

Psalms 139:19-24

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[0 : 00] Turn with me to Psalm 139. And we're looking at the last section of the psalm.! No one likes a hater, do they?

It's one of the big things in our culture.! Don't be a hater. Don't believe the haters. And that's one of the problems when we come to the end of Psalm 139, isn't it?

And we come to that bit which spoils it for many people. People love the omniscience of God. They love the omnipresence of God. They love the power of God seen in little babies being created in their mother's womb.

But do I not hate those who hate you? It would be far more comfortable, wouldn't it, if these verses weren't included in this psalm.

And it would be far more comfortable if wicked people didn't exist in this world. If men and women of violence weren't to be found on this planet.

[1 : 02] And what we find again as we turn to this psalm is, what we always find in the scripture is that the psalmist is so realistic. And it's not good enough just to dismiss these verses as if they belong to some Old Testament sub-Christian age.

What the psalmist is talking about is the sort of thing that is very much still with us. The feelings that the psalmist has are the same kind of feelings that any Christian has when they read about what's gone on in North Nigeria.

When they read about what goes on in North Korea. When you read the newspaper. When you read about some of the terrible acts of violence that go on in our culture. I want to argue very strongly there is nothing sub-Christian about the end of Psalm 139.

There's nothing primitive about the sentiments that David expresses. They are disturbing and they are very uncomfortable. But the psalmist is addressing reality.

And humanity today is exactly the same as humanity was back then. The human heart has not got any better. In fact it's probably got worse. And human beings are just as wicked and they are just as opposed to God as they've ever been.

[2 : 19] But people object to these verses don't they? They say they're out of joint with the rest of the psalm. How for example are you supposed to believe that the God who cares for the unborn baby in his mother's womb.

Is the same God who slays the wicked. How can the God who cares so tenderly for an unborn baby be the God who slays the wicked?

Well he is. And this God is a God who is opposed to all evil. He's a God who is terribly holy. He's a God who is dreadful in his holiness.

Who is awful in his holiness. And so this is the fourth thing that we'll see in the psalm. He's told us that God is omniscient. That he sees everything and he knows everything.

He's told us that God is omnipresent. That he is everywhere in the totality of his being. We saw last week that he's omnipotent. That he is almighty. He's all powerful. And the fourth thing that the psalmist has got to tell us about God is that he is holy.

[3 : 28] And far from being an embarrassment, that is the most glorious thing that you can say about God. Far from being something that we should throw out of this psalm, these verses in some ways are the most important verses in the psalm.

The most important thing that you and I need to know about God is that he is a God who is utterly opposed to all evil and wickedness.

Wherever it is to be found. He's a God of holiness. Let me try and read something to you that I think will express it better than I'm trying to.

The book is an account of a revival in the Solomon Islands. Do you know where the Solomon Islands are? A couple of you do. In the 1970s, the book is called *Fire in the Islands*. And I want to just quote to you one of the descriptions that they gave of what took place.

Because it's very much to the point. The heart of revival. Revival is to really know and experience the presence of God. And they've gone to explain what that meant.

[4 : 37] Let me read. We may think of it in this way. Every home has a door. And whenever we go into a house, we enter through a door. We go through so many doors that it becomes just a habit.

We enter without thinking whether we're going into a posh house or a poor house. So then, imagine that you're going into a particular house. The home of a very wealthy man. The Prime Minister, perhaps.

You walk straight into his house without thinking. And then suddenly you become aware of the beautiful carpet. This house is very posh. You look at the purity of the beautiful carpet.

And you think. Is there mud on my shoes? You look down and back. And yes. To your horror.

You have made muddy marks. It's a very real feeling as you see a beautiful carpet spoiled by mud. And then you realize that the owner of the house is looking at you and at the mud.

[5 : 36] And you feel you want to clean the mud away with your tears. Even on that yet, it would not be enough. It is like that with the very temple of God.

Your body. Dirty marks left inside the temple. And you want to clean away those marks with your tears. But you do not have enough tears. And you know that no soap, no shampoo can cleanse away those marks.

But then it is as you hear those words. No tear can wipe away those marks. Only the blood of Jesus can cleanse it. And you are glad and rejoice. And have a sense of indebtedness to God.

That is how the Holy Spirit convicts of sin. By bringing us into the very presence of God. And we compare ourselves with that awful holiness.

And we become aware of our sin. And something like that has happened to David in Psalm 139. We have seen him. He has been meditating upon God.

