

# Infinite Intimacy

Psalm 139:1-24  
Halifax: 15 August 2004

## Introduction

In our study of the Sermon on the Mount, we have come to chapter 7.

- In many ways, Chapter 6 emphasised relating to God as Father...the One we trust to bless us...
- And Chapter 7 emphasises relating to God as Judge... the One who knows everything about us—right down to the smallest detail.
  - This part of Jesus' sermon brings into sharp focus the point that Jesus has made throughout the entire sermon:
    - That we dare not pretend with God...
    - That we must be sure that we are presenting ourselves honestly before Him.
- Jesus urges us in this part of the sermon:
  - Not to censure others when we have not first judged ourselves!
  - To earnestly seek God for our deficiencies (instead of pretending we have no deficiencies)...
  - To make sure that we are on the narrow way that leads to life (not the broad way that leads to destruction)...
  - To beware of false teachers and avoid them...
  - To find no safety in hypocrisy, for it will always be uncovered in the end...
  - And to make sure that we are building our lives foundation on the right foundation lest we lose everything in the end.
- These are the topics that we will be taking for the next several weeks...
  - All about living honestly and sincerely before a God who sees right through us.
  - Our hearts may be hidden from the eyes men, but not from Him.
- So this week (before we begin our study of chapter 7),
  - I want to present to you Psalm 139—
    - A marvellous Psalm that presents to us how near God is and how well He sees us and knows all about us.
    - I am sure that if we would but carry this simple truth that God always sees us...
      - There would be so much holiness, so much gratitude, so much love, so much reverence in us that we would hardly be recognised by the people that know us now.

- Let us then make use of this great Psalm in our meditations over the next few weeks.
  - And let us examine it closely now to enrich that meditation.
- First of all...

**I. Just look at how intimate God is with you!**

- When you sing the first six verses of this Psalm, you confess the infinite intimacy that God has with you!

A. I want you to notice how personal this Psalm is.

1. It begins, “You have searched **me**.”

a. It is about God and you—**you** as an individual!

- We often talk about the covenant nature of the Psalms, and that is essential.
- But the emphasis here is on the individual.
  - We must never forget that the covenant is made up of individuals, and that each one of these has a personal relationship to God.
  - You must every one answer to Him.

b. Notice also that David does not begin like a theology book—

- He does not say,
  - “God is omniscient...”
    - And begin to talk about how God knows all the facts of the universe and about the movements of nations and the movements of atoms...
- But he says, “You have searched **me** and known me.”
  - It is personal knowledge that is the focus here...
  - It is God’s intimate knowledge of you as an individual!

2. You will find that this is the emphasis throughout the entire Psalm...

a. It is not just that God knows everything, but that God knows me!

b. You do great harm to yourself when you try to distance yourself from God and get lost in the bigness of His creation.

- He reveals Himself to us not as a God who is far away and detached,
  - But as a God who is close and intimate with you...

- Do not suppose that the things in this Psalm pertain to someone else instead of you...
  - the person sitting next to you or David...
  - It is just as much about you and God as about David and God.
  - Every thing here is true of you if you are one of God's elect.

B. These opening verses teach you that God searches you to the very depths of your being.

1. The word **search** in verse 1 speaks of **digging**...

a. It refers to a search that is done when you expend great effort...

- Think of a government agent who manages to uncover information about a terrorist attack that is planned for next month...
  - He will search!
  - How earnestly he digs through all the information he has found...
    - He will gather up all the details—
    - He will search until he knows everything so he can bring the information back to those who sent him.
- That is the idea of this word **search** that is used to describe God's searching of us...
  - It is a searching that uncovers everything.

TRANS> But of course you must not take the figure too far.

b. You must not think that God has **difficulty** in finding out about us!

- The point is not that God must dig to find out all about us...
  - The point is that the knowledge He has of us is so complete and so detailed that it is **like** the knowledge a man acquires when he digs and searches exhaustively.
  - Everything about the matter at hand is discovered and nothing is missing.

2. Just look at how far God's knowledge of you goes!

a. Verses 2-3 show that God not only knows everything you do and everything you say, but even your thoughts as you go about these activities...

