

J.N. May 7, 1978 A.M

WHERE IS GOD

Psalm 139

Each generation must do its own seeking and finding. The fathers have found it - and the children must search for it. Where is God?

Many times you have heard a child call, Mother, where are you? And in the same way, we as individuals seek and search for knowledge of God.

Someone once said - how nice it would be if knowledge grew on bushes as the berries do. Then we would plant our spelling seed and gather all the words we need. And some from off the slates, we'd wipe. And wait for figures to be right. And go into the field and pick whole bushels of arithmetic. Or if we wished to learn Chinese, we'd just go out and shake the trees. And grammar then in all our town, will grow with proper verbs and nouns. And in the garden there would be, great bunches of geography. And all the passers by would stop and marvel at the knowledge crop.

Everywhere today, we find individuals pressing for knowledge. They want to know about their identity. They are looking to see who am I. Where is God. Yes, we ask all sorts of questions in view of the scientific findings.

We come to deal with a man whose relationship with God - and get some knowledge of it. Psalm 139. It describes a man who is thinking about himself - and he is thinking about his relationship with God.

If you read this Psalm very carefully, you will find that there are at least four good divisions, I would say - for consideration. First, how well does God know me? Second, how near is God to me? Third, how do I know that God is true. Fourth, how do I deal with the problems of evil.

I. HOW WELL DOES GOD KNOW ME.

As you face the knowledge about your own life - this is a good question.

V. 1 - Oh Lord, thou has searched me and known me.

The Hebrew word here for search is the word to dig. Literally, what this man says is - Oh Lord, you dig me. Now that is very up-to-date - isn't it. In the Bible and what people say today. You dig into me and therefore you know me. And it is not surprising that the word dig has come to mean, understand, and in the English - to know and to understand. This is where the man of God begins. Lord, you dig me. And everything connected with his whole being and his whole life, is an open book to his God. Now how often do you convince yourself that no one knows some ugly thing in your life or in your thoughts. It becomes a nightmare to you as you imagine that sooner or later, some person will find it out. Shame or disgrace will be your part. You literally dread the hour when men will know your secret. How much do we make up and vener over the ugly scars or blemishes of our lives. Would it ruin us. Would it startle you to learn that the secret is already out. The neighbors may not know it. But here is the Heavenly Father who knows. He not only knows, just how it looks now, but he knows how it all happened. And just how you failed in the hour of testing. And no pretty veil will cover this. No man or forgetfulness will tone it down.

No sweet perfume will rob it of its odors. He knows it all.

In what way does God understand and know me.

V. (2) - He knows my (conscious) life - and I sit down and I rise up - he discerns my passive life and my action life. When I am resting. When I am in my subconscious - at all levels of life. He knows how I think, what I think about, and he understands my thoughts. It is all different from what you think. He looks way beyond and knows whether or not there is a sweeter, nobler, Christ-like life in your heart.

V. (3) - He knows about my (travels.) He know my pathway that I travel. That I chose. And you look inside of me.

V. (4) - He knows my (language.) He understands the words I utter. He knows what we say. And isn't that an amazing thing - that regardless of what your language may be, God knows and understands. Whether it is English, Hebrew, or Greek. Or some other language. He can communicate with you.

V. (5-6) - God knows your past, present, and future. Thou doth beset me behind. That is my past. And before. That is my future. And layeth thy hand upon me - now, that is the present. Now such knowledge as this is amazing, that God knows him better than he knows himself. And he knows all about him and this is a revelation. And what a wonderful revelation it is.

II. HOW NEAR IS GOD TO YOU - V. 7-12

The Psalmist catches his breath. As he realizes he cannot get away from God. He is swept off his feet by the knowledge that God is everywhere. And this thought has so challenged him - that God knows everything, and now he begins to ask himself other questions.

V. 7 // How can I get away from God - V. 7. Whether shall I flea from thy spirit or whether shall I flea from thy presence. // This question here - I imagine he asks. I have some guilt in my life and I would like to escape. Man thinks about somehow getting away from God's presence. Like taking a journey and going out into the darkness somewhere. Or going overseas - or taking a trip somewhere. And see if he can't get away from it all. Just sort of get out of himself - and get away from God's presence.

We have but to go to the first book in the Bible - and read the story of Adam. He tried to hide from God down through the ages - men have tried the same thing. Each of us imagines that it is possible to get out of his sight. Now the Psalmist begins to think about where he can flea from God's presence.

V. 8-10 - He declares there is no destiny that will separate me from God. The fact that God if I ascend the Heavens - thou art there. If I go to Hell, I cannot escape God. And the man is experiencing here something of how he can get away from the presence of God. And it is not a fearful thought - he goes on that no destiny, no place I can go - will get me away from God. I could sail around the world, he says. Do you go places where you hope that you will not find God. Would you be shocked to know that God is everywhere! And this is a stirring thought here in V. 9-10. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea. Even thy hand shall leave me.

