

1. Let me start by giving my title: "Knowing God and knowing that God knows us". (Try saying that a few times quickly. ☺) This is about realizing that if God is perfect by definition, then He cannot learn anything. If He cannot learn, He knows our future. The point is we can trust in Him to guide our lives because He already knows all the details of our lives before it happens.
 - a) OK John, I sort of already know that. I believe Jesus died for my sins and I believe God the Father already knows all things. As important as that statement is, that is not the issue of this group of psalms. The issue is trusting that God is in charge.
 - b) Before I go any further, let me state that we are now down to the last ten percent of the book of the Psalms. My thanks for all who have read these lessons and I truly hope they have been a blessing to your lives. With that said, we only have a few lessons left and I hope these last few are as beneficial to you as this whole series has been to me.
 - c) That statement leads me back to this lesson. A good question now is what is left that God wants us to know? After all of these psalms about comprehending Him, what is it, near the end that He wants us to remember? That question in effect, is the theme of this lesson.
2. To explain this concept of "knowing God" further, let me summarize the psalms of this lesson:
 - a) David wrote all of the psalms of this lesson as well as all of the psalms up to Psalm 145.
 - i) I believe the idea is that we are near the end of the book, and the focus of this group is about the reminder that He desires to guide all aspects of our lives.
 - b) First we have Psalm 138 in this lesson. It was written after a promise was made to David that a descendant of his would be the Messiah (i.e., Jesus) who will rule the world forever.
 - i) The main point of this psalm is about what that fact of an eternal ruler over the entire world means to David and what it means to those of us who trust in God.
 - ii) The idea is if Jesus will rule over this world one day, (i.e., it is a future "done deal") what should I do given the fact that God is going to do this thing?
 - iii) The answer comes back to the theme of "knowing God". The point is if we understand that God desires to guide our lives and we understand that He knows all things, then we should understand our ultimate future with God being in charge. That is the flavor of this psalm, "understanding our ultimate future".
 - c) Next we have Psalm 139. This is David realizing, "If God knows all things, then there is nowhere I can go to escape from God noticing me." It is about the realizations that if He is always watching my life, then I should constantly make the effort to remember that fact and live to make a difference for Him. I call this psalm the "nowhere to run to" psalm, as it focuses on the realization that God is guiding our lives, He knows everything that ever will happen to our lives and we can have peace knowing He knows all things.
 - i) Let me explain this psalm another way: Why worry about our future? Why worry about our problems? If God knows all things, then He must know everything we will go through in our lives. Therefore, He must have a reason to allow us to go through what ever we are dealing with. As I like to say, the results of our lives are His problem, not ours. Yes we have to try as if it is up to us, but at the same time, we have to let go of worrying about the results, because we are "One of His".
 - d) This leads perfectly, into Psalm 140. It is another psalm about dealing with problems. In David's case, it is dealing with enemies he had to face.
 - i) You would think by now, we have had enough "problem" psalms. For those who have been with me for a while through the psalms, there are lots of them that deal with problems that David and others have to face in their lives.
 - ii) What is unique about this one is the perspective of "knowing God". In other words, if God knows all things, David doesn't have to worry about the results.

3. With all that said, I want us to think about all of these psalms in the perspective that Jesus will come back to rule over this world one day.
 - a) Like everyone else in life, David had problems he had to deal with. At the same time, he trusted in God's unconditional promise to him that a descendant of his would be the Messiah, that is a king that would literally rule over the world forever.
 - b) The idea in effect is "Don't sweat the small stuff". God is not only going to rule forever, but we should be aware that He is also aware of what I am dealing with and wants to guide us through whatever we are going through at the present moment.
 - c) I have to admit at times I struggle with the concept of Jesus returning to rule forever. Stop and think of all the religions around the world that don't believe in that concept. Stop and think of how long a time gap it has been since that promise was first made. Therefore, it is logical at times to wonder, "Is this really going to happen, and how should I live my life knowing this event is to happen some day?"
 - i) That in effect is what I mean by "knowing God". The idea is if we live with the idea of the Messiah returning to rule and reign, how does that affect our lives?
 - ii) Does it mean I stop paying my bills, as Jesus will return one day? ☺ No it doesn't.
 - iii) Practically, what it means is that no matter what life throws at us, we can trust in effect it is the "small stuff", because Jesus will return one day to rule this world.
 - d) Let me end this introduction with why it is taking Jesus so long to return.
 - i) The short version is simply that God the Father is waiting for as many people to be saved as possible, before the return of the Messiah to "wrap up this world". If Jesus came back say a generation ago, most of us would not be saved.
