Palms 139

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Psalms 139:1-12 (NIV)

"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 discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD.

"You hem me in-behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. 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.

If I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,' even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you."

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The first time:

In November 2002 I was visiting at my Mother's house and she showed me a Bible she had purchased at a yard sale. It was in a beautiful wooden box made of cedar. I opened the front cover of the Bible inside and I noticed the publication date. I asked my Mom if she realized the Bible was published the same year I was born. She told me no and that she bought it because she liked the box.

Several days later I got an email from Mom asking if I wanted the Bible. She said she really only bought it

for the box and thought I might appreciate it more since it was the same age as me. I told her yes and thank you and she dropped it by my house a day or two later. I laid the Bible on a stand and one day while reading my regular Bible I decided to pick it up and glance at it. As I thumbed through I noticed in the middle of the Bible was a page that had different topics and a scripture reference for each one. That was nothing new, but as I read the list one topic caught my attention. It was 'What to do when God seems far away'. It caught my attention because of the topic. The reference was Psalms 139. I turned to the scripture and began reading Psalms 139 for the first time ever. I was in awe at what I was reading. This Psalm captured my attention and had a deep impact on me. It gripped my heart and my thoughts for several days.

I do not remember ever losing my Sunday School book. But I lost it the following January. I asked for an extra copy but was told there were no extra copies (we usually have plenty of extras, but we just happened to be out). Every lesson in December and so far in January had been in the gospel of John. Since I did not have a book I read John to prepare for our class. One Sunday morning during Sunday School, a member of our class had been having some serious issues and shared them with us.

I was reminded of the great encouragement I found when I had read Psalms 139 for the first time a few weeks before. I decided to share Psalms 139 with the class. When I finished reading the first few verses I looked at the faces and nobody seemed to be as impressed with the scripture as I had been. I thought everyone should have been excited by this passage as I had been when I first read it. This surprised me as I silently wondered why they had not been blown away with an amazing passage. I kept quiet and waited for our teacher to say something. She said it was a great introduction into today's lesson and she began reading more from Psalms 139.

I interrupted her and asked someone to hand me a Sunday school book. And there it was. The entire lesson for that morning was on Psalms 139! I looked at the lessons before and after and all of the other lessons in the book for that quarter and they were all in the gospel of John except for this one day!

The second time:

In 2003 I felt led to begin exploring the practice of silent worship by Quakers. The more I learned about historical Quakers the more it seemed like a wonderful example of truly living a Christian life. I visited a Quaker Meeting in Tallahassee in October of 2003 and once a month began to attend regular worship with Friends (Quakers) in Crestview. I attended the South East Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends in April of 2004.

I had a wonderful time eating simple meals and living in a tent for 4 nights. Each workshop or meeting began and ended in silence. I met many wonderful people and often reflected on the joy in them and their commitment to integrity and simplicity. The main speaker was Mary Lord and I very much enjoyed the workshop she led. On Saturday evening she gave the main lecture to the entire assembly of Quakers. The lecture centered on peace and our individual part in promoting peace.

Earlier on Saturday afternoon a Friend from the Tallahassee Monthly Meeting (TMM) and I spent three hours talking. We began the conversation talking about the power of God in our lives. I shared the testimonies of the many times God's hand was on my daughter's life. When she was 2 years old I was mowing our front yard and was stopped when I heard the sound of someone in a car honking their horn. My daughter had wandered out to the middle of a very busy road. My grandfather just happened to be driving by (he had only driven on that road a dozen times in 30 years) and slowed down because he was near our house

and saw my daughter. I told the Friend from TMM about several other stories involving my daughter where things seemed to - "just happen".

The most recent was her good accident where she totaled her car. She was driving down a hill on a sharp curve on a wet road and hit a bridge sideways and spun off the edge down near the creek below the bridge. It was a good accident because she walked away. That by itself is amazing, but also the fact that her cell phone worked from that one spot long enough to call us, a nearby friend, and 911, but that was all. I tried using the same phone from the same spot for three hours that day and could not get a signal. A year later my wife and I were driving on the same road and had the same phone and could not get a signal within 5 miles of the spot of her good accident.

