

Psalm 139

Peter Adam

‘You search me and know me’. ‘If only you would slay the wicked!’ ‘Search me and know me!’

1-6 ‘You have searched me and known me’

7-12 ‘Where can I flee from your presence?’

13-18 ‘You created me’

19-22 ‘If only you would slay the wicked’

23-24 ‘Search me and know my heart’

Two contemporary issues

1. ‘You know me’ **Good news!** **Bad news?**
2. What about ‘slaying the wicked’?

Us

- We don’t cope with the presence of evil, and try to avoid dealing with it.
- We have an optimistic view of human nature.
- We are generally unprepared for intentional evil. It seems unnatural.
- We underestimate the serious significance of deliberate and continued sin against God. [Here it is not ignorant, nor accidental, nor occasional....]
- We might read the Bible selectively, and avoid the difficult bits!
- We hear too much bad news through the media. We may want church to be an escape!

The Old Testament

- The book of Psalms includes 2 and 110.

| Psalm 2:7-12 | Ps 110:1-7 |
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| <i>I will proclaim the LORD’s decree: He said to me, “You are my son; today I have become your father. Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will break them with a rod of iron; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.”</i> | <i>The LORD says to my lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.” The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion, saying, “Rule in the midst of your enemies!” Your troops will be willing on your day of battle. Arrayed in holy splendour, your young men will come to you like dew from the morning’s womb.</i> |

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| <p><i>Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear and celebrate his rule with trembling. Kiss his son, or he will be angry and your way will lead to your destruction, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him [7-12].</i></p> | <p><i>The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.” The Lord is at your right hand; he will crush kings on the day of his wrath. He will judge the nations, heaping up the dead and crushing the rulers of the whole earth. He will drink from a brook along the way, and so he will lift his head high.</i></p> |
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- The king had the responsibility of imposing justice, and punishment. ‘Of David’.
- God constantly warns that he will not be defeated, but will defeat, ‘the wicked’, ‘bloodthirsty’ people, who ‘speak against him’, ‘misuse his name’, ‘hate him’, and ‘rebel against him’ [19-21].
- Here David is not acting against these people, he is asking God to deal with them.
- It is not a ‘curse’ Psalm [David is not ‘cursing’ these people], it is a prayer for justice.

The New Testament

- As in the Old Testament, God continues to be kind to evil people [‘he sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous’] and calls us to love our enemies [Matthew 5:43-48].
- God loves to make his enemies into his friends: ‘For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life’ [Romans 5:10]. ‘Be reconciled to God’ [2 Corinthians 5:20].
- We are saved only through Jesus taking our sin on himself. ‘The lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world’ [John 1:29], ‘He bore our sins in his body on the cross ... Chris suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God’ [1 Peter 2:24, 3:18].
- We are not to take revenge: Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord [Romans 12:19].
- Those who oppose Christ are his enemies. Jesus said, “Whoever is not with me is against me” [Matthew 12:30]. Paul writes, ‘many live as enemies of the cross of Christ’ [Philippians 3:18].
- Jesus currently rules over his enemies: ‘For [Christ] must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death’ [1 Corinthians 15:25,26].
- Those who oppose God will suffer on the last day. Jesus said, ‘be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell’ [Matthew 10:38].
- The ‘Hallelujah Chorus’ of Revelation 19:1-10 is a response to the destruction of wicked Babylon in chapter 18.
- The perfect justice of God will only be done when Christ returns. Until then, we have to suffer injustice, like Jesus: ‘Jesus entrusted himself to him who judges justly’ [1 Peter 2:23].
- Though we may seek justice for ourselves: ‘I appeal to Caesar’ [Acts 25:11]
- We should act with loving justice towards others: ‘Love does no harm to a neighbour: so love is the fulfilment of the law’ [Romans 13:10].
- So every time we pray, ‘Your kingdom come’ or ‘Come Lord Jesus’ [Matthew 6:10, 1 Corinthians 16:22, Revelation 22:20], we praying for God’s just future, when his enemies will be judged, and his saints vindicated and rewarded.

So:

‘Search me and know my heart ... and lead me in the way everlasting’.