

Psalm 139 • Search me, O God, and know my heart

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Chapter 139. Boy, we're zeroing in here on the end of our study of the Psalms. It feels like we've been in Luke and Psalms forever. But, hey, it's not like each week isn't rich and useful to us.

This is one of the most well-known psalms, I would say. And one of the most comforting in many respects. We're going to read through the whole Psalm. And then we're going to go back and talk about it. Follow along with me as I read through Psalm 139 out of the ESV.

It says,

"1 O LORD, you have searched me and known me!

2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar.

3 You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.

4 Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.

5 You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.

7 Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?

8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!

9 If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

10 even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.

11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,"

12 even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.

13 For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.

14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

15 My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

16 Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

17 How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

18 If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you.

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.

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!

24 And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" (ESV)

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, as we embark on this most incredible of Psalms tonight, we pray that You would open our eyes to see. We pray that You would open our ears to hear. We pray that You would open our understanding. The

understanding of our hearts to receive tonight, what You would have through this passage.

And we ask Lord, that You would help us to apply Your Word to our lives. Jesus, we desire to walk in wisdom. We desire to walk in understanding. We pray that You would help us to see this Word for what it is. To understand more of You. We thank You, Father God. Guide us and direct us through this time. We pray it in Jesus precious name, amen.

I think most of you are probably familiar with the attributes of God. When we talk about the attributes of God, we're simply talking about something that is true about God. And there are certain things that are uniquely true about God. In other words, they're only true about God. And they're true of no one or nothing else. They are His attributes and His alone.

And David is masterfully, poetically, writing in this psalm about certain aspects of the attributes of God, which are just absolutely beautiful. And this is really kind of a lesson in theology. But it's way more than that. Because we're going to apply it to our lives. But there is some powerful and wonderful theology that is given to us in this passage.

And he begins, David begins by talking about God's omniscience. And when we say God's omniscience, what we're talking about is the fact that God knows everything. Not just that God knows. I mean, you know things, I know things. But God knows everything. And God knows everything perfectly.

And that's what David begins to outline here, as he says in verse 1, "*O LORD, you have searched me and known me!*" And you'll notice that, as we go through the rest of the verses here in this first section, he uses that word, know, or known quite a bit.

And that's an interesting word because it is the Hebrew word, yada. And it means not just to know, but to know intimately. It means to know experientially. But David isn't simply saying that God knows him. He's saying that God knows him perfectly. In other words, without anything hidden in any way at all. And the reason of course, is simply stated that God knows all things.

One of my favorite books concerning the attributes of God, is one that was written by A.W. Tozer a number of years ago called, Knowledge of the Holy. And I've quoted from it to you guys many times in the past. And I'm going to do it a lot tonight. Because as we're talking about the attributes of God, Tozer has such a powerful way of stating things.

And he talks to us and helps us to digest this idea of God's omniscience when he makes some interesting statements. Let me put the first one up on the screen for you. He says,

To say that God is omniscient is to say that He possesses perfect knowledge and therefore has no need to learn. But it is more: it is to say that God has never learned and cannot learn. **A.W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy***

To say (first of all,) that God is omniscient is to say that He possesses perfect knowledge and therefore has no need to learn. But it is more: (It's more than that. It is to actually) say that God has never learned and cannot learn.

All right. I know that sounds weird. It almost sounds like, if you were talking about a human being, you say, that person cannot learn. You would think that there's something wrong. There's something desperately wrong because they can no longer amass knowledge. But God never amasses knowledge. Listen, God never learns. All right.

Let me go on to show you the next quote from Tozer. He said,

Could God at any time or in any manner receive into His mind knowledge that he did not possess and had not possessed from eternity, he would be imperfect and then less than himself. **A.W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy***

Could God at any time or in any manner receive into His mind knowledge that he (didn't) possess and had not possessed from eternity, he would (therefore) be imperfect and then less than himself. If there was anything ever for God to learn, that would mean that He would not be fully God. He would not be fully perfect in understanding, if God learned anything.

That ought to help you and I, when we're praying. God doesn't have to learn anything. You don't need to instruct Him. You don't need to inform Him.

