

QTC543. "You Are A Wonder" Psalm 139 series part 9. 31 October 2024

"You Are A Wonder" Psalm 139 Series - Part 9 | Malcolm Cox | Quiet Time Coaching Episode 543

Introduction

Today, we look at verse seven of the Psalm.

"Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?" (Psalm 139:7 NRSV)

We are in the second section of the Psalm. The first six verses remind us that God knows us and our situation, so we are protected. In this second section, from verses 7 to 12, the Psalmist focuses on God's presence with him. God is paying attention to his situation and what he needs.

Jeremiah 23.24

"Can a man hide himself in hiding places So I do not see him?" declares the Lord. "Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?" declares the Lord.

This is in contrast to the pagan deities. They were always localised, but not YHWH.

The question here is whether David is reflecting on God's presence as a benevolent thing or whether he is afraid. Does he want to hide from God like Adam and Eve in the Garden? I have heard this verse taught along the lines of, "You'd better behave yourself because God knows what's going on. You can run, but you can't hide!"

However, it seems to me this is more a celebration of the universality of God's presence. After all, David thinks he is safe and on God's side (vv 23 and 24). I reckon David is reflecting on a difficult truth we all feel from time to time. God may be real, but we don't always *feel* him. Is he *really* there?

Even in the Old Covenant context, David understands that God's spirit is everywhere *and* with him. He does not need to fear being away from God's presence. Literally, 'presence' means 'face. Therefore, God's face is always turned towards him, indicating an immediacy of

closeness. Perhaps he is offering his prayer as a reminder to himself that, even when he doesn't feel it, God is with him.

Question

Do you see the universality of the presence of God as something to be feared? Or something to be celebrated? Be honest with your feelings. The intellect may say different things to your spirit or your body. What's going on for you? And what do you think it means?

Suggestions

1. Bring whatever you discover to God and talk it over with him.
 2. Do the same with a trusted friend.
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Conclusion

Next time, we will move on to verse 8.

I am planning a spiritual experience day based on Psalm 139 in the spring of 2025. If you'd be interested, please email me at malcolm@malcolmcox.org.

Your brother, Malcolm

Please add your comments on this week's topic. We learn best when we learn in community.

Do you have a question about teaching the Bible? Is it theological, technical, or practical? Please send me your questions or suggestions. Here's the email: malcolm@malcolmcox.org.

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