What do you think he means by the wings of the morning. That is a beautiful expression. Did you ever stop and watch the sun coming up. And you will notice how the rays of the rising sun shows across the Heavens. In its furtherest bounds on its horizon. If I could travel with the wings of the morning - that is with the speed of light. If I could go with the speed of light, and reach the farthest point of the earth, the ocean, or sea. I would find you Lord - you have gone before me. You have preceeded me. And I will find you there as much as I will find you here. What does tomorrow hold for us. What is beyond the horizon. Young people ask the question - what, how, when. And try to go to the unexplored lands, the beautiful valleys, the high mountains. The landscapes, the rolling seas, the hidden rocks. This man said, to the young people - God is there. And in thoughtful middle life - when we wonder what is ahead of us. Will it be the danger of death. Or health, or illness, success, or frustration. God is there in old age. We could ask - what is there beyond the horizon. What shall I find. And as you round and turn the curve and climb up the hill - you can be certain of one eternal assurance. God is there. Since he is to be there - you may be certain that his presence, right now makes it possible.

V. 10

I think everyone needs some amount of courage and confidence to face the future hours. We go into dark clouds. We have burdens but he gives us strength to go through these.

I read about a man once that said when he was (12 years of age), he moved from Minnesota to Montana. The night before they were to move, he said, I got down by my bed and said, "Goodbye God. We are going to Montana." He said, I was sure I would not find God there. When they arrived, there he was. Having found him everywhere since. And that is what the writer was saying.

I read the poem of a Royal Canadian Air Force man who was killed at the age of 19. And John Magee describes his experience of flight in these words.

Oh, I have slipped the surely bonds of earth. And danced the skies on laughter's silver wings. Sunward I've climbed, and joined, ~~and~~ tumbling myrth. The sun-split clouds, and done a 100 things he had not dreamed of. Wheeled and soared, and swung. High in the tumult of the sunlight of silence, hovering there. I have chased the shouting wind along. Flung my eager craft through footless halls of air. Of up the long delirious burning blue. I topped the wing-swept heights with easy grace. Where never lark nor eagle flew. While with silent, lifted mind I tried the highest untrespassed sanctity of peace. Put out my hand and touched the face of God.

That poem appeared in Zonderland, 1968. And it tells about the pilot and the truth of it - if he takes the wings of the morning and dwells in the uttermost parts of the earth, there God has gone before. And there he sees the face of God.

V. 11-12 - No environmental change will change the presence of God. God will be there. Let the darkness cover me. Let the Night be about me.

Do you remember when you were little - and how you were guilty of something. You'd crawl under the covers at night and hide in your bed. You thought that God could not see you because man could. Now there are many grown-ups who still try to do that. We think if we do not think about certain things, then God will not hold us accountable. But he does. No darkness can hide us from God's presence. Nor from us.

Now we have said how well does God know me, how near is God to me.

III. HOW DO I KNOW THAT GOD'S NEARNESS IS TRUE

V. 13-14 - The design of my body tells me this. For if thou didst form my inward parts, and it is knit together in my mother's womb, I praise thee, for I am wonderfully and fearfully made. "As the man examines himself - he is amazed at his own body. His essential life. He obviously had no control of that. He says, but he shows us something outside of man that regulates man and runs him. I live within the limits of God. Have you ever stopped to think how much of your life is dependent upon the forces at work in you. If anyone of them stops - you would die very quickly. You are dependent upon these but you have no control. How about your heart that thumps away right now. It would be terrible - if you had to control it with your mind and will. How would you keep on saying to yourself - now thump, now thump. Or if you had to say - it is time to breathe, it is time to breathe.

No, it is wonderful - is it not. Someone else is running our lives. It is obvious from the design of our body. And this thing stuck in the mind of the Psalmist. He says, that did knit me together. In an amazing way in my mother's womb.

The creator always has a right to make demands upon its creature. And he is indebted here that God has made him so wonderful in this way.

V. 14-15 - The formation of his body lets him know that it is true. Thou

knowest right well that my frame was not hidden. But I was being made in secret. He talks about the formation of his body. How his frame was put together. Otherwise, he would have been a rolling ball of gelatin. Well, now some of us are getting that way anyhow.

The Psalmist says, (intricately) wrought. In one word, it really means (embroidered). Now you (ladies) know what embroidery is. It is a stitch that you do, and you add these to a piece of cloth. We men may never understand this kind of work. I don't know how you do it. But it adds beauty. It is fancy. And the word used here is described - the delicate embroidery of the body - the (things) that tie us together that one organ supports another. The lungs are needed, the heart needs the lungs, the liver needs the kidneys, and the stomach needs both. And all of these parts are embroidered together.

In V. 16 - He says, the eyes beheld my unformed substance - the (embryo). Here the Hebrew word is my rule of substance - the picture of an embryo. The becoming of a human being. And this is really some magnificent. That he gives us here in V. 16. The (eyes) behold the unformed substance. In Thy book were written every one of them, the (days) that were formed for me. And when as yet, there was none of them. This was quite an evidence here of how God tied everything together.