Notice that people do that a lot when you're praying in a group. People who are talking to God like, you know God, I'm not sure You knew this for sure. But let me explain what's actually going on here. In my life or in this situation... And I just need to kind of tell You what's happening here. Because I'm not sure You're clued in on exactly all the details here so just let me lay it out for You. God knows! God knows. And He knows perfectly.

And then Tozer goes on to define the divine omniscience when he says this. He says,

God knows instantly and effortlessly all matter and all matters, all mind and every mind, all spirit and all spirits, all being and every being, all creaturehood and all creatures, every plurality and all pluralities, all law and every law, all relations, all causes, all thoughts, all mysteries, all enigmas, all feeling, all desires, every unuttered secret, all thrones and dominions, all personalities, all things visible and invisible in heaven and in earth, motion, space, time, life, death, good, evil, heaven and hell. **A.W. Tozer, Knowledge of the Holy**

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He's got it all dialed in. He knows it all. And He knows it all perfectly. He never seeks to understand. He never seeks knowledge. He never seeks to learn. He knows everything perfectly and at all times.

But David takes this understanding of God's omniscience and he personalizes it. Because it's easy to go around just saying, God knows everything. And you can say that. But that's a very impersonal statement. Because it's talking about God but it's not necessarily relating it to you. Right?

David goes on. Look what he says in verse 2. Look with me in your Bible. He says, "*You know when I sit down and when I rise up; (he says,) you discern my thoughts from afar.*" And he goes on to say, "(and) *You search out my path and my lying down...*" or, as the NASB says "*You scrutinize my path...*" I think that's really interesting.

The word, path is just a simple way of saying, my going out and my coming in. Whichever way I happened to be going that day. My going out, my returning, and so forth. David says, You know all of that. You know all about my going forth, my returning, everything I do during the day. How do you know that? Well, David says, he says, You search me out. You search me out.

Now this is an interesting Hebrew word. It's a single Hebrew word and it means to scatter or get this to winnow. Do you guys..., I don't know if there's any farmers here. But we're not just talking about farming. We're talking about ancient farming.

When wheat was brought in as a crop, they would have a winnowing fork. And they would take the wheat after it had been cut and they'd put it on the ground. And then they would actually find a place where there was a wind blowing, believe it or not. And they would take a winnowing fork and they would just dive it into the wheat stalks and stuff. And they would throw up in the air, the wheat. And the wind would separate the wheat kernel from the chaff and that was called winnowing. And the chaff being lighter, the husk would blow in the wind and the heavier wheat kernels would fall again. And by winnowing up in the air repeatedly this sort of a thing, you would separate the wheat from the chaff.

David is using this word to describe the process by which God searches out his life. And it's a sense of you are winnowing, you are understanding my life" from the standpoint of what is useful and what is not. Because that's what would happen in the process of winnowing. The useful wheat kernel would fall to the ground, which of course they would use to make flour and then bread and so forth. And the chaff, which is just the empty husk would blow away.

David says, that's how You search. You search me out. You search my comings and my goings by winnowing, scrutinizing, as the NASB says, my life and so forth.

And then he says at the end of verse 3. He says, "(you) *are acquainted* (or of course, that just means familiar) *with all my ways.*" You know all my ways. You're totally familiar with the way I do things. The way I think, you know my ways.

Do you know that includes your weaknesses? God knows your weaknesses. God knows the ways that you respond to life that probably aren't that great. Sometimes we respond to life with all kinds of different responses: fear, anger depression, any other number of I suppose variations of emotions, or whatever and God knows.

God knows you. He's familiar with all of your ways. He's familiar with the way you think. He's familiar with the way you react. He's familiar with you. He knows you. In fact, he knows you better than you know you. And you know you pretty well. But He knows you better because He knows all your ways.

Verse 4, he says, "*Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it all together.*" David is saying that God knows what we're going to say even before we say it, including the things we regret saying. And that is to say He knows more than just the words.

When I get ready to say something, God knows not only the words before I say it, He knows the intent of my heart in saying it. He knows what heart condition is causing those words to emerge. Because you know, it is out of the abundance of the heart, we're told, that the mouth speaks. (Matthew 12:34, Luke 6:45) Remember that Scripture? That's the one we don't like to think about very much because it convicts us. It tells us in no uncertain terms when we say something hurtful, or mean, or vicious, or angry, it shows the condition of our heart.

