**Lesson 6: The Omnipresence of God**

Psalm 139:7-8

7Where shall I go from Your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your presence? 8If I ascend to heaven, You are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, You are there!

Omnipresence is the doctrine that states that God is fully present everywhere. Augustus Strong writes in his systematic theology, “God, in the totality of his essence, without diffusion or expansion, multiplication or division, penetrates and fills the universe in all its parts.”[[1]](#footnote-1) Wayne Grudem writes, “God does not have size or spatial dimensions and is present at every point of space with his whole being, yet God acts differently in different places.”[[2]](#footnote-2) These definitions help to explain that God is everywhere present, He is not bound to any one place, and this does not limit His ability to act and carry out His purposes.

Perhaps the clearest presentation of God’s omnipresence comes in Psalm 139 where the psalmist declares that there is no escaping God. He writes, “If I ascend to heaven, You are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, You are there!” No matter where the psalmist goes, as far east or west, as high or low, as is possible, he finds that God is with him. Jeremiah 23:23-24 also describes the omnipresence of God. There the Lord proclaims, “Am I a God at hand . . . and not a God far away? Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? . . . Do I not fill heaven and earth?” There is no created place – on earth or in sea, in light or in darkness, in heaven or hell – where man can escape the presence of God.

The fact that God is everywhere present does not mean that God is divided up into everything, but is fully present in every place. Thus Paul can say in Acts 17:28, “In Him we live and move and have our being.” Some may ask, “How can a spiritual God fill physical space?” In other words, if God does not have a body, how can the Bible say that He is present everywhere? God is not physically present in any place, but He is fully present in His being. This is referred to as His ontological presence. Since God is everywhere present, it is also impossible to limit God to one physical location (cf. 1 Kings 8:27; John 4:20-24).

We must be careful to distinguish that God is not present *as* each point in space. That is what the doctrine of pantheism teaches – “That tree is God, and that car is God, etc.” Omnipresence is intrinsically different than the doctrine of pantheism. Omnipresence teaches instead that God is *with* each point of space.

Scripture distinguishes between God’s ontological presence and His spiritual or moral presence. Spiritual or moral presence implies that there is some relationship of fellowship between God and a person. In this sense, God is spiritually absent within unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14-18). He is also spiritually absent in hell (2 Thess. 1:9). In contrast, as believers in the new covenant age, we now enjoy a special intimate relationship with God where His Spirit indwells believers in a way that old covenant saints did not know (cf. Rom. 8:9).

Henry Bavinck: When you wish to do something evil, you retire from the public into your house where no enemy may see you; from those places of your house which are open and visible to the eyes of men you remove yourself into your room; even in your room you fear some witness from another quarter; you retire into your heart, there you meditate: he is more inward than your heart. Wherever, therefore, you shall have fled, there he is. From yourself, whither will you flee? Will you not follow yourself wherever you shall flee? But since there is One more inward even than yourself, there is no place where you may flee from God angry but to God reconciled. There is no place at all whither you may flee. Will you flee from him? Flee unto him.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

*Questions for Discussion*

1. Sometimes the Bible speaks of a special manifestation of God: “Our Father in heaven” (Matt. 6:9; cf. walking in the cool of the Garden of Eden or in the Holy of Holies). Does this mean that God is only in heaven? How can God have a particular localization and still be everywhere present?

2. How does Psalm 23 support the idea of God’s omnipresence?

3. Read Psalm 139. What is the connection between the doctrines of omnipresence and omniscience?

4. What do the following passages say about God’s omnipresence?

a. Amos 9:1-4 – His presence for judging.

b. Colossians 1:17 – His presence for sustaining.

c. Psalm 16:11 – His presence for blessing.

5. In what ways does the doctrine of omnipresence comfort the believer? In what ways does it serve as a stern warning to unbelievers?

**Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above**

Sing praise to God who reigns above,

The God of all creation,

The God of pow’r, the God of love,

The God of our salvation.

With healing balmy soul He fills,

And ev’ry faithless murmur stills:

To God all praise and glory!

What God’s almighty pow’r hath made

His gracious mercy keepeth,

By morning glow or evening shade

His watchful eye ne’er sleepeth.

Within the kingdom of His might,

Lo! all is just and all is right:

To God all praise and glory!

The Lord is never far away,

But, thru all grief distressing,

An ever-present help and stay,

Our peace and joy and blessing.

As with a mother’s tender hand

He leads His own, His chosen band:

To God all praise and glory!

Thus all my toilsome way along

I sing aloud His praises,

That men may hear the grateful song

My voice unwearied raises.

Be joyful in the Lord, my heart!

Both soul and body bear your part:

To God all praise and glory!

*Thoughts for Application*

1. In a sentence or two, why are you particularly glad that God is everywhere present?

2. How does the doctrine of omnipresence draw a contrast between our heavenly Father and earthly fathers?

3. In what ways should our primary accountability come from the Lord and not from other people?

4. What difference should it make in your daily living that God is always with you? How might this truth affect your application of courage or comfort?

5. Write out a short prayer of thanks for God’s indwelling in your life?

1. Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson, 1907), 279. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Grudem, 173. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid, 177. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)