

ATTRIBUTE OF OMNIPRESENCE

Psalm 139:7-12; Proverbs 15:3; Jeremiah 23:23,24; Hebrews 4:13

"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). Because God is Spirit He is unchangeable in regard of place. He does not begin to be in one place wherein He was not before, or cease to be in a place wherein He was not before. The word "present" means here, close to, or next to, but when we add the prefix "omni" it gives it universality. God is everywhere here, close to everything, next to everyone.

You may recall the story which Dusty related to us about the little girl whose father was an atheist. He had the sign on his desk which said, "God is no where." She simply changed the sign to read, "God is now here." It is in this simple child like faith with which we must recognize that God is now here, i.e. omnipresent.

God is immanent in His creation for there is no place in heaven, earth, or hell, where men may hide from His presence. "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" (1 Kings 8:37). God is higher than heaven and deeper than hell, and possesses infinite imaginary spaces beyond created limits (Job 11:7,8).

"Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD" (Jeremiah 23:24). He that fills everyplace in heaven and earth cannot change place. God is substantially in all spaces, real and imaginary; there is no part of the world which He doth not fill; no place can be imagined wherein He doth not exist. The Scriptures teach that God is infinite, which means that His being knows no limits. There can be no limit to His presence, He is omnipresent. In His infinitude He surrounds the finite creation and contains it. There is no place beyond Him for anything to be.

He who hath no cause of being can have no limits of being, and though by creation He began to be in the world, yet He did not begin to be where the world is, but was in the same imaginary space from all eternity, for He was always in Himself by His own being. "God is over all things, under all things, outside all things, within but not enclosed, without but not excluded, above but not raised up, below but not depressed, wholly above, presiding, wholly beneath, sustaining, wholly within filling." (Anon)

As God is unchangeable in regard of essence, knowledge, purpose, so He is unchangeable in regard of place. He cannot be changed in time, because He is eternity; so He cannot be changed in place because He is everywhere present; He is eternal, therefore cannot be changed in time; He is omnipresent, therefore cannot be changed in place; He doth not begin to be in one place wherein He was not before, or cease to be in a place wherein He was not before. He that fills every place in heaven and earth, cannot change place; He cannot leave one to possess another, i.e. equally in regard of His essence, in all; "He fills heaven and earth."

If God be omnipresent how then can He draw near to us, or how can we draw near to Him? "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near" (Isaiah 55:6). "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you . . ." (James 4:8). "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). God's omnipresence personalizes man's relationship. God is present, near him, next to him, in him, sees him through and through. God is a Spirit, and He is everywhere. God is everywhere free in the universe, near to everything, next to everyone, and through the Lord Jesus Christ is immediately accessible to every loving heart. "The knowledge that God is present is blessed, but to sense His presence is nothing less than sheer happiness." (Dr. Fleece) God is present everywhere by His Divinity, but in His people by

the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9; Colossians 1:27). The Spirit is not bestowed upon all to reside in their hearts, but is everywhere present.

The practice of the presence of God consists not of projecting an imaginary object from within our own mind, and then seeking to realize its presence, but rather recognizing the real presence of God whom the Scriptures declare to be already here, and existing apart from any apprehension of Him on the part of His creatures. God drawing near to us is not a change of locality on God's part, but by special spiritual influences of grace. As a boat with a rope tied to the shore is pulled to the shore by those in the boat, and it seems that the shore is coming to them, in reality they are moving toward the shore. God is an unmovable Rock, and we are uncertain creatures, but while He seems to approach us, He doth really make us to approach Him.

God sees and knows all things that are done because He is everywhere in heaven and earth, as air is everywhere in the world. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" He fills it with His essence (Spirit), and He so fills it that there is no place without Him, both at the same time.

"That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; . . ." (Acts 17:27,28). We live and move in Him more than in the air where we are. We move in God and every creature hath its being in Him. "Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust" (Psalm 104:29). God taketh the spirit of man from him at death, but man still cannot escape God's presence (Psalm 139:8).

Omnipresence belongs to God only. No created being, man or devil, can claim this attribute. Man with a body or spirit, because finite, fills but one space; God, because infinite, fills all, yet so as **not to be contained** in them as water in a vessel. He is from the height of the heavens to the bottom of the deeps in every point of the world, and in the circle of it, yet **not limited by it**, but is beyond it. God is everywhere, i.e. His nature or essence hath no bounds. The creature can only be present in one place at one time, and when so, he is absent from another place. As no place can be without God, so also no place can contain Him.

