

Psalm 139: Our Sovereign God

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[0 : 0 0] Well if we could, this evening with the Lord's help and the Lord's blessing, we turn back to that portion of scripture that we read, book of Psalms, Psalm 139, and if you just read again at verse 1, to the choir master, a psalm of David, O Lord you have searched me and known me.

Well it's safe to say that as congregations and as an island and as a denomination, it's hard to move forward because of recent events and like many of you, I'm sure that you find yourself thinking and talking and praying and asking and even wondering if any good is ever going to come out of all this darkness and all this heaviness and we weep for the families involved and the pain that has been brought upon them and upon us.

But in the midst of all the darkness and all the pain and the heartache and the confusion and the questions and even the guilt, we can't look inward.

We have to keep looking upward. And as we said on Sunday morning, we are not to look to the situation, we are to look to the sovereign.

And we are to remind ourselves, as hard as it may be to say, that this was always part of God's plan and God's purpose. We may not understand it or be able to get our heads around it, but maybe we're not meant to, maybe we're not meant to understand it or get our heads around it.

[2 : 0 8] And this goes for every situation in life. There are things in life which in which we have to stop and just trust that God is sovereign and that he knows what he's doing because his word tells us that he does all things well and his word tells us that he does all things perfect.

His word tells us that his ways are not our ways and his thoughts are not our thoughts. Which is the very reason why in times like these, we have to leave it with the Lord.

I know that's hard to do, very, very hard. But we have to rest in the Lord, wait patiently upon him and trust in the Lord with all our heart and lean not upon our own understanding.

And this is the greatest test of our faith, to trust the Lord and to leave it with him. And in the midst of all that's going on, whether as a people or personally, we need to look to our sovereign God and be reminded that he is in control of all things at all times.

And you know, that's what Paul was reminding the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 4. He was reminding them that we are not to lose heart because the ministry of God's word has been revealed to us in the person of Jesus Christ.

[3 : 3 3] And Paul said, we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. And he went on to say that God has shone into the darkness of our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

And he says that we have this glory in jars of clay. It's in our being. It's in our hearts. And it's there to show to others that the surpassing power not to lose heart, it belongs to God and not to us.

And Paul says, we do not lose heart, even though we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed. Perplexed, but not driven to despair. Persecuted, but not forsaken. Struck down, but not destroyed.

And he says, we do not lose heart. Even though the outward man is perishing, the inward man is being renewed day by day. And he says, our light affliction is but for a moment.

And it's working for us an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. While we look not to the things which are seen, but to the things which are unseen.

[4 : 46] For the things which are seen are temporal. But the things that are unseen are eternal. And that's what I'd like us to do tonight.

As we consider the words of Psalm 139. I want us to look not to the things that are seen. But to the God who is unseen.

I want us to lift our eyes beyond what is around us. What is temporary. And what is transient. And look to the unseen God. And see that he is our sovereign God.

Because that's how David describes God in Psalm 139. David describes God as our sovereign God. And he describes him in three ways.

He says that our sovereign God is omniscient. He says our sovereign God is omnipresent. And our sovereign God is omnipotent.

[5 : 50] So our sovereign God, as David says, is omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent. So if we look firstly, he says that our sovereign God is omniscient.

Look at verse 1 again. He says, O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up. You discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down.

And are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue. Behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. You hem me in behind and before. And lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high. I cannot attain it. You know, the story is told that when the Westminster Divines were putting the confession and the catechism together in the Westminster Assembly, where our MPs meet, hard to believe that that's what they were doing then, that they gathered and they were putting the confession and the catechisms together.

But one question they had great difficulty with was the question, What is God? And as theologians, there were hundreds of them gathered there. And all of them, they could affirm that Scripture was the foundational basis for all of their doctrine, all of their teaching, all their theology.

[7 : 12] But when it came to the question, What is God? They couldn't put it into words. And having spent a long time proposing answers which could have been written down, it seemed that the Westminster Assembly was getting nowhere.

They didn't know how to answer this question, What is God? Because they all knew that God was beyond comprehension and God was beyond description. And they felt that they didn't have the right vocabulary to describe what God is like.

But it's said that the Westminster Assembly, they decided, well, to take a break, to stop for a wee while, and to pray about an appropriate answer to put down in the catechism and the confessions.

And so they put all their business on hold and they asked one of the clergymen to lead in a word of prayer. And when this certain man stood up, I'm not sure who it was, but in the course of his prayer, it's reported that he is reported to have said the well-known words, that God is a spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.

