

YOU'RE SURROUNDED

ME... ILLUSTRATION: Infected Shoulder

Throughout my life I've had many injuries and surgeries. One of the most painful was a torn rotator cuff. I was going through physical therapy after the surgery and doing all the stretches that I should be doing so I would make a complete recovery. The pain that I was experiencing was very severe, so much so, that I was taking two (2) opioid pain relievers. Even with all the meds. that I was taking, it didn't seem to help much. One morning I woke up and I had a knot in my shoulder. It kind of looked like my shoulder swallowed a golf ball. I went a few days later to therapy, and the whole time I was moaning quite loudly. The therapist said to me, "Mr. Dieterly if you keep making so much noise, you're going to scare the other patients away". My reply was: "when it stops hurting, I'll stop moaning". He asked me to show him where it hurts. I took off my shirt and showed him the knot on my shoulder. He asked me how long it's been there? I told him that it's been hurting for several weeks, but the knot showed up several days ago. He said he would be right back, and took off to see the Doctor. The next thing I know is I'm in the doctor's office. He looked at it and said you're going into surgery NOW! I mentioned that I had just eaten lunch, and I did not think it would be good to be operated on with a full stomach. He said OK, and that he would meet me in the operating room at 5:00 PM, when he's done seeing all his patients. I asked him if I could move it till the next day, because I had some things that I wanted to do. He flat out said NO, you have an infection, and it's a matter of life and death. That really hit me hard, so I left, went home, packed a bag, and went back for the surgery. I still remember my prayer; it went something like this..." Well God it's me and you, if I live, I'll live for you, If I die, I'll be with you". It went well, and when I woke up, I had no pain. I was sure it was all the medications from surgery. When I woke up the next morning, I had little, to no pain. I could even do my beginning exercises much easier, and still very little pain. PRAISE GOD! The only negative side was that I had to have a daytime IV and then a nighttime IV for the next 6 months. My wife was nervous with her job of switching IV's back and forth. Instead of 6 months, I only had to deal with them for around 3-4 months. I was so glad God's presence was there, seeing me through this whole ordeal. Not only was He in my Heart, but His very presence was in the operating room.

WE... We all go through many struggles in life, some of those seem so difficult that we're not sure if we are ever going to make it through. But with God's help and presence we can, and will, make it through.

Illustration: (Con't) One question remained; why did I have to go through this situation in the first place? I found out the morning following the surgery. When I woke up, I had a roommate. He was an elderly man who just had a knee replacement. I was his hospital room helper and I got to share Christ with him. After all, where could he go? Later that day I received another roommate. I got to be his helper and share Christ with him. I began to understand It was "not about what I had to go through, but what God wanted me to do".
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"The book of Psalms, a collection of inspired Hebrew prayers and hymns, is probably for most Christians the best known and loved portion of the Old Testament."

GOD...Psalm 139: 1 (The Voice)

**¹ You have searched me, LORD,
and you know me.**

...In verse number 1 it says that you have searched my heart. The Hebrew word used here, to search, means "to dig". "The Lord digs into you-not with careless thrust of a shovel, but with the painstaking sifting of an archaeologist. An archaeologist uses a brush and very carefully removes the dirt, a little at a time so that he doesn't miss anything or damage anything. He carefully brushes the layers off, to reveal or show exactly who you are. This is how God looks at us. When His digging is done, there's nothing about you that He doesn't know!

Psalm 139:2-4 (The Voice)

**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.**
**⁴ Before a word is on my tongue
you, LORD, know it completely.**

Starting at verse 2 you have David using contrasts (figuratively speaking). Speaking typically polar opposites. He knows when we're sitting down, when we get up. He knows our inner thoughts, even when and if, He is far away. He knows us when we're going out, and He knows when we lie down. He is familiar with every thing we have

done, and everything we are going to do. God knows what we are thinking, what we're planning to say, and then He knows exactly what we have said! He knows more about us, than we know ourselves. He knows everything and everyone.

Psalm 139:5-7 (The Voice)

⁵ You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.

⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.

⁷ Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?

It starts out in verse 5 saying that God is so near to us, He has us **SUROUNDED!** When you see police shows they might say "come out with your hands up, and they have the place [house/building] surrounded." They are trying to catch the suspect. Sometimes they are successful and sometimes they are not. But with God there is no escape. He Has us **TOTALLY SUROUNDED!** There is no possible way to escape God's Presence! God has placed His hands gently on our shoulders. Even though it is gentle, it is a firm grip. It's not a pat on the back, it's a solid clamp that lets you know He is there. With God's help and presence, you can face or do anything. God's placement of His divine hand, signifies protection and blessing. The key is that no matter where we flee, we cannot escape God's grasp, or the notice of God Himself. With God there is just no escape, you're surrounded with God's presence. A person has nothing to fear because God is there. He will be with you, to help you, guide you, protect you, and be with you to the very end. David simply realizes that God's knowledge of him, is greater than he could even imagine. The thought of God's presence totally enveloping Him [us] is more than David can even understand.

