

Psalm 139

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[0 : 00] Well good evening and a warm welcome to the service this evening, those who are watching online and those who are listening in on the telephone. Let's unite their hearts in prayer, let's pray together.

Our Heavenly Father we thank you that on this evening we are once more met in this place. We thank you that once more you have given us the opportunity, the freedom and the desire to come into your presence, to open your word, to sing your praises and to come before you in prayer.

And we thank you that we have the promise that where two or three gather in your name, you are with us. Whether it is in our homes, whether it is in a church building, we thank you that that promise stands good, that you are with us.

And we acknowledge Lord as we think about the words that we have said. You are the God who searches us, you are the God who knows us. You are the God who made us, the one who sustains us.

You are the one who draws near to us and who looks into our lives and who looks into our hearts and who shows us in a measure that we are able to bear something of what we need to see of our own hearts.

[1 : 06] And Lord as we come under your word and as you search us, you show us time and time again our sin. And we confess that readily this evening, that we are sinners in thought and word and in deed.

We are sinners by nature, we are sinners by practice. And we would not seek to hide that from you. We know that it would be futile to seek to hide that from you. And we know Lord that when we turn away from you because we feel the shame of our sin, there is that constant heaviness that mars our lives.

We thank you that you have told us what to do with our sin. You have told us to come before you in honesty and to confess our sin. And as we do so, we thank you that we have the promise that you and your faithfulness and your justice because of all that Christ has done are able to forgive us our sin and to purify us from all unrighteousness.

And more than that even, we thank you that you are able to make us righteous in and through Christ. So we ask Lord for that this evening, that you would cleanse us from sin, that you would make us righteous in Jesus.

That you would give to us and assure us and reassure us of the salvation that is promised to those who believe. And give to us Lord, we pray, the joy of your salvation.

[2 : 21] That we would not take these things for granted. That we would not become accustomed to the truths of the gospel. But Lord, that we would be filled always with the wonder of the cross and the joy of the resurrection.

And the wonder of sins forgiven. And the promise of eternal life. Life which begins in fullness the day that we trust the Lord Jesus. And life which knows no end.

Life which continues even through death's dark veil. And is given to us in full measure when we go from time into eternity. So help us Lord we pray to remember to meditate upon these gospel truths.

And help us to take the opportunity to share these gospel truths on this day. We pray Lord for this month in particular. A month when we hear the name of Jesus mentioned more often than usual in the public place.

A month where we hear much about Christ and Christmas. Help us we pray to see and to take the opportunities that you give to us to speak to people about Jesus.

[3 : 21] And we pray for services that go out online. We pray for services that are broadcast on televisions. For services that go out through the radio. For messages that we read in our newspapers.

That speak to us about the Christ of Christmas. We ask Lord that you would be working through these different mediums at this time. To help people to know and to take hold by faith.

For the one who was sent into this world to seek and save sinners. We pray for those who struggle with this month. For some who battle with addictions.

And find there are more temptations over this period. We ask that you would give them strength. We pray for those who struggle with grief. And who are more aware of the absence of those that they loved over this season.

We ask Lord that you would give to them your comfort. Lord we pray for those who struggle with strained family relationships. And we ask Lord that you would give patience. And that you would bring peace.

[4 : 21] Where there is division and where there is fracturing. Lord we thank you that every concern. Every worry. Every struggle we have. We can bring to you in prayer.

We pray for those who are ill at this time. Some who are receiving treatment. And who await the next stage of treatment. We ask that you would lay your hand of healing upon them. We pray for those who are suffering with this virus.

That we have been under for so many months. We ask that your hand would be upon them for good. We thank you for answered prayer. In the form of this vaccine. We ask that it would be effective. And we ask Lord that it would be administered quickly.

And we pray Lord that as we hope to see this virus subside. We ask Lord that we would not revert back to old ways. But that we would continue to be aware of the shortness of life.

And the reality of eternity. Give to us Lord we pray. In our own hearts. In our communities. And in this nation. Which we acknowledge has drifted so far from you.

[5 : 25] Give to us Lord we pray. That repentance and that readiness. To look in faith to Jesus. So hear our prayers. Help us Lord we ask. As we read your word. And as we meditate upon your word.

To know the help of the Holy Spirit. Moving within us. And guiding us and leading us. That we might see Jesus. And we pray all these things in Jesus name. And for his sake.

