

Reading: Psalm 139v1-24

Theme: Personal precious thoughts of God.

David has written of God being all knowing and all present. Yet to David these were not scary and intimidating thoughts, but were amazing, too wonderful he says in v6 and were a comfort to him - for he knew that wherever he was, then his God was there and would help him - God's right hand would hold him fast and guide him (v10).

As David pondered these things, he recognised that God's knowledge of him was in place when no one had ever seen him, even when he was in the womb - God had been mindful of him since the moment of his conception and right up to that present time. David did not say if he understood that God knew him before the world began, but David wrote of his being known from the moment of his physical existence. Let's note 3 things from v13-18:

1. Fearfully and wonderfully made. (v13-16)

As David contemplated God - His wisdom, all-knowing and ever-present Being, the thought occurred to him that this God not only new him now, but knew him as his Maker. Yes, David was aware of the biological process of conceiving children, but he recognised God's power and control in the processes of his unseen development in the womb - embryo, foetus and child.

For centuries, millennia even, that process has been shrouded with mystery and in the last 70 or so years in particular there has been tremendous understanding of the development of a child in the womb. The more we know, the more wonderful and amazing it is.

David, as he considered the wonder of the human body - possibly after the birth of a child - he was moved to absolute amazement at it and says he and all people are fearfully and wonderfully made. He recognised that God, through the laws, processes of nature which God had set in place, knit him together in his mother's womb. The word "knit" (NIV, ESV), "covered" (AV & NKJV) is best translated as "weave" (NASB). What a glorious picture - all our nerves, blood vessels, capillaries, muscle fibres, blood etc. are all intrinsically woven together – strand-by-strand by God. David also says that God "possessed my reins" (v13 AV) literally it says "my kidneys" which were thought to be the origin of emotions and strength of the body - so these descriptions refer to all his inward parts, all his internal organs, innermost being (NIV). David in v13 owns God's control through His knowledge, presence and power - that power put in place and operated by the laws of nature and so God was in control of his development by them.

David develops this thought further in v15-16. God knew his "frame" or "substance" (AV), which probably here refers to his bones, skeleton - for the Hebrew word refers to strength - so "frame" is a good translation, so is "body" as it has the skeletal structure in view here. All these things were necessary and in place under God's control when David was forming in the womb - the secret place.

Then there is this phrase (v15b) concerning him being woven together in the depths of the earth! What does David mean by this? The word "woven" (NIV) or "intricately woven" (ESV) or 'curiously, intricately, skilfully wrought' is a term for

skilful embroidery. Maybe some listening or watching has done embroidery or cross stitch, there's a lot skill involved in weaving, sewing or embroidering. Yet God is the master weaver and embroiderer and David says he was skilfully woven, but what does he mean by "depths of the earth"?

I agree with a number of commentators that this is hard to understand! The best explanation I've come across is that David in this Psalm uses a poetic expression that links his weaving together in the womb with the creation of Adam from the dust of the earth in the garden of Eden. David says in effect "*God has intricately woven me together in an unseen place*". Hebrew poetry usually contrasted, compared or added to adjacent thoughts - so secret place and depths of the earth mean together an unknown and unseen place.

Nowadays with scans etc. we have means to see pictures of babies in their development and technology allows pictures of babies in the womb so that they look like babies and are not just shapes that need to be explained! You can even have 3D pictures and models of your unborn baby – there is a business doing that in Thorne Road just up from the church, near the hospital.

David also understood that God's omniscience meant He knew all David's days and these were noted down in God's book. Here we are paddling on the edge of the very deep waters of God's foreknowledge. This is not blind and cold fate, this is not an automated process, for God knows the actions, the free actions of all people and all conditional events. This is true of all necessary events, but of all events where the choice is freely made by any person. As we view

history or our lives, we see that God knew and was in control of all events - even when we or others made blunders and did wrong. David seemingly came to the throne because Saul sinned and was rejected as king. Yet, David wasn't 2nd best, for God had this under control in His foreordained plan and foreknowledge. This evening, you and I are involved in this service as it goes on. I was due to be preaching here, but you did not have to listen or watch the service, but God knew and He decreed these things and knows all things, all possible actions and outcomes etc. God knew our futures before this world was ever created and hung in space.

For those of us who are His people, this is to be recognised as a work of grace and love and is to be a comfort to us. For those who are not yet Christians, then realise there are set days for us all, a fixed lifespan - then all will have to meet God and be accountable for our own actions and decisions. Are we ready for that time?