1) He knows your sitting down—knows what it is all about...

a) God sees you when you sit down to study His word...

- He sees what kind of attitude you have about it...what hunger you bring...

- He sees what you get out of it, what comforts you and what convicts you and what encourages you...
  - He sees to what degree you embrace His truth and to what degree you resist it.
- b) He sees you when you sit down to eat your food...
- He sees your gratitude and your praise of Him for your bread...
  - He also sees you greed and your gluttony...
- c) He sees you when you sit down in the company of others...
- He sees who it is that you choose to sit down with and why you choose that company—
    - and what you hope to do in their presence...
      - Are you there to impress them?
      - Are you there to get them to like you?
      - Are you there to help them? to get help from them? and if so, what kind of help?

TRANS> But not only does He see your sitting down;

- 2) He also sees your rising up.
- a) He sees you rise up to give praise to Him... to go and worship Him and to call upon His name...
- He discerns all the thoughts in your heart...
  - Are you going out of gratitude, or to try to bargain with Him?
  - Are you going for God, or are you going to impress other people?
- b) He sees you rise up to serve your neighbours...
- He does not forget even the cup of cold water given in His name...
  - He sees you rise up to take revenge on your neighbour or to go and slander your neighbour...
  - He is acquainted with all your ways.
    - Nothing escapes His notice.
- c) He sees you rise up to go to war—for yourself or for Him, for wickedness or for righteousness.
- d) He sees you rise up to commit sin, even as He saw Israel when they rose up to play before the golden calf.

b. His knowledge of you goes so deep that He even knows the millions of passing thoughts and all the thought-processes that went on your mind.

1) He “understands your thought afar off” as v. 2 says.

- He understands it before it is displayed to anyone—when it is the most remote...
- Even when you don’t understand your own thoughts—
  - When your motives are hidden from you under the veil of self-deception and self-righteousness.
  - Tell me Christian,
    - Can’t you look back on things you did in the past and see now that although you did not know it at the time...
      - you pretended to yourself that you were concerned when in reality you only wanted to gossip.
      - You pretended that you wanted to watch a certain movie for the good story line, but your real motive was lust...
        - God knew all about that even if you had deceived yourself.
        - He knows what is in your heart!

2) Verse 4 says that He even knows everything about your words before you speak them!

- “there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.”

a) He knows how it originated amidst a complex of motives and deliberations.

- For example,
  - He sees that word that was spoke in envy or self-pity about your neighbour’s new house...
    - even though it sounded like a complement.
  - He sees that angry word that was spoken to take revenge against your brother or sister.
    - The kind you speak so often that you hardly notice anymore because your conscience has been desensitised.

b) He also sees the word that you wanted to speak by didn’t...

- because you were afraid of being rejected or looking bad in the eyes of others...

- or because you were properly ashamed—
    - perhaps ashamed that you were about to speak a lie...or about to slander your friend...
      - He sees the initial desire to speak the word...
      - and He sees the restraint that keep you from speaking it.
- c. You are totally surrounded by God!
- 1) As verse 5 says, “You have hedged me behind and before”
    - With people, there is forgetfulness of the past, or no knowledge of the past...
      - But God is there behind you...
      - With people, there is no knowledge of the future and what you are going to do—
        - where all the motives and desires are going to lead you...
        - But God is there ahead of you as well.
          - He sees it all.
    - He is like a master who will not let his servant out of his sight for a moment...
      - Your very thoughts are all laid wide open to His view...
        - And they are not just opened... but actively considered and weighed.
  - 2) He has “laid His hand upon you”
    - so as to trace out all your ways.
    - You cannot make the least movement without His observation.
  - 3) But do not think that God is like an earthly master would be that did that...
    - a paranoid master that is so obsessed and filled with fear that he must have all his servants watched at every moment...
    - God is not like that at all!
      - His intimate observation of all the details of your life is a necessary part of His nature.
      - He is **God** and it is impossible for Him **not** to know.
        - He must know because all things are naked and opened to Him.
        - It is the way He is, and it is a glorious way!

