

The Ever Present Lord

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Date: 11 August 2022

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[0 : 00] I'm going to continue singing in Psalm 139 at verse 11.

Psalm 139 at verse 11. If I do say that darkness shall be covered from thy sight, then surely shall the very night above me be as light.

The darkness hideth not from thee, but night doth shine as day. To thee the darkness and the light are both alike always. For thou possessed hast my reins, and thou hast covered me.

When I within my mother's womb enclosed was by thee, thee will I praise, for fearfully and strangely made I am.

Thy works are marvellous and right well, and my soul doth know the same. My substance was not hid from thee, when as in secret I was made, and in earth's at lowest parts was wrought most curiously.

[1 : 08] Thine eyes my substance did behold, yet being unperfect, and in the volume of thy book my members all were fit.

We can sing these verses. Psalm 139 from verse 11. If I do say that darkness shall be covered from thy sight.

If I do say that darkness shall be covered from thy sight, Then surely shall the very night, Then surely shall the very night, The light may be the night, Yet darkness hath not from thee, The night shall shine the sea, To thee the darkness hath not from thee,

The night shall hold the night away, For thou possess the night, For thou possess the night, Thus my wings come, The night shall cover me, When I within my manner, And close and close by thee, The night shall float.

The night shall attack. Thy will thy place, The incident shall hath not from thee, The night shall delight thee, rolling durchs my mind, Thy roar thon, The dü■ün might result of that you are?

[3 : 49] Right where my soul doth know the same, My substance was not different from thee, When else your spirit high Was mere and tender to earth are, Was produced generously.

I die, my substance, take it home. Yet being young, fair play, a devil of all will not die through.

My name is all on my way. We return to the passage read, Matthew's Gospel, chapter 18.

We can read again at verse 20. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

There am I in the midst of them. We have been singing the words of Psalm 139. And it is a psalm, I'm sure many of you are familiar with it, that speaks particularly of the omniscience of God.

[6 : 05] And the psalmist, while he elaborates on what that means, is someone who is clearly in awe of it.

Even before he was born, God knew him with an intimacy that surprises the human intellect.

A knowledge that defies human reason. And yet no matter how remarkable the truth is, without it being equally true of God, that he is not only omniscient, that he is omnipresent, that he is omnipotent, and many other attributes that accompany these attributes.

and without them being harnessed into the passion of the divine being, without beginning, without end, that it would not be possible for God, speaking with all respect to what is revealed to us about God, it would not be possible of God, for God to be what he is, without all these attributes working as one within the one being.

I think one of the Puritans, Richard Sibbes, he summarises it with these words, if it were not so that within that thought, with all that fills the all of God, must needs be understood, that the God who fills all, must see all and know all.

[8 : 26] take away any one of these things, and God would cease to be God. God's power would be diminished greatly, if he was ignorant of any one thing, whether that thing is past, present or future, you could not consider God to be God, as he has revealed himself to be.

And we cannot separate what God knows from God's power. And equally so, if he is absent from anywhere at any given moment, then it cannot be possible for him to know all that is happening, where he is not to be found.

Now, at the heart of our text, the text that we have taken from Matthew's Gospel, which is found in a particular context, that speaks of God's purposes in salvation, through his Son, God's mercy, and how it is elevated, and God's justice, as it is executed in the face of all who refuse that mercy.

Christ speaks of this thing, his own presence, and those who are to be found in his presence, that they can comfortably understand that they are present, in the presence of God.

Tonight, we are in the presence of God. We are used enough to thinking along these lines. We come to God's house, where we would expect God to be.

[10 : 40] We come to the prayer meeting, where we would expect God to be. And yet, their expectations, what do we base them on?

Is it because that we are in his house, that we expect him to be present? Or that we are engaged in an act of worship? Or that we are met together with his people?

Very often, this passage, this verse, may be referred to, where two or three are gathered together in my name. There am I in the midst of them.

Does that mean that what we are to understand by that verse is that Christ or God is not present if the gathering is not in his name?

Is Christ not present, or is God not present if we are involved in some other activity? Well, that's not what Christ means us to understand.

[11 : 48] As I said, he is always present. He is ever present. Everywhere, he is present. And we can cite several passages from the scripture that encourages us to believe that.

But my question is, how open are we to that thought that we are in God's presence?

That we are in God's presence in a way where his presence makes itself known to us. And that we act in light of the experience of being in his presence.