[6 : 36] And he has been thinking about God. And the attributes of God. And he is suddenly aware that he is in the presence of God. And he is in the presence of holiness.

And he is conscious of this God that is holy. I think there are times like that in our own experience. In some small measure. We come and go here Sunday after Sunday.

We come and hear sermons. We sing our hymns. But there are some Sundays aren't there. When we are conscious that there is something here. God is always here.

He is always with his people. But there are times aren't there. In the Christian life. When we are conscious of his presence. Of his holiness. And as we become conscious of his holiness.

We become conscious of the mud and the dirt. And the sin of our lives. That is what David experienced. And so I just want to state and illustrate. And apply this doctrine of the holiness of God.

[7 : 40] Jonathan Edwards. He writes that God's holiness. Is more than just another of his attributes. That God's holiness is the sum of all his attributes.

It is the outshining of all that he is. Holiness is his crowning attribute. God's holiness is not just another thing that you can say about God.

We've said haven't we. In week one that God is omniscient. And we said that God is omnipresent. And that God is omnipotent. And now we're saying well he's holy.

But you can't say it like that. You can't talk about it like that. God's holiness is not just another thing that you can say about God. About what he's like. God's holiness transcends all those other things.

That you have to say about him. God's holiness colors and permeates all his other attributes. So for example when we talk about God being omniscient.

[8 : 47] That is he knows everything. That knowledge is a holy knowledge. That's why there's nothing sinister about it. That's why there's nothing kind of KGB-ish, spy-ish about it.

Big brother-ish. The psalmist rejoices in the fact that God knows him. And God knows everything. Because that knowledge is not prying.

It is a holy knowledge. God's omnipresence. The psalmist rejoices in that. Because it means that every place where he goes is holy ground. And God's omnipotence.

Well we've got to say that power corrupts. And absolute power corrupts absolutely. But that's not true. It's not true because God is the only one that has absolute power.

And yet he is absolutely holy. He's all powerful but that power is a holy power. And so God's holiness permeates and colors everything there is to say about God.

[9 : 48] So God's justice is not harsh. It's holy. And God's love is not slushy sentimentality. It is a holy love.

And God's goodness is a holy goodness. You could go on and think about everything about God. Everything that you care to say about God is holy. God's holiness is the most important thing about him.

Now let me illustrate this from a couple of places in the Bible. Do you remember in the end of the Bible John had a vision on the Isle of Patmos in the book of Revelation. And do you remember what he says in Revelation chapter 4?

This old man towards the end of his days on the Isle of Patmos. That God opens up heaven and gives him a vision. So let me read it to you. And after this I looked.

And behold there was a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard speaking to me like a trumpet said come up here and I will show you what must take place after this. And at once I was in the spirit.

[10 : 56] And behold a throne stood in heaven with one seated on the throne. And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. And around the throne was a rainbow. And it had the appearance of an emerald.

He goes on to describe the one who sits on the throne. And the scene surrounding the throne of those worshipping him. Strange creatures that cover their faces.

And then we're told in verse 8. The four living creatures each of them with six wings are full of eyes all around and within. And day and night they never stop saying. They never cease to say holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.

Who was and is and is to come. Of course if you know your Bible that will ring a bell won't it? It reminds you of Isaiah. That same vision hundreds and hundreds of years before.

Do you remember it says in Isaiah 6. In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord high and lifted up. I went into the temple. And in the temple I had the shock of my life.

[11 : 59] Because I was suddenly aware that I was standing on the thick pile carpet. If I can use the illustration. That I was suddenly aware that I was in the presence of God.

This holy God. This dreadfully holy God. And I saw the Lord high and lifted up. It's exactly the same picture as he paints. And he says there's cherubims surrounding the throne.

And they keep on crying to one another. He is holy. He is holy. He is holy as the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory. You know don't you that God's holiness is the only attribute of God. That is elevated to the third degree. So nowhere in the Bible do you find that God is love, love, love. Nowhere in the Bible do you find that God is wisdom, wisdom, wisdom.

But again and again you find that God is holy, holy, holy. How holy is he? He is holy, holy, holy.

[13 : 04] And if there's one thing that heaven wants you to know this morning is this. It is the fact that God is holy. And they keep crying out to each other day and night without rest.

They say over and over again he is holy, he is holy, he is holy. And so what does God's holiness consist of?