- You go all wrong when you think of God on our terms.
  - It is for you to confess the great difference that there is between you and the glorious God with respect to this knowledge!
  - Verse 6 says,
    - “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, I cannot attain it.”
    - The word **wonderful** refers to something that is far beyond human capabilities!
      - CALVIN: “Many when they hear God spoken of conceive of him as like unto themselves, and such presumption is most condemnable. Very commonly they will not allow his knowledge to be greater than what comes up to their own apprehensions of things. David, on the contrary, confesses it to be beyond His comprehension, virtually declaring that words could not express this truth of the absoluteness with which all things stand patent to the eye of God, this being a knowledge having neither bound nor measure, so that he could only contemplate the extent of it with conscious imbecility.”

TRANS> So you see that God is so near God to us and so intimate with us that it surpasses our human understanding!

- But now I want you to see something else that is closely related to this...
- Namely...

## **II. That even though God sees you and knows all about you, He keeps up this infinite intimacy throughout your life.**

A. It is not that we are always intimate with Him

- We fallen human creatures are utterly intimidated when we think of God’s intimacy!
  1. We want to run and hide from Him!
    - a. Here is this great God, our Creator, the Judge of all the earth...
      - right there He is...
      - seeing every action, every word, every thought and intent of the heart.
    - 1) Our first response is like that of Peter when he say who Jesus was!
      - “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man!”
    - 2) We are even like those demons who cried out against Jesus...

- What do you have to do with us? Have you come to torment us before the time?"
- 3) We say, "Why do you stick so close to me?"
- "You make me nervous and insecure!"
  - We are like Adam who wanted to hide from God after He had sinned...
    - Why are you looking for Me Lord?
    - Why do you keep coming to me?
- b. Psalm 139 reflects this!
- Verse 7 says:
    - "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?"
  - And of course the answer is that it is utterly impossible to get away from Him.
- 1) Verse 8 speaks of distance—Can I find a place so remote that God is not there?
- "If I ascend up into heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold you are there."
  - If you could be transported to the farthest galaxy, you would find God just as near there as here...
    - If you were to go to the grave (here called hell—sheol in the original) then you would find God there also.
    - There is no place so remote that God is not there.
- 2) Verse 9 speaks of speed... Can I be fast enough to get away?
- "If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea..."
  - The wings of the morning refer to the light that envelops the sky in the morning—how quickly it spreads from one end to the other!
    - The uttermost part of the sea refers to the west which is where the sea was for the people of Palestine...
    - If he could move from one place to the next with the speed of the dawn—the wings of the morning...
      - "Even there Your hand shall lead me and Your right hand shall hold me."
- 3) Perhaps the darkness is a place of escape...

- v. 11-12: If I say,
  - "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," Even the night shall be light about me; Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light *are* both alike *to You*.
- You see that it is all the same to God.
  - Do not suppose that you are ever out of God's sight...
  - Neither distance nor speed nor darkness can remove you from His presence.

2. What a torment this can be to a sinful soul!

- a. The God who is always near and so near is a God who sees and who judges...
  - He does not look upon us with indifference...
  - But He detests our sin and our wickedness...
    - And with such close scrutiny of us,
      - We actually bring all our sins right before His face.
      - We are like a brazen adulterous who performs her wicked act right in front of her husband's eyes.
- b. There is not a one of us that does not at times wish that we could withdraw from God!
  - Do you know how I know that?
  - I know that because we all indulge wicked thoughts...
    - We harbour resentment...
    - We embrace adulterous lust...
    - We swim in the sea of covetousness
  - When you do these things, you don't want God around...
    - You want Him to leave you alone...
    - And when you do these things, you pretend that He is not around!
- c. That's right, if you were focused on the fact that He is near, you would not indulge in these things!
  - There are things you think about in you mind that you would never even want another human being to know about!
    - You would not dare to say some of the things you think...
  - Yet, God is always there reading your mind.
    - How is it that you are not ashamed of these things before Him?