As souls who know what that means. That we are not simply dependent upon past experience or even an understanding of what the word of God says to us.

And neither of these things are to be despised. They are important. But are we here expecting to be in the presence of God?

[13 : 10] And in some way if we do not experience the presence of God do we find ourselves feeling that there is something lacking?

Now we know the scripture says that God is omnipresent. the psalm that we have been singing requires us to believe that his knowledge is so complete that there cannot be a place where he is not to be found.

Even given the intimacy of some of the things that he speaks of his knowledge requires him to be present everywhere.

but would it not be better for us to come away from this place knowing that we were in the presence of God?

Perhaps your answer would be surely we live by faith and not by sight. Surely we can't go by our feelings.

[14 : 25] I was thinking of this the words of Martin Luther that are attributed to him. Anyway feelings come and feelings go and feelings are deceiving.

My warrant is the word of God not else is worth believing. so if I warrant this God's word then why do we need the experience?

Why do we need the confirmation of knowing in my heart of hearts that I was in the presence of God this evening? That the God whose presence is certified by his word made that presence known to me?

Well I think that it is not only something that must be true of us that we know intellectually what God's word teaches us concerning himself but there is a dimension to our experience that must be there that is not just an intellectual exercise it must be something to know the truth personally and to experience the truth I'm not going to insist on it but I would like you to think about it anyway let me suggest to you some examples from the scripture that speak to us of the importance of the presence of God to the believer beginning with this verse that we have before us while it may not always be the case

God's people gathered together in the name of Christ can be assured of the presence of God in a meaningful way you can be persuaded that where two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ that Christ has promised to be in the midst and the promise of his presence to his people because they are his people is precious but you can speak for yourself are you at every given opportunity in the presence of God's people knowingly in the company of God's people assured of the presence of Christ in that company are you somebody who is conscious in your heart of hearts that Christ has made himself known to you in that company there are many promises that we find in the scripture particularly in the psalms that bring to our attention the nature of God's blessing for his people promises that he makes that help us understand how important the presence of God is to his people or the presence of Christ to his people and very often these promises that we can allude to perhaps identify they are most precious when they are fulfilled when the child of

[18 : 21] God is being tried or tested now many of the psalms that we can go to there is a promise contained there that the people of God hold dear when they have have trial or difficulty God is a refuge and our strength in straits at present aid therefore although the earth be moved we will not be afraid psalm psalm 46 we go on to sing in that psalm words that remind us of the importance that is to the child of God of knowing not just the promise but the comforting consolation that the word of God brings in in unison with the word being realized what do I mean you know very often when we when we try and minister to people you as a

Christian you can try and come alongside a Christian who is perhaps grieving or a Christian who is trembling as far as their faith is concerned and you come alongside them as you should as a Christian and as a Christian you bring God's word to bear upon their circumstances and sometimes you find yourself you're grasping for truth that is meaningful and even when you find a truth that you think is meaningful it feels hollow to you because the truth you want to bring to bear upon that situation needs the presence of Christ to make it more efficacious and sometimes you find yourself and you just surrender yourself to God and say well it's your word make this word what it is make it what it is meant to be the source of strength and encouragement and ban to the hurt if it is required because the word even though it is the word of

God and it's nothing less than that you find that you want God to be present taking that word and applying it in a way that is meaningful you know that Psalm 46 we mentioned there you find the psalmist speak the truth in a way in a way that clearly helps you understand that that he understands the significance of God's word God in the midst of her death dwell nothing shall her remove the Lord to her her and helper will and that right early prove you know these words but the help of God explained the help of God applied in a way that that God means us to understand this is what I am doing and I am using sometimes the instrumentality of the hands of a fellow believer so be it but God is there it's as if he means us to understand that this is what he has purposed for us in Psalm 148 again the psalmist speaks about his own presence he reminds us of the way that he works his people's horn the praise of all his saints exalted even

Israel see the people people near to him the Lord praise ye you might go past that word quickly a people near to him and he near to them the close proximity of God in their need is all important and I think that it is important for us to understand the significance of the presence of God in a tangible way I am not trying in any way to undermine or to negate the importance of God's word and the promises that the word brings to us but if our life is made up simply of past experiences of God's people and the history of

God's church without ever encountering for ourselves these experiences of God's promises being fulfilled in our life then our life would be lacking Joshua was given a promise by God he was told by God as I was with Moses so I will be with you I will not fail you nor forsake you now do you think Joshua was going to be happy with looking over his shoulder at the way God worked in the life of Moses would he be just content to say oh well I have Moses as God for myself I know Moses as God I have the promises that