You think, what a prayer. And that was the answer that the Assembly adopted for the catechism. As one theologian said, it's probably the best extra-biblical definition of God ever penned by man.

[8 : 36] God is a spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. And you know, when we consider the words of Psalm 139, that's exactly what David is reminding us here.

He's reminding us that the God we worship and the God who is sovereign over every aspect of our lives, he is infinite, eternal and unchangeable.

Our sovereign God, he is omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent. And as David reflects upon what God is like, he's overwhelmed by God's greatness and God's majesty.

Because in these opening six verses, David is taken up with the fact that the God he loves and the God he worships is a God who knows absolutely everything about him.

He says, our sovereign God is omniscient, he's all-knowing. And David praises God for the fact that his sovereign God knows everything there is to know about everything there is.

[9 : 44] He is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his wisdom. God is infinite in his wisdom. His wisdom is not confined, it has no boundaries, it has no restrictions.

But it's not only infinite, it's eternal. Which means that there has never been a moment in God's existence when God has not known everything.

He has always known everything. Because he is an eternal being. He has no beginning, he has no end. He is from everlasting to everlasting. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

And he is everything in between that too. He has always existed. And his knowledge and his wisdom of the world has always been known to him. But you know what amazes me even more?

Is that God knows himself. That's what's said in prayer. We don't know ourselves. We don't know what's in our own heart. We don't know what we're capable of doing.

[10 : 48] And yet God knows himself. He knows himself. And he knows everything about himself. And he knows the relationship. And he understands the relationship that exists between the Father, the Son and the Spirit.

In which they're the same in substance, equal in power and glory. But what's more is that God is not only infinite and eternal in his wisdom. He's also unchangeable in his wisdom.

All that God knows, it doesn't change who he is. We change according to what we know. When we increase in knowledge. When we grow and develop through learning or through experience.

We change. Experiences change us. Whether good experiences or bad experiences. But God never changes. He never increases in knowledge or wisdom or experience.

Because he knows everything. And he has always known everything. My friend, the omniscience of our sovereign God. Means that there are no surprises with him.

[11 : 50] Nothing shocks him. Nothing comes out of the blue. Nothing is unexpected. Because he knows everything. Everything possible. Everything actual.

He knows all events. All creatures. He knows everything in the past, the present. And everything in the future. He's acquainted with every single detail in life.

He's acquainted with every being in heaven, on earth and in hell. Nothing escapes his notice. Nothing can be hidden from him. Nothing can be forgotten by him. He knows all the laws of physics and chemistry and biology.

Because he set them all. He knows all the enigmas. All the mysteries. All the feelings. All the desires. All the unuttered secrets. All thrones and dominions. All personalities.

All things visible and invisible. In heaven and on earth. Motion, space, time, life. Death, good, evil. Heaven and hell. God knows everything.

[12 : 47] God knows everything. God knows everything. But what makes Psalm 139 so beautiful is that David makes it all so personal and intimate.

And he explains that every detail in his life is like an open book before God. David says, Oh Lord, you have searched me and you know me.

You know the minutest details about me. You know when I sit down. You know when I rise up. You know when I lie down in bed at night.

You know when I wake up in the morning. You even know if I wake up during the night. You're acquainted with all my ways. You know my circumstances. You know my strengths.

You know my illnesses. You know my joys. You know my sorrows. You know the day of my birth. You know the day of my death. Nothing is hidden from you. You know me so intimately.

[13 : 49] And David says that even before a word is on my tongue, you know it. You know what I'm going to say before I even say it. Whether I'm going to praise God with my tongue or curse man with my tongue, you see it.

You see my thoughts. You see my actions. You see my heart. And if anyone knew that God looks on the heart, it was David. You remember that when the prophet Samuel chose David to be king over Israel, he reminded his father Jesse that man looks not on the outward appearance.

Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart. And David says, you can see my heart. You can see if my heart is full of praise and adoration for you.

And you can see if my heart is cold and distant toward you. You know everything about me. And David says, you hem me in, behind, before, and you lay your hand upon me.

And this doesn't mean that David saw God as oppressive and his intimate knowledge of him as a threat. It was the opposite. David viewed God's knowledge of him and his knowledge of every situation in his life and every aspect of his life.

[15 : 06] He saw it as the greatest comfort. The greatest comfort. David viewed the omniscience of God as the fatherly care of his own children.

