

Psalm 139:7-10

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/ps/ps-139/psalm-1397-10/>

God is in all places at all times, so it is impossible to flee from Him. He is always present and reaching out to guide His people.

At the beginning of Psalm 139, David refers to God as his *Lord*, in Hebrew “Yahweh,” which is the proper name of God. It means “to exist.” He is establishing that God’s existence does not conform to our understanding of time or space. Verses 7-10 explore what it means that God exists outside of space.

David asks God a rhetorical question: *Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?* He already knows the answer to this question: nowhere. Since God exists beyond the confines of space, He is able to be in every place that we go.

If we *ascend to heaven*, He is there. If we make our *bed in Sheol*, He is there also. *Sheol* is used throughout the Old Testament to mean the grave, or the place of the dead. It is the opposite of heaven—the lowest place to be. While we may expect to encounter the presence of God in the highest or most glorious places (*the heavens*), David is saying that He is in the dark and low ones as well. The Hebrew term *Sheol* overlaps with the New Testament Greek term “Hades.” In Acts 2, Peter quotes a psalm that translates “*Sheol*” as “Hades” (Acts 2:27, quoting Psalm 16:10). This is again a picture of two complete opposites that include everything in between. God dwells everywhere that can be imagined, from the lowest Hades to the highest heaven.

If we try to escape God by riding *the wings of the dawn* or by dwelling *in the remotest part of the sea*, He still pursues us and leads us. The dawn, as it rises, seems to spread from one end of the earth to the other. For the people of Israel, the dawn would have been one end of the earth, and the horizon to which it spread would be the other. So if we were to start at one end of the earth, and go as quickly as the dawn spread, all the way to the known end of the earth, God would be there too. This again is a picture of two opposites that include everything in between. Just as God dwells in all spiritual dimensions, from Hades to heaven, God also dwells in every physical place.

The book of Jonah tells the story of the prophet Jonah, who God instructs to go out to the city of Ninevah to warn its inhabitants that they were about to suffer terrible consequences if they did not stop sinning. However, Jonah does not want to go, so he tries instead to *flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord* (Jonah 1:3). While the exact location of Tarshish is unknown, it is supposedly the furthest west that Jonah could have imagined going, at the far western end of the Mediterranean Sea. It was like going on *the wings of the dawn* to the end of the earth. However, as Jonah is traveling across the sea, the Lord sends a storm to torment the boat, until Jonah realizes that he has not, in fact, escaped the presence of the Lord. So he is thrown overboard to stop the storm and the Lord sends a fish to swallow him up for 3 days (Jonah 1).

There in the belly of the fish, knowing that even in the depths of the sea Yahweh is there, Jonah says:

“I called out of my distress to the Lord,
And He answered me.
I cried for help from the depth of Sheol;
You heard my voice.”
(Jonah 2:2)

Even in the depths of the sea in the belly of a fish, God is with Jonah. Not only that but He proves that, like David says, *even there Your hand will lead me*. As far from God as Jonah felt in that moment, as far as we can sometimes be or feel, David wants to make it very clear that God’s *right hand will lay hold* of us.

The description of God’s right hand being on us is also significant. The dominant hand in Hebrew literature is *the right hand*. It is a symbol of strength and dominion. God’s strong hand will reach out and *lay hold* of us, no matter where we are, if we cry out to Him. Just as God’s love has no bounds, God’s strength has no limitations.

Biblical Text

**7 Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?
8 If I ascend to heaven, You are there;
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.
9 If I take the wings of the dawn,
If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,
10 Even there Your hand will lead me,
And Your right hand will lay hold of me.**