

#50 “The God Who Is Near”

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Sometimes as we go through life we can begin to feel as if God is absent, uninvolved, unhelpful, or that He doesn't care. We might feel that our prayers bounce off the ceiling, we might feel as if God blesses others but not us, and we might come to the false conclusion that God isn't at work in our lives at all. This is a sad, unbiblical, and dangerous place to be spiritually because it is riddled with lies straight from the devil. It is a direct attack against the very nature and heart of God Who loves His us enough that He sent His own Son to redeem us. Our God is good, He cares, and He is at work not just in the world around us but in our lives and even in us.

There is a misconception in Christianity that God is “out there,” somewhere high above us, away from us, and imperceptible to us. To an extent this was true in the Old Testament, when God was approached through Moses on behalf of the people, for example. Yet we are under a new covenant, which is a better covenant (Hebrews 7:22), through which Jesus has made it possible for all believers to approach God directly (Hebrews 4:16). Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant (Hebrews 9:15), through which every believer becomes the temple and dwelling place of God (1 Corinthians 6:19). We don't have to go to a temple, a tabernacle, or a church building to find God. We don't have to offer up peace offerings to be sure God still approves of us. God's favor is ours because Christ has been offered up as a pleasing sacrifice to God on our behalf once and for all (Hebrews 9:12). God has drawn near to man in redeeming him so that we can draw near to God by faith as we turn from our sins in surrender to Jesus. We have direct access to God in prayer, and the best part is that He lives in us. The God of the universe, though He fills all things, being omnipresent, lives in each and every believer. We as God's children have died with Christ such that Christ lives out His life and desires in and through us, or at least such should be the case (Galatians 2:20). God is not distant from the believer, for He lives in the believer's heart. He is no farther away than this, and our very lives are found in knowing Him. *As believers, the issue is not in chasing down God in a distant hope that He might fellowship with us, but it is simply believing that Christ lives in us, our hope of glory* (Colossians 1:27). The joy and privilege of the believer in this time is indeed Christ in us, living out His life through us as we die to self and are made alive in Him.

God is very near, very involved, and very personal, being our very life. John 17:3 says, “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” Most certainly eternal life means that we will live with Christ forever in heaven, never perishing because we will have been given bodies that will be immortal. Yet we must understand that there is a sense in which eternal life is a state of being, or rather a state of knowing. John says outright that eternal life is knowing Jesus Christ personally. Therefore, there is a sense in which eternal life starts at the moment we come

to know Christ. Certainly, the fullness of knowing Jesus will manifest itself after we die when we go to be with Christ forever in heaven. But let us not forget that God is very near to us in the Person of Jesus Christ right now if we have received Him as Savior. The promise of having eternal life implies both an eternal existence in heaven and an eternal relationship with our Lord. We are not in heaven yet, but we do know our Lord already. Of course, our relationship with Him will only get better as we grow to know and love Him more. This relationship will be perfected in heaven in eternity, but we can enjoy this relationship even now. Because we have eternal life, we know Jesus, and He is near to us in our hearts.

God is alive, active, working, and moving in our hearts. As Paul said, describing the one true God, “in Him we live and move and exist” (Acts 17:28). He is not an image of stone, wood, or some other created material to which we must go and worship, just hoping he listens. *He is alive, and it is in Him that we live, move, and exist. Life in Christ is this personal, this real, and this near when it comes to knowing God.*

When we understand these things, it becomes foolish to dwell on the notion that God is distant or that He doesn't care. Circumstances might be difficult, and prayers may not be answered in the way we would desire. Yet God cares, He endures the trials with us (Psalm 23:4), and He is always there to be our constant Companion and Guide. Jeremiah 23:23-24 says, “‘Am I a God who is near,’ declares the LORD, ‘And not a God far off? 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.” God's declaration to us today is that He fills the earth, including the hearts of those who believe (John 1:12). He is a God Who is near, so let us believe this and enjoy our fellowship with the God of the universe today.