

## SEARCHED AND KNOWN

## Psalm 139:1-6

Intro: There have been attempts to say when and where and why this Psalm was written, but it seems best to say that we do not know. Some dispute that David was its author, but, in spite of some of the words that are used, there seems to be no real need to attribute it to anyone but David.

The fact that the circumstances under which the Psalm was written remain in doubt is evidence of the timelessness of the Psalm. We are not as liable to get sidetracked with an application to some past generation. We are more inclined to think of it as our Psalm, our knowledge of the Lord, and our prayer.

The Psalmist does in this Psalm what we see in most of the Psalms, he brings us immediately into the presence of God. It is there that we think of God's knowledge, i.e., what He knows (vv. 1-6). Then we pass on to the wonders of His presence (vv. 7-12). After that we see Him as the Psalmist's Maker (vv. 13-16). In vv. 17, 18 the Psalmist worshipped God for His thoughts. This leads to the mention of God's enemies (vv. 19-22). And then the Psalm closes with several petitions which David presented to God.

The whole Psalm is a prayer, a prayer that any of us would do well to pray. One writer has suggests that every child of God would find it valuable to read or quote this Psalm every morning, and again every night. The Psalm presents some truths that will serve to improve the godliness of our daily lives.

In reading the Psalm it is important to see that it was written with one person in mind. That originally was David, but since it was completed and has become a part of the sacred Scriptures, that one person is whoever happens to be reading it as a prayer to God. We all need to see that while the Lord is the God of heaven and earth, the God of the nations, the God of the families of the earth, yet He is our God, or better, He is MY God. And He deals with each one of us as though He had nothing else to do. As you read through the Psalm you begin to realize that you are talking about the Lord and just one other person, the one who is making these words his own.

Tonight I want us to consider just the first six verses.

The first verse is a title telling us that we are dealing with a God who searches us and knows us. Verses 2-5 give us the results of God's search. In the last verse (v. 6) we see

what our reaction should be.

We might state it this way:

- I. God's research (v. 1).
- II. God's results (vv. 2-5).
- III. Our response (v. 6)--or what it should be if it is not!

Let us look, then, at verse 1.

#### I. GOD'S RESEARCH (Psa. 139:1).

We need to recognize that God here had led the Psalmist to use terms which we would understand. If we were speaking of human research, we generally are speaking in terms of years. That, of course, is not necessary with an omniscient God, a God Who knows all. He is infinite in His knowledge, and infinite in His wisdom. God never has to learn anything because He knows all things. He will never need to know anything that He does not already know.

So when we say that God has "searched" us, and "known" us, we do not mean that He has carried on an investigation about us that has given Him clearer knowledge about us than He has of anyone else. We mean that He possesses knowledge which would make it appear that He has researched us, and has come up with some very interesting results.

"Searched" indicates that it is like God had carried out a "thorough investigation" (Plumer, p. 1161). "Known" tells us that the Lord has "precise understanding" (Ibid.). Our files do need to be brought up-to-date; they are up-to-date! They are kept that way in the mind and heart of God. Our doctors keep medical records on us. Schools keep records of our educational work. We may have applied for jobs which meant that we had to have personal clearance. But no records are as thorough, as complete, as up-to-date, as the record which God has of you and of me!

But let us go on to the main point in this passage:

#### II. GOD'S RESULTS (Psa. 139:2-5).

This is not what you might think the records would be. This is a moment by moment knowledge on God's part of where we are, what we are doing, how we are getting along.

A. He knows when we sit down, and when we get up (v.

2a). How many times do you do that in a day? You probably would be surprised if you were to keep a record. You came in here tonight, and sat down. Dr. Lockwood had all of us stand for the last hymn which we sang. Then we sat down. In a little while we will stand again for the closing hymn. Some of you will go to your cars, and sit down. Others will stand around, get tired waiting, and sit down. We are up and down all day long. And yet there is not a single time that you and I do either one of these but what God knows about it.

But let us notice another thing that God knows.

B. He knows what we are thinking (v. 2b).

This expression means that the Lord knows our thoughts while they are taking shape. When you try to figure something out, when you are seeking to know the will of God, God knows the thought process you are going through. He knows what got you started, the helps that you have, and the result you are headed for. He knows what bothers you, what makes you worry. He knows this about every single one of us. And He knows this even though He is in heaven, and we are on earth.