- How is it that you can be so brazen as to sin in front of the Almighty?
  - I'll tell you how you can do this...
    - You pretend that God does not see you... You pretend that He is not near... that you are out of His sight.
    - You try to get away from Him, but you can't.
- B. You see that this Psalm is teaching you that you can't escape from God's intimate knowledge of you.
1. But you need to understand that this Psalm is not written from the perspective of an unbeliever.
    - a. Remember that this is an intensely personal Psalm.
      - It is not about just anyone...
      - It is about a certain kind of person.
    - b. It is talking about an elect person...
      - That is, someone that God has chosen to save from before the foundation of the world.
      - Someone who at some point in their life will come to trust in the Lord Jesus as Saviour...
        - A person who will admit that he is a sinner and cannot save himself...
        - and who will see that Jesus died on the cross and that whoever believes in Him will be saved—forgiven all his sins and given eternal life!
    - c. It is true that some of the things in this Psalm are true of anyone...
      - It is true of both the elect and the reprobate that God knows all about us and that we can't get away from Him...
        - But this nearness of God takes on entirely different character for you if you are His child or His enemy.
      - This nearness of God is absolutely awful if you continue to reject God's salvation!
        - What it means is that all of God's intimate knowledge of you is piling up against you for the day of judgement!
          - If only you **could** escape!
        - Now let me tell you, you can escape if you will escape—
          - Repent of your sin and believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.

TRANS> But this Psalm is not focused on the unbeliever...

2. This Psalm is talking about someone who is trusting in God's salvation, someone who is elect...

a. And for you, the intimate nearness of God is a marvellous thing—even if it makes you uncomfortable at times!

- It means that even though God knows all about you, He still sticks very near to you to do you good!
- Indeed, there may be times when you wish to avoid Him and hide from Him...
  - But He sticks near to do you good...
    - You cannot drive Him away—
    - He is relentlessly committed to staying near to bless you!

b. The words in verse 10 express this very clearly:

- v. 10: “Even there your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.”

1) Wherever you are,

- There is this wonderful presence that leads you and holds you—
  - an intimate active presence from which we cannot escape!
  - A very near presence that is always and ever working diligently for your salvation with all the energy of the divine love that sent Jesus to die for your sins!

2) God leads you as a parent leads a child,

- teaching you in every circumstance of life,
- feeding you with the bread of life,
- giving you the living water to refresh you,
- disciplining you when you have gone astray,
- gently leading you when you are with young,
- guiding you with His counsel.

3) The good news, dear child of God,

- is that there is no way to escape this divine grace!
- David learned this when he murdered Uriah and committed adultery.
  - God was still there and would not leave him...
    - God saw what David did and He went after him to restore him...

- And He did restore him.
- David would escape into the darkness, but the darkness did not hide from God!
- “Even there, Your hand shall lead me and Your right hand shall hold me.”

C. This Psalm teaches you that God’s gracious intimacy has been with you from the very start!

1. Verses 13-16 show that He charted out your course and carried out His loving plan for you from the very start.
  - a. Verse 16 speaks of the book of God in which all your days were written...
    - Before God made you, He had written out a plan that contained all the details of how He would bless you!
    - 1) He had chosen you before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blame before Him in love...
      - He planned out all your days from the first to last, and how in those days He would meet you all along the way with His grace to save you.
      - How He would come to your sinful soul and redeem you.
        - How He would bring His word to you and open your heart by His Spirit...
        - How He would bring you lessons throughout your life until your days were finished to lead you and guide you to Himself.
        - How He would raise you up to glory to live with Him forever.
    - 2) It was all written in His book—every detail...
      - Now of course, this does not mean that God has a book as we do...
      - But it is as if He has a book—a recipe or a plan book—or a blue print by which He operates...
        - Your days were mapped out from start to finish in order that God might take you and bring you to a glorious everlasting salvation.
        - He loved you before He even made you!
  - b. Verse 13 and 15 speak of how He began His work in your mother’s womb.
    - 1) When you were hidden from the view of man, God began forming your inward parts—
      - Your inward parts (spoken of in v. 13) or your reins speak of the place of your deepest sensibilities and longings.
      - That part of man that is so hard for us to understand, God formed...