 - ii) I think David himself lived with the hope after this announcement that one of his own sons would be "The" Messiah. That may have been what motivated David to organize the materials for the first Jewish Temple. (See 1st Chronicles 22:5.)
 - iii) Many centuries later, I believe Paul lived his life with the hope that Jesus would return any day and that motivated him to work hard to make a difference for God.
 - iv) Now, 2,000 years after Paul, I live my life with the hope that Jesus would return any day, and like Paul, I make it my motivation to make a difference for God. The fact that Israel is a country again after several thousand years gives me hope that we are "close to the end", but of course I could be wrong.
 - a) Living with the hope of Jesus return is a motivation to "keep us on our toes", knowing that He can return at any moment to judge our lives based on how we have lived to make a difference for Him.
 - e) With that optimistic and scary introduction completed, I'm ready to start Psalm 138.
4. Psalm 138, title: Of David
 - a) King David wrote a large percentage of the psalms, as a lot of you know by now, but he didn't write all of them. As I mentioned in the last lesson, we know from the last psalm that the entire book of psalms was not organized into a single collection until after the Babylonian captivity, which was a few hundred years after the time of David.
 - b) With that said, know that David is the author of Psalms 138 through 145. Remember that the psalms end at 150. So why include a bunch of David's psalms at the end here? The answer comes back to our lesson theme about drawing close to God, as He "knows us".
 - c) David understood about God's promises to the Nation of Israel (and effectively to all Christians as well) centuries before anybody ever heard of Jesus. Therefore, David could thank God in advance for what will happen, and that is the key point of this psalm.
 - d) To summarize this psalm in a single thought: It is about gratitude to God who knows all about our lives before it ever happen. Therefore, we give gratitude to God because we realize He knows all things, He knows what will happen in our future and we trust in His guidance all for His glory. With that said, let me cover some verses and explain further.

5. Verse 1: I will praise you, O LORD, with all my heart; before the "gods" I will sing your praise.
 - a) This psalm starts off with a theme that should be familiar to us by now. It is about "giving it all we've got" when we give God praise. In short, "We praise God like we mean it."
 - i) The particular style we use to praise God is usually based on our personality and often on the way we are raised. That is not the issue here. The issue is about us telling God how grateful we are for our lives and mean it when we say it.
 - ii) Let me explain this in context. David is praising God out of gratitude for his life. Most likely, this psalm was written after God's promise that his descendant would build a great temple to God. That fact will become obvious in the next verse.
 - iii) But John, God hasn't made any promise like that to you or me. The idea here is not about being happy for David. The idea is about being joyful that God keeps the promises that He makes to us. I'll explain why that temple is so significant when we get to the next verse. First, I need to finish Verse 1.
 - b) The second half of this verse says in effect that David will praise God in front of the other gods. I would say that this half of a verse would require an explanation.
 - i) Most likely, this refers to other "deities" that were worshipped at that time.
 - ii) I believe the point David is making is, "While other people living around me may be worshipping false deities, I will focus on worshipping the true God despite what others around me are doing."
 - c) OK John, that statement could be true of any believer at any time. Why emphasize that fact here and why should I care?
 - i) I believe the point is simply that David is grateful that God "knows" him in the same sense that God is aware of your life and my life. The idea here is that we worship the true God of this world and we give it all that we've got. We don't waste our time with local "deities" (that is false-gods) that can and do draw us away from worshipping the true God.
 - ii) I remember many years ago, my wife was talking to a Catholic friend who said she was praying to Mary. My wife responded with, "Why are you praying to Mary when God Himself is willing to listen to your prayer requests?" That is part of the sentiment of this verse. Many people don't pray to God directly because they think He is unapproachable or it never occurs to them that they could pray to Him directly as opposed to some sort of intermediary figure.
6. Verse 2: I will bow down toward your holy temple and will praise your name for your love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word.
 - a) To understand this verse, first one has to remember that there was no "permanent" Jewish Temple structure when David was alive. God promised David that a son of his would build such a temple. David's son Solomon built the first official Jewish temple after David died. Since God made that promise to David he "acted on it" and organized all of the materials for this temple to make it easier for his son to build it. (References to these events: See 2nd Samuel 7, 12-14: 2 Chronicles 35:3, 1 Chronicles 22:5.)
 - b) With that explanation out of my system, let me explain what is going on in this verse:
 - i) David is bowing toward a temple that has not been built yet.
 - ii) David is thanking God for the promises that He made to him concerning the fact that a son of his would rule the world forever from this location. As I mentioned earlier, I suspect David organized the materials to build this temple in the hopes that his immediate son would be the promised Messiah.