The third thing that God knows:

C. God sifts through and searches our paths, and our lying down, and is acquainted with all of our ways (v. 3).

He knows when we are busy; he knows when we are in bed resting (or trying to rest). He knows how we live each day, our personal habits, our weaknesses and our strengths, our successes and our failures, our encouragements and discouragements. He knows if we are honest or dishonest. He knows if we are righteous or unrighteous. He knows if we obey the law, or disobey it. He knows when you are well and when you are sick. He knows it all thoroughly!

The fourth thing:

D. He knows everything that we are going to say before we say it (v. 4).

To be sure He knows every word we say, but He knows them before we say them. He knows not only the sentences, but the words.

Finally, as far as this list is concerned,

E. He besets His people behind and before, and lays His hand upon us (v. 5).

Although the Lord is "afar off" (v. 2), yet He is close in front, and close behind, so that no one can mislead us, nor surprise us from behind with an attack.

And His hand upon us is always an indication of having His blessing.

It is obvious that all of these statements from verse 2 down through verse 5 are intended to make us aware of God's presence so that our lives will be what the Lord wants them to be, but that these also may bring us great blessing in our lives each day.

Remember that these things are not just for a few of us; these are true for ALL of us! Go back and dwell on each one of these until their truth really grips your heart.

This lead us to:

### III. THE PSALMIST'S RESPONSE (Psa. 139:6).

This means that it was David's response. But it also means that it should be your response, and my response!

We now have a twofold knowledge: We know what God knows.

Then David indicated that he knew what he had written, and yet he did not fully comprehend it. Furthermore, he did not think that he would ever be able to comprehend these glorious truths completely. It went beyond his ability to understand it.

He did not cast it aside. He reveled in what he could understand, and worshipped the Lord that all of this had been revealed to him.

The truth of the Word of God will always have this impression upon us. We are humbled that we cannot take it all in, but we rejoice in and praise Him for what He has revealed which we can understand. God has not revealed everything to us. Those things we are to leave alone. Moses wrote long ago,

The secret things belong unto the Lord our God:  
but those things which are revealed  
belong unto us and to our children for ever,

that we may do all the words of this law  
(Deut. 29:29).

Concl: This is but the first step in learning a lot of other things recorded in this Psalm about our God. Let us seek to understand it the best we can, with the Spirit's help, and then see to it that we live in the light of what God has been pleased to reveal to us.

NO HIDING PLACE  
Psalm 139:7-12

Intro: There are two ways in which we can legitimately approach this Psalm:

1) The way I am approaching it--as the Psalmist contemplation of the greatness of God's knowledge, His presence, His wisdom and His power, as they all relate to us as His people,

Or,

2) As one writer has expressed it, "This is viewed by many as a Messianic meditation upon the mystery of His manhood" (Clarke, Arthur G., Analytical Studies in the Psalms, p. 337).

Andrew Bonar, that godly Scottish preacher of the last century (1810-1892), had this to say in his book, Christ and His Church in the Book of Psalms (p. 423):

"A PSALM of David," and no doubt often sung by the "Son of David." For, rightly understood, there is not in it any thought of desiring an escape from the Lord's happy presence in verses 7, 8; far from this, it is meant to express delight in the remembrance of Jehovah's omnipresence and omniscience. It not the utterance of the First Adam, slinking from sight behind the trees of Eden; but it is the utterance of the Second Adam, dwelling in the blissful fellowship with God, which fellowship he would not for all worlds ever lose. Think of it as sung by David, and by Christ, and by all the family of Christ.

While I am thinking about it primarily as what it meant to David, and then its application for us today, I would not want you to miss the blessings that you will receive when you think of this great Psalm as a prayer of the Incarnate Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, in His fellowship with the Father while He, the Son, was here upon the earth. As our Lord quite evidently found great comfort for His own heart in the midst of the great trials which He experienced here on earth, so this is how David before Him had found comfort, and how we today can find comfort.

As we saw last week, it is amazing to think about the Lord's intimate knowledge of each one of us, knowledge which never gets scrambled in the mind of God. So it is equally comforting to think about the vastness of God's presence on earth, in heaven, in Sheol--wherever we might go, or whatever we might be doing--God is there! We can never get away from Him; we can never go any place but what He is there! Every believer needs to make these great truths his own.

The section of the Psalm which we are considering tonight, has been interpreted two ways:

- 1) That the Psalmist was trying to get away from God, to find some place where he was not made to feel uncomfortable because of the presence of the Lord.

Those who hold this point of view would make this a Psalm which Jonah might have used (at least verses 7-12) when he sought to go to Tarshish "from the presence of the Lord" (Jonah 1:3).

