

Our Omnipotent God

Psalm 139:13-18

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Tonight we are looking at the omnipotence of God in our ongoing study of the doctrine of God. We have already looked at *Our Triune God, Our Faithful, Unchanging God, Our Holy God, Our Omniscient God* and *Our Omnipresent God* and now we're looking at *Our Omnipotent God*. The word omnipotence is derived from two Latin words, omni "all," and potens "powerful," (Grudens). It means "all-powerful." God is "all-powerful." That means He has the ability and power to do anything within His holy will.

Stephen Charnock says, "The omnipotence of God is His ability and strength to bring to pass whatsoever He pleases. Our desires may be-and are-more extensive than our power, but with God, "His counsel shall stand, and He will do all His pleasure" (Isa. 46:10). You must, in your conception of divine power, enlarge it further than to think God can do only what He resolves to do. In truth He has as infinite a capacity of power to act as He has an infinite capacity of will to resolve. His power is such that He can do whatever He pleases without difficulty or resistance; He cannot be checked, restrained, or frustrated. How worthless His eternal counsels would be if His power could not execute them. His mercy would be a feeble pity if He were destitute of power to relieve, His justice a slighted scarecrow without power to punish, and His promises an empty sound without the strength to accomplish them" (excerpt from *Masterpiece* [Sept.-Oct. 1989]:10).

That truth is also seen in His name El Shaddai which means, God almighty. El is "God" and Shaddai means, "almighty". This "name refers to His awesome strength and might" (MacArthur). Referring to God, Job said in Job 9:19, "If it is a matter of power, behold, He is the strong one!" (NASB). He realized that absolute strength and might belonged to God alone. Just as Revelation 19:6 says, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!" "Who is the King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, The LORD mighty in battle" (Ps.24:8, NASB).

In Psalm 139, we have looked at the omniscience and omnipresence of God. Tonight I want us to look at verses 13-18 and see the omnipotence of God. David has already stated that the Lord has "searched" him and known him (v.1). And because of such God knew his "sitting down and [his] rising up" (v.2). He understood his "thought afar off" (v.2) and comprehended his "path and...lying down" as well as was "acquainted with all [his] ways" (v.3). David was astonished at this kind of knowledge and confessed that it was "too wonderful for [him]; it is high, I cannot attain it" (v.6). That is to say the finite mind cannot grasp the infinite. Then in verse 7 David proposes two questions. The first is "Where can I go from Your Spirit?" We saw last time that the Hebrew word "go" referred to "movement." David was saying, in effect, "Where can I move, walk or go away to that you would not know?"

The second question was "Where can I flee from Your presence?" (v.7). The Hebrew word "flee" meant to "run away, escape, to bolt or flee suddenly." Here he was saying, "Where can I suddenly run to that You wouldn't know?" Both questions revealed the omniscience and omnipresence of God working together. Where could David move or suddenly flee to that God wouldn't know or see? Whether you walk or run quickly you cannot escape the knowledge and presence of God because there is "no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb.4:13, NASB). In verses 8-12, David answers his own questions. He does that by pointing out five truths about the omnipresence of God. The first is seen in verse 8 where he says, "If I ascend into heaven, You are there" and points out that *God's presence is in Heaven*. Also in verse 8, he says, "If I make my bed in hell (sheol), behold, You are there." And now says that *God's presence is in Sheol*. In other words, if I go up to heaven, You are there. If I descend below into Sheol, You are also there. There is no place I can go to escape the knowledge and presence of God. In verse 9 he continues by saying, "If

I take the wings of the morning” which meant, “If I should lift wings such as the dawn of the morning,” that is, “If I could fly with the swiftness with which the dawn of the morning spreads itself over the eastern sky, towards the extreme west and alight there” Your presence would be there because it is in *the rising of the dawn*. In other words, If I could streak across the heavens from east to west at 186,000 miles per second or travel to some remote corner of the universe at the speed of light, You would be there. Then in verse 9 he says, “And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,” that is, “the extreme end of the sea of the Mediterranean,” “even there, Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.” David, in verses 8-10, answers his own questions by affirming that *God’s presence is in heaven (v.8a)*, *God’s presence is in Sheol (v.8b)*, *God’s presence is in the rising of the dawn (v.9a)*, and *God’s presence is in the remotest part of the sea (vv.9b-10)*. Now in verses 11-12 he says that *God’s presence is in darkness*. He says, “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.” David, in effect says, “If the darkness was my covering, it wouldn’t hide me from your face because ‘the darkness and the light are both alike to You’” (v.12). Now when you think that David has exhausted his response to his two questions, he launches into verses 13-18 with a third attribute of God—His omnipotence.