And we say things and we say to people, man, I don't know where that came from. Well, the Bible tells you it exactly where that came from. It came from your heart. And that's a hard thing for us to accept. Because we have to accept that our hearts are truly evil.

I remember reading years ago about a very godly man raised in a godly home as a Christian, all his life. Toward the end of his life started having some health problems. And that caused him to be bedridden for a period of time. He had a series, I think it was of strokes or something like that.

And he talked about during the time of his.. I was going to say incarceration. I'm sure that's what it felt like to him. But during that particular time, he said all these thoughts and even some vile words came bubbling up in his life. And he was horrified! And he cried out to the Lord, and he said, God, where did this come from? I have never spoken like this in my life. I have always believed that these kinds of words are the most vile and obscene sorts of things that a human being can say! And I've never given freedom for these words to come out before. Why now what's happening to me?

And the Lord just spoke to his heart. And settled him in a sense by saying, listen, did you think your sinful nature went away? Did you think your sinful nature... Why else would I tell you repeatedly in the Word, that it must be crucified? It must daily be crucified. It must be brought to the cross of Christ. It must be repudiated. It must be resisted. And here you are going through this situation. You've never endured in your life with these kinds of health issues. And suddenly what is emerging from you is what has been in your heart all along. But you never really had a situation that really kind of just caused this to come bubbling out before. But here it is. Surprise! This is you apart from Christ.

Right? This is you apart from Jesus. Think about you at your worst time. Think about you saying the worst things you could say to another human being. The most hurtful, the most vile...That's you apart from Jesus Christ. That's what's in the heart. The heart is deceitful. It is wicked. It is sick. Jeremiah tells us it's beyond cure. (Jeremiah 17:9-10) And that's why God doesn't come and wash

our nature. He gives us a new nature. He implants in us literally the nature of Christ, so that we might yield now to that new nature. And resist the old nature.

I wish very much the old nature went away. I very much wish that. But in my life it has not been. I have not seen my old nature go away. It is still very much in place. And at any given time, if I give it the freedom, it will rise up and take control of my words, my thoughts, my actions.

Unless I resist it and yield instead to the power of the Holy Spirit. Which is, by the way, a greater power. Greater is he that is in you. Right? That is Christ in you, than the one who is in the world. Or the man of the world, if you will. (1 John 4:4) He says, You know, You see the heart, and so forth.

Verse 5. I love this too! He says, *"You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me."* I love this. This is beautiful. This is beautiful. *"You hem me in, behind (me) before, and you lay your hand upon me."* What a beautiful statement about God is always guarding us, always standing with us. And our lives are in His hands, both behind and before.

Meaning, the things of the past, the things that are yet future. Do you believe that, brothers and sisters in Christ? Our futures are secure in Him. Whatever they may hold, whatever the purpose of His will may be. He hems us in behind us, before us. Such a beautiful thing.

And then David writes in verse 6. This is so beautiful. He says, *"Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high;"* In other words, it is lofty. And he says, *"I cannot attain it."* And I love this statement because it's such a statement of humility and surrender to the Lord. Because David freely admits in this verse, that the perfect knowledge of God is something that is so far above him that he can't comprehend it. And again, this is hard for you and I to admit.

We go through situations in life and we're like, what's going on? What's happening God? And we ask God, God, what's happening? I want to know what's going on in my life. I want to know why this is happening in my life. And God is like, dude,... And I don't know if He calls you dude but He calls me dude all the time. Because it's His way of saying, chill, you're an idiot. He tells me that all the time. And it's fine because it's just... I know He loves me.

You can't know. You can't know. My plan is so far above you. You remember that passage from Isaiah of the ways of the Lord are so high above us as the heavens are high above the earth. And so are God's ways and thoughts high above our own. (Isaiah 55:8-9) Oh, that's hard to admit. God, I want you to

explain it to me. And God's like, I can't. Why not? Your brain isn't big enough. That's the problem. Your brain isn't big enough. You can't go there.