The other point of view is this:

- 2) That the Psalmist was delighting in the presence of the Lord.

This would be illustrated by what David wrote at the end of Psalm 16 (v. 11):

Thou wilt shew me the path of life:  
in thy presence is fulness of joy;  
at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

Another translation of the word "fulness" is satiety, that is, complete satisfaction and full sufficiency.

For the unbeliever, or for the believer who is out of fellowship with God, the presence of the Lord is a most distressing truth, but for David, for our Lord, and, I trust, for each one of us, it is a doctrine which holds for us the greatest of all joys. One thing that is going to make heaven heaven, is that there we will be "with him." The greatest agony that our Lord experienced on the Cross was expressed by His words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46).

An example of the awfulness of this truth to sinners is recorded for us in Amos 9:1-10. (Read.)

In the Book of the Revelation of our Lord, in chapter 6, verses 15 and 16, at the opening of the sixth seal, we are told that kings and great men and rich men and chief captains and mighty men and slaves as well as free men, will hide "themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, saying to the rocks of the mountains,

Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him  
that sitteth on the throne,  
and from the wrath of the Lamb.

But that is not the thought here. In Psalm 139 David was taking great delight in the Lord and, lit., in His face! I personally feel that to think of these verses in the opposite way is completely out of harmony with the rest of the Psalm. In the later verses of the Psalm we can see that David was in trouble because of His enemies. He was looking for comfort, for encouragement, for that which would bring peace to his

troubled heart. Thus far we have seen that He found that peace in the fact that the Lord knew him, knew where he was, knew what he was thinking, knew even what he was getting ready to say, and much more. And that led him to express the great joy which he expressed in verse 6.

But now let us turn to the text: verses 7 through 12.

David was contemplating the presence of the Lord from three aspects:

- 1) From heaven and hell (v. 8). A better word for "hell" is what it is in the Hebrew: Sheol.
  - 2) From the earth (vv. 9, 10).
  - 3) From day and night, especially the night (vv. 11, 12).
- And this whole section (vv. 7-12) is introduced with two synonymous questions in verse 1.

Let us look then, first of all, at:

#### I. THE QUESTIONS (Psa. 139:7).

All through the Scriptures we can see that for the Lord's people there are two possibilities for daily living:

- 1) We can walk by sight,
- Or,
- 2) We can walk by faith.

The first is the way that all people generally walk. The world says that "seeing is believing." Thomas was talking like a worldling when he said about his resurrected Lord,

Except I shall see in his hands  
the print of the nails,  
and put my finger into the print of the nails,  
and thrust my hand into his side,  
I will not believe (John 20:25).

However, when the Lord met with Thomas and showed him His hands and side, rebuke him for his unbelief, and then said to him,

Thomas, because thou hast seen me,  
thou hast believed:  
blessed are they that have not seen,  
and yet have believed (John 20:29).

To carry that a step further, Paul wrote to the Corinthian church in 2 Cor. 4:17, 18,

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment,  
worketh for us a far more exceeding  
and eternal weight of glory;

While we look not at the things which are seen,  
but at the things which are not seen:



for the things which are seen are temporal;  
but the things which are not seen are eternal.

"God is a Spirit" (John 4:24a). "No man hath seen God at any time" (John 1:18). Nobody has seen the Lord Jesus since He went back to heaven (except Stephen and Paul by special revelation). But the Lord has never been back to live for even a brief time on the earth as He lived here until the time of His ascension. When we speak of the Lord being "with us," therefore, we are talking the language of faith, not of sight. Sometimes it seems like the Lord is far, far away, or not even here at all. So David asked two very important questions in verse 7, and the rest of this section is given over to the answer.

The question is: Where can I go throughout the whole universe and leave God?

Some of the old timers (e.g., Matthew Henry) spoke of the ubiquity of God's presence. This is "the fact, or capacity of being everywhere at the same time" (New World Dictionary, p. 802). So it means the same as omnipresence. This is not possible for you nor for me. We can only be one place at one time. But that is not the case with God. He is everywhere at one time. But since He is a Spirit, we cannot see Him. And we are inclined to think that because we cannot see Him, He cannot see us, nor be with us. This, therefore, is why we need to speak the language of faith.

But it is one thing to believe it theologically; it is another thing to trust in God practically. You ask yourself this question this morning, especially if you feel all alone. Perhaps you came to church this morning because you felt the need for God. Possibly you thought you would find God here although you have not felt His presence at home. Where is God anyway?

