

**Reading:** Psalm 139:1-24

**Theme:** God knows!

This psalm tells us big things about God. He is not the God who is domesticated and tamed for our use, for us to conveniently have about in times of trouble. This God is the awesome God, the God who sees as cosmic rebellion any attempt to disown, ignore or flee His sovereign rule and reign. This God knows all things, is everywhere and all powerful. David presents us with this awesome God in this psalm, but does so, not with cringing fear, but with awe, wonder, amazement, thankfulness, joy and love. For this God was personally David's God - "you and me", "you and I" being often used.

In v1 we saw something of the **wonderful contrast** between the Observer and the observed; the Creator and the creature; the holy God and sinful man. We noted, focused on God's all knowing (omniscience). God knows Himself thoroughly, knows all things past, present and future - things actual and things possible and in His knowledge He knows every creature - including us as individuals in absolute detail. We also noted the **wonderful challenge** to those who would live carelessly and ignorant of God, even defying God and His ways. Such ones are known completely and will have to give an account before this God who will know and have all the evidence against them.

We also noted the **wonderful comfort** – for us who are believers, even with all our known failings, falls and faults, as God knows our love and heart for Him and sees this grace, sees His own work in us and knows our relationship with Him. Also, He knows all our needs, all we are going through, how we are feeling and knows what He is doing in, through and with our lives - even when it hurts, grieves, confuses us and we seem to be spinning like a little wooden top completely out of control in confusing, painful circumstances.

Is God's omniscience a challenge or a comfort to us? For David, as he chewed over this fact and develops other truths about God, it was a comfort. Yet having said v1, David continued to give practical, day by day reality examples of how this worked out in his life to show us what it meant to him to have such a God. This evening I want us to note 2 main areas in v2-6:

### **1. What God knows about David.** (v2-5)

In these verses David uses the words "*know, understand, discern, familiar, hem, laid upon*". If God knows all things, then David realised that God knew all about him in every area of his life. Here is either a challenge or a comfort to us, because it means God knows all about you and me - our visible lives and our out of sight, hidden lives too! I want us to note 3 broad areas within this heading which David identified that this God knew:

**A. His activity and inactivity:** In v2a David recognise that this all-knowing God knew him when he was sat down - resting, eating, or taking a break from work; as well as when he rose up to do something - DIY, for work, in or outside the house, for his loved ones, for war. Then in v3a he says God knew him when he went out into the world around him when he settled down at night - at home, on the run, on a battlefield or in fields with the sheep. The Lord knew his activities and inactivity, his doing and resting.

In v3 David uses a strange word; translated in different ways different Bible translations: NIV = discern, ESV and NASB = search, RSV = searchest, NKJV = comprehend, KJV = compasseth and the margin says winnowest. The word used means "*to scatter*" or "*to winnow*". David says God not only knows his actions, but his rest times, yet God also carefully searches out the ways, the path David went in. To David there is not an area of life which God did not know of - his battles, his being on the run, his troubles at home and on a national level, his work for the kingdom,

his misdeed in the bedroom with Bathsheba, as well as the right times in the bedroom!

David acknowledged that God knew all about him. Do we recognise or acknowledge the same for our own lives and the lives of our loved ones? This great God knows our skills and talents, knows all we would do as we serve Him in our lives. If we are a Christian, I would assume we commit **all** things into His hands and care. God knows our plans, dreams, desires for the future; for our loved ones, for our and their situations in life. He knows our concerns, fears, anxieties, our worries in the things that trouble us or bring us low.

This great God wants us to be real with Him. The future is unknown to us and things will occur that will shock, shake, numb, confuse us and cause us to question “*Why?*” We have probably asked that question many times before and will continue to ask it again in the future! Why? Because we do not understand what is happening in our lives, God knows what is going on as well as knowing all our activity and inactivity. In His wisdom and love He will lead us, keep us and be there with us. We are to be real with Him, to ask for His strength and grace to be given, known in all situations we go through.

We are not to try and excuse our actions or inactions - we need to realise and own when we have let God down, when we have done what we should not do; or not done what we should have done. He sees us and knows us in every part of our lives. Yet He will guide us, keep us as we go out and about in the ordinary things of life, as well as when we are on “spiritual” outings and actions. I have said before - we are to be spiritual in our natural things and natural in our spiritual things - in other words - both are so intertwined that we do all for God and are conscious His eyes always upon us! Also David understood God knew:

**B. His ways:** The Lord knew David's ways - the course of his life which he had been on, where he was at in his life and where he was planning and hoping to go. In v3 "*my going out*" is literally "*path, pathway or highway*" and then "*ways*" at the end of v3 means "*ways, route, journey, directions, course of life*". We are to recognise that God knows where we are all at and how we have arrived at this point of life, but also our experiences (good or painful) along the way. He has been observing us - in all the confusing twists and turns, in all the decisions of our lives, in all the let downs, all the surprises, all the heartaches, sorrows, as well as in all the giddy, exciting and joyful times.

This God has always been observing, knowing, been keeping, helping and even preventing. Psalm 37:23 (KJV) says "*the steps of a good man ordered by the Lord and He delighteth in his way.*" [The NIV "*If the LORD delights in a man's way, He makes his steps firm;*"] - both allowable from the Hebrew. Proverbs 3:5-6 (KJV) "*Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.*" These verses are so important for our lives. For if the Bible says the Lord knows all our ways, can't we consciously and confidently commit our ways to Him and not lean on our own abilities alone?