You can't go where God goes. That's what David is saying here. He's saying, this knowledge is too wonderful. It's beyond me. It's lofty. It's beyond my understanding.

But you know what? You know what? Admitting that I can't know what God knows, doesn't stop me from worshiping Him. Does not stop me from bowing at His feet and saying, Lord, You know! And that's one of the smartest things...

Let me just tell you something. One of the smartest answers you can give to God if He ever asks you a question is, You know! And I... Actually, some of the biblical characters did that. Someone receives a vision and... Son of man, what is this that you see? And the prophet says, Lord, you know! (Ezekiel 37:3)

That's the greatest answer you can come up with. God, you know! Always say to God, You know! I have no idea what's going on. And that's an important thing. It doesn't stop us from bowing in worship before the One who has no limitations in His understanding.

I remember a time in my life when I was a fairly young pastor. And I was not a senior pastor at this particular time. I was an associate pastor at a church in Washington. And the neighbor, our next door neighbor, was a couple with one small child. And he was a roofer and they went to our church. And they were a little bit younger I think, than Sue and I, even at the time. Sue and I were, I suppose, maybe I was either in my upper twenties or early thirties. But no, I was around 30 years old.

And this guy was roofing in Seattle and he fell off a roof and died; was killed. And his wife was scheduled to go in and be induced to have their second child the next morning. And I received the news of her husband's death. And had to go over with another pastor and tell her that her husband wasn't never coming home.

And I got to tell you, that was one of the most difficult things I've ever had to deal with in my entire life. And every ounce of my being wanted to cry out and say, God, why? Why? And I remember I got off the phone with the doctor. I actually... We heard that he had been in an accident. I called the hospital to find out. And I don't... I guess some guy called me and told me who had been roofing with him. Called me and told me that, he'd been taken to the emergency room somewhere in downtown Seattle.

I called this hospital. I actually talked to the doctor who... And I didn't know what the situation was at the time. And I said, I'm calling to ask about so and so... And he says, yeah, it's terrible. He says, we, we lost him. And I hung up the phone and there was just such a helplessness that just overcame me. Because just, it's the worst thing in the world.

But I remember being with Sue alone in the room as we were getting ready to go over and tell this young woman about her husband. And I just dropped to my knees. I just dropped to my knees. Because it was the only thing I could think to do. Because you want to cry! You want to scream! You want to yell! But all I could do was drop to my knees. And I just said, Lord, I worship You. I worship You. I worship You, the God of the unknown ways. And I don't understand this. I don't have a clue what Your plan and Your purpose in this terrible thing is. But I worship You.

And I share that with you to underscore the fact that when you and I are confronted with situations in life for which we have no answers, which is often by the way, very often. That does not stop you from dropping to your knees and saying, God, I worship You, the God of the unknown way. The God of the way that is so much higher than me that I cannot know it. I cannot comprehend Your way. I worship You. And I rejoice in who You are.

Now, beginning at verse 7 and following, David goes on to speak here of God's omnipresence. This is another theological word. But the omnipresence of God is a word that we use to describe the fact that He is not limited by space. And that essentially means that God is able to be everywhere present at the same time. Wouldn't that be a trip to be everywhere present at the same time.

And here's what David says, beginning in verse 7, he says, "*Where shall I go from your spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?*" And then he begins to talk about different places he could go. "*If I were to ascend to heaven,*" of course, there you are. But yet, "*if I make my bed in Sheol,*" which is the grave, and in some cases can be translated hell," he says, " You know what? You're there too!

"If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;" Poetic language there to describe the traveling of some great distant land across the sea. He says, you know what, "*even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.*" And this is such a lovely truth about the omnipresence of God. Because it doesn't matter where you go, it doesn't matter where you live, it doesn't matter where you are, God is there! And that's the simple truth.

Let me show you a couple of quotes from Tozer, once again, as we go on and talk about this idea of omnipresence. He says,

The Scriptures teach that God is infinite. This means that His being knows no limits. Therefore there can be no limit to His presence; He is omnipresent. In His infinitude He surrounds the finite creation and contains it. There is no place beyond him for anything to be. **A.W. Tozer, Knowledge of the Holy**

The Scriptures teach that God is infinite. (And that) means that His being knows no limits. Therefore there can be no limit to His presence; He is omnipresent. In His infinitude He surrounds the finite creation and contains it. There is no place beyond Him for anything to be.