It (looked) like something was (not) planned - (but) suddenly, (day by day) it fits together beautifully. Even before the days occurred, they were recorded in a book.

V. 17-18 - Even in death, he (still) is with us. There is an abundant revelation, the Psalmist says, even when we get to the end - God is with us and there is still more of God. The knowledge of God is vast. More than the sand. He says when I awake, I am still with thee.

IV. HOW TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

In the closing verses of this Psalm, he suddenly changes from his thoughts about what God knows about him. And how near God is to him. And the perfect knowledge of his truth - to think inwardly now about his own problem of sin in the light of God's knowledge.

V. 19-22 - Look at some of his reflections.

V. 19 - Oh, that that would (slay the wicked) for God and the men of blood would depart from me. Why does the Psalmist here bring in this thought? Lord, here are the wicked. This has troubled many people. It seems that it is far off from the New Testament standard. You are supposed to love your enemies. Pray for them that despitefully use you. And do good to them that injure you. We understand these things.

First, I think that this Psalm is not necessarily a reflection of God's will. We are listening to the experience of the believer. And they do not always reflect God's truth. To be an honor mirror of man's viewpoint, where he asks God

for something. That is about the way we go about it. He asks him a couple of things here. He asks God to take care of the problems of the wicked. And his suggestion and manner of handling that is not exactly what God would do. He says, Lord, wipe them out

Now I wonder how many of you have sometimes had a similar feeling as a remedy of your human ills. Wipe out these enemies that I have. Take care of them. Have you ever felt that way.

Gods gave him trouble
Mel Trotter, the famous evangelist once said - there are a lot of people that are wonderful people, and they are going to go to Heaven some day. And oh how I wish they would hurry up!

Well, you have felt that way, I am sure. In all honesty, this Psalmist requested here that the wicked be dealt with in that way. That is probably the easiest way to handle the problem. Lord, just go ahead and slay these wicked people.

I want you to notice that the (Psalmist) in this verse, did not say why don't you let me do it.

Now that is what (many are) saying today. Lord, I will wipe out the wicked. You just turn them over to me and I'll take care of them. But this man does not say that. He recognizes that vengeance belongs to God. And that if anybody is going to do it and do it right - God alone must do it. He is saying, Lord, it is your

problem, why don't you do it.

V. 20 We can understand why he was so upset. Here is V. 20 - We speak against the wickedly - and they take thy (name in vain). And here is a point. They defy thee. In the Hebrew they say, they speak of thee for wickedness. They use your name to carry out their evil design.

Now people better be (careful how) they use God's name, God's work, and God's word to fulfill their own evil design. In effect, he says, they take thy name in vain for evil. Now these are religious hypocrites. And the sharpest words that Jesus ever spoke against hypocrites, the Pharisees, he used words against them.

V. 23-24 - His (ultimate concession) How to deal with the problem of evil. He reaches the conclusion. It is the utterance of one of the most beautiful (prayers) in all of the Bible. Search me of know God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. "Lord, I don't understand that problem of evil, he says. It would probably be the easiest thing to eliminate these evil people. Lord, I don't know what the right answer is. And (my thoughts are (not always) right). And let me add my prayer. And what a wonderful prayer it is. How often, we should pray like this. Lord I don't understand what is going on around me. What my solutions are. But Lord, (I trust you to take care of me).

This is an earnest (invitation) to come in for a close (examination). He wants the (examiner) to put the powerful X-Ray right on his heart. No corner left, he wants to know quickly what the Great Physician would have him to do. And that is a great day. (If) you could stop where you are today, and let the conscience know that God knows all about you. God knows your thoughts, your desires, your yearnings, your secret imaginations, your rebellions, your sins, your noble aims, your purposes, your hills, your valleys, every step of the way - your business life, your social engagements, your experiences, your lonely hours, your heavily loaded day are all open to him. Nothing is hid from him. You will not be able to give him the slip and to pass and hide from him. Every minute you live in his presence.

He requests (four) things in this prayer.

First, search me - my (heart.)

Second, try me - my (thoughts.)

Third, prove me - my (conduct.)

Fourth, lead me - my (reward.)

As in the Old Testament, when he said, my presence shall go with thee. And I will give thee rest. And he said unto him, if thy presence go not with me, carry us up not hence. Exodus 33:14-15.

Acts 3:19 - Repent ye therefore, and be converted that your sins may be blotted

out and the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

*walk - is this the spot - no - ~~that's~~ 20
valley - I can't - this is it*

I close by illustrating Paul Reece - who tells about a preacher's conference.
And following a sermon, a young man came up to him and said - I would like to
have this surrendered life I can't go on. But when you come to the place where
you want to acknowledge God's presence and know that God is everywhere, and you
want to surrender your life to him. When you come to that place, then a miraculous
thing will happen. When you come to pray that prayer and let God search your heart
out. What manner of man ought I to be. And fall on your knees with this Psalmist.
And say, search me, try me, see, and lead me. It will be the grandest day of
beginning again for you. It will be one of the most important days and thrilling
days that you have ever experienced.