

Psalm 139:13-18

139:13 We have seen how David recognized the omniscience of God, and then the omnipresence of God. Now in this third stanza He spoke of God as the Creator, the Creator of the human body. And, in doing so, as Derek Kidner indicated (p. 465) he added "the dimension of time," especially if "when I awake" in verse 18 refers to the resurrection.

The margin of my Bible suggests that we can use two other verbs in translating this verse, and they are well-supported by those who have studied the original Hebrew. They are formed and knit together.

"Reins" is a word which speaks of "the seat of the tenderest, most secret emotions" (K&D, Psalms, III, 349). It is very close in meaning to the heart. God has not only given us a body, but also a soul with its "desires, affections, and passions" (Gesenius, 470).

"Covered," or knit together indicates how the Lord has put all of the parts of the body together to make them function as a unit, each part in its relationship with the other parts: the bones, the sinews, the veins, etc.

So this is not only a God of infinite wisdom, but of omnipotence. Man did not evolve; he is the masterpiece of God, the Creator.

The development of a child in the mother's womb will always be one of the greatest works of God. In creation it certainly is the greatest. Ecc. 11:5 tells us this:

As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit (or wind),
nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child:
even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.

And, such knowledge, as we learn from the next verse, is designed to cause us to glorify the Lord for His creative wisdom and power.

139:14 David has been marveling at the character of God. At this point he gives expression to his praise. He would offer the sacrifice of praise to God. He expresses his agreement with the truth that man has come from the hand of God.

To be "fearfully...made" is to be made so as to make a person fear, reverence, and seek to obey and honor the One Who made Him.

"Wonderfully" is related to that name of the Messiah, "Wonderful," is Isa. 9:6, and speaks of that which lies "altogether beyond human conception (ability to understand) or natural occurrence" (K&D, Isaiah, I, 252).

So, on the one hand, David was acknowledging the glory of God; on the other, his own inability to comprehend the marvels of the origin and the functioning of all that is man: body, soul, and spirit!

God's works are "marvellous," meaning that there are no other works like His. They are completely different and far above the greatest works of men, nations, or even the angels of heaven.

These were the subjects of David's praise because he knew very well, he had no doubts, but that man was the work of God, His masterpiece. Only man was made in the image of God, and only redeemed man will display that image throughout eternity! What a subject for praise this is!

139:15 "My substance" is my body with all of its powers. Man was not there so as to be able to describe what took place, but God was there. These things were not hidden from Him. Man today would try to tell us things which only the God Who made us could possibly know. We know it not by observation, but by revelation. God made man in secrecy. Only the members of the Godhead were there.

"Curiously wrought" is a very descriptive expression which points to "the complex patterns and colours of the weaver or embroiderer" (Kidner, Psalms 73-150, p. 466). It speaks of the most intricate details. Man is not only the work of God, but His masterpiece in all of creation!

"In the lowest parts of the earth" is an expression which can describe the secrecy of the womb, or, what seems to be more likely, the fact that man was made from the dust of the earth. The human body is even more wonderful when we realize that God made us from dirt!

139:16 Notice how David continued to refer to the fact that God in His omniscience was aware of us, knew all about us, not only before we were born, but even before we were conceived!

The word for "substance" here is different from the word at the beginning of verse 15. Here it speaks of "an unformed mass...not yet wrought, the parts of which are not yet unfolded nor developed, spoken of as embryo fetus" (Wilson, p. 428). God's knowledge and work includes the beginning, the development, and the completion of the unborn baby.

The latter part of this verse tells us that in God's book, i.e., in the records of heaven, the details of each man's body are recorded even before "in continuance," i.e., day by day, they were being formed. The record was there in each case before any life was conceived in the womb of the mother.

This verse shows the wickedness of abortion in which man destroys that to which God has given life.

139:17 Verses 6 and 14 have shown us the effect of these truths upon the heart of David, but we see even more in verses 17 and 18.

"Thy thoughts," i.e., the thoughts of God, should make us think of Psa. 40:5,

Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done,
and thy thoughts which are to usward:
they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee:
if I would declare and speak of them,
they are more than can be numbered.

In the 17th verse of that same Psalm we read,
But I am poor and needy;
yet the Lord thinketh upon me....

We have revealed in Scripture the thoughts of God concerning us. His thoughts did not begin when we began thinking of Him, but we have been in His thoughts from before creation, throughout that period from our conception to our birth, and every day since then.

David called these "precious." They were among his most treasured possessions. What can possibly bring more peace to our hearts than the knowledge that the Lord knows every thing about us, that He follows us

every moment of the day and night, that we can never go anywhere but what He is there, and that we have been in His thoughts and on His heart from before the foundation of the earth. The one who knows this is rich; the richest man on earth without this knowledge is the poorest of the poor. Matthew Henry said, "Our thoughts concerning God must be delightful to us, above any other thoughts" (III, 759).

And God's thoughts about us are not to be confined to this Psalm, nor even to all of such truth that we find in the Scriptures. They are "great" in number, beyond calculation. All of the books in all of the world could not contain them all.

Cf. Jer. 29:11,

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

David continued along the same line in v. 18.

139:18 Counting God's thoughts toward us is like counting all of the grains of sand in all of the earth! Such a count cannot be registered even by our most sophisticated equipment today.

However, we can see from this Psalm that there was nothing that David liked to do more than to trace the thoughts of God toward Himself:

- 1) To enlarge his understanding of God.
- 2) To cause him to worship and to praise God.
- 3) To give him peace in the midst of all of the trying circumstances of this life.

"When I awake...." is connected by many commentators with a verse like Psa. 17:15,

As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness:
I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

It is as though David was saying that even in eternity these truths will continue to be his delight; they will still be precious to him. Here, He is with us; there, we will be with Him.

However, David could have been speaking of the sleep we do here on earth in which the strength of our bodies is renewed for another day. When we sleep, we do not lose the Lord. He watches over us, thinking of us, caring for us. Cf. Psa. 121. What more can we ask?