Isn't that a great thought? There is no place beyond him for anything to be." Because He is every place. And then Tozer goes on to say this,

This truth is to the convinced Christian a source of deep comfort in sorrow and of steadfast assurance in all the varied experiences of his life. But...as a child may cry out in pain even when sheltered in its mother's arms, so a Christian may sometimes know what it is to suffer even in the conscious presence of God. (The apostle) Paul admitted that he was sometimes sorrowful, and... experienced strong crying and tears, though he never left the bosom of the Father. **A.W. Tozer, Knowledge of the Holy**

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In other words, God's presence being everywhere at all times does not negate the fact that there may be times that you will suffer difficulty, challenges, hurts, and pains in the midst of His presence. And there's no reason to think that somehow, because you've gone through a hard time, God is not there.

You will hear that from time to time, when people go through terrible tragedies they'll say, where was God? Where was God? Or they might even come out and just make the statement, well, God has left me.

I bet you've thought that. If you've never said it out of your mouth, I'll bet you've thought it before. God has left me. God's left me. He's abandoned me. He's not here. His presence is not in my life. Well, that's impossible. It is impossible for you to be outside of the presence of God.

And he's making the point, and I love how he says it. Even though a child may suffer pain even, even, while being caressed in his mother's arms, so also we may experience the difficulty of life even while we are being caressed by the very presence of God at all times. It is a very comforting, very beautiful thought.

Verse 11, "*If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,"*" which I bet you've said too, in the past. I bet this, you might have said, this darkness is going to overwhelm me. He says, even if I should say that, he says, you know what? Verse 12, "*even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is (in fact) bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.*" And this is one of the things I love about our God. The darkness cannot shut Him out.

And there are times, Christians, when darkness creeps into our lives. Right? But that darkness cannot shut out the light and the presence of God. It may seem to you as if that is the case. But you know better. You know better from the Word of God.

David is saying here, even if I say, surely, this darkness is going to overwhelm me. This darkness is going to consume me. This darkness is going to swallow me whole. He says, but you know what? Even that kind of darkness that has the ability to swallow a life whole, that's not dark to You. It's not darkness to You who are all light. David is saying that even in the darkness, God is present. And whatever darkness may invade my life, His light, is there as well.

You might remember, I don't know if you do, it seems like a long time ago. But back in the 18th Psalm, that was forever ago, David said something about this. He said,

Psalm 18:28 (ESV)

...it is you who light my lamp; the LORD my God lightens my darkness.

...it is you who light my lamp; the LORD my God lightens my darkness.

David had made statements about this previously. David felt the darkness of life. He felt people hunting him like an animal. He felt the darkness of sin. He

felt the darkness of tragedy. He felt the darkness of death. And yet he said, God, You light my darkness. You lighten my darkness. Wow, what a beautiful thing.

Notice what he goes on to say, as David now goes on, in verse 13 and following, he's going to begin to praise God for the genius of His creation. Verse 13. I love this. He says, "*For you formed my inward parts;*" And of course this speaks of the vast network of incredible, creative, genius that is our physical bodies. These physical... I'm surprised! I'm surprised! Every morning when I wake up, that I wake up! I'm surprised I made it another day! It's like, how in the world, does this body just keep functioning? And the older I get, the more amazed I am!

There is this incredibly complex network of nerves. And this system of healing that God put into our bodies. Isn't that amazing? God made band aids. "Band Aid" brand thinks they came up with band aids. They didn't. God made band aids. It's called these little cells in your blood that clot your blood. And you make a scab. And God created this method of stopping a bleeding. And keeping the thing clean. And then it goes away all on its own. It's just, it's amazing.

David was largely ignorant of much of what we know about the human body today. We know so much more. We've gotten down to the level of DNA. And we've learned something about ourselves. We've learned that our cells are packed with information. Information. Intelligent information. Our DNA cells were literally packed with intelligent information. Right? Which just screams at us about an intelligent designer.

