

Sermon & Bible Study Helps

I AM FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE

Emphasis Passage: Psalm 139:14

Parallel Translations

King James: I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.

New King James: I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well.

New International Version: I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

New American Standard: I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well.

New Revised Standard: I praise thee, for thou art fearful and wonderful. Wonderful are thy works! Thou knowest me right well;

New Living Translation: Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous--and how well I know it.

New Jerusalem Bible: For so many marvels I thank you; a wonder am I, and all your works are wonders. You knew me through and through,

Hebrew Text

נִפְלְאִים מַעֲשֵׂיךָ נִרְאֹת נִפְלִיתִי אֲדַבֵּר עַל כֵּי
Your works are wonderful. I am fearfully and wonderfully made. because I praise You

וְנַפְשִׁי יָדַעַת מְאֹד:
My soul knows [it] well.

KEY WORDS (WITH STRONG'S REFERENCE NUMBERS)

נִרְאֹת (nora'oth) – Niphal, participle, feminine, plural
(3372) יָרָא (yare') – to be afraid, to be awe inspiring, to be reverent

נִפְלִיתִי (niphlēthi) – Niphal, perfect, 1st person, singular
(6395) פָּלַח (palah) – put a difference, set apart, make wonderfully, distinguish

CONTEXT

Psalms 139 is one of David's great psalms of praise to God. In this Psalm David is awed by his realization of God's great attributes. David declares that God knows everything (vv. 1-4), that God is everywhere (vv. 7-10), and that God can do anything (vv. 5, 11-12). He then provides the example of his own conception as an illustration of these magnificent attributes (vv. 13-18). In light of God's greatness, it is inconceivable to David that anyone would reject Him. He expresses complete contempt for those who fail to recognize God's greatness and instead rebel against Him (vv. 19-22). He concludes his psalm of praise by asking God to reveal any rebellion in his own life so that he can walk more closely with God (vv. 23-24).

SERMON AND BIBLE STUDY NOTES

Introduction

We often look to Gen. 1:27 to defend the sacredness of human life. In that passage, Moses wrote that human beings are created in God's image. While we do not know all that it means to be created in God's image, we do understand that nothing else in creation has been endowed with this relation to God.

There are other reasons to defend the sacredness of life as well. Three of those reasons can be found in David's great psalm about God's attributes. In the midst of expressing his amazement at who God is, David reflects on the meaning of this for his own life. In verses 13-18 he looks at the beginning of his life and shares three great truths about God's care for him that give us more reason to appreciate the sacredness of human life.

I. God Cares About Our Beginning – vv. 13-14

God was personally involved in shaping David in the womb. This shaping was not just physical or spiritual, it was everything. David expressed the comprehensive nature of God's involvement in his formation by saying that God "created" his inmost being. The basic meaning of the word translated "created" is "get" or "acquire." Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, p. 350, notes that the word does not mean "to acquire" in the sense of "purchase" but rather "to put together." God brought together all the necessary components for David's life.

God's involvement in David's development reached to the most remote parts of his life. The word translated "inmost being" is often translated as "kidney" or "heart" in the Old Testament. David used the word here to refer to that which is the most inaccessible in the body. God didn't just shape the outside. He also took interest in the inside. W. VanGemeren, *Psalms, EBC*, p. 838, suggests that this phrase refers to David's spirit. If he is correct, then David is crediting God with both his physical and spiritual development.

David also stated that God's involvement was purposeful. All that God did fit together into a master plan. God wasn't simply throwing together a jumble of flesh and spirit. He was carefully

crafting a unified whole. David brought out this purposeful activity with his use of the word "knit." Each fiber, each sinew, each organ was woven together with the others to make David a complete human being. C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, vol. 3, p. 277, says that God had "put his parts together, as one who weaves cloth, or who makes a basket."

As David considered the wonder of God's care for his beginning, he broke out in praise (v. 14). He used two words to describe his awe at his creation. He said he was "fearfully" and "wonderfully" made. The word "fearfully" is used often to refer to peoples' response in God's presence. They are awestruck with reverence for God's magnificence. David looked at his body and was overwhelmed with a similar awe. F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, p. 350, says the word "wonderfully" signifies "to be picked out or separated, to be made in a select, altogether singular, i.e., a marvelously enigmatic, manner." David was amazed at how intricately God had worked to make his body so versatile and unique among all of God's creation.