 - iii) Finally, David is saying that God's name and His word are exalted above all things and that is David's motivation to do all of this.
 - iv) In summary, David is grateful for the promises made to him about his future and now he is taking a moment to show gratitude to God for these future promises.

- c) OK, now that we understand what David is doing, let me explain how this is relevant.
 - i) Remember that the psalms are not here so we can learn history. They are here to teach us about our own prayer relationship with God.
 - ii) Let me explain it this way: God did fulfill the promise to David in that Solomon did build a great temple to God. However, the promise made to David was not completely fulfilled in Solomon. That promise in 2nd Samuel 7:13 says that "I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." The key word is forever.
 - a) The throne of the descendants of David did last for many centuries, but it did not last forever. My point is when God says "forever", I take that literally. I also believe that God keeps whatever promises He makes.
 - iii) There are many Christians through the centuries who see this "forever" promise by the fact that Jesus rules over the hearts of billions of believers forever. For the few of you who don't know by now, Jesus was a descendant of David. As one can tell by history, Jesus never did rule over the earth. I am sure He rules in heaven but ruling over the earth is an unfulfilled promise to David.
 - a) The book of Acts (1:11) says that Jesus will return one day the same way He left. The purpose of His return is to rule. The classical debate within Christianity is between the "a-millennialists" who believe in effect "Jesus just returns and that's a wrap" versus the "pre-millennialists" (like myself) who see this ruling as Jesus fulfilling the promise made to David that a descendant of his would rule from David's throne in Jerusalem.
 - b) For that to happen, Israel has to exist as a nation. That is why so many Christians are "pro-Jewish" to hope that we see Jesus rule from this place.
- d) All of this background does, surprisingly, lead us back to Verse 2. The point here is David is bowing toward this nonexistent temple in effect to acknowledge God's promise that a descendant of his would rule the world from this future temple.
 - i) David is saying in effect, "I trust in God and I trust in His word to be true". Because I trust in His word, I look forward to this future temple being built so I too can worship God who will rule the world from this temple.
 - ii) This leads to you and me. It does not mean we too have to pray toward this nonexistent temple at our time. It does mean we know God in the sense that we trust in His promises to come true one day. Those promises include the concept that a descendant of David, Jesus, will rule the world from Jerusalem.

7. Verse 3: When I called, you answered me; you made me bold and stouthearted.

- a) Let me give my loose translation: "When God gave me (David) this promise that my descendant would rule forever, trusting in that promise gives me the strength and boldness to trust in You and do Your will for my life." For us, trusting in God's promises gives us the ability and the strength to face whatever it is we have to face.
 - i) To say it another way, we don't "win" in life by trying harder. We win by relying upon His strength to deal with whatever it is we have to deal with.
- b) I've always been a big believer that we don't have to strain to hear God speak to us. He is more than capable of speaking to us however, whenever and wherever He wants to. I'm also convinced the reason God doesn't speak to us more often, is simply because it is "our move" in that He is waiting for us to obey what He has already told us before He can say what it is He wants us to do next.
 - i) So how does one know when God has spoken to us? It is usually not audible. The answer is sometimes we just know. Other times, life itself bears it out. Another way is that if that "feeling" we get does not violate His word.
 - ii) Personally, I don't worry whether or not God is going to speak to me. I just try to read my bible and pray daily for guidance. I figure if God has something He wants to say to me, He will, on His timing and not mine.

- c) This leads me back to this verse. The point of this verse is that God did speak to David and he figured out that it was God speaking to him. David trusted that promise and it gave him the strength to be obedient to God. The point for us is that we can trust in that same promise made about David's descendant one would day rule forever.
 - i) This also does not mean that God has to speak to us directly in order for us to be obedient to Him. First and foremost, we must trust in the promises made to us through His word. If God has something personal He wants to say to us, like He did to David here, God is more than willing to say whatever He wants when He is ready to speak, and that is why I gave that long speech over this verse. ☺
- 8. Verse 4: May all the kings of the earth praise you, O LORD, when they hear the words of your mouth. ⁵ May they sing of the ways of the LORD, for the glory of the LORD is great.
 - a) If David knows that this descendant of his will rule forever, then it is David's wish that all the great leaders of the world acknowledge that fact. It is David's hope and prayer that all leaders and all people acknowledge a single God that rules over this world and also one day that this God will rule the world from this future temple in Jerusalem.
 - b) OK, John it must be time for another of your what does this have to do with me lectures:
 - i) Yes, it should be our desire that the leaders of this world also acknowledge that there is a single God and that He rules over this world. In effect, this is a prayer that David made and should be a prayer of ours as well. This is really a prayer for peace by praying that people's hearts turn to God.
