

# Dealing With Life's Hardships and Uncertainties (Part 3)

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[ 0 : 00 ] It's been a stressful week, hasn't it? Think of all that has taken place since we were here last Sunday morning.

The winds of Tropical Storm Irma caused a lot of hardship and uncertainty for millions of people, didn't it? Throughout the Southeast and including here in Pickens County.

I want you to think, the power outages that many people experience, some of those created life-threatening situations.

Some of them, of course, were just minor inconveniences. The wind damage, that's still a source of stress for people who actually have some damage to their homes.

And they don't know if insurance is going to cover it or not. And what causes even more anxiety is some people know it's not going to cover because they didn't have it.

[ 1 : 16 ] Think with me just a moment. Since this time last week, a lot of new hardships and uncertainties have cropped up among us.

And they just are added to the kind of things that we normally struggle with. There's things going on in homes right here that's hard.

That's caused some uncertainty. There's things with people's health. Things that are job-related.

Every one of us, every one of us at times experiences stressful situations that tempt us to be anxious, to lose sleep, to not be able to eat.

Some people even develop ulcers. There's always something, either in our life or on the horizon, that can tempt us to worry.

But as God's people, what we've been looking at, there is a better way to deal with life's hardships and uncertainties than worry. I want to be clear, and I've tried to every week, there's no way to avoid it.

[ 2 : 39 ] There is no way to make life just easy and smooth. You know, if you think about it for a moment, at every age, when you're growing up, when you're a teenager, when you're a young adult, middle age, think about there were situations in your life that you think, if I can just get through this, life will be easier.

If I can just get through the next month or this year, I know things are going to level out and smooth out and life will be easier. And maybe you do get over that hump, but it's not long until there's something else.

Something else that gets your attention that maybe causes you to fear. To be worried. That's life. I don't want to be pessimistic, but some people would even say, life's hard, then you die.

There's a lot of truth to that, isn't there? But that's not all the truth. Life can be hard, and we will die. But there are some positive, helpful ways that we can deal with the hardships and the uncertainties, because God has told us in His Word what those ways are.

We've looked at some already. Two weeks ago, from Philippians 4, Paul wrote that we need to replace worry with prayer. Last week, we looked at Matthew chapter 6 and saw where Jesus said we need to replace worry with two things.

[ 4 : 17 ] First, live with the right priorities, He told us. In Matthew 6, 33, Jesus says, Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Let's sort of translate that.

What Jesus was telling us is, we need to seek to have and develop a relationship with God as our first priority in all of life.

And as we walk with God in life, living in fellowship with Him, we need to seek to know and do His will. More than anything else, we need to be concerned about a lot of things.

We need to be involved in people's lives. We need to work. We need to do a lot of things. But Jesus was saying, Seek first the rule of God over our lives.

God's way. God's will. As our Heavenly Father, Jesus was trying to say, He can be trusted. You see, God is our Heavenly Father, and He takes care of everything in creation.

[ 5 : 20 ] He takes care of birds. He takes care of the flowers and all these kind of things. And if God can take care of all those things, we who are created in His image, we, that God sent His Son into the world to die for, God's going to take care of us.

And then Jesus told us to live one day at a time. Don't worry about tomorrow. Learn to trust God to provide what we need and when we need it.

Well, today I want us to begin looking at Psalm 139. Psalm 139 is going to help us understand why we should trust God and depend upon Him.

Psalm 139 is really the strongest declaration found in the Bible. Let me rephrase that. Psalm 139 is one of the strongest statements in all the Bible on God's greatness.

What God knows. What God can do. It was written by King David. He had such a relationship with God that he is described in two places in Scripture as a man after God's own heart.

[ 6 : 41 ] He wasn't perfect. He was flawed. But he had a heart for God. God even said that about him. So David is writing Psalm 139 from the perspective of someone who had a real relationship with God.

He knew God. He loved God. There were times he asked God a lot of questions. A lot of times he complained. But in this Psalm, David is making much of who God is, what he knows, what he does. Look at a quick summary of this. God knows everything. We're going to look at that this morning in verses 1 through 6. God is everywhere, verses 7 through 12.

God can do anything, verses 13 through 18. And God will deal with everyone, verses 19 through 24. We're not going to spend four weeks on this, but this is one way to outline it.

