

# Psalms 139:13-18

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Date: 22 November 2020

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[ 0 : 00 ] So turn in God's word to Psalm 139. And we're looking at verses 13 to 18 and then we'll finish off next week, God willing.

! God is there. God is there. The Bible doesn't seem to prove that. The Bible asserts that. It tells you what everyone knows in their innermost being that God is.

And that God exists. And that He is there. And Psalm 139 is all about God, the God who is there. It tells us something of what God is like.

Who this God is. We've learned, haven't we, that He's omniscient. That He sees all things. He knows all that there is to know. He is omnipresent. He is present everywhere, all of the time, in the totality of His being.

There's nowhere where God is not. And what this psalm is going to show us is that not only is God omniscient, that He knows everything. Not only is God omnipresent, He is everywhere.

[ 1 : 09 ] But He is omnipotent. That He is all-powerful. He is almighty and He is sovereign. That's the theme of the verses that we've got before us. And in order to demonstrate that, the psalmist points us to something we would never have expected Him to do.

He points us to the miracle of human life. And so when you think of omnipotence, when you think of almightiness, when you think of bare, sovereign power, you don't normally associate it with an unborn child, do you?

What could be more vulnerable than a baby in its mother's womb? And yet that is where the psalm wants you and I to go this morning to see the almightiness of God, His omnipotence and His sovereign power.

Look at verse 13 and 14. There is awe, isn't there?

And there is reverence and wonder in the words that David writes. He says, He says, We live in a day when the human fetus can be considered as a nuisance.

[ 2 : 25 ] When it can be removed like a burst appendix. Instead of a miracle to be admired and welcomed. Lorraine Boatner was a theologian.

He was writing in the last century. He wrote this. He says, That we shall live again is surely no more wonderful or mysterious than that we are alive now.

Think about that. That we shall live again is surely no more wonderful, or mysterious than that we are alive now. People find it very difficult, don't they, to accept that they are going to exist after death.

We find it difficult to believe what the Bible says about the resurrection of the body. But what Boatner is saying is that this is far easier to believe and understand than the fact that you and I are here now.

That we are alive at all. He goes on to say that the real wonder is that we are alive at all. The real wonder is having not been in existence through an eternity that is past.

[ 3 : 32 ] We are now in existence. That's the real wonder. And so we take it for granted, don't we? But that's the really wonderful thing. It's far more incredible that from not having been, we are, than that from actual being, we should continue to be.

Do you see that? Nor is it any more wonderful that as human beings we shall continue to live in a renewed body than it is that life on this earth is now perpetuated from generation to generation by means of a body.

We're familiar with the latter. And we tend to think, don't we, it's just routine people having babies. And it's commonplace. But that does not make it any less mysterious.

You see, what you and I take for granted is the fact of our own existence. And that is a mighty miracle. The conception and the development and the birth of a human being is a wonderful,

awe-inspiring demonstration of the almightiness of God.

Now there's two areas where God's almightiness, God's sovereign power is to be seen in these verses. Firstly in creation and then in providence. And so God's sovereignty can be seen, His power can be seen.

[ 4 : 50 ] And we talk about sovereignty and power together. One can't exist without the other. If God is going to reign, God must have the power to reign.

And if God is going to reign all sovereignly, God must have all power. And that's what we mean by omnipotence. God is almighty, He has all power.

And the psalmist is showing that that is true with regards to my life. And your life. He demonstrates the almightiness of God with regards to creation and providence.

The psalmist could have done that with the whole of the universe, couldn't he? He could have done that with the whole of creation, but instead he narrows it down to one human life, his own life. And he says, oh God, you have made me.

And you've mapped out my life for me. You are my creator and my sustainer. And you are sovereign in my creation and in the providence of my life. And so let's try and see God's sovereign power in creation first.

[ 6 : 02 ] You see what the psalmist is saying in verse 13? It's God, you've made me. Verse 13. For you formed my inward parts. You knitted me together in my mother's womb. And then verse 15.

I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Now look closely at verse 13 and then verse 15. And what is he talking about?

