

## “How Eternal Life Changes our View of People”

### *Psalm 139*

So far in our study of eternal life we have understand that it is far more than just the promise of life in God’s presence after we die. When we accept Christ as our Saviour, we receive eternal life now. This is a new kind of life we live. We now have God’s amazing and powerful presence in us which we didn’t have before we confessed our sins and professed faith in Jesus.

Having eternal life, as we saw in John 17, gives us a new purpose in life. That purpose is to help God accomplish His vision which is to fill the world with His glory. Jesus summarized His ministry on earth as *“I have brought You glory on the earth by completing the work You gave me to do”* (John 17:4). Which He also described in 17:6 as *“I have revealed You to those whom You have given me out of this world. They were Yours. You gave them to Me and they have obeyed Your Word.”*

So our purpose in life – regardless of our social status, our employment status, our age, our abilities – is to glorify God [make much about Him] by revealing Him to those He has given us in our spheres of influence (home, work, teams, families, friends, neighbours). Since God has promised that He will fill the world with the knowledge of His glory, if we do this with Him, we will have lived a purposeful and fulfilling life. A life with eternal purpose.

Why will God succeed? He made the world and everyone in it and created in everyone’s DNA the desire to find a purpose in life; who am I? How did I get here? Where am I going? Ecc.3:11 says God has put eternity in our hearts. People are searching beyond themselves for a reason for their existence. We have the answer and we are called to point them to God.

God has made every human being in His image. That means many things; the ability to think and have emotions and desire and find purpose. Because of our sinfulness that image has been tainted and many people never find God and their real purpose in life. And something else that’s very important for us to remember when God creates a human being, they also have this aspect of His image; they now live forever. Their physical life is limited to this earth but once we die we either spend eternity with God or eternity in pain and torment. Jesus said in Matt. 25:46, that those who reject Him ...

*... will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.*

That means every life has value since they were created by God. As a result, followers of Jesus need to make strong stands against abortion and euthanasia and all forms of devaluing of life which includes changing who God made you to be. Yet sadly, many Christians think our main objective is to prove we (the Bible) are right and others are wrong. In having that approach we lose sight that the “spiritually unborn” will suffer eternally outside of God’s presence. So, we need a better perspective on life as a whole.

While it is my intention this morning to show you from God’s Word that life begins at conception in the womb as we work through Ps. 139, P. 139 isn’t just a proof text on when life begins. God has something more for us here in this Psalm, something more that we need to see when we’re tempted to use the Bible just to prove our point.

Psalm 139 is a beautifully crafted song of praise to God. It is a song

- to God for what He’s done,

- about God for what He can do and
- for God to glorify Him in all that He is and does.

The psalm divides nicely into four 6 verse sections.

Vv.1-6 tell us about the omniscience of God – He knows everything.

Vv.7-12 about the omnipresence of God; He's everywhere.

Vv.13-18 about the omnipotence of God, He is all-powerful.

And there's this beautiful response of introspection and a desire to repent and draw near to God in vv.23-24. But someone forgot to tell David how to write nice psalms and he has these verses in vv.19-22 that we don't know what to do with. Our nice outline breaks down. What do we do with these angry words from David's lips to call on God to slay the wicked? Something more than a pretty defense on who God is, where He is and what He does is going on here.

What we see in the Psalm is more than just the evidence of God's omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence. – but rather that these qualities about God should cause us to respond to God in various ways. Let's look at vv.1-6 again,

*<sup>1</sup> O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. <sup>2</sup> You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. <sup>3</sup> You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. <sup>4</sup> Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD. <sup>5</sup> You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. <sup>6</sup> Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.*

In vv.1-5 David praises God because God knows everything there is to know about us! Everything? Everything. Where we go, what we do, how we think, what we're going to say and how God is in control over our life. How should we respond to such wonderful knowledge? *'It is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.'*

## **God's Knowledge of us Should Inspire Awe** (139:1-6)

The words for 'search' and 'know' are mining terms. God has dug down deep and discovered everything there is to know about us! Not just our whereabouts but our thoughts and our motives. There is nothing that God does not know about you and me and every person in this world all at the same time!

It's more than information. The word "familiar" in v.3 means intimately acquainted. Most of us are blessed to be intimately acquainted with our spouse, but even that is not the same as God because we don't know what each other is thinking – although as husbands and wives, we sometimes do think the same thing. But we don't know that beforehand. God knows you, me and every person in this world; saved or unsaved. Listen to these translations of v.6. And,

*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.*

Other translations say *'it is so far beyond me, I am unable to fathom it.'*

Or, *This is too much, too wonderful—I can't take it all in!*

Wonderful means 'that which is marvelous and impossible to understand'. The knowledge of God's intimate acquaintance with us should result in drop-to-our-knees worship and adoration of who

He is and a humbler perspective on who we are. Especially when we understand He knows our motives and our thoughts. When was the last time we had a drop-down-to-our-knees response to the awesomeness of God's knowing us? What a great comfort yet what a humbling thought when we understand He loves us in spite of all that that we think.

