

A Glimpse at Our Glorious God - Rev. Donald M Macleod

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[0:00] I won't be saying we're to turn to. I hope you get the message by now. We're back in Psalm 139. You're thinking to yourself, why are we reading it and singing it? I'm sure there's more psalms.

I'm wanting us to read it and sing it because we're taking a very broad view this evening at this psalm. Very broad. We'll be covering it in quite large sections. So I want to have it in our mind as much as we can going through it.

So please do, as I'm sure you always do, keep your Bibles open to this psalm. We'll be going through it. Our goal this evening, really, in looking at this psalm, is I want to look at three different ways.

Very simply, three ways in which this psalm gives us a view of God. A view of God in terms of who He is. In this psalm, of course, we're given a very broad view of God.

And really, the focus of Psalm 139, of course, is the view of God we get in terms of His creation of us and His overarching understanding of who we are.

[1:06] Now, there are many, of course, and ministers are bad for this, there are many theological terms we often use. And sometimes it's a good thing for us to have our minds stretched a wee bit.

We always want to be clear, and we always want to be easy to understand. But we can be clear, but also spend time together seeking to stretch our minds.

And this evening, I want to use three different terms to describe God. Now, some of us here, perhaps many of us here, know these terms already. But sometimes we have to relearn things we think we know.

And there's others here this evening, and perhaps at home, and these terms might be new to you. We also have to remember, we can't assume that everyone has had the same teaching we've all had.

Three terms to describe God that we find in this psalm. This psalm shows us a God who is omniscient, a God who is omnipresent, and a God who is omnipotent.

[2:16] So, omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. And we'll dig into these terms as we go through this psalm together. In taking very broad sections, first of all, how does this psalm show us a God who is omniscient?

We see that in verses 1 down to verse 6. Verses 1 down to verse 6. A God who is omniscient. Now, like all these three terms, the word omniscient begins with the first half, O-M-N-I, omni.

And then the second half of the word is the Greek, then Latin word for science, which roots back to the word for to know, the term to know, the word knowledge.

God is omni, which means all, and then the word for knowledge. God is all-knowing. Verses 1 down to verse 6 show us a God that is omniscient, that is all-knowing.

In short, these verses show us that God knows all things about all things. God knows all things about all things.

[3:30] Really, the wonder of verses 1 down to verse 6, it gives us a glimpse into the eternal mind of our eternal God. And God, of course, is described in terms of the vastness of his knowledge.

We see elsewhere across Scripture, God, how he forms the universe. The Psalms sing, you think of Psalm 8, the wonder of creation, the beauty.

We see in Genesis as God forms all of time and space. But here in Psalm 139, we're shown that God knows all things. How? By taking it right back down to us, to humanity, to you and me. And we're shown that God knows all things, not just about the planets and the galaxies, not just about the cosmos, but about our lives.

What are we told then about our all-knowing God? Well, first of all, we're told in verses 2 and verse 3 that our all-knowing God, he knows everything about our small actions.

[4:40] Our small actions and our travels. You could say he knows our daily life. Our all-knowing God, he knows our daily life.

The things we don't think about. The things we don't think twice about. Our waking up in the morning. Our having our breakfasts. Our going to our work, perhaps, some of us.

Our plans for the day. Even I was thinking myself in the car over. I was thinking just now of, you know, my timing today. When do I leave the house tonight? And when do I leave the house this morning?

And do I give myself a five-minute leeway for stags and for traffic and who knows what else? And all these small plans. The things we think about 10, 100 times an hour.

Things we forget about. God sees it all. God knows it all. Verse 2. You know when I sit down and when I rise up.

[5:35] You think, why? Why does God care about that? The normal process of life. The actions we don't even think twice about doing.

All our moments the Lord sees and the Lord knows. He who measures the full expanse of the cosmos, who at this exact moment is tracking and guiding the movement of whole galaxies.

He is also tracking the movements of you and I as we go about our daily business. The movements no one else thinks about or cares about. The movements we don't think twice about.

It all matters to Him. He carefully and lovingly keeps the same eye He keeps on the universe.

That same eye He keeps on His people. This applies to every aspect of our daily lives. Quite literally applies to all our traveling.