Listen to what he says: “13 For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. 14 I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. 15 My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. 16 Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them. 17 How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! 18 If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; When I awake, I am still with You.”

In this section it is as if David returns back to where he started and says, in effect, “The reason why God knew me was because God created me.”

Notice again how he keeps this personal. Verse 13, “You have formed *my inward parts*; You have covered me in my mother’s womb.” Drop down to verse 15, “*My frame* was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.” Verse 16, “Your eyes saw *my substance*. In this psalm, David is only concerned with himself. He does not speak of God’s attributes as they relate to others but as they relate to himself.

Notice again verses 13-18 where you have the greatest statements in the Bible about where life begins as we see *the expression of God’s Power in the creation of man*. David begins verse 13 by stating that *God Created Me*.

I. The Expression of God's Power

A. In the Creation of Man (Ps.139:13-18)

1. David says, "God created me" (v.13a).

"For You have formed"

The Hebrew word "formed" qanah, can mean "to get, acquire, create or buy."

This was a common Semitic word found in both ancient and modern Hebrew as well as in ancient Akkadian and Ugaritic.

It occurs in the Old Testament 84 times.

The first occurrence is in Gen. 4:1 where Eve says after the birth of Cain, "I have gotten a man from the LORD."

In this passage, qanah expresses a basic meaning of God's "creating" or "bringing into being," so Eve is really saying, "I have created a man-child with the help of the Lord." This meaning is confirmed in Gen. 14:19, 22 where both verses refer to God as "creator of heaven and earth" (KJV, NASB, "possessor"; RSV, "maker").

In Deut. 32:6, God is called the "father" who "created" Israel; a father begets or "creates," rather than "acquires" children. In the Wisdom version of the Creation story (Prov. 8:22-36), Wisdom herself states that "the Lord created me at the beginning of his work" (RSV, NEB, JB, TEV). "Possessed" (KJV, NASB) is surely not as appropriate in such a context.

When the Psalmist says to God, "For You have formed my inward parts" (Ps. 139:13, RSV) he surely meant "create" (JB).

Qanah is used several times to express God's redeeming activity in behalf of Israel, again reflecting "creativity" rather than "purchase." Exod. 15:16 is better translated, "... Thy people ... whom thou hast created," rather than "thou hast purchased" (RSV). See also Ps. 74:2; 78:54.

The meaning "to buy" is expressed by qanah frequently in contexts where one person makes a purchase agreement with another. The word is used to refer to "buying" a slave (Exod. 21:2) and land (Gen. 47:20) (W.E. Vine, Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words).

- a) God said to Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations" (Jer.1:5).
- b) Job 31:15 beautifully says, "Did not He who made me in the womb make them? Did

not the same One fashion us in the womb?”

“In a speck of watery material smaller than the dot over [the letter] i, all the future characteristics of the child are programmed ‘the color of his skin, eyes and hair, the shape of his facial features, the natural abilities he will have. All that the child will be physically and mentally is contained in germ form in that fertilized egg. From it will develop: ... 60 trillion cells, 100 thousand miles of nerve fiber, 60 thousand miles of vessels carrying blood around the body, 250 bones, to say nothing of joints, ligaments and muscles” (MacDonald, W., & Farstad, A. (1997, c1995). Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments, Ps 139:13).

2. David continues by saying that God created “my inward parts” (v.13b).

“Inward parts” is the Hebrew word kilyah and it means “kidney” referring to they physical organs.

This word was also “regarded by the Hebrews as the seat of sensation and feeling as well as desiring and longing” (KJV Bible Commentary).

God not only created everything inside of his body but also his emotions and desires.

3. He continues further in verse 13 by stating where all this took place

“You covered me in my mother's womb.”

“Covered” Heb.,sakak, “to weave together or knit together (Barnes) meaning that God put his parts together as one who weaves cloth, or who makes a basket. The weaving of the bones, tissue, and organs” (KJV Bible Commentary).