 - ii) When we pray for others to turn to God, it is about the realization that others become aware that there is a God who is in charge of all things. Praying for our leaders (called "kings" here) is in effect praying that our leaders became aware that God wants to guide over every aspect of their lives as well as our lives.
 - iii) What David wants is for the great men of his world not to honor David, but to acknowledge God as ruling over their lives. Just as the theme of this lesson is about knowing God, so David wants us to spread that prayer request to others.
- 9. Verse 6: Though the LORD is on high, he looks upon the lowly, but the proud he knows from afar. ⁷ Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes, with your right hand you save me.
 - a) It is best to read these verses first in context of the whole psalm. If David realizes that God not only rules over this world now and He will literally rule over this world one day, then one should go through life realizing that He is charge and we are not.
 - i) That is what David meant in Verse 6 by the "lowly". It has nothing to do with one's status in life. It has to do with one's acknowledgement of God who rules over our lives and over this world.
 - b) The text of Verse 6 says that God is "afar" from the proud. So if God is everywhere, how can the proud be "afar" from Him? This is about those who do not know God personally. This is about those who don't trust in His guidance for their lives.
 - i) Which surprisingly, leads very well to Verse 7. The point of this life is that even though we all have troubles, God is guiding our lives and guiding us against those who are "afar" from Him.
- 10. Verse 8: The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your love, O LORD, endures forever-- do not abandon the works of your hands.
 - a) So if we trust that God will fulfill His purpose in us, why pray like this final verse for God not to abandon us? I think the idea is that "As long as we are loyal to God, He is loyal to us." However, we can still mess up and turn away from Him. That could cause God not to abandon us forever, but discipline us for turning from Him. In effect, this psalm ends with a prayer to not give up trusting God so He won't have to go to extreme measures.
- 11. On that happy ending thought, ☺ it's time for Psalm 139.

12. Psalm 139, title: For the director of music. Of David. A psalm.
 - a) The title mentions that this psalm was designed to be sung and that it is a psalm. That simply means that David understood that God inspires what he wrote, and therefore God wants us to comprehend what it means.
 - b) As to the music, as I have stated in past lessons, the original music is long gone so I believe we are free to put our own music to these words.
13. Verse 1: O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. ² You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. ³ You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.
 - a) Well, I said this lesson is about knowing God and God knowing us, and the opening verses of Psalm 139 certainly fits well into this theme.
 - b) Let me give my loose translation of these verses: "You understand everything about my life. It is as my goal to be guided by You. It has become obvious to me that no matter what I do in my life, You, God are aware of it, and You are working on changing me and guiding me to live like You desire me to live. I need to accept the fact that because I am one of Yours. The best thing for my life is to learn to pay attention to Your desires for my life and live the way You desire".
 - c) OK John, why is this significant? The answer is that in order to have a close relationship with God, the first step is to realize that He exists, He knows everything about my life and more importantly He desires to guide my life in order to do His will. Once we accept that fact that He knows all things and wants to guide us, then we can make the best decisions possible knowing that in effect, "God has our back".
 - d) This speech about the realization that God is guiding us continues in the next verse.
14. Verse 4: Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD. ⁵ You hem me in-- behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. ⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.
 - a) Time for more "loose translation": Before I (David) speak, You know what I am going to say. You guide my life whether I think about that fact or not. I can't understand how a single God who controls billions of people and watches over the entire universe is also aware of, and cares about every aspect of my life, but I simply accept it as true.
 - i) Let's face it, it is tough, if not impossible to comprehend how a single God could be this powerful. Every now and then I like to quote a line I heard from a pastor named David Hocking who said, "Every time I try to think about how big God is, all I do is get a headache". That's sort of the point here. It is beyond our ability to comprehend how a single God can watch over us and guide our lives.
 - ii) This also reminds me of something I heard Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel fame say many years ago: "If you can handle the first sentence of the bible, then you can handle the rest of the book." In other words, if you can believe that God created the heavens and the earth, then it is possible to comprehend there is a God that is big enough that He can guide all of our individual lives.
 - b) OK John, if thinking about how big God is just gives us a headache, why do it? The point here is that the author David is realizing He simply needs to accept by faith that our relationship with God is true as described in these verses. The point for you and me is that even though we can't explain how God works, we accept that it as true and more importantly accept the idea that He desires to guide our lives.
 - c) If I accept that God is there, and He is guiding my life, then what? Then it is a matter of trusting the fact that He is guiding our lives and learning to do what it is He desires of us.
 - i) So why bring this up here and now? The answer is because if we accept His existence and accept His guidance, we need to regularly remind ourselves that He is there despite the fact we can't physically see Him work in our lives. Through His word and through prayer He makes known what He desires of our lives.

