

Studies in the Psalms

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Psalm 22

“The Hind of the Morning”

In the twenty-second psalm, David gives a more vivid description of the terrible reality of Calvary and the sufferings of Christ on the cross than do any of the gospel writers. None of the authors of the gospels dwell on the horrors of crucifixion, which were well known in their day and needed no elaboration. Yet note how this psalm begins with Christ's utter devastation, saying, “My God, my God why have you forsaken me?” (Psalm 22:1) We should also observe how the psalm ends with the description of what has happened: “They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, that He has done this.” The phrase “He has done this,” is actually just one word in the original Hebrew language, ‘asah,’ which means, “finished.” This statement is similar to Christ's words on the cross. It propels readers forward to Calvary where, at the completion of the Lord's redemptive work, the Gospels record that the Lord said, “It is finished.” In the original Greek language it is just one powerful word tetelestai, which means, “it is finished.” There are thirty-three distinct prophecies that were fulfilled at Calvary, and this is one of the great chapters that verifies inspiration in the prophecies of His death.

The Holiest of Men Forsaken by the Holy God, Psalm 22:1-6

Let us look more in detail at the specific sections of this psalm, beginning with verses 1-6. The Psalmist begins, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, and from the words of my

groaning?" The word "groaning" used in the Hebrew text here is also the same word often used to describe the roar of a lion, the noise of thunder, or the cry of an animal that has been mortally wounded. As the midnight darkness swept over Calvary at midday, it was met by a dreadful God-forsaken cry: Emmanuel's orphan cry. God had abandoned the Lord. This cry was the cry of the mortally wounded "hind of the morning," or "deer of the dawn." Christ's abandonment was absolutely complete and caused Him utter devastation. We can see this in Psalm 22:2: "O My God, I cry in the daytime, but you do not hear; and in the night season, and am not silent." We can also see that the reason He was forsaken was as a result of God's holiness.

In Psalm 22:3 the psalmist says, "But you are holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel." Jesus was the holiest man who ever lived. He spoke of His own perfect holiness when He said to His disciples, "I always do those things which please the Father." (John 8:29) God, His Father, also affirmed His complete holiness when He said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17) Why then did the psalmist cry out in agony in foretelling Jesus' suffering, "But thou art holy"? (Psalm 22:3) At Calvary, a righteous God was demanding the full price for the remission of sin, so that "He who knew no sin was made sin for us." (2 Corinthians 5:21) There was a great gulf that separated us from a holy God, and Christ became this sin so that we might not experience this separation any longer. Therefore, beloved Christian, He tasted death for us, experiencing in those three hours of darkness what every last soul will experience in hell for eternity.

There are numerous instances in Scripture where men cried out to God in distress and He heard them. Moses, Abraham, and David all experienced desperation at one time or another, cried out in anguish to the Lord, and God heard each of them and answered. Jesus, in contrast, cried with heartbroken cries that went unanswered. The psalmist introduces us to a statement which defies explanation in Psalm 22:6, saying, "But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised by the people." Let us consider two possible explanations of this phrase's meaning:

First, it is possible that as the Lord hung on the cross, he felt despised and rejected by God and men. He had been forsaken by God and His disciples had been betrayed, denied, rejected, surrounded by the bulls of Bashan (representing the Jews), attacked by packs of wild dogs (representing the Gentiles), and subjected to the terror of the roaring lion and his wicked legions, which symbolized Satan and His demons. Hanging on that cross with pierced hands and feet, a lacerated back, and a disfigured face, He probably felt more like a worm than a man. This is very difficult to understand, but let us all try to imagine the eternal Son of God, the Creator of every star and upholder of the universe, considering Himself "a worm and no man."

The second plausible explanation that some Bible teachers believe is that the reference here to a worm is the crimson crocus from which scarlet dye was obtained to color the robes of kings. To yield that royal dye, a lowly worm had to be crushed. This would render Jesus' statement to meaning something to the effect of: "I am like the crimson crocus." While on the cross we can see that the Lord was indeed crushed beneath the load of

our sin and the wrath and curse of God. The scarlet dye, his precious blood, provided us with robes of righteousness. The hymn Abba Father We Approach Thee praises Jesus for this act of granting us our righteousness through His sacrifice: "Clothed in garments of salvation, at thy table is our place."

The Contempt and Cruelty of Men, Psalm 22:7-18

The psalmist continues by crying out, "All those who see me ridicule me; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, "He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him; let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!" (Psalm 22:7-8) One of the most significant points of the prophecy of Psalm 22 is the fact that it foretold exactly what the Lord's enemies would say to him. (See Matthew 27:43) The phrase "He trusted in the Lord" is interesting because in the Hebrew Old Testament there are seven distinct words for 'trust', but the one used here occurs nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible. This emphasizes the unique relationship between our Savior and His Father, showing that the trust between them did not parallel relationships between human men. In fact, the Lord's enemies were likened to the bulls of Bashan, such was their contempt, scorn, and cruelty expressed towards Jesus. (See Psalm 22:12-13) This refers to bulls that would gather around their victim in a circle, and at the slightest provocation would charge and gore their victim to death. The Jewish leaders were being compared to these bulls as they stood around the cross, mocking, scorning, and degrading our Lord. Not only were these leaders like bulls, ready to strike and kill, but they were also like roaring and scavenging lions ready to rend and devour Him. This is quite a striking image of those men at the foot of the cross!

Psalm 22:14-15 tells us how Jesus felt as those bloodthirsty bulls and lions closed in on Him to end His life. The psalmist laments, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it has melted within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue clings to my jaws; you have brought me to the dust of death." The psalmist also likens other bystanders to "dogs" who are casting lots for His clothes. (See Psalm 22:16) These would be symbolizing the Gentiles or Roman soldiers who were looking onto the scene. Dogs during the time of the New Testament were not household pets; instead, they roamed the streets, were unclean and vicious, and tore their victims apart. So this description is to liken the soldiers to unclean and violent animals that attack. The various animals described here then, the bulls, lions, and dogs, represent those surrounding the cross that have crucified Him and led Him to this state of misery. The psalmist then goes on to pray and ask God for help, characterizing Jesus' prayer from the cross: "But you, O Lord, do not be far from me; O my Strength, hasten to help me! Deliver me from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dog. " (Psalm 22:19-21) We can associate this "dog" identified here in the person of Pilate, the Roman procurator responsible for the convicting of Jesus and his subsequent crucifixion. This cry from the psalmist not only resembles and predicts Jesus' prayer and cries from the cross, but recalls another prophecy from Zechariah of similar words: "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, against the Man who is my companion," says the Lord of hosts." (Zechariah 13:7)

Abuse of Satan and Demonic Powers, Psalm 22:19-21a

The Lord was not only abandoned by God and abhorred by men, but He was also abused by Satan. The psalmist cries, "Save me from the lion's mouth and from the horns of the wild oxen!" (Psalm 22:19a) The lion, symbolizing Satan, was present at the cross, seeking and ready to devour. The powers of hell and rulers of this world's darkness were present. We know that Christ is indeed over all of the powers of the heavens and earth, as Paul teaches in Colossians: "For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him." (Colossians 1:16) Even though Christ is the head of all these things, they were still all gathered around our lonely Savior agonizing on the cross.

