

Our Infinite God and Infants in the Womb (Psalm 139:13-18)

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Please take God's Holy Word and turn again to Ps 139. Last week we looked at the first half of this psalm, how God is all-knowing and all-present, our omniscient and omnipresent God. This week we pick up with our infinite and intimate God. v. 1-12 say His knowledge and presence is infinite and v. 3 says God is '*intimately acquainted with all my ways*' (NASB).

I know a story of a young mom going to the mission field decades ago with 4 little kids. There was fear of the unknown and going to a faraway land for most of the rest of her life, but Ps 139 comforted her, that everything is infinitely known to the God who intimately cares and controls all things and causes all things to work for our good and His glory. He knows our thoughts from afar. As she flew across the ocean, looking out at the wings of the airplane as the sun rose that morning, she looked at Ps 139:9: *If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,* ¹⁰ *even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.*

That was my mom, and I'm so thankful for this psalm and her faith and all she went through for me. And this next section talks what God did for each of our moms in what they went through for us: ¹³ *For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.* ¹⁴ *I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.* ¹⁵ *My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.* ¹⁶ *Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.* ¹⁷ *How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!* ¹⁸ *If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you.*

David wrote this to praise our God who is infinite and intimate. His presence is infinite, He's still with you always. His knowledge is infinite, how vast is the sum of God's thoughts, more numerable than the sand. God is infinite, but also intimate – these are *precious thoughts to me*, thoughts *of me*, and intimate details of days He formed *for me* in a book, like an intimate diary. He is infinitely massive to fill heaven and earth, v. 15 says He also intricately forms little ones. This God who is infinite in the world in v. 1-12 is the God of infants in the womb in v. 13-18.

They are precious in His mind, Jesus loves the little children of the womb

I first studied this passage in-depth 20 years ago when my first child was being knit together in the womb. It was for a seminary paper where I had to labor in the Hebrew text for a semester, while my wife was in the second and third trimester before she went into real labor. It made a wonderful impact on me to live in this chapter while Ella was being fearfully and wonderfully made by God. I finished the term paper on these verses in the months leading up to Jaime going to term. Part of the assignment was to preach on Ps 139, which I did when she was at 9 months. v. 13-16 will always be special in my life, and what it says of God's special care for unborn life

Before we went through that, couples from church would show us pictures of their ultrasound. I would smile and pretend I could tell what it was, but I really had no idea what I was looking at. I was clueless, people would talk about placenta and I thought they meant a city in California. But I learned a lot in those months personally seeing the miracles of life as a first-time parent.

I vividly remember seeing our first sonogram, and that sweet little baby moving and growing in that secret place as God was forming her smallest inward parts, those soccer kicks, the sound of a heartbeat, the side angle pictures we put on our fridge. Seeing that life was one of the most emotionally moving events of my life was. You moms more powerfully know it inside and out.

Thousands of years before technology could even dream about looking into the womb, Ps 139 gives us a “scriptural sonogram,” an inside peek at pregnancy from God’s perspective. This is the “ultimate ultrasound” of God’s Word here. It’s an intimate picture of His intricate weaving us in the womb, wonderfully making us, what He was doing for all of us before we were born, and how He knitted us and knew us before we were formed. And it should move us emotionally to praise our infinite Lord, to see infant life in the womb as He does, and help others to see this.

- Outline:**
- 1. God Has Intimate Care for Unborn Life (v. 13-15)**
 - 2. God Is Infinite Over All of Life (v. 16-18)**
 - 3. This Has Implications for Us Defending Life**

¹³ *For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you ...* The context is praise by David. The heading says he wrote this for their corporate worship. They were to sing and celebrate life, starting in the mother’s womb before it’s born, life that God intimately cares for. It says He forms our inward parts, that includes our most intimate parts or the entire inner person, and ‘*knitted together*’ is a verb that speaks of His intricate care.

In Hebrew poetic structure v. 13-15 is the apex or climax.¹ The grammar and word order in the original of v. 13 also puts great emphasis on the first two words “*For you*” and it adds an extra emphatic pronoun - “*YOU formed.*” Listen to what Job says that Ps 139 may be thinking of: ‘*Your hands have made me and fashioned me, An intricate unity ... You ... Clothe me with skin and flesh, And knit me together with bones and sinews? You have granted me life and favor, Your care has preserved ... You brought me out of the womb*’ (Job 10:8-12, 18 NKJV). Notice God grants life as He’s knitting it together in the womb, that’s life He cares for in God’s Word!