- That which makes up your personality.
  - He was intimately involved with you from the very first to make you into what He wanted you to be for eternity.
- 2) Verse 15 says that you were skilfully wrought in the lowest part of the earth—
- There you were, hidden in the your mother’s womb and nobody knew what God was going to produce...
  - The words **skilfully wrought** speak of needlework...
    - God knit together all the tissues, sinews, arteries, nerves, organs, to be just what He wanted them to be for His glory.
  - Nothing just happened—
    - Your intelligence
    - Your appearance
    - Your personality
    - All these things were designed and planned by God.
      - This is not to be for you an occasion for pride, but rather an occasion for worship!
        - v. 14: “I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are your works, and that my soul knows very well.”
    - You were designed for His glory!
      - All your weaknesses and your strengths are for His glory.
      - And you yourself, if you are elect, are a vessel of mercy prepared for glory in eternity!
  - God is displaying in you the glory of His salvation—
    - He is a God near at hand and intimately involved to do just that!
    - He will not move away from you...
      - He is like a lover that will not let you go.
      - He is intimately involves with you forever!

### **III. People of God, how precious all this!**

- Verse 17-24 show you three ways that God’s infinite intimacy ought to affect you!

A. First, let it stir up heartfelt praise from you!

- vs 17-18: How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! *If* I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; When I awake, I am still with You.
1. Just think, God has all these billions and billions of thoughts toward you for good and not evil!
    - He is working down to the smallest detail to bring about the grandest plan for you!
      - An eternity in glory with Him!
      - What praise is due to Him for marvellous wonders that He is performing!
        - They are more than the sand of the sea in number!
        - Though you go to sleep each night, when you awake,
          - God is still there...
          - God is still working...
          - God is still sustaining...
          - He is providing for you and preparing your way for glory.
2. When you consider His all seeing eyes and His continual presence,
    - Do not look at it as something to make you run...
    - Not if you are in Jesus Christ!
      - It is something for you to adore and freely praise Him for...
      - He is constantly at work in your both to will and to do of His good pleasure.
      - Praise Him vehemently for His mercies!

TRANS> And not only should God's ever present intimacy stir up your praise...

B. Let it cause you also to detest God's enemies!

1. How could it be that a God like this should have enemies?
  - a. What wickedness it is to oppose Him!
    - He is the God who sent His Son to redeem the world...
    - And He calls all people to repent and believe the gospel and promises that all those who do will be saved.
    - He promises to every believer that His divine power will be turned to bless us.

- b. What wickedness is it for a man to oppose a God like this?
    - That He should speak wickedly of such a God—against whom He so wickedly offended!
    - What wickedness that he should say that He is an unjust God...
    - What wickedness that he should say that He is an unloving God...
    - What wickedness that he should say that this God is not the true God...
    - What wickedness that he should opposed God’s law and call evil god and good evil.
    - What wickedness that he should serve idols instead of the God who gave him his life.
  - c. What folly that He should take the name of this God in vain!
    - That he should ignore the judgements of the one whose presence he cannot escape...
    - That he should resist the One who has power to destroy both body and soul in Hell.
    - That he should play the hypocrite before the One who sees every thought and intent of his heart.
2. You are taught to say to God concerning such persons...
- a. “Oh that you would slay them, O God!”
    - Not that you would take vengeance into your own hands against your fellow creature, but you look to God to deal with them.
    - God will clear the earth of all who oppose Him and will send them to their place—the place prepared for the Devil and his angels.
    - Your great desire should be that Christ be honoured as king and that all men should serve Him.
  - b. Therefore, you are not to join together with those that oppose Him...
    - You are to say to them, “Depart from me you bloodthirsty men!”
    - Their whole purpose is to suppress the truth, whether by hypocritical morality or by open opposition...
      - But you know that God is mocked!
      - You know that He sees their heart and motives and that they need to be saved just as much as you.
  - c. You are taught here to hate them...
    - v. 21-22: Do I not hate them, O LORD, who hate You? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them my enemies.

