

Inviting God's Searchlight

The Song, Part 13

Psalm 139:19-24

By the time we finish our session the Lord's Day in Psalm 139, we will have spent more than 2 hours expounding on this Song.

And we've really only gotten started, right?

The reason for that is, the subject of this Psalm is the nature of God and His attributes; more specifically, His omniscience; His omnipresence and His omnipotence.

God is all-knowing – omniscient; God is everywhere present – omnipresence; and God is all powerful – omnipotent.

And in this glorious song, and the first stanza – *verses 1-6*, David begins with the **omniscience** of God.

He basically sings – Lord, You know everything about me – when I sit down; when I go to sleep; when I go to work; what I'm going to say even before I say it; what I'm even thinking about at any given time.

Now you'd think he'd come to the end of that stanza and say, "The fact that you know everything about me and nothing is hidden from you is rather unsettling . . . it bothers me."

But that isn't his response at all.

Far from it, David writes in *verse 6* – knowing this about You, that You know everything about me, is absolutely wonderful to know.

This attribute of omniscience is too wonderful for me, it is high; I cannot even begin to grasp the amazing attribute of omniscience related to the glory of your nature, Oh God!

If David were writing today, you could expect him to add, "This truth of God's attribute completely blows my mind!"

And then it's as if David says, "But that's not all . . ."

In the next stanza he begins to reveal the **omnipresence** of God.

In *verses 7-12* he challenges you to try and get away from God.

Go ahead and try!

- Go as high as you can (v. 8) – He's there.
- Go into the depths of the earth – He's there

- Go infinitely east on the wings of the dawn (v. 9) – He rides upon those wings ahead of you
- Go infinitely west beyond the Sea – and God will meet you there too.
- Travel into the darkness (v. 11) – and God sees as perfectly in the dark as He does in the light.

God is omnipresent.

David then composes a third stanza about the **omnipotence** of God. As if to say, "You haven't seen anything yet!"

From *verses 14-17* he informs us that God was actually invested in designing you – coding your DNA with the pattern of information from which you would become who you are.

David writes that God uniquely crafted you...

- as an original (v. 14);
- He carefully embroidered you (v. 15) watching over the very formation of your embryo (v. 16) – your unformed substance;
- He also designed into your heart the number of times it will pump and the number of days, hours and seconds you will live (v. 16).

David comes to the end of this inspired revelation of the nature of God and says in verse 17, "I can't believe You – oh great Creator, Designer, Sovereign, all-powerful, all-present, all-knowing Lord actually have thoughts about me.

Listen, for you to think about the fact that God thinks about you – that He created you – that he embroidered you . . . according to trillions of personal thoughts about your design and has never stopped thinking thoughts about you – David sings, "How precious to me are your thoughts O God!"

Keep in mind how this Song answers those critical questions you might be asking:

- How much does God really know about me? He knows everything!
- How close is God to me, really . . . right now? He's never, not close to you - ever.

- How carefully did God make me? Did He slip up . . . did He really mean to do that?

Oh, God made you with such molecular precision and microscopic design – that we have only in the past 20 years begun to unwrap in the discovery of DNA – in fact, it’s only been in the last couple of years that medical scientists have discovered that even junk DNA – they called it – isn’t really junk after all . . . it has a purpose.

The revelation through David was way ahead of science – this is like Isaiah writing about the spherical shape of the earth, while everyone thought the earth was flat.

David writes, from the moment you were conceived, information that made you uniquely you, came from *the* source of information – the Designer/Creator.

From your fingerprint to the shape of your nose and the color of your hair; to your best abilities to your most painful disabilities . . . all of it has been designed to allow each of us to uniquely trust Him and depend on Him and glory in Him and long for Him to glorify us with immortal perfection in heaven, and to testify in the meantime to our world that His grace is sufficient to make it through another day with faith in Him!

