

INTRO: Some soldiers feel they want to run away from their unit. They are tense, nervous, and confused. Some husbands or wives feel like running away from their marriage. They are under pressure, and in their unfortunate situation can see no other solution.

Texas university student feels this world is such a rotten place to live that it just isn't worth the effort, so he takes the lives of his wife & mother & a dozen others in trying to "run away from it all."

Are these people right?

Are we wrong in facing up to our responsibilities, to this cruel world, and to ourselves?

If there is no God, they are right and we are wrong.

If there is no God who loves and cares for us, they are wise and we are foolish.

If there is no God who knows and understands us, and who is always with us, they are to be commended, and we are to be reprimanded.

But the first section of Psalm 139 teaches us that there is a God who is omniscient.

A. Not a theological doctrine.

B. But a personal experience of the psalmist.

1. God knows man
2. He knows the psalmist personally, & He knows us.
3. He understands us.

A common complaint among us is that we are misunderstood.

"Not understood,

We move along asunder --

Our path grows wider, as we go down the years.

We marvel and we wonder why life is life,

And then we fall asleep--

Not understood.

how many <sup>hearts</sup> ~~breasts~~ are aching,

how many spirits pass away--

Not understood!

O God, that men should see a little clearer or judge less harshly when they cannot see!

O God, that men would draw a little closer to one another, and they'd be nearer thee--

And understood." -- Walter Eccles

II. But, too, the second section of the Psalm teaches that

there is a God who is omnipresent.

A. Again, this is presented not as a cold, pedantic dogma

B. But as a warm, vital personal experience.

C. Not only does God know us;  
he is with us wherever we go.

D. Sometimes we try to flee from his presence.

Francis Thompson expressed it so admirably in his  
beautiful poem, "The Hound of Heaven":

"I fled Him, down the nights, and down the days;

I fled Him, down the arches of the years;

I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways

Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears

I hid from Him, and under running laughter."

Turn, where the soul may, however,  
it can find no rest or peace till at last it confesses  
that evasion of God is impossible.  
Fullness of life is found in nothing but full surrender  
to this ever-present, loving Father.

1. Adam & Eve covered themselves and tried

to hide from God. Gen. 3:8

2. Some men or women are alarmed & recoil in fear

and try to escape a deep & strong & true love of  
husband or wife.

3. So we like a conventional piety;

but when God breaks in upon us,

and reveals Himself as absolute holiness & love,

and tries to fill our life with his gracious Spirit,

and totally claims us and all we have ---

then an irrational & speechless fear rises within us,

and our one impulse is somehow, somewhere,

to escape & hide ourselves.

E. Yet -- "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?

or whither shall I flee from thy presence.

literally, "from thy FACE."!

We can't run away from

His Divine Presence -- (see further notes)

" " Punishment

" " Plan

ON BEING AWOL FROM GOD

YOU CAN'T RUN AWAY

Ps. 139:7, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit?  
or whither shall I flee from thy presence?"

I. You Can't Run Away From God's Divine Presence

A. The Fact of God's Presence

1. Ps. 139:7-8, ... If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.
2. Ps. 73:23, Nevertheless I am continually with thee.
3. Heb. 13:5, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee

B. The Blessing of God's Presence

1. Gen. 5:22, Enoch walked with God
2. Ex. 33:14, My presence shall go with thee and I will give thee rest.
3. Ps. 16:11, In thy presence is fullness of joy.
4. Security in trouble.  
Isa. 43:2, When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.

C. The Futility of trying to escape God's presence

1. Gen. 3:8, Adam and his wife hid from God.
2. Hosea 5:3, Israel is not hid from me

D. Why people try to escape God's Presence

1. Because they are afraid of Him  
Job 23:15, I am troubled at his presence
2. Because His holiness emphasizes their sinfulness.

II. YOU CAN'T RUN AWAY FROM GOD'S ~~DIVINE PUNISHMENT~~ <sup>Fatherly</sup>

A. The Chastening of the Christian <sup>Chastening</sup>

1. A sure sign of divine sonship  
Heb. 12:7 IF YE endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons.  
Prov. 3:12, Whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.
2. For the present seems grievous instead of joyous, yet afterward it yields the fruit of righteousness.  
Heb. 12:11
3. For our own good, that we might be partakers of His holiness, Heb. 12:10
4. The refining furnace of affliction, Isa. 48:10

(DAVID)

## B. The Punishment of the Impenitent

### 1. It is the just reward of their sin

Isa. 13:11, I will punish the world for their evil,  
and the wicked for their iniquity.

