

Attributes of God (Series 2): The Omnipresence of God

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer's sermon explores the omnipresence of God, emphasizing His constant presence and involvement in our lives and the world around us.

Duration: 46:11

Scripture: Psalm 119:105, Proverbs 3:6, Ephesians 2:8, Hebrews 10:25

Topics: "Attributes of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the omnipresence of God, stating that God is everywhere, whether on the sea with sailors or in the kitchen with housewives. This fact unlocks a door to wonderful treasure and settles the question of whether this world is a natural, self-running mechanism or if there is a divine presence. The preacher also highlights the difference between the presence of God and the manifest presence of God, using the analogy of hearing music versus being able to see the sun rise. The sermon concludes with a reminder that God is present in this world, and that realization can be both terrifying and comforting, calling individuals to repentance and a return to God.

Transcript

Tonight I am to speak on the Divine Omnipresence. The omnipresence of God may have a number of texts. In 1 Kings 8, 27, these two rhetorical questions.

But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven of heavens, and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much less this house which I have built it. And then David said, and our Lord later took it to himself as his own testimony, in the 16th Psalm, verse 8, I have set the Lord always before me, because he is at my right hand, and I shall not be moved. And then Paul, in writing to, or in preaching to, the people on Mars Hill in Athens, said, verse 27, breaking into his sermon, he said about the people, that they should seek the Lord, if happily they might feel after him and find him, though he be not far from every one of us.

For in him we live, and move, and have our being, as certain also about your own parts have said, for we are also his offspring. Now, the doctrine of the omnipresence of God, you will notice that we have that little word, the prefix omni, O-M-N-I, here, the same as I did the night that we heard the talk on omnipotence. And because of the language, we like euphemy, we like to pronounce a word so that it sounds good, so

that we do not say omnipotence, we say omnipotence.

And we say omnipresence, same thing, the omni meaning all, just all. So that what we have here, then, in the omnipresence of God, is that God is everywhere. That is, that God is everywhere present.

Now, present means close to, and close to is close to everywhere. Present means near to, and near to means near to everyone and everything. And present means next to, next to you and next to everyone.

Present means here, anywhere in the universe, here. So when we say that God is omnipresent, we simply say that God is close to everywhere, that he is next to everyone, that he is near to everything and to you and me, that he is here anywhere in the universe. The Canon Homes of India tells of the Hindu worshipers who will go into a woods and will tap a tree or a rock and whisper reverently, Are you there? Are you there? Tapping gently on the tree or rock, asking whether the deity is present there or not.

Now, the Christian in the full light of New Testament and Old Testament revelation can say that the answer is, Yes, I am here. And if that same person were to get on a rocket or a satellite and ride it to some far-off planet, and a rocket rather than a satellite, for the satellite goes around the earth, and the rocket would have to go to the planet, and were to tap something, whatever he might find there and say to God, Are you there? God could still say, Yes, I am there. And if we were to get on upon a light wave which travels 186,000 miles a second and ride for 10,000 light years and say, God, are you here? The answer would come, I am here, for God fills the heaven of heavens, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him.

And he says through Jeremiah, Am I a God far off and not a God night and day? I am a God both far off and night and day. Now you know that I have been not only giving you what is the theology, the biblical theology for this as it is taught in the scriptures, but I have been doing what the Bible says, giving a reason for the hope that lies in me. And I have been appealing to your intellect, and I am very proud of the fact that there are this many people in Toronto that don't mind having their heads worked on a little bit, that are not only wanting to be blessed in their hearts, but are willing to think a little bit about the great things of God.

And so I am also showing by reason based upon scripture why these things are true. Now God is omnipresent. That is, God is not far from anybody, but he is next to, near to, he is here, he is close to, and he is next to and near to and close to everyone and everybody and everything in his created universe.

Now let me give you some reasoning back of all this. I haven't preached yet on the infinity of God, I'm saving that one for the time when the weather is good and you feel really alert mentally, because that's a tough one. On the infinity of God, that God has no limits.

