

(How to Understand the KJV Bible) 11 Psalm 139

by Keith Simons

In this sermon, Keith Simons explores the profound themes of God's omniscience and our need for humility as expressed in Psalm 139.

Duration: 24:48

Scripture: Psalm 139:1

Topics: "KJV Bible", "God's Omniscience", "Humility vs. Pride"

Description

Keith Simons teaches on Psalm 139, emphasizing the deliberate order of the Psalms and how they connect to God's omniscience and omnipresence. He explains that God knows us intimately, from our thoughts to our actions, and that His presence surrounds us in every situation. Simons highlights the contrast between the proud and the humble, illustrating how God respects the lowly while being distant from the proud. The psalm culminates in a plea for self-examination, urging believers to seek God's guidance and correction in their lives. Ultimately, it is a reflection on God's greatness and our need for His mercy and direction.

Transcript

Welcome, my name is Keith Symons, I'm a Bible teacher from England and you're listening to the next in our talks on how to understand the King James Version of the Bible. Today we're going to be looking at Psalm 139. Did you know that the Psalms are in order? It's not a case of them just being in any order in which they just got put together.

They're in a very deliberate order. It's just we don't understand what links all the Psalms together. We just see clues occasionally that show us it's a specific order.

And if you want to understand Psalm 139, a good way to find out its meaning is to turn back a page and look at Psalm 138, verse 6. That says, In other words, God is in a high place. Yes, he's exalted in heaven, in his place of honour and of power and of authority. And there are certain people in the world whom the Psalm describes as the proud, evil people.

These are the people who try to make themselves like God. In their own minds, they think that they're like God, so they think they're truly great. And there's the opposite.

There's the lowly. We often say the humble. Those who don't try to prove their own importance.

Those who know their weakness. Those who put their trust in God. And the verse says, God has respect to the lowly, the humble, but the proud he knoweth the far off.

He won't even go near to a proud person because he knows that person's evil intentions. And so although that person tried to make himself even like God, he's failed because the Lord, who is truly high, who is truly in a place of authority and power, knows him. That's the subject of our psalm for today, Psalm 139.

As usual, I'll go through it phrase by phrase and verse by verse, and we'll have a look at it. It has a heading to the chief musician. That means the leader of the music in God's house, the temple.

A psalm of David, which would normally mean that it's by David, but it could mean that it's about David. We'll assume as we go through that it's by David. It begins, O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me.

Thou hast searched me. David says God has examined him and so God knows him. He knows him properly.

He knows all about him. Verse two. Thou, that's God, knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising.

Thou understandest my thought afar off. Down-sitting, of course, means sitting down, and up-rising means, of course, rising up. You know, says David, when I sit down and when I get up.

But why does he sit down and why does he get up? Well, an ancient Jewish writing says that he sits down to study God's law, the Torah, the Bible, and he rises up to go to war. And that fits in rather well with how the psalm ends. But David's meaning, that's adding to the meaning in a way, because he's simply saying God knows all about him.

In fact, God doesn't even just know his actions when he sits down and when he rises up. He understands what he's thinking about. Thou understandest my thought afar off.

Even before that thought is properly formed in my mind, God, you know it. Verse three. Thou compassest my path and my lying down.

You surround me wherever I am. As I walk along, as I lie down in bed, you're around me. Compassest means surrounds, and art acquainted with all my ways, all the things I do, you know.

Verse four. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. So a word in my tongue is something I say, but it's not even there in its full form before, lo, behold, look, God, you know it altogether.

You know fully what I'm saying when I'm just forming the words in my mouth, just as you know fully my thoughts when I haven't even formed them fully. And this amazes David. He says in verse five, thou hast beset me behind and before.

Thou hast beset me, that means confined me. In other words, I'm like a prisoner. Behind me and before in front of me, you've restricted the room where I can move.

