

Psalm 139:1-6. It would be an honor to have unlimited access to the President of the United States or be known by royalty. Yet, greater than any earthly power or celebrity, David rejoiced to know and be known by the Lord God.

When Adam sinned he answered the Lord saying, “I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself” (Gen 3:10). He sinned, heard the Lord coming and hid in fear of what would happen. The Lord gave Adam paradise with one restriction, and he threw it away. Fear of judgment motivated Adam to run, and man has been running from God ever since (John 3:19).

God is holy. We are not. Rather than run to His Son for forgiveness, we run from Him trying to hide. Man does not naturally like authority, certainly not the authority of an all-powerful Judge. We would like to pretend He doesn’t exist or at least convince ourselves that our sin isn’t too sinful. It may relieve our fears and make us feel better, but it’s a game. Like children who cover their eyes believing no one sees them, God still sees the fullness of our sin.

The fear of judgment also extends into our relationships with one another. We’re skilled at creating barriers to keep others from knowing us, and we know how to polish an image that makes us look good on the outside. It’s the fear of man. As with God, so with each other, we’re driven by some level of fear in all of our relationships. Due to the fall, transparency does not come easy, and the depth of authenticity is hardly known. Just like Adam, we’re afraid, and so we run and hide.

What makes Psalm 139 so striking is just the opposite of all this. David stands before the holy Judge and rejoices to be known. He doesn’t hide. Like the accused standing in a court of law rejoicing, it doesn’t make any sense. David’s guilty, and yet he is glad the Judge knows him. In such extreme vulnerability, he delights and celebrates God’s knowledge. We’ll see why...

THAT GOD KNOWS ME

The apostle John likened the Lord’s eyes to a flame of fire (Rev 1:14). As fire consumes every barrier in its path, so the eyes of God see as they will. Nothing prevents the Lord from seeing all things past, present, future, heaven, earth or hell. Scripture says He sees and knows all things in time and eternity (Isa 42:9).

God’s all-seeing eyes had searched and knew the depth of David. He knew when David would “sit down” or “rise up”, when he would awake each day and go to sleep. It’s an all-encompassing knowledge. From the beginning to the end of each day, God knew all of David’s actions before there was ever one. He also knew all of David’s words ahead of time. Whereas others know only a fraction of our words and actions, God knows all. He even knows our “thoughts from afar” (Psa 139:1-4; Psa 44:20-21).

Jeremiah 1:5a—Before I formed you in the womb I knew you...

God’s knowledge is fixed. He does not study to predict our next move. He already knows it. Before each of us ever were, before the heavens and earth were created or time began, God already knew us. There’s no way to hide from His knowledge. It’s complete.

A DIVINE PARDON

What could be worse? We’re sinners standing before a holy God who has infinite power and knowledge. He hates sin and is offended by each of our lives. He has all the facts straight in every case and needs no time to deliberate. He knows all we have ever done, said or thought. He knows our true motivations and sees into the depth of every soul at all times. When Isaiah stood before this God he cried, “Woe is me, for I am ruined!” (Isa 6:5). Ezekiel must have thought the same as he dropped to his knees in holy fear (Ezek 1:28).

1 John 4:18—There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

David was the king who slept with Bathsheeba, murdered her husband and lied to Israel about it. How could he have done these things and rejoiced about anything? Why would he not tremble in terror the rest of his life or try to hide from God? The answer is because God forgave him (Psa 32).

A divine pardon was granted to David on the basis of his faith in the future Messiah. As an Old Testament saint, he understood little, but he was certain a Savior was coming. One-thousand years later, the Savior came. No one knew what would be offered or how it would happen, but they knew their sins would be removed forever (Isa 53:5-6; Jer 31:31-34). Little did they know God would send His own Son, and He would offer His own life for the sins of man (Rom 3:23-25).

A Love that Drives out Fear

David stood forgiven. The punishment for his sins would be paid in full, and God would not count his sins against him or remind him of the past. He had nothing to fear anymore.

Psalm 103:12—As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

Do you remember the sinful woman with an alabaster jar? She was a known prostitute determined to meet Jesus. Breaking an expensive jar of perfume, she washed His feet and wept the entire time. She loved and because she believed in Jesus as her Savior, He forgave her. What an eternity of sacrifices and penance could never do, He did in a single instant. She stood perfectly forgiven before God. What are we to learn from this? As Jesus said, he who has been forgiven much, loves much (Lk 7:37-50).

Like this woman, David knew he had been forgiven much. A deep love had replaced all fear, and out of this well spring Psalm 139 was written. David could delight in God without fear of punishment or condemnation. He could rejoice for the God he loved so deeply knew him completely and loved him unconditionally.

PRAISE AND ADORATION

Like a man struck blind in awesome wonder, David has so little to offer but praise and adoration in verses 5-6. “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it!” (Psa 139:6). Here’s a man who’s been humbled. God is beyond understanding.

Is any god like ours? From antiquities to the present, scan through all that is said of any given deity. Pick one. Most are finite gods, similar to us with the addition of special abilities. The Greek and Roman gods, for instance, were all finite deities. They were personal, but finite. Others have believed in an infinite god, one who is wholly other than man. Though their deity might be infinite, it is impersonal. There is no God like ours. The God of the Bible stands alone as infinite yet personal, transcendent yet intimate.

David rejoiced not merely that God is infinite and knows everything. He rejoiced that his God knew him so personally. There is joy in having a friend who knows us and withholds judgment. Magnify that joy a thousand times and we see David’s joy at the thought that God knows him. Without fear there is joy and the ability to love.

Fear and judgment aside, there is a relationship. Yet, why would the Lord care to know anyone? It is as David asked in Psalm 8:4, “What is man that You are mindful of him?” As a believer it enhances our love and adoration of God to realize His greatness and our insignificance. We bring nothing to the table but our sin.

NO NEED TO HIDE

The Lord is intimately aware of all we have ever done and are currently doing. He sees every action, knows every thought, discerns every motive and understands every mystery in every human life (Psa 147:5). He knows the pain each person carries, every prayer ever spoken, every hope that has been dashed (Psa 103:14). This God was David’s friend.

THE GOD WHOM DAVID LONGED TO KNOW MORE DEEPLY WAS THE GOD WHO KNEW HIM COMPLETELY.

The love of God for the believer is not a love “which alters when it alteration finds” but is an “ever-fixed mark... never shaken.”¹ In a world where love depends upon performance, God’s love for His people never moves. David could stand in holy light with all of his sin exposed and rest secure that nothing would ever change.

Adam ran and hid. David did not, and neither do we who are secure in Jesus Christ. No believer will ever face punishment or condemnation for any number of sins (Rom 8:1). The penalty has been paid in full, the way to God the Father is open, and we can approach His throne with boldness (Eph 3:12; Heb 10:19). We have nothing to fear in this love that never ends.

*Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade,
To write the love of God above,
Would drain the ocean dry.
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.²*

¹ William Shakespeare, Sonnet 116.

² Frederick Lehman, *The Love of God*, 1917.