

Psalms 139 – God Knows You Completely



The book of Psalms is the most loved and read book in the Bible. At every turn in the mountain and valley experience of life, we will always find timeless truth in this book to comfort and counsel us.

Psalms 139 is yet another classic psalm of David, reaching both the heights of the revelation in the knowledge of God and the depth of intimacy we can have with Him.

The most important and powerful thing about you is your thoughts about God. My thoughts on God are what define me. Everything that I do flows from what I believe about God. As David meditates about who YHWH is - His greatness, His love, His holiness - he is taken on a journey to discover his own identity.

Do you feel lost? Lonely? Alone? Not valued? Are you asking yourself, 'Why am I here on earth? What am I supposed to do?' David starts by answering the question 'Who is God?' which then leads to the question 'Who am I?' The psalm ends by affirming David's ultimate purpose in life.

1. God Knows Me Completely - God's Omniscience (v1-6)

- a. The psalm opens with God's complete and total knowledge of us – 'O LORD, You have searched me.' (v1) God has actively explored, discovered, and searched out everything there is to know about me. There is nothing about me that God does not know about. God is intensely interested in me.
- b. This complete knowledge of God extends to knowing all my actions (v2-4) – 'sitting down' and 'rising up', i.e., my sleep and activity cycle, 'my path', i.e., my preferences and choices, etc. God knows my every turn, every move, every choice, and every mistake before they are made. This is God's foreknowledge. God's knowledge of me includes not only my actions but also my inner thoughts and words.

'You understand my thought afar off...for there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.' (v2-4) Before a thought enters my mind 'God sees that thought' coming from afar and He knows my precise response. It is literally impossible to think a thought outside of God! I have never thought a thought that God did not already know about – scary? God's foreknowledge is a subject we must approach with the utmost respect. This truth has a profound implication for our prayer life. The complete knowledge of God of every corner of the universe, and His holiness and power are too much to take in.

- c. *'You have hedged me behind and before and laid Your hand upon me.'* (v5) God already perfectly knows us - our personality, thoughts, actions, mistakes, shortcomings, and even our sinfulness. So, God is unshockable. And He still loves us! David says, 'You have hedged me in (I got nowhere to run)' and 'You laid Your hand upon me.' Imagine a father lovingly putting his hand on his child.

Can we take a pause and feel God's loving hand over us? **The One who knows you the best loves you the most!** Why would we ever try to hide from the One who can see us so clearly?

- d. *'Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high I cannot attain it.'* (v6) The subject of God's complete knowledge is way too high for us to comprehend. David too was overwhelmed at God's omniscience, and humbly acknowledges his limitation in grasping this knowledge and love of God. This is the right Christian attitude. We would be wise to follow David's model.

2. God Is Always With Me – God's Omnipresence (v7-12)

- a. *'Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?'* (v7-8) These two rhetorical questions David does not bother to answer. God is everywhere at the same time by His Spirit. He is with us even in the heights of heaven or in the depths of hell (lit. 'sheol': a place of departed spirits). Literal hell (lake of fire) is the place where one gets separated from the goodness of God for eternity.
- b. A modern translation of v9-10: *'if I get into a spaceship and leave our planetary system [completely alone], even from there Your hand shall 'lead me' (back to earth) and uphold me by His right hand.'*

Do you have this kind of trust in God?

- c. There is no darkness dark enough to hide me from God (v11-12). God can see me clearly like in the light of the day no matter how dark my life becomes (dark night of the soul). When you cannot see an inch ahead, when you cannot see where you are going, God can still you clearly as in the day. He is with you and for you. And God knows how to get you out of the dark night of the soul. David is saying to God, *'God, I cannot see anything or where I am going, but I trust in Your leadership over my life.'* C.f. *'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'* (Heb 13:5 c.f. Ps 55:22, 1 Chr 28:20, Josh 1:9)

3. God Has Made Me Uniquely – God's Omnipotence (His Imminence & Intimacy) (v13-18)

- a. David turns his attention to his birth. When we experience extreme weakness or suffer a near-death experience, our mind turns to the time of our birth (v13-15). David sees by the revelation of the Holy Spirit there was an intimate involvement of God's loving hands at his conception, knitting and forming his body in an embryonic form. ('inward parts' = lit. kidneys, representing all the vital organs.)

Can you see the loving hand of God at work in your conception even before your birth? None of us are accidents. The will of God preceded your birth, and the rich investment of God's purpose, love, and care. The unique quality and beauty were put into you by God at birth.

A pastor who grew up as an orphan confessed Ps 139:13-14 as his most beloved Scripture is. He saw that his life was not an accident or an 'oops.' God was there even in that secret place no one could see. The depth of the earth refers to his mother's womb. At your very inception, the hand of God 'covered you,' 'knitted you,' 'wired you,' 'shaped you' uniquely the way you are, strand by strand, cell by cell, blood vessel by blood vessel, etc.

- b. David concluded this about himself – his life had absolute worth from birth because God put His love and purpose in David. It means no man can take away from David what he did not put in.

(i) *'I am fearfully and wonderfully made'* - i.e., *'to stand in awe of,' 'separated out, distinct, set apart for sacred and holy purpose'*. When you feel you are not valued or cherished, you need to remember that God made you with dignity, value, and purpose with unique gifts and talents. You are born awe-inspiringly beautiful with the investment of God's love. And no one can take that away from you.

(ii) *'Marvellous are Your works'* – What is 'Your works'? 'I am God's masterpiece!'

(iii) *'That my soul knows very well.'* A lot of people need to be reminded of this. *Does your soul know this well?* Only the Holy Spirit can reveal this truth to us.

(iv) *I will praise you for your marvellous handiwork!* I.e., in creating me! Do you accept yourself this way? This is the *healthy, godly, scriptural view of ourselves*. NOT SELF-LOVE. Can you praise God for the way He has made you? With unique physique, personality, and gifts? A lot of people do not.

Let's pause here to pray, *'God, you did not make a mistake when you made me. You chose the place, time, and parents under whom I would be born. With gifts and callings that are unique to me. You have made me with dignity, strength, and beauty which nobody can take away. I know, I am not a finished product yet. But I know that in Your time, You will bring me to perfection and maturity as the trophy of God's glory.'*

- c. This leads David's thoughts to the future when one day he will breathe his last (v16). No one wants to know the day of their death. David saw something so powerful that it took the sting out of the fear of death. By the Holy Spirit's revelation, David saw a book in heaven written by God about his life. This book was open to God and no one else. In that book is written, not only the day of David's birth but also the day of his death, and every day in between.

God has already appointed for David the full number of his days on earth, where he will go, what he will do, what he will eat, what he will wear, etc. The number of days God has assigned David was perfect for him. Not one day more, not one day less. The day David died was the perfect day for David. *Do you trust God for the day of your death, and the days of your life?* C.f. *'You have decided the length of our lives. You know how many months we will live, and we are not given a minute longer.'* (Job 14:5)

- d. *'How precious are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them!'* (v17-18) What are God's thoughts toward you? Can you capture some of them? David sees God's loving and kind thoughts towards him are vast, more than the grain of sands on the seashore! God constantly thinks about David all day, just like a loving father thinks about his children.

When we can capture God's thoughts toward us and think His thoughts – this is called the fellowship of the Spirit. It is revealed by the 'Spirit' to 'spirit.'

REVELATION → WORSHIP [Awe of God] → IDENTITY → FELLOWSHIP.

This is what we are created for. Starting with salvation, we enter into 'fellowship' with God, leading to 'union' with God. This spiritual union with God is what the writer of Hebrews refers to as 'entering into God's Rest.'

'When I awake, I am still with You' (v18) David says his first thought in the morning when he wakes up is God. (Ps. 60:5; John 21:7, Matt 3:17 c.f. Ps. 18:19 – Our identity as 'God's beloved' is the foundation of our faith.)

4. Final Reflection (v19-24)

- a. *'O You would slay the wicked O God!'* (v19-22) This psalm arose, not during the time of peace but of affliction and opposition. These are wicked people on earth who are powerful and bloodthirsty (v19), and speak against God (v20). God's enemies who take His name in vain (v20), and rise against Him (v21). David is in agreement with God against those who hate God and war violently against Him.

David's commitment was to love what God loves and hate what God hates. 'We do not love God any more than we hate what God hates.' C.f. *1 John 2:15 - 'Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.'* Our attitude toward sin and the demons should be the same.

- b. *'Search me O God and know my heart!'* (v23)

- (i) But God already knows everything about David's thoughts. God can bring it out into the open, so that David can see what is hidden from his own eyes – the blind spots within him that hindered him, so that he can deal with them.
- (ii) David confesses before God. 'I want to go deeper with you. And the real enemy that hinders my journey is not the 'wicked around me,' but the 'wickedness hidden within me.' Please let me see it, so I can turn from it.'
- (iii) Key search phrase – 'my anxieties' or 'anxious thoughts.' What troubles you? What keeps you awake at night that is not brought out before God's searching light? What do you defend with vigour or even anger? What is behind all that energy and anxiety?

'And see (show me) if there is any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting (=deeper life in God).' Personal relationship with this God is only possible by coming to His Son Jesus Christ.