

Fearfully And Wonderfully Made

Psalm 139

Introduction: 1) This psalm links us with God as do few other texts in the Bible. This God who is omniscient (vs. 1-6), omnipresent (vs.7-12), omnipotent (vs. 13-18) and omni-compotent (vs. 19-24) has fearfully and wonderfully made us (v. 14), fashioning all our days before we were even formed in our mother's womb (v.16).

- 2) ● Psalm 139 was penned by King David.
- It clearly divides into 4 stanzas of 6 verses each in our English text. It is something of a composite psalm made up of a hymn, praise, thanksgiving, lament, confession, meditation and prayer. It has the characteristics of both the didactic psalm and the wisdom psalm.
 - Some form of the word “know” dominates the passage, occurring 6 times in vs. 1, 2, 4, 6, 14 and 23.
 - King David boldly and joyfully declares that God knows everything (vs. 1-6), that God is everywhere (vs. 7-12), that God can do anything (vs. 13-18) and that God will deal with everyone (vs. 19-24).
- 3) David wants us to know our God so that we may ourselves. John Calvin wrote in book 1, chapter 1, paragraph 1 in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, “Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.” (35). What then does Psalm 139 teach us about our God and ourselves that we must know and never forget?

I. We are made by an omniscient God.

139:1-6

- Stanza 1 affirms a simple and basic truth: God knows all about you.
- Note the powerful verb action of this stanza.
 - You have searched and known (v.1).
 - You know... You understand (v. 2).
 - You comprehend (winnow) and are acquainted (v.3).
 - You know altogether (v. 4).
 - You have hemmed (*ESV*) me in (v. 5).

1) God knows my heart.

139:1

- God knows your character. This is both convicting and comforting. God knows me inside out. He has exhaustive knowledge of my soul.

2) God knows my action.

139:2-3

- God knows your conduct. The “you” here is emphatic. The opposites “my sitting down and my rising up” denote all of our actions. (v.2).
- Our daily activities are completely familiar to our God. You 1) comprehend (lit. winnow) my path, 2) comprehend my lying down and 3) are acquainted with all my ways. (v. 3).
- Indeed even my attitudes and motives behind my actions are known by you: You understand (discern) my thoughts afar off. The heart that deceives you (Jeremiah 17:9) can never fool God.

- 3) God knows my words. 139:4
- God knows your conversation. Even before you say it, He knows. And, He knows them exhaustively and completely (“altogether”).
- 4) God knows my destiny. 139:5-6
- God knows your course. In fact He has you surrounded and “hemmed in” (ESV). We are enveloped, “enclosed” (NASV) by His love and care.
 - How do I know He loves me and cares for me? Because He has “laid His hand upon me.” The child of God is clearly in view here.
 - The word “wonderful” (v. 6) is in an emphatic position at the beginning of the sentence strengthened its force. It has the idea of “extraordinary” or “surpassing.”
 - Divine omniscience is simply too high for us to “get it.” Try as we might, we can’t “go there!” It goes beyond my wildest imagination.

II. We are made by an omnipresent God. 139:7-12

- 1) God is with me wherever I go. 139:7-10
- Verse 7 utilizes 2 rhetorical questions that anticipate the answer: nowhere! They are a beautiful example of semantic parallelism as the two questions complement one another.
 - Verses 8 & 9 use 2 pairs of hypothetical opposites which include everything in between them.
 - Go up to heaven you are there. If I make my resting place in *Sheol*, the grave, the place of the dead, you are there (v. 8). You are up and down and everywhere in between.
 - If I take the wings of the morning (and go east at the speed of light) and if I dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea (west/ the Mediterranean) ... you are there too (v. 9).
 - Verse 10 provides the conclusion of the whole matter: 1) even there Your hand shall lead me (direction); 2) And Your right hand shall hold me (protection).
- 2) God is with me wherever I am. 139:11-12
- Distance cannot separate me from the omnipresent God. Darkness cannot hide me from His presence either.
 - What is dark to me literally and spiritually is light to Jehovah!

III. We are made by an omnipotent God. 139:13-18

- Jeremiah 1:4-5 says, “Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you.”
 - God saw us and loved us before He made us and as He made us.
 - Omnipotence knits us together in the dark and secret place of our mother’s womb! David wants each one of us to know that God cares about our beginning (vs. 13-15), and He cares about our future (vs. 16-18).
- 1) The Lord formed my body. 139:13-15
- For connects stanza 3 with both stanzas 1 and 2.