[6:41] All our journeys. Verse 3. You could see all the physical reality of our comings and goings. There He is. He knows it. He sees it. He watches it.

And He cares about it. So, our daily lives He cares about. But not just that. The second half of verse 2 and verse 4 show us how else our all-knowing God knows all things about us.

Not just our daily lives, but also our daily thoughts and our daily words. Our daily lives, but also including our daily thoughts and our daily words.

The second half of verse 2. You discern my thoughts from afar. And down to verse 4. Even before a word is on my tongue. Behold, O Lord, You know it all together.

Not just our actions. Not just our journeys. Not just our plans. Our very thoughts are known to God. Every single firing of the many millions of neurons in our brains.

[7:44] And not to speak too much about our baby, but just I was reading the other day about how children learn. It's amazing when you see them.

Children and grandchildren, I know I'm saying things. It's all new to me. Let me have my moment. When you see a child learning, you know, he's gone from not knowing he has hands to now seeing his hands.

I was wondering what goes on in his mind. How does he understand that? And when you read it, so our brains, of course, have neurons. And these are connections that are made, the synapses made, second by second.

And every time you speak to a child, every time you interact with a child, every new movement a child makes, their brain is making these connections. Having these thoughts.

Well, it's the same for us. Every second of our lives. Right now, as you're watching me, as you're thinking about this, your brain is making connections. You're thinking about other parts in God's word, perhaps.

[8:46] You're thinking about what you've done today. You're thinking about, perhaps, other times you've heard sermons like this. And you're having these thoughts. Thousands of thoughts an hour are flying through our minds just now.

Thousands of these connections in our brains are being made every single minute. And we're told the Lord knows every one of our thoughts.

He knows our thoughts. Friends, he knows our thoughts we can't put words to sometimes. We'll get to that in a second. Not just the good things, but the hard things too. He knows the truths.

Perhaps the truths about us, we don't want anyone else to know. He knows them. Perhaps the truths about us, we don't want him to know. He knows them. He sees them.

He hears them. He knows our daily routine. He knows every single thought and every single word before we even think them or speak them.

[9:49] But also we're told here in verse 6, really, that God knows everything. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me.

It is high. I cannot attain it. We could say all of time and space is known to him. Really, verse 6 captures the full magnitude of the mind of God, the knowledge of God.

God, who tracks every single atom of every single part of his creation, who knows every animal, every human, every plant, every spiritual being.

They're all known to him. All their movements. All their futures. His knowledge is eternal.

He knows all things about all things. And he has always known that. And he always will know that. But he's not just all-knowing.

[10:55] The psalm continues. That's our next point about who our God is. He's all-knowing, but also he is omnipresent. It doesn't take much Latin or Greek to guess the meaning of that word.

He is omniscient. He is all-knowing. He has all-knowledge. He is also omnipresent. He is all-present. He is everywhere at all times.

He is in full control. He is in full appearing in all of his creation. Just to take it back for a second, though, look at verses 7 down to verse 12.

We see that God is, first and foremost, he is outside of his creation. Let's be very clear here. God exists outside of his creation.

We're very careful here how we word these things. We're not pantheists. The pantheists will teach that they'll say that the universe and the divine being, they are the one thing.

[12:01] So, you know, God lives in the rocks and the trees and the stars and God lives in the air. No. No, no, no. God is outside of time and space. He is outside of matter.

He is beyond it. He controls all of it. He is not bound by matter or time or space.

But he inhabits it because he desires to do so. He doesn't have to. But he desires to do so. So he does.

He is, of course, separate to his creation. He's not bound to creation. But our God, he interacts with his creation. He fills his creation.

He is present in every part of his creation at all times, in all places. He's not part of the wood. He's not part of the stars.

[12:59] He is everywhere at all times because he chooses to be. I couldn't find the author of this quote. It's one of these quotes that gets quoted in a commentary.

It gets quoted then by a minister years ago. And the origin of it, if you know it, please let me know. But I quote here about the presence of God, the omnipotence of God.

This author wrote, We have no concept of this.

We are either here or not here. We are in this building just now. We are contained by our minds and our bodies. We are contained by these four walls.

I can only move from here to here. We have no concept of being anywhere else other than where we are. God is not contained by any physical reality.