But I want you to understand as we go into this, and as you'll see as you read it, David is not trying to just give us factual information about God.

[ 7 : 53 ] He's just not trying to tell us more about who God is in abstract terms. David is being very personal.

He's not just talking about how God knows everything. He's describing how God knows him. How God is near to him. How God made him specifically.

So as we read through this psalm and go through it today and next week for sure, I want you to make it personal for you.

I want you to thank the God who created everything that exists. He knows me personally. He knows everything about me, the good and the bad, the public and the private.

And get this, God knows all this about us. But he still loves us. He still cares about us. And what David is trying to help us to do is find comfort in the fact that God knows us.

[ 9 : 06 ] That he's everywhere present with us. That he made us. So let's look at the first part today, verses 1 through 6. Read with me Psalm 139. O Lord, O Lord, O Lord, you have searched me and known me.

You know when I sit down and when I rise up. You discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.

Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. You hem me in behind and before and lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high. I cannot attain it. He's telling us here about God's knowledge.

David is amazed. Amazed. Not just that God knows everything, but that God knows everything about Him personally.

[ 10 : 14 ] I want you to look at a statement that Danny Aiken, he's the president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He's writing about Psalm 139 and I like the way he describes how God knows everything.

Look at it. With spiritual x-ray vision, God peers into your soul and sees you for who you really are. No detail escapes His watching eyes.

God is never surprised or caught off guard. He never says, wow, I didn't see that coming. God knows us. And if you look through those verses we just read, there is some form of the word no in four of the six verses.

I want you to look with me at some of the specific things that God knows about us. You think, these are some of the things that God knows about me right now.

First, God knows what's in our mind and heart. God knows what we think and how we feel right now.

[ 11 : 25 ] Look at verse one. Oh Lord, you have searched me and known me. The second part of verse two. You discern my thoughts from afar. Every one of us in this room, we have some thoughts and some feelings that we keep inside us.

And we keep it, you know, buried deeply inside of us at all times. You think about it. We don't want anyone to know every thought, every desire that we have over the course of a day or a week. If there was some magical way that right now we announce in the next five minutes and we call the name, your thoughts and your desires of the past 48 hours are going to be put on that screen, I bet you'd leave.

I would and I can't believe anybody would not be honest enough to not leave. But you know, we don't have to put it on the screen for God to know.

God knows what goes through our mind, what we think. He knows what we desire. He knows the kind of feelings that we have and even this. God knows the good and the bad and He knows what we do with the thoughts and with the desires.

[ 13 : 08 ] I know most of us are thinking negatively when it comes to thoughts so let's put it this way. A lot of times you can't help the thoughts that come into your mind.

Sometimes you can because of what you feed on. What we read and expose ourselves to and just dwell upon that will influence the kind of thoughts that we have. But sometimes the most faithful person, the most godly person who just tries to focus on that which is good and positive and so forth sometimes still have a bad thought.

Here's the thing. What do you do with those thoughts? God knows not just the thoughts that we have but He knows what we do with them. He knows if we play them out. He knows if we fantasize. He knows what we desire, what we wish would happen even though we may never even come close to doing it.

God knows what we do with our thoughts whether we develop them, let them run wild or God knows when we try to shut them down, not dwell on them, dismiss them, replace them with something else.

[ 14 : 28 ] David is thinking, he's writing, talking about his great God and he makes this statement that God knows what's going on within our minds, within our hearts, what we think, what we feel.

Then he goes on, God knows what we do. Look at the first part of verse 2. You know when I sit down and when I rise up. He's talking about doing anything. When we're active, when we're passive. Verse 3.

You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. God knows what we do every day. God knows our daily routine.

He knows the interruptions to our routine, the unusual things. God knows what we do. God knows why we do it. God knows our conduct and our motives.

It's all clear to God. So just think. God knows you. He knows what you think. He knows what you feel. He knows what you do.

[ 15 : 42 ] And look at the next thing. God knows the words we speak. Verse 4. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it all together. We can live with someone and we can get to know them so well that things happen and we know what you think.

How many of you, with your, just say with your spouse, how many of you, you know a lot of times what your spouse is thinking before they even tell you? Raise your hand. We have that. We have that knowledge.