The omnipresence of God in the world is in every part of the world, as the soul is in every part of the body, though unseen. If God be in heaven, earth, hell, and sea, He fills all places with His presence. "Thou art there" (Psalm 139:7). If God should create a million worlds He would be in all of them, not by stretching out His being, but by the infiniteness of His Being. As God was before and beyond all time, so He is above and beyond all place. "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heavens of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" (1 Kings 8:37). As God was before the creation of the world, we see His eternity. As God is without the bounds of the world, we see His omnipresence. "Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?" (Isaiah 66:1).

As God is infinite, He is everywhere. Whatsoever God is, He is always, and He is everywhere. God is in heaven, in regard to the manifestation of His glory; in hell, by the expressions of His justice; in the earth, by the discoveries of His wisdom, power, patience, and compassion; in His people, by the monuments of His grace. Men who believe God absent and careless are subject to His judgment, i.e. the flood and Sodom and Gomorrah.

God is present in all places of His creation, and there is nothing which can be done by any of His subjects except in His sight. As God is present everywhere, He knows what is done everywhere, and God is Light so nothing can be hidden from Him in His light. God that fills heaven and earth cannot be contained in anything. He fills the

understandings of men, and the understandings of angels, but is comprehended by neither. There is no measure of an infinite Being, for if it could be measured it were not infinite, but because it is infinite, it is not to be measured. Nothing is more present than God, yet nothing more hid; He is light, and yet obscurity; His perfections are visible, yet unsearchable. How then can we comprehend God, who exceeds all, and is exceeded by none; contains all, and is contained by none; is above our understanding and our sense because infinite? He is known by faith, enjoyed by love, but comprehended by no mind. How wonderful is God, and how nothing are His creatures! "Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God" (Deut.32:3).

This attribute of God is commonly forgotten, or not believed. Most all, if not all, the sins of men may be traced to the forgetfulness of this attribute. Adam in the garden testifies to his unbelief of this attribute. "And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, and because I was naked I hid myself" (Genesis 3:10). His ear understood the voice of God, but His mind did not conclude the presence of God. He thought the trees could hide him from God whose eye was present in the minutest parts of the earth. He thought that after his sin he could hide himself from the presence of justice, and before that, that he could hide himself from the presence of His knowledge, and was deceived in both. Thus he either denies, or forgets this attribute. In all sin there is something of atheism, either denying the being of God, not believing His holiness to punish it, nor His truth that threatens, nor His justice to punish it, or His presence to observe it.

It is forgotten by good men, when they fear to much the designs of their enemies. "Fear not: for I am with thee: . . ." (Isaiah 43:5). If the presence of God be enough to strengthen against fear, then the prevailing of fear issues from our forgetfulness of this attribute. This attribute is also a comfort to God's people. That God is present everywhere, is as much a comfort to a good man, as it is terror to a wicked man. God is everywhere for His people, not only by a necessary perfection of His nature, but in the immense diffusion of His goodness. He is in all creatures as their preserver; in the damned, as their terror; in His people, as their protector. He fills hell with His severity, heaven with His glory, and His people with His grace. He is with His people as light in darkness. Where God is present in His essence, He cannot be absent in His grace from them that fear Him.

The omnipresence of God is a comfort to His people in all temptations however small or severe. No fiery dart can be so present with us, as God is present both with that and the marksman. The most raging devils cannot be so near us, as God is to us and them. He is present with His people to relieve them, and present with the devil to manage him to his own holy purposes: so He was with Job, defeating his enemies, and bringing him triumphantly out of those pressing trials. God's presence is such a terror, that whatsoever the devil can despoil us of, he must leave this untouched. He might scratch Paul with a thorn, but he could not strip him of the presence of Divine grace which God promised him. "There were they in great fear: for God is in the generation of the righteous" (Psalm 14:5).

The omnipresence of God is a comfort in great afflictions. Whether in nasty prisons, or oppressing tribunals, or in the scorching flames God is still with His people. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Isaiah 43:2). "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king . . . Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? . . . Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God" (Daniel 3:17,24,25). God is more present to

support His people in all their adversities than their adversaries can be present with them to afflict them. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1).

"For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. . ." (2 Chronicles 16:9). If God doth not deliver His people from afflictions, He will be so present as to manage them in them, so that His glory shall issue from them, and their grace be brightened by them. Paul experienced the presence of God in the Philippian jail and the heart of the jailor was broken. David took courage in the presence of God when his soldiers were mutinying. "And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God" (1 Samuel 30:6). What a comfort is God's presence in exile or in forced desertion of our homes (though we may not have experienced it yet, it may be coming). God's people may be banished from their country, but never from the presence of their Protector.

The omnipresence of God is a comfort in our worship. God told Moses, ". . . in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee" (Exodus 20:24). When the directions for the tabernacle were given to Moses concerning the mercy seat, God told Moses, "And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee . . ." (Exodus 25:22). The Lord told the disciples, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). The Holy Spirit wrote through Paul, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own" (1 Corinthians 6:19). And in later revelation, ". . . which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). By His omnipresence God is everywhere, but to His people He is ever present in a special way (in them), accepting their worship and praise as it is offered up to God. As the living God He converses with us, and we with Him, by the indwelling Spirit of Christ which is the life of God in us.

The omnipresence of God is a comfort in all our service to God. When Moses was to go to Pharaoh to deliver the Israelites he said, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent" (Exodus 4:10), and the Lord's reply was, "Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say" (Exodus 4:12). When the Lord sent the disciples out to teach all nations, He said, ". . . and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20). When Paul was to go to Rome, and the ship was being tossed upon the sea, he relates this, "For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul; . . ." (Acts 27:23,24). It is the presence of God that scatters by its light the darkness of our spirits, and is the cause of what is done for His glory in the world. It is the presence of God from which springs all the assistance of His people to stand true to the faith amidst all opposition from the enemy.

God's presence is manifest in His perfections as the necessity requires. If we need wisdom, His wisdom directs us for His own honor; if we need relief from misery, His goodness is supplied; if we are weak, His power is ours; if we are suffering, His grace sustains us; and if we are downcast, His rejoicing is supplied to us.

We are to be much in actual thought of the indwelling presence of God. We should enrich our understanding of this truth. What are wisdom, mercy, goodness, grace, and power at a distance from us? **May we not imagine God sitting on a throne in heaven only, but in us**, and on the throne of our heart. If the indwelling presence of God is not deeply imprinted in our minds and hearts our personal religion will grow faint and feeble. Who would fear that God that is not imagined to be witness of his actions? Who would worship a God at a distance from the worshipper? Believe this truth of God's indwelling presence, but not with an idle faith, believe it with all our heart. Just as

wherever a fish moves it is in the water, or a bird moves it is in the air, so wheresoever we move, we are in God. There is not a moment that we are out of His presence. One writer asked the questions: How shall we do to be serious? Mind the presence of God. How shall we avoid distractions in worship and service? Think of God's presence. How shall we resist temptations? Oppose to them in the presence of God.

God's presence in us is a shield against all temptations. God is present, is enough to blunt all the weapons of hell. The actuated faith of God's indwelling presence will stifle the fiery darts of Satan. God is as near to observe us, as the devil is to solicit us, yea, nearer; the devil stands by us, God is in us; we may have a thought the devil does not know, but never a thought but God is actually present with us and knows. David said, "I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved" (Psalm 16:8). Paul said, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11).

God's presence leads us to holy actions. What man would do an unholy act in the presence of a prince? Why would a believer do an unholy action knowing he is in the presence of Christ, and Christ is in him? "I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies: for all my ways are before thee" (Psalm 119:168). Job said, "Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps" (Job 31:4). God said to Abram, ". . . I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Genesis 17:1). Jacob awakening out of sleep said, ". . . Surely the LORD is in this place: and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (Genesis 28:16,17). If we consider that communion with God is chiefly ordering our ways in the presence of Him who is invisible, it will make us watchful in our passions, and spiritual in our walk. God is everywhere about us, therefore should not God's seeing us have the same influence on us as our seeing God? God is not more essentially present if He should so manifest Himself to us, than when He does not.

Let us endeavor for more of the sensible presence of the indwelling Christ in our life. Let His presence be the ground of our reverence before Him, and let His gracious presence influence our life. Without His presence we signify nothing, because without His presence indwelling us we differ not from devils who also know His essential presence, and if we have no more, we shall be no better. May God's indwelling presence be our portion, our desire, our life, and our continual blessing all our days.