

“My King”

by Pastor Jason Van Bommel

Psalm 139

Psalm 139

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

¹ O LORD, you have searched me and known me!

² You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.

³ You search out my path and my lying down
and are acquainted with all my ways.

⁴ Even before a word is on my tongue,
behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.

⁵ You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.

⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is high; I cannot attain it.

⁷ Where shall I go from your Spirit?
Or where shall I flee from your presence?

⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there!
If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!

⁹ If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me.

¹¹ If I say, “Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light about me be night,”

¹² even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is bright as the day,
for darkness is as light with you.

¹³ For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother’s womb.

¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;

my soul knows it very well.

¹⁵ *My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.*

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.*

¹⁷ *How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!*

¹⁸ *If I would count them, they are more than the sand.
I awake, and I am still with you.*

¹⁹ *Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God!
O men of blood, depart from me!*

²⁰ *They speak against you with malicious intent;
your enemies take your name in vain.*

²¹ *Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD?
And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?*

²² *I hate them with complete hatred;
I count them my enemies.*

²³ *Search me, O God, and know my heart!
Try me and know my thoughts!*

²⁴ *And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!*

Longing to Be Known and Loved . . .

To be human is to long to be truly known and deeply loved and yet to also be afraid that if we were truly known, we would be shunned and shamed instead of loved. And so, we long to be known and loved, and yet we live in fear of exposure, of the darkest aspects of our thoughts or our private lives being “found out” to our shame and rejection.

This summer, we’ve been exploring, celebrating, and learning to more deeply worship and more joyfully proclaim the LORD as the King of Creation. We have seen in the Psalms how

powerful God is and how marvelous His works are. We have also seen how good and gracious God is as the King of Creation, how tender His heart and care are for His creation and His people. The glorious grandeur of God is on display all around us in the stars and the sea, the redwood and the hummingbird, and the steadfast love of the Lord is also on display in the way he cares for creation and the way He has provided for His people's deepest needs in Jesus Christ our Savior.

And today, we close our summer series in the Psalms with Psalm 139, where we get deeply personal, profoundly intimate. We see here in this psalm that the LORD who is King of Creation is my King who knows and loves me so completely I cannot even begin to truly comprehend it. The God who spoke galaxies into existence with a word and who measures the depths of the oceans in the hollow of His hand knows my every movement, my every thought and word, and loves me personally perfectly, completely.

We're going to walk through Psalm 139 together in four parts:

1. My King Knows Me, verses 1-6
2. My King is Always with Me, verses 7-12
3. My King Made Me Wonderfully, verses 13-16
4. How Knowing My King Changes Me, verses 17-24

A. My King Knows Me Perfectly, 1-6

¹ *O LORD, you have searched me and known me!*

² *You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.*

³ *You search out my path and my lying down
and are acquainted with all my ways.*

⁴ *Even before a word is on my tongue,
behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.*

⁵ *You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.*

⁶ *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is high; I cannot attain it.*

The LORD has searched me out. He knows every nook and cranny of my being, body and soul. He doesn't just know me when I'm being still and lying in my bed at night, but He knows me always - at all times and in all situations. And He's not just watching me externally like a

video camera always on me, but He knows all my thoughts from afar, meaning He knows what I'm thinking more clearly than I do. He knows what I'm going to say before I say it, knowing both the things I say out loud and the things I almost say but keep to myself.

Let's get real about this for a moment: My internet browsing has no "Private" mode when it comes to God. He knows it all. My wife and I don't have any closed-door private conversations when it comes to God. He hears it all. When I smile and tell someone what they want to hear, God knows what I'm really thinking about that person, and He knows the real reasons why I don't speak my mind more honestly.

Not only does God know me perfectly, but His hand is on me. He keeps me, preparing the way before me and guarding me in all my ways.

Psalm 139 is not primarily describing the general knowledge God has of all people. It is true that God knows everything and everyone perfectly, but David is celebrating the special, intimate, loving knowledge God has of His own. Specifically, the truth that God's hand is on me and He hems me in behind and before – this is really only true in this sense for believers. So, if you are an unbeliever, God still knows you perfectly and knows everything about you. But is His hand on you for your good and His glory in your life? Not if you are outside of Christ and not a child of God.

