

OUR WONDERFUL GOD

"Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me." Psalm 139:5.

There are three great facts with which this Psalm is almost altogether taken up, namely, the Omniscience of God, vss. 1-6, the Omnipresence of God, vss. 7-12, and the Omnipotence of God, vss. 14-16.

1. The Omniscience of God.

(1) God knows all men.

Every person can truthfully say "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me." verse 1. Man is known to God in his physical and spiritual natures.

(2) God knows all men thoroughly.

He knows the incoming and outgoing, walking, waiting and working of all the sons of men. He understands all for He sees all.

a. God knows all their thoughts.

"Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off." verse 2.

b. God knows all their words and actions.

The entire course of human life is perfectly known to Him. Not a single work escapes His ears. "For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether." verse 4.

(3) God knows all men constantly.

At all times and under all circumstances He is perfectly acquainted with us. He knows us in work and in rest, in our daily walk and in our nightly repose. "Thou knowest my downsitting" for rest, "and mine uprising" for action. God's knowledge of us differs from our knowledge of each other not only in its extent and completeness, but in other respects: --

a. His knowledge is underived and independent.

b. His knowledge is clear and perfect.

He knows all things clearly and distinctly, intimately and thoroughly, infallibly and perfectly.

This ought to prove: --

(a) An antidote to the pride of intellect.

"Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." verse 6.

(b) An effectual restraint from the sins of the heart and action.

Darkness cannot hide from Him. He knows the evil thought, dark design, impure feeling.

(c) A solemn warning to the sinner.

(d) Impossibility of man justifying himself in sight of God.

(e) A comfort to people of God when misjudged by man.

(f) A guarantee of well-being of people of God.

God not only knows, but also cares for His people.

(g) A pledge of triumph of Divine Government.

2. The Omnipresence of God.

(1) God is personally present everywhere.

(2) God is intelligently present everywhere.

(3) God is influentially present everywhere.

Practical bearings of this great truth: --

- a. It should restrain us from evil.
- b. It should lead us to hold humble thoughts of ourselves and exalted ideas of God.
- c. It should comfort and strengthen Christians in severe trial, painful loneliness, and arduous duty.
- d. It should be an incentive to holy action.
What an incentive to holy living! "Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me." verse 5.

God knows us intimately and thoroughly. He is well acquainted with our persons, natures, and characters. The divine knowledge is not partial and fragmentary, but thorough and complete. Nothing has been overlooked, unrecognized, or unnamed. How good it is to know that there is One who fully knows and understands!

"Thou knowest my downsitteing and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off." verse 2. My most common and casual acts, my most needful and necessary movements are an open book to Him. He is present in my thoughts of meditation, in those seasons when I sit down to plan and devise. He is an intimate presence when meditation is ended and the moment of execution has arrived. This is a fact to be remembered every moment; sitting down to consider, or rising up to act, we are still seen, known and read by our God.

"Thou understandest my thought afar off." verse 2b. God discerns the faintest beginnings of purpose. He knows the thought long before it becomes the overt act. He sees it "afar off," when it is only a trembling suggestion. He has it under consideration and perceives its nature, its source, its drift, its result.

"Thou art acquainted with all my ways." verse 3b. God's knowledge of us is full and final. Nothing is concealed from Him with whom we have to do, and this should fill us with holy fear so that we sin not; with courage so that we dread not; with delight so that we mourn not.

I. Pardon For The Past.

"Thou hast beset me behind." He stands between us and the enemy in the rear. He defends us from the hostility of the past. He intervenes to save us from the sins that would overwhelm us. The memory of the past with its failures and follies would haunt us and hunt us and make our lives vertiable miseries but He undertakes to set us free. The believer is assured of pardon for all the past and God himself stands guard on his behalf. He besets us behind.

II. Power In The Present.

"And laid thine hand upon me." The hand suggests the sweet sense of companionship. The little child awakens in the night and is frightened by the darkness and the stillness, but the mother lays her hand on the baby, and the little one goes to sleep again. The hand suggests also the ministry of soothing. A fevered, tossing patient feels the nurse's hand upon his brow and exclaims, "How lovely that is!" How often in moments when life grows feverish our Lord lays His cooling hand upon us and we grow calm again. The hand suggests the bestowment of power. The Old Testament frequently says: "According to the good hand of my God upon me." It indicates the power of God flowing into human weakness and making strong for service. Is not this precisely what we need? In ourselves we are and can do nothing, but He lays His hand upon us and, lo, the weak becomes strong. "And I was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me." Ezra 7:28.

III. Protection For The Future.

"And before." He comes between us and the enemy that lies ambushed in futurity. He intervenes between us and the foes that frown upon us from the unknown future. He knows how often His people are harassed with anxious fears as to what the future holds in store, and by a miracle of transformation He changes the enemy's swords into ploughshares. He changes destructive anxiety into constructive thoughtfulness. He converts a lacerating fretfulness into an energetic contentment. He takes the terror out of tomorrow and enables us to live and labor in a fruitful calm.

All of life is enfolded in this gracious provision -- pardon for the past, power in the present, and protection for the future.