Blessing and Exaltation, Psalm 22:21b-31

The Psalm can be divided into two parts, with the natural dividing mark lying in the center of Psalm 22:21 where the suffering Savior cries, "You have answered me." Everything before this verse involves Jesus' suffering, and everything following it is an unbroken song. The title of this psalm, "Aijelet Shohar," in the original Hebrew language means "The hind of the dawn" or the "deer of the dawn." In the poetical books, such as Song of Songs, the hind and the hart, the male and female deer, are frequently mentioned and symbolically refer to the Lord. Song of Songs 2:17 and 8:14 both refer to this animal, the "gazelle." This kind of a deer is one of the most beautiful creations that God has made, yet it is also one of the most defenseless. Its only means of survival is its keen sense of smell and speed in flight, because enemies surround it continually. This analogy of

the “hind” is the beautiful picture used of our Lord in Psalm 22 to show His defenselessness, His humility in suffering, and the constant attacking to which He was subject through enemies. In Psalm 22:1-21, we can see that His enemies come from three distinct sources. His sufferings are divinely from God, physically from man, and diabolically from Satan.

Yet in this second section of the Psalm 22:21b-31, we also find that the Lord is blessed in three corresponding spheres as well. The psalmist speaks of His “brethren” to whom He will pass on the message of salvation from His Lord. (See Psalm 22:22) He then goes on to recall the blessing of the “descendants of Jacob” and “offspring of Israel,” noting that He still recognizes His people as set apart in order to glorify God. (See Psalm 22:23) He then turns His praise and thanks for blessings to the kingdom of the Lord, saying, “All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you.” (Psalm 22:27) This last remembrance of blessing looks forward to the hope of all of God’s people for eternal salvation of the “ends of the world.”

There are also four different recognizable applications through which the psalmist speaks in Psalm 22. First, symbolically, the psalmist illustrates the sign of helplessness and defenselessness against enemies through the “hind of the dawn.” This hearkens us back to the suffering of our Lord on the cross and describes an image of our Lord in His abandonment by both God and men while at Calvary. Secondly, this psalm portrays several messianic titles to describe our Lord: the “worm,” “my darling,” the leader of the praises, and the ruler of the nations. (See Psalm 22:6, 22:20, 22:25, and

22:28 respectively) Each of these titles expands our image of the Lord and our understanding of what Jesus endured on the cross for each of us. Thirdly, we see the historic events of the birth, death, resurrection, and exaltation of the Messiah. The psalmist speaks of forming Him in the womb, bringing Him to the “dust of death,” hearing His cries and delivering Him from His enemies, and finally, recounting what He has done for the “next generation.” (See Psalm 22:9-10, 22:14-18, 22:19-24, and 22:25-31 respectively) Each one of these sections deals with an historical stage of the Lord’s life and ministry on earth or from the cross. Lastly, a fourth image is given in Psalm 22 of the Lord as the Prophet, when three circles of blessing are described, as previously mentioned. Each of these prophecies propels us forward to the time when His kingdom will come and all nations will glorify Him. These spheres of blessing are presented before the mention of the Kingdom of the Lord in Psalm 22:28-31 because this is the last stage of prophecy that follows the blessings of His people. (See Psalm 22:22, 22:23, and 22:27)

Interestingly enough, for Jewish people today, Isaiah 53, which portrays explicitly the sufferings of Christ and the sin-bearing Messiah, is often omitted in the Sabbath readings in the synagogue. Additionally, rabbinical commentaries of the Psalms omit any reference to Psalm 22, since it is “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense” to them and their lack of recognition of Jesus as the Messiah. Beloved, as Christians may we all glory as the psalmist does in the recognition of what Psalm 22 teaches us in regards to our Savior. May we all be like the psalmist and be able to say “I will declare your name

to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will praise
You.” (Psalm 22:22)

The Beautiful Savior

In various scriptures, there are praises of Christ that label Him precious and beautiful. We find one of these in Psalm 45, when the psalmist cries, “You are fairer than the sons of men; grace is poured upon your lips!” When the psalmist used the word “fairer,” this is like saying that Christ is beautiful. Beloved, do you think of Christ this way? We can also see names given to Christ in prophecies of Isaiah, for example in Isaiah 9. Isaiah cries, “And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9:6) Even in Peter’s experience in the gospels, we see him calling Jesus the Christ, which is revealed to him by God. (Matthew 16:16) In Peter’s writings later, we see him still identifying Jesus as His precious Savior: “Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious.” (1 Peter 2:7) We then see Thomas identifying Jesus as his precious Lord; once a doubting witness, but eventually a believing disciple after Christ reappeared following His resurrection. After seeing His wound, Thomas cries in awe and renewed belief, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28)

If we take a look at Song of Songs 5, we see other praises for the beauty of the Lord, represented by “the beloved.” The women of Jerusalem are asked, “What is your beloved more than another beloved?” (Song of Songs 5:9) The bride, who can represent the church or body of believers, answers, “My beloved is white and ruddy, chief among ten thousand.” The bride then tries to describe the beauty of the bridegroom using images of the finest things to describe him, but finds him utterly

beyond compare, and ultimately exclaims, “Yes, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend.” (Song of Solomon 5:16)

Mary Magdalene is yet another example of a woman that displays devotion to a precious and beautiful Savior. At various times, she names Jesus “my Lord,” “Rabbi,” and “Master.” (See John 20:13 and 20:16) She also shows undivided worship of her Savior. In one story in John 12:1-8, Mary opens a costly oil jar in order to worship and anoint her precious Lord before His death. In her worship, however, Mary never speaks a word, simply weeping and wiping His feet with her hair. The fragrance of her action expresses her adoration and worship, and it fills the room. This image has lived on through time and is still a wonderful example of sacrificial love for our Savior. What is so memorable is that Mary recognizes the Lord as worthy of worship because He was the fairest and most beautiful man in the world. In a similar story, a woman breaks an alabaster box filled with expensive oil and anoints Jesus’ head, much to the chagrin of those standing by. In Mark 14:6, Jesus tells those observing the scene, “Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for me. Against the day of my burial she has done this.”

