

God's Omni-Love for Me

We will be looking together at Psalm 139 if you'd like to turn there.

- Certainly, God's work over the six days of creation is astounding, beyond our ability to comprehend. The stars, planets, sun and moon, light, gravity, laws of motion and energy...along with the earth and the oceans, plants, birds, fish, creeping things, beasts, and livestock – it's all miraculous, and it all gives testimony to the majesty of our Creator.
- We will spend eternity learning of the intricacies of His work and how every atom and molecule are woven together to reveal His fingerprints and His character.
- The crowning glory of God's creative work is mankind. We are the pinnacles of His design; the culmination of His masterpiece because we are the only creature that was made in His image. Nothing else in the universe has this distinction.
- God breathed life into Adam and Eve on the sixth day. Earlier that day livestock, creeping things, and beasts of the field came into being. Here's how Genesis 1:26-28 describes it:

26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply..." (Genesis 1:26-28, ESV)

- Our God is certainly an awesome God! He is indescribable, yet we try. This effort to describe Him is an effort to better worship Him.
- Theologians have attempted to understand God by clarifying and classifying His attributes...things that are true about Him. God is One, yet He is multifaceted. He's a trinity – One God in three Persons. That fact in itself is way above our comprehension.
- So, this effort to describe God by describing His attributes is a way that we little humans can begin to understand His glorious magnitude.
- The chart on the back wall illustrates this. If you take some time to look it over you will see attributes like:
 - **Aseity** – This is God's self-existence. He has the power of being in Himself, and He is not dependent on any one or anything else.
 - **Eternality** – God has no beginning or end. He has always existed and He always will. No other thing or no other being is eternal. Only God.
 - **Immutability** – God never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.
- Three of God attributes are, perhaps, the most basic and easy for us to grasp and understand, even though they remain incomprehensible to our limited human minds. They are:
 - **Omniscience** – God knows everything. The Latin word for knowledge or knowing is *sciens*. There is nothing He doesn't know. Nothing in the universe escapes His attention.
 - **Omnipresence** – God is present everywhere, all at once. He completely fills His creation.
 - **Omnipotence** – God is infinitely powerful. He is almighty. The Latin word for power is *potens*. There is nothing God is unable to do if He determines to do it.
- Notice each of these last three attributes I described start with the prefix "omni." This is from the Latin word "omnis" which means "all" or "in totality."

- Back when I was in Jr. High and High School our family was deeply involved with airplanes and learning to fly. Dad, my brother, and I were consumed with aviation, and at one point Dad determined that he would purchase a used airplane for our family.
- Dad subscribed to a publication called “Trade-A-Plane” which was as monthly newspaper that listed airplanes for sale all over North America. I quickly learned all kinds of terminology and acronyms used to describe these airplanes, things like “time SMOH – since major overhaul,” I learned the difference between taildraggers and tricycle gear airplanes, I learned that a NAVCOM radio had features that helped the pilot both navigate and communicate with others, and so on.
- One term that popped up in for sale ads was “omnivision.” An airplane with omnivision was desirable. This meant, simply, that the airplane had a large rear window in addition to the windows on the front and sides. In an airplane with omnivision you could see all around, 360 degrees. So “omni” means all. This word picture may help you remember.
- When we think about God and we consider His attributes, we have a natural and understandable tendency to reflect on them on a grand scale. We go outside at night and we see the moon, the stars, and the planets. They are players on the stage of this great big universe.
- We can’t help but think about God’s immensity: He created the universe demonstrating His omnipotence; He fills it demonstrating His omnipresence, and He fully knows and is aware of every aspect of it demonstrating His omniscience.
- And, without going into detail, we can apply these three omni-attributes to the microscopic world as well, where things can be infinitely small, yet God is not limited there either.
- So how does this relate to you and me? Beyond the reflexive “wow!” factor, this should cause us to well up in an attitude of awe and worship, as it did for King David, the shepherd king.
- He had a lot of time to consider the heavens as he sat alone, in his “pre-king” days, out there in the field night and day with his flocks. In Psalm 19, verses 1 and 2 David exclaims:

1 The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

2 Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. (Psalm 19:1-2, ESV)

- We can imagine David penning many of His Psalms while out in the field, praying, reflecting, all the while being inspired by the Holy Spirit. We know his Psalms were inspired because Jesus, Himself, quoted dozens of David’s Psalms.
- In one of his most loved Psalms, Psalm 139, David personalizes the three omni-attributes, even though he doesn’t call these attributes by name. Let’s take a look at this Psalm together, and I’ll make a few observations as we do.

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. (Psalm 139:1-6, ESV)*

- First of, which omni-attribute is David describing here? (omniscience)
- Think about the people on this earth who know you better than anyone else. For most of us, that would be a spouse or a family member, or maybe even a best friend.
- Could the folks with whom you have the most intimate relationships come anywhere close to imitating what David is describing here...seeing every move you make, reading all your thoughts, knowing what you are going to say before it even comes out of your mouth?
- I've thought about this a lot over the years. I believe that the deepest yearning of all of our hearts is to be KNOWN...we want others, especially those we love, to know and understand us at every level. To be known is to be fully loved and appreciated.
- But, it may cause intense fear when we realize the Most Holy God knows us at this level. We understand and regret that we fall woefully short of His perfection.
- Our only appropriate response would be to confess all of our shortcomings and to receive His forgiveness. 1 John 1:8-9 says: *"8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*
- Even though, in His omniscience, God knows how filthy we are, His word proclaims that He is "faithful and just" to forgive us if we agree with His assessment.
- In verse 5 David states that God "hems me in, behind and before." Other versions use different words for this:
 - "enclosed me behind and before" (NKJV),
 - "encircled me behind and in front" (NASB)
 - "beset" or "hedged" me behind and before (KJV)
 - "squeezed me in from behind and in front" (NET)
 - "hem me in behind and before" (NIV)
 - "go before me and follow me" (NLT)
 - Perhaps the most interesting..."behind and before Thou hast **besieged** me, and Thou dost place on me Thy hand." (YLT)
- God is so intimately close that His presence squeezes in on us, and He lays His hand on us to protect us even in our folly. *If we truly believed this it would cause us to immediately cease our grumbling* because nothing can touch us unless the Almighty allows it.
- We can agree with David, in verse 6, that this knowledge is so wonderful that it is impossible for us to fully understand. God's omniscience, brought down to a personal level, is encouraging and deeply humbling. But there's more...