And that the great and sovereign God, who is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, he's willing to guide David with his hand behind him, before him, and beside him.

And David stands in awe of the fact that God would look upon him and desire to care for him and take an interest in him at all. And you know, is that not what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount?

A sparrow can't even fall to the ground without our Heavenly Father knowing. And Jesus says, well, if that's the case, how much more will your Heavenly Father care for you?

He knows the number of hairs upon your head. He knows everything about us. He knows that we're fallen sinners who fail him all the time. He knows our weaknesses.

[16 : 18] He knows our frailties. And his knowledge of us is not to put us off him. No, no, it's to make us realize that he has a deep interest in us.

And that he is concerned for us. He cares about us. He loves us so deeply. My friend, the all-knowing God is interested in you and me.

And it's no wonder David says, such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too high to understand. My friend, our sovereign God is omniscient.

He's all-knowing. But as David continues, he reminds us that our sovereign God is omnipresent. Our sovereign God is omnipresent.

He says in verse 7, Where shall I go from your spirit? And where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there. If I make my bed and shell, you are there.

[17 : 20] If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hands shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night, even the darkness is not dark to you.

The night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you. As David stands in awe of God's knowledge of him, he then begins to consider God's presence with him.

And David realizes that it wouldn't matter where he went in the world, the Lord would be present because he is present everywhere. He's omnipresent.

There is nowhere where God is not. And that's why the catechism, that well-known catechism, it describes God as a spirit. God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being.

Which means that he's not confined or restricted by time or space or even matter. He's not confined to a body. He has no body parts. He's not made of flesh and blood like us.

[18 : 27] His presence is boundless. It has no boundaries. Or restrictions or limitations. He is omnipresent. But in order to express this omnipresence of God, David asks all these rhetorical questions.

He says, Where shall I go from your spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? There's nowhere I could go. Supposing I went all the way to heaven itself, he says, You're still there.

And if I went down to the depths of hell, you're present there too. There's no hiding from you. There's no escaping from your presence. There's nowhere to run.

Because you're everywhere. And David says, Even if I were to take the wings of the morning, if I were to reach as far as the horizon where the sun is rising, I would still be in your presence.

And even if I were to sink to the deepest, uttermost parts of the sea, down, down, down into the depths, you're still there. You're still there.

[19 : 34] Lord, there is nowhere in the world that I can go. And I am not in your presence. But like before, David doesn't view God's presence as something which should be escaped, or something he should run from.

Instead, David says that it's in God's presence that he is led, and that it's in God's presence that God's right hand upholds him. And what David is saying is that wherever we may go, and whatever events unfold in our providence, the Lord is there.

The Lord is there. And the wonder of it all is that he has been there from the beginning. And David says that even if the darkness of his experiences, if they try to cover and envelop and hide him from the presence of God, it would still be no use.

Because he says even the darkness is not dark to you. The night is as bright as the day. Darkness is as light with you.

It's beautiful language. That even in the darkness of all that we go through, where we can't see the way ahead, we can't see the way forward, we can't see any good coming out of this darkness.

[21 : 00] But for God, the darkness of our providence, it has light. It has light to him. And this should be the greatest comfort to us.

That even in the darkness, and in the depths, and in the uttermost parts, and in the times of total despair, and uncertainty, where we wonder what the Lord is doing, and what's going on, and all the whys and the hows.

And yet, David is reminding us that he knows. He knows. And that God is in the midst of us. As the psalmist says in Psalm 46, God is in the midst of her.

And nothing shall her remove. He knows the way that we take. When he has tried us, we shall come forth as gold. And you know, it doesn't matter what we may feel, or what we may think, in our own minds.

By presenting to us the omnipresence of God, David is reminding us of one of the greatest promises in Scripture. If God is everywhere, the promise stands, I will never, ever leave you, and I will never, ever forsake you.

[22 : 17] He is, that's the promise of Emmanuel. God with us. With us always. In every situation. Everywhere. I am with you always, said Jesus, even to the end of the world.

And you know, thinking about it, Paul must have been considering the omnipresence of God when he was reflecting upon God's love towards sinners.

For Paul, he was convinced that there was no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. And he was completely persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, neither height, nor depth, nor any other creature is able to separate us.

Nothing shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. It's a beautiful thought. Our sovereign God is omnipresent.