In another instance, Mary and Martha are hosting Jesus at their home and Martha becomes red-faced and ruffled with the responsibilities of hosting. After all, this meal she is hosting is not just for an average family member or even a Pharisee; the Christ, the Son of God, is in her home! Mary, however, sits at Jesus feet, worshipping and adoring her precious Savior. Jesus condones her worship and devotion to Him, saying, “But one thing is needed,

and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.” (Luke 10:42) Indeed, worship of Jesus, in its purity, is always near the cross. Brothers and sisters, we should all remember the words of the hymn In the Cross of Christ I Glory that worships Christ, saying, “In the cross of Christ I glory, towering over the wrecks of time.”

Authentic Broken Vessels

The Psalmist in Psalm 51:17 cries out, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—These, O God, you will not despise.” If we think upon what God can use for His glory, we must remember that He can only use broken things and imperfect vessels reflecting His glory. Think about Mary’s box of ointment she broke open in order to anoint the Lord’s feet with very costly oil. (See John 12:1-11) Through her tears and brokenness, she serves the Lord and anoints Him for His upcoming sacrifice on the cross. In Judges 7, we read of the story of Gideon’s troops. 32,000 men were gradually reduced to 22,000, then to 10,000, then ultimately to three hundred men by the Lord’s command. God wanted to use this strikingly small number of men against the Midianites, who were numbered as “the sand by the seashore in multitude.” (Judges 7:12) God chooses to use this small, ragtag band of Gideon’s men, armed with earthen vessels, torches, and trumpets to defeat these mighty men, so that He might have all the glory and recognition for this amazing defeat. He could have armed Gideon’s 32,000 with classic military weapons, but the Lord chose to whittle their numbers down to scarcely anything, and then gave them seemingly harmless tools to accomplish this task. He used these broken, powerless vessels to create a memorable victory and bring glory to Himself!

Again, we see with Saul of Tarsus that God intends to use the brokenness of individuals for His service. Despite his persecution of Christians, God chooses him as His “chosen vessel.” (See Acts 9:15) Saul, becoming

Paul later, even identifies himself as “formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor and an insolent man” and a “chief” of sinners. (See 1 Timothy 1:13-15) On the road to Damascus, Jesus intends to break Saul into his servant, giving him an affliction in his eyes, which might have been something like blindness, then heals him of this with Ananias’ baptism with the Holy Spirit. (See Acts 9:10-19)

Later in his ministry, Paul refers to himself as weak, with a thorn in his flesh given to him by the Lord. This brokenness apparently enables him even more for his ministry. He says he pleaded for the Lord to take away his thorn, but the Lord replies to him, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Paul then boasts in his infirmities, so that the power of Christ may rest upon him. He continues, “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:9-10) Despite these many biblical examples, the ultimate use of brokenness lies in our Savior Jesus. If we reflect upon the Lord’s human body, we know this was the exemplary model of brokenness accomplishing redemption of God’s people and glory to God. God used Jesus’ broken body to pay for the sins of the world, shedding his blood and suffering for the sake of His people.

We also can see this brokenness through tears shed over lost souls and grieving for the sin in the world. General Booth, the great evangelist and leader of his “Salvation Army,” led evangelists to spread the gospel and bring others to salvation. When two in his army became frustrated and weary from evangelism in a new city and

shared their concerns with General Booth, he sent a telegram to them with two words: "Try tears!" This old-fashioned evangelist, broken in spirit, displayed this kind of fervency and soaked his pillows as he pled for souls' salvation. Psalm 126:6 teaches, "He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Andrew Bonar, another great minister from Scotland, used to weep and cry as he heard the crowds of people outside roaming the streets on a busy Saturday night on the town, "O God they perish, they perish!" His soul was wounded in thinking about the multitudes that did not know the Lord and he shed tears for their lostness.

Let us look in Scripture where we see evidence of brokenness and grieving for lost souls through the weeping of God's people. In Isaiah, God commands the prophet to tell King Hezekiah he will deliver him and save him, saying, "Go and tell Hezekiah, 'Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father: "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears."' (Isaiah 38:5) In the book of Job, we see this godly man in his pain, grieving, and suffering, crying out, "My friends scorn me; my eyes pour out tears to God." (Job 16:20) David tearfully laments in Psalm 6, "I am weary with my groaning; all night I make my bed swim; I drench my couch with my tears. My eye wastes away because of grief; it grows old because of all my enemies. Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity; for the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping." (Psalm 6:6-8) Jeremiah also laments for his people in despair, "Oh, that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my

people!" (Jeremiah 9:1) In Luke we encounter the sinful woman, who, overtaken by the holiness of her Lord and her own sinfulness in contrast, tearfully anoints Jesus' feet and anoints them with her expensive oil. (See Luke 7:36-50) In Acts 20, we know that Paul has spent the last three years training up leaders and Christians in the church at Ephesus, and he says, "Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears." (Acts 20:31) In Hebrews 5:7, the author refers to the Lord's crying Himself, grieved by the lostness of His people who He would die for: "in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear." We see from these many biblical examples that tearless hearts can never be the heralds of the passion of Christ, rather we should grieve and weep for those who do not yet know the love of the Lord and salvation for eternal life.

Let us be aware, however, that our brokenness and tears should never be a feigned faith. As believers, we should never pretend. Ask yourself, are you for real? Are you what you appear to be? Are you putting on a show or masquerading as a spiritual Christian? Many are hiding under a façade or acting out their part well. We must be careful of this, because the Word admonishes us to drop the façade, take off the mask, and stop trying to impress others. Jesus, teaching before the scribes and the Pharisees, condemns them, quoting from His father's words in Isaiah: "Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 'These people draw near to me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And in vain they worship me,

teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” (Matthew 15:7-9) Stop covering up your coldness, lethargy, and sin and quit pretending to be spiritual and victorious. Let us demonstrate unfeigned, sincere, genuine faith and walk among men as a holy prince of God.