But if there were any place that God is not, then God would have a limit. And if God had a limit, God would not be infinite, and if he were not infinite, he would not be God. You see, that's just as plain as the nose on your face.

If there were a place where God was not, the borders of that place would set a limit to God. And as soon as you set a limit to God, you have a limited God. And a limited God is a helpless God, because he has limitations and he cannot always be sure he'll win, he'll win provided he doesn't meet too much opposition.

But the God who is limitless can always win, because he fills all things and surrounds all things, and therefore is able to handle all situations at all times. And if God were a limited God, then he wouldn't be

God at all, he'd be a creature. Creatures are limited.

God could not make other gods, for there are no other gods. He said, God, I know not any. There's only one God, so God could not make any beings that were equal to him in that they were limitless.

We all have limits, and some have more limits than others, and some are not so limited, but we all have limits, but God has none, and therefore, having none, there is no place where God is not. And then another thing is that God is our environment. Now that is taught plainly here, do not I fill heaven and earth, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, and in him we live and move and have our being.

And if God is our environment, this declares that God is omnipresent, that is, that God is wherever things and people are, he's got to be, because he is our environment. If God is infinite, then he has no limits, I say, and he must surround the finite completely. He must surround it completely, and if God fills the heaven and the heaven of heavens, then there is no place outside of him for anything to be.

You can live a lifetime in modern gospel churches and never have such that thought brought to you. Now, this isn't to say that I'm an unusual preacher, it's only to say that I'm preaching about something that isn't usually heard, that's all. But there's no place outside of God for him for anything to be, I'm just telling you that.

You think about that a little bit, and it will make a difference in your Christian life, you Christians, and it will make those who are not Christians want to be Christians, I'm quite certain. So God surrounds us, and God is our environment, and God is present to us as the sea is present to the fish. The fish is swimming around in the sea, and he finds that the sea is all around him, and he opens up his gills and takes the sea into him, and he lives in a watery environment.

But the bird flies in the air, in the environment we call the air, and so God is present to us. But that is not a good illustration, because you can take the fish out of his environment. Every time you go and say, I'll have whatever you have, a fish, in a restaurant, you're asking for something unnatural, you're asking that you might have a fish that has been removed from his environment, or the bird, the Canada goose that shot down out of the sky and is brought roasted to your table.

You've taken him out of his environment, it's all right, but you've done it, you've taken him out of his environment, he's no longer surrounded by the blue yonder, and the fish is no longer surrounded by the sea. You can take creatures out of their environment, but who can take the creature away from God who surrounds all things and fills heaven and earth? Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Have you ever noticed that passage back in the 139th Psalm? People don't half believe that psalm, I'm quite sure they don't half believe it. The man of God said, O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me, thou knowest my down sitting and mine up rising, thou understandest my thought afar off, thou compasses my path and my lying down, and thou art acquainted with all my ways, and there is not a word in my tongue, but, O Lord, thou knowest it all together.

You see, a word in your tongue is one that hasn't come out yet. When it comes out, it's not in your tongue any longer, it's in the air, you've given it the wing, but it's in your tongue, it's lying there, and God says he knows every one of those words. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high I cannot attain unto it. You see, David was having a little intellectual difficulty here, too, he said, this is tremendous, this idea that God is everywhere and all around

me, knows all about me. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there.

Now, everybody agrees that God is in his heavens, all is right with the world, very good. If I make my bed in hell, God won't be there, we would say. But the man of God knew better, and he said, if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

In verse 9, if I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there, shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. God is above in heaven, he is beneath, and he is in the farthest parts of the sea. And if I say, well, I'll hide from God in the darkness, surely the darkness shall cover me.

Why, no, even the night shall be light about me. Be the darkness and the night. Darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day.

The darkness and the light are both the light to thee. Now, those were the words of the man of God. He says it's a fearful, wonderful thing, and it's too high for him, and he can't know it.