The psalmist here in Psalm 139, he describes the essence of it, doesn't he? He doesn't tell you everything that there is to know about God's holiness.

But he does tell you in these closing verses very clearly that God hates sin. And that God hates sin with a perfect hatred. And that essentially is what God's holiness consists of.

God's holiness means, amongst other things, that he takes the matter of being God so seriously that he will not allow anyone or anything to aspire to his place.

[14 : 11] And that's what David is saying in these closing verses of the psalm. God is holy and God hates sin. And he's not only saying in it, but he's sharing in it, isn't he?

So let me try and apply this. Let me try and apply it in three ways. I want to ask you first of all, how much does God really matter to you? How much does God really matter to you?

This God whom David is describing, the God of the Bible, the God of this psalm. Clearly God mattered a great deal, didn't he?

To David. You see, this psalm, especially the last verses, are an expression of David's commitment and devotion to God. He's been contemplating God.

He's been spending time meditating on the doctrine of God. And he cannot bear the thought that there are those anywhere in the universe who hate God and are opposed to him.

[15 : 12] That's what these closing verses are about. The God whom David loves is a God whom the wicked despise. And David's concern is primarily with the character of God.

He says, surely God, you're not going to let them get away with that, are you? Surely you will slay the wicked. Now, there's no personal malice or vindictiveness in these words.

David's motive is grief rather than revenge. When he cries out in verse 19, Oh, that you would slay the wicked, O God.

O men of blood, depart from me. He's not intending to kill them himself. He's simply pleading and praying that God will not allow the wicked to continue in their wickedness and their wicked ways.

And so David's concern is that God would be vindicated. So let me ask us as a church, do we share that concern? Does the glory of God, does the character of God and the name of God, the good name of God matter to us more than anything?

[16 : 37] Do you remember when David confessed his sin in Psalm 51? We've looked at this a few times over the last few weeks. It comes out really clearly, doesn't it? Do you remember how he confessed his sin?

Nathan, the prophet, has come to him and has exposed David's heart and sin. And he's pointed out to David, you've been hiding, but you've sinned against God.

And David confesses it there, doesn't he? Psalm 51 verse 4. And he says, against you, you only have I sinned and done this evil in your sight. So you are proved right when you speak.

Justified when you judge. He's confessing his sin. He's pleading for mercy. But do you see what he's saying? He's saying, oh God, my sin I've committed against you and before you.

Not only have I committed that sin against you, I've done it in your very presence. And I'm saying this, and I'm confessing this, so that you may be proved right when you speak. And that you may be justified when you judge.

[17 : 43] What's David saying there? He's saying, I'm more concerned with the vindication of your name, God, than I am about my own name. I've not come to try and cover it up or to rationalize it or excuse it.

I confess, God, I've sinned against you and before you. And I'm saying this so that you may be justified when you speak. So that you may be in the clear when you judge. And everyone will know that your judgments are right.

And so here is a man that God was dealing with and he'd come into the presence of the living, holy God. And what mattered to him more than anything else was God. God's character and God's glory and God's name mattered more to David even than his own salvation.

And so do you know God like that? Does God matter to you like that? That our concern first and foremost as churches should be with God.

With God's name and with God's glory and with God's character. You see, it's the great motive in evangelism.

[18 : 55] What is the great tragedy in healing today? Is it that there are men and women and boys and girls who are heading to a lost eternity to hell? In one sense, yes.

But in another sense, no. The greatest tragedy is that God is not being glorified by creatures he has made. It ought to be unbearable to us that there is a world full of people who are opposed to God and some who hate God.

It ought to be a matter of great sorrow to us that the churches of this world so often misrepresent him. His character is holy. And David's concern is for the glory of God.

And so you cannot say that there's something sub-Christian about Psalm 139. There's nothing inconsistent with the gospel that he's praying here. And you know that.

And you've actually prayed that this morning. Because every time we pray the Lord's Prayer, you are praying this. When you pray, hallowed be your name, what does that mean?

[20 : 03] It means that those whom David describes, verse 20, they speak against you with malicious intent, your enemies take your name in vain, they might be destroyed.

They might be taken out of the way. When you pray, your kingdom come. What have we seen from the Heidelberg Catechism? When we pray, your kingdom come, we are praying that the kingdom of Satan would be destroyed.

And all that is opposed to God and his kingdom would be destroyed. And that's what David is concerned about.