- 1) To love them with benevolence is your duty, but to love them with complacency is a crime...
- 2) Here the word hate is used in the same way Jesus used it when He said you cannot serve two masters because you will love the one and hate the other...
  - It means that you cannot please them or agree with them or join with them in any way that is contrary to your Lord...
  - You hate them by refusing to go along with them in their rebellion or to endorse it in any way.
  - Yet you are to love them in giving them food if they hungry and drink if they are thirsty,
    - in giving them medicine and care if they are sick,
    - and in praying for them.
- 3) Not only are you to hate them because they hate God...
  - You are also to count them as your enemies...
  - You are to set your way in opposition to them—
    - to oppose their false teaching and false counsel,
    - and as far as you have been authority, to punish them.
- 4) To illustrate this,
  - If you are at war, you fight against your enemies,
    - but if you find one them fallen on the battle field, you are to take him and nurse his wounds and feed him...
    - Yet, you are not feed the opposing army.
      - If false teachers come into your city, you are not to receive them into your house or support them, but to hate them and oppose them...
      - But if one of them is sick and needs care, you are to care for him and love him.
- 5) David is an excellent example all this...
  - His anger was stirred in way primarily because Goliath defied the name of the living God.
    - He went, not to take private revenge, but to execute God's judgement against this man who had set himself up against God.
    - Yet this same man would not lift a hand against Saul even when he was given occasion even though Saul had wickedly pursued him without cause.

- In his office as king, David fought battles for the Lord, but as a private individual, he prayed for his enemies and blessed them.
- 6) Jesus is an even better example—as He railed against the scribes and Pharisees as the enemies of God...
- Yet suffered unjustly with meekness when attacked in His person...
  - And even wept for His enemies and lamented their hardness of heart.
  - You are called to imitate His example.

TRANS> So then, God's ever present intimacy should bring forth praise from you for God and hatred for your enemies and lastly...

C. It should stir up a longing in you to be all that God wants you to be!

1. That is the import of the closing supplication in this song in verse 23-24:
  - v. 23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if *there is any* wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.
2. Here is this awesome, all powerful, all knowing God who is so near to you...
  - This holy God who is so near, and yet comes not to condemn but to save!
    - a. It is not for you to avoid His searching gaze, but to yearn for it!
      - But how is it that this Psalm begins by declaring that God has searched you and known you and ends by asking Him to search you and know you?
      - It is that you are to ask Him to search in such a way that He works with you...
        - To let you know what He finds...
        - To show you if there is any wicked way in you.
    - b. When a lover has subdued the beloved's heart, the beloved wants to please him.
      - When you see the great love of God who is so near to you, what can you desire but that He might begin to point out to you how you might please Him?
      - What kind of bride is it that does not want to please a husband that she absolutely respects and honours—
        - a husband who is worthy of all praise and perfection, and who has demonstrated His absolute commitment to you!
        - You want to come into His house and be led by Him!
        - You absolutely trust His counsel and His assessment and so you give yourself to Him.

- You want to be shaped by Him so that you please Him in every way!
- He has come so near to you in your sin, and now you want to come near to Him in righteousness!
- This is the hunger of the Christian heart for righteousness!
  - It is a longing to please Jesus who has loved us and given Himself for us.
  - If He is so near to you,
    - surely you want to be dear to Him.

### **Conclusion**

What a difference it makes to know that God is so very intimate with us!

- It will either make you run away and try to hide...
- or it will make you draw near to be saved.
- Jesus makes all the difference.

The difference between a converted and an unconverted man is not that one has sin and the other has none.

- The difference is that one joins up with his cherished sins against a dreaded God,
- the other joins up with a reconciled God against his hated sins.

If you are converted, the infinite intimacy of God is precious to you,

- but if you are not converted, the infinite intimacy of God is a horror to you.

It is Jesus Christ who makes all the difference...

- If you have Him, you to come to God with faith in Him to have your sins forgiven and cleansed.
- If you do not have Him, you try to avoid God until the day that His judgement overtakes you and you are forced to give an account to God.

Let us then come to God now and plead with Him to have mercy on us for Jesus sake...