It seems like he's contradicting himself, doesn't it? Verse 13. You knitted me together in my mother's womb. Verse 15. I was intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

How do you reconcile those two things? Well, verse 15 is a euphemism. The depths of the earth is just a roundabout way of referring to the mother's womb.

What's the point of it? Why does he put it like that? What's the point, the truth that the psalmist is trying to get across? What's the connection between a mother's womb and the depths of the earth?

[ 7 : 06 ] And so, when we come to the Bible, how do we interpret the Bible? I hope you know this. We interpret the Bible. When we come to a bit we don't understand, we compare Scripture with Scripture. That's what we do. The Bible is one book.

One author. God. God. And when you think about that, it's obvious. So, do you remember how Adam was made? What was Adam made from? What was Adam made from, children?

Ellie? Brilliant. Really, really good. Dust of the earth. Really, really good. And so, the Bible goes on, doesn't it? And it speaks of how Adam was made of the dust of the earth.

You know, you go to a funeral. And at a funeral, what do I say? I say, from dust you are, to dust you will return. And we're reminded of this. So, let me read to you some passages which help us.

You can write them down if you want. Job 33. And one of Job's comforters, Elihu, in chapter 33, in verses 4 and 6, says this, The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

[ 8 : 11 ] Behold, I am towards God as you are. For I, too, was pinched off from a piece of clay. Like you, Job, I also am formed out of the clay.

But Elihu was born in exactly the same way as you and I were. He was born out of his mother's womb. And Job was born in a normal way.

He was born from his mother. They were not literally taken from the clay. And yet the Bible uses this imagery. Or you can go to Job 10, verse 9.

And it says this, Remember that you have made me like clay, and you will return me to the dust.

Again, do you see? It's as though Adam's creation from the earth, from the dust, is repeated in the form of every human being, the formation of every human being, from Adam onwards.

So do you see what David is getting at here? The point that he's making, it's really important for you and I to understand this. We live in an age, don't we, when people are playing God, the genetics, and the point that David is making is, there is a directness of God's creative activity in your existence.

[ 9 : 32 ] So get your head around this. God is just as directly involved in creating you, as he was in making Adam.

That's the point that David is making. You are God's creature. You are his handiwork. Just as much as Adam was. God's direct activity in the creation of human life.

And so you and I are not on the end of, end product of an unreasoning, or an unthinking, or an impersonal biological process. We are made by God's own hands. He formed me in my mother's womb. Just as surely as he made Adam out of the dust of the earth, God formed me in my mother's womb. He arranged my genetic makeup. He made me. He's my creator. That's what David is saying. And it is marvelous. It is wonderful. I am fearfully and wonderfully made. But not only has God made him. [10:31] Not only have you made me, but there in verse 16, he adds this other thought, doesn't he? He says, you've mapped out my life for me. You're my sustainer. Not only have you made me, and you are my creator, but you are my sustainer.

Verse 16. In your book were written every one of them the days that were formed for me. When as yet there was none of them. In other words, God has the transcript of your life. The God who made me is also the God who's mapped out my life. In such a way as it will fulfill its potential. And so I'm not the captain of my own fate. I'm not the master of my own destiny. That's what David is saying. My life is not a series of chance or random happenings. It is all planned, and it is all foreordained by the God who made me. And that means my life is charged full with significance and meaning. And so my creator does not push out the boat of my life to take its chances upon the stream of time. [11:40] He is sovereignly in control of all the circumstances of my life at all times, in all places, in every circumstances, God is in control.

You get that in the New Testament, don't you? Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, almost in passing, he reminds us that it is by grace that we've been saved. We don't deserve it. It is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. And that's not of your own doing. It's the gift of God. It's not a result of works. So no one can boast. But we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Do you see that? That God has tailor-made us and the circumstances of our lives and the days in which we live and the place in which we live. And God has foreordained so that you and I might glorify Him in a unique and a special way. So not only is He my Creator, He is my Sustainer. [12:49] And He is sovereign and He is almighty and He is all-powerful. Now that's the doctrine. Let me try and apply this. Let me try and give you the implications of this. And there are many.