15. Verse 7: Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? ⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. ⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, ¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.
- a) David continues this little speech about the fact that no matter where he goes in his life, he can't get away from God. Think about this psalm this way: Where can we go where we can have a thought that God cannot comprehend? There is no place. That means the God we worship is aware of every thought we have good or bad. That means every sinful thought we have, God is aware of. It means every concern we have in life God is aware of that fact and He desires to control every aspect of our lives.
 - b) OK John, let's assume for the moment all of this is true. What do we do about it? If we realize that God knows all things and He desires to guide our lives, we should make the conscious effort to make every (big emphasis on every) aspect of our lives pleasing to Him. But you might say, I can't think about God every moment of the day. I can't think about anything every moment of the day. That's not the point. The point is when we become aware of a thought or an area of our lives that is not in conformity to His will, we simply turn that thought over to Him and say in effect, "This is Your problem, as I can't deal with it on my own strength."
 - c) Getting back to the issue of why this psalm is here, the point is to comprehend that God is everywhere and that He wants to guide our lives should drive us to serve Him all the more because we realize that He is everywhere. That is the point of these verses.
16. Verse 11: If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," ¹² even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.
- a) David continues his poetic way of saying "God is everywhere". The point of these verses is in effect we could be in the darkest place one could imagine, be it a physically dark place or a place that is so horrible to us, it is "pure darkness". Even in such places, be they real or in our mind, God is still there and He still desires to guide our lives even through the dark places that we are in at any moment.
 - b) To read these verses, one should not think they are just saying God is everywhere. The point is when we go through dark places, or when we are in good situations, it is a matter of remembering God is there through the good and bad times and it is His desire to guide us through such places. The idea is we are not alone no matter how we are feeling. There is a God who wants to comfort us and guide us through all of these "locations".
17. Verse 13: For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, ¹⁶ your eyes saw my unformed body.
- a) If you ever want a biblical argument why abortion is wrong, study these verses. They say in effect that even before David was born, You (God) were aware of my existence and You were guiding me even when I was in my mother's womb.
 - i) Obviously, we have no memory of being in our mother's womb or even of God guiding us at that point in our lives. David's point here is that even if we are not conscious of God guiding every step of our lives, He is there and He is aware of all things, including the time before we were physically born.
 - b) OK John, I accept the idea that God knows all things and therefore, I sort of get the idea that He was aware of me, even before I was ever aware of His existence. Why should I bother to think about this stuff? This comes back to the idea that if we accept the concept that God is everywhere, we should desire to please Him with our lives if for no other reason, that there is nowhere we can run to that we can get away from Him. That's sort of the sentiment that this psalm is trying to portray to us.

18. Verse 16 (cont.): All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.
 - a) If God knows all things, and He was aware of us even before we were born, it would also make sense that He would know how long I have to live. To put it another way, "I don't know what is going to happen to me today or tomorrow, but I do know God is aware of it and despite all of my shortcomings, He wants to guide my life."
 - b) Let me try this verse another way: If we accept the fact that God knows everything about our lives why make any effort in the first place? In other words, if God knows everything I will ever do, why lift a finger to try to please Him in the first place?
 - i) The answer comes back to "judgment day". God may know all things, but we don't. Therefore, we should live to make a difference for Him, because whether we like it or not, God will judge us based on how we live our lives.
 - ii) But John, I thought Christianity was all about "faith, and not works". That is a half-truth. The point is if we have faith God has forgiven all of our sins, then we should naturally just "want to" (for a lack of a better term) produce works based on that faith. Tying that back to this psalm, the point is if God is aware of all things about our lives and He has forgiven us of all sins, then the "natural" thing left to do is to make the effort to please Him with every aspect of our lives.
19. Verse 17: How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! ¹⁸ Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you.
 - a) When you first read these verses, one gets the impression that David is still trying to comprehend how big God is, and David is giving himself a headache. (I had no idea that was going to turn into a running joke. ☺)
 - b) To understand, you have to read this psalm in context not only of this psalm but of the last one as well. Remember in the last psalm, God told David that a son of his would rule forever. I don't know if this psalm was written after the last one, but the point is David became aware not only that God exists, but that He desired great things for not only for David's life, but for the lives of those of us who trust in Him.
 - c) I have only had a few times in my life where I sensed God spoke to me specifically about something. At the same time, I can sense God guiding me constantly. The point is like David, God has thoughts and plans for our lives. So how could God's thoughts for us outnumber the grains of sand in the world? Even if He spoke to us daily, there is still a lot of sand out there. The underlying idea is not to literally count the times we have sensed His presence in our lives. The idea is to realize He is guiding every step of our lives and He has wonderful plans for our lives. I suspect those "grain of sand thoughts continue into all of eternity."
