

Psa. 139:0 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

This is a psalm (song) that David has given to the head musician, the director of music, at the Temple.

Spurgeon: "One of the most notable of the sacred hymns. It sings the omniscience and omnipresence of God, inferring from these the overthrow of the powers of wickedness, since he who sees and hears the abominable deeds and words of the rebellious will surely deal with them according to his justice."

Psa. 139:1 O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known *me*.

"Lord" = YHWH, (the) self-Existent or Eternal; name of God

After looking at the Hebrew, I am convinced that David is expressing his knowledge of the fact that God has penetrated to the core of his being and examined his character intently, and He understands David better than anyone else ever could. The word for *known* indicates the results of that examination; David was God's "familiar friend." I think that truth can be verified with scripture that identifies David as a man after God's own heart.

1Samuel 13:13-14 "And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee."

Experience has shown me that the best friends are those who share your heart, your interests, who love the things you love, who have the same concerns, who are considerate of you.

The truth is that God has "searched" each one of us. My desire is to also be *known* by Him as a "familiar friend," to have a character that embraces the things He loves, that is jealous for His name, that lives to see Him glorified in me.

Psa. 139:2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.

Not only does David recognize that God knows his character, He also knows where he is and what he is doing at all times. He even knows the thoughts that occupy his mind. The Hebrew root for *thought* was quite interesting; it states, "to tend a flock; i.e. pasture

it; intransitively, to graze.” This seems to be referencing the ideas that dominate our thinking, the things upon which we meditate. The Hebrew for “afar off” was also interesting. It referenced “wandering and precious” among other things. This gives a different perspective to me. Instead of just understanding that God knows our thoughts no matter how far away we may think Him to be, it seems to be saying that He knows where our thoughts like to wander, the meditation of things that are precious to us, things we may choose to hide from others. It really ties in more directly to the Hebrew for *thought*.

Psa. 139:3 Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted *with all my ways*.

“compassest” = to cast away, to diffuse, winnow, spread, scatter, to turn aside

The Hebrew for this word has stumped me; it wasn’t what I expected to see. After going to good old Webster, my thoughts were drawn to the word *spread*. It made me think that the NLT had the best translation, “You chart the path ahead of me and tell me where to stop and rest...”

This fits in with my understanding of God’s working in the lives of His children. We are created with a purpose to bring Him glory, and He doesn’t just leave us to chance regarding that purpose. As God, He can direct our paths without taking away our freedom as to whether to follow that path. Because God is love and He knows us so well, we are given every opportunity to honor Him in fulfilling that purpose—even if we take a few detours from that path along the way.

Spurgeon: “...nothing is concealed from thee, nor surprising to thee, nor misunderstood by thee. Our paths may be habitual or accidental, open or secret, but with them all the Most Holy One is well acquainted. This should fill us with awe, so that we sin not; with courage, so that we fear not; with delight, so that we mourn not.”

Psa. 139:4 For *there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether*.

David knew that God knows us even better than we know ourselves. He is omniscient; He knows everything. He even knows every word that we are going to say before we know it ourselves. Nothing we do or say surprises the Lord.

Psa. 139:5 Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.

This is a statement of David's faith in God's protective hand upon His life. He knows that nothing can touch Him unless God so chooses to allow it. Because God is love, we can be sure that He will allow nothing to touch His child that is not for good. This truth was proclaimed by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans.

Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Psa. 139:6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.

The Hebrew for the word *high* states, "especially inaccessible, by implication, safe and strong." I certainly identify with David's thought. Even though I can accept the truth stated in God's word, I certainly don't always understand it. It's just beyond my understanding. I liked the inclusion of the words *safe* and *strong*. Even though I may not be able to truly understand God, I can certainly trust Him. God's character ensures that the person of faith has nothing to fear from what he may not understand about God's truth. He can be confident that God only operates from a righteous, compassionate and loving character. I can't help but be reminded of the words of the prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah 55:8-9 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Psa. 139:7 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

Psa. 139:8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

Psa. 139:9 If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

Psa. 139:10 Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

The first thing I notice in this section of verses is that David is making a direct connection with God's *Spirit* and His *presence*. They are inseparable. The point David is making is that he knows that there is nowhere he can go to hide from God. In fact, there is nowhere he can go where God is not with him. As one who has trusted God for his salvation, David knows that God is always ready to provide him direction and protection.

