

DAVID'S GOD, AND OUR GOD

Psalm 139

Intro: We all have our favorite Psalms, and there are certain Psalms that have drawn the attention of the Lord's people from the time that they were written. Possibly the most familiar of all, even by many who do not know the Lord, is Psalm 23. And the first Psalm would rate a close second in popularity. Psalm 27 deserves a place among those that the Lord's people love to read again and again. I have told you more than once that the Psalm I have read more than any other while standing beside a hospital bed, has been Psalm 34 which tells of how the Lord hears us, and delivers us, and helps us in so many ways. And this is only a beginning.

All of the Psalms were sung, and all of them have been set to music in Psalters which are still available. There was a day when it was really unthinkable that congregations would sing anything but the Psalms in their worship. It is very significant that the longest book in the Bible is the Psalms. One of my friends said to me many years ago that it seems to him that whenever there was any trouble in life, which is most of the time, the people of God find the Psalms. Perhaps it is not as true that we find them as it is that the Lord leads us to them.

However, on most people's list would be Psalm 139. Many of the Jewish teachers have felt that this is the best of David's psalms. And most of us would agree that in reading through the Psalms, we are always happy to come to the 139th.

It is easy to see its divisions. David began with a section on the omniscience of God (vv. 1-6). This means that He knows all things. Then he continued with a second section on the omnipresence of God (vv. 7-12). God is everywhere at the same time. And then there is a third section which we might say has an emphasis upon the omnipotence of God, because David spoke of a fact which it seems most people don't believe anymore. And that is that God made us. This takes us down through verse 16.

These truths have a threefold effect upon David.

First, in verses 17 and 18 his heart is moved to worship. Secondly, in verses 19 through 22 he understands that such a God cannot tolerate either sinners or their sins. And he has found in the contemplation of God that

his own heart sides with God, and that he can no longer with the wickedness of men. But in the last two verses, probably the most familiar verses in all of the Psalm, we see his prayer in which he prays that the Lord would search his own heart to make sure that there is no “wicked way” in him, and that he would be led in ‘the way everlasting.’”

I like the way Matthew Henry interpreted this Psalm. He believed that the main theme of the Psalm is on the sovereign, infinite knowledge of God. And then as we move on from verse 7 to the end of the Psalm everything either explains why we can consider that God is omniscient, or the practical influence that this great doctrine had upon David himself, and implied is the thought that it will have the same effect upon us. And that seems to me to be what must have been in David’s heart as he wrote. He was overwhelmed with the knowledge of God, but not His knowledge in an all-inclusive way, including all things in heaven and earth, and from the beginning of time to the end of time, or even from eternity to eternity, but *he is concerned in this Psalm about how thoroughly the Lord knew him, David.*

In the Psalm David is talking to the Lord about himself. As we read it we feel like we are overhearing David as he met with the Lord in some quiet place. But the interesting thing which ought to interest each one of us, is that *when we read this Psalm, it is just like David wrote it for us, and so we read it knowing that it applies just as much to us as it did to David, and so we make it our own just like David wrote it for each one of us.* So David’s Lord is our Lord, and David’s God is our God. David may have entered into the knowledge of these truths, and the enjoyment of them, more than most of us have, but we need to make this our Psalm knowing that it applies to each one of us just as much as it did to David three thousand years ago!

Now let us look briefly at each section of this great Psalm. The old timers in Bible exposition used to look for the main teaching of a passage, and they called it “the doctrine.” So I am going to follow my teacher in this instance, and call the first six verses

I. THE DOCTRINE OF PSALM 139 (Psa. 139:1-6).

The doctrine is that God knew David in a most intimate way. We can say that He knows us *innately*. Even though David expresses how God learned all of these things about him as the result of a personal investigation, yet we know that God possesses the knowledge of all things supernatu-

rally. God does not have to learn anything because He already knows all things. That is what we mean when we say that He is omniscient. But David must have expressed it this way to show the Lord's personal interest in him, and that the Lord was not only acquainted with him, but fully acquainted. Even those things that we don't pay much attention to, the Lord knows them. He knows when we sit down, perhaps to rest. He knows when we get up to go some place. He knows the thinking that prompts us to do what we do. And David meant here that the Lord knew these things about him before he did them. He knew His thought before David thought them.

When in verse 3 he said, "Thou compassest my path and my lying down," David not only meant that the Lord always knew where he was going, but that the Lord had a direct hand in the very steps that David was taking. As David said in Psalm 37:23, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." The Lord was "acquainted," intimately familiar with all his ways.

Even as far as his speech was concerned, even before we speak, the Lord knows what we are going to say. But again, implied in this statement is the fact that the Lord had a hand in David's speech.

- David was not blaming the Lord for the sinful things that he had done, nor for the bad things that he might have said from time to time, but he was recognizing the Lord's knowledge of every little detail of his life, and how the Lord's influence was to be seen in it all.

Then to say that the Lord had "beset" him behind and before, means that the Lord had gone before him, and the Lord had protected him from behind, and then laid His hand upon him. This shows the infinite care of the Lord. You talk about providence, this is providence. You talk about the sovereignty of the Lord in David's life, this is sovereignty. And when you multiply these truths in every generation of the Lord's people, how amazing it all is. It is not wonder that David said what he did in verse 6. It is impossible for us to fully comprehend those word with which David began in verse 1. The Lord has searched us, and known us.