From God's omniscience David moves to sing about God's omnipresence: There is no where we can go that God is not. You can't flee from God's presence. In vv.8-9 David points to the extremes of all 4 directions: heaven (north), sheol (south), the dawn (east), the sea (west – Mediterranean where the sun sets). Where ever I go Your hand is right there. Ahh, but what about in complete darkness? God can't see me then, can He? Even the darkness is light to God. How then should we respond to the omnipresence of God?

## **God's Continual Presence Should Help Us Obey** (139:7-12)

*'Where can I go from God's Spirit? Where can I flee from His presence?'* We can't, so stop running from God. God loves us and knows what we need. He reveals Himself to us in creation to make us aware of how great He is but He sent Jesus His Son to this earth to show us how much He loves us. *"Even while we were yet sinners Christ died for us"* (Rom. 5:8). Jesus died for everyone's sins even though most people will not accept His gift. They will either try on their own terms to get right with God – but God said there is only one way; believe Jesus died for our sins and ask Jesus to forgive your sins. Or they will pretend God isn't there. Pretending there is no God is like saying you don't believe in gravity. I can deny the existence of gravity but that doesn't change the fact that I can't live without it or that it doesn't affect every move I make in life.

But David's a believer and sometimes even believers try to avoid God. We said we would follow Him and obey Him but we sometimes refuse to do His will and disobey His Word. Paul says in Gal. 6:7 that God will not be mocked and that we reap what we sow. He will discipline us as a good father should so we get back on where we're supposed to be and do what we've said we would do. We can't flee from His presence.

Why is God intimately acquainted with all our ways? Why can we not flee from God's Presence? Because He made us. Vv. 13-18.

*<sup>13</sup> For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. <sup>14</sup> I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. <sup>15</sup> My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, <sup>16</sup> your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. <sup>17</sup> How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! <sup>18</sup> Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you.*

God knows everything about us because He made each one of us unique. Every person who has ever lived was made by God with unique personality, DNA and gifts. It's amazing that David *"knew this full well"* without the need for scientific evidence. We believe the Bible by faith whether the scientific or historical evidence is there or not.

David knew he was made by God because he knew God. God has built this knowledge inside of us. Paul says in Rom. 1

*<sup>18</sup> The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, <sup>19</sup> since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. <sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and*

*divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.*

Those who want to call that person being formed in the womb a fetus are suppressing the truth. You know that child in you is a living being. Don Hutchison, a lawyer with the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, was riding in an elevator when a woman who was pregnant got on. So he asked her 'When is your fetus due?' The look of disgust she gave him was something he won't forget! But he was making a point. You know full a child lives within you.

How does knowing that every life is made by God affect us?

## **God's Creativity Should Change the Way** **We Value Life** (139:13-18)

God "knit" us in our mother's womb. The word means he was weaving us like a tapestry, making sure all things come together for a purpose. The word 'Fearfully' should literally read 'Awe fully' made because it means to be in awe of; to honour, to respect. "Wonderful" is the same word used in v.6, 'that which is marvelous and impossible to understand'. God's works are wonderful.

A grandfather was reading a bedtime story to his granddaughter. Every now and then she would touch her cheek, then look up at him and touch his cheek. Finally, she said, 'Grandpa, did God make you?' *"Yes honey, God made me a long time ago."* Then she said *"Grandpa, did God make me?"* 'Yes honey, God made you just a little while ago.' *She thought for a second. Then she said 'God must be getting better at it'.*

But that's not really true is it? Every person of every age has value. Every human being; whether they are inside or outside the mother's womb has value. Does the life of an adult have less value than the life of an unborn? Is the angry, abortion supporting person have less value than the person rejecting abortion? Is a gay/lesbian person created by God? Do they have any less value than those who are not? If we as God's people truly believe all life is valuable and made in the image of God then we should be the ones who show them God's love and helping them understand how God made them unique.

Jesus told His followers we need to be different than the world. In Matt. 5 He said,

*<sup>43</sup> "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' <sup>44</sup> But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>45</sup> that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. <sup>46</sup> If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? <sup>47</sup> And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? <sup>48</sup> Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

When we choose to love those who don't love us, we are "perfect" in that we are like Jesus. If we really believe that life begins at conception and the unborn have rights and are fearfully and wonderfully made let's not stop valuing all people after they are born, whether we agree with them or not. If we don't show them Jesus' love how are they going to see God and come to know He made them?