But we Christians ought to know these things. It's shameful that we go through life and don't know them, that all the reading we do is little snips of something that somebody prints in a little book and sells for daily readings, and you get up in the morning and you turn over to your daily reading and you get that little snip of poetry or sentimental or religious saying from somebody, and you go off and you face a big world that's playing for keeps, a world that doesn't love you and doesn't care, and a devil who hates you, and you can't live on that little religious bird seed. You've got to know something, and one of the things that you've got to know is that God is where you are, and that no matter where you are, God is.

I was glad God was with me up in the air the other day, coming in here to the airport with the snow, tremendous snow blowing. I was glad when we left Chicago in the muck, glad God was there, God who was there most surely and just as God is here. And God is no more here now than he was in that airplane, and he's no more here and in that airplane than he was down in the mine with the miner, or that he's out on the sea with the sailor, or he's in the kitchen with the housewife, because God's everywhere.

Now, you see, that's not only a fact, but it's a fact that unlocks a big door of wonderful treasure. And it settles a question, a question of what kind of a world this is that we're living in. Is this a natural world running by itself? Did a great God somewhere wind up the universe and throw the key over the borders into infinite space and say, This thing is wound up forever? And so is the world running a wound-up mechanism out yonder? When we look out upon the stars above and the earth beneath, is that all there is? Does this interlocking system explain itself? Is this it? Or is it a spiritual world running by an unseen power? Now, the world has divided itself into two sections.

There are two kinds of thinking about this. There are the materialists. You hear a lot about them.

Occasionally a preacher will spit the word out of the right-hand corner of his mouth in an angry way. He'll call it materialism, and then he'll go on. I don't know whether he knows what it means or not, but materialism simply means it's the doctrine of those who believe that we are made of material and that that explains us, that we can explain you by your glands, that if you're happy or mad or gloomy or joyful or exuberant or despondent, you can all be explained by your glands, ductless glands and chemical operations within you.

That's materialism, and it's materialism that we're run by. The whole world can be explained materialistically, that some people believe that, and there are varying degrees of that. Some would give God a place, some would give God no place at all.

There was a man by the name of John B. Watson, whose name isn't heard of anymore. They're kind of shamed of him, I think, in psychological circles, but he believed that there wasn't any God and there wasn't any soul, and he even believed there wasn't any mind. He said, this idea that people have minds is silly.

He said, nobody has any mind. Nobody ever saw a mind. Nobody ever saw a soul.

He said, it's ridiculous. He said, we are strictly glandular and chemical, and we live by our glands and by the chemical within us. And he said, you don't think with your head, you think with your gut muscles, as every word now.

That's right in the book. He said, you think with your internal muscles, and he said, you talk, you think with your neck muscles, and he said, that's all there is to it, nothing to it. He said, give me a baby, when it's a day or two old, and I'll make anything out of it by subjecting it to certain pressures and determining how it shall be.

That's mechanistic determinism. Well, now, that's one class of people, and they're out there, I suppose, they're pretty well educated, you know, and they read each other's books, at least, and know what each other say. If that means an education, they've got that.

But there's another class of people, and I'm a little one among them. I run along under the shadow of these big men who, like David and Isaiah and Paul and all the rest of them, and they say that the world doesn't run. It wasn't a wound-up mechanism, and that people are not running by their glands and the chemicals within them.

While they acknowledge the presence of the glands, and they acknowledge that we're made out of dust, we're all made out of dust. They used to say that you could buy a man in a drugstore for 95 cents, but inflation has upped him somewhat, so that you now have to pay a little more for a man. Some of you women would have done better if you had gone to, what do they call it here, and bought yourself one.

But that's a man, but that's the mechanism, that's the chemical, that's the lime and the iron and the copper. Occasionally you'll read an ad and it will say, you feel tired after you've walked nine miles because you need copper, buy my vitamins and you'll get copper. So you eat it, and I don't know if it hurts you, but I don't know if it does you any good.