20. Verse 19: If only you would slay the wicked, O God! Away from me, you bloodthirsty men! ²⁰They speak of you with evil intent; your adversaries misuse your name.
 - a) From contemplating how much God cares about David, he switches thoughts and says in effect, "Dear God, I have enemies who want to hurt me and they speak against You. Given that there are people out there who don't want anything to do with You and they hate me because I trust in You, why aren't You dealing with them in order to help me?"
 - i) In other words, if God exists and He loves me so much, why does He allow me to go through so much pain? Why doesn't He just wipe out my problems so that I can live and worship Him God in peace?
 - ii) The answer to such tough issues is often that God wants us to learn things from facing such adversaries. Sometimes God wants to work through us in order to defeat such forces His way and on His timing. Usually it is a matter of trusting Him to defeat things that we could never defeat based on our own.
 - b) Still, the question remains of why God allows such evil to exist? I suspect the answer is simply that sin exists in this world and some willfully choose to oppose Him.

21. Verse 21: Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD, and abhor those who rise up against you?
²² I have nothing but hatred for them; I count them my enemies.
- a) I believe David is saying, "Dear God, You know how much I hate those who oppose You, so why do You allow them to exist?" In other words, why don't You God, just wipe out those who still oppose Your will so I don't have to deal with them?"
 - i) This is David acknowledging the fact that evil exists and no matter how hard He tries, David still has to fight against those who oppose God's will.
 - b) Let me modernize this a little. We could say, "I have my own problems to deal with. Why should I worry about strangers who oppose God? After all I know that God will win in the end, so why should I focus my energy on those who oppose His will? I don't sense anyone trying to kill me as I go out the door today."
 - i) To answer, remember that if we are doing God's will, evil forces exist that are going to try to make us a bad witness for Jesus. I am convinced that Satan can't take away our salvation, but at the same time He doesn't want Christianity to spread, so he does what he can to make us a bad witness for God. That includes the idea of using people around us to focus on anything and everything other than making a difference for God in our lives.
 - ii) The way we fight our own battles is by our dependency upon God for victory. We don't see or sense demons. We just know that we struggle through situations and with people who make it difficult for us to focus on God. We may ask God to wipe out those forces, but we also realize we are fighting them with His help.
 - c) The lesson here is that God does want to give us victory over such forces, but that victory comes through working through us and not God wiping them out all by Himself.
22. Verse 23: Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. ²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.
- a) David is saying in effect, "Since God knows everything about me, and since it is my desire to be pleasing to Him, may He show me any way that I have been displeasing to Him as it is my desire to be in conformity with His will."
 - b) Every now and then it is a good idea to pray something like this to God. Think of it as a time of confession. It is one thing to confess sins we know we have committed. It is another to ask God to search us and make it obvious to us of any ways we have been displeasing to Him. David realizes that if God knows all things about him, then He also knows all ways in which he has been displeasing to Him.
 - c) If God knows all of our faults, why ask that He make them known to us? Don't we have enough to worry about with the faults we are aware of? Think of it this way: It is God's desire that we draw close to Him and since He knows everything about us, this is a way of making us aware of ways that are preventing us from being even closer to Him.
 - d) Several pages back, I mentioned the concept of it is "our move". That means we are usually aware of what God wants us to work on and He is waiting for us to confess and turn from sins He has already made known to us. So if it is usually "our move", why ask that God make me aware of "His next move?" The answer comes down to wanting His will done for our lives. Remember that God may answer this prayer request in effect with, "I already told you (us) what I want you to work on, and when you have given that aspect of your life completely over to me (God), then we are ready for what is next."
 - i) My point is we may never know what is "next" until we ask. That is why David ends this psalm with a continuous request that God keep working on His life.
 - e) What this psalm "boils down to", is the concept that God knows us, and if He knows everything about us, then we should ask God to work with that knowledge about us and lead us down the path that He desires for our lives.
 - i) Here we are near the end of the book of Psalms. David is saying in effect to us since God knows us, we should draw upon that source to guide our lives.

23. Psalm 140, title: For the director of music. A psalm of David.
- a) This title is almost identical to the last one and conveys the same information. To remind us, it says that David wrote this psalm. He knew it was a psalm (inspired by God to teach us things) and it was designed to be sung. Again, the original music is long gone and I take that as a sign that we are welcome to put our own music to the psalms.
 - b) Let me talk for a moment about what this psalm is about. In the last psalm, David thought about the fact that God knew everything about his life and in effect he wanted to draw upon that knowledge in order to get even closer to God in terms of what He desired of David's life.