That all enmity, all hatred of God, in whatever shape or form, would be destroyed. That God should be known as God. And that God should be seen as God.

And that God should be God. And that extends to your own heart and life too. Let me give you my second point of application that I want to make. David would be nothing more, would he, he'd be nothing more than a hypocrite.

[21 : 12] If his hatred of sin and evil was only directed at those out there. It's very easy, isn't it, for you and I to tut-tut about the things we see on the news. And in other people's lives and what other people are doing.

And if David was that sort of man, he would have been a hypocrite. But he wasn't that sort of man. Look at verses 23 and 24. He says, Search me, O God, and know my heart. And test me and know my thoughts.

And see if there be any grievous or wicked way in me. And lead me in the way everlasting. He stands with God against his enemies.

The enemies inside and outside his own heart. In his own life. And the psalmist wants to be rid of everything that is offensive to God. And there's no hypocrisy here.

It's not a holier-than-thou attitude that he's got. He's aware of the enmity of the hatred that is within his own heart to God.

[22 : 15] And so he confesses his need of self-examination. And he welcomes God's searching eye. And he's grieved by the evil deeds of the wicked. But he wants to be quite sure that his own sins are not grieving God.

In other words, what David shows us here is what the Bible tells us, isn't it? That he is a man after God's heart. That's what God said about David.

That this man who hates with a perfect hatred the wicked. Who hates those who are opposed to God. Is a man after God's own heart. The man who loves what God loves.

And hates what God hates. And so every believer should be a man or woman after God's own heart. To have a heart after holiness.

Every regenerate person. Every person that has been born again. What is that? What is it to have a regenerate heart? It is to have a new heart.

[23 : 20] To have a heart after God's heart. To have a heart after holiness. That is what a Christian is. And finally let me speak to you. To those of you this morning.

Who have no heart for holiness at all. And it may be that this morning. You're not on God's side against his enemies. And you don't hate evil.

Maybe you're sneaking admiration for it. You're in church. You're respectable. You're religious. You may even profess to be a Christian.

But you've got a kind of sneaking admiration. For the way that the wicked live their lives. The Bible says. The sinful mind is at war with God.

Against God. It's not subject to the law of God. Indeed neither can it be. What that's saying is. The natural condition of our hearts. Apart from the grace of God.

[24 : 23] Is that we're at war with God. That's the way the Bible describes. Every one of us. You don't come into this world neutral. You come opposed to God.

The natural self. Is at war with God. It's at enmity with God. It's hostile towards God. And you say. Well that's a bit strong. Isn't it? Steady on. This morning.

But that is the truth. How does this hostility show itself? Well it shows itself. At the point of the law of God. When God's holy law.

Scrapes against. The natural inclinations of our heart. See. God's law affects every one of us. In different ways. There are certain things in God's law.

Which you'll be quite happy with. Certain things that God forbids. That will cause you no problems at all. Maybe because of your kind of background. Your psychological makeup.

[25 : 24] Maybe you've never been tempted. To break God's law in a certain way. You're not naturally a murderer. You're not naturally that sort of person.

But that's no test. Whether you love. Are a lover of God. Or a hater of God. The test is this. When God's law.

Cuts across. The natural inclination of your hearts. That's when it's shown. So you might not be an adulterer. You may have never had the opportunity.

You may never have had the inclination. And you may be sitting there this morning. Complacently. And saying. Well I'm not guilty of that sin. So I'm not opposed to God. But Jesus says. You look at a woman lustfully.

And you've committed adultery. And at that point. You say. Well I can't do that. I can't live by that. I'm not going to live in that way. Or you may be sitting there. Thinking.

[26 : 20] I've never murdered anyone. And so I'm alright. I've got no problem with the law of God. And Jesus says. Well if you're so much as angry with your brother. You've committed murder. And at that point.

The law of God cuts across. Maybe you can go through all the commandments. Like the rich young ruler. And you can say. Well I've kept all of these since I was a little boy. But the word of God comes up to you at a particular point.

And your natural hostility to God shows itself. It surfaces at the point. Where God's law cuts across. The grain of your natural inclinations. And at that point.

When the demands of Jesus Christ come upon us. And we naturally rise up. And we say. Well I don't care what the Bible says. I'm not going to be that person. I'm not going to follow. That's when we show our true colors. The natural mind.

Is at enmity. Towards God. And is not subject. Under the law of God. And neither can it be. And so that's. That's my natural condition. And that's your natural condition.

