

Bible Chat week starting 30 6 23

Psalm 139

- 1 You have searched me, Lord,
and you know me.
- 2 You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.
- 3 You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.
- 4 Before a word is on my tongue
you, Lord, know it completely.
- 5 You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.
- 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.

- 7 Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
- 8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
- 9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
10 even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.
- 11 If I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,'
12 even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

- 13 For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
- 14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.
- 15 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.
- 16 Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.
- 17 How precious to me are your thoughts,[a] God!
How vast is the sum of them!

18 Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand –
when I awake, I am still with you.

19 If only you, God, would slay the wicked!
Away from me, you who are bloodthirsty!

20 They speak of you with evil intent;
your adversaries misuse your name.

21 Do I not hate those who hate you, Lord,
and abhor those who are in rebellion against you?

22 I have nothing but hatred for them;
I count them my enemies.

23 Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.

24 See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

1. Some scholars suggest this Psalm may express the pain an innocent man felt after being accused of some crime by his enemies. What in the text supports this theory? Does it feel right to you?
2. If you know the Psalm already, what has it meant to you in days gone by? If it's new to you, how do you respond to it?
3. What is your favourite part of the Psalm, and why?
4. Can we pray this Psalm at times when we feel God is absent?
5. Could the perpetual presence of God as described here be unwelcome to some people? Why?
6. What should God do with evil people? Slay them? Punish them forever? Do you need to believe in hell, if only for very wicked people?
7. David argued that Calvin's rigid ideas about predestination are a part of an attempt to make a systematic, overarching theology that explains everything neatly. But this fails, for it produces a God who is unworthy of our worship. Discuss this idea.