Amen. Let's turn now and read this passage of God's word. Psalm 139. For the director of music of David. A psalm.

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.

[6 : 21] 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 light tonight will shine like the day. For darkness is as light to you. For you created my inmost being. You knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful. I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you. When I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book. Before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God.

[7 : 20] How vast is the sum of them. Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you. If only you would slay the wicked, O Lord. Away from me, you bloodthirsty men.

They speak of you with evil intent. Your adversaries misuse your name. Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord, and abhor those who rise up against you? I have nothing but hatred for them.

I count them my enemies. Search me, O God. I know my heart. Test me. I know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me. And lead me in the way everlasting.

Amen. And may God bless that reading of his word to us. Lord God, we do pray as we open your word, as we meditate upon it.

We ask, Lord, that you would lead us in the way everlasting. That you would show us our great need of Jesus. And that you would give to us the faith that would pursue Christ.

[8 : 18] And know the reality, the reassurance of the life that is everlasting. And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. If you could turn back now to the passage that we read, Psalm 139.

And I want to begin today by talking to you for just a second about cookies. Cookies. And these cookies that I'm talking about are not the kind that you eat, that you enjoy eating with a cup of tea.

These cookies are the things that you accept. Almost every time you click on a web page, you get this box that pops up saying, please accept cookies. And we accept these things, although we're not really very sure what they are.

Well, I looked into what they are this week a little bit. And these cookies are little files that are sent to your device. Whether it's a phone or an iPad or a computer.

And these little files are sent to your device to monitor you, to remember you. That's why when you go to some websites, they seem to know your postcode before you give it.

[9 : 20] Well, I wondered to myself, what else do they know? And I discovered when I was looking at these cookies that these cookies enable the people behind the websites to know quite often your age, your gender, if you declare it.

Whether or not you're a homeowner. Whether or not you're married or have children and how many children you have. These cookies send information back about whether or not you have stocks and shares.

What your professional interests are. What your personal interests and hobbies are. They track what you've bought in the past online. They watch what you may be considering buying in the present online.

So these cookies, they gather quite a lot of information. They watch our activity and they send back to the people behind websites a fair bit of knowledge about who we are.

And yet the knowledge that they have is nothing compared to the knowledge that God has of us. And that's the first point that we come to as we look at this psalm.

[10 : 25] Point number one is the perception of God or the knowledge of God. And that takes us from verses one down to verse six. The psalm splits into four sections.

Four stanzas of six verses in each. So from verse one to verse six, we see the perception. We see the knowledge of God. Verse one, we'll just step through it.

Oh Lord, you have searched me and you know me. And the word that David uses for search there, it's an interesting word. It's a deep word.

You know, I can say to our girls, go and search for the remote control. Because it's always going missing. And what do they do? Well, they're sitting on one couch and they glance casually in the direction of the other couch.

And if they can't see it, they'll say, no, I can't find it. I've looked and it's not there. That's one kind of searching. Which isn't really searching at all. But God's searching of us is not that kind of a search.

[11 : 21] This search is a thorough investigation that God does of us. Not a quick scan. It's not a casual look. But it's a deep and personal search that God conducts on us.

Warren Weerspe, the commentator, says the verb search means to examine with pain and care. It's a painstaking search. The Jewish people, he says, use this word to describe digging deep into a mine or exploring a land or investigating a legal case.

So that's the kind of search that God does of us. It's the kind of knowledge that he has of us. And that comes through as we step from verse to verse in this first section.

Verse 2. You know when I sit and when I rise. Well, what does that refer to? Well, sitting and rising basically refers to all David the psalmist's activities.

Every relaxing pastime, God knows. Every working endeavour, God knows. Verse 3. You perceive my thoughts from afar.

[12 : 27] So not only does God see where we go and what we do in our downtime and our work time. But even the things that we think. The thoughts that are passing through our minds.

Even our intentions, our good intentions and perhaps our bad intentions. Our wholesome plans and perhaps devious plans that may be within us. God perceives them from afar.

Now for me, things that are far away, I struggle to see. That's why I have to wear these glasses. It enables me to see things that are at a distance. But God needs no help and assistance with his vision, his perception of us and our thoughts.

He sees everything crystal clear, even though he looks from afar. Verse 3. You discern my going out and my lying down. You're familiar with all my ways.

The commentator Lane says, Going out and lying down cover all our waking and sleeping hours. Every state, active and passive. God knows it.