William MacDonald says, “Think of the brain, for instance, with its capacity for recording facts, sounds, odors, sights, touch, pain; with its ability to recall; with its power to make computations; with its seemingly endless flair for making decisions and solving problems. And God knit us together in our mother’s womb. This aptly describes the marvelous weaving of the muscles, sinews, ligaments, nerves, blood vessels and bones of the human frame” (Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments, Ps 139:13).

4. Before he continues in attributing his creation to God’s power he praises God in verse 14

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

5. In verse 15 David says that God created my skeletal structure

“My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.”

“Frame” Heb.otsem, “bones”

“Made in secret, and...in the lowest parts of the earth” also refers to the womb.

6. Verse 16 continues by saying “Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.”

“Substance” Heb.golem, “an embryo, unformed substance”

Here we also see the predetermined thought of God in our creation when he says, “And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them.”

The creation of man as seen in this passage is not the same as the creation of the first man and woman. The first man was a direct creation of God from the dust of the earth. The creation of the first woman was from the rib of man and both of them were created as full grown adults.

Here David is referring to “God’s sovereign superintendence over the natural process of reproduction” (Walvoord).

A DVD I would recommend for everyone of this is by Answers in Genesis called “Fearfully and Wonderfully Made” with Dr. David Menton.

7. The only response David could have at this wonder of the power of God is found in verses 17-18.

He says, “How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! 18 If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; When I awake, I am still with You.”

The fact that God goes to so much detail in His creation shows Him to be a gracious loving Creator not a tyrant.

Ps.40:5 says, “Many, O Lord my God, are Your wonderful works Which You have done; And Your thoughts toward us Cannot be recounted to You in order; If I would declare and speak of them, They are more than can be numbered.”

Even though God is “angry with the wicked everyday” (Ps.7:11), He has a special love for them. Even though He loves both the elect and the world differently, He still loves them. That’s why He commissions you and I to “make disciples of *all the nations*” (Mat.28:19).

Let’s move away from this passage now and see God’s power expressed:

B. In the Creation of the World

1. Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."
2. Psalm 33:6 says, "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth."
3. Romans 4:17 says when He willed creation into existence, He called "into being that which does not exist."
4. Isaiah 44:24 says He did all this without any help:

"Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, And He who formed you from the womb: "I am the Lord, who makes all things, Who stretches out the heavens all alone, Who spreads abroad the earth by Myself."

5. When God creates He also sustains, maintains, and preserves

Heb.1:3 says He "upholds all things by the word of His power."

The Greek word "uphold" means "to support" or "to maintain." It is used in the present tense, implying continuous action. At this moment God is sustaining everything in the universe. That is much more than a law of nature; it is the very activity of God.

John MacArthur in his book *Our Awesome God* says, "Can you imagine what would happen if God were to relinquish His sustaining power? We would cease to exist. Our lives depend on the constancy of the physical laws He has established.

If God were to stop maintaining the law of gravity, we wouldn't be able to stay on the earth and would surely die. Or consider the sun. It has a surface temperature of twelve thousand degrees fahrenheit. If it were closer to the earth, we'd burn; if it were farther, we'd freeze.

Furthermore, our globe is tilted on an exact angle of twenty-three degrees, which enables us to have four seasons. If it weren't tilted, vapors from the ocean would move north and south, eventually piling up monstrous continents of ice. If our atmosphere suddenly thinned out, the meteors that now harmlessly burn up when they hit our atmosphere would constantly bombard us.

If the moon did not remain a specific distance from the earth, the ocean tide would completely inundate the land twice a day. If the ocean floor merely slipped a few feet deeper, the carbon dioxide and oxygen balance in the earth's atmosphere would be completely upset, and no vegetable or animal life could exist on earth.

Things don't happen in our universe by accident. God sustains it. He is the principle of cohesion. He is not some remote watchmaker who made the world, set it in motion, and hasn't bothered it since. The reason the universe is a cosmos and not chaos-an ordered and reliable system instead of an erratic and unpredictable muddle-is because of the upholding power of God. Scientists who think that they are discovering great truths are doing nothing

more than discovering the sustaining laws that God uses to control the world. No scientist, mathematician, or astronomer could discover anything apart from the upholding power of God because He monitors and sustains the movements and developments of the entire universe. His governing of the entire universe manifests His unsearchable wisdom and boundless power. And He upholds it all by the word of His power” (76-7).