David didn't have the knowledge that you and I have about these physical bodies. Look what he goes on to say. He says, "*you knitted me together in my mother's womb.*" He's using poetic language here to just speak of the process of procreation. Which God has given to us. What a miracle. Have you ever thought about that? What a miracle.

I... We had our little grandson over at the house today. We were taking care of little Benjamin, who's two. Just little... Yeah, just turned two here this month. What a character that kid is. But he is just... He's his mom and his dad. He's this amalgamation of his mom and his dad. And we can see it. In his silliness and his weirdness and all the little things. And we just look at him and we laugh. And we just go, it's just like Aaron. Here's this little kid, he doesn't...He looks more like his mom, frankly, but he acts just like Aaron!

And what an amazing thing it is that God has blessed you and I, to make people. I mean, good grief! Sue and I made four people over the years. It's like, look,

honey, we made a people! It's a little people. And they grow up and they walk and they talk and they... And it's just crazy! And they think! And then they get to the age where you call them up to ask for their advice. "Honey, what do you think I should do? Talking to my kids. That's crazy. And we made this kid!

Then, I love what he says in verse 14. *"I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made."* Fearfully and wonderfully made. When they had the memorial service for pastor Chuck Smith, which we showed here at Calvary Chapel.

It was his daughter, Cheryl, who got up during the memorial and talked about how, as his lung cancer was increasing, spreading, she went to his doctor's appointments with him to hear what the doctor had to say and so forth. And the doctor sat him down and showed him on these x-rays. And had these other images to show him about how this cancer was spreading and throughout his body. And essentially, was telling pastor Chuck that it's beyond what we can control.

And Cheryl, during the memorial, said that she looked over at her dad, and all he said was, I am fearfully and wonderfully made. That was his response. I remember when I heard that at the memorial, I started crying. I actually burst into tears. I did. I didn't want anybody to know it, but...

It just, it overwhelmed me that, such an attitude, in the light of that sort of a revelation of such destruction going on in his physical body, he praised God for being fearfully and wonderfully made.

I mean, God was, the doctor rather, was explaining all these things about his body. And he was missing all the parts about the cancer. And all he was seeing was how incredibly he had been formed by God! And he was just amazed!

Look what David goes on to say in that same verse. He says, *"Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth."* Again, poetic language here. *"...depths of the earth"* just speaks of the unseen, the mysterious, the beyond our ability. You could even make reference in a longer sense, to the womb.

But he says, in verse 16, *"Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them."*

I actually liked the way the NIV renders this. The NIV says, "*All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.*" I like that. The clarity of that because that's what David is saying. All the days that were set apart for my life, were written in Your book, even before one of them started. Before the first day started, all the days that You had set out for me, were written down in Your book.

Now, some people might hear that and go, that's... kind of creeps me out a little bit. Because we don't want to think about the end of our life. But David was comforted by that understanding. He was comforted by the fact that God's knowledge encompassed his life to the point where he says, You knew me. You knew me perfectly. You knew the number of days that I would spend upon this earth from the beginning to the end. You knew them. You saw them all. And they were all written down in Your book before even one of them started. And he was comforted by that. Obviously, that speaks of God's ability to see beyond the limitations of time.

In verse 17, David now returns to speak of God's perfect knowledge. And he says in verse 17, I love this. "*How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!*" If I were to count them, he says, good grief. "*they are more than the sand. I awake, and I'm still with you.*"

There are kind of two statements that we're looking at here in this section. And that is, first of all, David talks about the value of God's thoughts, or, the thoughts of God. And then secondly, he talks about the vastness. The value and the vastness of God's thoughts.

First, the value. David calls the thoughts of God precious. Did you catch that? "*How precious,*" he says, "*are your thoughts?*" I looked up that word in the Hebrew and it literally means weighty. And by inference, it means precious. It doesn't literally mean that. It literally means they're heavy. He's saying, how heavy are Your thoughts to me? But again, it's a figurative way of saying how precious. And he's speaking of something of great worth.

Are the thoughts of God to you of great worth? As Christians, this is kind of how we feel about His Word that is bound up for us in the Bible. Because we have God's Word, right here in this book. And it speaks of something, that is very precious to us, something that we hang on.