[13 : 31] He discerns it. Verse 4. Before a word is on my tongue, you know it completely, O Lord. So everything that we say. The indistinct murmurings and the grumblings that other people don't quite catch.

It's just as well they don't. God catches. And even the words that are formed within our minds, that we manage to stop before they come off the end of our tongues.

God knows them. Such as his perception, his knowledge of us. And even as we get to this point within the psalm, verse 4, I wonder, does this make you and I nervous?

That God would have such complete knowledge of us. That our lives would be such an open book before God. What we have done, what we are doing, what we still have to do, God knows.

What we say, what we think, God knows. Verse 5. It continues. You hem me in behind and before. You have laid your hand upon me.

[14 : 37] We learn in that verse that God is behind us in our past. We learn that he's before us in our future. And we learn that he's not distant from us. He's not a God who is uninvolved with our lives.

But he has his hand upon us. Spurgeon says this. Behind us there is God recording our sins or in grace blotting out the remembrance of them. And before us there is God foreknowing all our deeds and providing for all our wants.

We cannot turn back and so escape him for he is behind. We cannot go forward and outmarch him for he is before. However, the commentator Alec Mottier, he notes that in respect of all the verbs that speak to us about God's knowledge, his perception of us, his searching of us, his discerning of us, the tense that's used in the Greek is the perfect tense.

And that indicates to us that God's knowledge of us is searching of us. It's not a one-off search. You know, like the environmental health can come in and search a restaurant maybe once a year.

I don't know what the frequency is. Sometimes we can find that people from an external body may come in and they want to look at a property and do an audit. It's a one-off thing.

[15 : 56] That's not God's kind of searching. He doesn't do annual checks. He doesn't do just the occasional look into our lives. But this searching of God, of our lives, it's a constant, it's an ongoing thing.

And I think as we consider this, as we think about the perception of God, as we think about the fullness of the knowledge that God has of us, of our lives day by day, I wonder how it makes us feel.

I wonder what response it provokes within us. One commentator, Eveson, says, To someone who hates God, this is an awful thought. God's full knowledge of us.

But for David, it says, Eveson, it is awesome. And we hear that in the next verse, verse 6. David says, Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

David is in awe of the knowledge that God has of him. The understanding that God has of him. Now, there are times in our lives, and we may feel like no one really gets us.

[17 : 02] No one really understands us. I think probably the teenage years are a period, especially where there is a feeling that the teenager just isn't understood by the people around them.

It's not unusual for teenagers to say, you just don't know. You don't understand what's going through my mind. You don't understand my experience. But what we learn here is that there is a God who does know us in all fullness.

There is a God who understands us perfectly. And as David thinks about the knowledge of God, he's amazed. He's even more than amazed. He's full of joy.

Because he realizes that this God, who knows him so well, doesn't push him away. Doesn't wash his hands of him. But rather lays his hands upon him. And draws near to him and is with him.

And it strikes me at this point that that's the message of Christmas. This is December. And so we're always looking at the message that we go to in December.

[18 : 02] The message of Christmas. And this is the message of Christmas. The fact that God, the God who knows us, he is with us. He came to be with us. Matthew 1.23.

The words that were given to Joseph. The virgin will conceive. Mary. The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son. And they will call him Emmanuel, which means God with us.

And I think at this point we should take the encouragement of that. We should take the encouragement of realizing that the God who knows us so well. He didn't stand back from us.

He didn't watch us struggle from a distance. And leave us to sink into sin. But he came to save us. The same God that David speaks of in this psalm.

It's the God who does not cast us off. He doesn't push us away. But he takes us into his presence. We sing of that sometimes in that hymn. I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus, the Nazarene.

[19 : 05] And wonder how he could love me when he knows me so well. And knows that I'm a sinner. Condemned. Unclean. How marvelous goes the hymn. How wonderful. And my song shall ever be.

How marvelous. How wonderful is my Saviour's love for me. And there's great reassurance in that, I think. As we consider how God deals with us. He knows us fully.

And yet he comes to us as Saviour. He draws near to us as the God who loves us and who is with us. And yet, as we think about this, perhaps also there's a rebuke.

When we think about how we deal with others. Because sometimes when we deal with others, as long as we see their successes and their steadiness, we allow them to come close.

But when people fall and fail and disappoint us and cause us to be grieved, what do we do? Well, very often, if you're anything like me, we step back. We might even push them away.