[24 : 47] God made to Moses and these promises came to me but surely Joshua would expect the same experiences or some measure of these experiences for himself that he could understand and appreciate as being God's doing one thing of concern to us is that if the promise is being fulfilled why are we not seeing the promise as being fulfilled we don't doubt the peracety of the truth we don't doubt the promise we don't doubt that God has said he would do things but how often are we in the privileged position of being able to speak passionately about our experiences speak passionately about the nature of

God's dealings with ourselves that we could not and cannot but explain us be God with us in that very particular way the preacher E.W.

to sir speaking on passages from the epistle to the Hebrews and he's talking about the way God works in the life of the believer in different passages from that and in so doing he quotes one thing that is true about the child of God somebody else quoted it as well I came across it when I was looking at this passage the quotation from Augustine you have made us for yourself O Lord and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in thee and please Pascal there is a God shaped void in our hearts that only God can fill now that's a description of the experience of the believer what does it describe well it describes the longing that is in the heart of the believer for

God it describes the experience that every believer has for God Pascal or Augustine they understand only God can meet this need and when God creates that need only he himself can meet that need now that is not satisfied entirely at the moment of regeneration because if that is so then our gathering tonight would be pointless if the people present here tonight are born again of the spirit of God you had your encounter with Christ close the book you don't need any more experiences of Christ companionship company blessing upon your life whatever it may be you've had the best he's given you salvation you don't need any more is that right no not at all there's no way on earth that you could argue like that now what

Tozer goes on to say he speaks of three things in particular and he says first of all that there is what is true about a person all sinners he says that there is a moral bankruptcy of the human soul that only Christ can deal with a moral bankruptcy of the soul that's the human condition through an encounter with Christ that deficit is dealt with the second thing he says is the foul scent of sin which surrounds us and again our sinfulness we're aware of as Christians when we came to know Christ we came to know Christ as sinners in need of redemption and the sin that so blighted of humanity we understood

[29 : 43] Christ alone could deal with it and so he did and the third thing and he says this and I believe it is quite true the last concept of the majesty of God the last concept of the majesty of God only Christ can restore it and Christ in fact does restore it he introduces us to that God that we did not know and could not know without his own agency and when he introduced us to God and we been to know God we saw a God who was high and lifted up now the world and unfortunately much of the theology that is in the world deprives

God of that majesty and only Christ can help us overcome that you know that last one maybe I can expand on how how Tozer sees it he says and it's quite unusual the way he approaches things very often he says when the sinner sins or sinned they fell from their relationship with God and this world in which we live has from that point on it has deprived man of the image of

God as much as they are able to do that because God created man in his own image you'll remember that when he found that image was lost defaced either totally or mostly and when you look at the way the world looks at man historically man has been constantly undermined as someone who has instead of being the pinnacle of God's creation bearing the image of God they are now the naked ape they are now the co-equal of their creatures who occupy this world with them and God is overlooked and forgotten because he is not any longer in the eyes of the world a

God who is a creator if he is God at all now what has that got to do with the need that we have for God to make himself known to us in our fellowship in our gatherings in his name the intimacy that we would desire to have with him should fill our hearts because we want exposure to this God we want fellowship with this God we want a greater knowledge of this God we should hunger and thirst after this God to be in our company and for him to reveal himself to us and we ask the question is that the way we are perhaps another area where we can ask questions of ourselves is you remind yourself of this fact that there are occasions in the scripture where you find for whatever reason the knowledge of

God is diminished that's not quite I would want to put it but for example remember Jacob when he dreamed and a ladder went from the world to the heavens and when he awoke from his dream in chapter 28 of Genesis this is what he said behold I am with thee and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest that was God's promise to him Jacob awakened out of his sleep and he 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 it's an unusual thing for somebody who knows

[35 : 13] God to say that God was in this place and he didn't know it why did he not know it was it possible that God was revealing himself to him as he always did or was he holding himself back from being recognized by Jacob sometimes God tests his people with such experiences he holds himself he's present but he's not present to our senses present to our spirit to our heart and soul in Isaiah where he the prophet dare say hast thou not known hast thou not heard that the everlasting