There've been times in my life, I have ached, literally ached for a fresh word from God. There've been times in my life that I've cried out to Him for a fresh Word in my life. God, I need to hear from You. I mean, I've told Him that, I

need to hear from You. And I need to hear from You today! I need a fresh Word.

And the reason I say that to Him, is because I equate His Word, or, His thoughts with life itself. Do you understand? His Words are life. His Word is life to me. It gives me life. I live in a world of death and so do you. And all around us is death and dying. We see decaying and this sort of thing happening all around us. The end of things happen all the time.

And when we come to God, He is the only source that we can come to. The only source Who is always full of life. His Word, His Spirit, His presence is a life giving thing. His Word is life giving. His presence is life giving. To receive His Word is to receive life. Right? And there have been times in my life I've cried out, "God, I need You. I need to hear from You. I need You to infuse me with life. Because I'm just sick to death of all this dying all around me."

And that is what the Word of God is to us. It is also what the Bible is to us. A very precious Word of life. Because it allows us, within the pages of the Scripture, to understand and to clue in on the thoughts of God, the very thoughts in the heart of God.

I love hearing things about God from the Word. Because I'm able to say that tells me what God's heart is like. When I see Him showing mercy to somebody who deserves death, I say, That's my God! That's how He acts toward people. I love that! I need that. I need that in my life! Lord, I need what You are. And I go to Your Word to find it.

But you'll remember... (pastor Paul chuckles thoughtfully) We men... And I speak of men, not men as a gender, but mankind. We're so full of opinions, aren't we? Everybody's got an opinion. Ever since social media was created on the internet, everybody just loves to give their opinion. Well, I think... as if it matters what I think. As if it really matters. Well, you guys need to listen to what I think because this is my opinion. You ready? I'm sure you're going to want to just settle down and stop doing whatever you're doing. Because I'm about to talk. How arrogant is that? But in the thoughts of God, we have God's own interpretation of reality and all that has true meaning.

Many times human opinions have no meaning. They're just opinions. It's fluff. But what God thinks about all that He created, all that He made, all that He knows. And what He communicates to you and I through His thoughts, through His word, through the Spirit, right? It's uniquely true. It's uniquely meaningful.

So much of what you and I say on our opinions, it's meaningless. It's meaningless. This is my opinion." Who cares? God says, well, here's what's true. And we all... Oh, thank You, God! That's truth. I've just now been able to take in truth. Oh, what a wonderful thing that is. It gives us a very unique view of the world when we look at it through the thoughts of God. How precious are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast the sum of Your thoughts. And that's what he goes on to talk about, the vastness of God's thoughts, David says.

He says in verse 18 again, if I could count them, I'd find that they are more than the sand. And of course, he's using language that excites our understanding. That goes really beyond our understanding of how much God actually thinks about us. Have you ever thought about how God thinks about you? How much He thinks about you? He... You thought you thought about you a lot, and you do. You think about you a lot! But He thinks about you more. And for different reasons.

You think about you because you're selfish. That's why I think about me. He thinks about us because He loves us. And He knows what's best for us. How vast, he says, if I were to count your thoughts concerning me, they would number more than the grains of sand on all the beaches worldwide. Can you imagine counting them?

My...When Aaron was a little boy, he used to ask me questions like that. Dad, how many grains of sand do you think there are in the world? I go, Aaron, what are you asking me that for? What do you... I don't know!

And then he'd go, dad, how many blades of grass do you suppose there are in the world? Just give me a number. And I'd say, Aaron, I don't know. He'd say, just give me a number. I'd say, okay, four. And that really made him mad. Come on, give me a good guess! I don't have a guess. It's beyond me!

David is saying, God, Your thoughts, the vastness of them, they're beyond me. They're beyond me. Were I to try to count them, there's no way.

David then turns to address those who care nothing for the God who created them. Who actually do evil. He says, "*Oh (verse 19) that you would slay the wicked, O God! O men of blood, depart from me! They speak against you with malicious intent; your enemies take your name in vain.*"

Now it's important to see here in these verses that David's hatred here is not a personal sort of a thing. He's not talking about somebody who dislikes him. He's talking about those who hate God. Right? That's what he says here. He says,

They're speaking against the Lord. They're using the Lord's name in vain. They have malicious intent toward God. He says, they speak against You. Right? And David couldn't abide such a thing.