Psalm 139:8-10 (The Voice)

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.

The contrasts continue. No matter how high you go God is there. No matter how low you go God is there. Some versions use the translations of Sheol or hell. A more proper translation would be the depths as translated here. So,

from the highest part of heaven, to the lowest depth, God would be there. Plane, jet or rocket does not put you out of God's range. If a submarine could take you to the lowest part of the ocean (if you could even get there) you still wouldn't be out of God's reach or influence.

If we "rise on the wings of dawn" speaks about the sun rising in the east. The "far side of the sea" is talking about the west where the sun sets. So, no matter which way you go God will be there. You are totally surrounded by God's presence. He is with you when you're at home, and He is with you if you're far away. You're surrounded by God!

Psalm 139:11-12 (The Voice)

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.

But wait; maybe darkness could hide us from God. That will not work either, God can see everything that is done just like it is daytime. There is nothing that can be hidden from God. He sees all and knows all. As a matter of fact, what is done at night, will shine like its daytime. Darkness will not be able to hide you from God. The night and the Light are the same to God. "He's with you even in the darkest nights-even the ones of your own making." God can look right through us and see what's in our heart. He knows the darkness of our heart, or He can see a new heart that was placed in us, because of salvation touching and influencing our lives.

Illustration: Back Slid/Drunk @ Youth Retreat

My problem when I was growing up was that I always looked older than I was (very bad thing). I was going to a youth trip, after recently giving my heart to Christ. The drinking age in Pennsylvania was 21 years old, but I was able to be served alcohol anywhere when I was 16 years old. I was driving to a youth event with a friend of mine in the car. For some reason I decided to stop and purchase alcohol at a liquor store. I was so drunk, at the youth event, that they threatened to throw me in the shower (with my clothes on). The incident caused me to be so embarrassed & humiliated that I totally abandoned God. I remember going to the youth group/church and being stared at. In my heart I was furious, and said that "there was nothing on earth" that could make me turn back to God. On Sunday I went to church, and I was sitting next to my

friend that had also gotten drunk. He had a hard heart and never wanted to serve God. The Pastor's sermon was on "the Prodigal's son". I knew that it was directed right at me and my friend. Remember what I said, that there was "no way on earth" that I would repent and go to the altar. The end of the sermon came, and I refused to move. Suddenly, I felt a tap on my leg from my friend sitting next to me. He said If I go to the altar and repent, that he would follow me, and give his life to Christ. Talk about a way to shatter a hard heart. It was like God took a sledge hammer to an ice cube. We went to the altar and God touched us; it was absolutely amazing!!! Hugs, Tears, Joy, Laughter...2 prodigals came home. The fear that I had was that there was no way God could remove the shame and embarrassment. I thought there was no way that God could fix what I messed up. But God touches us where we are, and knows how to reach us. No way on earth, but there is always a way with God!

Romans 8:28 (The Voice)

²⁸ We are confident that God is able to orchestrate everything to work toward something good *and beautiful* when we love Him and accept His invitation to live according to His plan.

Psalms 119:13-18 (The Voice)

- 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;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.**
- ¹⁷ How precious to me are your thoughts,^[a] 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.**

God has shaped us inside and out. He put us together in our mother's womb. He took care of even the smallest details. God made each one of us unique, and put these details into place as we developed in our mother's womb. It was almost like David was dreaming...but when David woke up...it was all true!

“Human creation from its beginning, is a mystery and a wonder known only to God.”

Illustration: 4 Miscarriages, but I was born

I grew up on a farm in Pennsylvania. Growing up on a farm required a lot of work. Because of this hard work, my mom had four (4) miscarriages before I was born. But with God, against all odds, I was born. I was born very early and only weighed 3lbs. 4ozs. Back then preemie babies did not have a good chance of surviving. God had His hand on me before I was even born. God was faithful, and with His mercy and grace I am here. In verse 13 it says that “He knitted” us together in our mother’s womb. “This parallels the intricate work of human creation as each person is woven into a tapestry” [of art]. Each of us, is the Art work, of the hand of God.