He's everywhere. He's in everything. And nothing or no one can separate us from him. My friend, David is reminding us this evening that our sovereign God is omniscient.

[23 : 34] He's all-knowing. Our sovereign God is omnipresent. He's everywhere. And lastly, David reminds us that our sovereign God is omnipotent. Our sovereign God is omnipotent.

He says in verse 13, For you formed my inward parts. You knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. 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. 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 were none of them. And as David, as he considers what God is like, he stands in awe of him.

And as he's progressed through this psalm and through his thoughts, David stands in awe of God's knowledge of him, that God is omniscient.

[24 : 37] He stands in awe of God's presence with him, that God is omnipresent. But what we see here is that David stands in awe of God's power to keep him.

God's power to keep him because he is omnipotent. He's all powerful. And again, this is the emphasis of the catechism.

Infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power. Which means that our sovereign God is all powerful. He's omnipotent.

He's omnipotent in all his acts. He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his power. His power knows no limits or restrictions or restraints or weaknesses or tiredness or frailties.

nothing can restrain or even retain him. And you know, it's amazing the amount of times in the Bible that the Bible refers to the power of God.

[25 : 39] The power of God. It says that God created all things by the word of his power. And that that same powerful word says, Paul, it's the power of God unto salvation to those who believe.

But more than that, Paul also says that God's word is the power of the resurrection. And then Peter says, it's the power, we are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

And so when we look at what David says about God's power and God's omnipotence, he doesn't speak about God's power in the works of the created order. And he doesn't speak about God's power in the works of redemption.

He doesn't even speak about God's power in the work of the resurrection. No, David makes it all so personal and so intimate. Because as he meditates upon the fact that it is the sovereign God who has searched him and known him, and that that same God whom he is worshipping not only knows everything about him, and has promised to David that his presence will always be with him.

But he says that that same God, he also took time to create him. And David expresses this closeness, this intimacy, this relationship which exists between God and his own creation.

[27 : 12] As David considers who God is, he says, you formed my inward parts. You knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you for I'm fearfully and wonderfully made.

Wonderful are your works. When I was being made in secret, my frame was not hidden, but I was being intricately woven in the depths. My friend, David's language, it's so full and he's just amazed at the love and the care and the compassion and the time that God took when he made him.

And David, he compares his own conception and God's formation often in his mother's womb, he compares it to a weaver working on his loom. With all these threads being drawn together and they're weaved in so intricately and so carefully and done with such precision in order to make this beautiful pattern.

And David sees that even though it didn't look like much to someone on the outside looking in, God was working. God was carefully forming him and fashioning him and weaving him in his mother's womb.

And as David reflects upon the fact that God was slowly taking his time to make him unique, David knew that what was through of him was through of everyone else.

[28 : 42] That we are all uniquely and beautifully and fearfully and wonderfully made by our sovereign God. No two are the same. But we all have one thing in common.

We're all made in the image and likeness of this sovereign God. And because we've been made in the image and likeness of our sovereign God, we are precious to him.

Our life is precious to him. In fact, David reminds us that every day of our lives in this world, it's precious to God. Because every day has been written by God.

Every single day. 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. Every page in the story of our lives has been penned by our sovereign God.

[29 : 45] He has written them. He has seen them. He has formed them. He has ordered them. He ordered every day of our lives even before we were born.

It's a wonderful thought. He planned our paths and he's woven them into the great tapestry of our lives. And he did it all before we had lived any of these days.

And it's no wonder David says, How precious are your thoughts to me, O God. How great is the sum of them. If I could count them, they are more than the sand.

It's beyond him. It's beyond us. Beyond words. Beyond understanding. Beyond comprehension. But they are beyond him. And this is the marvel of who our sovereign God is.

Because he knows every detail about us. And he promises to be with us every day all because he has planned and purposed everything for us. And our sovereign God, not only, he was not only weaving us when he was weaving us in our mother's womb and when he was weaving all our paths together before we trod them.

[31 : 05] But you know, he's still weaving tonight. And with this divine weaver, there are no mistakes, no mishaps, no loose threads in his work.

Every thread is accounted for. We might not know or even understand why they are there, but he does.

His weaving is perfect. And he knows what he's doing. Even in our hardest of circumstances and the most testing of trials, he's still weaving.

and although we may not be able to see it just now, and we know that despite everything that's going on in our lives, we know that he is still, still working all things together for good and for his glory.

We might not understand why or how, but we know that he is. And my friend, you know that you are in no safer hands than in the hands of the divine weaver.