What is your reaction to God knowing you so perfectly in this way? Some people think this is horrible, terrifying even. They don't want to be known this intimately, especially by someone so absolutely holy and just. But for David and for all those who truly know the steadfast love of the LORD, such knowledge is too wonderful – it is marvelous, astounding. To think that God knows us this well blows our minds because we know He loves us as completely as He knows us. How is this possible? Only with God!

B. My King is Always with Me, 7-12

Not only does God know us perfectly and have His hand upon us, but He is always with us. We can never run or hide or be taken away from God.

⁷ Where shall I go from your Spirit?

Or where shall I flee from your presence?

⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there!

If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!

⁹ *If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me.
¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light about me be night,"
¹² even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is bright as the day,
for darkness is as light with you.*

Like God's perfect knowledge of us, our inability to escape from God's presence can bring us either terror or comfort. We can resent His constant presence with us, wishing we could hide from His holy gaze, or we can rejoice in the fact that nothing can separate us from God and His loving presence in our lives.

God's constant presence with us can also raise some hard questions – Is God really with us when we sin? How about when we are sinned against in ugly ways? It helps when we ask these hard questions to remember that David wrote this psalm. David both sinned greatly and was sinned against grievously. And yes, God was with him and God saw him when he committed adultery with Bathsheba and when he plotted the death of Uriah, Bathsheba's husband. God saw and God knew, and God continued to love David, even though He hated David's sin. That's why He sent the prophet Nathan to confront David in his sin and call him to repentance, because God knew everything perfectly and still loved David deeply and hated his sin thoroughly.

David was also grievously sinned against. His older brothers bullied him and hated him. His king, Saul, whom he served faithfully, hated and resented David and persecuted him, seeking to kill him. Even after Saul's death, most of his nation refused to acknowledge him as the rightful king, even though they knew God had chosen him. His son, Absalom, led a rebellion against him and overthrew him, slept with his concubines, and sought to have him killed. And yet, through all of this, God was always with David and always saw and loved David perfectly and had His hand on David for David's good - yes, even in the worst times when he was grievously sinned against.

This helps us know that God hates our sin but loves us and is calling us to repent and be forgiven for our sin. It also helps us to know that God sees when we are sinned against and

still has His hand upon us for our good through it all – whether we sense or feel that or not, it’s true.

As Romans 8 puts it, nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord - nothing, including our sin or others’ sin against us.

C. **My King Made Me Wonderfully, vv. 13-16**

Our King who knows us so perfectly inside and out and who is always with us is our Creator who formed us each personally, individually in His image:

*¹³ For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother’s womb.*

¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

*Wonderful are your works;
my soul knows it very well.*

*¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.*

*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.*

This is very tender, personal, and intimate language: God formed our inward parts. He knitted us together with skillful care. All of God’s works are wonderful, and so we are fearfully and wonderfully made. We are not garbage; we are the hand-formed masterpiece of the King of all Creation.

When God made the rest of His creation, He spoke it all into being, but when God made man in His image, He got His hands dirty. There’s interesting imagery in this because the Word God spoke in Creation was the Second Person of the Trinity, God the Son. And when God formed Adam from the dirt, the hands that shaped Adam were also those of the Second Person of the Trinity, God the Son. But forming Adam was a more personal process, and it required a kind of incarnation, anticipating the greater and permanent incarnation of the Son

of God for our redemption. So, Jesus has been the King of All Creation from the very beginning, but His kingship over His people has always been more personal, more intimate.

There's also a double forming here in these verses that's easy to miss: God formed us in our mother's wombs, and He also formed our days for us. We were formed for the glory of God, and our days were formed for us to live and glorify God in.

Sometimes we think of verse 16 as primarily meaning that God has numbered our days. He's written down how many days He's going to give us in this life, even before we were born. And this is true, but that's not the primary meaning here. The meaning here is more personal and detailed, because God wrote down in His book each one of the days He formed for us. So, not just the number of our days, but the story of our days, the content of our days, formed for us, were all written in His book before any of them came to be, before we were conceived in our mothers' wombs. God formed and wrote our days for us personally.

