

# UNIT 1: The Attributes of God

## Section 10: God's Presence

*Assigned Reading:*  
*A. W. Pink – The Attributes of God*  
*No Assigned Reading*

### Introduction:

Having discussed God's Aseity, Unity, and Immutability in our previous weeks, it is appropriate to move on in our discussion to attributes of God that are typically grouped together under the heading of God's Infinity or Infinitude. These help give fuller description of what we mean when we speak of God being "perfect" in His existence... He is not bound or restricted by anything, for everything is a creation of His. He is unlimited in regards to time, space, power, and knowledge. We'll be looking at each of these specifically in coming weeks: Eternality, Omnipresence, Omnipotence, and Omniscience.

<b>God's Infinity in Relation to:</b>			
<b>Time</b>	<b>Space</b>	<b>Matter</b>	<b>Quality</b>
<b>No beginning</b> <b>Uncreated</b> <b>Unbegotten</b> <b>Imperishable</b> <b>Immortal</b> <b>Everlasting</b>	<b>Infinite</b> <b>Uncircumscribed</b> <b>Boundless</b> <b>Infinite power</b>	<b>Simple</b> <b>Uncompounded</b> <b>Incorporeal</b> <b>Without flux</b>	<b>Passionless</b> <b>Unchangeable</b> <b>Unalterable</b> <b>Unseen</b>

This morning we will be studying God's Presence. Because God is infinite, He is not limited by space. **Wolfhart Pannenberg** explained, "Where as God's eternity means that all things are always present to Him, the stress in His omnipresence is that He is present to all things at the place of their existence."

**Q1:** What do we mean by "the presence of God?"

**Q2:** Is God really present *everywhere*?

**Q3:** What impact does this doctrine have on us?

### Outline:

#### **I. Defining God's Omnipresence**

##### *A. Various Theologians*

1. **Lit. present:** here, close to, next to; **omni:** universality, all, every
2. **Ryrie**, "Omnipresence means that God is everywhere present with His whole being at all times."
3. **Strong**, "God in the totality of His essence, without diffusion or expansion, multiplication or diffusion, penetrates the universe in all its parts."
4. **Grudem**, "God's omnipresence may be defined as follows: God does not have size or spatial dimensions and is present at every point of space with his whole being, yet God acts differently in different places."

5. Some have explained this as the Immensity of God. God is not limited in regards to space. All finite objects have “location.” They are somewhere, and where they are necessarily prevents their being somewhere else!
6. **Erikson**, “The greatness of finite objects is measured by how much space they occupy. With God, however, the question of whereness or location is not applicable. God is the one who brought space (and time) into being. He was before there was space... There can be plotting of God’s location on a set of coordinates.”

## B. Clarifications

1. This leads us to a discussion of God’s “immanence” and “transcendence.”
  - a. Immanence – God is everywhere
  - b. Transcendence – God is not anywhere – above/beyond...
  - c. **Jeremiah 23:23-24** "Am I a God who is near," declares the LORD, "And not a God far off? <sup>24</sup> "Can a man hide himself in hiding places So I do not see him?" declares the LORD. "Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?" declares the LORD.
  - d. **1 Kings 18:20-40** \*see v27
2. God “fills the universe” – but this is not to say that He is merely “larger in dimensions than the universe... God has no dimensions, He is w/o spatial dimensions! Also, God is not “spread out” over the universe, but wholly present everywhere.
3. Out of this discussion on “spatial” dimensions of “spiritual beings” arose the scholastic inquiry “*How many angels can stand on the head of a pin?*”
  - a. Today people speak of this “inquiry” as a scornful description of a tedious concern with irrelevant details; an allusion to religious controversies in the middle ages. In fact, the medieval argument was over how many angels could stand on the *point* of a pin. The issue seems to revolve around properties of the spirit; can angels, who are spiritual beings, manifest themselves in any shape, size or form they wish?
  - b. **Dan 10:12-13** indicates that angels have spatial definitions – being one place prevents their being somewhere else... but God does not!
4. This is NOT Pantheism – God is NOT the universe... While God is present everywhere in His Creation, He is distinct from what He has created!
  - a. **III**) Sponge “filled” with water (obviously analogy breaks down in that there are still spatial categories in this analogy, whereas God cannot be spatially described...)
  - b. God is not present physically in space. There is a difference between physical (corporeal) presence and ontological presence. It is not that “God is present AS each point in space” (pantheism) God IS present in every point in space.
  - c. **Before Creation there was no “where” and yet God existed!**
  - d. **Gen 1:1** “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”
  - e. **All of Creation cannot contain God (implies He is distinct from it)**
    - (1) **Deuteronomy 10:14** "Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it.
    - (2) **Isaiah 66:1-2** Thus says the LORD, "Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest? <sup>2</sup> "For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being," declares the LORD. "But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.