[20 : 03] And it strikes me, as we look at ourselves, compared to the God who is revealed in this psalm, how unlike God sometimes we can be. So we see, first of all, here the perception of God.

The second thing we see in this psalm is the presence of God. And that takes us into the second stanza here from verses 7 through to 12.

And David says in verse 7, Where can I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? And some of the commentators think that this may be David's expression in terms of him wanting to escape the searchlight of God.

As he realises how fully God knows him. As he realises how God is able to look straight into his heart. He wants to run. He wants to flee. So he says, where can I go from your spirit?

Where can I flee from your presence? But I think that's probably the wrong interpretation there. John Stott says this question of David expresses not the desire to escape, but the joyful astonishment that escape is impossible.

[21 : 08] And that God's hand is everywhere to guide him and to hold him. And if we think back through David's life, we know that there was a period in his life, about a year, when David did go on the run from God.

He had sinned badly. He had sinned very publicly with Bathsheba. You can read about it in Samuel. And for a period, it seems, that rather than turning to God in repentance, David, he ran from God.

He, in a sense, tried to hide from God. And that went badly. And he writes of it in Psalm 32. He writes about his experience of being on the run from God.

In verses 3 and 4, he says, When I kept silent. That's silent. I didn't confess sin. He says, My bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

For day and night your hand was heavy upon me. My strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. And so David here, he's not writing some theory that he's read of in a book.

[22 : 10] He's writing from experience. He knows what a miserable and what a futile thing it is to flee from the presence of God. He knows that he can't do it because God is everywhere.

And God knows everything. And so David is speaking from experience here. He's speaking as a man who tried for a short period to carry the guilt of his sin. He speaks as a man who tried for a period to cover up his sin before he realized that was useless.

It was impossible. Malcolm McLean says, Remember my younger sister Aileen, when she was maybe three or four years old in the garden in Stornoway.

One day she decided it would be a good idea to eat a lump of coal. And so she picked up this lump of coal like an apple and she started to chew it down. And my folks saw her and rushed out to the garden and they confronted her.

She dropped the coal, very obviously. And they said to her, Were you eating coal? And she looked at them indignantly and she said no. And yet she had soot and coal all over her face and all over her teeth and all over her hands and all over her pantsuit.

[23 : 32] It was comical. It was ridiculous. And yet that's a picture of us when we try to hide from God or try to hide our sin from God. So David says to us in Psalm 32, Take it from me.

Don't do it. So what do we do when God in his knowledge shows us who we are and shows us our sin? Well, what we do is we confess our sin. And Psalm 32 again goes on to give an example of that, an instruction in that.

David says, Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Therefore, says David, Let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found.

And so we ask that question as we know our own sin. Where can God be found? And the answer that we have repeatedly in Psalm 139 is he can be found everywhere.

We don't have to go looking because God is everywhere. Verse 8, If I go up to the heavens, you are there. In the high places, both spiritually and physically, God is there.

[24 : 40] At a wedding in Cana, as we read of in John chapter 2, we see Jesus, God the Son, in that high, happy event. He is there. And at a wedding in Tarbert next week, or this week now, Ena and Michaela, we believe that God will be there.

He is there with us in these high places, in these happy days. And yet, in verse 8, we know that on the other extreme, God is also there. If I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

In the low places of life. In grief, in trouble, in struggles, in distresses, God is there. Even in death. Sheol, as it is put in the ESV, the place of death.

We know that Jesus was there. He went ahead of us into death's dark veil. He is the one who is able to take us safely through death's dark veil if we are trusting him.

Verse 8 in the King James Version says, If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. And Spurgeon says, Of course, says Spurgeon, the presence of God produces very different effects in these places.

[25 : 55] But it is unquestionably in each. The bliss of one, the terror of the other. What an awful thought, says Spurgeon, that some men seem resolved to take up their night's abode in hell.

A night which shall know no morning. But you get the point here. David is saying, God, he is everywhere. In the heights of heaven, he is there. In the depths of hell, his presence is there.

Verse 9, 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 we pause there for a moment, we can take great comfort by way of application from these words if we are God's people.

There's great comfort in knowing that there is nowhere we can go. There's no place that we can move to. On the face of the earth, where God is not there before us to be our guide and our protector.

And yet also, by way of application, there's a great warning for those who are not God's people. Or perhaps some who are God's people, but who are on the run at present. We learn here that there is nowhere that we can go to run and hide from God.

