

Psalm 139:19-22

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Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 0 0] Father, we confess before you that it is far easier for us to deceive ourselves than we realize.

Father, we confess before you that self-deception plays a far greater role in our lives than we realize. And we confess before you, Father, that we do not know ourselves as well as you know us.

But, Father, we hide this from ourselves so often. And we feel, Father, that we know ourselves and you better than you know ourselves or that you know yourself. Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would move and work deeply in our lives, that you would help us today, Father, to become more honest with ourselves and more honest with you.

And, Father, we give you thanks and praise that as your Holy Spirit leads us to a greater honesty about ourselves and an honesty with you that you, Father, will come and enter into our lives and have a far greater role and power.

We ask, Father, for your wisdom into our lives, that you would help us to hear the wisdom of your word. And all this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior.

[1 : 1 4] Amen. Please be seated. I have to confess it's not a matter of confessing.

I haven't received hate mail lately. And I'm happy about that. I don't know how many of you have ever received hate mail. But a few years ago, I had an involvement in sort of a national debate on things that touched a lot of different people.

And I took a side on that national debate. And I would regularly receive hate mail. In fact, some of you might know I've even been stopped on the street and told off about how hateful I am and the views are that I have.

And it's not fun receiving hate mail. It's not fun just walking on the street, minding your own business and being stopped by a stranger who recognizes you from wherever to be told off and sort of condemned.

It's not a fun experience. And I know I haven't dealt with as much abuse as probably. I'm sure there are some of you who have had vastly, vastly worse examples of hatred directed at you and probably over a far longer period of time.

[2 : 2 6] So I'm not claiming to know about hatred more than all of you. But I do know a little bit about what it is to be hated, to receive hate mail. Actually, twice I've been assaulted in my office over the years by people trying to beat me up because they hated me.

This was on a separate matter. So I have a very, very tiny sense of what it's like. And so I understand the worry that some of us can have when we hear the Bible passage today.

It all started just so nice, didn't it? And then all of a sudden towards the end, I hate them with a perfect hatred. And so for some of us here in the room, there can be a great degree of anxiety that emerges when we hear such a scripture text.

A worry that the Bible, in fact, is promoting hatred. But the Bible is legitimizing us hating people. And so we're going to look at that a little bit today.

We're going to look and see, is it in fact the case that the Bible promotes hatred? Or is it in fact the case? Well, let's just see. So if you have your Bibles, it would be a great help if you open your Bibles up.

[3 : 36] And turn with me. The psalm was Psalm 139. Psalm 139. And the part that we're going to look at first, sort of our entrance way into the text, is verses 19 to 22.

19 to 22. Towards the end of the 24-verse long psalm. And 19 to 22, of course, towards the end. And that's the surprising bit, the shocking bit, maybe for some of you. And I just want to let you know something as you sort of turn to that.

One of the things which is not good about the Anglican tradition in Canada is that in 1959, when they were revising the prayer book, and most Anglican churches follow some type of lectionary, and in 1959, when they were changing the lectionary for Anglican churches, with this psalm, they took it out.

They took that part of the psalm out. And so if you were to go and find a little tiny red prayer book and flip through it, these verses aren't in it. And in fact, for many, many Anglican churches and Roman Catholic and Lutheran United churches, they follow something called the Revised Common Lectionary.

And in that Revised Common Lectionary, when they talk about Psalm 139, these parts of the psalm are taken out. And so it's quite possible for many people to have thought they've gone to church all their lives, maybe an Anglican or Catholic or Lutheran United Church, and heard the scriptures read and not realized that this is actually even in the Bible.

[5 : 06] So we're going to look at it. And here's what it says. Oh, that you would slay the wicked, O God. Verse 19 O men of blood, depart from me.

They speak against you with malicious intent. Your enemies take your name in vain. Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?

I hate them with complete hatred. I count them my enemies. Wow. It's a very, very stark text.

Well, here's the first thing as we look in this. I have to confess that there are some times that Christians talk about themselves as if Christians are better than other people.

In the Irish household that I grew up in, my parents and my relatives, who are all Protestant Irish immigrants, had a way of referring to something as being very Protestant.

[6 : 11] And the implication was that Protestant people were good and Catholic people were bad. And so if you did something that was good or well-organized or intelligent, that was very Protestant. And the implication was that if you weren't doing those things, it was Catholic and bad.

Or maybe, I mean, I guess they would have been open-minded and said Muslims, Hindus, and Jews, and everybody else. But they're not Protestants, and Protestants are sort of good. And that's not a part of my background or my heritage, which I embrace or I'm proud of.