[14:13] He is outside of time and space. We are, of course, limited by our creation. We are created beings.

God is not. He is. And he is able to be everywhere at all time. Now, this is not just some theological truth that we believe because we believe it.

This is actually, of course, great news for the Christian. Isn't it, brothers and sisters? The news that God is always with us wherever we go, it means, practically speaking for the Christian, that physical distance makes no difference.

See that in verses 7 down to verse 8. Whether we're heading towards heaven or heading towards the grave, the Lord is there. Physically, that's true. Wherever we might travel, wherever we may end up in God's providence around the world, the Lord is with us. He is not confined or contained to this island. He's not confined or contained to our nation.

[15:20] He is all places. But spiritually speaking, mentally speaking, this is also true. It doesn't take us to travel far, to look for the hope and ask the question, Is God always with me?

This morning we dealt with doubts. I'm not talking about doubt. I'm talking about the Christian who's going through dark days mentally. Dark days, perhaps spiritually. Is God with the Christian there? Is God with the Christian during the darkest days of their life? Look at verse 11 for a second.

Brothers and sisters, have you, and I ask this knowing the answer from most is yes, but have you had that point in your life, in your journey so far where you're just in darkness, mentally, spiritually perhaps, and you're saying, Lord, I can't do this.

You know, I'm done. And perhaps you use better words than that, but let's take all pretense away just now. Moments you say, Lord, I can't go on.

This is far too hard. This is far too dark for me. And perhaps you feel as if every atom of your mind and spirit, every part of your being is breaking.

[17:12] The darkness is tangible. The darkness is heavy, and it's crushing you, and you think, Lord, I can't do this. You feel physically drained, mentally drained, perhaps spiritually drained, depending on what you've been through or going through.

And it feels like the whole world, the whole universe around you is like darkness. It's there our minds go to this verse. And we say, darkness is covering me.

The light about me is turning to night. And then verse 12, of course, kicks in and reminds us that to God, who is all places, physically, mentally, spiritually, to God, who is there, we're reminded even the darkness is not dark to Him.

And the night is as bright as the day. Dear brother, dear sister, I don't know your darkness just now. I don't know your darkness this past week.

I don't know what darkness perhaps might be ahead of any one of us this new week. We have a God who knows all things, and a God who is present in all of His creations, physically, spiritually, and mentally.

[18:27] Brings us to the third point we have here, verses 13 down to verse 18. Verses 13 down to verse 18.

God is omnipotent. So He is omniscient. He knows all things. He is omnipresent. He inhabits His whole creation.

And also He is omnipotent. He, of course, has full power. He is all-powerful.

And here again, His all-powerful nature is not shown by His creation of seraphim, His creation of angelic hosts, or spiritual beings, or the universe, or galaxies.

His all-powerful nature is shown to us, in verses 13 down to verse 18, by His creation of us. The reminder there that we are the pinnacle of His created order.

[19:31] Oh, man. The stars, the universe, the beauty, the wonder of it all. If you've looked up at all the last few nights, you've seen it. The Lord says no.

That He has created, of course, man as the only, humanly speaking, the only rational, the only being, the only animal He made, the creature He made able to have a real relationship with Him. God's all-encompassing power is shown via His creation of us. The creation of the tiny, He could say.

You form my inward parts, you knit me together in my mother's womb. His power is seen, yes, in the great, but it's in the small, in the small, quiet work of creation.

The term there is, in the depths of the earth. Now, some people struggle with that term. We need not struggle with that. We have to remember, the Psalms are poetry.

[20:47] And in our own poetry, English and Galactic poetry, we use illustration. And the illustration of us being made in the depths of the earth, the imagery there is clear, isn't it? Think of it properly. What's

imagery there?

It is the seed being planted that's growing up. Darkness covers it. Underneath the soil, no one sees it, no one knows it. But the seed is growing. Life is there.

And the Psalms, of course, is comparing that to us. For long enough, for a while anyway, no one knows we're there. The Lord knows we're there. The Lord has caused that creation to begin.

Yes, of course, we have our part to play in one sense, but ultimately, life itself comes from the Lord. We know that. It's one of the reasons, and not to go off on a tangent here, but just to remind ourselves, it's one of the reasons why, given, if you're following the news, recent news, that there are discussions, discussions on laws.