God has personal individual care as He knits together skin and sinews like He’s sewing onto a structure, into this intricate unity in the womb. The NIV says ‘*You gave me life and showed me kindness, and in your providence watched over ...*’ God speaks of ‘life’ He gives to the unborn, and His providential care and kindness. Job asks why he didn’t die at birth, another statement of life before birth.² David says in another psalm ‘*from my mother’s womb you have cared for me*’ (71:6 NLT). God tells His prophet ‘*in the womb, I knew you*’ (intimate knowing, life and love).³

In v. 13 God forms ‘*inward parts,*’ that’s translated ‘heart’ in other places metaphorically. But medically we now know the heart is being formed 16 days after conception, and 6 days later it starts beating. 3 weeks and 1 day is when there’s a heartbeat, often before the mother knows she’s pregnant, God is forming the heart and other inward parts. Modern science tells us in the first month the brain is also forming, and by weeks 4 and 5 liver and kidneys are forming.⁴ This Hebrew word for inward parts in v. 13 was used of kidneys literally. I remember Bob Johnston preaching on this psalm after his kidney transplant. God cares for us to the littlest parts inside us

Paul Rockwell M.D., told of first seeing those tiny parts after an early ruptured tubal pregnancy, just 6 weeks or so along: ‘The embryo sac was intact and transparent. Within the sac was a tiny (approx. 1cm [$>1/2$ in.]) human male swimming extremely vigorously in the amniotic fluid...[It] was perfectly developed, with long tapering fingers, feet and toes. It was almost transparent, as regards the skin, and the delicate arteries and veins were prominent to the ends of the fingers. The baby was extremely alive and swam about the sac approximately one time per second, with a natural swimmer's stroke. This tiny human did not look at all like the photos and drawings and models of 'embryos' which I have seen...obviously because this one was alive.’⁵ God did that!

I'll put the links to that with pictures in the footnotes online at sermonaudio.com

God is the Great Physician in v. 13 forming our tiniest insides, making us inside and out by His pre-natal intensive care. It's in the imperfect tense to emphasize continual action of God throughout the pregnancy, constant care, close and personal, complicated cross-stitch. Tendons, muscles, bones, ligaments, and internal systems all sewed together according to the design and detailed eye of God as He makes a tapestry masterpiece.⁶ I don't know much about knitting or sewing, but I know you need good light for it! Not God, His most delicate precision work He does in that darkest place, because the end of v. 12 says *darkness and light are alike* to God.

The best surgeon with the best light can't stitch together like God does in the dark

Look at v. 15: *My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven...* That's another sewing word, and ‘*the depths of the earth*’ may be a poetic way to describe the deep darkness of the womb, or a figure of speech for the most secret place hidden from human eyes. One pastor suggests ‘When priceless treasures in ancient history of Israel were put in a place of safety, they were usually buried, tucked away in a dark place away from peering eyes, and greedy minds. So with the treasured work of God as He works...’⁷ Or think of a sculptor or artist working in private before bringing a master work or art out to the public.

We're His workmanship! No architect in the world can match the Architect in the womb!

The word ‘frame’ is a picture for how He frames us and builds bones or a bony framework. On that frame it says God is intricately weaving, a word for embroidering with fabric. Ancient Jews were well-known for beautiful needlework and how they would weave and dye various colors. They would interlace and intertwine and interweave, like Joseph's multi-colored robe or priestly robes with their sophisticated sewing patterns with sewn in figures or gems in a breastplate. The word in v. 15 was used of those who skillfully wove the embroidered tabernacle curtains. The master weaver would use shuttle and colorful threads (indigo blue for cotton, or red for wool).⁸

They would weave together ribbons or scarlet threads (like for the baby in Gen 38)

Some Hebrew scholars say v. 15 is intricately woven veins and arteries through the human body like colored threads, or the “variegated colour...of the inward parts...the colours of the outline following the undeveloped beginning, and of the forming of the members.”⁹ An ancient Jewish writing The Talmud used a similar word to refer to the egg of a bird or reptile when the outlines of the developed embryo are visible in it.¹⁰ God's inspired Word uses this image of great value, embroidery was incredibly expensive.¹¹ This speaks to the incredible value of life in the womb to God. He exquisitely and intricately and skillfully weaves together His priceless handiwork.

Modern science can't improve on what David said 3,000 years ago or Job said 4000 years ago.