Now, in this Psalm, David goes on to begin singing a rather interesting stanza – notice *verse 19*. ***Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God! O men of blood, depart from me! 20. They speak against you with malicious intent; your enemies take your name in vain! 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 complete hatred, I count them my enemies.***

This is what one author called, holy hatred!ⁱ

Why? Because when you see the glory of God and learn about the magnificence of His nature and His character and His design and His power and His care and His thoughts toward mankind – you all the more despise and loathe those who would trample upon His name and glory.

Did you notice their description in *verses 19 & 20*?

- They are unrepentant murderers
- They are malicious blasphemers
- They glory in the fact that they are enemies of God – they intentionally and maliciously defy God.

These are not passive atheists . . . [people that don’t go to church much] these are unashamed,

hateful, open, blatant despisers of God and God’s people.ⁱⁱ

So David effectively prays, “Lord, why don’t you just slay them now . . . why wait until the final judgment to deal with them in justice and righteousness . . . do it now . . . cut off their blasphemy.”

David, of course, doesn’t take matters into his own hands; that’s important to understand as he leaves to God the timing of His justice and judgment.

In fact, *verse 21* provides an interesting nuance to David’s attitude. He writes, ***“And do I not hate those who hate you; do I not loath those who rise up against You?”***

The word translated *loath* explains the word *hate*. It’s a Hebrew word that can be translated “*to grieve*”.

It isn’t so much a hatred of the sinner as it is hatred for the sin they represent and applaud and promote and David says, I can’t stand their sin and I grieve over their condition.

Charles Spurgeon comments on this text and writes, This isn’t ill-will so much as it is pain of heart and sorrow over their unbelief.ⁱⁱⁱ

It’s interesting that this same word was demonstrated by Jesus Christ in Mark *chapter 3*. ***We’re told in verse 5*** that He looked upon his unbelieving audience ***with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their heart.***

This is holy hatred for sin; this is righteous anger mixed with sorrow and grief over the sinner’s defiance against Creator God.

The average Christian misses the mark when they so easily dismiss the unbelieving, blasphemy of those around him who reject God and defy God’s word – they just smile and are quick to forgive those who blatantly sin in rejection of God authority – even when they never asked for forgiveness.

I’ve always been a little troubled to see or hear of pastors and religious leaders standing on courthouse steps and confessing America’s sins . . . when America is only more than happy to keep on committing them.

This isn’t the Old Testament; we’re not Israelite priests and America isn’t Israel . . . pastors or religious leaders can’t confess someone else’s sins . . . certainly the sins of a nation that is categorically and unapologetically defying the authority of God’s word.

That’s utter nonsense.

But listen, the description of God's great power and His all-encompassing presence and His total and complete eternal knowledge should in fact lead a person to hatred of and a loathing for and a grieving over not only sinners around him, but his own sin.

You see, David isn't just interested in exposing the sinners around him and grieving over them – he's actually most interested in his own transparency and his own purity before God.

And so he ends this song with one of the most powerful, pointed – yet intimate, personal prayers in all of scripture.

Notice *verse 23. Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts.*

This final stanza makes perfect sense, doesn't it?

Having just recently reveled in the omniscience of God – there really isn't any need to try to hide something from Him.

But David isn't simply saying here, "Well, okay God, since you know everything, I guess I'll submit to your inspection."

Oh no . . . David is welcoming this inspection; in fact, he's pleading for it.

The word for *search . . . search me, O God . . .* is the Hebrew verb which means to explore . . . to dig . . . to probe – break through the outer shell of defensiveness and dig down deeply into the core of who I am, David writes. David is inviting God's searchlight!^{iv}

"O Lord, place me under divine investigation!"

Have you noticed the news footage as the headlines break that someone is under investigation? Lines of officials are exiting that person's office building with boxes and boxes and boxes . . . boxes of files, computers, phones, records, bankbooks, emails . . . everything.

And that person is no doubt hoping they don't find that one box – or that one receipt – or that series of emails . . . "Don't look there!"

That isn't the picture here . . . in Psalm 139 David is running out in the open with all his boxes . . . all his records . . . all his emails . . . "Lord, don't overlook this!"

Look here too!

And keep in mind, David isn't saying this here because he's pretty confident God isn't going to find anything. He's saying this because he knows God will find what David himself might overlook – or hide – or manage – or excuse.