## II. THE ANSWERS (Psa. 139:8-12).

### A. What about "heaven" and "hell," or Sheol (v. 8)?

The Lord asked some questions in Jeremiah's day which he recorded for us in Jer. 23:23, 24. Listen to them:

Am I a God at hand, said the Lord,  
and not a God afar off?

Can any hide himself in secret places  
that I should not see him? saith the Lord.

Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.

God not only lives in heaven, and governs the

universe from heaven, but He fills not only heaven, but also the earth!

With all of the saints that are there today, plus all of the angels who are there, no one has any trouble finding God in heaven! What a prospect we have before us!

Sheol has been explained in various ways. It is the grave. It is in inner part of the earth. It is the place of departed spirits--at least until the resurrection of our Lord. What about it? Do we lose God when we die? Will there be a change then.

No! David said of both places, **"Thou art there!"**

- B. What about distance on the earth? Cf. Psa. 139:9, 10.

Here we come not only to consider distance, but time in getting there.

"The wings of the morning" speaks of traveling with the speed of light. Light travels at the rate of 186,000 miles per second. Man has never been able to achieve such speed. A space craft needs to go 25,000 miles per hour in order to reach "escape velocity," i.e., in order to get out of the earth's atmosphere. As great a speed as this is, it is only 7 miles a second. So the Psalmist was talking about a speed much greater than man has ever gone.

The point of the statement seems to be this: If I suddenly go faster than man has ever gone, leaving with notice, going as far away as it is possible for me to go on the earth, will God be there?

The answer: The Lord's hand will lead me in, and He will still be holding me in His right hand.

Being held by the Lord's hand is an expression of our security in Christ. Link this idea with what our Lord said in John 10:27-29:

My sheep hear my voice,  
and I know them, and they follow me:  
And I give unto them eternal life;  
and they shall never perish,  
neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.  
My Father which gave them me is greater than all;  
and no man is able to pluck them  
out of my Father's hand.

I do not know if any of the astronauts who died in the spaceship Columbia were believers, but if they were, whatever speed it was that they attained after lift off, was not sufficient to tear them out of God's hands. He held them as they took off; He was holding them when the ship exploded and they died.

Such a statement surely has to be proof that David was speaking by divine inspiration. He could not have known that man would be traveling at the high speeds we are reaching today, but he was writing for the comfort of a space age generation.

The last area:

C. What about the night? Cf. Psa. 139:11, 12.

Wicked "men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil" (John 3:19). Why? Because they think that they are not going to be seen when they commit their sin. But they are wrong. God sees just as much in the night as He does in the day.

Often when someone is lost in the woods, and a search has been carried on until sundown, we will be told that the search has been called off until daybreak. Why? Because men have trouble seeing at night.

What about God?

The Psalmist was inclined to say that the darkness would hide him from God, that God could see where he was and what he needed in the daytime, but not at night. But David remarked that if he said this, then the night became light all around him.

We have a burglar alarm system in our home. It works just as well in the pitch black darkness of the night as it does in the full light of the day. That infrared beam will pick up any motion regardless of how dark it may be.

This illustrates the divine vision. However, infrared beams are limited. You can get out of the reach of them. But no so with God's eyes. Proverbs 15:3 says,

The eyes of the Lord are in every place,  
beholding the evil and the good.

Our omnipresent God has omnipresent eyes and omnipresent hands. And since "his ears are open" to our cries, His ears are omnipresent, too.

Concl: So what does this all add up to? It means that whether it is day or night, whether we are here or on the opposite side of the earth, in the heavens in a space craft, in heaven itself, or in the depths of the earth, living or dead, **GOD IS THERE!**

Those early Russian astronauts who scorned the idea of God by saying that they did not see Him in outer space, were revealing their own stupidity. He was there; they just did not have what it takes to see Him.

Moses was different from them. We are told about him in Heb. 11:27,

By faith he forsook Egypt,  
not fearing the wrath of the king:  
**for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.**

We cannot comprehend such truths as these just by an occasional reading of the 139th Psalm. We need to meditate on these verses, and pray that the Lord will give us the understanding that we need. You will remember, I hope, that Paul's prayer for the Colossians was that

...ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will...  
and increasing in the knowledge of God (Col. 1:9, 10).

God is far greater than any of us can imagine. But as we take our Bibles and seek to increase in our understanding of Him, we will find that our faith will increase with our knowledge, and that we will take greater delight in simply being able to trust the Lord.