Jn. 3:36, He that believeth not the Son shall ~~not~~  
not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on  
him.

Rom. 1:18, The wrath of God is revealed from heaven  
against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of  
men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.

### 2. It is a fearful thing.

Heb. 10:31, It is a fearful thing to fall into the  
hands of the living God.

Deut. 32:22, A fire is kindled in mine anger, and  
shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall  
consume the earth with her increase,  
and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.

Deut. 4:24, The Lord thy God is a consuming fire.

### 3. It is inescapable.

Jer. 16:17, For mine eyes are upon all their ways:  
they are not hid from my face,

neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes.  
Ezek. 7:19, Their silver and their gold shall not  
not be able to deliver them in the day of  
the wrath of the Lord.

Ezek. 23:8, There is no secret that they can  
hide from thee.

Mt. 10:26, There is nothing covered,  
that shall not be revealed;  
and hid, that shall not be known.

In Psalm 139:24, the expression "wicked way"  
could be translated "way of pain."

This indicates a manner of life that brings pain.  
The way of rebellion against God always brings  
pain to the heart and life of the rebel.

We don't have to wait for any external, objective,  
retribution from an angry God in which Jonathan  
Edwards believed. The results of our own  
sins contain in themselves the way of pain.

It is written into the moral law of the universe  
that we reap the results of our own misdeeds.

In this sense God does not punish the sinner;  
the sinner punishes himself.

CONCLUSION: What is our response, then? Jesus says that Christ calls, "Come unto me." and so every Christian has the impulse there to give ourselves in love & service. Still another impulse holds us back. Sometimes the experience rises to a crisis and finally we make a decision for Christ that determines everything else.

Followers of the evangelical tradition call that conversion.

There may be others for whom it is a day by day choice

between good & bad,

" truth & error,

" right & wrong,

" beauty & ugliness,

" duty & pleasure,

" responsibility & compromise,

" love & selfishness,

" obedience & rebellion.

Often everything depends on these deep & frequent struggles of the soul,

and in comparison nothing else matters.

A small boy was in an emergency operation.

As the Doctor cut deep with his scalpel to remove the poison dart which had broken apart within,

he paused when he saw the boy's tears

and felt his trembling

and heard his groaning.

"Do you want me to stop?" he asked.

"No, please don't stop," said the boy  
through quivering lips.

"Please go on. Dig deep,  
and get it all out."

So our response to God should be --  
not to run away from Him --

but to pray to Him that He will search out the secret thoughts, and bring to light every lurking evil,  
and spare nothing so that the hidden trouble may be  
rooted up and cast away.

You may not have any natural fluency in extemporaneous prayer, or you may have no liturgical knowledge or care for any; but you can pray the sincere prayer of the psalmist in the last two verses of this Psalm,

"Search me, O God, and know my heart!

Try me and know my thoughts!

And see if there be any wicked way in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting."

And as we wait in silence before God's mercy seat,  
this ancient prayer of the psalmist gives us courage  
to stand before the Lord & face his presence, his  
his discipline, and His purpose for us.

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### III. YOU CAN'T RUN AWAY FROM GOD'S DIVINE PLAN

#### A. God's redemptive purpose in Christ

1. Eph. 3:11, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.
2. II Tim. 1:9, Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace.
3. Rom. 8:28, We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them ~~who~~ are the called according to his purpose.

#### ~~B. God's Plan and Will for Your Life~~

- ~~1. God has a plan for every Christian life.~~

#### B. God has a Plan and Purpose for this World.

1. T.S. Eliot's gloomy philosophy.

"This is the way the world ends. . .

Not with a bang, but a whimper."

2. God's Word says the world will end with neither ~~an~~ bang nor a whimper, but with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.

3. We have a part in His plan.

Not like the parody of a well known hymn:

"Sit down, O men of God,  
His kingdom He will bring  
Whenever it shall please His will;  
You need not do a thing!"

#### C. God has a plan and will for your life

1. We should understand what is His will for us.

Eph. 5:17, Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

Rom. 12:2, That ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

2. We should not try to run away from God's will

a. Jonah 1:3, But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

- b. Contrast the attitude of Nehemiah,  
Should such a man as I flee?

3. We should yield to God's will.

Luke 22:42, Not my will, but thine, be done.

CONCLUSION: (See concl. to message  
"On Being AWOL from God.")

Ankhe, RVN Feb. 68

10 Dec. 61. J. H. Ch. W. Y. Ft. Ben. Con.

14 Aug 66 - Ft. Carson. Post Chapel

June 1969 - COEC Ch. Ft. Ord.

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M.B.C.