And it's easy sometimes. And all of us have heard Christians who've talked as if somehow Christians are better than other people. But the first thing I want to suggest to us is that not only must we as Christians completely and utterly repent of any such type of attitude towards that, of saying that way, that somehow we Christians are better or better behaved than other people.

The other thing is that we need to understand that this is a human problem, that hatred is a human problem.

That on one hand, while it's often, you don't have to look very far on the Internet to find Christians talking as if things like hatred is a Muslim problem or an atheist problem or a gay problem or something like that.

[7 : 30] I mean, I don't mean to offend anybody here. I really don't mean to offend. But I haven't been able to think of a different way to put it. But on Saturday in the National Post, there was an interview with a scholar from the University of British Columbia who's written a book.

And the thesis of the book, according to the interview, and I don't know whether the interviewer got the interview correct. Okay, so I'm just going to go by the interview, that big gods create big civilizations.

At the end of the interview, not only is it that big gods create big civilizations, but that big gods who create big civilizations create lots of reasons to dislike a lot of people and sort of legitimize violence against them.

And I guess it might be a shock to be a secular professor at a university. But the fact of the matter is, and here I don't mean to offend anybody, but if we look at it honestly, hatred is a human problem.

Hatred is a human problem. Over the last couple of weeks, there's been reports in the papers about Buddhist mobs attacking people who aren't Buddhists. We see lots of examples of Muslim on Muslim and Muslim on Christian and violence.

[8 : 45] There are stories in the papers over the last couple of months of Hindu violence against Christians and against Muslims. Whole states, atheist states, have been characterized by profound hatred against social groups or dissidents or people who have views that are other than their own.

And in fact, it's probably very, very often the case that an atheist might think that hatred is a Christian problem and atheists aren't like that. And Christians think that hatred is an atheist problem and Christians aren't like that.

And Hindus think that hatred is somebody else's problem and not their own. And the fact of the matter is that we can be profoundly self-deceptive and that hatred is a human problem.

And I don't mean, but hatred is a human problem. And if we start to understand that hatred is a human problem, then the question really becomes, does the spirituality or the ideology or the philosophy or the religion that we adhere to or adhere to or follow, does it speak wisely into the issue of hatred?

Or does it inflame hatred? Does it permit hatred? Legitimize hatred? Lead to self-deception about human hatred?

[10 : 06] Is the philosophy or the ideology or the religion that we follow or adhere, does it actually speak wisely into the human problem of hatred?

Now, I think that if we start to look at this psalm, and we're going to look at the psalm more, we're going to look at these words again more in a couple of seconds, we're going to look at the whole psalm.

I'm going to tell you this. I actually think that if you look honestly into the resources within atheism and other faiths and look into the resources of Christianity in terms of how they can speak into the whole issue of wisdom, you'll see that I don't believe there's anything which is as wise and as insightful about the range of human experience and emotion and the reality of hatred as we will find in the Bible.

And that even this psalm and even this part of the scripture, which at first seems so worrisome, is that we can worry that if we take it to heart and take it literally, that we'll all turn into reverend Phipps types going around chanting, you know, death to faggots or, you know, and other types of unbelievably obscene hatred.

And rather than actually thinking that if we take the Bible more seriously and delve into it more deeply, that we will turn into a Pastor Phipps, I think we will see that in fact the Bible has profound wisdom and insight into the reality of the human problem of evil.

[11 : 36] So the first thing is to say that hatred is a human problem, not a Christian problem, although Christians have that problem, it's a human problem. And the second thing is as we hear this text, I'm going to read it again, Is there any type of social context or experience whereby that prayer might actually make any type of sense?

Imagine that you're in Syria. You can't get out. And you're a Christian businessman or a Christian businesswoman, and you have a little church.

And your business has been attacked many times. Your church has been attacked many times. Your friends and your neighbors, maybe some of your family members have died from gas attacks.

The Assad regime, in anger at the triumph of the rebels, partially takes it out on you, the rebels, and they take it out on you. And the rebels, angry at the success of the Assad regime, take it out on you.

And you've not only endured low-level violence and maybe high-level violence for most of your life in that country, but over these last two years, you have had many loved ones die.

[13 : 13] Maybe your own family. What do you think, if you're in Syria, you would think about this text? What do you think you might think?

You see, friends, here's the very, very first thing. Those of us who think that they can protect the church by editing out parts of the Bible, ultimately what they do is create care-bear Christianity.

And care-bear Christianity is insipid, weak, useless, idle. That's what it is.