At least you spend your money and you keep people at work, and we take our food supplement and our vitamins, and that's to restore the copper, because we're made, we have some copper in us. No, we don't doubt, we don't deny we have copper. You can analyze a man or a woman, for that matter, or a dear little baby, and you'll find you can tell what they're made of.

But there's a company of people that say, no, you can't tell what they're made of. That's only the tabernacle in which they live. You can only analyze the vehicle that they travel in.

You can't get to them. God made them in the image of God. He created them, and like a mammy bending over her baby, God formed man of the dust of the ground.

And then he blew into them the breath of life, and man became a living soul. And it's that living soul that you can't analyze, it's that. We say it's that that makes us men and women, but it's not our mortal bodies which you can cut up and cut off.

A man called me on the phone tonight, a dear friend of mine, a good, warm-hearted, saintly Christian brother. He's one of the best-known surgeons in the city of Chicago, and he cuts people. He good-naturedly threatened my gallbladder, you know.

I never had anything wrong with my gallbladder. You know, he said, I'll get you. He's just a friend, that's all, a good friend.

And he cuts people up and throws part over there, you know, and tells me to lug that thing off. He knows he's a Christian, he's a praying Christian. He knows that he never cut a human soul.

He knows that he never affected once a man or a woman. He only affected the carriage in which they drove. Suppose that my wife was in an automobile, I had one, and I was driving it and it had a flat tire.

And I'd get out and say, I've got a flat tire, and my wife would be riding in the car. And I'd fix the flat tire. I hoped that never happened, but if it ever should, why, you would that, would that? I say, oh, that's my wife.

It wouldn't be my wife. That's the vehicle in which she'd be riding, and I could take the tire and roll it down over the bank and put another one on, and it wouldn't affect her at all, because that's a human being riding in a vehicle called a car. You and I are made in the image of God.

We have his creativeness, we have his intellect, we have his imagination, we have his ability to think, we have his ability to love, we have his ability to trust. We have the creativity of the great God Almighty, and we're made in his image and we're like him, and for that reason we rise transcendently above all the effort of the scientists and the rest. No surgeon ever cut a human being yet, he only cuts his body.

Nobody ever put a man to death yet. Jesus said, don't worry about those who can kill the body. Don't worry about somebody who can destroy your automobile.

That's only the vehicle you're riding in. He said, if you want to worry, worry about that one who is able to take your soul and cast it into hell. So you and I believe, and this settles the fact that God is everywhere, that God is here, that God fills his universe, settles forever the kind of world this is.

It's not a mechanistic world, it's not run by chemical reactions and magnetic attractions and a few other things, it is run by the presence of God in his world. And the Bible says positively that the world originated in spirit and came out of spirit, and that it's useless and insignificant apart from its spiritual value. Now, there was a day when they said atoms were little building blocks, just little building blocks.

You can imagine several billion, billion, billion, billion of tiny little building blocks, so small you can't find them, those were atoms. Now they say that an atom isn't a little building block at all, that it is pure energy. In other words, an atom is a disembodied dab of energy in a big hurry, going to beat the band.

That's what we're made of, and that's what you're made of. You think that you say I weigh a hundred and, you ladies, a hundred and twelve, and you men here say I weigh a hundred and seventy-five strips. You weigh, you think you're a great big solid hunk of muscle and gristle, no, you're not.

You're a hundred and seventy-five pounds of tiny little dabs of energy in a terrific hurry. Only it's held together for the time being, and that makes you. Well, I don't know now, I don't give this as a proof that science has come around to the belief that this is a spiritual universe, because in another ten years they may change their mind about the whole thing.

But I believe it's a spiritual universe because God says it is. And it's a meaningless, apart from its spiritual meaning, the great central rock of human existence is that God is present, and that we have God to deal with, that this is a divine world, that God made it, that God hasn't deserted it. We have been blind and didn't see him, but that God is here, as Jacob said, you know, when he woke up out there in the waste, howling wilderness, he said and saw God and the angels and put his hand over his mouth and whispered, surely God was in this place and I didn't know it.