When we do that, it does not mean we stop doing anything! We are to actively apply God's word, its principles and standards to our lives, ways and planning. Yet we still seek to go the way He wants and are prepared for Him to close or open doors, but also we are to use sanctified common sense!

The Lord's leading, guiding and knowledge of our ways are often best seen when we look back - as we can see Him working in our lives. One day we will see clearly and bless the Lord for all the

way He has led and guided us. For now, we can be sure that all the way our Saviour leads us and He will lead us in the paths of righteousness and not in paths of wickedness or sin.

The tragedy of Christians falling into sin, even public sin, is that they can compound their foolishness by saying something like “*I prayed about it and the Lord led me...*” which is the reaction of people from Adam onwards - Adam blamed God “*The woman you gave me...*” We are to remember that the Lord always leads us in paths of righteousness and not in sin and wickedness. Have no doubt this great God knows all our ways, our paths, our roads and He will help us and lead us as we go on in His ways - even when the road is rough and steep, we are to fix our eyes upon Jesus. Also, David knew God knew:

**C. His words and thoughts:** anyone with adequate surveillance equipment can monitor people’s actions or inactions - their comings and goings, the places they go and the things they do. David goes further and says God knew his words - not only those verbalised, after they were said, but before they were even spoken (v4). Some take this to mean unspoken words which could fly off our tongue and express a person’s thoughts but for circumstances! In fact, David recognised that God in heaven knew his thoughts (v2) and knew them from afar, a great distance - either from His position in heaven, or as they are in the process of being formed.

On TV one time there was an item on the local news about Lincolnshire bees and how the cold weather that year was affecting the honey production (*I guess there were short of news!*) I thought it was a good picture of how our lives are like beehives to others around us - people see what’s happening on the outside, as well as the comings and goings from our lives, but they can’t see what’s going on inside. Yet to God, every area of our lives are as glass beehives - as are all our thoughts, motives and everything

they produce in us are visible in God's sight. Almighty God sees and understands our thoughts, our words - whether they are formed or unformed, spoken or unspoken. He sees and knows our motives, desires and innermost reactions also.

Nothing, absolutely nothing in our lives is secret or hidden from God. Our anger is viewed as the sin of murder; our lust as the sin of adultery, sexual immorality; covetousness is seen clearly, as are our hard thoughts, unspoken cruelties and bitterness, our sinful thoughts and desires are all known, perfectly known by God.

God is not fooled by our outward appearances. Yes, we can fool others by looking and sounding as if we are good people, making out we are so godly, moral or spiritual, but God knows our thoughts, the things we desire, the things we say and fantasise about when we are on our own, or the way our behaviour and speaking changes when we are in non-Christian company. We need to wake up, realise He is not fooled or deluded by the masks we put on.

Paul wrote to both the Corinthians and the Philippians about our thought life - 2 Corinthians 10:5 *“we take captive **every thought** to make it obedient to Christ.”* & Philippians 4:8 *“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—**think about such things.**”* Our minds affect our motives and desires - what we see and hear, are what will affect our thoughts, our motives - so we need to be careful what we allow into our minds. We are to take practical steps to guard our minds and put on the helmet of salvation to protect them. This will take time, take discipline, involve effort, but learn to think God's ways and do not allow sinful things to settle and grow in our lives and imagination. Martin Luther, among others, said *“You cannot stop birds from settling on your*

head, but you can stop them building a nest!” We are to be very careful!

## 2. What David knows about God. (v6)

David knew God’s knowledge of him; but it did not produce a harsh or fearful reaction in David; but he knew in the light of, in the recognition of God’s knowledge, a sense of awe, admiration and adoration. As I said last week, his reaction is “*Wow!*” He is amazed at such knowledge and cannot grasp it.

It is such an awesome thought and consideration, we can’t take it in. We may feel God knows about our needs, but to know all our ways, actions, inactions, all our thoughts and motives, that is incredible! All things are known perfectly, completely and always by God - He never forgets anything. All is known by God about every person there has been, there is and ever will be.

At this point I feel awestruck just as David was! Yet these things are not there to terrify us if we are Christian, but are to encourage us that we will **not be overlooked or forgotten**. The Lord in Isaiah 49:15-16 says of His people “*Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands;*”

As we noted last week, the Lord deliberately remembers our sins **no more** (*Isaiah 43:25*) - it is a sovereign act of God when we trust the Lord Jesus. It means our sins will never be dragged up, presented to or held against us ever again by the Lord. He forgives and remembers them no more and we are eternally justified.

How wonderful to have such a God as our God - His thoughts and ways are above ours - as the sky is far higher than the earth. This God cannot be searched out by a telescope or a microscope, but

He makes Himself known in creation, especially through His word that points us to His clearest revelation of Himself in the person and work of God the Son in human nature - Jesus Christ.

God knows about His people and cares and loves them, including us. Terrifyingly, He knows about those who neglect, reject or ignore Him and His ways, who rebel either defiantly or quietly against Him. What answer will they, or you, give when presented with all the evidence He knows about your life and you realise there is no hope for you? Yet now, at this time, there is hope... so seize the opportunity to get right with Him and live for Him.

As Christians we should long to adore and praise God for this glorious attribute of His omniscience and bask in the delight of knowing what is just a glimpse of His all-knowing care of us and it is far more wonderful as we keep on knowing Him and experiencing His love in and through the Lord Jesus.