I know people will have many questions about this, I cannot answer questions about why things happened in people's lives, the question of suffering - such as miscarriages or handicaps, dreadful events. People question "*If God is in control why do such things happen?*" I do know it is a consequence of sin – not specific sins of people necessarily, but sin and the consequences that sin works out in humanity - part of which is human DNA degrading, that disease and pain are present. The same questions can be raised about illness and severe disease in God's children, why they are affected by Covid-19 etc. It may seem a copout, but we have to say God knows why and we cannot understand His plans and purposes in such things or why God allows suffering in this

world... Yet we are not to have hard and harsh thoughts and grudges against God, but like David we are to have:

2. Precious thoughts. (v17-18)

David was not alarmed that God knew all things about him, even knowing him when he was unformed and knew all his days. On the contrary, David was thrilled and comforted to recognise that the Lord knew all about him and he felt himself the richer and more content for recognising such. David had precious thoughts concerning the Lord's precious thoughts for him!

David says *“How precious/valuable/costly/esteemed are God's thoughts to or concerning* him”* [*NIV footnote] David was amazed that God, the everlasting God and Lord, should have thoughts of care and tenderness toward him and this delighted David. If we are a Christian this evening, do we delight in the thoughts God has towards us? We may not know His plans in detail for us, but He does and He will work all things together for good to those who love Him, to those who are called according to His purpose. Not only that, He will be with us in all we go through - whether pleasant or dark experiences, in our joys or in our sorrows.

God's thoughts to us are vast - David spoke of this and saw God's thoughts towards him as more than the sand on the seashore or in the deserts. Do we as believers consider God's vast number of thoughts to us? His thoughts to us are certain and will never fail; they are numerous - about our needs, concerns, heartaches, joys, about our present needs and our future situations. That the God of heaven is concerned about us is a wonderful thing and it teaches us of His love and care

and assures us He will not despise us as weak and frail as we are or feel. His thoughts to us are for our ultimate good and He works things out in practical ways in our lives to that end. We are never out of His thoughts as an individual child of His, but we are constantly thought of, loved and cared for.

David was thrilled at this, so as he slept and woke, he recognised that and as the day dawned, it brought with it the constant thoughts of God toward him. In a sense, he says as Jeremiah did in Lamentations 3:22-23 *“Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.”*

Our God does not wander off in the night. Just because we sleep and are not conscious of much, it doesn’t mean God is not thinking of us, for whether we sleep or awake, He is there - near us, watching over us and His thoughts are toward us. I hope we remember this as we get up tomorrow and it will be an encouragement to us to remember God’s thoughts are for us and new every morning is His faithfulness. Perhaps we can set markers in place of God’s thoughts toward us by counting those visible, observable thoughts - which we call blessings, so we can count our blessings, name them one by one and it will surprise us what the Lord has done. It also will underline that God’s thoughts toward us are far more than all the blessings we can count!

David had precious thoughts of God’s precious thoughts! It is good to think often of God’s precious thoughts to us as it will delight and thrill us as we consider them, especially as we recognise we do not deserve any such thoughts toward us,

then it will lead us to appreciate His grace and mercy much more. It also will be a source of comfort to us in our hurting and confusing times; be a means to strengthen and encourage to our faith; to stir up and arouse our love to Him for all His goodness, mercy and precious thoughts to us. Such things should then lead us, as it did David, to:

3. Praise.

To David, his God - who knew and made him, who had precious thoughts concerning him - was worthy of praise and he says so in v14. As David looked at and considered the intricate weaving and tapestry of his body, he just had to praise God. He could see God's design and hand upon him; he marvelled at it and it brought from his heart this appreciation - expressed in praise.

In v17 David expresses his appreciation "*How precious to me...*" He viewed God's thought to him as precious and here gave thanks to God for all His thoughts to him. Do we delight in God and what He has done for us? Our lives, physical lives etc. are all a blessing from God, as are our homes, loved ones, health, recovery after sickness, protection from sickness and so we could go on considering God's precious dealings with us. Those who have been blessed with children or grandchildren know particularly the blessings of God physically and can see they and we are fearfully and wonderfully made. Our consideration of God's blessings and thoughts to us should cause us to appreciate His goodness, love and mercy when we deserve nothing - for we are unprofitable servants even as Christians.

If you are not a Christian, then this God still knows all about you as He does Christians, yet you could be very careless as you may reject, or simply neglect, ignore such precious knowledge and thoughts of God about you and you do not praise the God in whose hand we all have our life and being.

Our consideration of the goodness of God should not only cause us to praise Him, but to trust Him as our own God and Saviour and to seek forgiveness for our sins. The apostle Paul asks in Romans 2:4 “*do you presume on the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?*” Is incredible that we can so easily abuse God’s kindness, forbearance and patience and presume that He will ever do so, but because He shows these things to us, it should cause us to turn away from our self-centred, sin biased lives, our ignoring, neglecting and even rejecting Him and go to Him in gratitude and repentance for sparing us so long in our lives. I pray that we would all have enlarged thoughts of this God who knows us thoroughly and we would praise Him from our hearts and thoughts, as well as our lives and lips.