

Reading: Psalm 139v1-24

Theme: Sincere and searchable.

David, in this magnificent Psalm, considers God's greatness - the greatness of His knowing all things, the greatness of Him being ever present, everywhere at the same time and in the fullness of His being. These awesome truths were not frightening or daunting thoughts for David, but were a comfort and he viewed them as awesome, yet also precious thoughts and David praised this amazing God that not only knew all about him, but also watched over him in such a personal, caring and loving way.

I think many people would have liked David to have ended this Psalm at v18, or to have jumped to v23-24 - because many do not like v19-22 – as they seem harsh, cruel, and totally against the cosy, fuzzy picture of God as an all-caring grandfather figure, whose reason for existence is to watch over us, do us good and spoil us rotten!

David's words here upset many, dismay them; causes them to dismiss parts of God's word as an irrelevance, as just the opinion of the writer, or are a product of his culture and generation. In doing this, it allows them to accept only what they like and want to accept. Yet if we hold to the inspiration of Scripture - that it is all God breathed and written down under the direction of the Holy Spirit, then we cannot ignore these and other such verses which we may dislike or disagree with, but we have to learn of and from them, also to apply them - as I will try to do using 3 headings:

1. A destructive God? (v19-20)

We are not to forget the context of these verses - David considered the greatness of God and is now moved in his heart and life to praise God, to speak of the greatness, of the awesomeness of this God - who knew all things and knew such because He was ever

present everywhere and all things were done, said or thought in His very presence.

It is as if David saw and understood the horror, the seriousness of the sin of those who had no time or thought for God; who are actively wicked, are cruel and bloodthirsty, or blaspheme God's name – using such a glorious name as a swearword, a thoughtless exclamation and even deriding it and God.

David was so very taken up with this God and what he considered of God, that there is a disgust, a hatred of sin. How could people sin so easily and carelessly against **this** God? In David's view, this God was so glorious and precious - he had such precious thoughts about God's precious thoughts to him - that he wanted his God to act decisively to vindicate the honour and glory of His name, character and Being.

Picture the scene - a group of young professionals are having a meal together, nothing is off limits in the conversation - they talk of the drugs they have experimented with, of the sexual partners they have had - whether the same or opposite sex, one mentions an abortion and then one of them lights up a cigarette, but the others are filled with horror and disgust and say so! Such ones have twisted values. Sadly, mankind is like that - we rationalise and give things strange priorities. Yet God does not. God is the ultimate standard. David knew that the all-knowing, all seeing, ever present God is holy, holy, holy. He is the fixed absolute and as Creator of all, He has authoritative right to say what is righteous and what is sin (*unrighteous*) and He is very clear and definite about it - for He sets it by Himself, His holiness and purity.

God's standards do not fluctuate according to the current thinking or fashion. Often, we have changeable values according to what is being done and to whom or what. Imagine that we are going down

the road and there are group of young people and as you pass, you see they have caught a wasp and are, very carefully, pulling it apart. It's not nice and we may say something, but then it's only a wasp... Imagine the same scene, but now it's a butterfly or a bird or cat, now to our horror, a baby, even worse our baby!

God always sees sin as sin We are to realise that when people sin, including us, they pull apart God's own glory and holiness and do so in His presence. All sin is committed in His presence with Him seeing and knowing what is done. In God's eyes, sin is disgusting, nauseating and vile. God has an "allergic reaction" to sin - it provokes His anger, wrath and deserves His holy justice. There is no such thing as an insignificant sin, a justifiable sin or even a "*it doesn't matter sin*". God hates sin as intensely as He loves perfection and righteousness. This is the God who knows and sees all things and is ever present as such things are done.

Let's go back to David, he is so taken up with God, that he recognised the offensiveness of sin and of the ones who did such sin. So, he called on God to destroy them! He couldn't understand how this God could tolerate and allow such ones to keep on living as they use all their lives, gifts, strengths, minds, mouths etc. which God gave them, in active, known and often open rebellion against God.

