

## GRIPPED AND HUMBLLED BY GOD'S GREATNESS

(Sunday, November 21, 2021)

---

**Scripture:** Psalm 139; Romans 8:31-38

### INTRODUCTION

Brief note on why this passage.

Man was created in the image and likeness of God.

**Gen. 3:4** Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. **5** For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Man in rebellion so foolishly thinks, I can be like God.

Some people are amazingly talented and brilliant.

Pride is so natural.

Scripture frequently sets forth our own insignificance and God's magnificence.

David was a mighty king, powerful, intelligent, very successful, yet he needed to be humbled by the Lord, sometimes in very painful ways.

Even though David had learned so much about God's protection and providence, he made very foolish and wicked choices.

- Murder and adultery

- Improper census

**Teach me to be comforted and warned by your knowledge, presence, power, vengeance, and holiness.**

4 Parts:

1] God's Omniscience, vv. 1-6

2] God's Omnipresence, vv. 7-12

3] God's Omnipotence, vv. 13-18

4] God's Vengeance and Holiness, vv. 19-24

### 1] GOD'S OMNISCIENCE, vv. 1-6

Two key words of this Psalm – searched and known.

Verse 1 and verse 23.

To know – 5 times in this Psalm.

Search or examine

**To question somebody about his basic convictions.<sup>1</sup>**

Why do we think we can hide from God?

Why do we think so often we can cover over sin?

The delusion of sin: we don't give proper thought to God, and we live like we are somehow independent.

David through the work of the Holy Spirit is brought to properly consider God in His greatness and His work and to direct God's people to give special consideration unto it.

This Psalm so beautifully brings together all the different aspects of life:

1] Daily routine, v. 2

---

<sup>1</sup> HALOT, s.v. "1:348," חקר.

2] Our thoughts, v. 2

3] Every single aspect of life, v. 3

4] Our words, v. 4

How much time do you give in considering God's omniscience?

Recall the testimony in John 4 of the Samaritan woman.

**John 4:39** And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all that I *ever* did."

One point of reflection – If we are in Christ, we are loved by God even though He knows us completely.

Verses 5-6, the climax of this first part.

Verse 5 – God hedges us from behind and before and lays His hand upon us.

There is no place to hide.

Verse 5 is describing how God in His Providence shapes and directs our lives.

Yes, you make choices.

We are responsible for all our actions.

God stands above all things. We are not independent.

And this leads to the thought of verse 6 – this knowledge is beyond our full comprehension. We cannot truly fathom it.

We can have true knowledge of God.

It is not our imagination.

And yet we do not have exhaustive knowledge of God.

**Humility and wonder are the proper responses!**

## 2] GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE, vv. 7-12

Verses 1-6 God's exhaustive knowledge.

Now with verse 7, the shift is to the first person – I.

Not self-centered; it is just a different perspective.

Listen to Jonah 1:3 which might be one of the most ironic or comic verses in all the Bible.

**Jonah 1:3** But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish **from the presence of the LORD**. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish **from the presence of the LORD**.

The verb **flee** in Jonah 1:3 is the same verb **flee** in verse 7.

Part of this Psalm is to convict us of our foolishness and sin. **We stand before God**.

Another aspect is to bring comfort. **God stands before us**.

In the situations that are good and bad, God is with us.

When you are not walking as you should, God is with you.

During the most difficult situations, God is with you.

Look again at verse 11.

Other versions read a little differently:

The ESV reads:

If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,"

The contrast then is found in verse 12.

**Nothing can hide from God.**

Is this a basic principle?

Yes, it is.

It is however not always recognized as it should be.

Part of the purpose of this Psalm is to remind us about things we should know but we don't always practice as we should.

### **3] GOD'S OMNIPOTENCE, vv. 13-18**

My outline is not inspired - God's Omnipotence.

There is a shift in this Psalm, we can say a focus on God's power.

And it is significant that here the focus is God's power **when we had absolutely no power.**

When you were in your most vulnerable, defenseless situation, that is when God in a very special way watched over you and protected you from harm.

Moderns tend to think ancient people were not so sophisticated.

Obviously, they did not have ultrasound machines 3000 years ago, but even ancient people could reflect on the amazement of life in the womb.

Consider just a few details related to the incredible plan of God that works in the development of a child from a single cell to over a trillion cells at birth.

- 18 days - heart begins to beat. (Can you imagine just how amazing this is!).
- 21 days - pumps own blood through separate closed circulatory system with own blood type.
- 28 days - eye, ear and respiratory system begin to form.
- 42 days - brain waves recorded, skeleton complete, reflexes present.
- 7 weeks - photo of thumb sucking.
- 8 weeks - all body systems present.<sup>2</sup>

Another fascinating article shared this information on the incredible development of the baby.

“.. in weeks three and four [as] the mother becomes first aware of her pregnancy to the forming of limbs and major organs by weeks four and five. At this time, **“the brain starts growing at an average rate of 250,000 neurons per minute.** At about that time, the brain neurons and muscles “form functional connections” as the preborn child begins to respond to touch. By the seventh week, the child has measurable brain activity, makes spontaneous movements, and the heart has developed all four chambers.<sup>3</sup>

In terms of God’s work related to creation and providence, I don’t know that there is anything as amazing as the process of life from its start to its growth.