The Bible addresses the depths and the breadth of human experience. Amongst other things that Christians in Syria could say, they could say, God understands a little bit about what's going on inside of me.

He understands. And surely, wouldn't you want a Christian in Syria to pray something along that line to have his life be somehow informed by that in some way?

[14 : 29] Because wouldn't you think it's valid in that context for you to pray, if I have nine kids and if I'm that Syrian dad and six of my kids are married and I have grandkids, I would want to pray, Father, don't let one of my kids get so completely overwhelmed by these people who do not value human life, who hate.

don't let my son or my daughter join them. Father, please never put me in a position where I, to protect myself, to protect my business, will become like one of them to kill or to maim or to rape my neighbors to save my own skin.

Father, please grant me the courage to be completely and utterly loyal to you. I know, Father, that you find what's going on around me completely and utterly abhorrent and, Father, please do not let me ever join that side.

Don't you think that something like this prayer might actually speak into their lives? You see, the problem is that we become ethnocentric.

The fact is, this text does not give me any type of insight about how to deal with the person who cuts in front of me in the lineup at McDonald's. Okay? If you think this verse is speaking into how to handle the guy or the gal in front of you cutting to you at McDonald's, wrong.

[15 : 55] But the fact that the matter is that many of us will have to make, should pray, Father, hopefully, I never have to experience this. So that's, that's the first thing about this text is that it actually, there are, it touches on context, the, the, the, the, the young girl who's now 16 years old who's been brutalized in secret by her father or grandfather, her stepdad, ever since she was a young girl and is horrified by the fact that the family members rally around to disbelieve her and to protect the guilty one.

this song might speak into her life, don't you think? The Bible addresses the full breadth and depth and shallows as well of human emotion.

Bible, not this text, other places where it addresses the shallows of human emotions. It's not care pair Christianity and the way of following Jesus is not just for the successful person who's never had anything go wrong in their life.

See, one of the problems with care bear Christianity is that when things go really bad in our lives and we just feel so much anger, we're such strong emotions, we feel we have to stay away from church rather than understand that God is familiar and knows the full breadth of human experience and that if we are dealing with great, great, great anger rather than thinking that the Jesus way has nothing to do with us, we are to understand that the Jesus way has everything to do with us and the Bible has everything to speak into our lives.

So the first thing we can see about the wisdom of the Bible is that the wisdom of the Bible actually acknowledges the strength of profound, deep, human emotions and social context that we maybe hope we never have to go into but it speaks into it and that in fact by speaking into it it provides a type of wisdom but it also has another type of wisdom because you see we want more than wisdom when looking at the human, the reality of hatred, we want something that speaks about restraint and context.

[18 : 27] Well, does the psalm provide some type of restraint or context? It does in a very, very profound and powerful way. Let's look up to the part just before verses 19 to 22 and I'm going to begin reading at verse 13.

Yes, verse 13. Check my notes. Here's what it says. For you formed my inward parts. You knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Wonderful are your works. My soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance.

In your book were written every one of them. The days that were formed for me when as yet there was none of them. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I could count them, they are more than the sand.

I awake and I am still with you. Now, first of all, this psalm is not saying that the psalmist thought that babies developed in caves and pelicans go and get them out of the cave and then somehow go and bestow them upon a happy couple.

[19 : 41] This is not what the psalmist is talking about at all. It's using chaste, poetic imagery to talk about the conception of a child in its mother's womb.

And here's the thing which is so powerful about the text. I am known and loved by God from conception. So from conception, I have a dignity and value as a human being regardless of what a parent, regime, race, institution will say.

This text is telling me that I am known and loved by God from conception. So from conception, I have a dignity and value as a human being regardless of what a parent, regime, race, institution say.

I do not have to wait for a parent or an institution or a race or a social class to declare that I am human and fit to enter into the society of humans.

I don't have to wait for that. I mean, it might be that they mistakenly are going to act as if they have that power of God over me. But this text in a very, very powerful and profound way says that in fact, it's by being begotten, it's by being conceived that I receive value, dignity, excuse me, and worth and integrity from the moment of my conception and every human being does as well.

[21 : 14] You know, I was joking with my wife last night when we were driving, I helped my oldest son move yesterday from Renfrew to Wormprior and I was joking that, you know, Louise, this is a really easy text, I'm just going to talk about hatred, abortion, maybe I should throw in tithing and same-sex marriage or something while I'm at it just to sort of get like three or four or five really controversial, actually I could talk about same-sex marriages from this text but I won't.