Find it Lord – bring it to my attention – because I want to walk uprightly with you.

Charles Spurgeon wrote this insightful paragraph on this text that I want to repeat; Self-examination is not the simple thing which, at first sight, it might appear.

No Christian who has ever really practiced it has found it easy. But is there any exercise of the soul which any one of us has found so unsatisfactory, so impossible, as self-examination?

The fact is this, that the heart is so exceedingly complicate and intricate, and it is so very near your eye which must examine it, and both your heart and your eye are so restless and so unsteady, that its deep anatomy baffles our research.

Just a few things, more obvious and floating upon the surface, a man discovers; but there are chambers receding within chambers, in that deepest of all deep things, a sinful heart, which no mere human investigation ever will reach . . . thus it is the prerogative of God to "search" the human heart . . . and if you ask Him to, He will do it.^v

He created you . . . He made you . . . He knows you . . . your strengths . . . your weaknesses . . . your sin.

David writes in verse 24, *Point out whatever you see that is grievous – you could render that, hurtful, dangerous, self-destructing . . . and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Old Testament scholars point out that you could translate this closing phrase, "lead me in the old way – the ancient way"; that is, lead me in the way which was revealed in ancient times through Moses.^{vi}

In other words, David is asking God to lead him according to His word.

Which is another way of admitting, "I'm prone to look for some new way . . . some popular way . . . some well-traveled way . . . that new way according to that new bestseller."

No, no, no . . . *the ancient way* that is still the true way – lead me from an ancient past to an everlasting future.

The fulfillment of this "ancient way" of course is the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of David who announces, *"I am the way, the truth and the life – no one comes to the Father . . . no one travels into eternity to the Father's house – except that path which goes through Me."* (John 14:6)

You come to the end of this description of God and you are brought to worship Him and surrender to Him and follow Him.

He made you . . . He not only created the universe . . . He fashions the embryo . . . He knows everything . . . He will graciously inspect you and

reveal to you that which you need to confess as you walk with Him in fellowship toward your eternal home.

What do you do, but thank this amazing, creator God.

One news story that never did make it into the headlines was when the Apollo 11 landed on the surface of the moon that Sunday, July 20, 1969. Most of you are familiar with astronaut Neil Armstrong's historic statement – it was in your textbooks in school; as he stepped onto the moon's surface: "One small step for man; one giant leap for mankind." But few know what happened next – it never made it into those same books.

Buzz Aldrin had brought aboard the spacecraft a tiny communion kit. He sent a radio broadcast to Earth asking listeners to contemplate the events of that day and give thanks to God.

Then in radio blackout, Aldrin opened his Bible and read from John 15 where Jesus Christ says, I am

the vine, you are branches; he who abides in me, and I in Him, bears much fruit – for without me you can do nothing. Silently, he gave thanks and partook.^{vii}

He wanted the glory of God and the gospel of God to be declared as it were, into the universe – from the surface of the moon.

David wanted the same glory to be declared to God alone.

And this kind of song is over you can't do anything but bow your head and worship Him . . . this truth glorifies Him and humbles us . . . but it also encourages us . . . reassures us . . . and purifies us.

And then it points us to the coming fellowship we will one day have with God – the Designer of life and ultimately the Giver of eternal life.

Think about it – David would say – the One who designed you, has designed eternity for you.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 4/27/2014 by Stephen Davey.

© Copyright 2014 Stephen Davey
All rights reserved.

i John Phillips, *Exploring the Psalms, Volume Two* (Loizeaux Brothers, 1988), p. 599

ii Charles R. Swindoll, *Living Beyond the Daily Grind: Book II* (Word Publishing, 1988), p. 374

iii Charles Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David: Volume 3* (Zondervan, 1977), p. 285

iv Adapted from Swindoll, p. 376

v Spurgeon, p. 288

vi G.A.F. Knight, *Psalms: Volume 2* (Westminster Press, 1983), p. 327

vii Dennis Fisher, *Communion on the Moon*, Our Daily Bread (June/July/August 2007)