David's praise and awe of God has resulted in this great affirmation about God in vv.17-18:

*<sup>17</sup> How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! <sup>18</sup> Were I to count them, they would out-number the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you.*

But then his thoughts turn to those who don't know this holy, amazing God. The next 3 verses are what's called an 'imprecatory prayer' where the King of Israel – usually David – calls for God to remove God's enemies. A son of David who sat on Israel's throne acts as God's representative and as a forerunner to the true King of Israel, Jesus. Because he knew God's Word and what God's covenant promises were for Israel, they knew what was going to happen to God's enemies. David then prays that God would vindicate himself by judging wickedness. God is so awesome how can people not see it? How can they rage and shake their fist at what is so obvious to them?

### **God's Holiness Should Help Me Trust Him in all Things (139:19-24)**

David may be expressing what we might call righteous indignation. But as Israel's covenant represent to God, he was praying that God's Word regarding judgment of the wicked would come about. God's holiness should help us to trust Him in...

#### ***Dealing with those who oppose us (vv.19-22)***

Under the inspiration of the Spirit David is praying that God treat God's enemies as they deserve. But in v.23 David seems to come back to God in humility and perhaps realizes except for God's mercy and grace, so too would David be an enemy. The holiness of God in His hatred towards sin all works together with His love, grace and mercy. 2 Pet. 3:9 is quite clear in letting us know that the reason God has not brought judgment on the world is because He wants to save more people. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked but is pleased when people repent (Ezek. 18:23). Israel was supposed to be a light to the nations, something they did not do well.

God's holiness helps us see the unsaved for who they are, but also ourselves. We may be saved but God knows our thoughts and motives. But for the grace of God . . . We need wisdom in how to deal with those who oppose us. Jesus showed grace and mercy to Judas the one who betrayed Him. Jesus had a nickname given to Him to shame Him but He wore it with pride: 'friend of sinners'. The more we understand God's holiness the greater mercy we should show others. David's abrupt change between vv. 22 and 23 almost cause me to wonder if in seeing God's holiness and venting his frustration at those who reject God and make his life difficult has opened up his own eyes to his own less than perfect heart.

He began the psalm praising God because He had searched and known David. God had dug deep into David's heart and revealed where his thoughts, his motives and his words weren't pure. Now he prays for forgiveness and asks God do it again: *"Search me O God and know my heart, test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me"*. Dig deeper God. There's more sin down there. I've tried to hide it but I can't run from you. I've tried to keep it in the dark but You expel the darkness. God's holiness should help us to trust Him in all things by . . .

#### ***Dealing with our own sins (vv.23-24a)***

David committed adultery with Bathsheba and had Uriah her husband killed. Yet God forgave him. God forgives people of their sins when they confess them. Jesus died for murder. Jesus died for those who had abortions. Jesus died for those who commit adultery. Jesus died for those who have sinful thoughts. Jesus died for those who gossip, for those who say no to serving Him or refuse to give Him their possessions – and we can go on and on listing sins. Is grace available to all? Is forgiveness available for any sin? Sure it is. The closer we draw to God the deeper we can see our own sinfulness.

David asks God for forgiveness – maybe even for thinking vv.19-22 – and realizes that if his life has value because he's been made in God's image then so does everyone; even those who hate God.

The end of v.24b speaks of hope. God makes us so we will come to him as our Creator and Jesus as our Saviour. God has numbered our days and made each of us with honour and wonder. That means He has a plan for our lives. God's holiness should help me to trust him . . .

***To lead us to follow his Word (v.24b)***

David didn't need scientific proof that he was made in God's image in the womb of his mother. He also didn't need to have had to live after Jesus' death to understand grace. He asks for forgiveness and trusts God that God will continue to lead Him in the way everlasting. To lead means, create opportunities to give direction. Everlasting way refers to what's ahead (tomorrow, next week, year). He's not talking about the next life but this life; he means create opportunities for me to live the eternal way of God and to show people they can have eternal life with God now.

Since David confidently knew God knew everything about him, was always with him and created him uniquely for God's purposes, he could confidently ask for forgiveness and anticipate God will forgive him and use him for God's purposes again. That's how much value God placed on him, that He wanted to use him for His purposes. And that's how much He values you and I, fearfully and wonderfully created, so we can be used to tell others the same thing. You are valued. You are special. God made you. God has a purpose for your life, if you choose to follow Him. But so is everyone else valued by God. The unborn, the angry, the confused and the neglected. Let's not forget that the ones we are trying to help see how God values all life, are also those Jesus died for and need eternal life.

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