Resources in Christ

Christian, if we ever need genuine sympathy, it can be found in the sympathizing Jesus, who mingled His tears with the bereaved sisters of Bethany and suffered more than we can imagine. We see Him at various times in scripture weeping. For example, He wept at the grave of Lazarus when he died, He lamented for Jerusalem, and even for the world while at Gethsemane. (See John 11:35, Matthew 23:37, and Matthew 26:37-38) The compassionate Jesus cared for His people in Israel while in the wilderness by providing them with their every need: manna, water, and the pillar of cloud and fire. In Deuteronomy we see these promises and provision through the Lord in various places. In Deuteronomy 29:5, the Lord reminds Israel of this: "And I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn out on your feet." Then again He promises them, "Your sandals shall be iron and bronze; as your days, so shall your strength be...The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms; He will thrust out the enemy from before you, and will say, 'Destroy!'" (Deuteronomy 33:25, 27)

We are also told many times in Scripture to rely on the Lord for our strength and power, whether in times of distress or times of prosperity. In 1 Peter 5:7, Peter tells us, "Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." Similarly in Psalm 55:22 the psalmist exhorts believers to "Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved." In the story of the Samaritan woman at the well

with Jesus, Jesus speaks of Himself as renewal and strength, saying to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." Jesus loved, cared for and had mercy on countless people during His earthly ministry. For example, when John the Baptist's disciples inquire about Him being "the Coming One," Jesus confirms His miraculous care for those around Him, telling them, "the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them." (Luke 7:22b) Because of Christ's unfathomable understanding and mercy upon us, as believers we know that when we need strength for the way, we should come to the One whose strength is made perfect in our weakness. (See 2 Corinthians 12:9)

Let us consider the story and situation of Job in regards to suffering and Christ's genuine sympathy. In Job 1:1 we are told he was "a man who was blameless and upright, one that feared God and shunned evil." God had so blessed him for his obedience that he was "the greatest of all the people of the East." (Job 1:3) He possessed seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred female donkeys, and had obviously prospered in his livelihood by God's hand. Yet God allowed Satan to test Job by taking everything he possessed, including his family. Satan smote Job with boils so that he was forced to be quarantined from the remainder of the community. His wife urged him to "curse God and die." (See Job 2:9) His three comforters asked him to confess his sin. Job

said, "Though he slay me, yet I will trust him." (Job 13:15) Even right after he has just found out that his entire household and all of his sons and daughters have died, Job still praised the Lord, saying, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Even though Job was suffering, the eternal God still ministered to him for his faithfulness and blessed him. Several times Job referenced "the shadow of death" in this book about his life and this experience of suffering, much like David used it in the well known Psalm 23 where he said, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me." (Psalm 23:4)

Let us consider for a moment a famous psalm by David, Psalm 103. At the time when he wrote this, we can conjecture that David had already walked through many valleys of death. He had fought and killed a lion, a bear, and the mighty Goliath. David's secret weapon in these feats was not his physical strength and power, rather, the power of the Lord. He admitted to Goliath, "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied." Then, when David was in the palace, Saul threw a javelin at him, and his own son, Absalom, eventually tried to kill him, hunting him as a partridge. Finally, as David approached the last dark valley of life he wrote in this psalm, "I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me, guarding and guiding me all the way." (Psalm 23:4) We know that as believers, just as God would never leave David, He will indeed never leave or forsake us. As Moses told all of Israel when they were wandering in the desert, the Lord promised them and promises us: "Be

strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Deuteronomy 31:6) Beloved, this is a resource we have in our own beloved Christ.

The Love of Jesus

In Christ, we also have the amazing, unmerited resource of His divine, sincere, enduring and unfailing love. This sincere love can be found in the heart of the God who told forth its love in drops of blood. There is indeed no other love like the Lord’s love. In John 15:13, Jesus taught this matchless love saying, “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” Jeremiah also testified to the Lord teaching about His love, saying, “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.” (Jeremiah 31:3) The best description of the sincere love of Christ came from Solomon. In Song of Songs 8:6-7, he wrote this description: “For love is as strong as death...many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it.” Jesus indeed loved us to the end of His ministry and will continue to love us throughout eternity. (See John 13:1) The Lord’s love for us is unquenchable because He loves us from everlasting to everlasting, regardless of what we have done. In Romans 8:38-39, Paul teaches, “Neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Jesus’ love for us is also an enduring and unfailing love. In Psalm 37:25-26, the psalmist claimed, “I have been

young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging for bread. He is ever merciful, and lends; and his descendants are blessed." Jesus continues to love throughout the ages, from young to old. He loved Peter even through his denial of knowing Him, even back into the fellowship again. We see countless hymns in which this reality is brought forth in beautiful poetry. In the hymn, Glory to God on High, by Thomas Kelly, he wrote these words: "Love that no tongue can teach. Love that no thought can reach. No love like his. God is its blessed source. Death ne'er can stop its course. Nothing can stay its force. Matchless it is." In George Robinson's classic hymn I Am His and He Is Mine, he wrote, "Loved with everlasting love, let by grace that love to know; gracious Spirit from above, thou hast taught me it is so! Oh, this full and perfect peace! Oh, this transport all divine! In a love that cannot cease, I am His and He is mine."

We also should be assured that we each have perfect protection in Christ. In Isaiah 43:2 we are told, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you." Psalm 46:1 likewise teaches us, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Beloved, be confident in the fact that the one who made and holds the universe together has promised to be our shield, buckler, fortress, and high tower. Philippians 4:4-7 teaches us to let the God of peace also foster His peace in our lives. Paul said, "Rejoice in the Lord always...The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and

supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Psalm 91 promises us equally beautiful blessings through our Lord and Savior. The psalmist praised, “He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust.” (Psalm 91:1-2)

Psalm 133

Introduction

David wrote this Psalm. It is one of the fifteen songs of degrees of which Hezekiah wrote ten, David four and Solomon one. Despite its brevity, it is a spiritual jewel. The main lesson of the psalm is to show the beauty of unity. This unity implies oneness of spirit, awe, and interests within the Body of Christ, which is made up of diverse individuals. On the fundamentals we must agree. In matters of less importance there should be liberty for differing viewpoints. The assembly that agrees on the basics and yet disagrees on subordinate issues without being disagreeable is guaranteed God's presence, power and blessing.

Psalm 133:1 - "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." This was the state that God desired for Israel (see Numbers 24:2-6). He also desires this unity for His church (see Acts 2:42). The Lord delights in the unity of His people and pours out His blessing upon them. It is also the state which Satan fears most and he and his divisions work day and night to destroy.