As I continue to think about verses 8-9, I get a picture of God's mercy. We believers are sure of God's direction and protection when we are on the high road of obedience (ascending to heaven and taking the wings of the morning so to speak), but God is faithful to His own even when we choose to rebel and disobey (make our bed in hell or dwell in the depths of the sea so to speak). He is faithful to rebuke, chasten and forgive.

Revelation 3:19 "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."

Hebrews 12:6-8 "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons."

1John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Psa. 139:11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.

Psa. 139:12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

David is expressing something that we all must think sometimes if we are honest about our actions. We think that God won't notice this one thing; after all, "I'm not important; I'm just one among billions," "no one can see me," or "nobody knows me here." David knew the truth—You cannot hide from God. Everything we do is as if we were surrounded by neon flashing signs. To God's eyes, there is no such thing as night or darkness. He sees us just as well at night as in day and in dark as in light.

Psa. 139:13 For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.

"possessed" = to erect, i.e. create; by extension, to procure, especially by purchase.....redeem

This is a very precious verse. Every individual is specifically created by God in the mother's womb--a place that God intended as a place of protection for the developing person. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, David is also telling us that every individual's redemption has been provided for as well. Even though Jesus wouldn't die on the cross for another thousand years or so, in the mind of God that redemption was sure before the foundation of the world.

1Peter 1:18-20 "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you...."

Psa. 139:14 I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.

The Hebrew for the word *praise* includes worship and thanksgiving. We worship and give thanks to God for many reasons. In this particular psalm, David is focused on how God loves him and has such concern for him from the moment of creation in his mother's womb to intimate involvement throughout his life. The Hebrew for *fearfully* indicates to revere as well as to cause fear. This seems to be a statement regarding the value that God places on human life. "Wonderfully made" is a phrase that indicates the uniqueness of man in the creation and the amazing way in which our body functions. To describe God's creative skills as *marvelous* is a reference to the miraculous intricate design of our being. Only in this century are we beginning to get a glimpse of just how miraculous and unique our bodies are with the unlocking of the DNA database that is unique to every individual. David may not be able to understand it all, but he certainly knows how to appreciate the results. The word *soul* is a reference to the true person of David that is housed in this magnificently designed body.

Psa. 139:15 My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

This verse is confusing at first. The Hebrew for *lowest parts* included a reference to the "womb, figuratively." I think this is David's poetic expression coming out. Since we are made of the dust of the ground, the womb would picture the "lowest part" of the woman's being. "Curiously wrought" is a reference to embroidery and needlework, which I think is a reference to the exacting care and attention given to the design of our being. It would also be a reference to the uniqueness of each individual.

If possible, I am even more overwhelmed than before as I think of the God of the universe keeping intimate tabs on each one of His children to the point of knowing their thoughts before they do and at the same time giving special attention to the formation of every new human. It's interesting that the word *substance* was chosen. It's a reference to the raw material used in the creation, which we know consists of the merging of an egg from the woman and sperm from the man.

Psa. 139:16 Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

The Hebrew for *unperfect* is a reference to the “embryo, the unformed mass.” When God looked at that embryo, He already had the blueprint recorded that would eventually result in David; that is true for every baby that is born. As that baby continues to develop, God ensures that he/she develops exactly according to His recorded blueprint. The Spirit through David makes express note that this blueprint exists before even one identifiable part of the baby is formed.

It truly grieves my heart to see how little respect our culture gives to these special creations. It is the ultimate in selfishness to decide that one’s comfort or convenience is more valuable or important than to honor the life that God has initiated in the womb. The question begs as to why God allows this to continue. One thing of which I am sure is that The Righteous Judge to Whom vengeance belongs will administer justice. The sad thing is that once we get to the point of thinking we have the right to determine who should have the right to be born or not, we are well on the way down the path to determining who should be allowed to live or die according to our assessment of their quality of life (and our current culture reflects that truth). That is an authority that only God possesses. Once we position ourselves as “gods” regarding the value of life, we have effectively done away with our need to recognize His authority in any area.