You can say that about the streets of Toronto, you can say that, you can say that about the broad ocean there or the sky under, oh, God's in this place and I didn't know it. It's not the absence of God from his world that makes us so lonely, it is our inability to know he's here. In him we live, in him we move, seek not thy God afar, he is not prisoned in the height above sun, moon, and star, but thou through strange dark lands have strayed and wandered far from him, and therefore he, O soul, to thee is distant and is dim, so, O thirsty not that God is far away, but that we are distant from him in our hearts.

Now, the presence, I want to talk a little about the presence and the word. You know that great and strange and beautiful passage in 1 John. In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.

The same was in the beginning with God, as all things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men, and the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. This is the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

God is to his universe what your soul is to your body. The universe is a created material world, but God being in it makes it alive. And you are a material body, but your soul being in that body makes it alive.

When your soul leaves the body, the body degenerates and goes back to its elements again. And if God were to withdraw or could withdraw from his universe, it would go back to its elements again. Where do I get scripture for that? The Bible tells us that Jesus Christ upholds the universe, that in him all things hold together.

Now, that's what the apostle said in Colossians. In him all things hold together. What is it that holds the universe together? It is the presence of the deity in the universe that holds it together.

So this is not a dead world, this is a live world, and God lives in it. And this is what I'm preaching tonight, the omnipresence of God. God is to the world what the soul is to the body.

God's presence is a universal conscience to the race. It says, even before Christ was born of the Virgin Mary, even before he became flesh to dwell among us, the eternal word was in the world. It tells us in John, and I have been quoting it, let me turn to it and give you a little more of it, that the same was in the beginning with God and all things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made.

In him was life, and the life was the light of man. In him was life, and the life was the light of man. It doesn't say in him was life, and the life was the light of Christians.

It says in him was the light of man, and the light shone in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. He was not the light, John was not the light, but he was sent to bear witness of the light. That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

Sometimes they say to us, why do you send missionaries to the heathen? The mission and the heathen know nothing about Jesus Christ, and the only sin there is is rejecting Christ, as we are told, wrongly. And therefore, if they don't know about Christ, and you go preach Christ to them and they are rejected him, you have been guilty of causing innocent people to be damned because they reject Christ. That's the silliest argument you could possibly imagine, for the Bible tells us there is a light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

And no missionary ever needs to go to any tribe of the world, however primitive, and preach sin to them, they know they have sinned. Their conscience within them says the scripture either approves or disapproves. And they know, according to Paul and according to John, that they have sinned.

So men are not only sinners, they are conscious sinners around the world. The humblest caveman, wearing nothing but his gourd, yonder somewhere in the far-off valley of New Guinea, knows he is a sinner and knows it inside of him. How does he know it? Does he know it by reason? No.

Does he know it by law? No. He doesn't have law. How does he know it? He knows it by the light that lights every man that comes into the world.

Remember there is enough light in the world to damn every man. We turn against that light. And John said, furthermore, that he that loves darkness, he goes away into the darkness, but he that loves the light comes to the light.

There are some that will follow the light within them and come to the light of the gospel. There are others that turn away and are lost forever. So God's presence, I say, is the universal conscience of the world.

Because he is present in the world, even before he came as Son of Man, because he is present in the world, the world knows its own sin. And the word is the divine intelligence. The word in the world, God's word in the world, is the divine intelligence.

The failure of the world to hear this is the great sin, my brothers and sisters. It's the great sin. The failure of the world to hear this is the deep sin.

In him was life, and the life was the light of men, and the light shone in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not, and he was in the world, and the world knew him not. This is the failure of the world. God is immanent, I say, within his creation as light and order, holding all things by the word of his power, and he is within the human mind as a moral conscience.

Now what does it all mean that God is here, this great central building block of human thought, God is here, this great central pillar of all religion, God is here? How do we know? What does this mean to us? Well, it means to the Christian that you can't roam beyond his enfolding presence, it means that. You may lose the sense of his presence, but you can't roam beyond his presence. You may grieve him so that he doesn't manifest his presence, but you cannot move out of his presence.