God the Lord the creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not neither is weary there is no searching of his understanding he can bow to the faint to them that have an almighty increase his strength even the youth shall faint and be weary and the young men shall utterly fall but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength they shall mount up with wings as eagles they shall run and not be weary they shall walk and not faint what could be clearer than that and yet Jacob's question that creates such a response is this my way is hid from the Lord my judgment is passed over from my God God's constant fulfillment of his promise is not in doubt but the experience of the church the experience of the believer is such that they are looking for scrabbling for sense of God a sight of God the experience of God is not dear to their senses later on in the same prophecy in chapter 59 we read that

God is saying or the prophet is saying concerning God behold the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save neither is here heavy that it cannot hear God hasn't changed his promises are the same but he says your iniquities have separated between you and your God and your sins have heard his face from you that he will not hear there are many such passages that tell you that there are occasions when God may choose to veil his face and withhold from you what is possibly rightfully yours as a child of this you look at the exact opposite of this when the believer is brought to heaven what do you find what is the prospect that lies in store for the believer well you read in revelations that everything that separates the believer from

God from fellowship with him from the experience of being in his company all of these things are no more revelation seven therefore are they before the throne of God serve him day and night in his temple he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them they shall hunger no more neither thirst any more neither shall the sun light done them not any heat for the lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them into fountains of living waters and God shall wipe away every tear from their eye headlights does that mean this is the heaven experience and we have no right to experience anything like it in this world Christ is saying that two or three are gathered in my name there am I in the midst of them so just a vague promise yes we can say Christ is here but we don't expect him to be here in a way that we can't say adios in a way that

I can see my friend or my husband or my wife here we can't afford to think like that Professor Finn listen I'm going to finish with this quotation from him he's speaking about the seven churches in revelations and the picture that we have there of Christ being in the middle of the seven candlesticks seven golden candlesticks and this is what he says any flickering of light any dimness of shining any wavering of testimony any concealment of truth any coldness of love was instantly observed and correctly judged by him who walked in their midst the defects of their witness might for a time be concealed from the eyes of men but he walked in the midst the example searching out and assessing the quality of their shining

[41 : 49] Christ in the midst of his people are we afraid of him being in our midst would we much prefer him to be at arm's length or are we content for him to be like the psalmist describes him with the all seeing eye of God upon us upon our lives upon our deepest and darkest secrets perhaps that's where we might find him revealing himself to us you know when you think about it it is not always a comfortable experience to be in the presence of God it's not always a comfortable experience some people speak as if it is speak as if it's a euphoric experience to know that God is there and to experience him being there but sometimes when he is there it is not to to wrap us in cotton hole as it were but to remind us that by his presence he is reminding us that his all seeing eye is upon us in our worship what does he see when he sees my heart tonight does he see a heart that is warm that is see a heart that is yearning that is see a heart that is crying out for for the heavens to be opened or does he see something that is as hard as the adamant you know just before

I came in I was thinking well there was a time in my life and I'm sure in your life when you came to the prayer meeting and whatever your thoughts were you were saying to yourself well I wonder I wonder if there's going to be anybody else here tonight that haven't been before are we going to see somebody make an indication of their interest in the things of God when did you last have such a thought when did you last come to the prayer meeting with such a thought in your heart maybe we're so used to going through the motions and as long as we manage to to contain ourselves within what is acceptable with content would it not be better for us to to have this desire for for a felt knowledge of the presence of God in the midst of his people reminding us that we're one of them reminding us that he's our

God and that what we have we have by reason of his mercy well may he bless to us these few thoughts let us pray we give thanks that we have such a desire to come to you not one of us can afford to think that a contrary thought might overtake us we pray that it would not just be that we follow the course of our ordinary midweek activities that we come to church that we join with God's people however fluid that joining may be but that we would come with hunger that we would come with desire that we would come most of all with the desire that you would meet with us and that you would fellowship with us and that you would reveal yourself to our souls grant mercy for our every transgression with regard to your holy things we ask all with forgiveness of sin in Christ

Amen we're concluding our service singing from the psalm that we had psalm 139 we're singing the last two verses in Gaelic psalm 139 at verse 22 22 phua emolan hugmygaeth gwybiach marg naid ymys rams ix mu e moch riu feng mos mwant yw ffeich jaraf mish ffe hyg ysafr cfe hyn ffe sli aing iol gam y chle ys awn syn tli hiori chor gwy jiro tror i mi foe y beat ôi poder su tar engine zo kan su if il mi if y k■r

Access – Burn as exams TWO The FASTaven Oh your face The discover Thank you.

[48 : 57] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.