- (3) **Acts 17:24-25** "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; <sup>25</sup> nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things;

## II. Discussing God's Omnipresence

### A. How do we reconcile different "conceptions" of God's Presence?

1. **While God has no spatial dimensions, He chooses to manifest Himself spatially...**
2. **While God is present everywhere, He is present in different "ways"**

### B. The Sustaining Presence of God

1. **Tozer**, "There is no place beyond [God] for anything to be. God is our environment as the sea is to the fish and air to the bird. 'God is over all things,' wrote Hildebert of Lavardin, 'under all things, outside all, 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' ... The universe operates as an orderly system, not by impersonal laws but by the creative voice of the immanent and universal Presence, the Logos (the Word)"
2. **John 1:1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.
3. **Col 1:16-17** For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created through Him and for Him. <sup>17</sup> He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.
4. **Heb 1:3** And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,
5. **Acts 17:28** for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.'

### C. The Judging Presence of God

1. **God is immanent... there is no where to hide from Him! [Gen 3]**
2. **Psalm 139:7-12** Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? <sup>8</sup> If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. <sup>9</sup> If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, <sup>10</sup> Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me. <sup>11</sup> If I say, "Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, And the light around me will be night," <sup>12</sup> Even the darkness is not dark to You, And the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike *to You.*
3. **Read Amos 9:1-4 ... God was present to PUNISH...**

#### D. The Blessing Presence of God

1. **Because it is the “main way” God’s presence is described, when one speaks of God’s presence w/o further identification, it is God’s presence to bless that is typically thought of – this follows the biblical model (vast amount of references have this idea)** When we speak of God’s presence in “other ways” we must provide clarification...
  - a. **Psalm 16:11** You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.
  - b. **Matthew 28:19-20** "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
  - c. **Other Examples: 2 Cor 3:17, Rom 8:9-10, Jn 14:23**
  - d. **“far away” (not present to bless) – Is 59:2, Prov 15:29**
2. **Hell: the absence of this presence of God: 2 Thessalonians 1:8** dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.<sup>9</sup> These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

#### E. Applications...

1. No person can escape the presence of God – Unbelievers warned, Believers comforted!
2. Provides assurance: we can never be physically or geographically beyond God’s help! He is present no matter our circumstances: prison, den of lions, lost in a desert, storms...
3. For many of us, certain places have sacred connotations, but it’s not as though God’s presence is limited to certain geographical locations...
  - a. **1 Kings 8:27-30** "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built!<sup>28</sup> "Yet have regard to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplication, O LORD my God, to listen to the cry and to the prayer which Your servant prays before You today;<sup>29</sup> that Your eyes may be open toward this house night and day, toward the place of which You have said, 'My name shall be there,' to listen to the prayer which Your servant shall pray toward this place.<sup>30</sup> "Listen to the supplication of Your servant and of Your people Israel, when they pray toward this place; hear in heaven Your dwelling place; hear and forgive.
  - b. **John 4:20-24** "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you *people* say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."<sup>21</sup> Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.<sup>22</sup> "You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.<sup>23</sup> "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.<sup>24</sup> "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."
  - c. **Revelation 21:3** And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,
  - d. **God is present in a *special* way in heaven, present to bless and show His glory! We might say God manifests His presence in heaven more fully than elsewhere...**

4. *Additional thought provoker... The Lord's Supper:*
  - a. Discussion of the body and blood of Christ present in the sacraments...
  - b. Catholic (transubstantiation) – bread/wine spiritually changed to Christ's body/blood
  - c. Lutheran (consubstantiation) – Christ is present with the elements
  - d. Calvin (true presence) – Christ is truly present in the partaking of the sacrament
  - e. Zwingli/Anabaptist (memorial) – remembrance of Christ's work
5. ***Great Quote from Herman Bavinck's The Doctrine of God***

When you wish to do something evil, you retire from the public into your house where no enemy may see you; from those places of your house which are open and visible to the eyes of men you remove yourself into your room; even in your room you fear some witness from another quarter, you retire into your heart, there you meditate: He is more inward than your heart. Wherever, therefore, you shall have fled, there he is. From yourself, whither will you flee? Will you not follow yourself wherever you shall flee? But since there is One more inward even than yourself, there is no place where you may flee from God angry but to God reconciled. There is no place at all whither you may flee. Will you flee from him? Flee unto him.