We've just managed to bypass the assisted dying bill, and now we're seeing the next bill come in again, that potentially, potentially is looking to legalize the so-called act of abortion up to birth.

[22:04] We're seeing, yet again, a society that has hatred for the most vulnerable and the innocent, in one sense, of our day, of our land.

Those who cannot look after themselves, those who cannot protect themselves. Psalm 139 is a great, a great teacher for us when it comes to these matters.

It reminds us that life is precious right from the very start. The amazing thing is, when you actually delve into this, and again, this is not for tonight, but when you delve into this, and you ask the question, well, we as Christians believe life begins right from the start, right from the moment.

We see here in verses 13 and verse 14, with young years present, you know what I'm trying to say, life begins right from the start. What does science say?

At least current modern science. Surely that's against that. It's actually not. In 2018, there's a secular study, sorry, not Krishna at all.

[23:09] In 2018, a secular study of biologists in America. 96, 96 of university level and above biologists in America agreed that life begins, unique human life begins at the moment of conception.

It's not surprising to the Christians that we've always seen that, we've always read that, even from Psalm 139. Brothers and sisters, life and friends, life is carefully made.

Life is carefully crafted. And life, we see in these verses, is all in His hands. Look at the wording of it. It doesn't say, you made me.

Look, you formed my inward part. Even the word formed there is not just a builder kind of making a ditch. The word formed there, it is the intricate work of a potter in the wording.

It's a potter forming his work. So that intricate forming work then goes on to the next term there. You formed me, you knitted me, made in secret, verse 15, formed, knitted, intricately woven.

[24:29] Brothers and sisters and friends, this is the work of the Lord. His power is seen in His care to the almost minuscule work that brings about life.

In that case, every one of us here this evening, every generation is a testimony of His miraculous, omnipotent reality.

We perhaps lose sight of these qualities of God because we're so used to them. every life is a miracle because every life, quite literally, is God and His omnipotence working these things together according to His perfect plan.

And God, of course, has, in verse 17, we see God creates and God forms and God then has infinite thought towards our finite lives.

God has infinite thought poured out towards our finite lives. Verse 17, how precious to me are your thoughts. How many thoughts does God have?

[25:41] He hasn't got synapses like us or brains like us. How many thoughts does God have per minute? A question we can't begin to answer, a question that has no answer. God's thought towards us is infinite.

We are finite. But God loves us so much, dear brother, dear sister. His thought towards His people. They are infinite. God thinks about us.

God thinks about us. But, of course, we live our lives in reality. When you sing Psalm 139 and read the psalm, you might think to yourself, well, the psalm is beautiful, but why do we then jump into verses 19 down to verse 22?

It's a strange one, isn't it? God formed me, God made me, God loves me, God thinks about me, and then, you're into verse 19, oh, but you would slay the wicked. Where's this coming from?

This doesn't match the rest of the psalm at all. Verse 19 and then to verse 22, it's worth our own sermon, but just to say in passing, these verses remind us that we live a real life.

[26:52] Yes, the wonder and the beauty of God's knowledge and God's presence and God's power, but we live a life lived in verses 19 down to verse 22.

We live in a real world where we live amongst the enemies of God. We live amongst those who hate God, who hate our Savior, and because of that, who hate us.

And it makes the wonder of how this psalm closes even more wonderful. Search me, oh God, and know my heart.

Try me and know my thoughts. See, the psalmist can say that because all we've seen, because the Lord does do that. And see if there be any grievous way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. Dear brothers, dear sisters, we this evening come before a Savior, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, but a Savior who in all his eternally divine characteristics, he lost nothing of himself, but what he did do was he took on, took on that which he was not before.

[28:15] He took on what? Full humanity. He became like us in every single way apart from sin. And he experienced what it is to live in the world of Psalm 139.

He stepped down out of creation, out of eternity, I deposed, into creation. The one who the whole universe was made through and made for, he stepped down and he himself was formed in the womb.

He himself was knit together. He himself grew in understanding and stature. He himself experienced what it was to have a father in time and space who knew him, who loved him, who was his guide.

so that we this evening can say, Lord, you are omniscient. You know all about me. You know every part of my existence and that gives me joy.