Notice also God’s power as it is expressed:

C. In Salvation

F.B. Meyer said, “We go into the artist's studio and find there unfinished pictures covering large canvases, and suggesting great designs, but which have been left, either because the genius was not competent to complete the work, or because paralysis laid the hand low in death; but as we go into God's great workshop we find nothing that bears the mark of haste or insufficiency of power to finish, and we are sure that the work which His grace has begun, the arm of His strength will complete” (The Epistle to the Philippians [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1952], p. 21).

Isn’t that Paul’s point in Philippians 1:6 when he says, “Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

1. Salvation is a powerful work of God

- a) Since every person is a sinner from the very womb (Ps.51:5) and “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph.2:1), salvation is an act of the power of God
- b) That’s why Paul said in Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”

2. Salvation was an even greater display of God’s power than creation because there was no opposition to Creation

“But in redemption the devil had to be subdued, death had to be conquered, and sin had to be dealt with. God then chose ‘the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong’ (1 Cor.1:27)” (John MacArthur, Our Awesome God, 79).

Heb.2:14-15 says it this way: “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

Notice another area where we see the power of God:

D. In the Resurrection

1. God's power is also manifested in His ability to raise the dead

During His time here, Jesus raised people from the dead. One story that is known by all is His raising Lazarus from the dead (Jn.11).

2. But the greatest event was His ability to raise Himself

- a) Jesus said in John 10:14-18, "I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. 15 As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. 16 And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd. 17 Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. 18 No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."

- b) In John 2:19 he said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

They thought He was talking about the temple itself but He was "speaking of the temple of His body" (v.21).

3. Scripture teaches that He not only raised Himself from the dead but also God and the Spirit raised Him

- a) Acts 2:22-24 says, "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know--23 Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; 24 whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it."

- b) Romans 8:11 says, "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."

II. The Extent of God's Power

"How does God's power apply to our lives as believers?"

A. In Worship

1. We are to worship God because of His power

God said to His people, "The LORD, who brought you up from the land of Egypt with great power and with an outstretched arm, Him you shall fear, and to Him you shall bow yourselves down, and to Him you shall sacrifice" (2 Kings 17:36, NASB).

This applies to us today as it did to the Israelites then. We ought to meditate more on His power. Doing so will help us focus less on our problems.

2. Think of this in a practical way as to God's power to daily *change* your heart

Who causes you to confess sin? Who empowers you to repent from it? Who helps you to draw to Him? It's God in His supernatural power.

His power is not only to save but to sustain. That's why you can never lose eternal life. If you could, then it wouldn't be eternal and God wouldn't be powerful.

That's where we see God's the extent of God's power:

B. In Confidence

1. Heb.4:16 says, "Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need" (NASB).
2. If we are "kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet.1:5) then we can "greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials" (v.6).

God's power is not only seen in our worship and confidence but also:

C. In Hope

1. We await "the redemption of the body" when God in His awesome power raptures His church
2. The resurrection of Christ produces this hope
 - a) Romans 6:5 says, "For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection" (NASB).
 - b) 1 Cor.15:51-57 says, "Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. 55 "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (NASB).

CONCLUSION

What comfort and hope we see in the omnipotence of God.

A.W. Pink says, “Well may the saint trust such a God! He is worthy of implicit confidence. Nothing is too hard for Him. If God were stunted in might and had a limit to His strength we might well despair. But seeing that He is clothed with omnipotence, no prayer is too hard for Him to answer, no need too great for Him to supply, no passion too strong for Him to subdue; no temptation too powerful for Him to deliver from, no misery too deep for Him to relieve” (The Attributes of God [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975], p. 51).

Stephen Charnock adds to this when he says, “As omnipotence is an ocean that cannot be fathomed, so the comforts from it are streams that cannot be exhausted. How comforting to know you have a God who can do what He pleases: there is nothing so difficult that He can't accomplish, nothing so strong that He can't overrule! You need not dread men since you have One to restrain them, nor fear devils since you have One to chain them. His power was not all expended in creation; it is not weakened by His preservation of all things. For whom would the Lord display His eternal arm and the incomprehensible thunder of His power but for His own?” (Masterpiece excerpt [Sept.-Oct. 1987]:10).

It's no wonder that David closes Psalm 139 by saying in verses 19-24: “Oh, that You would slay the wicked, O God! Depart from me, therefore, you bloodthirsty men. 20 For they speak against You wickedly; Your enemies take Your name in vain. 21 Do I not hate them, O Lord, who hate You? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? 22 I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them my enemies. 23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; 24 And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.”