The Friend from TMM and I shared a lot about our own searching for Truth. There was one point where both of us had tears in our eyes as we shared things from deep within. For me it was a strong reminder not to lose sight of Jesus as I explored the Quaker thing in my life.

Our conversation ended with me telling her the story of Psalms 139 and about the Bible in the box that my Mom bought at a yard sale and how it just happened to be published in the same year I was born.

It was an amazing afternoon talking about Jesus and about following Him.

We went our separate ways and did not see one another until the lecture that evening. I sat on one side of the auditorium and she and her husband were sitting in the center. Mary Lord began her prepared lecture and God used her words to speak to us about peace. It was inspiring and captivating.

About half way into her lecture she stopped. She held up her worn Bible to the audience and said something like, "I wasn't sure why I brought my Bible tonight,

but I did. I had all of my scripture references for my lecture in my notes. But I feel led to pause here and share a passage of scripture. It does not really pertain to my topic of peace, but I feel led to read these verses."

She then went on to read the first dozen verses from Psalms 139.

Then she went back to her lecture on peace and did not open her Bible the rest of the evening.

The third time:

In October 2004 I decided to go to the beach and worship in silent waiting on the Lord. It was raining and a month earlier Ivan had destroyed all of the walk ways leading to the beach. I found a beach trail being used by the county to access the beach near the public park I often went to and used it to get to the beach. There was not a soul on the beach except for me. Half the dunes where missing, completely flat. I sat on the beach in the rain for an hour in silence.

After an hour of quiet worship I got the change of clothes I brought from home and used the public restroom to change into dry clothes. I then sat in our blazer and began reading a book written in 1875 by a Quaker named Hannah Smith called "The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life". I had been reading it for a few weeks and was now ready to read the last two chapters. The final chapter was on Psalms 139!

I drove home and listened to a collection of my favorite songs. One song is a recording of Amazing Grace recorded by my son and a good friend of his who is the daughter of my best friend from high school. I also had a couple of songs from a Quaker singer and songwriter as well as others from folks like the Issacs. There is one song that was written and recorded by Paige, a friend of my daughters. She sings all the parts and plays all of the instruments.

I first heard the song several months ago and fell in love with it and the message. I added it to the cd of my favorite songs and listen to them often. The entire song uses scripture and I loved it for the way she uses Isa. 40:27-31 which is an exciting and encouraging passage.

As I was driving across the bay it was still cloudy. I crossed the highest point of the bridge and the sun broke through the clouds casting a brilliant shaft of light on the road directly in front of me. At that same moment Paige's song just happened to play and for the very first time I realized some of the words in her song were straight out of Psalms 139! I have listened to her song many, many times, but never made the connection until that magnificent moment crossing the bridge and receiving light both physically and spiritually.

I have found deep comfort through this passage of Scripture. Psalms 139 will always hold a special place in my heart, along with the bible given to me by my mother.

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Here are the lyrics to Paige's song:

Unsearchable

"Where can I run?
Where can I go that You don't see me?
How can I hide myself from You?
Wherever I go, wherever I am
You're always with me
I cannot hide my face from You

For You know my thoughts and my inner ways
And the hairs on my head and the length of my days

No matter where I go
If I stay here or turn there
Or try to hide anywhere You see me
Wherever I may be
You are always near me

And everywhere that I go You're already waiting

How can I say my way is hidden from the Lord?
Do I not know? Have I not heard?
The Everlasting God, The Lord, The Creator of the earth
Neither faints nor is weary
His understanding is unsearchable
So He knows our needs
And He gives power to the weak
And to those who have to might
He increases their strength

So, You know my needs
And give me power when I'm weak
And when I have no might
You increase my strength

You're already waiting
You're still there waiting
For me to see You
Lord, I want to see You

Why do you complain and say that your way is hidden from the Lord and Your cause is disregarded by Your God? Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, The Lord, The Creator of the earth, He neither faints nor is weary, and His understanding is unsearchable. (Isaiah 40:27-28)

And He's waiting for You"

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