As the shadow of the Cross began to fall heavily across the Lord's path, He prayed for the unity of His Church. He prayed that they might be one - specifically, "that they may be one even as we are one." See John 17:21-22. This unity, this oneness, is what the Holy Spirit accomplished when He baptized each believer into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13 and Ephesians 4).

There is one body and one Pentecost. This unity was evident in the infant Church. They were in one place and they continued with one accord in prayer and supplication (see Acts 1:14). This means that they were all in agreement. They were as one as they waited for the coming of the Spirit. As the Church grew they were bonded together: rich and poor, slaves and freemen, great and small, young and old, educated and uneducated. They had all things in common. There, the Lord commanded a blessing. [Describe the great days of the beginning of our movement.] There was blessing and rapid growth. After twenty years the whole thing was blown apart. Unity, even today, is a rare and exotic plant. It is an endangered species. All this is true, despite the fact that God says, "it is good and pleasant for brethren to dwell together in unity, there I command my blessing."

David's Illustrations: The Anointing of Oil and the Dew

David uses two illustrations to show how good and pleasant unity is in God's eyes. The first illustration, the anointing of oil, is taken from the sacred realm, while the second illustration, the dew, is taken from the secular world. He says, "It is like the precious ointment upon the head that ran down upon the beard even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garment." David brings to our attention the anointing of Aaron, Israel's first High Priest. He mentions five things about the anointing:

1. The oil was poured on Aaron's head (see Leviticus 8:12) - This speaks of the uniqueness of his position. He was the recognized heart of the religious nation. Aaron is a type of the Lord, who is the Head of the Church. The

Lord was anointed by the Spirit (see Hebrews 1:9).
“Anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows.”
The glory of the majesty and the fragrance of His person
fill the heavens and the earth.

2. The oil ran down over Aaron’s beard: Aaron was a real man - As a type he speaks of the manhood of our Lord, who though perfect man was also perfect God. See 1 Timothy 3:16, which speaks of the mystery of the hypostatic union. Aaron, by his anointing, stood out from all other men; in the same way, the Lord stood out from all created beings in unsurpassed excellence. He is without equal and beyond compare. “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Men and women from all walks of life were drawn to Him. There was a magnetic power and a fragrance about Him that was inexplicable. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. He was loving, gracious, kind, forgiving, and generous. Everywhere He went the perfection of His Deity and humanity shone forth. Some examples include: The multitude of Capernaum, the money changers, and the disciples in the stern of the ship. Strong men left their careers to follow Him, even to death. Devoted women loved Him and served Him. The children were unafraid of Him and received His blessing. He was a real man. He was God manifest in flesh - Emmanuel, God with us.

3. The oil ran down onto Aaron’s garments - Aaron’s garments were the garments of a working priest. The Lord Jesus came into this world as a servant. Mark 10:40 says, “He came not to be ministered unto but to minister.” He came with a Calvary ministry, which He fulfilled with Calvary love and He has a continuing ministry at God’s right hand.

4. The oil ran down to the skirts of Aaron's garments - The skirts of Aaron's garments reached down to the ground. As a type, this depicts the stupendous stoop of the Lord Jesus, who left heaven's highest glories and came into earth's lowest depths.

2 Corinthians 8:9 "You know the grace of the Lord Jesus."

Philippians 2 "He was made like unto His brethren."

Hebrews 2 "We see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels."

Hebrews 4:15 "He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities."

Hebrews 4:16 "We can come to Him and "obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

His ministry for His own is loving and caring. His mercy is compassionate and kind.

5. Aaron was a type of Christ - As the anointed one and the Mediator between God and man, he reminded others of Christ. As he served God and the people, the fragrance of that unique perfume emanated from Him. As the Lord served God and man there was an air of mystery about Him. There was an un-worldliness about Him that baffled the intellect. It forces us to ask the questions: Are we like Christ? Do we show Him in our lives? Does the fragrance of this Person flow through us? There was nothing on earth that brought more joy to God than to see a prepared priesthood functioning in His appointed way, and a united people worshipping and serving Him. It was in such conditions that God commanded the blessing.

Let us now consider the ingredients and the making of this perfume. This perfume was made of four spices: myrrh, sweet cinnamon, sweet calamus, and cassia. These were mixed with oil. Careful instructions were given as to the weight of each spice and the amount of oil to be used. Everything was to be mixed and bound together by the oil. This was a perfume that was not to be duplicated; it was for God's use alone. Its fragrance was confined to the Tabernacle. The vessels of the outer court were anointed with it. The furniture of the Holy Place was anointed with it. In the Holy of Holies the ark and the Mercy Seat were anointed. The Tabernacle environment was enveloped in this unique fragrance. Aaron and his sons were anointed with it. They could not come into God's presence with the odor of the flesh on them. They had to be washed with water, then anointed with this unique ointment.

The application is that each believer has been anointed by the Spirit to be a "sweet-smelling savor of Christ in a foul-smelling world." Believers have been washed with the water of the Word - cleansed from all sin - and anointed with the Spirit. One should be able to say, "Truly they have been with Jesus."

As was mentioned previously, the second illustration David uses is from the secular world. Unity in God's eyes is like the dew of Hermon that descended upon the mountains of Zion. In that hot Mediterranean climate, dew is vital to the sustenance of plant life. When David mentions Hermon, figuratively, he is referring to the ten northern tribes. When he mentions Zion, he is referring to the two southern tribes. In this verse he envisages the united nation of Israel being saturated with the life-giving blessing of God.

Dew is formed in the night season. It falls to the earth when the world is still and at rest and brings joy, life and fruitfulness to a parched world. Restless energy, ceaseless activity, and endless striving cannot produce this unity that God desires for His people. The dew “type” of the Holy Spirit cannot be manufactured by fleshly means. He falls upon God’s people when they are submissive, quiet and still before Him (see Psalm 46). He brings love, joy, abundant life, and fruitfulness to a waiting church. David ends the Psalm with a pertinent statement, “There the Lord commanded the blessing,” even life forevermore.”

Unity and the Lord’s Blessing

God’s Holy Spirit is grieved and quenched by a squabbling church. Where there is quarreling and murmuring, souls are not saved. Young believers do not grow in the Lord. The secret of growth spiritually and numerically is when those in fellowship, “Love God, love each other and love the lost around them.” In these pristine conditions God bestows His blessing. “Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. There the Lord commanded the blessing.”

