

Perfect Personal Knowledge
Psalm 139
The Laurel Center
May 29, 2015

Main Idea: the Lord knows me more completely than I know myself.

Introduction

The next song in our series is quoted more than you may think in our culture. This song reminds us of how close we are to God and how personally knows us. His intimate knowledge of us shows that he cares about us even when no one else does. It comforts and encourages us what others don't let us know our value that we are still valuable to God. If you would take the time to know us so intimately we know that he loves us and cares deeply for us. We also know that we are valuable to him and worthy of them when he spends the time to know us. This is a Psalm that encourages us but also challenges us because God's intimate knowledge also means he is watching us the matter where we are or what we do.

Psalm 139:7-8

7 Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? **8** If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!

I. The Lord knows where I am (vv. 1 – 12).

A He knows my habits and preferences.

- 1 There are two basic types of knowledge throughout the Bible. The first type is to know facts about someone or something. This is the more popular knowledge available to anyone through observation.
- 2 The second type of knowledge is a personal or intimate knowledge of a person or thing. This includes knowing facts but also includes an experiential knowledge of the person. This knowledge comes through up close and personal relationship.
- 3 In this Psalm, David expresses his happiness that the Lord knows him better than he knows himself. He starts by talking about how the Lord always know where he is. His location is never a mystery to God.
- 4 The Lord is not just know where he is geographically but knows his thoughts on where he is wanted to know. This intimate knowledge is not simply by observation but by being in his head.
- 5 The Lord has his GPS location but not from observing them from the heavens. Rather God knows where he is at all times because he is with them at all times.

- 6 Lord knows his patterns of movement and his routines. We tend to be creatures of habit but it goes beyond simply that. While anyone could observe our patterns and habits from afar, the Lord knows them because he walks with us.
- 7 **Illustration:** I am reminded of him walking with Adam in the garden of Eden in the beginning of creation. That walking with God in the cool of the day was their time of fellowship together. The moment that Adam sinned, we see God walking in the garden alone and searching for Adam for the first time. Sin separated them from walking together. It is not that God could not find Adam or suddenly did not know where he was. The stress is on the fact that Adam is no longer walking with God but walking on his own.
- 8 Walking with God is the biblical way of saying that we live our lives in God's presence. It started with the literal image of walking with God but it goes beyond that to talking about our life with him and our relationship with him .
- 9 **Application:** God knows our every move before we make it. He knows us inside and out through and through. Although he knows where we are just by observing us, it goes deeper than that. He knows our habits the ways that we think in the things we like to do. He knows our nature and our character. But he knows these things because he knows us on the inside and out, not just because of observation. The Lord is watching you in everything that you do. He is evaluating your character and the kind of person you are. He is looking for godliness and righteousness in you.

B I cannot escape from his presence.

- 1 Most of the time, especially when we are walking closely with the Lord, we have no trouble being in his presence and unable to get out of it. But, when we are not living the righteous life this could become a problem for us because of God's discipline.
- 2 If we wanted to get out of it, it's not going to happen. Beginning in verse 7, David describes how God intends him in on all sides. This could be taken as comforting when we want to be in God's presence. But it is also an image of his discipline.
- 3 This intimate knowledge of each one of us is called to wonderful by David. We cannot know a person inside and out like God does. Through years and years of being with someone we can come close, but not as close as God.

- 4 God has a unique relationship with each of us because he is our Creator, as we will see further in the sunroom. We can obtain knowledge through human means of observation and relationship.
- 5 David further explains that no matter where he goes or where he is mentally and emotionally, God is there with him. There is no place too high or too low that God does not know where we are and is not with us.
- 6 Once again we see that God's presence and his Holy Spirit are synonymous. David first says that if he ascends to the heavens the Lord is there. Then if he descends into Sheol God is still there.
- 7 Whether he is in darkness or in brightness God is still with him. God is everywhere. There is no escape from him. He can be everywhere within his creation and has access to all of it.
- 8 No matter what extreme we would flock to, God is still with us. Once again, this can be seen as a good thing or a bad thing. If we are trying to run from God we can run but we cannot hide. If we need God in our desperate situation, we need not look far for he is there with us.
- 9 **Illustration:** every time that I fly in airplanes I am amazed at God's creation. My favorite part is looking out the window at the heart of an seeing how small it really is and in ascending through the clouds. It is amazing to me how no matter what the composition of the clouds may be, they seem so frail and so thin. This tiny layer that the plane passes through takes my breath away. And yet and yet there is so much comfort in knowing that he is with me even in the clouds. We can conquer any part of this earth or even into space and yet we are not alone.
- 10 **Application:** No matter where we go or how far we think we are from God he is there with us. We can take comfort in knowing that God will never leave us or forsake us. He is always with us whether we want them there are not. We will find in extreme circumstances that we want him there with us. Being alone in danger is not something that humans enjoy. But God is always with us in these times and he is always ready to listen to us. I take great comfort in knowing that I am never alone no matter what comes my way.