In Psalm 32:7 David wrote concerning the Lord, "Thou art my hiding place." But from God there is **NO HIDING PLACE.** Wherever you are, He is. Whatever you do, He sees. Whatever you say, He hears. Whatever you think, He knows. Such truth can be a great comfort to believers, and that is what Psalm 139 is intended to be. May our hearts find great consolation in the truth of God's omnipresence.

## THE CREATOR'S MASTERPIECE

## Psalm 139:13-18

Intro: The knowledge of God is one theme that should always be of interest to the child of God. This includes not only the knowledge of the Father, but also the knowledge of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Peter identified our knowledge of Christ with our spiritual growth when he wrote at the end of his second epistle,  
 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.... (2 Pet. 3:18a).

The Apostle Paul was expressing the main object of his daily life when he wrote, speaking of Christ, "That I may know him" (Phil. 3:10a).

One of Paul's burdens for the Colossian church was that they would be "increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:10b).

They, the Apostles Peter and Paul, were not speaking merely of knowing truth about God (that was certainly included), but they were speaking of knowing God Himself, having fellowship with Him, trusting Him, loving Him, seeking to live so as to please Him and to glorify Him. They were speaking of the kind of knowledge that transforms our lives.

Perhaps I could state it this way: It is one thing to know that God is omniscient; but it is life-transforming when I realize that He knows everything about me, right now, where I am at this very moment. It is one thing to know that God is omnipresent; but it is another thing to know that He is with me right now, where I am at this very moment. He will be with me when I leave here tonight. He will go home with me. He hears what I say. He sees where I go, and what I do. He knows what I think. To live in the presence of a God Who knows all, and Who is everywhere, is one of the first lessons we need to learn if we are to be holy.

Here in Psalm 139 David had declared some very wonderful truths about God. And it was all personal with David. Notice the many times he spoke of "I," "me," "mine," and "my." There are over 20 of them in the first twelve verses. David was speaking of truths that he knew with head and heart.

It would have been an experience to hear David quote this Psalm. I am sure that it would have been very different from the way you or I would read it. These truths of the omniscience of God, and the omnipresence of God, had gripped his heart and changed his life. As I believe I have said before, if you and I could know these things as David knew them (and

we can), our lives would be very different from what they are! Think of what it would mean if the Lord Himself were physically with you, and you will have some idea of what God meant to the godly men and women of the Bible.

But all of this raises the question, Why? Why would God be even interested in such a personal knowledge of David, and why would He want to live in such a personal relationship with David?

Verses 13 through 18 give us at least part of the answer. Will you notice the word "For" at the beginning of verse 13? That suggests an explanation. David gave it in three parts. And this is what they are:

- 1) He made me (vv. 13, 14).
- 2) He planned for me (vv. 15, 16).
- 3) He thinks about me (vv. 17, 18). Or, to state it another way, He has plans for me.

Keep in mind that we are speaking about a child of God. We are thinking about David. Some of what he said would apply to everyone, but there are some things here that have special application only to those of us who know God as our Savior.

Let us see what David said.

First,

#### I. HE MADE ME (Psa. 139:13, 14).

David knew where man had come from. Man had not always existed. He did not just happen. He was not the result of some evolutionary process. He was God's creature, the greatest of all of God's creatures, God's masterpiece!

David had several important things to say about this.

"Possessed" and "covered" could be better translated, formed and knit together.

The first part of verse 13 has to do with David's soul; the second part has to do with his body. "Reins" is practically a synonym for the heart. It has to do with man's emotions, his desires, his affections, his passions. This includes all that has to do with our inner man. He gave us the personality that we have.

But He also put all of the parts of our bodies together when we were in our mother's womb. He is the One Who caused them to function as one body, as a unit. The way we grew within our mother's body was from God.

The development of a child in his mother's womb will always be one of the greatest works of God. In creation there is nothing like it! Ecc. 11:5 says 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.

Such knowledge made David pause to worship the Lord, to offer his sacrifice of praise indicating that he was in full accord with the truth that he had just mentioned.

But then he added three words to describe how he came into being:

- 1) "Fearfully."
- 2) "Wonderfully."
- 3) "Marvellous."

The first means that the truth about our origin as human beings, and our individual births, are so designed as to make us fear the Lord, reverence Him, worship and obey Him.

The second is related to that title of the Messiah given in Isa. 9:6. It means that the work of creation and the birth of a child are "altogether beyond human conception (our ability to understand) or natural occurrence (K & D, Isaiah, I, p. 252).

The third means that there are no other works like the Lord's work in creation and in the procreation of children. Neither men nor angels can even begin to approach what God has done, and continues to do every day.