That's why I don't always go along with the prayers that I hear, and maybe that I even make myself sometimes. We say, O Lord, come where we are. We don't have to pray that prayer.

God is nigh, and you don't have to come and tap the wall of this church and say, O God, are you here? If two or three are gathered, I am there. If I make my bed in hell, thou art there. If I go into heaven, thou art there.

If I take the wings of the morning and sail to the far points of the sea, thou art there. God is here most certainly. I know not where his islands rear their fronded palms in air, I only know I cannot stray beyond my Savior's care.

He is where we are. Now, that to me is a wonderful, wonderful thing. When the war was on, we had a number of sons in the service, and our eldest son, Loyal, was way over there somewhere.

We didn't know where. We knew occasionally we'd get something. It was in Italy, then it was in South Africa.

He was under Clark, and his regiments were being shot to pieces. God was preserving him. He said, It doesn't pay to make a friend, you can't keep him, he'll be killed.

He led somebody to the Lord, and within a little while that person was standing by an ammunition dump when a German shell hit it and it blew to smithereens and killed this fellow. But he was with the Lord. Well, the American Bible Society wanted a picture, and they asked my friend Francis Chase, who was an elder in our church in Chicago, asked him to make a picture that would say something to the boys in uniform and to the people back home.

And so Francis Chase drew this picture and put it up in the churches all over the United States and Canada. It showed a picture of a ship with men sailing away. No, it showed a picture of a church back home, that's it.

It showed a picture of a little church back home, back in Canada, back in the States. And then it showed another picture. This was a foxhole and a boy, and he used our son as a boy, and we recognized the face.

And here was a boy reading his New Testament in a foxhole in somewhere in Europe or the Far East. And here was a little church back home on the North American continent. And at my suggestion, he used this little text, "Though sundered far, by faith we meet around one common mercy seat." And they sent that all out, and I am sure that it warmed the heart of many a parent to know that even if their boy was over there in a foxhole reading his New Testament by a flickering light or by the light perhaps even of a sun going down, standing in mud to his knees, by sundered far from his home and from the little church back there, oh sundered far by faith we meet around one common mercy seat.

So God's children have this, absolutely have this that they can be sure of. There is no such a thing as you are running away. You know there was a man once, he was a Jew and he was a believing Jew, and he was told to do something he didn't like to do, and he thought that he could skin around it.

So he went down to Joppa and he bought himself a ticket on a shipboard, and he bought a ticket for another place than where he was being sent. But you know, he didn't get away with it at all. Out there on the ocean, or the sea in this instance, the Mediterranean Sea, he went down in the hold of the ship and went to sleep, and all the other sailors were scared stiff when the storm came up.

They were praying to their gods, and they found him asleep, and they said, "What's the matter with you? Why are you lying here asleep? Don't you have a god?" He said, "Boy, I surely do, but I'm in no shape to pray that I've run away from my god." And he told them the story. And then he determined he'd be a hero and save that ship, and he said, "Listen, I am your Jonah. If you'll throw me overboard, your ship will be saved." And they didn't want to do it, and they rode the harder, it says, and they prayed the harder.

They didn't want to do it. They were good fellows, even though they were heathen. So at last they took him, one took a hold of one foot and one of the other, and one took a hold of one hand and one of the other, and they counted, one, two, one, two, and overboard went Jonah.

Jonah thought, "Well, God isn't out here, that's sure enough. He isn't here. I left him back in Palestine.

God isn't here.' But God spoke to a little, oh, a big fish, and said to that fish, "Get him.' And he went in one gulp, and Jonah was down on the sea, and they were wrapped around his head. And there was Jonah running from God, but he didn't get away from God, because God is on the ocean just as Saurior is on the land." And you know the story of how Jonah came out later, worse for wear but wonderfully and spiritually blessed, and went out and preached, and there was a big revival. Jonah is a queer fellow, and I suppose when we get to heaven we'll find out more about him than we know now.