[27 : 06] Remember Adam and Eve? If Genesis 3, they try to hide amongst the trees. It was ridiculous. God saw them. Remember Jonah? He tries to hide from God because he doesn't want to go to Nineveh.

So we find him in the guts of this boat, going in the opposite direction. But God saw him. Remember the minister-in-law, Karen, before me, Alan MacArthur? When he shared testimony one night, he spoke about how God was wrestling with him in his home.

And he was resisting God. And he went off to the Navy. He was on the far side of the sea, the other side of the world. And it was in that place, in the cabin of a wee boat, when he was ill, that God wrestled with him.

And he found salvation. God is everywhere. Verse 11. 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. Malcolm McLean says, And again, as we just pause to reflect on that for a moment.

[28 : 24] There's comfort and there's challenge. There's the comfort of knowing that when our circumstances change, and when it feels like we've been taken from the light into the darkness, when it feels like we're on our own, when we can't see anyone around us, we have this promise that we're not on our own, even in the darkness.

God is with us. And the challenge we have here is in remembering that God is always with us. Even when no one else is looking. Even when no one else is listening. Even when we look around in a room and it's empty.

It's not empty. Because God sees and God hears. And God is with us wherever we go. The darkness and the light. The heights and the depths.

The far side of the sea. God is with us. Oliot, the commentator says, Remember, it was God in the beginning who divided light from darkness. He is not the servant of either, but the Lord of both.

He is in the light. He is in the darkness. Isaac Watson, as him, says, Darkness and light in this agree. Great God, they are both alike to thee. Thine hand can pierce thy foes as soon.

[29 : 31] Through midnight shades as blazing noon. So we see the perception of God. The knowledge of God. We see, secondly, the presence of God.

He is with us always, everywhere. The third thing, and much more quickly, we see the power of God. And that power of God is seen in verse 13 through to verse 19.

And we see God's power in the context of his creative and his sustaining power. Verse 13. For you created my inmost being. My inner parts, the ESV puts it as.

Refers to the emotions, to the conscience. God made us, in other words, who we really are in our souls. Verse 13. And so we learn in these verses that from the very beginning of our lives, before we even came into this world, when we were carried within our mother's wombs, from before we were born, right through to our last day, whenever that might be, God is the one who sees us.

God is the one who knows us. God is the one who blesses us with his life-giving power. So when we look around at all of creation, when we look at each other, when we look in the mirror and see ourselves, we see the power of God at work.

[31 : 06] We feel something of the power of God at work with every beat of our pups. It's God that's giving us power. We're thinking about Christmas more frequently just now than usual.

And how many Christmas mornings have been ruined because a child has been given a toy that they wanted, that they longed for, that they now had in their hands, and they wanted to play with it.

But these awful words were written on the box. It's batteries not included. No power. So there's this toy that's supposed to walk or talk or do whatever, and it just stands there, motionless, useless, until these batteries, which can't be bought for another three days, are put into it.

That's a picture of us. We're slow to see it because we, as a people, are so arrogant that we think that we power ourselves. But all God has to do is take the battery out, and our days are done.

Every day we have, every breath we take, speaks to us about the power of God. So how should we respond to that? Well, I think we take a lead from the psalmist here.

[32 : 15] We don't respond with a self-centered arrogance, but we respond in worship. We respond in praise to the God who knows us, who is with us, who made us, and who gives us life.

It's what David does. He pauses at this point in the psalm because he cannot wait to praise God. And he says in verse 17, How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I'm still with you. It's a song of praise from David. He says all my life, when I'm awake, is for praising you.

And then when I sleep, says David, and then awake, still, I'm with you. Derek Kidner says, When I awake, that phrase may have a glimpse of resurrection.

And I think it does, and I think there's comfort for us to take hold of there as well. Those who sleep in Jesus have the promise that when they awake, they awake in that place of never-ending life, that place where God's presence and the power of God is known in full measure.

[33 : 23] So we see the perception of God. He knows us. We see the presence of God. He is with us always everywhere. We see the power of God. We feel the power of God pulsing through our bodies.

And finally here, David speaks to us about the purity of God or the holiness of God might be the term that we would go to more readily. That takes us from verse 19 through to the end of the psalm.

Verse 19, David says, If only you would slay the wicked, O God, away from me, you bloodthirsty men. They speak of you with evil intent. Your adversaries misuse your name. Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord?