You know, maybe I'll just throw in a whole pile of things all at once, you know, and then if people, here's the thing, this is very, very, very, very profound, it's a profound limiting factor on hatred in two ways because the first thing is, what is it that happens to us when we get overwhelmed by hatred?

We dehumanize the other person, we see them as less than human, we see them as worthy of death, we see them as worthy of being treated like garbage and this text is a profound guard against that.

Once again, if I'm that dad in Syria, I have to realize that those people that are horrendous were also made human at the moment of their conception, that there is in fact a dignity of them as human beings, that comes not by my anger or my approval, but from God.

Most importantly, and that's a very, very, very, very, very important limiting aspect and wisdom into hatred. You see, the fact of the matter is, is that if any of us, even those of us who have been terribly brutalized and terribly, been terrible recipients of violence, it would not be appropriate for us to ever just meditate upon verses 19 through 22, but to meditate upon the whole psalm.

[23 : 14] And as we meditate upon the psalm, where even as we are dealing with the depth of our emotion around hatred, we are also taught very deeply about the dignity of every human being, a dignity that comes from God from the moment of their conception.

And for me, who is a victim of hatred, this is a profound thing. When those of us who have suffered some type of violence, it's very easy for us to be deeply ashamed about who we are, to actually wonder if the people who have so hated us and attacked us are right in treating us being somehow subhuman and worthy of violence and assault and brutality, it is easy for that to go through our minds.

And in the face of being the recipient of human hatred, we can look at this and say that I am fearfully and wonderfully made. So it is both profound wisdom into those who are the victims of hatred and a profound limit to human hatred.

It is bringing wisdom into a very, very powerful thing. But it also provides another aspect of trying to bring wisdom into the whole situation, which is maybe a little bit first it's surprising, but we get great help in understanding part of the psalm if we know Star Trek.

Because, you see, I'll tell you the point and then I'll show it to you from verses 1 to 12. The whole psalm is a prayer to God. I mean, the psalm ends with saying in verse 23 and 24, search me, O God, and know my heart.

[25 : 03] Try me and know my thoughts. See if there be any grievous way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. The entire psalm is captivated, excuse me, with God.

And how is God described here in the psalm? Here's how he's described. God is not a Vulcan, and nor is he overwhelmed by irrational emotions.

If you've never watched Star Trek, you're not going to get the Vulcan reference. But the psalm portrays God, that God is not a Vulcan, he's not Spock, nor is he overwhelmed by irrational emotions.

Listen to the delight of the psalm. Go to verse 1. O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up.

You discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my line down, and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it all together.

[26 : 10] You hem me in behind and before and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high, I cannot attain it. This in very, very concrete language is describing God seeing you and being present in your life.

In the image of hemming in and hand upon you, think of a little two-year-old maybe after church during coffee hour and an attentive mom or dad or grandparent with their two-year-old.

And they sort of just, you know, the stairs are over there, or maybe it's a 16-month-old, and they just sort of move over here to hem in the 16-month-old so they don't go tumbling down the stairs. And then they just put their hand upon them in love and affection, just so they know that you're there, just to sort of guide them and hold them.

And the psalm could just say in one word, one little sentence, God is all seen. God is God is God is God is present everywhere, but once again, in poetic, beautiful language, concrete, visual language, which can capture the imagination.

it goes on to say, where shall I go from your spirit, or where shall I flee from your presence? And actually the word there for presence is literally face. Where shall I flee from your face?

[27 : 45] Where shall I flee from you looking at me? And you can't read the psalm without realizing that it's picturing God looking at us with his face and being not in our face in a bad sense, but looking at us with affection.

Picture once again a mom watching her little 12-month old or 13-month old who now starts to toddle a little bit like this, and for a moment, or maybe a long moment, the mom is no longer thinking about all the other people up there having coffee, but just looking with delight at their little child go like this.

And the child, the mom's face is on the child of affection. Where shall I go from your spirit? Verse 7.

Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there. If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me and your right hand shall hold me.

If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me and the light about me be night, even the darkness is not dark to you. The night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.

[29 : 03] And then it goes on to say, for you formed my inward parts, this beautiful picture of conception and God's seeing the person in the womb. And here's the thing.

God is not a Vulcan, nor is he overwhelmed by irrational emotion. See, the problem for us as human beings, and the great problem, by the way, with hatred. Those of us who have experienced hatred, know this, hatred can overwhelm.

Hatred can overwhelm. Maybe I'm the only wicked person here in the room, but hatred can overwhelm. Hatred can fester. Hatred can make it so that you can't stop thinking about this person.