D. Knowing My King Changes Me, vv. 17-24

How does knowing that God knows us, is with us, and created us in this wonderful, perfect, intimate way change us? Well, three things should result from this:

1. We should be in awe of how much God thinks of us, vv. 17-18.
2. We should hate the enemies of God as our enemies, vv. 19-22.
3. We should want God to know us still more and more and teach us to know ourselves better and live better in light of what He knows of us, vv. 23-24.

¹⁷ How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!

How vast is the sum of them!

¹⁸ If I would count them, they are more than the sand.

I awake, and I am still with you.

¹⁹ Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God!

O men of blood, depart from me!

*²⁰ They speak against you with malicious intent;
your enemies take your name in vain.*

²¹ Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD?

And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?

²² I hate them with complete hatred;

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Try me and know my thoughts!

²⁴ *And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!*

Verse 17 is speaking of God's thoughts toward us –

“How precious toward me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!”

It's a reminder that the God who knows us so well loves us so deeply and thinks precious thoughts toward us. He is for us and for our eternal good. His thoughts toward us are precious and vast – which they have to be if He knows us so completely and is with us always.

Some people think, “God is too busy with bigger and more important things to be bothered with me and my petty little problems.” Psalm 139 is a direct challenge to that kind of thinking. God is never too busy. He doesn't have too much to do. He's not stressed trying to figure out what His priorities for His time management should be. Thinking like that is re-shaping God into our image. He knows all, sees all, understands all, and rules all things perfectly without ever breaking a sweat. Yet among all of the things He reigns over in His creation, nothing is more precious or gets a higher priority than His children. His thoughts toward us are more than the grains of sand, and we are always with Him, close to His heart.

Knowing that God knows and loves us in this way, and growing in our knowledge and love of Him, causes us to love what He loves and to love those who love Him and also to hate that which attacks, opposes, insults, or seeks to undermine our King and His good reign.

Verses 19-22 feel like a rude interruption to a beautifully flowing poem of intimacy – almost like someone randomly broke out into a few bars of heavy metal music in the middle of a soft, romantic ballad. It feels out of place and a bit rude. But it actually flows quite perfectly from what David has learned of God and His loving concern for and constant presence with him. David's affection for and appreciation of God cause him to resent and resist those who hate God, those who fight against God's good rule.

We do need to make sure we translate these verses into New Testament reality: We are not an earthly nation with an army fighting earthly enemies. We are the heavenly people of God who have Christ for our captain and Satan for our true enemy. We do not fight against flesh

and blood but against Satan and his evil forces of demonic influence in the world. We are called to hate the devil and his lies, which lead people astray and destroy so much of God's good creation. We are to long for the day when Satan and his minions are thrown into the lake of fire forever, for they oppose God and everything true and good He is doing in the world.

But Psalm 139 doesn't end on this note of hatred but with an invitation to God. What do you pray when you know that God knows you perfectly inside and out? You ask Him to search you more, to keep knowing you, and to show you what He sees in you, so that you might know yourself even better. You ask Him to expose and remove that which is grievous in you. And you ask Him in His wisdom, love, and goodness to lead you in His ways, in the way everlasting.

If God is truly the One who knows me the best and is the One who knows best how life should be lived, I want Him to show me what He knows of me. I want Him to lead me in overcoming the things in me that grieve His heart and oppose His ways. I want Him to keep knowing me and leading me in His love.

So, when you step outside this afternoon, look up and look around and be in awe and wonder of the God who made everything and who rules everything as the King of Creation. But also know that this King of Creation is your King, if you believe in Jesus Christ and are a child of God through faith in Him. Know that He knows you, is always with you, has created you wonderfully in His image, has written a beautiful story for your life, and is leading you through it day-by-day. Know this God and love Him more and follow Him more day-by-day until you're home with Him face-to-face. After all, if God says you are the most precious priority for Him in all His vast creation, shouldn't knowing Him and loving Him be the most precious priority for you in your life?