

THEISM

God And Me

For many people, God is considered a being who is disconnected from reality, i.e., not relevant to humanity. Even though most people may declare belief in God, people often act like they consider God a distant being, one with whom they have no personal or intimate fellowship. Their beliefs about God are admittedly generally irrelevant to their decisions affecting their personal, familial, social, cultural or political behavior.

But that's not how the Psalmist, David, thought about God. Psalm 139 best describes David's understanding of his association with God. This Psalm is a prayer wherein the Psalmist not only described God as all-knowing, everywhere, creator, and holy, but also indicated what these characteristics of God meant to him personally. Observe the Psalmist use of pronouns. Whereas God is referred to as "you" and "your," the Psalmist refers to himself as "me" and "I."

Psalm 139 consists of twenty-four verses and appears to be divided into four strophes of six verses each. In the first strophe, the all-knowing God is described, but not as a distant unconcerned God. The author is convinced from experience that God knows everything there is to know about *me*, not just acts, but also motives and purposes. God has searched *me* (v. 1). He knows *me* (v.1), *my* sitting down (v.2), *my* rising up (v.2), *my* thought (v.2), *my* path (v.3), *my* lying down (v.3), all *my* ways (v. 3), every word on *my* tongue, even before it is spoken (v.4), etc. God has cupped his hand over *me* (v.5). For the Psalmist, the implication seems to be that God's knowledge is for his benefit, for his protection. Such knowledge, the Psalmist reflects, is too wonderful, too high, for him to attain (v.6).

The second strophe observes not just that God is everywhere in time and space, but that God is always wherever I am. *I* cannot get away from God's spirit, from his presence (v. 7). If *I* go into heaven, God is there (v.8). If *I* go into the grave, God is there (v.8). If *I* go to distant parts of the sea, God is there (v.9). If *I* go into darkness, God is with me there (v. 11). The Psalmist cannot hide himself from God. However, the Psalmist does not want to escape from the presence of God. Rather, he is reflecting on the fact that wherever he is, God is there for his benefit, i.e., to "*lead me*," (v. 10) to "*hold me*" (v. 10).

In the third strophe, God's great power is not characterized as might be expected, as creator of heaven and earth, but as *my* creator. He "formed *my* inward parts" (v. 13). He "covered *me* in my mother's womb" (v. 13). "*I* was made ..." and "skillfully wrought" (v. 14). God's creative work stimulated the Psalmist to exclaim, "I will praise *You*" (v. 14), and "Marvelous are *Your* works" (v. 14). The Psalmist also noted that to him, God's precious thoughts numbered more than the sand (v. 18).

The fourth and final strophe is a prayer that God would slay the wicked (v. 19). One's first thought may be that this strophe appears disconnected from the other strophes that present the greatness of God – his great wisdom, his great presence, and his great power. Yet, a more careful scrutiny of this strophe reveals that the Psalmist wants the wicked destroyed because they are incompatible with God. (Only in the fourth strophe are the third personal pronouns "they," "them," and "those" used.) The wicked are here

characterized as “bloodthirsty” (v.19). They “speak against *You* wickedly,” “take *Your* name in vain,” and “rise up against *You*” (vv. 19-21). Therefore, the Psalmist hates them; he loathes them, he counts them as his enemies (vv. 21-22). The Psalmist seems uncomfortable with the fact that wicked people exist and that they can oppose his great and wonderful God. Yet, being human and capable of sin, lest he himself also be classified among the wicked, he concludes with the prayer that God would “Search *me*,” “Try *me*,” “know *my* anxieties,” “see if there is any wicked way in *me*,” and “lead *me* in the way everlasting” (vv. 23-24).

A few observations may be appropriate. First, whereas the Psalmist was keenly aware of God’s knowing all about him, we who live in a secularized world often act oblivious to God’s knowing our thoughts and actions. And whereas the Psalmist stood in awe of God because he understood that God knew all about him, we may have little if any reverence for God because we do not recognize that God knows all about us. A sense of closeness to God requires that we acknowledge that God knows all there is to know about us, and that we are comfortable with that fact.

Second, whereas the Psalmist seemed highly conscious of God’s presence wherever he was, we may act like there is no God as we go through daily routines, because we may think that we alone direct our lives. If we are unmindful of God, we are likely to feel self-sufficient and have no desire to seek God’s leadership, care and protection. We thereby rob ourselves of close communion with God.

Third, whereas the Psalmist was aware of God’s power to mold and form his life, we may be unaware of God’s power in directing our lives. And whereas the Psalmist awareness of his formation by God’s and of God’s guidance over his life caused him to praise God, and to marvel at His works, we, being unaware of God’s power over our lives, may not praise Him, nor marvel at His works. Nor are we likely to pray for God’s guidance when we lack intimate association with Him.

Fourth, whereas the Psalmist identified himself with God and understood that God is holy, he hated those who took the name of God in vain and counted the wicked as his personal enemies, we, being unmindful of the holiness of God, may not identify ourselves with God. We may even sometimes laugh with those who take God’s name in vain and count the wicked as our friends. We must remember that those who are friends with the world are at enmity with God (James 4:4). Therefore, we, like the Psalmist, should pray for God to “see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (v. 24). Since we know that God will condemn the wicked (Matthew 7:23; 25:41, 46; John 5:28-29; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; Revelation 6:15-16), we should aspire to obtain everlasting life (1 Timothy 6:12; 1 John 5:13; Jude 21)

When people strongly believe that God knows all about them, that He is everywhere they are for their own benefit, that He made them, and that He has no commonplace with the wicked, then people are better motivated to so live that they may be in close, intimate fellowship with God. Moreover, God will not then appear in their minds to be off out yonder somewhere. Rather, their attitude toward God will be like the Psalmist who thought in terms of personal, intimate fellowship with God.