If it stands now, I wouldn't want him for a deacon in my church, really, I wouldn't. But he probably had more than we thought he had. But he didn't get away from God, he just didn't get away from God.

Some of you have tried it. I remember when I was a young chap, I was about, I was converted when I was 17, joined a Methodist church, and then I got to wandering around a bit, and I kind of backslid and got cold in my heart, and I decided one day that I wouldn't go to church. I said, oh, I won't go.

And I was backslidden, not badly, but I was backslidden enough that I didn't want to go to church that day. And so Jonah started out for a walk. I was in Akron, Ohio, and I started for a walk out through, what's the name of that, my wife would be able to tell you, somebody's wood, Britton Woods.

And I was walking all by myself. I hadn't told her, and we were going together then. I hadn't told anybody.

I hadn't told my friends at the church. I was backsliding, and I was wandering away from God. And I was cramping through the woods and across the fields and trying to get away from something.

I didn't know what, but it was God. And I looked here in the woods, far from the city, in the little field that lay between the woods, and there in the deep grass I saw something that didn't look like another weed or grass stalk or something, and I thought, what could that be? And I went over and looked down, and it was a book. Now, how did that book get there? And I opened it up, and it was one of those little paper-bound books for Christians.

It was to tell Christians how to stay right with God after they got converted. You've seen it maybe around, I forgot the name of it now. But here I was trying to get away from church, and here God was putting church in my way.

And I picked that book up, and it had been there quite a while, and it had been rained on, and it had a red cover, and the red cover had sort of run, you know, the dye had run into some of the pages, but there were a lot of pages I could read, and every page cut me to pieces, every page cut me down. And the next Sunday I was back in my place in the Methodist church where I belonged all the time. I didn't get away

from God, thank his holy name, I didn't get away from him.

God had said, Well, boy, if you want to go, just go! That would have been too bad. I would have been finished, because I am being kept not by my staying, but by God keeping. Do you believe that? Do you believe it? You know, there is a division of opinion.

Some people say you are saved because you stick to God, others say you are saved because God sticks to you, and I say with the latter. I heard a preacher one time, a Welshman by the name of Davies, preaching a sermon, he had a good accent, and he said, I am not exactly a Presbyterian when it comes to eternal security, but I believe this, once God gets hold of you, he will give you a run for your money if you try to get away. And I believe that, brethren, with all my heart.

I believe that God will hang on to you, and he will be where you are, and he is. So you Christians remember that. God is right there.

So sometime when you get in a real jam, a business jam, or a school jam, or any kind of jam, you say, Oh, God, are you here? And God will reply, I'm right here. Don't you remember that sermon? I'm close to you, I'm near to you, I'm next to you, I'm here. And you can say that anywhere, in a family of ten brothers, and shake hands some morning on the front porch, and start for ten different parts of the world.

And when each one of them gets where he's going, he can say, Oh, God, now you're here, and God will say to each one of them, I'm here, right here, next to you, nearer to you, close to you, I'm here. You know, there's a difference, a vast difference, between God's presence and God's manifest presence. It's God's manifest presence that I'd like to see us enjoy.

His presence, you can't do anything about that. Can the heavens contain God? Therefore how can you be where God is? God's there. God's with you in the middle of the night.

God's with you when you're sick. God's with you when you're half-awake. God's with you when you're under pressure.

God's with you. But that's one thing. But the manifest presence is another thing altogether.

To have music in the room is one thing. To be able to hear it is something else again. To have the sun come up kissing the mountaintops with glorious sheen is, Shakespeare said, one thing.

To be able to see that is another. Two men stand on a hillside looking out over the sunset, beautiful, beautiful sunset or sunrise. One man is blind, I said looking, but he's not looking, he's only staring with blind eyes.

The other man can see, and the blind man says, tell me what you see. And he describes it the best he can describe it, but he can't make it too clear. There's a presence there, but it's not a manifest presence.

A little later, the heat will begin to touch the blind man's cheeks, and he'll know by the feeling that the sun is up, but the man with the sight knows it long before it comes up. So the presence and the manifest presence. If the manifest presence of God were in this church, we'd be so happy we couldn't contain ourselves.

Only rarely does anybody say amen here, God bless you. Are you too conservative? Now don't pull that on me, you're too cold. I don't know, I tune in sometimes, I'm trying to get the news, and I run into a

hockey game being attended by Canadians, nothing conservative down there.

He scored, he scored, he scored, he scored, he scored, he scored. I don't know what they do when they score, but he did it. And everybody roars, nothing conservative there, they're warmed up to their subject.

Britain Avenue Road Church, we're conservative. The manifest presence, brethren, it's the manifest presence. You remember when Jesus our Lord, I'm not saying much about this, I want to preach a sermon on it sometime, he was made known unto them on the breaking of the bread.

You remember they walked and talked and their hearts burned, but they didn't know it was. Then when he broke the bread, they saw the back of his hands and they knew it was Jesus. Oh, they said, carry with us.

The next day they said, did not our hearts burn? Their hearts burned because they were conscious of the presence, you see. I've had it said a few times, I have a prayer, I carry it around with me and pray it often. Oh God, when I preach, make thyself so present that people will know your presence.

And I've had a few people tell me down the years, when I walked in, I felt a presence. A man came into a church, Canadian, no, no, he's from Washington, I always get them mixed up over there, Washington and British Columbia. And this fellow is from just over the border.

And he came into our church and said to me, I'd like to talk to you. He said, what is there here? He said, I sense something. When I came in, I sensed it.

During the service, I sensed it. Well, what could I tell you? I said, well, there's only one explanation. God's here.

This preacher went away saying, oh, must be it. God's in this place. This is what we want, my brethren.

This is it. Are you with me in this? Amen? Now, to realize the presence, to have a felt presence, a manifest presence, we must be morally worthy. By right conduct, clean heart, clean thoughts, we must be spiritually prepared.

With holy desire and faith, receptivity, Jacob and Esau were brethren. God appeared to Jacob, but he couldn't appear to Esau. Why? Because Jacob was better than Esau? No.

Because Jacob was receptive and Esau wasn't. Jacob had the divine touch, somehow, and Esau didn't have it. So Jacob, have I loved than Esau, or have I hated? That stands for the theologians to wonder about.

But we know that Jacob was receptive. Jacob wanted to talk to God and Esau didn't. And then simple faith.

Just a little closing word now to those who may not be Christians. Let me say this to you. You can never say there's too much confusion in the churches, too many arguments, too much division among the churches.

I didn't know what was true and what wasn't true. Don't give me that argument because it's not sound. There is a light that lights up every man that cometh into the world, and this is a live world and God is in it.

And you were once made in his image and no fallen and lost. There is that in you which can still hear God. No matter how many hypocrites there might be in any church, nor how divided the churches might be, God is not making you responsible for the churches.

You're responsible for your own self. The universal voice is speaking. My friend, that will be a terrible moment for you when your paper-thin excuses are torn away and you find you had loved sin, and that was the reason you didn't hear God's voice.

You blamed the churches, but you had loved sin. You blamed divisions and arguments within the church, but your problem was you loved sin. Those who love the darkness, they stay with the darkness.

And that terrible day when you suddenly become aware that there is a God and that God is real, and that for a lifetime you have been living and sinning and playing and working and laughing in full view of God, that, it seems to me, will be a terrible, terrible time. Terstigin said, Lord, I was in the far-off land I loved from need astray, and when unto myself I came, swineherd far away, one moment, then in the welcome suite to kiss the Father's home, far distance was the distance, for thy bosom I am coming. You couldn't be worse than that, and if you were, it wouldn't matter.

He calls you, and he calls you home to himself. Now, we're going to sing a number.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/1/SID1970.mp3>

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