One scientist explains ‘With the development of the microscope in the later half of the 17th century, it became evident that the cellular and extracellular components of organs and tissues ...are often woven in complex ways...in the dermis of the skin...connective tissue fibers made of the protein collagen are woven in a highly complex manner...similar to a cloth fabric.’¹²

In the 1950s, Crick and Watson described their DNA discovery, with very similar language, the fabric of life they explained as ‘two ribbons’ of genetic material woven together.¹³ In the womb is when it’s intricately woven together. 2002 cover story in *TIME* magazine, What Scientists Know About the First Nine Months: ‘we know so much about what goes on inside the womb [by] the remarkable progress researchers have made...Scientists can now describe...many of the steps involved in building a human...sculpting of a four-chambered heart and the weaving together of trillions of neural connections.’¹⁴ They discovered we’re weaved together like v. 15!

How should we respond to all this? Like v. 14: *I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.* There’s several literary devices¹⁵ to make this especially emphatic. 3 consecutive passive verbs put all the emphasis on God and His wonderful works that should make us worshipful and fearful in the sense of reverent awe. I remember trembling and marveling and wondering at the miracle of life in that delivery room. *Wonderfully made* can mean ‘uniquely made.’¹⁶ ESV footnote has: ‘or *I am fearfully set apart.*’

That’s what we mean by the sanctity of human life, set apart from all other life as made in the image of God. The world says we’re evolved animals, the Word says we’re the special creation of God for His glory. Human life has dignity, value, and worth, whatever age or stage, ability or disability, we are all beautifully, intricately, fearfully and wonderfully made by a loving God.

God has intimate care for unborn life, and that takes us to #2. God Is Infinite Over All of Life

¹⁶ *Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.* ¹⁷ *How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!* [Infinite thoughts of me and sovereignty]

When he says God ‘saw,’ that means He ‘oversaw, superintended.’ He saw it before dad saw a twinkle in his wife’s eye. Before mom had thoughts of her precious baby, God had precious thoughts to her baby. God’s eyes were on David before he took form. The Hebrew lexicons say ‘unformed substance’ is ‘embryo.’ Before our embryo forms, we’re seen and superintended by the Lord. Jer 1:5 ‘*Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you...*’ i.e., ‘I infinitely knew you.’ From embryo to end of life, our unformed past to unknown future, God has infinite oversight.

What does He oversee as embryos start forming the first few weeks in the womb? ‘weeks 5 and 6, eye pigment and the retina start forming...Pain receptors start to develop...Brainwaves in the developing human brain can be detected as early as 6 weeks, 2 days after fertilization...During weeks 7 and 8...[if] the embryo is touched, there may be squinting, jaw movement...During weeks 8 and 9, the baby can suck her thumb... grasp an object...The baby has nerve receptors in the face, hands, and feet allowing him or her to sense and respond to light touch.’¹⁷

God oversees the embryo and all life and has a plan written for all its days in a book

It’s a precious thought to me how God brought Ruby Peppers into our church by an embryo adoption. God’s eyes saw that unformed fertilized life from another, that could be implanted in Lisa’s womb and formed and born and now before our eyes. That’s a fearful wonderful precious thought, how that unborn life God cared for wasn’t lost or left but is now loved in their family. That’s infinite, so big it blows my mind, to think God wrote that story in a book, and ours, too.

I counted 16 in our church who were adopted into families, all our stories are in His book

How vast are God's thoughts of us, more than sand (pre-formed embryo is size of a grain of sand)

I love how v. 18 ends, every day he wakes up and is still with God, uncountable unending love. He doesn't just know the future, He has a plan for every embryo and every day of adulthood. v. 16 says He forms our days for us and has a book written with every one of our days beforehand. In Gen 2 God formed Adam from the dust, it's the same root word for a potter. Same verb in v. 16 for our days being formed, fashioned, designed with a plan, molded by the Potter who's far wiser than the clay. All the days of our life are ordained and ordered by His infinite wisdom.

The old hymn says 'How sweet to hold a newborn baby, and feel the...joy he gives

But greater still the calm assurance, this child can face uncertain days because [He] lives...

I can face tomorrow, because He lives, all fear is gone, and I know He holds the future....'¹⁸

There's infinite comfort in a God who has infinite control over all. Our big sovereign God says in Isa 46: '*I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please...you whom I have upheld since you were conceived, and have carried since your birth. Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you.*'¹⁹ Womb to the tomb, from our conception to our conclusion. Isa 44:2: *Thus says the LORD who made you, who formed you from the womb and will help you: Fear not...* The infinite God who helps unborn life will help you to the end of life, so don't fear!

He is sovereign over life, the source of life, and sustainer and upholder of all life.

