

THE GOD WHO IS NOW HERE

PS. 139:7-12

Armando Quervo couldn't stand it anymore. Now Armando wasn't normally a man who was unfamiliar with problems. I mean he traded oil on the International Market from his firm in Columbus, Ohio, so he was used to overcoming obstacles. But he had never faced anything quite like this. Armando's young son, Andrew, had colic. Every single night, he would lay in his crib and scream and cry, arching his back, stretching out his arms and legs. At first, Armando and his wife, Kathy, were beside themselves with compassion and concern for their young son's discomfort. But now, after 2 weeks of not sleeping a wink all night, every night, they were beside themselves. Armando just couldn't take it anymore. So, at 2:30 A.M., he picked up the phone and called their son's pediatrician. The doctor tried to calm Armando down, but he soon realized that it was no use. Armando was at the end of his rope. He had to have some help, now. So, finally, the pediatrician gave to Armando the location of an all night clinic that he could take his son to. The doctor would call ahead and make arrangements for the young boy's care.

Kathy and Armando packed their screaming son into the car, and began to drive off to the clinic. At 2:40 in the morning, there weren't very many cars on the road, so they were making good time. But as they drove along, an amazing thing happened. Young Andrew stopped crying, and fell asleep. Imagine their embarrassment as they arrived at the clinic, having disturbed their pediatrician from his night's sleep, having a crew of physicians waiting for their emergency, only to have their son sleeping peacefully in the car seat.

It was that trip that started Armando thinking. Now, a decade later, there is a product on the market that advertises itself especially for colicky babies. The product is called "sleep tight". Armando Quervo is the designer of this product and it is marketed by Ross Laboratories in Ohio. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development has finished a 3 year research project on this very product and has published their report on this device. In their report they say that 97% of colicky infants were calmed by Armando's device, 85% within just 4 minutes. The device is really rather simple. It is a small machine that mounts on a child's crib. It is outwardly unimpressive, but it sure seems to work. It works by making noises- lulling vibrations, swishing sounds. You know, it sounds very much like a ride in a car.

What is it about Armando Quervo's invention that seems to calm young infants? Who can know for sure? But part of the Sleep Tight's charm might be found in the fact that it comforts the child with its presence. The infant does not feel alone. The baby has some company in its discomfort to soothe and calm.

Almost every creature that God has created finds pleasure and comfort in the company of others. But there are times when it is impossible to be with others- when one must inevitably be alone, all alone. It is

important for each of us to realize that even during these times of solitude, we are never really alone. For God is always with us. He is always with us because by his very nature he is omnipresent- everywhere in the fullness of his being, all of the time.

Last week, we began a study looking at 6 pictures of God found in Psalm 139. At that time, we saw God presented in the first 6 verses as the one who is perfect in knowledge. He knows our actions, he knows our thoughts, he knows our ways, he knows the words on our tongues before we even speak them. David sums up God's knowledge by saying, "such knowledge is too wonderful for me." vs. 6.

Now closely connected with God's knowing all things in the Bible - is the fact that God is omnipresent- everywhere all the time. In part, God is able to know all things, because he is everywhere, all the time, observing everything that is happening. So it does not surprise us that David goes on in verse 7 to talk about God's ability to fill his created universe with his presence. Notice his words as we read them together.

READ Ps. 139:7-12

PS 139:7 Where can I go from your Spirit?

Where can I flee from your presence?

PS 139:8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

PS 139:9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,

PS 139:10 even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.

PS 139:11 If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,"

PS 139:12 even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

1. David begins this section by asking a rhetorical question. "Where can I go from your Spirit?" The obvious answer from the context is nowhere. We can go nowhere to escape the presence of God, because God is now here- filling the universe with his presence.

*God is in the heavens-if I go up to the heavens, you are there.

*God is in the depths of the earth- if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. The term depths is actually the Hebrew word for sheol, the place where the spirits of those who had died went in the O.T. times. David makes no distinction between believers or unbelievers here, even though there were 2 sections of sheol. One, Abraham's Bosom for believers- the other, for unbelievers. The indication is that God is even present in our afterlife state. It is interesting for us to realize that even though Hell is by definition being

separated from fellowship with God, God's presence is still there. Even though nobody there will have an awareness of it or be comforted by it, God still will know what is happening all of the time- he is everywhere present and knows all things.

*God is there to supervise the dawn of a new day- if I rise on the wings of the dawn, you are there.