As I read this again, I thought of God’s declaration that Israel would not be given the land until the sins of the Amorites were “full” (Genesis 15:16). God’s long-suffering with sin is tied to His desire that all men come to Him in faith and repentance.

2 Peter 3:9 “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

As I look at the cultures prevalent in the world today, I tend to think that sin is approaching the “full” point at which God is going to destroy sinners and give the earth to His people under the rule of His Son.

Psa. 139:17 How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!

Psa. 139:18 If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.

I think you have to read both of these verses together to get the best understanding. I remember thinking early on that David was describing his thoughts about the Lord. The context of this psalm makes it clear that David is describing God's thoughts about him. The fact that he numbers them as more than the grains of sand is a commentary on how strong David's faith in God's love for him was. I do think there is a legitimate connection to David's thoughts toward God as well in the last part of verse 18. It seems as if David is saying that when he goes to sleep, he is focused on his relationship to God (implied by the word *still*); and when he wakes up, his first thoughts are about God. I can honestly say that I have grown in relationship to the point that I can make that same statement. My desire is to grow to the point that my every thought, word, and deed is made with reference to His presence in my life and how it glorifies Him.

Psa. 139:19 Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men.

Psa. 139:20 For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take *thy name* in vain.

I am sometimes surprised at how abruptly the Psalmist seems to change the directions of his thoughts. At one moment he is praising God and thanking Him, and then he turns his thoughts to his enemies, who are most often equated to God's enemies. That's foreign to my type of thinking. David, however, was a warrior, and much of his life was spent defending himself from his enemies. Because he considered himself a man of God, he naturally associated his enemies with God's enemies. I think David's actions many times reflect the truth that he expected God to act or to give him specific direction to act on his behalf against his enemies—whether Saul or even his own son. He seemed to desire to align his battlefield activities according to God's direction—his treatment of Uriah being an obvious exception. David's respect for life ties in directly with his understanding of the worth that God places on each individual through the care that He takes in the creation of that person. In Saul's case, in particular, he knew that he was dealing with a man that was God's anointed; and even though he knew he had been anointed by God to succeed Saul, he knew that he should respect God's authority as to when and how that succession would be effected.

In reading several other translations, this verse is worded more as a desire on David's part that God would just go ahead and destroy all the wicked people that caused him such grief since these same people showed their disdain for God, especially by using His name so flippantly and profanely.

Psa. 139:21 Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?

Psa. 139:22 I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.

In these verses David is expressing his love and honor for the LORD. He was expressing his extreme hatred for the enemies of God as a reflection of his love for his LORD. It seems to be clarifying his thoughts in the previous verses. Anyone who is an enemy of God is an enemy of David. It's like a son professing his love and commitment to his father by rejecting fellowship or refusing to have compassion on anyone who would show his father disrespect of any kind.

I couldn't help but think of the Lord's teaching that we should love our enemies. It would seem in these verses that David had no understanding of that concept. The key difference is that David lived in a time that was functioning under the law. It took Jesus, God in flesh, to come and example and teach us the true intent of the law. We are to hate the sin but love the sinner.

David was jealous for God's honor, and one of the best ways he could express that was to express hatred for those who did not honor God as he did. Jesus is jealous for the honor of His Father as well, and He expressed that jealousy by throwing the moneychangers out of the temple in defense of that honor. Jesus, however, primarily came to reveal the character of God and to provide redemption for wicked, sinful man. His desire was to bring more people into relationship with Himself. He exemplified a lifestyle that expressed concern for the sinner through humility and forgiveness without regard to self, and He taught that to honor Him we should follow that example.

**Psa. 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:
Psa. 139:24 And see if *there be any* wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.**

After expressing the desire for God to destroy the wicked, David begins to look introspectively. He loves his Lord, and truly desires to live his life in obedience to and respect for Him. He invites God to search his heart again. If God finds any wicked thoughts or desires, his prayer is for the Lord to direct his thoughts and desires according to the straight way that aligns with God's way. He is looking forward to a relationship with the Lord that will never end.

Spurgeon: "We cannot hide our sin: salvation lies the other way, in a plain discovery of evil, and an effectual severance from it.