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The Omnipresence of God

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

As embodied beings, we are limited by space and time. When confronted with competing demands on our time, we often excuse ourselves by stating that we can't be in two places at once. God, however, can be in two places at once. In fact, He is everywhere at once. In this lesson, Dr. Lawson unfolds the biblical teaching of God's omnipresence, demonstrating that there is no place in heaven or hell, nor the entire universe, where God is not present in the fullness of His being.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Psalm 139:7–10; Jeremiah 23:23–25

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

1. To explore the significance of God's unbounded presence
2. To correct misunderstandings about the nature of God's omnipresence
3. To demonstrate how an understanding of God's omnipresence can comfort Christians experiencing hardships

QUOTATIONS

If God be infinite, he is omnipresent. Suppose him infinite, and then suppose there is anything besides himself, and his presence with that thing, wherever it be, doth necessarily follow; for if he be so bounded as to be in his essence distant from anything, he is not infinite.

—John Owen

Does the Lord turn Himself unto our prayer only after long delay? Is not He omnipresent? Is not every whispered and stammering prayer known to Him, before there is yet a word in the tongue?

—Abraham Kuyper

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. Everywhere Present

- A. The doctrine of divine omnipresence teaches that God is at the same time present in every part of the universe.
 - i. As a spiritual being, God does not experience spatial constraints and is not barred from any location.
 - ii. Moreover, when God is present in all places, He is present in the fullness of His being.
- B. The imagery of Psalm 139:7–10 encapsulates the comprehensive scope of God’s presence.
 - i. Whether one ascends to the highest point (heaven) or descends to the lowest point (Sheol), God is present.
 - ii. Whether one flees to the distant east (the wings of the morning) or to the distant west (the uttermost parts of the sea), God’s presence and influence are there still.

II. The Heights of Heaven

- A. God transcends human power and understanding.
- B. Scripture attests that God rules from the highest place.
 - i. The Lord is enthroned in the heavens (Ps. 123:1).
 - ii. God is exalted over all competitors, and He rules over all the earth (Ps. 97:9).
 - iii. God’s throne is high and lifted up (Isa. 6:1).
 - iv. God’s throne room is in heaven (Rev. 4:1–2).
- C. Christians in all places and times can trust in the knowledge that their God is in absolute control and is actively at work in their lives.

III. Near the Earth

- A. The God who is exalted on high (transcendent) is also present with His people (immanent).
- B. Scripture affirms God’s commitment to His creation and His people.
 - i. God accompanies His people in the valley of the shadow of death (Ps. 23:4).
 - ii. God is present on earth and in heaven (Deut. 4:39).
 - iii. God dwells both in the high places and with the humble and lowly (Isa. 57:15).
 - iv. God will be with His children to the end of the age (Matt. 28:20), never leaving or forsaking them (Heb. 13:5).

IV. The Depths of Hell

- A. It is God Himself who administers divine wrath in hell.
 - i. Revelation 14:10 describes eternal punishment taking place “in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.”

- ii. Although hell is sometimes described as a place where God is absent, He will be all too real to those who experience His judgment there.
- iii. Despite being present in hell, God will turn His countenance—His gaze of blessing—away from hell’s inhabitants.

V. Concluding Thoughts

- A. The doctrine of God’s omnipresence offers tremendous encouragement.
 - i. God is with us in the midst of trial and adversity.
 - ii. God is committed to His people.
 - iii. Since God alone is omnipresent, Satan is spatially finite and must rely upon his minions to wage spiritual warfare.
- B. The doctrine of divine omnipresence also offers a grave warning.
 - i. Those who oppose God can never flee from Him.
 - ii. Those who experience God’s common grace but do not respond in faith will one day experience only divine wrath.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Hell is the one place where God withholds His presence.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. The Latin word *omni* means _____.
 - a. Present
 - b. Powerful
 - c. Unlimited
 - d. All
3. Concerning God’s omnipresence, all of the following are true *except* _____.
 - a. He is equally accessible to all believers at all times
 - b. The grave cannot separate individuals from Him
 - c. At the incarnation, the Son of God gave up His ability to be present everywhere
 - d. His sovereignty includes both His immanence and His transcendence
4. It is Satan who carries out vengeance on the unbeliever in hell.
 - a. True
 - b. False

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. At the beginning of the lesson, Dr. Lawson quotes Richard Sibbes, who said, “How shall the finite comprehend the infinite? We shall apprehend Him but not comprehend Him.” What does it mean to apprehend but not comprehend God?
2. In what ways is God’s omnipresence great news for believers and terrifying news for unbelievers?
3. In a previous lesson on God’s sovereignty, Dr. Lawson mentioned that many Christians live in fear of Satan. How can a proper understanding of God’s omnipresence help to overcome this fear?
4. Is there a time in your own life when you have felt particularly distant from God? How can you understand such an experience in light of this lesson?