Psalm 139:13–14

13 For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. **14** I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

II. The Lord knows me better than myself (vv. 13 – 18).

A He knows me as my Maker.

- 1 This next section has been quoted by many in reminding us how intimately God knows us from the inside out. It is often used to talk about the issue of abortion in our culture to point out that even in the womb a fetus is considered a human by biblical standards.
- 2 While that is a true fact of this passage, David was not have that in mind. His goal in this Psalm is to show us that God is our Creator and by virtue of his creation of us, he is sovereign over us.
- 3 As is the perfect venue in the Psalms for poetic expression and vivid imagery, David uses concrete images to demonstrate how the Lord is our Creator even before we are born.
- 4 He tells us that the Lord formed our inner parts, referring to the heart and soul of the human being. The inward parts here does not refer to our organs as much as to the makeup of the human being.
- 5 Then David tells us that he met as together in our mother's womb. The image of knitting together is one of sewing us into the people we will become. It speaks to the development of the fetus i the mother's womb.
- 6 This shows that not only our conception but the very growth of the baby throughout the terms of pregnancy is a continually creative process by God himself. He is intimately involved in making us into the physical creatures that we will become, as well as our moral makeup, our nature and character.
- 7 We are fearfully and wonderfully made by our Creator, meaning that our whole makeup from the inside to the outside of each person is a wonder. Scientifically, the body is still a wonder in his creation and efficiency. And the soul has been mind for millennia by poets and artists.
- 8 The imagery continues as David talks about how we were in and secretly woven into being in the depths of the earth. Here, the depths of the earth probably speaks of the mother's womb get again and speaks to the creation of the human soul and the imperishable parts of humanity.

B He knows me in his providence.

- 1 The song continues to extol God is creator but moves to the providence of God in our lives. Because of God's intimate knowledge not only of us but of our destiny, he knows us completely.
- 2 Verse 16 goes even further and explains that God's foreknowledge of our person and character pushes the bounds of our future. It tells us that God knows what we will be like our whole life before we do.

- 3 Some push the so far as to say that God knows every little thing that will ever happen in all of human space and time and has already determined it. But this would be pushing the literary structure of poetry.
- 4 David is expressing what we call God's providence, the fact that God knows what will happen based on our character and makeup. God is aware of the kind of person we will become throughout our life and the changes that will occur in us.
- 5 It means that he foresees the kinds of changes we will make in the kinds of things that will affect us. Although God knows based on his foreknowledge the type of person we will become, there is room for us to learn it as we go.
- 6 We can only move from the past to the future but God can see all of it in one shot because he is outside of time. This does not mean that everything is predetermined. It means that God knows the ways things can go in our future.
- 7 We know that he does not have everything predetermined because he comes to characters in the Bible and challenges them at the crucial junctures of their lives as they make moral choices and choices that would change their life one way or another.
- 8 God for knows those moments in our lives that are critical junctures and intersections of our character. But the fact that he comes to us in those moments of choice means that human free will is still greatly involved in making the future.
- 9 Human free will and God's providence work together like a choreographed dance. God makes room for human free will and choice. He uses these moments to guide us but gives us the final say. The future as we know it is being made by our free choice inside of the fence of all God's already known possibilities.

C I struggle to know him as deeply.

- 1 While God knows us completely and wholly he is infinite while we are finite. This makes it impossible for us to fully know him, but we long to know him in his much as it is possible for us.
- 2 Just because God is not completely knowable does not mean that we do not gain much in trying to know him better. If we would consider it, even another finite human being is almost impossible to know completely by us.
- 3 David stresses the effort we put forth to know God. Because God is so incredible, we long to know his thoughts and his ways. We long to learn him as he knows us.