David loved unity. He came from a divided family and knew the disadvantages associated with this. He was distressed to see Israel divided and torn apart with internal strife. In their weakness they were harassed by their many enemies. They also were suspicious of one another. Despite the magnitude of this task, with the Lord’s help, he united the tribes and welded them into a united kingdom. David brought cohesion to the nation when he centralized everything in Jerusalem. David

knew that true unity is centralized in the living God. He planned for the Temple to be built to weld the people together as one. David knew that true unity could be obtained through faith in the living God and obedience to His Word. It was when Israel was united under David that God commanded the blessing. Israel was never greater in her long history.

After David's death, Solomon in his backslidden condition undermined the foundation David had laid. Jeroboam, Solomon's son, shattered this unity. He led the northern tribes in open revolt. He taxed the people to death and he also introduced calf-worship to the nation. He changed the feast days, corrupted the priesthood, and forsook temple worship. Israel became apostate and came under God's judgment. Then along came Hezekiah. Hezekiah saw that the nation needed to be reconciled to God and united; the old divisions needed to be healed. Under God he spearheaded one of the greatest revivals in Israel's history. The people came from the northern and southern kingdoms united in heart and voice to worship God in the beauty of holiness. God blessed the nation again. "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity, for there the Lord commanded the blessing."

The way of transgressors is hard (see Proverbs 13:15). If proof were needed of the truth of this verse we need only read the daily newspapers: A Nazi war criminal who had escaped detection and capture in South America for 35 years committed suicide. The fear of being caught and probable execution made living unbearable. Three men who demanded \$90,000 ransom from his son kidnapped a 74 year-old man at gunpoint. The son is a reputed drug dealer, currently fleeing from

the police. A police captain falsely reported that his car had been stolen. He hoped to collect insurance on it. He was an outstanding officer and was likely to become chief one day. Now he has been dropped from the force and awaits a criminal investigation. One criminal knew the truth of the verse. He had proved that sin's built-in consequences are inescapable. I repeat, "The way of transgressors is hard."

Finally, consider this: One of the most poignant moments during the coronation of Her Majesty, the Queen, in Westminster Abbey was when the crown was about to be placed upon her head and the Archbishop of Canterbury, the chief citizen of the country, called out four times towards each point of the compass in the Abbey - "Sirs I present to you the undoubted Queen of this realm. Are you willing to do her homage?" Not until a great affirmative shout thundered down the nave of Westminster Abbey four times was the crown placed upon her head." Now I say to you my brethren and sisters, "I present unto you Jesus Christ as your undoubted King and Lord." Are you willing to do Him homage?"

Studies in Psalm 139

The Omniscient, Omnipresent, and Omnipotent God

This Psalm is one of the most excellent and beautiful of all one hundred and fifty Psalms. It is unsurpassed in the sublimity of its message. Not only is its message a glorious one, it is also one of the most soul-searching chapters in the Bible. David, the psalmist of this particular psalm, realized he was in touch with the omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent God. The fourteen verses of the Psalm divide into four sections of six verses each. In Psalm 139:1-6, we learn of God's omniscience in being the all-knowing and all-seeing one. Next in Psalm 139:7-12, we see how God is omnipresent, meaning He is present everywhere. In Psalm 139:13-18, we find David proclaiming God's omnipotence, meaning that He is the all-powerful One. We also see that in Psalm 139:14-20, the psalmist reacts to these majestic truths, and finally, in Psalm 139:23-24, the psalmist ends the psalm on his knees in earnest prayer as he considers God's attributes and his own unworthiness.

The Omniscient God, Psalm 139:1-6

Let us now consider God's omniscience as we examine more thoroughly the first six verses of Psalm 139. David says, "O Lord, you have searched me and known me." (Psalm 139:1) This means that God knows each and every one of us in this intimate way, with deep knowledge of our minds, emotions, wills, and lives. In fact, nothing escapes His all-seeing eye nor alludes the gaze of His all-knowing mind. There are examples in Scripture where we see Jesus casting meaningful glances as He knows the intimate details of people's

lives and minds. In the story of Peter's betraying of Jesus, Jesus predicts that Peter will betray Him three times, yet he denies it. When this does come true, we see that "the Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times." (Luke 22:61)

In Revelation, Jesus appears with "eyes like a flame of fire" and says to the seven churches, "I know your works." (See Revelation 1:14 and Revelation 2) When Jesus tells the parable of the tax collector and the Pharisee praying before God at the temple, the one who "goes down to his house justified" is not the Pharisee, who performs for the outward appearance of his actions and prays he is not like other men. Rather, God, who searches all hearts and knows men's thoughts and actions, knows that the tax collector is justified, because he recognizes his sin and unworthiness of mercy. (See Luke 18:9-14) God is watching us every moment of our lives with His searching, penetrating, piercing eyes. We also cannot avoid God, because there is no escaping from Him. In scripture, we see Adam, Elijah, and Jonah all attempting to hide from God and His call for them. (See Genesis 3:8, 1 Kings 19:1-10 and Jonah 1:3) Hebrews 4:13 claims, "There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account." Every part of our life, moment, movement, and microscopic detail is revealed and known to Him.

In Psalm 139:2-6, David tells us the extent to which God knows us, speaking of our thoughts, actions, and words. David says, "You understand my thought afar off." (Psalm 139:2) Only the all-knowing God possesses

this kind of knowledge. This is a most comforting and yet frightening thought! David continues by saying, “You are acquainted with all my ways.” (Psalm 139:3) This means that God also knows the motives that prompt our actions and has perfect knowledge of our open and secret life. He sees and hears what we do and say. If we reflect on David’s experience with Bathsheba and his adultery, Nathan finds out from the Lord about what David has done in secret. He tells David a parallel story about a rich man and a poor man, and when David condemns the rich man’s actions, Nathan reveals to David, “You are the man.” (See 2 Samuel 12:1-15) God indeed can see into every part of our lives, even that which is hidden to other men. Continuing on in Psalm 139:4, David says, “For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.” This shows that God is also in full knowledge of and well acquainted with our words. Let us consider for a moment how much and how often we open our mouths to speak. The average man fills an average-sized book with his words every single day. That means that in a lifetime, he would speak as many words to fill enough books in a large library! Yet while he will forget most of the words he spoke, God always remembers them all. God’s knowledge is so extensive that even before our thoughts are brought together coherently or expressed in words, He knows what they will be and understands them!