This truth made David praise the Lord. We should do the same, especially those of you who are parents. And David expressed in the last part of verse 14 that he was fully convinced that all of this was true.

So God keeps up with me, and knows all about me, because HE MADE ME.

Secondly,

II. HE PLANNED FOR ME (Psa. 139:15, 16).

You and I were not an accident (as parents sometimes say); God planned for us.

"My substance" speaks of David's body with all of its powers. It was not hidden from God. He was actually involved in it all. We were not hidden from God even though we were made in the secret of our mother's womb. God was there and knew what was going on. Man cannot tell God about creation, nor about procreation. God tells man, and He does it through the kind of revelation that we have here.

We were "curiously wrought," like "the complex patterns and colours of the weaver or embroiderer" (Kidner, Psalms 73-150, p. 466). This speaks of intricate detail, a masterpiece of divine art. Nothing in all of creation displays the glory of God more than man does.

"In the lowest parts of the earth" can mean the secrecy of the womb, or it can be a reference to the fact that man was made from the dust of the earth. The human body is even more wonderful when we learn that God made it from dirt!

So much for verse 15. Now look at verse 16.

This verse tells us that God had planned for us, not only before we were born, but before we were even conceived. The latter part of the verse shows that in God's book in heaven the blueprint for each one of us had been carefully planned long before we were conceived. It was before that "continuance," that day by day process of growth finally resulted in our birth.

God knew us, had planned for us, when we were nothing but an unformed mass, the unfolded and undeveloped embryo fetus. God's planning included the beginning, the development, and the completion of the unborn baby.

This verse condemns every act of abortion that has ever been performed. The abortionist is interfering with that which is the work of God, and God will hold him accountable.

What tremendous truths are here. But we are not finished yet.

### III. HE THINKS ABOUT ME (Psa. 139:17, 18).

As I indicated before, this means that HE HAS PLANS FOR ME. Not only did God plan for each one of us, but He has plans for us.

Early in the Psalm David said that God knows our



thoughts. Now he would speak of God's thoughts about us.

In Psa. 40:5 we read these amazing words:

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.

And then in the 17th verse of that same Psalm 40 we read,  
But I am poor and needy;  
yet the Lord thinketh upon me....

We can add to this, to bring out the meaning of God's  
thoughts about us, those words in Jer. 29:11,  
For I know the thought that I think toward you,  
saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil,  
to give you an expected end.

God's thoughts include who we are, where we are, what we  
are doing, and everything else about us, but in  
particular they have to do with His plans for us! God  
would not plan something in eternity past, then see it  
carried out in time, unless He had some great purpose for  
the future as the goal of it all.

Many feel that David's words at the end of verse 18,  
"when I awake, I am still with thee," have reference to  
David's resurrection unto glory, and they quote Psa.  
17:15,

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

Now look at what David said about God's thoughts in this  
light. They were "precious" to him. They were his most  
treasured possession. It would be as impossible to count  
as it would be to count the grains of sand throughout the  
whole earth.

What are these thoughts? These are the outworking of  
God's plan for each of us His people. It started with  
our election to salvation, and it includes all that God  
is doing in our lives to fulfill those purpose which He  
made in eternity past as they relate to you and to me.

Concl: Upon what does our salvation depend? Upon the  
omniscience of God, upon the omnipresence of God,  
and, in this text, upon the omnipotence of God--the ability  
of God to complete what He planned to do before the

foundation of the world. I am not saying that David knew as much as we know since the completion of the Bible, but I am saying that David knew far more than we give him credit for knowing. He reveled in God's knowledge of us NOW. He reveled in God's presence with us NOW. He reveled in God's power for us NOW. But he also knew that the work which God had started before creation, and carried out through creation, would not fail in its fulfillment.

Can you say what David said when he got to verse 6? And then what he said at the beginning of verse 14: "I will praise thee." And then can you say what he said in wonder and praise in verses 17 and 18?

If we can't, then we should stay with this Psalm, dwelling on these great truths, until our hearts are also "lost in wonder, love, and praise."

You see, the people who reject God as the Creator aren't headed any place. We who know that He created us, and that He has redeemed us, can be certain that He will continue to know us, and be with us, and exercise His power in us, until the work is finally finished and we are with Him, and like Him! Hallelujah!

What is the Creator's masterpiece? Man, you say? Yes, that is true! But more than that: **MAN REDEEMED AND TRANSFORMED INTO THE VERY LIKENESS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.**

## GOD'S OTHER SIDE

## Psalm 139:19-24

Intro: There was something in David's contemplation of the omniscience of God, and the omnipresence of God, and the omnipotence of God, that caused him to become aware of the holiness of God.