It means you know my sin. It means you know my falling away. It means there's nothing I hide from you. So I come to you openly and say, Lord, here I am. We have a God who is omnipotent, a God who has all power, a God who is able to keep his people, to sustain his people because he sustains the whole universe.

[29:43] Well, how easily then can he sustain us? A God who is omniscient, a God who is omnipotent, a God who sees us, a God who knows us, a God who is with us every single step of the way, a God who is omnipotent.

present. He knows us. He is with us. And he will never let us go.

I'll close just with a thought and then I'm going to read a few verses of a paraphrase of this psalm. A very simple thought. A very obvious thought, I'm sure, too.

See, all of Psalm 139, all I've declared this evening from the Word, it applies to the Lord's people. This psalm is a psalm for the Lord's people.

And if you're here this evening and if as of yet, as of yet, you cannot say that you know him nor love him nor follow him, then you have no reassurance, no assurance of any of the words of this psalm for your life.

[30:52] Yes, the Lord sees you, the Lord knows you, but you don't see that, do you? You don't feel that. You don't experience that in terms of a father and child relationship.

He is there. He sees you and he knows you. He is all-powerful. But you're still experiencing that, aren't you, as a judge over you, who you know, who you know, sees and knows.

You can't escape from him. That need not be the case. You can come and know him and be known by him. You can come and know the God who says and reassures you and reassures you but in his all-knowing nature, his all-powerful nature, his all-present nature, that he will call you a son or a daughter if only you would come.

If only you would come and receive the work of the Savior finished, complete for you. You keep yourself away from him this evening.

He has done all things. Our omnipotent God has done all things to make salvation available for you. If you don't accept it, you keep yourself away from it and you keep yourself away from relationship you could have with this God.

[32:14] There's a paraphrase of this psalm. Let me read the verses in conclusion. It's, I believe, by New Scottish Hymns, I think, as a group. They write, were I to cross from land to land and sail afar by sea, descend the depths or climb the heights, my Lord remains with me.

Before the blood ran in these veins, the days ordained for me were written in your book, O Lord, before I came to be. I grieve to hear enemies speak hatred, Lord, of you.

Long though they scheme with ill intent, their days are numbered too. How precious are your thoughts to me, how countless, Lord, they are. More than the shores have grains of sand, more than the skies have stars.

Come search and test this heart, O Lord, dispel each anxious thought and lead me onward evermore to tread the path I ought. How blessed I am, so bound with love, surrounded yet so free, in doubt or blessing, life or death, my Lord remains with me.

Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer. Lord, we thank you for the magnitude and the wonder of who you are that we are bound by our small words.

[33:37] We are equally bound by our limited understanding. But we give you praise. You have revealed yourself to us in a way we can at least begin to grasp. And the person of the Lord Jesus, you have shown us the fullness of your holiness and perfection and beauty.

We see in a way we can understand more fully. In his full humanity, we see full divinity. O Lord, we ask you to help us to understand this mystery.

Give us peace so we give you praise. You're a God who is always present for your people. A God who is all-powerful when it comes towards your people.

And a God who knows all things about your people. We thank you again for our time of worship both this afternoon and this evening. We ask you to bless your word to every one of us.

Look after us and keep us and help us this new week to have your word clear in our minds. It's all these things. In his precious name's sake.

[34:40] Amen. Well, let's bring our time to an end with the last few verses. The last three verses of Psalm 139a.

Psalm 139a, verses 19 down to verse 24. Psalm 139a, verses 19 down to verse 24.

May God destroy all wicked men away, you men of blood. You foes with evil in their hearts misuse your name, O God.

Do I not hate all those, O Lord, who your great name oppose? I cannot but abhor them all. I count them as my foes. Search me, O God, and know my heart. My anxious thoughts survey.

Show me what gives offence to you and lead me in your way. Let's sing these verses to God's praise. May God destroy your wicked men away, you bled of blood.

[35:54] You foes with evil in their hearts misuse your name, O God.

Do I not hate all those, O Lord, who your great name oppose?

I cannot but abhor them all.

I count them as my foes. Search me, O God, and know my heart.

My anxious thoughts survey. Show me what gives offence to you and lead me in your way.

[37:19] The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Amen.