- 4 The journey of learning God's character and his person takes a lifetime and beyond. We learn about God while we are in his presence. Every moment that we are with him, just as learning human beings by being in their presence, is the best way to know God.
- 5 We can learn facts about him from reading his word that the best way to know God is by experience. This is where we learn more than mere facts and learn his heart, his mind and his love for us.
- 6 Knowing about God is not the same as knowing him. If we only learn your facts about God, we may misrepresent who he really is. We may not be able to comprehend the facts without the experience of knowing him.
- 7 Knowing facts about God is like dealing him from afar and after observing what he does trying to understand who he is. Without his personal interaction with us, we may misrepresent his character simply by observing his acts.
- 8 Only by knowing him and interacting with them can we understand the facts about him within his person. God acts based on his character and inner being. Only through interaction with him can we understand the outer and inner works.

Psalm 139:23–24

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! **24** And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

III. The Lord knows what's in my heart (vv. 19 – 24).

A My heart lines up with his.

- 1 This next section almost seems like doesn't fit in this Psalm. It would best be interpreted or understood as the thoughts of the psalmist's heart. He brings up the issue of the wicked and how he feels about them in his own heart.
- 2 This serves as a great example of how God understands the thoughts of our heart better than anyone else. As human beings, we can look on the outside of a person and make our own minds about their actions.
- 3 But if we do not know the context of their actions or the heart out of which they do those actions, we can easily misinterpret what they are doing and why they are doing it.
- 4 This section might shock the reader because it moves from talking about how God understands the psalmist to the psalmist voicing their hearts desire that the wicked would perish.

- 5 At first look, the reader might think it is quite the abrasive thought. How can the psalmist judge the wicked so easily and wanting to die? This doesn't sound like a wholly or Christian thought at all!
- 6 But if one would look at this in the face of righteous anger the thoughts may be more Christian than you think. The wicked go against God's heart and cause more problems in the world.
- 7 The wicked act as their father, the devil. And as we hate wickedness and the father of wickedness, so also the psalmist is not far off in having a righteous anger and a zeal for the Lord to be vindicated from the evil that has destroyed his creation.
- 8 The psalmist sounds judgmental as he uses the word "hate." But the way he describes the wicked agrees with righteous anger. The wicked act against the Lord with their mouths in their actions.
- 9 We must also understand that the Hebrew word hate does not always demonstrate the kind of hate that we think of in English. Hate can be used as a word of choice as in, "Jacob have I loved (chosen), and Esau have I hated (rejected)."

B My heart is open to his searchlight.

- 1 The deepest desire of every person who serves Christ should be the prayer at the end of this Psalm. Along with the psalmist we all cry out for God to search our hearts.
- 2 We long for our hearts to agree with the heart of God. We long to be what he is. We long to have the same desires and actions as God would do himself. We want to be like him.
- 3 We also want our hearts and the desires of our hearts to be what he wants them to be. We want to be what God wants us to be. We long to be in agreement with the King of the universe.
- 4 We put ourselves under his evaluation because we long for these things. We want him to search us and find us worthy. We want him to try our thoughts and make sure that they line up with his.
- 5 We are open to his searching and trying us. We are open to discipline and readily avail ourselves to him. We want him to search and try us. We want to be like him and to have him agree with our thoughts. We want our thoughts to be the same as his thoughts.
- 6 We are open to discipline if the thoughts are not the same as God's or if they are not in line with his heart. We are willing to respect and change according to his evaluations.

- 7 This desire to be like the Lord in our innermost being, our thoughts and in our heart, our emotions and our desires, is the desire of every one that serves the Lord.

Conclusion

The 139th Psalm shows the openness and genuineness of the one who wants to serve Christ. He is our Lord and we come up are not afraid to hear his discipline or his delight in us. In the New Testament, Jesus is given just as much credit as God the Father for the creative work. As our Creator and Lord we seek his evaluation and to know what he thinks of us. We want to be zealous for him but in a way that he would condone and be glorified by. This Psalm shows us how precious we are to God.

When we think less of ourselves we are comforted by God's care for us and how he created us uniquely to serve him. When no one else values us we are priceless to God. We also realize that we are always in God's presence whether for the good or the bad. He is always with us and never leaves us. No experience that we have divides us from his presence. He is always with us and always watching over us. This provides comfort to us when we go through trials. The Lord is with us and he finds us priceless. Even when we are neglected by others the Lord never neglects us.