Even with a moment’s thought we must say with David:

**Psa. 139:14** I will praise You, for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made;

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.prolife.com/FETALDEV.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://theinterim.com/issues/pro-life/human-life-begins-in-the-womb/>

Marvelous are Your works,  
And *that* my soul knows very well.

Look again also at verse 16.

**Psa. 139:16** Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.  
And in Your book they all were written,  
The days fashioned for me,  
When *as yet there were* none of them.

We confess often that we believe this, that God knows us so intimately.

The problem is we don't live according to our confession.

We are often filled with fear, worry, and do not live according to our confession.

And perhaps the root of the problem is we are self-focused rather than God-focused.

I must be careful in presenting this.

The Christian life isn't if you just do these techniques, your life will much happier.

We are to live by faith.

But part of living by faith is looking away from yourself.

**Phil. 4:6** **Be anxious** for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication,  
with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

Charles Spurgeon wrote of the wonder of God's thoughts toward us:

How great is the sum of them! When we remember that God thought upon us from old eternity, continues to think upon us every moment, and will think of us when time shall be no more, we may well exclaim, "How great is the sum!" Thoughts such as are natural to the Creator, the Preserver, the Redeemer, the Father, the Friend, are evermore flowing from the heart of the Lord. Thoughts of our pardon, renewal, upholding, supplying, educating, perfecting, and a thousand more kinds perpetually well up in the mind of the Most High. It should fill us with adoring wonder and reverent surprise that the infinite mind of God should turn so many thoughts towards us who are so insignificant and so unworthy! What a contrast is all this to the notion of those who deny the existence of a personal, conscious God! Imagine a world without a thinking, personal God! Conceive of a grim providence of machinery! – a fatherhood of law! Such philosophy is hard and cold. As well might a man pillow his head upon a razor edge as seek rest in such a fancy. But a God always thinking of us makes a happy world, a rich life, a heavenly hereafter.

#### **4] GOD'S VENGEANCE AND HOLINESS, VV. 19-24**

Earlier problem – man thinks he can be like God.

Related to this – we imagine God to be like us.

David directed by the Holy Spirit confessed the vengeance and holiness of God.

And this is not because David imagined himself perfect.

David knew the justice of God in a very personal way.

David was not a detached, ivory-tower theologian.

David was sickened by sin and the rebellion of sinners.

We know we live in a very perverse and disgusting age.

But we also consider that sin and sinners were also doing perverse and disgusting things 3000 years ago.



Just as we don't say people from the past were all stupid; we don't say people from the past were not so sinful either.

David, more than we do in many ways, lived directly in the world of blood, sweat, and tears.

Some of you have served in the military or you have seen horrible things.

But we consider how David for many years was involved in all sorts of hand-to-hand combat fighting.

Now just as there is a sinful anger, so there is a sinful peace.

We are not just talking about personality types here. **The issue is our concern for God's vengeance and holiness.**

The issue is our concern that we are holy in our thought, words, and actions.

In the face of incredible evil, it is wicked to be tolerant and uncaring.

This passage is designed to be shocking!

We often need to be shocked from our ease.

We don't always realize how much our world lulls into slumber and not really caring.

And it is for this reason that so much evil has taken control of so much of this world.

There is too little righteous, holy anger and like prayers.

We observe several things from the words of verses 19-22:

1] David prays for God's justice rather than trying to take justice into his own hands.

2] David's concern is not his own character that has been insulted or maligned. He is concerned with God's name that is blasphemed.

3] There is a **righteous hatred of sin and sinners**.

This is not what you often hear discussed by Christians; and yes, we do recognize that Scripture also commands that we show love to our enemies.

Some say, these strong expressions are just found in the OT and that things are different in the NT.

Is that true?

Not at all.

**2Tim. 4:14** Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works.

4] Other portions of Scripture expressing what is sometimes known as imprecation do also include a prayer of salvation.

For example from Psalm 83.

**16** Fill their faces with shame,  
That they may seek Your name, O LORD.

**17** Let them be confounded and dismayed forever;  
Yes, let them be put to shame and perish,

**18** That they may know that You, whose name alone *is* the LORD,  
*Are* the Most High over all the earth.

5] When we ignore the reality of sin and try to be all peaceful and loving, there are severe consequences that come as a result.

6] This final point connects with the final two verses. Our holy hatred does need to be guided by God's truth, and we must pray for God's conviction and leading.

We must also pray this way when we are not righteously angry as we should be.

If your own sin does not concern you, you are in a dangerous place.

When you also do not cry out in the face of wickedness, the bloodthirsty nature of the wicked, then you are in a dangerous place.

## CONCLUSION

**Teach me to be comforted and warned by your knowledge, presence, power, vengeance, and holiness.**

1] Let the book of Psalms in particular guide your prayers.

2] Let us seek to have our thoughts and feelings be less focused on ourselves and much more on God's amazing power!

**Prayer**

**Hymn 34**

## BENEDICTION - 1 TIMOTHY 3:16

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.

