

Jan 13th 2013: "Closer Than The Air We Breathe" Psalm 139:7-12

Our God is Omniscient—He has total and absolute knowledge. That was the message that we took from Psalm 139 last Sunday. Today we turn once again to Psalm 139 to discover that another attribute of God is His Omnipresence. He has this powerful and Divine quality of being everywhere, in all His fullness, all the time, and Psalm 139 specifically applies this to His personal presence with human beings like us.

Now this is a truly incredible thought. That creator God would deign to be that close to us on a permanent basis. I recall a service back in 2011 when Lex draw our attention to a verse about God's voice in Isaiah 30:21 that says:-

Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

Yet this is no less than what we would expect of a God whom we address as Almighty Father. For a God who is only there for us in certain places or at certain times wouldn't be the God revealed to us in His Word. If you could only make contact with Him in a church, or a Temple, or in a particular country, or within a set daily time frame it would be terrible.

Thankfully God is always closer to each one of us than the air we breathe. A fact that David described from his own personal viewpoint in Psalm 139:7-12

Where can I go from your Spirit?

Where can I flee from your presence?

⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,

¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.

¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"

¹² even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

At first glance it seems that David is trying to get away from God here, but that is far from the case. He is excited about the fact that there is no place he could even think of being where God would not be with him. From the heights of heaven to the lowest depths of all, God's presence is there. When he talks about rising on the wings of the dawn in v9 and moving to the far side of the sea he is referring to travelling on the speed of the sunlight, yet still the omnipresent God keeps pace with him, for none can outrun God.

And the reason David is excited about this is, as he points out in v10, God is constantly with him to guide him and to keep him safe with His right hand of mighty power. And he had experienced the reality of that so many times, from his battle against Goliath when God had guided him to trust in stones from a brook rather than the armour of the king, to the numerous times that the deranged king Saul had nearly captured and killed him.

God had sought David out for Himself and David valued more than anything else this connection he had with the awesome God of Israel, and that there was no place where God would not be with him.

And it may well be the case that David's mention of the darkness in v11 and 12 is a reference to the times when he felt that his sins had cut him off from his holy God only to find that God knew all he had done and was beside him still, offering forgiveness and re-instatement.

So God was constantly with David, but the question for us is, does this still apply for human beings today, and the answer is yes. God is still omnipresent and is still near to the heart of every person. But many gain little benefit from that because although He is alongside them to bless, protect, save and keep them, He expects them to respond to Him as to their God. And sadly, many refuse to relate to Him as Almighty God and will not reach out in surrender of themselves to Him.

Rather like a person who has electricity connected to their home but refuses to use it because they don't understand it or want to pay the charges connected to using it. Now you can get by quite well without electricity, but you will miss out on so much in this life without God and be absolutely without hope in the next.

But there are also those who have a problem with a God who is close to them because they know what He wants them to do, but just don't want to do it. People who reckon they can hide from God.

In the Bible we read of a few people like that. For instance see if you can work out who this one is:-

1. I am stuck someplace where I don't want to be.
2. I am absolutely surprised and devastated to find myself here.
3. I know that I only have myself to blame for my current situation.
4. I'm astounded that I am still alive but surely death is imminent.
5. I've disobeyed God and ran away but yet I sense He is with me
6. So I pray, He hears me, and I'm vomited up on to dry ground.

Are you just a little like that this morning. You are aware that God wants you to walk in a certain manner through this life but you are fighting against it. Or there is something He is calling you to do that will mean complete trust in Him on your part and it's so scary to even contemplate. Or perhaps there is something He wants you to stop doing but it's all too hard. And like Jonah you don't want to go along with God's desires, and

sometimes you too want to run away from His presence. So you think about avoiding church, or Christians, or the Bible, but you can't get away from God. You can't get away from His Spirit or His presence.

Your best response is to go along with the desires of the ever present God, for straight away you will be blessed by the positive impact of His omnipresence.

You see that is the wonder of God's omnipresence. He is constantly with us for our comfort, enabling, protection, guidance, keeping and strengthening.

Think of the promise found in Isaiah 43 made first to Israel but stands just as true for us.

***But now, this is what the LORD says—
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:
"Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have summoned you by name; you are mine.
² When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers,
they will not sweep over you.***

Or think of what Jesus said to His disciples about the Holy Spirit in John 14:15-17

¹⁵ "If you love me, you will obey what I command. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

Then of course there is the promise that Jesus made about His own ongoing presence with those who follow Him and seek actively after the extension of His Kingdom, which we find in Matthew 28:19-20

¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Now when I was at Sunday School that verse was always quoted in the King James Version which has Jesus saying:- ***"and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."***

And it always reminded me of a story told about the missionary pilots in New Guinea who have to land and take off from some extremely dangerous airports in order to ferry the missionaries from mission station to mission station. Also the flying conditions once they are airborne are subject to speedy deterioration.

Consequently the missionaries are often a little fearful when flying from place to place. So it was that on one occasion when the missionary was obviously rather scared, the pilot said to him. "Why are you so fearful when Jesus said that he would be with you always?" Quick as a flash the Missionary replied by using the King James version and saying.... "But the verse says Lo I am with you always, it doesn't say anything about being off the ground".

The absolutely glorious thing is that God is with us everywhere. In the very dark places of the soul when we hit the lowest depths, and in the most joyous moments of life when we reach the heights, and in every place in between, God is with us.

We can't see Him, and we won't always sense His presence, but His promise is that He is with us. A promise he is unable to break because God is indeed our Omnipresent God.