We... In Psalm 139 “The psalmist’s hope rests entirely with the God who knows him, the God with whom He is in [an intimate] relationship with.” The Hebrew word “YADA” appears 7 times in this Psalm. Vss1,2,4,6,14, & 23 (2x), thereby reinforcing the I-Thou relationship between the Psalmist and God. This brings out not only the presence of God, but more importantly the intimacy God wants to have with us. He knows us, loves us, wants to be near us, and He has chosen us to bear fruit for Him.

The Three Attributes of God Seen in Psalm 139

OMNISCIENCE: “having total knowledge; knowing everything”

OMNIPRESENCE: “present everywhere simultaneously”

OMNIPOTENCE: “having unlimited or universal power, authority or force: all powerful.”

Unlimited power.

Favorite Quote: One commentator [Howard Neil Wallace] said “the Psalm does not want to make a statement about the Lord’s omni-this or that” ...” instead this Psalm confesses both God’s constant presence with the Psalmist, as well as His comprehensive knowledge of the Psalmist” “The Psalm is intimately personal, as the God to whom the Psalm testifies.” Yet as this Psalm draws to a close, David’s nearness to God, gives him hope even in the face of impending threats.!

YOU...” the child of God sees God’s presence everywhere, and experiences the joy of God’s watchful eye over him [or her]. “The believer senses more than any other part of God’s creation that he is fearfully and wonderfully made.” Each of us was formed and framed by God. “Each of us was reverently, wondrously, [Uniquely], strikingly, remarkably, differently made-in ways that are beyond human explanation.”

Psalm 8:3-4 (NIV)

³ When I consider your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which you have set in place,
⁴ what is mankind that you are mindful of them,
human beings that you care for them?

Proverbs 18:24 (NIV)

²⁴ One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin,
but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

John 15:13-14 (NIV)

³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command.

Ephesians 2:10 (NIV)

¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

When we give our hearts to Christ, the Holy Spirit comes into our lives. The thing that we sometimes neglect is that God is always with us, goes before us, and leads us in the way that we should go. As a believer, God never promised us a life that would always be happy, and trouble free. "David who expresses in the Psalms God's blessing in the strongest terms, lived a life that was filled with almost constant tragedy and disappointment; as 1st and 2nd Samuel describe. YET, he praises and thanks God enthusiastically at every turn, even [when we express grief and sorrow] [like Psalm 139] just as Paul advises us to do in the hard times (Eph. 1:16; 5:20). God deserves praise for His greatness and goodness in spite of, and in the midst of, our misery. This life holds no certainty of freedom from distress." No matter where we go, what we face, or what comes against us God is there to see us through. He began His intricate work when we were in our mother's womb. It continues through our entire life. He said "He will never Leave us". And that is literal, He will be with us, from before we were born, in our mother's womb, now, even through eternity if we have given our lives to Him. You might consider yourself beyond His help or reach, all you have to do is allow Him to work in whatever situation comes against us. Maybe you're lonely, depressed, without a friend, He can be your friend. You might need a physical miracle, He does that too, by "His stripes were healed". Perhaps you tried to do everything on your own

strength, rely on Him, He will take you through, if we “cast our cares on Him.” Maybe you have need of housing, He will take care of that too, if we “seek Him first”. Maybe you have fears, or uncertainty of the future. If you need a Job or a better paying job, He is “Jehovah Jireh” (our provider). He’s ready to help us with whatever needs we have; He is at the “right hand of the Father praying for us.” We serve a personal God who cares intimately for us, and He will place his Loving hand gently upon us and go with us, no matter what we go through.

“The Psalms like no other literature, lift us to a position where we can commune with God, capturing a sense of the greatness of His kingdom and a sense of what living with Him for eternity will be like.” Possibly you have never heard about God like this before, He’s everywhere, even at the altar right now waiting for you. Just come to the altar for whatever you need He’s already there waiting for you, just come because you’re surrounded by God!

Illustration:... Belts

They are such a useful accessory! A properly fitting belt will hold up your pants, keep your shirt neatly tucked in, and do it all, almost without notice.

“But an improperly fitting belt. Well, that’s a different story. Too loose, and you’re tugging up your pants all day. Too tight, and we feel constricted and uncomfortable, and can’t wait to get home and unbuckle it.”

Application...” Like a well fit belt, God’s presence [surrounds] us, supports us, and it holds us all together. And it does so without cinching us so tightly that we cannot move. Rather, He is holding us together. Right there, at the center of our being.”

Acts 17:28 (NIV)

“For in Him we live and move and have our being”