II. God Cares About Our Present – vv. 15-16

In vv. 15-16, David repeated his acknowledgement of God's presence at his earliest moments of life. But the focus is much different in these verses. In v. 13 he said "you created," "you knit," but in v. 15 he said, "I was made," and "I was woven." Instead of saying that God performed the work, he said, "your eyes saw my unformed body" (v. 16). God is pictured here as one who observes the work rather than as one who actually performs the work. Here David considered God as the one who watched over his development, like a foreman watching over the progress of a job, making sure everything goes according to plan.

God's observation didn't just end in the womb. David envisioned God's watchful eye looking far into David's future, where He observed every event in David's life before it ever occurred. God saw all of this and wrote it down in His book (v. 16). While David affirmed that God created a record of his life, the fact that the events of David's life were recorded isn't the true focus of what David said. What is most important about what he said is that God cared so much about him that he recorded the events of every day of his life even before they took place. David knew that God didn't just shape him and then send him off into the unknown alone. God looked out over every day of his life and took note of what was in store for him each and every day.

III. God Cares About Our Future – vv. 17-18

What was even more amazing to David was that God had a plan for his life. The word translated "thoughts" probably means "plans." David used the word in v. 2 when he acknowledged God's knowledge of the ideas he entertained in his mind. Here David stated that God entertained ideas about him. In other words, God had a plan for David's life, and this excited him. In fact, David recognized that God's plans for his life exceeded his ability to understand. He said that if he could count them they would "outnumber the grains of sand" (v. 18). W. VanGemeren, *Psalms, EBC*, p. 839, comments on David's assessment, "Yahweh's plans are beyond man's ability to comprehend, as they are more in number than the sand of the sea."

When we consider that God had a plan for David's life before David was even born, God's role in David's development takes on an even greater significance. God was busy shaping David while he

was in his mother's womb to equip him for the task that He had planned for him. Obviously, God's involvement in David's earliest days was nothing like that of a distant observer. God took a hands-on approach to David's development. As God formed David's body and soul and watched over all his development, it was with a specific purpose in mind. God had plans for David, and he was making sure that David would be equipped to fulfill them.

Conclusion

God's intimate involvement with David was not unique. It was typical of His involvement with every human being. E. M. Blaiklock, *Commentary on the Psalms*, p. 130, comments that "God is interested in the unborn child, a point which necessarily determines the Christian attitude towards abortion. The embryo is His work, and the subject of love and interest of One who sees future potential and value in the first beginnings of life." When one considers that God is this involved with humanity, it is impossible not to respond with respect for human life. If God cares that much, we ought to care as well and give every life the opportunity to enjoy the God who created it and to fulfill its God-ordained purpose.

WHAT CAN ONE PERSON DO?

- Start a Pregnancy Crisis Center or volunteer to work in one.
- Teach young people the importance of abstinence from sex until marriage.
- Adopt a child.
- Find ways to meet the basic needs of people in your community out of respect for the high value God has placed on all human beings.
- Encourage your church to observe The Sanctity of Human Life Sunday every year.
- Write letters to your elected officials encouraging them to pass laws to protect all people regardless of age or condition.
- Write letters to the editor expressing your reasons for being pro-life.
- Hold seminars in your community to provide people the opportunity to hear pro-life answers and positions.
- Explain to your children why you are pro-life.

HELPFUL SCRIPTURE

Bible verses about the sanctity of human life

Genesis 1:26-27, Genesis 9:6, Exodus 20:13, Exodus 23:7, Job 10:8-12, Job 31:15, Job 33:4,
Psalm 106:37-38, Psalm 127:3, Psalm 139:13-16, Ecclesiastes 11:5, Isaiah 49:1, Jeremiah 1:5,
Matthew 19:4, Mark 10:6, Luke 1:41-44, Acts 17:24-28, Galatians 1:15

SUGGESTED BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

This is a suggested Bible study for any size group. The sermon notes on this sheet, the accompanying fact sheet, and the enclosed materials serve as resources as you prepare to teach and then lead this Bible study. Answers are provided with the questions when appropriate, but do not be too quick to give the answers. Allow the participants time to talk about the questions among themselves and offer their own answers.

Create Learning Readiness: Share some statistics or stories from the accompanying Fact Sheet that show how serious the sanctity of human life issue has become.

Ask: Why do you think people have such a low regard for human life?

Let the members spend some time talking about this.

Say: Somehow, people have to be brought back to the place where they value all human life. While there are many ways to do this, for Christians the beginning point is to know how God values human life. Today, we will learn from David about God's attitude toward human life in Psalm 139.

Say: Psalm 139 is one of David's magnificent Psalms of praise to God.
(Share with the members the Context information in the Sermon and Bible Study Helps guide.)