We have that ability to read people. But sometimes we're wrong. Sometimes we think they're thinking one thing and it's just the opposite.

Well, God, He truly knows, He perfectly knows what we say and what we're going to say in the next few minutes.

Think about this. God hears every conversation that we have every single day. God hears every conversation and God detects the tone of our voice, the way that we talk to people as well as the words we say to people.

[ 17 : 12 ] God even knows what we say, what we're going to say better than we do. Have you ever surprised yourself by some of the things you said before you thought?

We all do sometimes. That is a great fear that I have that I will say the awful thing. Brian's over there laughing because he's heard me say things I ought not say. Don't shake your head because you do the same thing. We all do. Sometimes we'll pop off with an angry response to someone and we didn't really mean to say it. We thought it. It's true. But if we had just thought I sure wouldn't have said that. I wouldn't have said it like that. And then sometimes we'll blurt out a foolish statement that embarrasses us. We'll say something and then we'll think no I look like an idiot. Makes you you know you wish you could just disappear. Sometimes we say things like that and we surprise ourselves. [18:26] Sometimes we say things and we surprise people. But we never say anything and surprise God. God's never surprised he knows what we're going to do before we do it.

He knows what we're going to say before it ever comes out. And the point the psalmist is making here is that's how well God knows us. Now when you think about how and what God knows about you how does that make you feel?

I mean what the psalmist is saying here this is just true about God. this is who he is. I mean because he's God he's got to know these things. But the psalmist is trying to help us make this personal.

God knows all this stuff about me. What do you think? Does it comfort you? or does it convict you? It's obvious that sometimes we are convicted because we think and feel and say and do things that are just plain wrong sinful selfish mean spirited angry.

[19:44] so all of us as we read through this we think about some of the things going on in us and God knows it very very well perfectly we're convicted but that's good it's good for us to know that God knows everything about us that nothing is hidden from him ever because that can help us to guard our thoughts be on alert for what we dwell on think about desire that can help us more carefully choose our words learn to think before we speak learn to think before we act I want us to think about this if God has convicted you about something as we've gotten to this point in this message be honest with him just to admit yes Lord own up to the thoughts to the desires to the words to the tone own up to what you've done you can't play games with God you can deceive some people you can hide some things from some people but we cannot deceive or hide from God ever go to

God in prayer a prayer of confession agree with him about this confess your sin make no excuses humble yourself turn turn from that sin change your mind repent and seek God's forgiveness that's the only way to deal with the guilt the conviction if you have it right now over something you have thought or done or said or something like this and the good news for us this morning is God will forgive us if we'll go to him genuinely broken over our sin not because we've gotten caught but because we know it grieves him and if we're Christians he's our heavenly father and the last thing in the world we want to do is grieve our loving heavenly father seek his forgiveness you know the verse of scripture from

John 1 John chapter 1 verses 9 is something that all of us ought to memorize we ought to just know if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness we are sinful people we are selfish self-centered people we too often seek our way instead of God's way we need his forgiveness but until we confess our sin we're not going to experience that forgiveness so I want you to hear that right now as a Christian you can be right with God you can be forgiven you can be set free from that guilt if you'll come to him sincerely doing what you see on the screen there David the writer of our psalm here he understood the importance of confession of being right with God when he was convicted of his sin and he makes that known in Psalm 51 that's the great psalm of confession repentance in the Bible

I want you to look at part of it with me the first two verses are on the screen David when he sinned terribly and most of you know about his committing adultery with Bathsheba he tried to cover it up and wound up having her husband killed at first he just tried to cover it up ignore it finally God got through to him through a prophet named Nathan and when Nathan confronted him the way that he did David was broken humbled and this is his cry of confession read it with me have mercy on me oh God according to your steadfast love according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin David understood he didn't deserve God's forgiveness that's why he went to God and said have mercy on me that's why he talked about

God's steadfast love God's abundant mercy David understood that God sees it all God knows it all and some of the things God sees some of the things God knows it should break us it should humble us we should be convicted of that sin but not just wallow in our guilt not try to just pretend it doesn't exist but go to God recognize he is your father if you're a Christian who loves you he desires to show you mercy he desires to give you what you do not deserve and the reason he can do that is because Jesus paid the penalty for our sins when he died on the cross Jesus lived that perfect life for us and when we trust him all that's credited to us that's why God can show us mercy not give us what we deserve but we've got to go to him in confession and in repentance