*If we were to travel across the widest ocean, we would still find the presence of God there- if I settle on the far side of the sea, you are there.

*The darkness of night does not hide his presence- even the darkness will not be dark to you.

*the conclusion- there is no situation that exists which is outside the realm of God's presence. He is everywhere.

Now there are some misconceptions that people have concerning the omnipresence of God simply because our minds are too inadequate to fully grasp God's the completeness of God's being.

a. an ancient heresy called Socinianism that is still advocated by some today said that the fullness of God's presence is in heaven, while the radiation of his power is felt here on the earth. It is as if God is like the sun. The sun is a great heavenly body with a diameter of about 865,000 miles. If the sun were a glass bowl, it would take more than a million earths to fill it up. And as we know, the sun is composed of hot gases. The temperature at the surface of the sun is about 11,000 degrees Fahrenheit. We know that it is a little bit warmer today than it was a couple of decades ago being the major contributor to what many are calling "global warming". The sun has so much energy that it emits the equivalent of 54,000 horsepower for every man, woman and child upon this earth, continually. But we receive only 2 billionths of the energy actually sent out from the sun on this earth. Just because of the vastness of the sun in comparison to the earth, we continue to be under its influence every day. Every day, we receive our light from the sun. Every day, we feel the warmth of its rays. Every day, the sun's energy is stored in the food that grows. The sun is a heavenly body way out there, almost 93 million miles from the earth. But its power is so great that we feel it even though we are far from it.

Some follow the ancient Socinians in looking at God in the same way. He is like the sun. He is seated on his throne in the heavens. But he is so great and mighty that his power, his energy, his warmth can be felt all the way down here on the earth. So God is everywhere in the sense that his power can be felt everywhere, they claim.

Now even though the Bible does admit that God is seated on his throne in the heavens, this teaching is not what is meant by his omnipresent nature. David, the Psalmist, was speaking of the presence of the person of God in this psalm. If I go up to the heavens, if I make my bed in sheol- you are there. Not just your power, but **you** are there.

b. Another common misconception of God is that he is diffused throughout his universe. Much like air or some other gas is diffused into the space available for it.

We know that if we were to take this sanctuary and either squeeze it in or expand it out without letting any of the air escape, the air within it would either become more pressurized as we squeezed it in or it would expand to fill the available space if we expanded it. The greater the expanse, the less dense the air would be, diffusing out into every corner of the building.

Some view God in this way. They feel that God is diffused throughout his universe, spread out everywhere so that a little part of him is everywhere. Pantheists who worship everything as being gods- the rocks, the trees, the rivers, every creature- often have such a view that everything is a little part of God because he is diffused throughout his creation. Many today who advocate a New Age Theology have this view.

This is not the Biblical teaching concerning God's omnipresence. Even though God is everywhere, filling his creation with his presence, He still remains distinct from his creation. He is able to do this because he is spiritual by nature. God is a spirit. Everything in the created universe is material, matter. So God is in a different dimension than that which he has created.

Augustus Strong gives a clear definition of God's omnipresence in his theology when he writes, "By God omnipresence, we mean that God, in the totality of his essence, without diffusion or expansion, without multiplication or division, penetrates and fills the universe in all its parts."

Now if you can't completely comprehend the omnipresence of God, you very likely have a Biblical understanding of it. For nobody completely understands the nature of God. God is beyond our comprehension.

2. Now what practical application does God's omnipresent nature have to our daily lives? There are many applications that we could talk about- but let's notice the 2 that David the Psalmist brings to our attention in this passage. They are found in verse 10

PS 139:10 even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.

a. the first is found in the guidance that is available because of God's omnipresent nature. Because God is everywhere in the fullness of his being, He is able to lead and guide his people all the time through their earthly journey. David says that wherever he might be, "even there your hand will guide me."

The Hebrew word that David uses here is a picturesque one. It literally means to herd a flock. David, of course, was very familiar with the common Jewish occupation of being a shepherd. During his younger, teenage years, he spent countless hours shepherding the flocks of his household. David knew the necessity

of moving from pasture to pasture because of the Palestinian climate. The sheep would not make such journeys on their own. But the shepherd was familiar with the landscape- he had been all over the country. So he would lead the sheep for their own good, and as he did so, the sheep would prosper. David realized the analogy between shepherding his flocks and following the guidance of the Lord, and he wrote about the Lord being his shepherd and leading him in paths of righteousness in Psalm 23. And this terminology became quite common in O.T. poetry. In Psalm 78:52, 53 we read, "But he brought his people out like a flock; he led them like sheep thru the desert. He guided them (same word) safely, so they were unafraid."

