

Sermon outline notes: Psalm 139 The Mystery of God

Introduction

Many regard this psalm as one of the most profound poems in all Hebrew literature. It is an intensely moving meditation on the nature of God, but it is a meditation pursued not by the use of visual images but by reflection on the invisible attributes of God.

- 1) **The Divine Omniscience– the Mystery of God’s all Embracing Knowledge** vv 1-6.
 - David sees himself under the inspection of the ‘all seeing eye of God’. This ‘all seeing eye’ however scrutinises his mind as well as his actions.
 - A person might feel tyrannised by this divine omniscience, but for David this all embracing knowledge of God is not an ominous threat but a welcome refuge, verse 6.
 - I freely confess says David that I cannot understand you God– you are a mystery to me and ironically the more I find out about you the more amazing and awesome and mysterious you become.
- 2) **This Divine Omnipresence–The Mystery of God’s Inescapable Presence** vv 7-12.
 - David considers the idea hypothetically at least of flight from God– is there somewhere in the universe where he can escape God. But he realises the impossibility of that.
 - David’s reaction to God’s inescapable presence is not one of resentment but one of gratitude. No matter what happens to him, David can rely on God being there, not to threaten but to direct and make secure.
- 3) **The Divine Providence– The Mystery of God’s Sovereign Providence** vv 13-18.
 - David knew enough biology to know that something as complicated as a human being put together in nine months was truly amazing.
 - God had plans for David and David does not feel resentful about the fact that God directs, superintends, guides his life. David does not

feel that this Sovereign providence of God is a threat to his human freedom, David finds it an immensely precious comfort in all his human vulnerability.

- 4) **The Spiritual Challenge** vv 19-24
 - David knows he is faced with a choice– either he identifies with ruthless men and their unscrupulous ways or he must find the courage to be different and stand out from among them.

Application

- 1) This psalm is immensely important in our understanding of God. It is a key text about the doctrine of God.
- 2) Ethical issues– verse 13-16 have enormous significance and relevance to the debate about abortion and embryo research:- What is the status of a foetus; when does a foetus become a human being?
- 3) David showed me that a God I could fully understand would not be God. A God I fully understand I would not be able to worship. Worship is wonder at that which surpasses you– worship is to bow and say ‘such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.’ Psalm 139 taught me that I have to come to terms with ‘mystery’.

Points to Ponder

- 1) Share first reaction to the sermon. What points particularly spoke to you? Why?
- 2) The ancients spoke of childbearing in mysterious terms. Has science added or subtracted from the mystery of life?
- 3) Has God ordained all your days? (v16) What does this mean? What doesn’t it mean?
- 4) What do you think of David’s hatred (vv 21-22)? Is this an appropriate response for a Christian today?
- 5) Write verses 23-24 in your own words. What is David asking for and why does he ask for it? Think of your answer in the context of the psalm as a whole!
- 6) What did you think of the personal application of ‘mystery’ made by Charles?