He goes on. Verse 21. *"Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? I hate them with complete hatred; (In fact, he says,) I count them my enemies."*

Now you and I read this and as New Testament Christians, we're like, hmmm? Okay, how am I supposed to compute this in my little human brain? Because it sounds here like I have permission to hate unbelievers. That's what it sounds like. I want you to remember something. And that is, that David is talking about those who hate God, not necessarily those who hate him.

We actually have a record of how David treated those who hated him. King Saul, was a man who hated David, bitterly. Was very jealous of him. Wanted him dead. Hunted him down for a great a number of years. David treated him with respect and honor. And there were others. And when...

And there were times when David was called on the carpet for hating people who he probably should have had the right to hate. Remember when he sent his men out to go get some food from a particular rancher, farmer who had been just bringing in his flocks. It was sheep shearing time. It was probably harvest time if there were crops in the field.

And David sent his men to this man to say, hey, we've been out in the field watching over your flocks, making sure that they were safe. How about you share a little bit of the return with me and my men?" And you remember David was met with an insult.

And David said to his men, strap on your swords boys. We're going to go to this man's camp. We're going to go to this man's house. We're going to kill every male in his household. We're going to kill them. And he started heading that direction.

And you remember what happened? God raised up a woman, the man's wife, Abigail. She comes out and she meets David. And she confronts him with his hatred. And you'll remember that David, to his credit, responded properly. Properly. He said, you're absolutely right. That was wrong of me. (1 Samuel 25:1-35)

You need to understand we have a record in the Scriptures of how David treated his own enemies many times. And David, again, is talking about those who hate God. And you and I have been given a Word of command from Jesus Himself, related to how we deal with people who hate us. All right. And that's our first line of obedience.

Let me show you what Jesus said. From Matthew 5:43-45. He says,

Matthew 5:43-45 (ESV)

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. (Why? Because) For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."

And that is the command that you and I are given for those who are our enemies.

David ends this Psalm with some incredible words. And it comes by way of an invitation. *"Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!"* David is praying for the Lord to do something that he probably found very difficult to do on his own. And that was to know his own heart.

And because of our great propensity for self-deception, did you hear me? We have a great propensity for self-deception. We need God to reveal things that we would otherwise be unwilling to look at in our own hearts. And so David prays and says, Lord, search me and know my heart. *"Try me..."*

And that literally means like, put me on trial, if you will. It's the same sort of language. And he says, *"and know my thoughts."* Know my thoughts. Know, and that means not just that you know what I'm thinking. But you know what's behind my thoughts. You know the intent of my thoughts.

And then he said this, verse 24, *"and see if there be any grievous way in me."* And grievous means hurtful, wicked or offensive. And that's actually how that

word is translated in different Bible translations, hurtful, wicked or offensive. See if there'd be any of those things in me, Lord.

And then *"lead me in the way everlasting."* And *"the way everlasting"* is simply, a way of saying, lead me in the way of life. The way of Your life, not man's life, not my life, not the life of this world, but Your life. Lead me in the way of life.

What a beautiful way to end that beautiful psalm. Lord, search me and know me. I invite You to turn on the searchlight of Your holiness, and wisdom, and insight to look at my heart. Boy, that's a brave thing to say. You know why? Because God's bound to find things there that are probably not very pretty.

Whenever the Lord turns the searchlight on in my heart through His Word and through His Spirit, there's always something to convict. There's always something for God to convict me of.

And you get to the point, where you recognize, hey, if I'm going to open up my Bible, I'm going to be opening, turning on the searchlight of His holiness. And it's probably going to uncover something in there that I probably don't want to look at.

There's something in me that I really don't care to see. But I need to see it so that I can bring it to God. And so that He can then lead me in the way that is of life, not of death. Sin leads to death. Right? The wages of sin is death. (Romans 6:23) But the life that we have through Jesus Christ is eternal life. And He is leading us in the way of life.