Yet he's not thinking of that as a hostile act to control him. He's saying, you've surrounded me with your knowledge about me. You know all about me.

And he adds, laid thine hand upon me. Well, forgot to lay his hand on someone. That could be in chastisement, in punishment, or it could be an expression of support and care.

And because David knows God and trusts God, we think that's probably an expression of support and care. But it could mean God admonishes him, deals with him when he does wrong things. That's true of David's life as well.

And so maybe we can bring these ideas together and say, God laid his hand upon David. God dealt with David as a father deals with his son. Sometimes he had to punish him, but only for his benefit, only for his good.

And sometimes he supported him through troubles. Verse six, such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high.

I cannot attain unto it. The knowledge that God has is wonderful beyond anything that David can imagine. If he could, he would attain to it.

He would reach to it, but he can't because it's beyond him. It's so high, as high as the heavens are above the earth. David cannot reach to it.

It is very wonderful. Verse seven, whither shall I go from thy spirit? The powerful spirit of God is present, and it's present wherever David goes. David can't think to run away from God.

That would be out of question. Whither shall I flee from thy presence? In the Hebrew, that's from thy face. You see me wherever I go.

If I were to run away from you, if I were afraid, if I tried to escape from you, I couldn't get away from you because your spirit is present everywhere. And you see with your face wherever I might flee or escape. Verse eight, if I ascend into heaven, thou art there.

Of course, God is there. That's his home, his palace, his royal temple. But if I make my bed in hell, well, even in the grave, I've not escaped from God.

God sees every place. If I take the wings of the morning, if I take the farthest part of the morning, if I go to the place where the sun rises and even beyond that place, or if I dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, if I found my bed not in the heights of heaven, not in the furthest place of the sun rising, but down in the depths of the sea, well, even there shall thy hand lead me and thy right hand shall hold me. In the depths of trouble, in the multitudes of blessings, whichever David finds himself in, yet as one of God's people, he can declare boldly, your hand is leading me.

Your hand is holding me. You're protecting me. You're looking after me.

You're helping me. But what about night? I mean, it's all very good for God to see with his face wherever I am, but what about when it's dark? Verse 11, if I say, surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me, the darkness will hide me, but not from God. Verse 12, yea, yes, the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day.

The darkness and the light are both alike to thee. You see everything. You see what's happening in the darkness.

You see what men hide away from you. You see even what I hide away. You see my secret sins.

You know me. You know every part of me. Verse 13, he explains this a bit further, for thou hast possessed my veins.

You own, my veins really means my kidneys, but David's using it in a more figurative way. You know the secret parts, deepest hidden parts of me. The kidney is hidden deep in the body, and so this may figuratively refer to David's thoughts.

It refers to any part of David's inner person. Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. Even in my mother's womb, you saw me there.

You were looking after me. You were defending me. You were protecting me.

Verse 14, I will praise thee. I will praise you, God, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. How awesome is this.

How wonderful is this. How God has made me. Marvelous are thy works.

Everything you do is wonderful. So wonderful and so amazing, David says to God, and that my soul knoweth right well. My soul, my inner self, deep inside me, I know these things and I know them well.

I know that you have done the most wonderful things in my life, in me, even to form me in my mother's womb. And that's the subject of verse 15, although in the King James it didn't quite sound like it. My substance was not hidden from thee when I was made in secret and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

My substance, my unformed body, my body before I was born, it wasn't hid from you, God. You made me in secret as if I were in a deep part of the earth, hidden away. But you saw me.

You saw me and you made me and you formed me. Verse 16, thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect, you saw my unformed body in my mother's womb. And in thy book all my members were written.

Members means parts of the body. You had planned all the different parts of my body. You arranged them, which in continuance were fashioned, which you made when as yet there were none of them.

Verse 17, how precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God. How great is the sum of them. Your knowledge of me, says David, is wonderful.

