

# Infinitely Knowing, yet Intimately Upholding

## Psalm 139

### 1. Introduction.

#### a. Structure of the Psalm.

- i. The omniscience of God (1-6).
- ii. The omnipresence of God (7-12).
- iii. The omnipotence of God (13-18).
- iv. The justice and vengeance of God (19-22).
- v. The holiness of God (23-24).

#### b. What we must keep at the forefront of our minds is that we must get God right. If we get God wrong, it has significant consequences.

- i. Your understanding of God affects everything.
- ii. You can't rightly understand yourself until you rightly understand God.

### 2. The omniscience of God (1-6).

#### a. There's an intimacy of knowledge (1).

- i. "Search" carries the idea of examination and exploration.
- ii. Cf., Deut. 13:14.
- iii. God completely exposes a person. There's no hiding or pretending.

#### b. The expansiveness of God's knowledge (2-6).

- i. God knows all of our physical, but also intellectual realities (2).
  1. Lit. "He discerns our strivings."
  2. He judges the intentions of our thoughts and desires (cf., Heb. 4:12).

- ii. God scrutinizes our paths (3).
  - 1. He sifts through our thoughts and ways like a fork through the grain.
  - 2. “Lying down” refers to private life. “All my ways” refers to public life.
- iii. God knows all things before they even happen (4).
  - 1. He doesn’t have to wait until anything happens.
  - 2. Despite the fact we often feel independent, the reality is God knows all things (both mental and physical) before they even come into being.
- iv. God encloses us (5).
  - 1. “Hand” could be translated as “palm.” It’s not a reference to blessing, but enclosing.
  - 2. This is a fearful reality for David.
- v. David’s confession of fearful unattainability (6).
  - 1. David cries out with a confession that God’s thoughts are too incredible and full of wonder.
  - 2. His finite mind can’t understand the vastness of God’s infinite knowledge.

3. The omnipresence of God (7-12).

- a. David asks a series of rhetorical questions (7-12).
  - i. “Heaven” and “Sheol” refer to the afterlife—a time when a person will never be more present with the person of God (8).
  - ii. “Wings of dawn” refer to the speed of light, where you’re surrounded by much, and “remotest parts of the sea” refer to loneliness (9).
  - iii. “Darkness” refers to the difficult times of life – to trials and hardship (11).

b. In vss. 10 and 12 David reflects on the goodness of God's presence to sustain him.

i. "Right hand" refers to God's victory and salvation (cf. Isa. 41:13).

1. David doesn't try to find God's hand.

2. Rather, God simply sustains David from His own sovereign goodness.

ii. David understands this truth as a state of fact, indeed, a promise, that God will uphold David and lead him. David is reminding himself of this truth. He is preaching doctrine to himself. He is sustained in the darkness (v. 12), not by figuring out what he has to do to fix the situation, but by meditating on the nature and attributes of God.

4. The omnipotence of God (13-18).

a. David reflects on the reality that God created his very life, body, and soul (13-16).

i. God is not some distant, or cold, Creator.

ii. He's intimately involved in the subtest realities of life, even the formation of our bodies. Every person is uniquely known by God as a unique creation.

1. "Inward parts" speak of the soul.

2. "Wove in my mother's womb" speaks of the physical body.

b. There is an argument from the lesser to the greater. David's point is that if God was intimately involved in the weaving together of a person's body, and brings their very soul into being, then how much more does He control the circumstances of a person's life (16).

i. God ordains the days of a person's life.

ii. He controls every circumstance and trial a person might encounter. And yet He still cares for them in the most intimate of ways—especially if you're His.

- c. “When I awake” is not a reference to waking up from sleep, but returning to life from his meditations of God.
  - i. David knows that God is present even when he’s not aware of God.
  - ii. He preaches this truth to himself, then returns to life (19-22).

5. The justice of God (19-22).

- a. This is the occasion for David’s writing—it is the trial that brought about the meditation of this Psalm.
  - i. David is surrounded by enemies.
  - ii. David’s reference to darkness in vss. 11-12 may be a double reference, as armies will surround a city and sometimes attack in the dark of the night.
- b. This is an imprecatory prayer—David is calling down the righteous judgment of God.
  - i. This is not personal vengeance of David.
  - ii. This is a cry for justice against those who hate God.
  - iii. The better you understand God, the more you will begin to love what He loves and hate what He hates.

6. The holiness of God (23-24).

- a. After seeing the wickedness of his enemies, David turns the prayer onto himself.
- b. David invokes God’s omniscience to reveal that which is still wicked in David.
  - i. David desires that God would make his sin known to him (i.e., his anxious thoughts).
  - ii. David prays that this trial (i.e., the surrounding enemies) would be the means through which he might grow in holiness.

7. Conclusion.

- a. The pathway to holiness often means the presence of difficult exposure—an exposure of who we really are.
- b. In the midst of discovering all that we lack in holiness, we must look to Jesus—the perfect manifestation of holiness.