And, just as each of those preceding attributes had had a corresponding effect upon David, the same is true of God's holiness. It was the sense of God's holiness that led David to pray the prayer which we find at the end of this Psalm.

The contrast between the first eighteen verses and verses 19 through 22 is, as one commentator has express it, "startling"! Cf. Perowne, II, 442. It is startling because we today know so little about righteous indignation. Our sense of sin is also so far less than it should be, that we can hardly understand the feelings which must have motivated David to pray such a prayer. As Perowne went on to say, this prayer

does not arise from a sense of wrong and personal danger, but from the intense hatred of wickedness as wickedness, from the deep conviction that, if hateful to a true-hearted man, it must be still more intensely hateful to Him who searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins. The soul, in the immediate presence of God, places itself on the side of God, against all that is opposed to Him (Op. cit., p. 443).

There are many things about verses 19 through 22 that strike a harsh note in our ears, but let us seek to understand, with the help of the Spirit, just what David meant by the words that we find here.

Let us call this section,

#### I. DAVID'S ABHORRENCE OF SIN (Psa. 139:19-22).

As we come to verses like these we need to remember what Paul wrote to the Roman church. He said in Rom. 12:9b, "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." To abhor is to hate; to cleave to good is to stick to it like you were glued to it. Few of us really have this intolerance for sin. But David had it. And Paul had it. And so did many others in the Scriptures. There were times when David's intolerance fluctuated, but, for the greater part of his life he hated sin and loved righteousness--a statement which is made of our Lord Jesus Christ in Hebrews 1:9, quoting Psalm 45:7:

Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity;  
therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee  
with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

- In verse 19 we see, not that David was calling upon God to destroy every wicked man, but that he, David, could not conceive of a final estate in which there would be wicked men doing wicked things. David anticipated, and longed for, a world in which there was no sin.

When David spoke of wickedness he was thinking of man as a creature who often sets his heart on carrying out vicious and gross sins, people like Solomon was describing when he said,  
For they sleep not, except they have done some mischief;  
and their sleep is taken away,  
unless they cause some to fall (Prov. 4:16).

David wanted to have nothing to do with them. And so he told them to leave him alone, calling the "bloody men." It was not that David did not care for their souls, but he was speaking of times when they would entice him to join them in their evil deeds. There are times to witness, and there are times to stand against sinners and sin regardless of how offensive it might be to them.

- In verse 20 we see why David felt as he had expressed himself in verse 19. He knew that all sin is ultimately against God, and that that is the worst thing about it. Not only that, they will often use the Lord's Name either to excuse their sin, or to justify it. We do not just take the Lord's Name when we speak in profanity, but when we use the Lord's Name in ways so as to involve him in our wrongdoing. Adam took the Lord's Name in vain when he said what he did in Gen. 3:12.

In verse 21 David was asking the Lord to confirm, as the Searcher of hearts, that this was really true of him. He was not just speaking words, but they were words that came from the heart. It is impossible for us to be a friend of God, and at the same time to be friendly with the world. In fact, James taught in the NT that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God" (Jas. 4:4). David strongly declared here that if a man is an enemy of God, he is David's enemy, too.

- But David added the word "grieved." This meant that while he was tired of sin, and loathed anything that was displeasing to God, yet at the same time he felt sorrow, he was distressed, he mourned over sinners and their sins.

This was like what Paul said in Phi. 3:18,  
For many walk, of whom I have told you often,

and now tell you even weeping,  
that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.

David was expressing a total rejection for sinners and their sin, while at the same time he felt compassion for the sinner.

Finally, in verse 22 David declared that his hatred, his rejection of sinful men was sincere and complete. He would consider no compromise at all. If they were at enmity with God, there was no way that he was going to be their friend!

How many of the Lord's people do you know who can say such things to the Lord? How many of them were there even in the days when the Bible was being written. The Apostle Paul certainly did. Peter came to the place where he did, too. In the Old Testament we would have to select Enoch and Noah and Abraham and Moses, and many others.

And there have been many from that day to this who would have been able to say it from the heart. BUT WHAT ABOUT YOU AND ME? DO WE FEEL THIS WAY? Or do we look upon the sin of our generation as that which you could expect, so that we have become more and more callused to sin?

If we have really understood the first eighteen verses of this Psalm, then we should at least have some of these feelings, and they should be growing, feelings of a greater love for God and a greater hatred for any and everything that is displeasing to God.

