

## PSALM 139

### *God's Omnipresence and Omniscience*

#### INTRODUCTION.

- A. From Roy H. Enoch (1-15-97). For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.  
"The Omniscience, Omnipresence, and Omnipotence of God."
- B. The universal esteem for this psalm is stated by Coffman, "Scholars have exhausted their vocabularies extolling the glory and greatness of Psa. 139.
- C. There is no rational reason to doubt the ancient superscription that attributes it to David. Coffman quotes Charles Haddon Spurgeon as expressing his own views of authorship:  
"Of course, the critics take this composition away from David on account of certain Aramaic expressions in it; but upon the principles of criticism now in vogue, it would be extremely easy to prove that John Milton did not write *Paradise Lost*. Knowing to what wild inferences the critics have run in other matters, we have lost nearly all faith in them. We prefer to believe that David is the author of this Psalm from internal evidences of style and matter, rather than to accept the opinions of men whose modes of judgment are manifestly unreliable."
- D. The paragraphs of this psalm are very simple as it is divided into four strophes or stanzas of six verses each.
  1. The Omniscience of God (139:1-6).
  2. The Omnipresence of God (139:7-12).
  3. The Omnipotence of God (139:13-18).
  4. The Supplication to God (139:19-24).

#### THE TEXT AND COMMENTS.

- A. The Omniscience of God.

O LORD, You have searched me and known *me*.  
2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up;  
You understand my thought from afar.  
3 You scrutinize my path and my lying down,  
And are intimately acquainted with all my ways.  
4 Even before there is a word on my tongue,  
Behold, O LORD, You know it all.  
5 You have enclosed me behind and before,  
And laid Your hand upon me.  
6 *Such* knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
It is *too* high, I cannot attain to it.

[v1] "...You have searched me and known me." Clyde Miller points out that the word "searched" here in the Hebrew means to dig for precious metal; and here God is searching our thoughts to thoroughly understand us.

[v2] "...my sitting down and my rising up..." God knows us regardless of our activity. "You understand my thoughts afar off." It is probably not that God knows our thoughts from heaven, but that He knows them before they get to our conscious knowledge.

[v3] "...my path and lying down... all my ways." God's knowledge is complete and comforting to a godly person.

[v4,5] "...word on my tongue... hedged me behind and before... Your hand upon me..." God's knowledge of us is complete.

[v6] "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me..." The godly person treasures God's complete knowledge of him, but it is the worst fear of the worldly person.
- B. The Omnipresence of God.

The literary style here of balancing the synonymous and antithetical parallelisms is beautiful and delicate. The psalmist compares and then contrasts in trying to picture how God is always and everywhere present in our lives.

7 Where can I go from Your Spirit?  
 Or where can I flee from Your presence?  
 8 If I ascend to heaven, You are there;  
 If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.  
 9 If I take the wings of the dawn,  
 If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,  
 10 Even there Your hand will lead me,  
 And Your right hand will lay hold of me.  
 11 If I say, "Surely the darkness will overwhelm me,  
 And the light around me will be night,"  
 12 Even the darkness is not dark to You,  
 And the night is as bright as the day.  
 Darkness and light are alike *to You*.

[v7] "...Your Spirit... Your presence?" Here is comparison or synonym.

[v8] "...into heaven... in hell..." The contrast or antithesis of place is seen here.

[v9] "...the wings of the morning... the sea." From the perspective of Canaan, or Jerusalem, the morning would refer to the east, and "the Sea" would be the west--the Mediterranean: another contrast.

[v10] Wherever we are, the Lord will still lead us if we stay with His word.

[v11,12] "...Darkness... light..." Both are the same to the Lord. He is with us regardless of where and the condition. It is a comfort to David, and the righteous, but gives no place for the wicked to hide.

C. The Omnipotence of God.

David focuses on God's power in forming the child in the womb. Sometimes we think of great power as doing something big, but intricate design and detail demonstrates real power even better.

13 For You formed my inward parts;  
 You wove me in my mother's womb.  
 14 I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
 Wonderful are Your works,  
 And my soul knows it very well.  
 15 My frame was not hidden from You,  
 When I was made in secret,  
 And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth;  
 16 Your eyes have seen my unformed substance;  
 And in Your book were all written  
 The days that were ordained *for me*,  
 When as yet there was not one of them.  
 17 How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!  
 How vast is the sum of them!  
 18 If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand.  
 When I awake, I am still with You.  
 19 O that You would slay the wicked, O God;  
 Depart from me, therefore, men of bloodshed.  
 20 For they speak against You wickedly,  
 And Your enemies take *Your name* in vain.

[v13-15] "You formed my inward parts... my frame..." David reflects on the marvels of the child being formed in the womb so intricately. David is saying that "it was me, not some part of my mother's body.

[v16] "...And in Your book they were all written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them." Some have claimed that this teaches that God has determined exactly what will happen in every day of our life, before we were conceived. We need to remember that God's knowledge of the future is the same as His remembrances of the past. Does His remembering our sin make Him responsible for it? His knowing beforehand what we will do does not make Him determine it either. God has foreordained the kind of life we must live to receive His blessings, but he has not made us live in a certain way. See Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:4,5.

He predestined the kind of person we would have to be to receive His blessings and the way we would have to respond to the gospel to become His children. But He did not compel us to serve Him or to reject Him. But He did know what choices we would make.

**[v17,18]** “How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!” One who cherishes God’s thoughts and plans is anxious to do what God wants, and is glad that God knows us and our deeds.

D. His Supplication to God.

The first supplication is for God to punish the wicked according to their deeds.

**21** Do I not hate those who hate You, O LORD?

And do I not loathe those who rise up against You?

**22** I hate them with the utmost hatred;

They have become my enemies.

**23** Search me, O God, and know my heart;

Try me and know my anxious thoughts;

**24** And see if there be any hurtful way in me,

And lead me in the everlasting way.

**[v21,22]** “Do I not hate them... who hate You?... I hate them with perfect hatred...” Some would jump to the conclusion that the psalmist is mean and vindictive, but he is only reflecting the disposition that God describes as His attitude and punishment for the wicked. There is not a distinction being made here between the sin and the sinner, but the person seems to be represented by his behavior. God’s word often speaks in this manner of sin and sinners.

**[v23,24]** “Search me, O God, and know my heart... see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Here is truly a man after God’s own heart. This language reflects so clearly David’s penitence in Psa. 51 and many other times when he confesses his sin and asks God to purge out any evil in him. He asks God for judgment, on the wicked and on himself. Nothing can be of fairer or higher motive.