And abhor those who rise up against you? I have nothing but hatred for them. I count them my enemies. And this is a change in tone within the psalm. It comes as a bit of a surprise to us when we get to verse 19.

To be honest, this is a stanza that many people would rather not read. You might want to say to David, you know, why did you not just finish in the last stanza? Why not just finish on the positive?

[34 : 24] But it's not up to us where the psalm finishes. God, in his wisdom, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, caused David to include this stanza.

And it's a stanza that speaks to us about the purity of God and the holiness of God. David, in his life, he encounters people who speak evil against God, verse 20, who are openly and defiantly wicked, verse 19.

He meets people who misuse the name of God, verse 20, who hate God, verse 21, who rise up against God, verse 21. And David says, I hate them. Get them away from me.

They are my enemies. And we might want to say to David, that's not a very nice thing to say. No, that's not very Christian. Calvin, though, notes that we are very quick to defend ourselves when others wrong us.

But, says Calvin, we are abundantly timid and cowardly in defending the glory of God. But David is not. We saw that with Goliath.

[35 : 28] A whole army of people sits silent as Goliath takes the name of God in vain. David steps forward. He won't have it. And here, as the psalm comes to an end, David shows courage.

He shows conviction. He shows zeal as he squares up to the enemies of God. And why does he do that? It's because he has a zeal for the Lord. He has a love for God, a deep love for God.

And he says this because he, I think, has a better understanding than us of the fact that God is holy and he is pure and that sin is serious.

Sin is so serious that God cannot even look upon it, we're told. I think it's in Habakkuk. And when we think about Christ and Christmas, we ask the question, why did Jesus come?

The answer was and is to save us from that sin. And how did Jesus save us from sin? The answer is by going to a cross, by becoming sin for us.

[36 : 27] And as our sin was transferred to Jesus on that cross, the Father turned his face away from his own Son who stood, who hung on that cross as our substitute.

See how seriously, as we look at the cross, see how seriously God takes sin. He would go to a cross to crush it. And you know, if our response to the last section of Psalm 139 is to turn up our noses at it and say, I wish it wasn't there.

That, I think, doesn't indicate a problem of intolerance within God. It actually indicates a problem of sin tolerance within me and you. And that's a tolerance we must repent of.

And that's the note that the psalmist ends on. As he's confronted once more with the holiness and the purity of God, he says, Search me, O God, and know my heart. Test me and know my anxious thoughts.

See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. And note here, just as we finish, the context of this psalm isn't actually given to us until the end.

[37 : 36] What's going on in David's life? Well, actually, what's going on in his life is he's struggling with anxious thoughts. And it strikes me that today is a time when I think more than any other time before, we are a people who are anxious.

And even the young people whom we think of as worry-free. In schools today, we keep hearing they're anxious. And psychologists and teachers are rolling out programs to try and deal with their anxiety.

And doctors are handing out pills to try and help people deal with anxious thoughts. And yet, David here says to us, this is how I deal with my anxious thoughts. I look to God.

In fact, more than that, I come to the God who knows me, who understands me better, even though I understand myself, and yet who loves me. David says, I come to the God who is with me, who never leaves me, who never forsakes me, who never lets me run so far away from him that he lose sight of me.

He says, I come to the God who never lets me wander so far that I will be lost. David says, I deal with my anxious thoughts by coming to the God who gives me life and breath, the God who created me and sustains me.

[38 : 52] He says, I come to the God who is holy and pure, and yet who doesn't drive me, a sinner, away, but takes me close and forgives me when I fall and picks me up and sets me back again in the way that is everlasting.

This is my God, says David. This is the God who deals with my anxious thoughts in life. This is the God who leads me in the way everlasting so that I need not be anxious even in death.

This is my God, says David, and he can be our God too if we are those who are trusting him. Lord God, help us, we pray, to trust you. Help us, we pray, to know you and to love you as the psalmist did.

You're the God who knows everything about us and yet who still loves us. You're the God who is with us everywhere, always, who never leaves us nor forsakes us.

You're the God who gives us life and breath and all in our being and you are the God who is holy and pure. Help us, we pray, to see you clearly.

[40 : 02] Help us, we pray, to come to you and trust you. Come to the Father through Jesus, the Son. Enable us to do that even this evening and to know the reassurance, the settling reassurance that you are our God and that you are with us.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all both now and forevermore. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.