 - i) That "drawing" in effect leads well into this next psalm. It is about dealing with problems in our life. We have already had many psalms that deal with the issues and problems we face in life. The key to reading this psalm is to see it in context of the last one: If David realizes that God knows all things about his life, then David wants to draw about that knowledge to help him deal with his problems.
 - ii) The point for us is not to learn ancient history about David. The point is to realize that if God knows all things about our individual lives, then we should draw upon that information to help us with the problems around us and help us to know what is His will in dealing with whatever it is we have to deal with.
 - c) On that happy thought, ☺ I can start Psalm 140.
24. Verse 1: Rescue me, O LORD, from evil men; protect me from men of violence, ² who devise evil plans in their hearts and stir up war every day. ³ They make their tongues as sharp as a serpent's; the poison of vipers is on their lips. *Selah*
- a) When you read about David's life in 1st and 2nd Samuel, you get the impression that he was constantly in trouble. He spent years on the run as a fugitive from King Saul. Even when David became a king himself, I'm sure he had to deal with enemies who wanted to overthrow him as the king. Later, one of David's own sons (not Solomon) lead a major rebellion against him, which caused David to flee the country for awhile.
 - i) My whole point here is that if anyone understood dealing with violent men who wanted to harm him, it is David.
 - ii) The related point is that if David could constantly cry out to God for help, so you and I can have that same privilege. To be perfectly forgiven of our sins through Jesus, gives us the privilege of drawing close to Him the same way David did.
 - iii) You and I may or may not have to deal with violent men stirring up trouble or at the least saying bad things about us. However, if we do trust in Jesus for our salvation are given the same privilege of David of drawing close to God for protection from whatever troubles we face.
 - b) So does this mean our problems magically go away if we pray about them? I doubt they did for David and I don't think they go away that quickly for us. However, by making prayer requests like these first three verses, we are effectively saying to God, "I can't deal with all of "this". Dear God, give me the strength and wisdom to deal with the situations that I have to deal with in my life." I usually find that God, His way and on His timing, lead us and guides us through the situations that without His help, would be impossible for us to overcome on our own.
 - i) To say this another way, "If we belong to Him, then our problems are now His problems to deal with." Prayers like this remind us of that fact.
 - c) These three verses end with a "Selah". We have not had to deal with that word in many psalms. For the sake of those who have not been with me through all of the psalms, that is an untranslated word. Essentially it means to "think about it". What David is saying here is pause for a moment, stop and think about what I just wrote, and hopefully apply to our own lives what David is saying here. That is the idea behind my commentary on these verses so in effect, I have accomplished my "Selah" for these verses.

25. Verse 4: Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; protect me from men of violence who plan to trip my feet. ⁵ Proud men have hidden a snare for me; they have spread out the cords of their net and have set traps for me along my path. *Selah*
- a) Whatever David was dealing with at this time, he realized that he could not win in this situation without God's help. Whatever the situation was, David was wise enough to know that a trap was being set for him. David needed God's wisdom in order to avoid falling into that trap.
 - i) Again, I could talk about David's many years being on the run for his life, and I suspect there were many occasions where people literally set a trap for him. Even as a king, I'm sure his enemies regularly tried to set traps for him.
 - ii) The point for us is that when we realize we are trapped in some situation, we do have the greatest resource in the world we can draw upon to help us deal with what may seem like an impossible situation to handle on our own.
 - iii) To say it another way, we may not be able to handle the situation we are in, even if we allowed ourselves to get in that situation. However, there is a God who knows all things and even knows that we allowed ourselves to get in this "trap" and it is never too late or too early to call upon God to help us with our situation.
 - b) This comes back to my theme of "Knowing God and knowing that God knows us". If we can pause from our problems long enough to realize that fact, then we can pray to Him to help us through our own problems and allow Him to guide us through our situations.
 - c) OK what if I prayed and still don't know what to do next? Then just make the best decision possible and trust that He is guiding us through such situations.
26. Verse 6: O LORD, I say to you, "You are my God." Hear, O LORD, my cry for mercy. ⁷ O Sovereign LORD, my strong deliverer, who shields my head in the day of battle-- ⁸ do not grant the wicked their desires, O LORD; do not let their plans succeed, or they will become proud. *Selah*
- a) I have to admit, it is easy to know how much text to cover at any one time whenever David uses a "Selah". If David wants me to pause and think about the psalm at that point, this is a good indication of how much text to include before I pause and write. ☺
 - b) The first thing I noticed here is that David used the most holy name for God four times in these three verses. The idea is the God who "is who He is" and knows all things, is also aware of the situation I am in. If He knows all things, He is the best source of help one can imagine to deal with whatever David or you or I are dealing with at any given time.