I wish I could spend more time than I've got. So let's see, first of all, how awe-inspiring is the mystery of human life. David said, I am fearfully and wonderfully made. I am fearfully and wonderfully made. And how little reverence and awe there is for human life today. There is something sinister, isn't there, in our culture about how people use words. Augustine has got a lovely little quote. He defines words and Augustine says this, words are precious cups of meaning. That's great, isn't it? That's a lovely way of putting it. It's a lovely definition. That's what language is meant to be, a precious cup of meaning. [13:48] And words are meant to reveal, not to disguise reality. words are precious cups of meaning.

And yet, children in the womb are described as fetal tissue. People speak of terminating a pregnancy. And the womb, according to David's teaching and according to the word of God, the womb is God's workshop. It's a lovely picture in verse 15. He says, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. The picture there, that is the language, isn't it, of a woman or anyone who does embroidery, if you do embroidery. You know, you've seen someone who does embroidery and they work at the intricate detail, don't they, of the embroidery. That's the picture here. Of God at work in the womb of a mother. I was intricately made, God is at work there. And so at conception, the baby has the right number of chromosomes. Most have 46. Some very special people have an extra one. [15:07] Baby's heart starts beating at 20 days. 20 days. 42 days, eyelids begin to grow. 45 days. Baby's brain waves can be detected. A baby has all her organs by the time she is eight weeks old. By 12 or 13 weeks, she recoils from pain. She sucks her thumb. David says, it is awe-inspiring. It is fearful. And it is wonderful.

It is not protoplasmic mass. It is not fetal tissue. It is a human being made in the image and the likeness of God. And it is a terrible thing for a human being in the name of science or medicine to smash his way into God's workshop and to tear into pieces God's handiwork and to destroy what God has made.

And that ought to make us tremble. And yet, it is an everyday routine, isn't it? It is an everyday routine just down the road here in Ealing.

[16:21] It is just a matter of course, isn't it? The millions of unborn human beings being slaughtered in the 21st century Britain. And I realize I am talking about a subject that has a profound and a disturbing effect on some.

And in a congregation like this, there will be people who are personally and vitally affected by this issue. It may be this morning that you have guilt on your conscience.

And I need to speak to you very tenderly and I need to speak to you in the name of God and I don't want to minimize your sin. That is the worst thing that anyone can do.

I don't want to minimize the seriousness of what has happened and yet at the same time, I need to tell you that there is forgiveness in the blood of Jesus. There is forgiveness in the blood of Jesus for the chief of sinners.

What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. In the Old Testament, there is an example of a man who was guilty of offering his children as a sacrifice to Moloch.

[17:34] It is a horrific story. Manasseh and child sacrifice. But that man repented. And that man repented and he saw the seriousness of what he had done and he sought God and he was forgiven and he was accepted by God.

And so I want to say to you today, don't believe them when they say it doesn't matter. Don't believe them when they say you'll get over it.

Before God, it is a terribly serious thing but there is forgiveness. There is forgiveness. There is forgiveness that he might be feared. And this has implications, does it, not only for life inside the womb but it has implications for life outside the womb.

Life is very cheap but these verses tell you that every human being is distinguished as the handiwork of God. So look at chapter 30.

If you want to do it, you can go to Job 31 verse 13. Job speaks there and he says, if I've rejected the cause of my manservant or my maidservant when they brought a complaint against me, what then shall I do when God rises up?

[18:47] When he makes inquiry, what shall I answer him? And here's the point, did not he who made me in the womb make him? And did not one fashion us in the womb?

Do you see what he's saying? See what Paul's logic, the psalmist, Job's logic is? Because God made my manservant and my maidservant, Job says, they must be treated fairly.

They must be treated justly. They must be treated with dignity. And to abuse and despise or to ignore them is to insult God. And God is the sovereign creator of human life.

That is the basis for human dignity. So Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, he expounds the sixth commandment. He says, when you've heard that you shall not kill, that's right.

But that's not just what the commandment is. They say, the Pharisees say, well, you shall not kill. And if a man does kill, he is in danger of hell. And Jesus says, no, that's too negative.

[19:57] That's too negative in understanding the sixth commandment. Understand the depth of the sixth commandment. I say to you, so much as someone, you call someone fool, literally means numbskull or moron, you will be guilty and in danger of hellfire.

Do you see the point that Jesus is making? He's saying, like we said in the introduction of the confession of sin, you mustn't understand God's commandments in purely negative terms.

You mustn't think that it only forbids murder. No, he's saying, isn't he, that the sixth commandment is to be understood positively. It's about the sanctity of life.

Why do human beings matter? Why should we treat one another with fairness and dignity? Why should we be concerned with one another as human beings? Because you and I have been made in the image of God.

We bear the stamp of our Creator upon us. So if you take up a pen and you draw a moustache on the queen on the first class stamp, technically, and it is technically, you're guilty of treason.

[21:19] What are you doing? You're defacing the image of the sovereign. What the Bible tells us and what Jesus tells us here is that you and I, human beings, we bear the image of the God who

created us.

And your fellow human beings are not just statistics, they are image bearers of God. And to abuse them and to refuse to give them their rights, to refuse to treat them fairly, to refuse to treat them as human beings is to insult God Himself.

And so that has implications, doesn't it, for life in the womb, but it is a lot to say about life outside the womb, life in work and life in society. We are God's creature and God has made us.

And then this teaching has got something far more personal to say to us. Because can you notice in verse 14, David is able to thank God for making Him the way He is.

Look at verse 14. I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works, my soul knows it very well. And so instead of David crying and complaining because he's not been made in some other way, he thanks God.

[ 22 : 39 ] And you might say, well, David was good looking, wasn't he? He was a good looking fellow, he was handsome. So he could thank God. But no, he thanks God that he's been made by God.

Look at verses 17 and 18. He says, How precious to me are your thoughts, O God, how vast is the sum of them. If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake and I am still with you. He's become aware of this truth, this stupendous fact, and it's so liberating when you get hold of it. That David is the result of the careful, attentive, thoughtful, intimate, detailed creativity of God. He is the object of God's unceasing love and full attention. And so for Shakespeare, life is a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury signifying nothing.

But nothing could be further from David's thoughts here. His life is charged with significance and meaning because God has made him. And so let me ask you a simple question this morning.

[ 23 : 42 ] Can you thank God that God has made you, you? Can you thank God for making you, you and not someone else?

It's not an easy question, is it? The circumstances of our lives are hard and difficult for some of you. For some here, they'll be even more difficult than others. And yet we can still ask the question of being brought to the point where you can thank God that you are you.

Sin accepted. You need to bear in mind that God hasn't finished with us yet. There's going to be a resurrection. But can you thank God that God has made you what you are?

And we don't want to be complacent about sin in our lives and you and I need to change and develop a great deal. But what we need to change has nothing to do with the way that God has created us.

Nothing to do with our creatureliness. It has to do with how sin has twisted and warped us. And that's an important distinction, I think. Are you content with the way you are?

[ 24 : 56 ] Are you happy with the way that God has made you or do you resent it? Perhaps you're envious and you're jealous of the way others are, aren't they?

Envious of someone else's looks or personalities or circumstances or gifts. Do you ever find yourself living someone else's life for them?

Dreaming, fantasizing that you're someone else somewhere else. Oh, there's so much unhappiness in that, isn't there? And can't you see what Psalm 139 is screaming at you?

That God has made you. That that's what this Psalm is telling us. The sovereign God has not put you on an assembly line and this is how you've turned out. You've dropped off the end of something.

No, God has been personally involved right from the beginning. He's intricately woven and worked out your genetic structure and made you what you are.