Your knowledge is so precious. And when I think of all the detail with which you've made me, when I think of the different parts of my body and how complex they are, and yet you've put all that together, it's great, it's wonderful. Your thoughts, your plans for me, what you're doing in my life, how great is that? How wonderful is that? If I counted them, your thoughts about me, your promises to me, there's so many.

They're more in number than the sand. When I awake, I am still with thee. I wake up in the morning and you're there, you're with me, you're looking after me, you're protecting me, your thoughts are surrounding

me.

Verse 19, there's suddenly a change in the subject of the psalm. Remember I spoke at the beginning about the proud people, the proud people with their evil and cruel schemes. The reason David's been thinking about all this and remembering about all this is that David has enemies, enemies who want to attack him, enemies who want to kill him, enemies who are completely evil, who are devoted to cruelty.

This is a prayer about those enemies. The whole psalm is David's prayer about those enemies and about his own relationship with God. So verse 19, surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God.

God, you're going to kill wicked people. Your judgement will be against them. You are a fair judge.

You know that I am humble and lowly, that I am weak and that I am trusting completely in you, but I'm trusting you to act against my cruel enemies and to act against them in overwhelming power and authority. He turns from the enemies, sorry from God. He's been speaking to God all the way through and he speaks a word to the enemies.

He says to them, depart from me therefore, ye bloody men. They're called bloody because they want to spill David's blood. They want to kill David.

And so David says to them, depart from me because, because God is his judge. God is going to defend him. God is going to help him against them.

Verse 20, for they speak against thee wickedly and thine enemies take thy name in vain. The words they speak are not just against me. They want to kill me, but they're not just against me, those words.

They're much more against thee, against God. They are speaking against God and God's holy name. Those enemies are taking in vain because they proudly act as if they are like God.

They proudly act as if they have all power and authority. Verse 21, do I not hate them, O God, that hate thee? And am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? If I have hatred for anyone, God, I hate those who have hatred towards you. It's them that grieve me.

It's them that upset me because they are rising up against thee, against God. They are fighting against God. David saw that these battles were not just against people who hated him.

No, these were people who hated God. These were people who were rising up in pride against God. And David says, I'm on God's side in this.

I'm standing for God. Now, I know people might say, well, what is David doing hating them? Shouldn't he show love to his enemies? Well, yes, the Bible does teach us to love our enemies and to care for our enemies, but there is a place for anger against the evil things that people do. There is a place for declaring that when people have hatred towards God, that is absolutely and totally wrong.

When people in pride rise up against God and make cruel plans against the people of God, there's a place for saying that they are very, very wrong and very, very evil with those evil plans. And it's that sort of attitude David's saying here. He continues, verse 22, I hate them with perfect hatred.

He would show them compassion if they turned away from those evil deeds, if they wanted to turn back from God, if there was any hope that they might do so. But there comes a point when people have given

themselves totally to do evil. And so David could only consider those people, his enemies, not so much because they hated David, but much more because they hated David's God.

And then in the last couple of verses, David becomes very personal again. He says, Search me, O God. Remember how he began this psalm, verse one, O Lord, thou hast searched me.

You've examined me, he says at the beginning. And now he says, God, I want you to keep on, keep on examining me because maybe my heart is not perfect. Maybe my thoughts are sometimes evil.

Examine me, show me if I'm doing wrong things and correct me, teach me that I might go your way. I don't want to be in any way like those evil people who are opposing me, opposing you. Because those evil people are doing what's wrong.

I want to serve you. Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me or test me and know my thoughts, verse 24, and see if there be any wicked way in me.

See if I'm living in an evil way and lead me in the way everlasting, the way, the path that leads forever, that goes forever, the life that continues forever, everlasting life of serving you as God in humility and respect towards the true and living God. I'd love for someone to write to me. Let me know that you've heard this podcast, 333kjv at gmail.com. That email address again, 333kjv at gmail.com. Now let's have the whole psalm.

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I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day.

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Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

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