Yet in Psalm 139:5, David says, “You have hedged me behind and before, and laid your hand upon me.” This shows that God’s knowledge of us and what our days will be like is so complete that He can guard us from both behind and in front of us day by day. His powerful

hand continues to protect us. In Psalm 34:7, David also claims the promise that “the angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him.” Psalm 91:11-12 promises us God’s angelic protection, saying, “For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.” David continues his psalm in Psalm 139:6, saying, “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high, I cannot attain it.” Here David can rejoice in the knowledge of the Lord’s promise to never leave us nor forsake us, the awareness that He will resurrect us in a place where there will be no more mourning or crying or pain. (See Revelation 21:4)

The Omnipresent God, Psalm 139:7-12

Now let us examine the next section of this psalm, with verses 7-12, that reveals the omnipresence of God. The psalmist not only knew God as the all-knowing and almighty God, but as the ever-present God who is in all places at one and the same time. David was convinced that nothing could hide us from God and His inescapable presence. Hebrews 13:5 promises us that He will never leave us. Romans 8:39 similarly promises us that nothing “shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Look at the two questions David asks in Psalm 139:7: “Where can I go from your Spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?” In the next five verses, David proceeds to answer his own questions by describing the inescapable God as present in five extreme spheres: His height, depth, the east, the west, and extreme darkness.

First, he says, "If I ascend into heaven, you are there." (Psalm 139:8a) Heaven here symbolizes the highest height the Lord reaches, because the Lord's presence reaches far beyond earth's confines. In Psalm 89:11-12, the psalmist says, "The heavens are yours, the earth also is yours; the world and all its fullness, you have founded them. The north and the south, you have created them." All of the vast, stellar empires of space and the countless stars and their satellites traveling at inconceivable speed are His too. Think about the fact that there are a hundred million galaxies in which the Milky Way is only one. In this one galaxy, there are a hundred billion stars spinning around a central disc. This disc is one hundred thousand light years from rim to rim and contains six hundred million, billion miles of stars, and they are all His. Isaiah 40:26 speaks of God's divine creation and care for the heavens: "Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power; not one is missing."

David then identifies the depth of God's presence in Psalm 139:8b: "If I make my bed in hell, behold, you are there." He follows this with a description of God's presence in the easternmost parts of the universe, saying, "If I take the wings of the morning," implying God is there too. The psalmist here is making an allusion to the rays of the morning sun that streak across the sky at 186,000 miles per second. Even if we could travel like this at the speed of light to the remotest corner of the universe, when we arrive, God would still be there. We cannot hide from Him and He is absolutely inescapable. Think of the example of Jonah, who God wanted to go to

Nineveh five hundred miles northeast of Palestine. But instead of going east, Jonah decided to go two thousand miles to the west. God sent him to the greatest metropolis of that day, but Jonah instead headed for a remote trading post on the fringe of civilization, fleeing from the presence of God. Despite his well-laid plans, though, he could not hide from God. The Lord knew where Jonah was all along and found him to complete his mission he desired him to complete.

David continues in Psalm 139:9-10 by saying if he dwells “in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me and your right hand shall hold me.” Let us recall a story in history to reflect upon this. In 1845 Sir John Franklin lost his life in the snow-clad polar regions of the Pacific while on an exploration with his ship crew. None of his team ever came back or was found alive. Years later, Sir Francis McClintock discovered what remained of the expedition, and among the books and bones was Franklin’s copy of John Todd’s Student’s Manual. The dead explorer’s finger was pointing to a place on the page in the book where a dialogue was found. This dialogue said, “Are you afraid to die?” The other says, “No!” The person reacts, “No? Why does the uncertainty of another state give you no concern?” He replies, “Because God has said to me: “Fear not, when you pass through the waters, I will be with you.” We can see that even on this doomed, freezing expedition in Northern Canada, Sir John Franklin knew the abiding presence of God.

We see from Psalm 139:7-10 that David is sure that not even death, being in heaven nor being in hell can hide him from God. Revelation 21 speaks of the gates of pearl, the streets of gold, the walls of jasper, the

foundations gleaming with precious stones, the tree of life, and the crystal river, where there is no night, no sin, no suffering, and no tears. God, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus, the Son of God will all be present there, and we will see His face. We cannot hide in heaven nor hell, and death allows no escape from God. Anyone who shuts God out of their life and dies will meet God in hell. They will hear the dreadful sentence being passed upon them. Revelation 22:11 says, "He that is unjust let him be unjust still, he that is filthy, let him be filthy still."

The Psalmist continues by showing how not even darkness can hide us from God. In Psalm 139:11-12, David says, "If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," even the night shall be light about me; indeed, the darkness shall not hide from you, but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to you." Humanly speaking, darkness is considered the surest of all hiding places, because mortal eyes cannot penetrate dense darkness. Although darkness may hide man from man, it cannot hide man from God, as we see in these verses. In His presence, the night shines as the day, the darkness and the light are alike to Him. In Jeremiah 23:23-24, The Lord Himself asks rhetorically, "Am I a God near at hand and not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him? Do I not fill heaven and earth?" Men and women have tried to hide from God since time began, starting with Adam and Eve in the garden. In Amos 9:2-3, the Lord similarly shows the ultimate knowledge of His creation, saying, "Though they dig into hell, from there my hand shall take them; though they climb up to heaven, from there I will bring them down; and though they hide themselves on top of Carmel, from there I will

search and take them; though they hide from my sight at the bottom of the sea, from there I will command the serpent, and it shall bite them.” We can see that the Lord knows and sees our whereabouts and can be present with us in our every attempt, because He is everywhere. He is with us in the valley of the shadow of death and when we pass through the deep, dark waters. When the storm in our breast is raging we will not fear, for God is a present help in time of trouble. (See Psalm 46) When we walk through the fire of affliction, if we trust that He was with Daniel in the lion’s den and the Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, He will be with you leading you out faithfully. Isaiah 32:2 assures us that during a future reign of righteousness and justice, men will be “as a hiding place from the wind, and a cover from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” Let us remember the words of the well-known hymn, Take My Hand, Precious Lord, by Thomas Dorsey:

“When my way grows drear, precious Lord linger near.
When my life is almost gone, hear my cry, hear my call,
hold my hand lest I fall. Take my hand precious Lord,
lead me home.”