Now thirdly and finally by way of application: This Has Implications for Us Defending Life

Not everyone values life. Life needs defending from wicked people who take the precious life blood of the defenseless. Ps 139 doesn't end here, it calls God to bring an end to men who bring life to an end. ¹⁹ *Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God! O men of blood, depart from me!*

It sounds jarring! It should jar us in this context of babies to think of bloodshed by wicked men. It's more jarring to stop a beating heart that makes blood flow though veins God knit together. Other translations say '*bloodthirsty men*' or '*murderers.*' KJV '*surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men.*' We don't have time today to do justice to the imprecations in the psalms, but one of the implications is we need to cry out for justice for the defenseless life of this psalm. We're not to slay abortionists, but it's biblical pray to God to stop their bloodshed. Gen 9:6 calls for men of blood to face justice, so David calls God to His Word.

That blood cross-reference can apply to the context of Ps 139 and unborn children

In the end of v. 20 they're God's enemies taking His name in vain. Many profess His name but are pro-abortion. They claim God but reject what He creates. Catholic or Protestant politicians and other self-identifying Christians are taking the Lord's name in vain when they argue for taking away life that the Lord is fearfully and wonderfully making for His namesake. Israel did that in Ps 106, professing His name but they '*shed innocent blood, The blood of their sons and daughters, Whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; And the land was polluted with blood. Thus they were defiled ...Therefore the wrath of the LORD was kindled against His people...*'²⁰

Then it was idols of Canaan, now it's idols of career, comfort, control of her own body, etc.

But 1 Cor 6 says '*the body is for the Lord...you are not your own...glorify God in your body.*'²¹ 1 Cor 7 says we don't have authority over our own body, we belong to our spouse (or future spouse). Here in Ps 139, this isn't just part of a woman's body or something her body does, in v. 13 God is forming inward parts of a 2nd body (*me*). v. 13 doesn't say God formed the mother's inward parts (ex: appendix or tumor or a part of her body she can choose if she wants to remove it). David says that was *me* and *my* inward parts, in *my* mother's womb You knit *me* together.

Me/my are personal pronouns. He's a new person knit together inside another person's womb. You don't give personal pronouns to a tissue, but a tiny baby is a *him or her* scripturally and scientifically, a biologically genetically distinct person. David says that was 'me' God knitted in mom. The inspired text uses the Hebrew first person 11x in v. 13-16 for David's preborn person

Isaiah tells us '*The LORD called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name* [notice a distinct person in his mother's body with a personal name, not just her body her choice].' Same chapter, Isa 49:5: *the LORD says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant...for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD...* We need to see as the Lord does and honor life being formed in the womb by the Lord. It's about His choice and calling, we can't play God

There's over 20x the Bible calls a pregnant woman '*with child*,'²² Tamar in her 1st trimester and apparently sooner with Bathsheba. Hagar conceives and soon flees from Sarah, the Lord says: '*you are with child...a son*' (personal pronoun *he/his* 5x). In Gen 25 Rebekah is pregnant with twins, and God calls them the plural of person, '*in your womb, two people...*' and the inspired text says '*the children struggled within her*' (plural of child, same word for child after birth).

The same David who wrote Ps 139 wrote in Ps 51 '*my mother conceived me,*' right before he mentions inward parts (same word as v. 13). Job 3:3 NAS: *a boy is conceived* [Lit. *man-child*]. God told Samson's mom she would conceive '*a son...the child shall be a Nazirite from the womb...*' God calls him a '*child...from the womb*' and a son from conception in Judges 13:5. Not cells – a son! Not a choice – a child! Not a blob – a baby! Not a tissue – a tiny person!

We need more than just changed laws, let's pray for changed hearts and saved souls

Ps 51 says in sin I was conceived, David was a sinner. What about sin of incest? In Gen 19 Lot impregnates his daughters. In Gen 38 after incest Judah calls for the immoral mom and her baby to die – until Judah realized it was his sin and let her and the baby live. Gen 19 led to Moab and the Moabites who through Ruth became the line of Messiah. The Gen 38 story with Judah and his daughter-in-law Tamar also was in that line, that baby saved was an ancestor of our Savior! If incest calls for abortion, the line of Jesus dies out and we can't call on His name to be saved!

His family tree also had an unwed teen mother and prostitute keeping the line alive

What about birth defects or disabilities? Jesus said the man born blind was for God's glory to be shown. God tells Moses God alone determines abilities and inabilities and God also tells Moses that those who cause abortions, even accidentally, are to be executed (we'll study that in Exodus series). What about rape, the horrible sin of a father? Shouldn't that mean the death of the child? Dt 16:14 commands a child is not to be put to death for the sin of its father. That's God's Law.