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 (other versions say "hell"), 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. (Psalm 139:7-12, ESV)*

- Obviously, David is now describing God's omnipresence. There is no where David can go and God is not there with him.
- Can we believe this for ourselves? We may not *feel* that God is close by, but the truth is not guided or controlled by our feelings.
- How interesting that David should say, in verse 8, "Even if I make my bed in hell, you are there!" It's bad theology to think that hell is a place where Satan rules and God doesn't. God is sovereign, even over hell.
- In the book of Revelation, the Apostle John plainly states that God casts Satan into hell where he is bound under lock and key. Erase from your mind forever the cartoonish, Hollywood images of the Devil smiling with glee as he tortures people in Hell. He's the one being tortured, by God, along with all those who reject God's rule over them.
- Let's read again starting in verse 13:

*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. (Psalm 139:13-16, ESV)*

- Because humans are God's crowning achievement, our design demonstrates His omnipotence.
- Tim told a joke which, I think, illustrates God's omnipotence very well:

God was once approached by a scientist who said, "Listen God, we've decided we don't need you anymore. These days we can clone people, transplant organs, and do all sorts of things that used to be considered miraculous."

God replied, "Don't need me huh? How about we put your theory to the test? Why don't we have a competition to see who can make a human being, say, a male human being?"

The scientist agrees, so God declared they should do it like he did in the good old days when he created Adam. "Fine" says the scientist as he bends down to scoop up a handful of dirt."

*"Whoa!" says God, shaking his head in disapproval. "Not so fast. **You get your own dirt.**"*

- A common phrase used by pastors at funeral graveside services is "Ashes to ashes; dust to dust." It's a reminder that, when God created Adam, He "*formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life...*" (Genesis 2:7, ESV). So, it's very appropriate for David to marvel that he was "intricately woven in the depths of the earth."
- You and me – we are made from a conglomeration of microscopic rock particles, rotted leaves, and rabbit manure. We are all made of dust.
- On the last day, when our deceased and decomposed bodies are again called up from the depths of the earth, God will intricately weave our substance, once again, into glorious spiritual bodies that will never, ever die. Death will be swallowed up in victory, and we will all proclaim, along with the Apostle Paul in his remarks about the resurrection of our bodies "*...thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" (1 Corinthians 15:57, ESV)
- Only an omnipotent God can predetermine every minute detail of our lives even *before* we were in the dust stage of our existence! We existed in God's mind and he knew and loved us even then! We can exclaim right along with David, in verses 17 and 18:

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. (Psalm 139: 17-18, ESV)

- Other versions read:
 - *How difficult it is for me to fathom your thoughts **about me**, O God! How vast is their sum total. (NET)*
 - *How precious to **(concerning me)** me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! (NIV)*
- It sounds like God's total focus is on David. How can God have the time or bandwidth to think about anyone else or about everything going on in the world? We think this way because of our own limitations.
- Remember, God is not limited by time. He's had all eternity to consider you, me, and David.
- God's thoughts about us are like grains of sand. When we were at the seashore earlier this summer, as I walked along the beach, I thought about this verse and other places in the Bible where the term "grains of sand" is used to describe innumerable quantities in relation to God.
- The vastness of the capabilities of our triune God is mind-boggling...recall the Apostle John's final comment in his gospel where he said, "*Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.*" (John 21:25, ESV)
- At first it would appear that John is using hyperbole because he is so in love with his Savior, and he wants to elevate Jesus in the eyes of his readers.

- But remember in Colossians where Paul says this about Jesus: “16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” (Colossians 1:16-17) By Him and through Him **all things**, including you and me, were created and, even now, He’s holding all things together. He is able!
- When we begin to question God and what He allows, we should tell ourselves and each other “Hush!” Our thoughts are a pinch of sand compared to the tens of thousands of miles of sand on the seashores of the world which contain trillions of grains! He knows infinitely more than we do about how all things fit together in eternity.
- Knowing this, how can anyone oppose Him? David wondered the same thing. He says:

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. (Psalm 139:19-22, ESV)

- I’m not going to say much about this except to give David a pass on his righteous indignation. Obviously, the faithlessness of those who oppose the omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent God causes David to seethe in anger.
- But then, it seems as if his conscience kicks in when he realizes how out of step his reaction is when compared to God’s loving holiness:

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! (Psalm 139:23-24, ESV)

- Paul says in Romans that the kindness of God leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4). This final prayer whispered by David at the end of this Psalm should be our own, as we consider the omni-loving, omni-kind God whom we serve. May He grant us the repentance that leads to life.
- Pray with me...

Suggestion for further study:

When preparing this sermon, I found it extremely helpful to use the online tool Bible Gateway.

<http://biblegateway.com>

Enter into the search field the verses you wish to study. You can choose 55 different English translations. It is helpful to see how various translators have interpreted the passage in English. If you isolate a single verse at a time, and choose “See this verse in all English translations” the verse is presented in a list as these various translations present it.