 - c) Notice David does not spend a lot of time telling God the details of his problems. David figures if God knows all things, then He already knows the details. What David is doing here is reminding himself that God can help him through this situation and it is His desire that He does guide us through whatever we are dealing with.
 - i) David's prayer in effect is "Don't let my enemies win over me, because if they do, they will just grow even more proud in their rebellion against You". In effect David is praying "Dear God, don't let Your reputation be blemished by allowing enemies of mine to win. If it is my desire to do Your will, may Your will be done in this situation and don't let those who oppose Your will, win in this situation."
 - d) What if our battle is against others who trust in God? The answer is we still pray for God's will to be done and we accept that if it is His will to help other believers in that situation then it is "His will" and we accept it as such.
27. Verse 9: Let the heads of those who surround me be covered with the trouble their lips have caused. ¹⁰ Let burning coals fall upon them; may they be thrown into the fire, into miry pits, never to rise. ¹¹ Let slanderers not be established in the land; may disaster hunt down men of violence.
- a) If there is one thing I have learned after studying through all of the psalms, is that David was an expert on how to insult his enemies. ☺ You read that through a lot of his psalms. Whatever David was dealing with, it was so painful to him that he wished horrible things upon those who opposed him.

- b) So is that "anti-Christian" to wish harm on our enemies? I think it comes down to the idea that we are to love what God loves and hate what He hates. We can't judge salvation but we can only judge behavior. Therefore, what is really happening here is that David is asking God to eternally judge the behavior of those who through their actions are opposing God's will for the nation of Israel.
 - c) Suppose David is wrong here or suppose those were believers he was opposing. For starters, remember that this curse in effect is a prayer by David. Just because he is offering up this prayer, does not mean God has to accept it. The true point of surrender to God is when we accept His will to be done in any situation no matter what the cost or the consequences to our own lives or our own desires.
 - d) So is it ok to curse out own enemies like David is doing here? I would say it is ok, to tell God how such people have hurt us. God knows all things as I have been emphasizing through this whole lesson. However, telling God how we have been hurt is our way of letting go of that pain. It is saying, "Dear God, this is Your problem. You deal with it".
 - e) On that happy thought, ☺ I'm ready to finish this psalm.
28. Verse 12: I know that the LORD secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy.
¹³Surely the righteous will praise your name and the upright will live before you.
- a) Now that David has let go of how he has been hurt and hopefully we have let go of how others have hurt us by saying in effect, "This problem is now Your problem God, as I can't deal with it and I need Your guidance to see me through this situation".
 - b) OK, hopefully we have all let it go with a statement like that. ☺ This now leads us to the final verses of this psalm and this lesson. David realizes that if God knows all things, then God also helps those who need His help. Notice the last part of Verse 12 says that God "upholds the cause of the needy". That is saying God helps those who need His help.
 - i) I was thinking of people who have been murdered simply because they oppose the will of others. One has to remember that if there was no judgment day or there was no heaven, this world is very unfair. That is why I refuse to go through life without trusting in a judgment day coming for all people.
 - ii) I make that statement about trust in the existence of heaven because that is in effect the purpose of Verse 13. That final verse says that those who trust in God (that is who the "righteous" are) will praise His name and live before Him for all of eternity. It is our faith in that concept that gives us the strength to face whatever it is we have to face. Knowing that there is a God who judges all things, and guides us through our lives is the best way and in effect the only way we can handle whatever it is life throws at us.
29. Let me end this by coming back to the concept of "Knowing God and knowing that God knows us". It is that realization that God knows all things about our life and knowing that He desires to guide our life that gives us the strength to face whatever it is we have to face in our lives.
- a) So John, how do you know all of this is true? How do you know there is a God and the fact that He is guiding our lives? How do you know it is not our imagination? The short answer is that I have seen too many "coincidences" to believe otherwise. The answer is that first we have to take the step to trust in Him, and then it becomes obvious to us over time that He exists and that it is His desire that we live to make a difference for Him.
 - b) Let me end this thought in a closing prayer.
30. Heavenly Father, we admit, it is difficult at times to have faith in Your existence since we can't always see what You are doing and we constantly have to face difficult situations in our lives. Yet as we learn to trust You with every aspect of our lives, we realize not only that You exist and You know all things, but that You desire to guide our lives for Your glory. With that said, help us to see areas of our lives that are not pleasing to You. Help us to deal with whatever issues we are struggling with at the moment. Finally, help us to use our lives to make a difference for You in all that we do. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen