

Series: God Is Near #1625

Title: Philippians 4.5

God Is Near by His Power, Knowledge, Essence

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. It is good to have you here and I remind you that we are talking about the presence of the Living God who is with us. He is in our midst always. In the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians the Apostle Paul instructs us saying, quote, **"The Lord is near."** By this he means the Lord is close to us in space. God is always present to us wherever we are at any given moment. Sometimes we strive to defend our space from other people. We do not want anyone invading what we call our "personal space." And while we can be successful at keeping others away. While we can isolate and be all alone, we can never escape the presence of the Living God. And that is because "The Lord is near."

We have identified this truth as the omnipresence of God. Paul Enns defines omnipresence simply as, "God is everywhere present (*The Moody Handbook of Theology*, 194)." God is everywhere present. And theologian A.H. Strong in his *Systematic Theology* defines God's omnipresence as, "God, in the totality of His essence, without diffusion or expansion, multiplication or division, penetrates and fills the universe in all its parts (*Systematic Theology*, 279)." Those give you a couple of additional ways to think about the all-present God. As we read the people of God whom have come before us, these competent and Holy Spirit filled writers and teachers of theology from of old, we learn so much. Part of my responsibility and joy, here on *God Is*, is to bring them to your attention.

There is a lot of false teaching out there on the radio and on the internet. So where can we turn for *truth*? To the Bible itself, yes of course. But also to those who illuminate the truths of Scripture to our minds and hearts. Enns and Strong do that. And so does Francis Turretin, whom we have been following as we discuss the doctrine or the teaching of God's immensity and of God's omnipresence. And when we left off last time, Dr. Turretin was testifying to us out of his writing in the 17th century. Though long dead, still he speaks through his writing. He is a solidly biblical resource to us in the 21st century as we are comforted by the truth of God's all-consuming presence in our lives.

Picking up where we left off, think with me – and these current broadcasts and podcasts do require your mind – think with me about the three ways Turretin says that God is near. First, God is near by His power. In Acts 17, verse 28 the Apostle Paul preaches saying, **"For in Him we live and move and exist."** All people are sustained by God's power. Indeed, for us to be alive, for us to move, friends, for us to *exist* all requires the power of the Living God. If the Lord cuts off His power, we die. Period. So that God comes near with sustaining power. In Hebrews chapter 1, and verse 3 we are told this about Jesus, **"[He] upholds all things by the word of His power."** Jesus upholds all things by the word of His power. Wow.

My wife and I have been having trouble with one of our mobile phones. It is a fairly recently purchased iPhone and this dumb thing (my not-so-affectionate name for it), this dumb thing won't stay charged. Unplugged, it loses power quicker than I can eat a bowl of ice cream. And that's *fast*. Until we have time to get it over to the store, we have to keep it plugged into the wall to keep it powered up. Well, *unlike* that dumb little phone, all people – not just Christians, but *all* people – are sustained by God's power and in this sense we never lose His power. If we did, we would immediately perish. Acts 17.28, **"For in Him we live and move and exist."** Hebrews 1.3, **"[Jesus] upholds all things by the word of His power."**

Second, God is near by His knowledge. Turretin writes, "[God] is present with all by His knowledge because He sees and beholds all things which are and become in every place as intimately present to and placed before Him (*Institutes of Elenctic Theology, Volume I*, 197)." He then cites Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 13, **"And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."** That is an awesome Scripture. I want to read it again, so that you hear it more than once and let it sink into your busy brain and down into your heart.

Hebrews 4, verse 13, “And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” God’s eyes are always on all of us all the time. He does not slumber or sleep. God watches. None of us are hidden from His sight. All things in all of our lives are open and laid before Him. God is all-knowing. Even that which is buried deep down in our hearts and souls, even things we do not think about nor understand, God knows. He has this perfect knowledge of each of us. And of course He does, He is all-present to us.

This truth terrifies us, mostly. It should certainly terrify the unrepentant sinners who plunge ahead in sin, not thinking about God, not even acknowledging His existence. (His divine presence.) How is it that God is close and yet they are practicing atheists? What a horror it will be to them to find that God has been right by their side this whole time of unregenerate, wild living. And God’s knowledge of us brings fear into the hearts of all believers. Why? Because we also sin and we know that even when we are in the midst of carrying out our iniquity, God sees it all, hears it all, and knows it all. So that the presence of the Lord is inescapable and so no wonder we feel wretched, just awful when the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sins. And yet, unlike the reprobate, as believers we have recourse: we repent and fellowship is restored between us and our heavenly Father.

We are hearing from Francis Turretin on how God is near to us. First, God is near by His power. Second, God is near by His knowledge. And third, God is near by His essence. I better define essence, and I take it to mean the essential nature of God or we can say God’s essence is who God is. God’s essence is the character of His being. Regarding God being near by His essence, Turretin has more to say about this than power and knowledge. He writes, quote, “[God] is everywhere by His essence because His essence penetrates all things and is wholly by itself intimately present with each and everything (197).” He then cites Jeremiah chapter 23 and verse 24, **“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.”**

Another *great* Scripture. We have some terrific verses today! Jeremiah 23, verse 24, this is The Only God speaking, **“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.”** This certainly speaks directly to the immensity of God’s essence.

And we circle back to that interplay between God’s immensity and God’s omnipresence. God’s immensity, His transcendence. He is above and beyond time and place and space. And also God’s omnipresence, His immanence. He is always everywhere present in time and place and space. This all goes together. I want to quote Turretin again, but first let me spell a word he will use. He is going to use the word wholly. And this will be wholly as in entirely or fully. W-H-O-L-L-Y. Wholly. OK? Good. And now the quotation, “For wherever [God] is, He is wholly; wholly in all things, yet wholly beyond all; included in no place and excluded from none; and not so much in a place...as in Himself...He is not contained in place, but contains all things in Himself (198-199).”

Huh? Do not be confused. All of God, the entire essence of His being is in all and beyond all. God is never bound by any place, but He is also never excluded from any place. So that God is in all places and spaces while at the same time being beyond all places and spaces. We cannot contain God. And yet God is always here with us. We cannot contain God, but God contains us. God is in Himself and God contains all things in Himself! What *stunning* truth. I hope this is getting you to *think*. And I hope you will be back with us next time because God Is!

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