God's grace also provides with adoption and care for single mothers like Hagar

Resources: *Choose Life: Answering Claims of Abortion Defenders with Compassion*, 2022.

Pregnancy Counseling Services Placerville – table at the back after the service (Judy Dixon).

Opposition growing – this month at IBC – other pro-life people have death threats

There are some in our church who were counseled to get an abortion and didn't. I think there's one who survived an abortion. No doubt some listening have had an abortion. Many more here have committed murder in the heart. But PTL His mercy is more! David was a murderer and he saw his own son die from his sin, but was forgiven. So he ends Ps 139 with '*lead me in the way everlasting.*' Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. The infinite God became an infant. He was an embryo at one time. Joseph wanted to put her away in her pregnancy but PTL for His birth.

Jesus came for our rebirth, so that we could be born again.²³ Satan comes to kill and destroy but Jesus came that we might have life abundantly and everlastingly. He was murdered but He rose and receives all who come to Him in repentant faith. Let the little children come and let us all

¹John C. Rankin, “The Corporeal Reality of *Nepes* and the Status of the Unborn,” *JETS* 31 (1988): 159. Rankin says this psalm is “not only structured with poetic parallelism and edifying hyperbole; it is also chiasmic in structuring the theme ... The apex of the chiasm is the verses quoted above” [13-16]. Gunkel (29-30) considers v. 14 as an example of the “main part” of the hymn.

² Job 3:11.

³ Jeremiah 1:5.

⁴ Tara Sander Lee, “Knit Together in a Mother’s Womb: The Biology of Prenatal Development,” in *Choose Life: Answering Key Claims of Abortion Defenders with Compassion* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2022).

⁵ Dr. Paul E. Rockwell, Director of Anesthesiology, Leonard Hospital, Troy, New York: Letter to the editor, Albany, Times-Union, 10th March 1970. With photos at <https://thelifeinstitute.net/learning-centre/life/science-photos>

⁶Glenn, 175.

⁷ Charles R. Swindoll, “A Careful Analysis of the Unborn, part 2,” 2001. Audio sermon available from Insight for Living Ministries Broadcast Archives, June 12, 2001 (www.insight.org)

⁸ J.I. Packer, and M.C. Tenney, eds., *Illustrated Manners and Customs of the Bible* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1980), 291, 478-79.

⁹ F. Delitzsch, *Psalms*, trans. by James Martin, Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes (reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976) 5:349.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 158.

¹² <https://answersingenesis.org/sanctity-of-life/weaved-together-in-the-womb/>

¹³ J. D. Watson and F. H. C. Crick, “A Structure of Deoxyribose Nucleic Acid,” *Nature* 171 (1953): 737–78.

¹⁴ <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1003653-2,00.html>

¹⁵ E.W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Book House, 1968), cites this verse as example of “heterosis” - using the plural for the singular when great excellence or magnitude is indicated, i.e., “I will confess thee, because that (with) wonders (*i.e.*, with *great* wonder) I have been distinguished ...,” [529-30]; “antimeria” – using a noun in the place of an adverb, i.e., “with fears and wonder = *fearfully* and *wonderfully*” [496]. There may also be noun-verb parallelism and assonance (intentional similar sounds) in verse 14 (*pelah* [noun] and [verb]) which could add further emphasis along with the aforementioned heterosis and plural form for intensity.

¹⁶ Allen P. Ross, *Psalms*, 3:827.

¹⁷ Tara Sander Lee, “Knit Together in a Mother’s Womb: The Biology of Prenatal Development,” in *Choose Life: Answering Key Claims of Abortion Defenders with Compassion* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2022).

¹⁸ Gloria and William Gaither, “Because He Lives.”

¹⁹ Isaiah 46:10, 3 NIV.

²⁰ Psalm 106:36-40 NKJV.

²¹ 1 Corinthians 6:13, 19-20.

²² NKJV of Genesis 38:24, 2 Samuel 11:5, Genesis 16:4, 11-12 (note she understands this is the Lord she’s talking to, the Lord who sees her and cares for her personally as well as her unborn child).

²³ For a great example of speaking with people on the 7 most common pro-abortion arguments, persuading them to life, and sharing eternal life in Christ, see this video with Ray Comfort of Living Waters Ministries, <https://youtu.be/mB1vV2EgS5A>