



The Created Body

Psalm 139

Part 1 • 5.6.18

Summary: Our life with God is not just corporate, pertaining to the whole body of believers; it is also corporal, pertaining to the **whole body** of each believer. “The body is meant for the Lord, and the Lord for the body....Your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit.” (1 Cor. 6:13, 19). These jars of clay, these earthen vessels, are made to house God. Thus when we come to know the Lord, we do not just accept him into our hearts, but into the rest of our bodies as well.

Yet many of us feel conflicted about our bodies. Over 80% of women and 40% of men have body image issues, experiencing regular disappointment with their physical form. Psalm 139 says that we are “fearfully and wonderfully made,” but we just feel fearful, and wonder why God made us like we are. The solution to that conflict is faith in God, and knowledge of the one who knows you through and through.

Psalm 139 celebrates the omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence of God, but not as abstract theological concepts; rather, as personal attributes extended to us. They apply to us! Not because we share them with God, but because he shares them in loving care of us! Our lives, our bodies, our self-concepts are formed by what we know of the character of God. *All that he is, he is to us.*

In his omniscience, God knows everything about us (Ps 139:1-6). That includes all the fact of our lives past, present, and future; all things internal and external to us; all things real and all things hypothetical. But then factual knowledge gives way to relational knowledge. In other words, he not only knows the good, the bad, and the ugly; he extends himself to us in covenant love and loyalty. As verse 5 says, “His hand is upon me.” His hand of blessing, support, affirmation, and reassurance.

In God’s omnipresence, he is everywhere with me. I cannot escape him. There is no place I can go where God is not. But in every aspect of my life, his hand guides and holds me. God both goes before me and trails behind as my rear guard (Is. 52:12). He spreads his shelter over me (Ps. 91:1) and places his everlasting arms under me (Deut. 32:27).

And David celebrates these first two attributes because the third one, omnipotence, is so powerfully evident in his life. God formed David like clay; knitted and wove him like cloth; fashioned him in his mother’s womb the same way he created Adam from the earth. David is, like all of us, “fearfully and wonderfully made,” an earthen vessel formed for noble purposes.

In the end, the grandeur of our lives does not depend on pedigree or beauty. Jesus came from suspect ancestry, his genealogy including prostitution, incest, and adultery. His physical form was bland at best: “He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him” (Is. 53:2). Yet as Hebrews 10 affirms, a body was prepared for Jesus, which he faithfully embraced in order to do God’s will, atoning for our sins and saving us, body and soul.

Discussion:

1. Read Psalm 139:1-18 slowly and meditatively. How would you describe the overall mood and tone of this Psalm? What emotional responses does it evoke in you?
2. Studies show that over 80% of women and over 40% of men struggle to have healthy body images. Do you? Do you remember when this first emerged?

“I tend to focus on the aspects of my body that I don’t love. It’s been this way, to various degrees, since elementary school, when one of my female classmates told me that I had big thighs. Up until that moment, I had never even considered the size of my thighs. After that, life was never the same.” *Ann Swindell*

“I wasn’t particularly self-conscious as a kid, but when the cutest girl in the class teased me because my ears stuck out, I felt the blood rising as my face burned with shame. I have thought about my ears many times since then.” *Matthew Anderson*

3. Studies have also shown that elective cosmetic surgeries are up 500% in 20 years. Why do you think that is? What might be at the root of this societal trend? How should people of faith think about such things?
4. It’s one thing to affirm the amazing intricacies of the human body generally, and another to affirm your body specifically. What does being “fearfully and wonderfully made” mean to you? What is one adjustment to your body image that Psalm 139 would encourage?
5. How do you reconcile “fearfully and wonderfully made” with congenital defects and disabilities? How can this psalm encourage people coping with bodies that are less than fully functional?
6. Reflect on the other attributes of God celebrated in this text: His omniscience (v. 1-6) and omnipresence (v. 7-12). How do these encourage in life? What’s a recent example of how one of these gave you comfort or strength?
7. In 2 Timothy 2:20-21, Paul writes,

“In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for special purposes and some for common use. Those who cleanse themselves from the latter will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.”

What does this passage, along with Psalm 139, challenge you to do differently this week as an embodied human being?