This God is not a violent, cruelly destructive God. Even though such ones sin in His presence and He knows the offensiveness of this sin as it really is against Him; yet this God is the God of grace, patience and mercy. Realise the goodness of God should lead all to repentance - the sun and rain comes on the righteous and unrighteous; health, strength, joys, blessings, love, peace etc. are known by all, whether righteous or unrighteous. Sadly, such ones pervert God's goodness and say He is weak, cannot or is unable to do anything, but God will call such ones to account one day. We

are to understand sin has no place in heaven and all those in whom sin is found will be eternally punished by God in His justice and anger and there will be no passing from hell into heaven, but their eternal position will be fixed and the full seriousness of sin will be seen and recognised on the Day of Judgement.

The question is, what about you and me? Where will we be? There is only one way to escape hell and it is to trust the Lord Jesus as our Saviour - then all our sin and its guilt is transferred onto Jesus and He, in His death on Calvary, was and is credited as bearing our sin and having our sin upon Him as He took our punishment in our place so that we can be justified, be made and declared eternally and legally righteous by God. Now we see:

2. A hateful believer? (v21-22)

David uses strong words in these verses. He seems very bitter and twisted, as a Middle Eastern religious fanatic, who seems to delight in picturing these ones being wiped out, even saying he hates, abhors and counts them enemies!

What is going on here? Suddenly it seems David has turned from praising God to hating people! Has he some sort of schizophrenia, or dual personality or a warped religious fervour? No, not at all. David wrote as Hebrew and they have very black-and-white concepts. There are no Greek influences or degrees of viewpoint - as the Hebrew mind and language is very polarised. David wrote as one who was absorbed by the greatness of this God and marvelled there could be haters of and active rebels against this God. David expresses they deserve nothing but destruction by God. David is consumed by love for God and His honour and that those who hated God were David's own enemies. David had no time for those who had no time for the God who had such precious thoughts towards him and knew him with such attention and care.

Charles Spurgeon wrote *“He was a good hater, for he hated only those who hated good. Of this hatred he is not ashamed, but he sets it forth as a virtue to which he would have the Lord bear testimony. To love all men with benevolence is our duty; but to love any wicked man with complacency would be a crime. To hate a man for his own sake, or for any evil done to us, would be wrong; but to hate a man because he is the foe of all goodness and the enemy of all righteousness, is nothing more nor less than an obligation. The more we love God the more indignant shall we grow with those who refuse him their affection.”*

David and we are to love and care for people as fellow human beings, as those in need - especially the need of the gospel, but our acceptance of them does not mean we approve of their sin and sinful ways. In fact, their sin and sinful ways are to grieve us, make us angry at what sin can do and how it can dominate people and their behaviour and ways. While we would do them good, we cannot but hate the sin that may not only be ruining their lives - as gross and open sin often does, but we pray for them as we see it drags their souls down to hell, see they need to confess it, forsake it and turn to the Lord Jesus. We recognise God knows and sees this sin very well and yet has graciously provided the way of salvation and we are to tell the wonderful gospel of hope to all people.

We are to accept the sinner, but not condone their sin. Some people make it difficult for us to accept them in their open and vile sin, but we are to pray for God’s help to make a distinction between the sinner and this sin. We read of the Lord Jesus (Mark 3:5) *“He looked round at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.””*

To be angry with sin and sinners who commit such sin is not wrong. It is how we allow that anger to evidence itself. It should

cause us holy zeal and desire to pray, witness and seek to win them for the gospel and not demand, as did James and John on one occasion, judgement on such ones. We should desire to see as God sees - the vileness of sin, but the preciousness of eternal souls and the awful consequences if they do not get right with God. Seeing in such a way, will keep us from bitterness, from being judgemental, from being hard and callous, but keep us praying and yearning for people's salvation.

