

Four Great Attributes of God

Psalm 139

Psalm 139 - *"O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, You know it altogether. You have hedged me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high, I cannot attain it.*

Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there. If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," even the night shall be light about me. Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day. The darkness and the light are both alike to You.

For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. and in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them. How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand. When I awake, I am still with You.

Oh, that You would slay the wicked, O God! Depart from me, therefore, you bloodthirsty men, for they speak against You wickedly. Your enemies take Your name in vain. Do I not hate them, O LORD, who hate You? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them my enemies. Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me, and know my anxieties. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Background Notes

In this magnificent psalm of David, the focus is on four great attributes of God. The psalm concludes with David's prayer that God would search his heart so that any sin would be exposed and confessed. David was confident that God's testing of him would show his loyalty to the Lord.

Psalms 139 has twenty-four verses. It is clearly divided into four sections, or *strophes*, with six verses in each. Each division concerns one of God's divine attributes, so four of God's attributes brought out in this psalm. His omniscience (v1-6), His omnipresence (v7-12), His omnipotence (v13-18), and His holiness (v19-24).

Doctrinal Points

1. Believers should acknowledge and praise the Lord for His omniscience.

God's divine attribute of omniscience (all-knowledge) is taught in verses 1-6. *"O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up. You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways"* (v1-3).

God knows **everything**, right down to the last detail. He knows every detail of our lives, all of the time - every minute of the day, every day of the year, every year of our lives. Nothing about us is hidden from God's knowledge. Even every word we say is known by God before we say it: *"For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, You know it altogether"* (v4). David was overwhelmed by this truth: *"You have hedged me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high, I cannot attain it"* (v4-5).

Let me ask you - when you really grasp this truth that God knows everything about you, are you thrilled - or are you scared? I love this truth. To know that God knows everything about me all the time, and based on that knowledge, He plans my life for the best from His all-knowing perspective - that's a very comforting doctrine. Believers should acknowledge and praise the Lord for His omniscience.

2. Believers should acknowledge and praise the Lord for His omnipresence.

The attribute of God's omnipresence is revealed in verses 7-12: *"Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall fall on me,' even the night shall be light about me. Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day. The darkness and the light are both alike to You."*

The doctrine of divine omnipresence is stated as: "All of God, in all places, at all times." Notice - this is not the false teaching of pantheism, that "all is God." No, the Creator is distinct from His creation.

Omnipresence is one of the divine attributes of the Creator. David revealed this truth by giving hypothetical examples of the impossibility of escaping God's presence. He ridicules people who think that they can hide or escape from God. You can go as high as you want, or as low as you want - and God is there!

David was comforted by this doctrine. He felt secure because of this truth, and so should we. Some folks are afraid of the darkness (v11), but when we realize that to an omnipresent God there is no darkness, then we know we are safe and secure when we trust in Him. Believers should acknowledge and praise the Lord for His omnipresence.

3. Believers should acknowledge and praise the Lord for His omnipotence.

The doctrine of God's omnipotence is taught in verses 13-18. God is all-powerful. *"For You formed my inward parts. You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed, and in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them. How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand. When I awake, I am still with You."*

To demonstrate the omnipotence of God, David did not go to the telescope and look at the stars as he did, for example, in Psalm 19. In Psalm 139 he went to the microscope to observe the mighty power of God. Although David did not know all the details of the unbelievable evidence of DNA as we do, he knew enough about the wonderful development of the unborn child to appreciate the wisdom and power of God. How could such a miracle take place apart from the almighty power of God?

Notice, by the way, that **David spoke of himself as a person right from the beginning** - not just from birth, but from earliest development in the womb - all the way back from conception: *"You wove me in my mother's womb."* He did not say, "You wove the parts together that I came from." No. He said, "You wove me in my mother's womb." David was a person right from the beginning. Psalm 139 makes a powerful statement against abortion, doesn't it?

Believers should acknowledge and praise the Lord for His omnipotence.

4. Believers should acknowledge and praise the Lord for His holiness.

God's attribute of holiness is emphasized in verses 10-24. *"Oh, that You would slay the wicked, O God! Depart from me, therefore, you bloodthirsty men, for they speak against You wickedly. Your enemies take Your name in vain. Do I not hate them, O LORD, who hate You? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? I hate them with perfect hatred; I*

count them my enemies” (v19-22). Because of God’s holiness, evil men and those who hate God and His people will be destroyed.

When David uses the word “hate” here, he is not referring to God’s emotions or his own emotions. The Hebrew word used here has to do with “rejection by choice,” as it is used in Malachi 1:2-3 where God says, “*Jacob have I loved but Esau I have hated.*” Out of loyalty to our Lord who is holy, we too should hate what the Lord hates. Believers should acknowledge and praise the Lord for His holiness.

Practical Application

Are you willing to pray “Search me, O God?”

In verses 23 and 24 we see that because of God’s holiness, He searches the believer’s heart. *“Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me, and know my anxieties. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”*

If you were to pray that prayer, do you think the Lord would find some wicked or hurtful or offensive way in your heart? If He did, would you be willing to let God take it away and change you?

Think of David wanting the Lord to test him, knowing that God is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent and holy. Are you willing to have the Lord test you as a refiner tests a precious metal? Would we prove to have a loyal heart for the Lord if the Lord tested us in this way?

Are we willing to pray “Search me, O God?”