[32 : 23] You've been in his hands since you were conceived. You're still in his hands tonight. And he's still weaving all the threads on his loom into every providence and every experience in our lives.

And as you all know, that anonymous poet, once wrote, sometimes he weaves sorrow. And I in foolish pride forget that he sees the upper and I the underside.

And not till the loom is silent and the shuttle cease to fly, shall God unroll the canvas and explain the reason why the dark threads are as needful in the weaver's skilful hand as the threads of gold and silver in the pattern he has planned.

my friend, there may be things in our life that we will never find the answer to. And there may be threads of providence that have been woven into our experience that we will never know why.

Maybe not until we leave this world. But our greatest comfort is that he knows what he's doing. He knows what he's doing.

[33 : 35] And that his omnipotence is reminding us that we are being kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

And as a child of God, we can say he does all things well. He does all things well. It's no wonder.

Is it? It's just, when you think about it, it's beyond us. how David says, such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too high to understand.

In the midst of all that's going on, may we be enabled to say with the apostle, we do not lose heart. Even though we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed, perplexed, but not driven to despair, persecuted, but not forsaken, struck down, but not destroyed, we do not lose heart.

For our light affliction is but for a moment, and it is working for us an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. For we look not to the things which are seen, but to the things which are unseen.

[34 : 57] For the things which are seen are temporal, things that are unseen, are eternal. And that's what we are to do.

We are not to look to the things that are seen, to what's around us, but lift our eyes. Lift our eyes heavenward.

Lift our eyes to the God who is unseen, and look by faith towards our sovereign God. And as David has reminded us this evening, we are to see that our sovereign God is omniscient, our sovereign God is omnipresent, our sovereign God is omnipotent.

Our sovereign God knows us, he is with us, and he has the power to keep us. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too high to understand.

May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we thank and praise thee for who thou art, one who is beyond and past finding out how the apostle could say, O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.

[36 : 34] We bless thee, O Lord, that even though we do not understand, and even though we cannot see it, that it seems as darkness to us, but yet, Lord, we bless thee, that thou art the God who is light, and the God who sees everything through thine own light.

Help us, Lord, to trust thee, to trust thee each and every day, to know that thou art sovereign in every aspect of our lives, a God who is with us, a God who knows us, and a God who promises to keep us.

O how we need thy keeping, to be kept by thee, that thou wouldest keep our going out and our coming in, from this time forth and even forevermore. Bless those, O Lord, as we heard, those who are mourning.

O we pray that thou wouldest be gracious to them. Lift them up, Lord, from all the depths that they are in, that they would know thy presence with them.

We pray that thou wouldest keep them in the days that lie ahead, that they would know the Lord in the midst of them, and the Lord strengthening them for the tasks that are before them.

[37 : 40] Remember also thy servant next door, we pray for him. As he begins his ministry here, we pray that, O Lord, that we would do one another good, that we would truly try and build up the kingdom of God, to extend the name of Christ, that souls would be one, that those who are in darkness would be brought into this most marvellous light, and taste and see that thou art good, and trust in thee and be blessed.

O Father, be gracious to us, as we know thou art, that thou wouldest go before us in all that we say and do. Cleanse us, we pray, for we ask it in Jesus' name, and for his sake.

Amen. We shall conclude by singing in that psalm, in Psalm 139. Psalm 139, page 433.

We're singing from verse 13 down to the verse marked 17. Psalm 139 from verse 13, For thou possessed hast my reins, and thou hast covered me, when I within my mother's womb enclosed was by thee.

Thee will I praise for fearfully, and strangely made I am. Thy works are marvellous and right well, my soul doth know the same. Down to the verse marked 17 of Psalm 139, to God's praise.

[39 : 20] For thou puttest set past my wings, and thou hast covered me, when I within my mother's womb, wij Kraft soyincoln T■■■■higherry assistkov were moment las semen ensue chip and disple I am.

Thy words are marvelous and right well. My soul doth know the same.

My substance was not here from Thee. When a sin's secret eye was made and in earth's lowest part was wrought most curiously.

Thine eyes my substance did behold yet be in the perfect perfect.

And in the volume of thy good my members so were it which after it continuous where fashioned every one when as they yet all as they yet all shakeless were and often there was none.

[42 : 11] was none. How precious also are thy thoughts O gracious God to me called to me and in their song a passing great and number lest they be.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Now and forevermore. Amen.