David was not a hateful believer for he was not hating the people, but he hated the expression of sin's dominance and outworking in them. Only as we love God more and more and see things as He sees them, will we be those who hate sin - first of all in ourselves, then others - desiring sin be removed in us and others. David was not a bitter believer, full of hatred, but he was:

3. A sincere believer. (v23-24)

David knew that God knew him through and through, but even in his appreciation of God, his desire was to see God glorified because of God's precious thoughts to and care of him. Yet David was aware of sin lurking, developing, germinating and rooting in his life. David wanted God to deal with sin and sinners, yet did not exclude himself. He did not merely condemn others and point out their wrongs and then get on with doing the same. David was no hypocrite. Paul warns the Roman Christians of this in Romans 2:1-5.

David wanted God to deal with him. Yes, David was aware that God knew him and had searched him, but David here asked for such to be actively carried out and we assume that he wanted the results made known to him! David wasn't just putting on a front, but he was a sincere believer - not just looking good, but having many flaws, but he was sincere = sin cere i.e. without wax. Even his hatred of sin's expression and dominance in people has to be

included in this microscopic review and examination by God. David wanted it to be godly anger, a true hatred of sin, so that he would truly love and hate according to God's holiness and for God's glory and honour alone. David wanted a godly, God glorifying passion.

David was willing to be shown his wicked ways - even having such a great appreciation of God and His attributes, for he recognised that sin could so easily camouflage itself and live tucked away in his life; or he could secretly hang onto and treasure such, but not realise its destructive potential e.g. about 2005 in Boston Lincolnshire, a fishermen had an unexploded World War II bomb in his nets and kept it outside his front do for a while not knowing what it was! It was diffused safely! Last year a friend of mine in Bristol was making some footings for a new shed and dug up something he recognised from his army days - an incendiary device from WW2 and called in the bomb squad!

We are to love our enemies, we are not to hang onto hurts or resentments, but we would genuinely do them good if we had the opportunity and not secretly gloat at them about any need they had. Sin is so subtle and deceptive, which like dandelion roots, go down deep or roots of horsetail/marestail weeds which spread relentlessly and only shows here and there. We need to have our offensive, wicked ways shown us, even our anxious thoughts can lead to sin and doubting God's care, for we can become anxious, fearful, doubt and we may assume God doesn't know or doesn't care for us and He isn't in us. Yet the word of God declares so clearly - that He is always with us, but we give into our anxious thoughts. We can even feel our thoughts and desires do not matter. We need to safeguard those anxious and doubting thoughts as they can affect our actions and ways, especially in these Covid times.

David wanted to be led in the way everlasting = God's ways - the way of salvation, the right road. That may not always be the way we would naturally want to go as it seems to us so hard, steep, narrow and may appear so lonely, but it is the way everlasting and in it we have the close presence in company of the King of the land to where we are going, for it is the King's Highway and all would go to heaven at to walk in it.

The way everlasting is contrasted with the offensive, wicked way which literally means "the way of grief" - grief to our lives and souls, to others and grief to God. The everlasting way is the way that pleases God and is best for us.

If we are not a believer, then why not? Doesn't this God know you, your fears, objections, your sin in all its totality? Are you so unwise as to think you've done enough to satisfy His holy justice or that you will be able to reason and argue your way out of His judgement? There is only one hope for you as there is for all people, and it is in the work and the person of the Lord Jesus as your Saviour.

For those of us who have Jesus as our Saviour, be sincere before God and all people. Live a life that is transparent before God and not self-deluding. We are not to live to impress others, but live to honour God first and foremost and be natural and passionate about that. In doing so, we will find it will not be able to be contained, but will evidence itself in our lives.

This amazing psalm presents to us this great big and awesome God, let's all be prepared to for Him to search us, show us our lives and then lead us on in the way everlasting. Pray we would live conscious of being always in His sight, presence and care all our days and we will do so with delight and joy, coupled with great amazement and wonder.