

## 2CH Sunday at 7.30

Talks from the NSW Council of Churches

### When you feel insecure

Presented by Steve Cooper

Good morning! I wonder if you've heard the story of the little boy who couldn't sleep. He was alone in his room, surrounded by darkness, and he was scared. When he called out to his mom, she said: 'Don't worry about the dark, God is with you'. She heard his trembling reply: 'But God doesn't have a face like you do!'

We all frequently go through times when we feel insecure. The darkness seems to close around us. We may have faith that God knows our situation, that he's present with us, but we still struggle with our inadequacy. We wish we could see God, or at least see more clearly what he's doing.

Today let's look at a wonderful psalm from the Hebrew Scriptures, Psalm 139. This psalm was composed by David during a time when he faced daily harassment and even violence from people who opposed God. As he writes this psalm he meditates on God. David re-discovers that God is personal and intimately involved in every detail of David's life. This meditation gives David security and confidence that he can trust God in the darkness.

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What do we do when we feel insecure, when the darkness seems to overwhelm us? It's a common problem for most of us. This feeling of insecurity was the experience of King David on many occasions. When he wrote Psalm 139, he was deeply troubled because he was threatened by violent people. He pleaded for God to intervene, to punish these people who were 'bloodthirsty' and hated God (vv.19-22).

What David needed most was to re-capture a sense of security and safety that only comes when we know God is in control. He begins the psalm by recalling in prayer that God knows everything. He writes: 'O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar... You are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD... You have laid your hand upon me. (vv.1-5)' David responds to this God who knows all with these words of awe and wonder: 'Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. (v.6)'

What strikes us about David's meditation here is that he takes his knowledge of God and sees how God relates to him on a personal basis. It's not just that God knows all, but God knows all about David. We can affirm the same too – that God has complete knowledge of everything about each of us, and encircles us with his care.

David continues in this psalm by pondering that the Lord not only knows all, but God is ever-present, wherever we are. He writes: 'Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast... even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. (vv.7-12)'

Reading these words with David, and praying along with him, we can sense that he is already feeling more secure and safe. When we too sense that darkness and evil is all around us, we can remember that God knows all, he is ever-present with us, and his strong hand is guiding us and holding us in the darkness. Remembering basic truths about God is so important. Like David, when we're harassed we can place our trust and confidence in this God who is intimately aware of all that is happening to us.

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Today we're following the prayer of King David in Psalm 139. He feels insecure as he encounters the reality of evil and violent people. David reminds himself that God knows all, and is ever-present with us in every situation. He is feeling more secure and safe as he re-gains his confidence in such a great and personal God.

David focuses on God's creative power. He writes: 'For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. 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, your eyes saw my unformed body. (vv.13-16)' These thoughts mean a lot to me. My mother was a great knitter. As a boy, I recall that whenever we drove for long trips in the car, or watched a TV program, mum would be working away at her knitting. She produced beautiful quality jumpers for me and her other children. King David is saying that when each of us was a foetus being formed in our mother's womb, God was personally involved in shaping us. Each of us has value and significance, because God superintended the creation of each one of us.

Just as amazing, reflects David, the Creator's work covered not only the person being shaped in the womb, but also the experiences yet in store for that person. David writes: 'All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. (v.16)' That's such a comforting thought: the Creator does not bring us to birth then push us out to take our chance on the sea of time. The days ahead were shaped and formed by him too. Our Creator has planned all our life; all our experiences are under his sovereign control.

As David contemplated God's personal knowledge of him, God's presence, God's creative power, the security he felt was very precious. He writes: 'How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you. (vv.17-18)'

Faced with darkness and evil, feeling insecure and harassed, we too gain confidence and security as we remember we are constantly in the presence of this God who knows all about us, who created each of us individually, who has planned our life.

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This morning we're reflecting on the moving and powerful words of Psalm 139, a prayer King David prays as he feels insecure and unsafe in dark situations. He recalls that at all times God is in control, in all places and in every circumstance, and those who trust God are in safety.

At the end of this psalm, having pleaded with God to intervene and punish these people who oppose God and who want to hurt David (vv.19-22), the psalm concludes with a very personal prayer for God to examine David's heart and lead David in God's ways. He writes: 'Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (vv.23-24)'

It takes courage to pray a prayer like that! David began this psalm by acknowledging that the Lord has searched him and known him (v.1) – now he daringly invites God to search him and examine his inner thoughts. David knows that he is angry about those who hate him and God, and he wants them punished. But he is honest enough to admit that his ‘anxious thoughts’ could be wrong in God’s sight, so he invites God’s scrutiny. David doesn’t want to offend God or hurt people, so he asks God to show any ‘offensive’ attitudes or behaviour. His desire is to be led by God in the way that is solid and lasting, the ways revealed by God’s commands.

I’m personally challenged by David’s honesty and vulnerability before God. When feeling insecure, he prays before the Lord, calling to mind God’s character, applying what he knows about God to his own personal situation. As he asks for God to intervene and deal with his tormentors, he opens himself to God’s scrutiny and God’s leading for the future.

For the Christian, the coming of the Lord Jesus adds a deeper dimension to dealing with our insecure feelings. A good example of this is the apostle Paul. In Romans 8 Paul faces all the hard things that happen to God’s people, including false accusation, trouble, hardship, persecution, danger, death and demons. Paul affirms that in light of God’s love shown in Jesus’ death for our sin, we know that this God will graciously give us what we need to sustain us. Nothing can separate us from God’s love shown in Christ. We can trust God, says Paul, we can feel safe, secure and confident in that knowledge of his love for us. (Rom 8:31-39) And when we pray about those who hate us and God, we pray not just for God to judge them, but for for God to help us love them and do them good. (Luke 6:27-28)

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When facing darkness and evil, we do feel insecure. We learn from King David’s magnificent prayer in Psalm 139 that we can deal with our insecurities. We can recall what God is like: he knows all about us, he is ever-present with us, he is sovereignly in control as the mighty Creator. We can trust this God, and become confident about the future.

‘Heavenly Father, we praise you that you know so much about us – our past, our present, our future. You are in control. As David was honest before you, help us be honest with you in our prayers – honest about our insecurities. We open ourselves to your truthful searching of our hearts, your leading in ways that please you. Assure us that you are intimately and personally involved in every detail of our lives. Give us security, safety, and confidence as we rest in your love shown in our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.’