But now let us go on to:

## II. DAVID'S PRAYER (Psa. 139:23, 24).

Here we have an excellent example of how much more a verse means, or verses mean, when we see them in their context.

At this point in the Psalm, how do you feel about David?

I am inclined to feel that he, at this point, was just about as holy as you could expect to be in this life. But he did not feel that way! The closer a person gets to God, and the more he experiences the holiness of God in his heart and life, the more he suspects that there might be something in himself that he has overlooked. This is why David prayed this prayer. His conscience seems to have been clear, but he did not see everything

that God was capable of seeing. And so he prayed. (Read again verses 23, 24.)

Will you notice that David was concerned about himself, about his inner man? Notice "me" and "my heart" and "me" again and "my thoughts" and in verse 24, "in me."

"Search" is the same verb that he used in verse 1. But David wanted to be re-examined; he wanted a thorough examination. He wanted the Lord to do it, and he wanted to be the patient. He wanted to be sure that there was not some hidden evil in his heart which he had not yet discovered. This is a Hebrew word which is used for mining.

Have you and I not found that the more we seek to please the Lord, the more we see in our own hearts that is wrong, which we have been overlooking?

"Try me" means that David was asking the Lord to put him to the test. We had this idea in the Lord's letter to the church at Laodicea when He said to the church,

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire,  
that thou mayest be rich;  
and white raiment, that you mayest be clothed,  
and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear:  
and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve,  
that thou mayest see (Rev. 3:18).

This is what Satan wanted to do with Job, and what he wanted to do later with Peter. His idea was that if you make the people of God suffer, they will deny the Lord. David was willing for the Lord to test him even more than he had been tested so he could show the Lord that he really meant what he said.

Fortunately the Lord never tests us to the extreme, but He does test us that we may see our weaknesses, and may know what our other needs are. David did not want to be tolerating "any wicked way" in his heart. A wicked way is a way which causes pain and grief to God, and to us! Peter's denial was a wicked way for him, and he wept bitter tears over his sin. That is what David's sin with Bathsheba was, a wicked, painful, grievous way.

David wanted to know as much about himself as the Lord would show him.

And all of this was that the Lord would lead him "in the way everlasting."

A "way" is the manner in which a person lives. David was speaking of God's way, a way of holiness, a way pleasing to the Lord. And it is a "way everlasting" because it is the old way, the way that Abel walked, the way that Enoch walked, the way Noah walked, the way Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob walked, the way Moses and Joshua walked. David wanted to follow those who had walked with the Lord before him. And he wanted to succeed where they might have failed.

You see, the inside has to be right before the outside can be right. Our hearts need to be right before our lives can be right.

David had used this verb "lead" back in verse 10. He wanted, even with all of the examples he had from the saints who walked with God before his time--he wanted the Lord to lead him personally in a way of life that would have no regrets, and which would be the way we will walk with the Lord when we get to heaven: "the way everlasting."

Concl: I am sorry to come to the end of this Psalm. There has been much here that I have learned, and much more that I need to learn. I want to love the Lord like David did, and I want to hate sin like He did. I hope you do, too. And I am sure that most of you do.

But I think that before this prayer can really become ours, as simple as it is and as easy to memorize, yet we will never really be able to pray it like David did until we have learned how marvelous and glorious our God is: omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, and all holy! He has made us to be like He is, and like our Lord Jesus Christ is. And we can see that knowing Him will teach us that He stands ready every day, and every step along the way, to conform us to His own holy image. That is "the way everlasting." That is the way of greatest blessing and joy for us. That is the way we can bring the greatest glory to Him.

And so, trusting in the grace of God, and realizing what it probably will mean in the way of testing, let us pray the prayer of David which we have in verses 23 and 24. (Repeat.)

## BUT GOD—

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I KNOW not, but God knows;  
Oh, blessed rest from fear!  
All my unfolding days  
To Him are plain and clear.  
Each anxious, puzzled "Why?"  
From doubt or dread that grows,  
Finds answer in this thought:  
I know not, but He knows,

I cannot, but God can;  
Oh, balm for all my care!  
The burden that I drop  
His hand will lift and bear,

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Though eagle pinions tire,—  
I walk where once I ran,—  
This is my strength, to know  
I cannot, but God can.

I see not, but God sees;  
Oh, all-sufficient light!  
My dark and hidden way  
To Him is always bright.  
My strained and peering eyes  
May close in restful ease,  
And I in peace may sleep;  
I see not, but He sees.

—Annie Johnson Flint.

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