[ 25 : 48 ] I want you to look at what else he said in Psalm 51 verses 10 through 12 David was not just concerned about unloading the burden of guilt he wasn't just concerned about trying to make himself feel better David was concerned about his relationship with God when he realized his sin he cried out for mercy and forgiveness he wanted to be restored to a right relationship with God as these verses show creating me a clean heart of God and renew a right spirit within me cast me not away from your presence and take not your Holy Spirit from me restore to me the joy of your salvation and uphold me with a willing spirit if we are children of God when we sin when we know there's something between us and God certainly we want to be forgiven we want the weight of guilt to be removed but more than anything else we should want as children of God to be restored to good fellowship with him to come back close to him to have a renewed spirit to be back in his presence to have the joy of our salvation restored do you have that kind of relationship with God that you know what it means to be right with him to be close with him to enjoy your salvation to have a clean heart to have real fellowship with him that's what God's goal is for us and if we will seek that if we will seek him through Christ we can know that and when something happens that hinders blows up that fellowship through confession and repentance we can come back and be restored but our knowledge of what God knows about us should not just be convicting it should be comforting you may say well that's just strange think about what all God knows that comforts us well that is really the point of this song that's what you see in verse 6 the next one look at it such knowledge is too wonderful for me it is high

I cannot attain it David says knowing all this about what God knows it just blows my mind in a good way the thought of God knowing everything including everything about him was a comfort to David here's one reason why it should comfort us God knows everything about us but he still loves us God knows all that we've been thinking desiring saying and doing this past week we're still alive God's being patient God's being merciful because as our heavenly father he loves us and he works in us shaping us and molding us through the hard times through the uncertain times making us more and more like his son that's

God's goal David wants us to understand how well God knows us because he wants to encourage us David wants to encourage us that God knows us better than we know ourselves he knows what we can and can't take in terms of hardship and uncertainty he knows what amount of suffering will help us to develop Christ like character which is his goal for us you know the doubts the uncertainties the fears hardships of life God is working in yours to make you what he wants you to be as his child in your home for your spouse God's working in all these sufferings of life to make us what we need to be to be the parent he wants us to be to our children or to be the child he wants you to be to your parent

God's doing all this in our lives through the hardships the uncertainties he's always with us he works through the sufferings he works through the hardships to perfect our character to make us more like Jesus he knows exactly what is needed for us to do that God knows what we need and when we need it because he is God he knows everything about us now the question that we need to answer before we go is this will you trust God knowing this about him will you trust him as your heavenly father enough to do what you know he wants you to do instead of worry do you trust God enough to pray to talk to him about your difficulties instead of worry you know what we saw two weeks ago if we'll pray instead of worry and really trust God he will so work in our midst not necessarily to change anything but to give us a sense of peace rightness with him he's with us in the midst of our anything but peaceful situation instead of worrying will you make knowing

God loving him and obeying him the first priority of your life and if you live in fellowship like him if you'll live in fellowship like that with him he'll see to it that your needs are met because as Jesus said he's your heavenly father he loves you more than anyone he knows what you need he's able to meet that need and finally will you seek to live life one day at a time instead of worry God will not

only provide what you need but when you need it and he knows when that is God can do this God can replace our worry with better things because he knows us and he loves us and it's his desire to comfort us with his presence with his awareness with his involvement in our lives find comfort in what all that

[ 33 : 04 ] God knows about you and draw close to him now let's pray together dear God help us to see now how we should respond to you and what you know about us which is everything father for those who truly need to confess repent of sin help them do that right now this moment and experience your forgiveness father if there are people in this room who are not christians make it clear to them that their greatest need is to trust jesus christ as their savior and lord now help them to call upon jesus for salvation as they turn from their sin their selfishness their self-centeredness father father help us as your children to find comfort in your presence and what all you know about us because you're our heavenly father you love us you are for us and in an attitude of prayer you just do what god tells you to do talk to him listen to him obey him if you'd like me to pray with you i'll be here at the front and be happy to do that during these next few minutes you