- You formed –“You” is emphatic again. You and no other formed/created me, even my inward or inmost parts (lit. “kidneys”). All that I am inwardly, body and soul, you made it.
 - Covered – wove, knitted. God was involved in the intricate details. As a skilled craftsman would knit a piece of cloth or weave a beautiful basket, this is how God made us.
 - David marvels over the mysterious process of a developing baby inside his or her mother. He can only break out in praise seeing we are fearfully and wonderfully made (v. 14).
 - David sees the works of this great Creator God as marvelous (*ESV*, “wonderful”). He affirms: “my soul knows it very well.” (v. 14) He has no doubts either about the Creator or the tiny creation in view! There is human life in there put there by God.
 - The theme of God’s omniscience now makes another appearance. My frame (lit. “bones”) was not hidden from You. You see everything and you know everything.
 - Made in the secret, hidden place within my mother, I was skillfully wrought (*ESV*, “intricately woven”, *The Message*, “You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit, how I was sculpted from nothing into something”). Chip McDaniel notes the Hebrew word could be translated “embroidered.”
 - “In the lower parts of the earth” is simply a poetic expression, a figure of speech, that points to the darkness, hiddenness and secrecy of the mother’s womb.
- 2) The Lord foreordained my life. 139:16-18
- Once more omniscience and omnipotence come together working hand in hand.
 - God saw me at the moment of conception as an unformed substance. Even when I wasn’t much, I was still something to Him! In fact He prerecorded and set out in advance all my days. God 1) wrote all the details of my life in His book and 2) He fashioned and formed all the days of my life when none of them yet existed (v. 16). Both in terms of length of life and the specifics of life, God has His purposes and plans.
 - Once more these truths inspire David to break out in praise to His God (vs. 17-18).
 - Some Bible scholars believe the phrase, “when I awake, I am still with You” may be alluding to another waking; the waking up from death in the very presence of the Lord. Unlike the wicked who are slain by the Lord (v. 19), the believer in the resurrected Jesus has a different destiny all together. No wonder the New Testament repeatedly refers to the death of the child of God as “sleep.” He closes His eyes one moment, and awakens in the presence of Jesus His Maker and Savior the next.

IV. We are made by an omni-competent God. 139:19-24

- The fourth and final stanza constitutes what could be called “a dangerous prayer.”
- Our great God is a good God, a just God, a righteous God. Nothing is beyond His knowledge, presence or power. He is indeed an omni-competent God. Here we see His competency applied to the moral order of things. David notes in stark contrast

the heart and mind of those who oppose God, and are his enemies (v. 22) with those who seek God and are His children (vs. 23-24).

- In a psalm of imprecation, a psalm that vividly calls on God to judge the wicked who do great evil, David asks God to slay the wicked, and at the same time He pleads with the Lord to search His own heart knowing the utter depravity of man apart from God's saving grace.
- 1) Our God will deal with the wicked. 139:19-22
 - These men were evil in action (v. 19).
 - These men were evil with their words (v. 20).
 - These men were evil in their agenda (v. 21).
 - These men were enemies of David because they were the enemy of God (v. 22).
 - Hate means to reject and oppose. Emotions are involved to be sure, but this is a reasoned volitional response on David's part. David asks God to deal with the wicked.
 - 2) Our God will lead the humble. 139: 23-24
 - Four verbs catch our eye as David comes before the Lord in humility:
 - Search me/ try me (v. 23).
 - See me/lead me (v. 24).
 - Search (v. 23) is the same word as in v. 1.
 - Try (v. 23) means to test as a refiner would test metal. Anxieties or "anxious thoughts" (*NIV*) speaks of motives and attitudes of the heart.
 - Wicked way is better "grievous way" (*ESV*), lit. "way of pain."
 - I believe David grew to understand God will often use greatly those He wounds deeply. And, he knew such wounds were necessary to bring life and healing to his soul.

Conclusion:

- 1) Even before you were conceived in your mother's womb, your Lord had designed your size, shape, and the specific makeup of your body and soul.
- 2) At birth and throughout all of life, there are no surprises or accidents in God's eyes. Each and every day was ordained and planned by Him and written down in His "day planner" for each of us.
- 3) From the moment we are conceived to the last breath of life, there is no such thing as fate, fortune, luck or coincidence. The sovereign God who made us is the sovereign God who planned out our life for us.
- 4) The fact we have been made and ordained by this omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent God should remind us that nothing we do is hidden from Him and nothing we do can ultimately overcome His plan.
- 5) We are fearfully and wonderfully made by an awesome and wonderful God. He knows me, He is with me and He made me. Unlike the wicked who are His enemies, I will worship Him and be His friend. Even better, I will devote my life to Him and become His child!