(Call on several people to read portions of Psalm 139.)

Say: David talks about God's care for him from three perspectives—his conception, his present, and his future. He begins by praising God for His involvement in his conception and development in his mother's womb.

Ask: What part does David say that God had in his early development?

God created his inmost being and knit him together.

Say: The word translated "created" in v. 14 is usually translated as "get" or "acquire." Most Bible scholars believe David is using the word in the sense of gathering together ("acquiring") all the necessary parts to make the desired product." So David is saying that God brought together all the necessary components for David's life.

Ask: What do you think David meant when he used the term "inmost being"?

Let the members discuss this. If necessary share with them the discussion of this term in the first point of the Sermon and Bible Study Notes section of this Guide.

Ask: What comes to mind when you think about God knitting David together?

David also stated that God's involvement was purposeful. All that God did fit together into a master plan. God wasn't simply throwing together a jumble of flesh and spirit. He was carefully crafting a unified whole. David brought out this purposeful activity with his use of the word "knit." Each fiber, each sinew, each organ was woven together with the others to make David a complete human being.

Say: Look at verse 14. This is how David responded to God's involvement in his earliest development. He used two words to describe his awe at his creation. He said he was "fearfully" and "wonderfully" made. The word "fearfully" is used often to refer to peoples' response in God's presence. They are awestruck with reverence for God's magnificence. David looked at his body and was overwhelmed with a similar awe. F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, p. 350, says the word "wonderfully" signifies "to be picked out or separated, to be made in a select, altogether singular, i.e., a marvelously enigmatic, manner." David was amazed at how intricately God had worked to make his body so versatile and unique among all of God's creation.

Say: In vv. 15-16, David repeated his acknowledgement of God's presence at his earliest moments of life. But the focus is much different in these verses.

Ask: Can you see what is different about verse 15 compared to verse 13?

David changes the action of the verbs from active to passive. In v. 13 David said "you created," "you knit," but in v. 15 he said, "I was made," and "I was woven." Instead of saying that God performed the work of forming David, he said, "your eyes saw my unformed body" (v. 16).

Ask: What is the difference between using the active verbs in v. 13 and passive verbs in v. 15?

God is pictured here as one who observes the work rather than as one who actually performs the work. Here David considered God as the one who watched over his development, like a foreman watching over the progress of a job, making sure everything goes according to plan.

Say: David says God wrote all the days of his life in His book before he ever even lived out one of them.

Ask: What do you think he means by this?

God's observation didn't just end in the womb. David envisioned God's watchful eye looking far into David's future, where He observed every event in David's life before it ever occurred. God saw all of this and wrote it down in His book (v. 16). While David affirmed that God created a record of his life, the fact that the events of David's life were recorded isn't the true focus of what David was said. What is most important about what he said is that God cared so much about him that he recorded the events of every day of his life even before they took place. David knew that God didn't just shape him and then send him off into the unknown alone. God looked out over every day of his life and took note of what was in store for him each and every day.

Say: Many Bible scholars believe that the word translated "thoughts" in v. 17 means "plans." David used the word in v. 2 when he acknowledged God's knowledge of the ideas he entertained in his mind. Here David stated that God entertained ideas about him. In other words, God had a plan for David's life.

Ask: Look at the last part of verse 17 and also v. 18. How do you think David feels about God's plans for his life?

David recognized that God's plans for his life exceeded his ability to understand, and this excited him.

Ask: Is there any relationship between God's involvement in David's formation and God's plans for David's life?

As God formed David's body and soul and watched over all his development, it was with a specific purpose in mind. God had plans for David, and he was making sure that David would be equipped to fulfill them.

Ask: David was blessed to have God so involved in his life. Do you think God is this involved with all people? Can you think of Bible passages that support your belief?

God says something very similar about Jeremiah (Jer. 1:5). Paul says that we "live and move and have our being" in God (Acts 17:28). E. M. Blaiklock, *Commentary on the Psalms*, p. 130, comments that "God is interested in the unborn child, a point which necessarily determines the Christian attitude towards abortion. The embryo is His work, and the subject of love and interest of One who sees future potential and value in the first beginnings of life."

Say: When one considers that God is this involved with humanity, it is impossible not to respond with respect for human life. If God cares that much, we ought to care as well and give every life the opportunity to enjoy the God who created it and to fulfill its God-ordained purpose.

Ask: What can we do to help people develop a greater respect for all human life, especially the unborn?

Let the members suggest some ideas.

Say: These are all great suggestions. Let's pray about what God would have us do this week and talk about His leading at our next meeting.