You see, one of the blessings of the omnipresence of God is that he is always with us to guide us, and he being everywhere knows the best path for us to take in life. It is one thing to have someone tell you directions to get somewhere. It is far better to have them personally lead you to your destination.

God not only gives us directions for life in His inspired Word, but He also by His very nature is with us all of the time to lead us and guide us in the path to take. All we have to do is listen to his directions and be willing to follow them.

b. But David also found **security** in the omnipresence of God. He concludes verse 10 by saying, "your right hand will hold me fast." Because God is with us all the time in the fullness of his being, we have the confidence that we are never outside the realm of his care.

Jesus used this same personified figure of speech in his famous allegory depicting himself as the good shepherd in John 10. He said, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my father's hand." John 10:27-29. What a beautiful picture Christ portrays for us with his words. Those who follow Jesus Christ, those who have entrusted their lives to him are pictured as sheep in his flock. Christ says of these that he has hold of them in his hand. And if that weren't secure enough, he also says that they are secure in his Father's hand as well. Doubly secure. Safe in the grasp of Jesus Christ, and safe in the hold of God the Father. Because of the omnipresent nature of God, the believer has the confidence of an ever present guide, and the security of an ever present comfort to hold and protect him. "even there you hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast."

We find the omnipresence of God pictured in a very practical way during the days when the Israelites were being delivered from the nation of Egypt. In fact, these very Hebrew words that are used here by David in Psalm 139, were also used by Moses in referring to the great blessing that God gave to them at that time. The Israelites were excited about their newfound freedom as they left the Egyptian borders, but they also had some concerns as well. After all, none of them except for their leader Moses had ever been outside of the

borders of Egypt. And Moses, himself, had never been thru the Negev up into the land of Palestine. How were they to know what direction to take? How could they be sure that they wouldn't get lost?

Don't worry, God said. As the omnipresent God, He would lead them to their destination and would always be with them to grant them comfort and security. They would never be outside of his presence. He would hold them in his hand. And in order to give to them something tangible, something that they could see and feel to illustrate his presence, God provided 2 miraculous provisions for the children of Israel. Listen to what we read in Exodus 13:21- "By day, the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them (there's the same word used in Psalm 139) on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night."

God did not intend to deliver them from the Egyptians just to leave them to wander around aimlessly in the desert. No, as the omnipresent God, he would not let them down now. So he revealed his presence continually with them in a very tangible way. Whenever they wondered about which way to go, all they would have to do is look up and they would get direction from above. When the cloud or pillar of fire stood still, it was God's indication that they were to camp. When the cloud or fire moved forward, all they had to do was follow it, and they would never get lost. God provided continual guidance for them in the cloud by day and the pillar of cloud by night.

But there was also another provision that is often overlooked in God omnipresent provision for his people. One of the distinguishing features of the Negev wilderness thru which the Israelites were travelling is the extreme temperatures. During the day, the heat becomes unbearable. But just as quickly at night, the sand releases its heat, and the temperature drops to uncomfortable coolness. These people had never experienced such extremes in climate before. But the people were not to worry. God had them safe in his hand, and he would comfort them with his presence. The cloud by day would shield them from the blazing sun above. I believe that the cloud was just big enough so that the entire Israelite nation could walk in its shadow. And the pillar of fire at night would knock the chill off of the air to provide comfort for them. Imagine, the world's biggest space heater. God continually assured his people of his presence with them. And that presence in the cloud and fire would guide them, and would hold them giving comfort and security.

God has not changed in his nature during the past centuries. He remains the same God yesterday, today and forever. And even though his presence is not in visible form in a cloud or pillar of fire today, his presence is just as real now as it was 3,500 years ago. God fills the universe with his presence- He is everywhere in the fullness of his being all of the time. The Bible reveals to us that this is the nature of God.

And we, just like the Israelites of old, only need to look up, to seek his fellowship, to acknowledge his presence with us. When we do, He will give to us the guidance that we need and the assurance that we are

in his grasp. It doesn't matter where we are- whether we are in church or home, car or work, U.S.A or the South Pole- because the God of the Bible is omnipresent. He fills the universe with the fullness of his presence.