

Somebody Knows You

Dear friends,

“Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men?” Some of you may recall those words. Back before the internet, before cell phones, before television even, there was a radio serial called “The Shadow.” An invincible crime fighter, with amazing strength, he could defy gravity, speak any language, even become invisible. Nothing could be hidden from him. “Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The Shadow knows.”

It’s a truly scary thought, that someone would know everything about you. It makes you feel completely smothered, afraid to step outside. I read about a state politician who was accused of sending improper text messages to a co-worker years ago. He claimed the messages were consensual, but still embarrassing, and as he resigned from leadership in his party, he asked, What would you do if your most embarrassing secret, something you’ve regretted for 20 years, was suddenly the headline on all the local news? But it doesn’t take headlines. What if just one person knew your darkest secrets?

Well, somebody does know you. Psalm 139 makes it perfectly clear. The Lord knows everything about you. Further, the Lord is everywhere. And that may scare you thoroughly; but Psalm 139 intends to assure you that you are loved. Somebody knows you, and that Somebody loves you.

First, see how thoroughly the Lord knows you. **“You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely. You hem me in, behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me.”**

David pictures the Lord searching him. Not that God would have to, but David is making his point vividly. The Lord knows us completely; he is familiar with all our ways. God is not just somewhere up there, looking down like a satellite keeping track of where we are. The Lord knows us in and out. He knows our thoughts, our actions, and our words—even before we do. We call this God’s “omniscience”: God knows all things. But again, he knows us intimately.

If we only think about God knowing other things or other people, it would be fine; we might even be amused. Some first graders were asked, “Do you think God understands computers?” and they voted, No—because, of course, they didn’t understand computers, so how could God? We hear that and we chuckle; of course God knows computers. God knows everything!

But if God knows us—if God knows my thoughts, what I did; if I’ve got anything to hide, that is a scary thought. How horrible that I did that bad thing, thinking I could get away with it! As Jesus said, **“Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.”**

And this is even more terrifying when I remember that God is not only the detective snooping into my heart; he is also the Judge, who on the Last Day will sentence me for all the things I've done wrong. Hebrews says, **“Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”**

But in this Psalm, David does not shrink in terror. This Psalm is addressed to “the LORD.” That is a special name for the God of all grace and mercy, the God who forgives our sins, the God who made a covenant, a promise to save us. Jesus’ disciples called him “Lord,” because they saw him as their Savior. The God who knows you is the God who saves you.

Look again at the words of Psalm 139, and see how comforting they are. **“You have searched me, Lord, and you know me.”** No human being, no angel even, knows you as the Lord does. The Lord knows you better than you know yourself. He knows things about your body that no doctor will ever figure out. He knows the stirrings of your soul, the feelings that lie deep inside which you can’t begin to put into words. Therefore, he knows exactly what you need. Better than any pharmacist, better than any psychologist, the Lord knows what’s going on in your life and what needs to be done to straighten it out. And this is the LORD, the One who promised to bless you, to make all things work out for your good, the One who chose you from eternity.

“You are familiar with all my ways”—more than that, **“You hem me in, behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me.”** God knows everywhere you go, everything you do, even before you know where you’re going. You cannot go backward or forward without the Lord knowing about it; in fact, you can’t go anywhere without the strength that the Lord gives you. **“In him we live and move and have our being.”** Every movement of a muscle, every thought running through your brain, only happens by God’s power. God knows our weaknesses, and he helps us overcome them. God knows our troubles, and he gets us through them.

If God hems you in, behind and before, then who or what can harm you? And how can you lack the strength to do what he wills?

Parents go to extreme lengths to protect their children. When they leave home, they’ll get a reputable babysitter; some will even have a video monitor that they can check on their smartphone. But they still can’t see everything, and they can’t control what’s going to happen. But the Lord can. The Lord sees all things. And the Lord is with us everywhere.

No wonder David writes about the fact that God knows everything about him, **“[God’s] knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.”** Somebody knows you; somebody who loves you.

Of course, when we forget the Lord’s love, then these words are terrifying. And the natural reaction is to run away. You remember what Adam and Eve did after they ate the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil? They hid from God. They were ashamed and they were afraid, and they tried to run deep into the Garden of Eden, desperately hoping God’s eyes would not find them.

At first glance, it may seem that this is what David is trying to do in our Psalm. **“Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the**

dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.”

Could a person go so high as to avoid God? But heaven is his home. What about into the depths, into death itself? God is the God of life and death. He even rules hell. Joining with the dawn, or chasing after sunset, cannot avoid God. Think of Jonah, running away from his assignment in Nineveh by taking a ship across the Mediterranean Sea. God brought him back, with the help of a big fish.

Adam and Eve tried to run from the Lord; but the Lord came to them, and called them gently. He asked them about their sin, to lead them to recognize what they had done and repent. And the Lord has done the same thing for us. He leads us to repent, and then he forgives us. He leads us to trust in him instead of running away. David’s words in Psalm 139 are a comfort to us.

Where could you go and not have God with you? Nowhere. Wherever you travel; even if you find yourself in a dangerous part of town; or if the wind and snow are blowing around you—God is there. In the hospital, God is with you. No dungeon is so dark or filthy that God can’t see us. Think of Jonah praying to God from the belly of the great fish. Think of Paul chained up in prison, confidently singing hymns to the Lord.

If you go into heaven, God is there—we pray to “Our Father who art in heaven.” If you lie down in death and the grave, God is there. When Christians die, our souls are safe in God’s keeping, and our bodies will be raised on the Last Day, made glorious and perfect. Travel to the east or the west, God’s hand is holding you tight. He will never leave you nor forsake you.

In the Gospel that I read earlier, Nathanael asked Jesus how he knew him. Jesus said he’d seen Nathanael earlier—even though he was a long way away. In this little miracle, Nathanael recognized that Jesus is the Son of God. For Jesus had seen him—and not just seen him with binoculars, he knew Nathanael inside and out. Only God can know a person that well.

But Jesus promised Nathanael that he’d see greater things than that. In the future, he would see heaven open, and the angels of God going up and down—on Jesus. For Jesus is the ladder to heaven. Jesus is the only way to heaven. By his perfect life, by his innocent death, Jesus took away all of your sins. Jesus secured for you the righteousness you need to get into heaven. There’s nothing standing in your way. Believe in him, and you will be saved.

You can be confident that the Lord knows you. He knows you better than your mother, better than your spouse, better than anyone. And with his power he also protects and guides you. And someday he will bring you to his side in heaven. Somebody knows you—somebody who loves you perfectly. Amen.