



water from rock

## Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – June 8, 2021

The Lord be with you.

As a pastor and a Chaplain, I've often been asked through the years to read two psalms to people. Two psalms that just really seem to speak to and encourage people, whether they're struggling with cancer or they're wanting to get ahead. You probably won't be surprised by the first psalm that I'm so often asked to read, it's Psalm 23, that great shepherd psalm about the Lord as our Shepherd. The next Psalm, I am often asked to read a Psalm 139, it is a wonderful Psalm, a psalm that my wife and I read together most every night before we go to sleep. I don't have time today to look at the entire psalm, but I do want to introduce it and to talk more about it in the next Selah.

Psalm 139 is a psalm of David, as David is in trouble again. David is surrounded by enemies. People seeking to put him to death, and this song gives us insight into what is David's boldness his fearlessness, they all come from David's confidence in God's omniscience. That is David's confidence that God knows everything. But not just that God knows everything, but that God knows everything about David. As God knows everything about you. About me. For David, that is encouragement, that is inspiration, that God does know everything about us. My wife Rita and I just returned from being with our grandkids, and I don't think you'll be surprised when I tell you that I want to know everything about our grandkids. I mean, not because I want to catch them doing something wrong and punish them, but I want to know everything about our grandkids well, because I love with them. And so David began Psalm 139 in the midst of trouble. He is praising God for knowing everything about him. David writes in verse 1. "O Lord, you have searched me and known me. The Hebrew word translated search as a word that was used for searching for gold or silver, you see, God has taken the initiative to get to know David, to search him out, to know him like a lover seeks to better know the beloved. So, this is not a Santa Claus kind of checking out to see who's been... Not again, is but no, this is God wanting to know everything about you, to know you inside and out, to know what makes you tick. The Hebrew word translated here as known, it is not to know about you, but it is to know you experientially, to know you relationally, to be in relationship with you. And so that gives David courage as he is surrounded by his enemies.

Verse 2, David continues in praise of the Lord. "You know, when I sit down and when I rise up." Here David is using a figure of speech that is common in the Hebrew scriptures, the figure of speech is called merism, that's M-E-R-I-S-M. And that's where the whole is expressed by stating the opposites... The opposites here, when I sit down, when I rise up, that means the whole of your life, that God knows you from the moment that you get them in the morning to the moment you go to bed at night, because God cares about every part of your whole day. David continues praising God, you discern my thoughts from far away. From far away has a sense not from far away in space, but



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far away in time you see, God discerns your thoughts from eternity, God knows what you and I will be thinking in any situation, he knows it from eternity past.

Verse 3, David continues, "you search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways." Here is another merism where opposites are put for the whole my path, my lying down, all of that you do from one end of the day to the other, from the work to your rest. God knows it all.

And then in Verse 4, David says, "Even before a word is on my tongue, Oh Lord, you know it completely." Before you know what, you're going to say tomorrow, or even five minutes from now, God knows it completely.

Verse 5, he says, "You and hem me in behind and before and lay your hand on me." When David praises God that You hem me in. The words had the idea of that God builds a hedge around us. God puts us in his shelter, God holds us fast. He lays his hand on you. He's got you.

This leads David, and it leads us, I think, to praise God in Verse 6, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is so high that I cannot attain it." David's words here are use of a stronghold, a fortress that is so high up that you cannot climb to it. You cannot reach out. And so David says that The God's knowledge of you is so high that he cannot understand it, he cannot attain it.

Okay, let's put these first six verses together now, and let's worship God...

"O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know, when I sit down and when I rise up, you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, Oh Lord, you know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and lay your hand upon me, such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is so high that I cannot attain it."

Thank you, David. And I say a hearty amen to that.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thanks for listening until next time.