[27 : 25] And that means that your life. Is on a collision course. With the almighty. And there will only be one winner. Won't there? Do you see what David says.

In Psalm. 139. Do you see he says. Verse 19. Oh that you would slay the wicked. Oh that you would slay the wicked.

Oh God. It's not just a plea. It's a statement of fact. He said it. Over and over again. God has. He said it. Right at the beginning.

The day that you eat of it. You will surely die. And Satan comes into the garden. Doesn't he? And he stirs up a rebellion. Has God really said? And they fall for it. And so Adam rebels.

Against God. And he dies. If only you will slay the wicked. Oh God. He will. He will. The Bible says.

[28 : 19] The soul that sins. Will die. The wages of sin. That which is coming. Is death. And not just physical death.

But eternal death. And separation. And so finally. Will you look at verse 24 with me. And in verse 24. You'll see that there are two ways to live.

Search me. Oh God. And know my heart. Try me. And know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way. Any grievous way. That's the first way. In me. And then lead me.

In the way everlasting. That's the second way. There's two ways. To live. There's the way of death. God will slay. The wicked. There is no way.

That evil will triumph. Ultimately. In this universe. It is God's universe. And God is everywhere present. And there's nothing going on. That God does not know about. And there is no way.

[29 : 18] That evil is going to triumph. In this universe. Ultimately. And God will slay the wicked.

And so there's two ways. Set before you. One is the way of destruction. And if you continue. In your unconverted state.

If you continue. Religious. But unconverted. With a heart. That has not been changed. To love God. And hate evil. You go to the path. That leads to destruction.

But there's another way. David says at the end. And he says. Search me. Oh God. He wants to know. The way in which he's heading. Help me Lord. Teach me. Know my thoughts.

See if there be any offensive way. In me. And lead me. In the way everlasting. That's the way. That I want to go. I don't want to go. To the way of the wicked. Jesus says.

In the sermon on the mount. Doesn't he? He says. There's a narrow way. That leads to life. And there's a broad way. That leads to destruction. Broad is the road.

[30 : 18] That leads to destruction. And many go on it. You think of a motorway. And people. Flying down the motorway. Sometimes you hear of. Motorway pileups. People just.

Hammering on down the motorway. You think of that way. And broad is the way. That leads to destruction. I'll lead my own life. I don't need God. To tell me how to live.

That's the way of destruction. The broad way. Jesus says. You go that way. But you'll go that way. With my warnings. In your ears. How many warnings.

Have you had? How many bereavements? How many funerals? And no one pays any attention. They just fly down the motorway. Heading to destruction.

A global pandemic. Pandemic. But there is another way. There's a slip road. Off that motorway. There's a narrow way.

[31 : 14] A way that leads to life. And you can get off the motorway. That goes to destruction. And you can head the other way. And that my friends. Is Jesus Christ. Christ. The Christ of the gospel.

God hates sin. And what this psalm teaches. Is God hates the sinner. It's often said to me.

It's kind of one of these. Kind of mantras. Of evangelicalism isn't it? God hates the sin. But loves the sinner. Have you heard that? Probably said it. It's really not true. If David can say.

I hate them with a perfect hatred. And he is a man after God's own heart. We have to say. Don't we? God hates sinners. And God hates sinners. With a perfect hatred. It's very difficult.

To separate the sin. From the sinner. If you ever try and do it. Because our hearts. Are a massive. Kind of war against God. God hates the sinner. But this is where. We don't understand.

[32 : 19] And we've got to get our heads around it. God's hatred. And God's love. Are not mutually exclusive.

God loves the sinner that he hates. Isn't that the message of the gospel? God loves the sinner that he hates. And Calvary.

The cross is the proof of that. God so loved. This world. Not the planet. God so loved this world. In rebellion. And anger against God. That he gave his one and only son.

And so God loves those whom he hates. And we can't do that. But God does that. God hates the sinner.

He's angry with the wicked every day. The Bible says. And yet at Calvary. At the cross. God's love and God's anger meets.

[33 : 21] Don't they? Don't they? In the person of the substitute Jesus Christ. And so there is a motorway that leads to destruction. But there is a slip road.

In Jesus there is a way to turn off the broad road that leads to destruction. There is a way to life. And if you will turn to the Savior. And you will turn from your sins.

And trust in him. You will be led in the way everlasting. Search me oh God and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts.

See if there be any wicked way in me. And lead me in the way everlasting.