[ 25 : 53 ] Psychologically, physically, He's made you what you are. Comes out really clearly, doesn't it, in verse 13. For you formed my inward parts, my inmost being, my psyche. God has made that and God has covered that in the womb and God has given us a body, your inmost being, your physical frame and all the days of your life and your circumstances of your life are all according to His sovereign power.

and to recognize that and to accept that is a gloriously liberating truth, isn't it? To be able to recognize it and worship God for it, that is the true biblical teaching about self-worth.

I will praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Every single human being can say that. And with the talents and the gifts that God has given you, I will serve you and glorify you.

There is something to say, doesn't it, about gender identity. There is something to say to the transgender movement.

No, no, no. God has made you. God has knitted you together in your mother's womb. For us as Christians, we won't use the excuse, I think, if we understand this, well, I'm not as gifted as them, so what can I do?

[ 27 : 23 ] If I had her gifts, I'd be able to do something. No, when the Lord comes, He will ask, what did you do with the talent that I gave you?

Have you buried it? No, part of Christian maturity is accepting that God has made us and we're unique and there's no one else like me. And with that unique being that I am, I'm going to worship and serve and glorify God in a way that no one else can.

That leads me to say that it's so important, isn't it, to meditate on the doctrine of God. That's what Psalm 139 is. That's what David's been doing over his 17 and 18.

How precious to me are your thoughts, O God. How vast is the sum of them. If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake and I am still with you. What's he doing there? He's meditating.

He's thinking on these great realities. He's letting them grip his mind and his heart last thing at night, first thing in the morning. He was with God. God. So if I can put it this way, it's very personal for David.

[ 28 : 35 ] All the way through, it's not a statement of the abstract. It's a prayer, isn't it? David is worshipping and he cries out, verse 14, I praise you. You've searched me and you know me.

And so God's omniscience is not an abstraction. You know me completely. All about me. And it is wonderful. And God is everywhere present in the totality of his being and I can't get away from him. And it's wonderful to know that wherever I go, God is.

And God is all powerful. And he's sovereign in my creation and in providence. Oh, he says, I will praise you. Such thoughts are too wonderful. Literally, they're too weighty for me.

And so if you can think about God without worshipping him, you better think again. And if you come here Sunday by Sunday and you are thinking about God and talking about God and discussing various aspects of doctrine and you're not moved, you need to think again.

And examine your heart to find out whether you've known him at all. Because David, as he thinks about God, he's lost, isn't he, in wonder and love and praise. He's overwhelmed by the enormity of these truths, the sheer weightiness of them.

[ 29 : 53 ] And he's lost, and as I finish, let me say this, God is sovereign in creation and he's sovereign in providence but he's also sovereign in salvation, redemption.

Salvation belongs to the Lord. The God, the God who knows you, the God who is everywhere and the God you cannot get away from, the God who has made you and the God who has mapped out your life for you, that same God has sent his son into the world to die for sinners.

And you, this morning, can come to know this God through Jesus Christ. David knew him, that's what he's confessing. How precious are your thoughts to me, O God, how great is the sum of them. How do you know what someone is thinking about you? Do you ever wonder that? I often wonder that when I'm standing here on a Sunday morning. How do I know, how do you know what someone is thinking about you?

How do you know their thoughts? You don't, do you? The only way that you can know for sure what those thoughts are is when somebody puts them into words. And that word is spoken in your hearing.

[ 31 : 14 ] And you understand what they're thinking. And the good news according to Hebrews is that in these last days God has spoken. He's spoken fully and finally and completely and perfectly in his son Jesus Christ, the word of the Father.

Jesus Christ is the incarnate word of God and in these last days he has spoken by his son and that's the tone of his voice. And to you is born this day in the city of David a judge?

No. An example? No. A teacher? No. A saviour who is Christ the Lord. And if you want to know this morning what God thinks of you, if you want to know what God thinks concerning you, if you want to know what the sum of his thoughts are concerning you, you look at Jesus Christ.

You look at Jesus Christ and you see there what God thinks of your sin because in Christ God punished it. And you see there what God thinks of you in his love and his mercy and his kindness for sinners because he did not spare his own son but gave him up that sinners might be saved.

Let's pray together. Thank you.