The Omnipotent God, Psalm 139:13-18

In Psalm 139:13-16, David presents to us the omnipotence of God through skill and delicacy, describing the mystery of conception, the development in the womb, and the birth and life of human beings. David sees man as God’s crowning achievement. He says, “For you formed my inward parts; you covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are your works, and

that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. 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." (Psalm 139:13-16)

Here, to demonstrate the power and skill of omnipotent God, David chooses not to describe the immense power of God in creating the universe from nothing, creating Adam from a small quantity of earth, creating the animals, or even creating Eve from Adam's rib. He does not even reference the amazing event of the liberation of Israel from Egypt or the miracle of the opening of the Red Sea. Instead, to prove his point of the awesome power and omnipotence of God, David chooses rather to describe the marvelous development of a baby in its mother's womb.

Even though David's knowledge of the mysterious process by which a baby is conceived and grows in the womb would have been very limited, he knew enough to be awed at the process of the development of life and still attributed this inexplicable phenomenon to omnipotent God. He could not have realized how marvelous and miraculous the growth and development of a child in a mother's womb truly was! Since David's time medical knowledge has exploded, baffling the intellect of our brilliant professors and doctors. We now know that in an infinitesimal embryo, smaller than the dot over the letter 'i', all the future characteristics of an individual with their physical traits and natural abilities are programmed in germ form in that fertilized egg. Each cell contains two hundred trillion tiny molecules of atoms, each of which is a micro-universe of unbelievable

complexity. All of these cells put together make up a living creature. Every minute of every day, some three billion cells of the body die, and the same number are created to take their place. There are thirty billion of these cells in the brain and billions of red blood cells in the veins. With infinite skill and delicate precision, our omnipotent God develops one tiny egg into sixty trillion cells, one hundred thousand miles of nerve fiber, and sixty thousand miles of vessels carrying blood around the body with numerous bones, joints, ligaments and muscles working in conjunction to form a life. Such a complicated human system cannot possibly be the result of the mechanical forces of evolution or chance. We see in this psalm that even without this complex study, David was indeed confident that God had made, formed, and created him.

David also knows that God determines the length of our lives before we are born. (See Psalm 139:16) The Lord's tender care does not cease once we are launched on to the ocean of life and are born. God's thoughts toward us are unfailing and more than the grains of sand on the sea shore. (See Psalm 139:18) These verses urge us to think, "How precious it is Lord, to realize that you made me and that you are constantly thinking about me." He schedules the things around us all of the time, each day of our lives are planned even before we began to breathe. God made us, our fingerprints and our DNA uniquely, like no other among the billions of humans that have lived. Beyond this microscopic attention of the Lord, He is also powerful at the telescopic level. For example, astronomical evidence displays that the earth is indeed the Lord's. (See Psalm 24:1) Our God is the God of the Universe, and He spoke worlds into space,

billions of stars sprang into life, shone, burned, blazed, exploded and expanded. To create these, God had only to speak them into existence.

The World's Final Judgment and the Omnipotent God

We should also consider the practical application of these truths for us. The omnipotent God knows how you treat Him and His Son because He created you. He will undoubtedly draw you to Him and hold you accountable for your actions. Even though we are born in sin, we still must answer to Christ for all that we have done and said in this life. Proverbs 29:1 promises us, "He who is often rebuked, and hardens his neck, will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." We also know that there is no escape from this inevitable judgment. In Hebrews 2:3, the author asks, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" (Hebrews 2:3) Later, the author also claims the inevitability of our deaths: "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment." (Hebrews 9:27) Our omnipotent God has a personal message for us. In Acts 17:30-31, Luke reports, "He now commands all men everywhere to repent because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Jesus Christ from the dead." Therefore, we are to repent, brothers and sisters, because we know that we will one day appear before Christ to answer for our lives.

Let us examine Revelation 20:11-15 and what it says about the world's great assize, or final judgment. John "saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled

away.” (Revelation 20:11) This scene is in eternity, where earth and heaven have disappeared and the throne is set up in space, upheld by the mighty power of the omnipotent God. John continues, “I saw the dead small and great standing before God, and books were opened.” (Revelation 20:12) These men standing before God will include all types of men: great, rich, poor, religious, moral, famous, and infamous, and we will all be there too! (See Revelation 6:15-17) There will be no escaping this call. John goes on to describe this scene: “The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.” Here, John is describing the second resurrection, involving all those resurrected from Hades, or those who have died without Christ as their Savior, being judged out of the books. At this time, the degree of punishment will be determined for everyone. Finally, John tells us about those who have appeared before God at the great white throne and “cast into the lake of fire.” He says, “This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:14-15) If you die without Christ, you too will be there. There will be no escaping this call!

However, despite the judgment to come that is promised, we know that we have an escape as believers of Jesus Christ. God, our omnipotent God, provides for us! He does this through His Son, our Savior, Jesus. Jesus Himself actually warns us to “flee from the wrath to come” when He lashes out at the Pharisees in Luke 3:7. He also teaches his followers to deny themselves and take up their crosses to follow him. He says, “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world,

and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" Again in John 5:24, Jesus teaches, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes in Him who sent me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life." He also says to his followers, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) When we think of the provision of our omnipotent God to be saved from His wrath at the final great assize, let us remember the words of the hymn Lord I'm Coming Home by William J. Kirkpatrick from 1892: "I wandered far away from God. The paths of sin, too long I've trod. I've wasted many precious years, I now repent with bitter tears. I've tired of sin and straying Lord; I'll trust thy love, believe thy Word. My soul is sick, my heart is sore; my strength renew, my hope restore. Coming home, coming home, never more to roam. Open wide thine arms of love, Lord I'm coming home."

In Psalm 90:12, the psalmist requests from God, "Teach me to number my days, that I may apply my heart to wisdom." We should ask ourselves if we trust that nothing is too hard for God. As we have seen in Scripture and in this study, nothing is impossible with God! The Lord asks Abraham in Genesis 18:14, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" The angel tells Mary in Luke 1:37, "For with God nothing will be impossible." We must remember that He has the whole wide world in His hand. We should also be in awe of Him: God is so great that there is nothing He does not know, nowhere He is not present, and nothing He cannot do. He knows when you and I sit down, when we get up, and is

acquainted with all our ways, words and thoughts. He is behind us, before us, His hand is on us all the time, and He is absolutely inescapable.

Let us cry out to God as David cries out to God at the end of Psalm 139: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm 139:23-24) In the royal Christmas message broadcast on December 25, 1939 to England, a country just on the brink of World War II, King George VI read the famous poem God Knows by Minnie Louise Haskins. He is quoted as saying, "And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: "Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown." And he replied, "Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way." Beloved, God is so great! Let us rejoice in these three amazing characteristics of our God. There is nothing He does not know. There is nowhere He is not present. There is nothing He cannot do.