

Fact Sheet for "Search Me" Psalm 139:1-24

Pastor Bob Singer 07/19/2015

I have a friend who attends a group that helps with a destructive pattern of behavior (much like AA). They even talk about how long they've been sober, meaning how long it has been since they acted out in this pattern. My friend invited me to attend this group one night. While there someone made a comment that gave me pause. They said something like they work so hard to stay sober. My first thought was that it's hard work only if you do not stay sober. But I understood what they meant. The conversation around sobriety is a good and appropriate one for a benchmark, but biblically there is a different way of thinking that we should pursue. Imagine walking up to the edge of a cliff. How close can I get until I am in danger of falling off? Wrestling with personal destructive habit patterns are a lot like this. We give often ourselves permission a little at a time to get closer to that brink of disaster. For an alcoholic it may be just walking into a bar. He hasn't ordered a drink yet (fallen off the cliff). He's still sober, but the temptation has definitely ramped up. The real trick is not to even take that first step towards the cliff. In Psalm 139 David writes of both the behavioral choices we make in life *AND* the thoughts behind those choices. Guarding our very thoughts is the biblical line we should not cross.

ESV *To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.*

God, You Know Us Completely (1-6)

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.**

This is either comforting or scary depending on your choices. (Compare the KJV on this verse,)

³ **You search out my path and my lying down
and are acquainted with all my ways.**

NET **Psalm 139:3** You carefully observe me when I travel or when I lie down to rest; you are aware of everything I do.

⁴ **Even before a word is on my tongue,
behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.**

Consider God's foreknowledge

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.**

We Are Always in Your Presence and Can Never Get away from Your Knowledge (7-12)

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, you are there!**

Compare Romans 10:6-7. "Sheol" – Even when I die You are there.

⁹ **If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,**

"wings of the morning" (east) and "uttermost parts of the sea" (west)

¹⁰ **even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me.**

Notice the words "lead" and "hold". They indicate that David is seeking after righteousness and knows that God will help him. The "right hand" is usually the strong hand

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.**

"If I say" – This is a hypothetical that does not describe David. Not that darkness is light to God, but that darkness cannot hide anyone from God's knowledge.

You Even Made Us (13-16)

**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.**

"I praise you" – again shows David's heart as he wrote this psalm

**15 My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.**

We are intricately woven, not evolved.

**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.**

"formed" – Compare Isaiah 45:18

Consider also the tension here between God's choice for the length of our life before we were conceived and our choices in life.

Your Thoughts Are Precious to Me (17-18)

**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.**

Cf. Job 38-42

I Hate the Wicked (19-22)

**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.**

This is David's gut reaction to those who hate God's thoughts.
Remember that David was a warrior.

Search Me and Lead Me (23-24)

**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!**

These are the words to a hymn we sing. These words go far deeper than actions. David is asking God to evaluate his thoughts and inclinations! What makes the struggle with sin hard is when we try "sin management". God never calls us to manage sin. He calls us to be righteous. What makes it easy is when we choose to deal rightly with every thought before we even get near to acting out. If we do this we avoid the hard temptations all together. This is why the comment about working so hard to stay sober caught in my thinking.