kings 14:25). The widespread peace throughout the region was due in part to the subdued threat of Assyria following Nineveh's repentance under the preaching of Jonah. On the home front, Amos was called to confront the rampant corruption and moral decay that permeated his society) [The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible].

Notice here in chapter 9 the parallel to Psalm 139:7-8: "I saw the Lord standing beside the altar, and He said, "Smite the capitals so that the thresholds will shake, And break them on the heads of them all! Then I will slay the rest of them with the sword; They will not have a fugitive who will flee, Or a refugee who will escape. 2 "Though they dig into Sheol, From there shall My hand take them; And though they ascend to heaven, From there will I bring them down. 3 "And though they hide on the summit of Carmel, I will search them out and take them from there; And though they conceal themselves from My sight on the floor of the sea, From there I will command the serpent and it will bite them. 4 "And though they go into captivity before their enemies, From there I will command the sword that it slay them, And I will set My eyes against them for evil and not for good."

C. God's Presence is the Rising of the Dawn (v.9a)

"If I take the wings of the morning."

1. In Psalm 18:11 it speaks of "the wings of the wind."
2. In Mal.3:20 it speaks of "the wings of the sun."
3. Here David speaks of "the wings of the morning's dawn."

"It should be translated, 'If I should lift wings such as the dawn of the morning' i.e., could I fly with the swiftness with which the dawn of the morning spreads itself over the eastern sky, towards the extreme west and alight there" (Keil, C. F., & Delitzsch, F. Commentary on the Old Testament).

“The wings of the morning are an allusion to the rays of the morning sun that streak across the heavens from east to west at 186,000 miles per second. Even if we could travel to some remote corner of the universe at the speed of light, we would find the Lord there, waiting to guide and uphold us” (MacDonald, W., & Farstad, A. *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*).

D. God's Presence is in the Remotest Part of the Sea (vv.9b-10)

“And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.”

1. This is “the extreme end of the sea (of the Mediterranean with the ‘isles of the Gentiles’” (Keil, C. F., & Delitzsch, F. *Commentary on the Old Testament*).
2. Both extremes in verses 9-10 yield the same results: “Every there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.”

E. God's Presence is in Darkness (vv.11-12)

“If I say, ‘Surely the darkness shall fall on me,’ Even the night shall be light about me; 12 Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You.”

1. David, if effect says, “If the darkness was my covering, it wouldn't hide me from your face.”

John Calvin says, “David represents himself as a man using every possible method to make his escape from a situation of embarrassment. So having acknowledged that it was vain to dream of flight, he bethinks himself of another remedy, and says, If no speed of mine can bear me out of the range of God's vision, yet, on the supposition of light being removed, the darkness might cover me, that I might have a short breath of respite. But this also he declares to be hopeless, as God sees equally well in the deepest darkness as at noon-day” (Calvin, J. *Calvin's Commentaries: Psalms*).

Job 12:22 says, “He uncovers deep things out of darkness, And brings the shadow of death to light” (NASB).

2. The “darkness shall not hide from You.”
  - a) Many sinful acts are committed in dimly lit places
  - b) “Darkness” is used many times to describe the deeds of unbelievers
    - (1) Prov.4:19 says, “The way of the wicked is like darkness” (NASB).
    - (2) 1 Thess.5:1-8



- c) “Darkness” also describes God’s judgment

The “Day of the Lord” is described in Joel 2:2 as “a Day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness.”

Leslie Allen says, “V.11 veers to a related motif belonging to the sphere of divine judgment, as in Job 34:22 RSV: "There is no gloom or deep darkness where evildoers may hide themselves." Divine vision is a common variation of Yahweh's judicial knowledge (cf. Job 22:13-14). The superhuman character of divine sight irrespective of light-contrast Job 22:11a-is being affirmed” (Word Biblical Commentary, Vol.21, Psalm 101-50).

## **CONCLUSION**

So “Where can [one] go from Your Spirit? Or Where can [one suddenly run] from Your presence?” If God’s presence is in heaven, Sheol, the rising of the dawn, the remotest part of the sea, and in darkness, then where can we go where He does not know or see? There is comfort here for the believer as well as accountability. The comfort is the fact that God knows and see’s us every day, every moment of the day. Keeping with the context of Psalm 139, He vindicates us from our enemies, which means that He is the only one that can make an accurate judgment of our lives. The accountability comes from knowing that all our sin is in His presence.

Charles Spurgeon, said, “From the sight of God [David] cannot be hidden, but that is not all--from the immediate, actual, constant presence of God he cannot be withdrawn. This makes it dreadful to sin, for we commit treason at the very foot of his throne” (Psalms).

For the unbeliever the truth of God’s omniscience and omnipresence brings fear of judgment. For there is no place he can hide from God’s judgment. Though they hide “themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and [say] to the mountains and rocks, ‘ Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!’” (Rev.6:15b-16), they will not escape. Are you running from God tonight? Are you hoping He doesn’t see your sin? There’s no place you can hide from His presence. That is either comfort to you or it’s torment. You decide.