Now we need to go back over these verses again and again until the truth of them reaches our hearts. God's hand is in every detail of our lives, and there is nothing that we do or say that He does not know, or an incident in our lives but what He has had a hand.

Now we come to the second part:

II. TWO PROOFS TO SUPPORT THE DOCTRINE (Psa. 139:7-16).

The first is:

A. The Lord's omnipresence (vv. 7-12).

One reason that we don't know more about each other than we do, is because we are not always with each other. But David realized that he had never gone anywhere or done anything but what the Lord had been right there.

Let us all answer the questions in verse 7. Can you possibly name a place where you won't find the Lord?

Go on to verse 8. Obviously the Lord is in heaven. That is His dwelling place. We have never been there, but if we did we would find the Lord. Even in Sheol, the grave, we can't get away from the Lord. Some people try to get away, but they learn immediately that they can't escape from the Lord.

I wonder what David was thinking when he wrote verse 9. Planes were not flying then. No one had traveled into outer space as men and women are doing today. Do you remember that Communistic Russian cosmonaut who went into outer space, but said he didn't see God? Well, maybe he didn't, but God saw him.

And remember that David was not saying that if we take the wings of the morning and go to the ends of the earth, that even there he would find the Lord, he didn't mean that the Lord would travel along with him (although that would be true too). No, David meant that the Lord is everywhere at the same time. At this very moment the Lord is in Portland, New York, London, Moscow, Bagdad, all over Africa. You name the place, and the Lord is there right now. If I go to London, the Lord is there waiting for me, but He is still in Portland which I have left behind.

The Lord said that men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. But they never stop to think, or just don't know verses 11 and 12 of Psalm 139. God can see just as well in the darkest night, in the darkest den of iniquity, as He can see when the sun is shining at noon without a cloud.

So when you recognize the omnipresence of the Lord, you probably won't

have any trouble believing in the omniscience of the Lord.

But there is a second proof of the doctrine of this Psalm:

B. God made us (Psa. 139:13-16).

Now we all know that in the beginning God made man, and then he put man to sleep, took a rib from his body, and made a woman. Let our evolutionists try to tell us otherwise; it only reveals their ignorance. The Lord to Whom David was speaking was the Creator of the heavens and the earth. And if you approach the world and people with any other idea, you are totally wrong.

But perhaps we have not fully realized what David was talking about in these verses. He not only created Adam and Eve in the beginning, but there has never been a child born from that day to this that has not been formed by the Lord, the Creator.

Verse 13 is a most wonderful verse because it seems that here David was telling the Lord that He not only made man, David in this instance, a body, but that in the word “reins” many expositors feel that David was speaking about his spirit and his soul, and that he covered that life with a body.

Verse 14 tells us what a wonderful work God does when any child is born. And as you go on reading down through verse 16 you can see how the Lord Himself has attended the conception and growth of every child in the womb of his or her mother until that child is ready to be born. So we are what the Lord has made us – body, soul, and spirit.

Is this not a further confirmation of the doctrine, the main teaching of this Psalm. He made me, and, of course, He knows me, knows all about me, knows me better than I know myself, and better than anyone else knows me. This is what David was saying.

This brings us to the third and last point of the Psalm. And it has to do with the effect that all of this truth had upon David.

III. THE EFFECTS OF THE DOCTRINE OF PSALM 139 (Psa. 139:17-24).

There are three of them as I have already mentioned. And we can tell if the doctrine of this Psalm has in any way been understood by us when

these same three effects are felt in our own hearts.

The first is this:

A. Worship (vv. 17-18).

When we are confronted with the greatness of our God, and we appreciate at least something of His majesty, we will find our hearts drawn out to Him in worship, true worship, worship that is spontaneous, and joyful.

David was overwhelmed with the thoughts that he had just written down, that God would have had such care for Him, and such involvement in his life, from his conception to that very hour. And we know also that the Lord has set His love upon us who are His people even before the foundation of the world. They are great, above our wildest thoughts, and so numerous that we could have an easier time counting the sand of the sea than we could count the times and the ways that the thoughts of the Lord have been turned toward us.

B. A hatred for sin and for sinners (vv. 19-22).

The only way we can truly appreciate the awfulness of sin is by contemplating the glorious character of God. When we understand something of the greatness of God, we then can understand why He cannot look upon sin, and why the day is coming when He will create a new heaven and a new earth where there will be no sin, only righteousness.

And you can see that what bothered David the most about sin was that it was against God, and that men were taking His Name in vain. How common it has been to hear even children swearing in our day. That follows from the God-less society in which we live. Most of us don't like sin, but these verses teach us that we need to hate it.

C. David's petition for himself (vv. 23-24).

Doesn't this remind you of Isaiah 6 where Isaiah spoke of seeing the Lord, and then declared how the vision of the Lord affected him. Let me read those verses to you as I close tonight. He said,

Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts (Isa. 6:5).

We don't see the Lord as Isaiah did, but we see the Lord as He is revealed

in the Word, in passages like Psalm 139. And we don't see things clearly just by reading it over once, but as we read it over and over, and as we meditate upon it, asking the Lord to make the doctrine of this Psalm clear to us like it was to David.

May this prayer of David be our prayer, but it can only be our prayer if we make David's Psalm our Psalm, knowing the David's God is our God too.

Concl: And so we have considered this Psalm together, but now we need to go back to it, and pray that the Lord will make the doctrine clear to us, so that it will affect our lives as it affected the life of David so long ago.