It wakes you up at three o'clock in the morning. It greets you when you wake up in the morning. It is there as you're trying to fall asleep. And not only hatred, but there are many, many, many different passions or emotions that can overwhelm us.

Whether it's an overwhelming desire for that promotion, or for that woman, or for that man, or for that amount of dollars in the bank, that there's passions and desires that can overwhelm us irrationally.

[30 : 17] And often in our culture we think that the only option to be overwhelmed by emotion is the Vulcan option of having no emotion. But here we see God.

Here we see God, neither a Vulcan, nor overwhelmed by irrational emotion. And he's the one that the psalmist is dealing with.

You see, and the implication is that there is a way to recognize the evilness of evil. evil. Is there possibly a way, Father, for me to see and understand the evilness of evil in a way that does not overwhelm you?

Dear God, show me if there be any grievous way in my life. Dear God, lead me in the way of everlasting life.

Lead me in that everlasting way. Lead me away from a grievous life. Now, if this was all the psalm said, then I'd have given you some good therapy this morning.

[31 : 31] And we could learn a few therapeutic things to move on in our lives. But the psalm has far more to deal with than therapy. Actually, the psalm has a profound riddle in it.

And let's illustrate what the riddle is in a moment. But this is maybe the way some of us would hear the text if we were just, well, here. You know how to go and say, oh, Lord, you have searched me and you know me.

Verse 1, you know when I sit down and when I rise up, you have assumed my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my line down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before word is on my tongue, behold, oh, Lord, you know it all together.

You know, such, you hand me in behind and before and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high, I cannot attain it. Some of you have heard this story before. This is a long time ago.

I was doing a wedding and during the wedding rehearsal, this, I think she was a 16 or 17 year old girl, she was going to read the Bible passage and she got up and she had to read the Bible passage with a very, very solemn voice and then she closed the Bible like that and said, I don't want to read this.

[32 : 33] I want to talk about me. And her dad, who was a lawyer, was horrified. And then she had this dramatic pause and then she skipped down the steps and gave him a kiss on the cheek and said, don't worry daddy, I'll do it proper tomorrow.

And, you know, here, if you met somebody who said with a straight face, with no type of embarrassment, God just loves following me around for the day. He just can't wait for me to wake up.

He just looks at me all day and smiles and thinks, gosh, St. Claire is so wonderful. Look how cute he is. Everything he thinks about is just so wonderful.

It makes me giggle. Like, if you met somebody who actually thought that that's what God thought about them all the time, what would you think about them? Not good thoughts, right?

You'd actually probably have some pity for them. You'd think that they're captivated with, they have a profound narcissistic personality or some other type of thing like that. That's what you'd think, right?

[33 : 42] So how on earth can this psalm be true? Let me tell you what most human beings experience when they think about God. Most human beings, most Christians, when we think about God, we want God to rescue us when we're in trouble.

And when we want to do those naughty things, we like to pretend he doesn't exist. Maybe I'm the only wicked person in the room. But the fact of the matter is that if this text is brought home to us about God being all present and all seen, if that's brought home to us very, very, the fact of the matter is that we don't actually want God to know everything about us and see everything about us, that we want God to keep his distance from us.

That's the natural human condition. We find it not comforting to think about God's all-seeing eye and always being present, even with no qualification.

So how can this psalm be true? How is it that we could read it? You see, the psalm contains a riddle.

Contains a riddle. The psalm contains a riddle that is more than us being able to get a few good therapeutic ideas about how to live a more human life. The psalm provides a riddle which is only answered by the person and the work of Jesus in the gospel.

[35 : 20] You see, on one hand, this all-seeing, all-knowing aspect of God helps us to understand something about the death of Jesus upon the cross, that we are to understand that Jesus dies for the whole me, from conception to death, from the depths to the shallows, with nothing left out.

That Jesus dies for me, from conception to death, from the depths to the shallows, with nothing left out. That, I apologize, folks, I had a yellow cord at home that I was going to use to illustrate this, and I forgot it.

So I ripped out my bookmark, which is gray, which you can probably hardly see, but I have a bookmark here, and it's probably actually pretty good for our lives.

It's sort of bent, twisted, obviously not a perfect type of a thing. And in a sense, what the Bible is saying is that from the moment of my conception here to the moment of my death at this end, and all of the wrinkled, bent, creased parts, the stitching, the depth of that entire thing, when Jesus is dying on the cross for me, and I don't know, maybe I hope that in terms of my life I'm only still here and I have all this left to live.

I don't know, actually, if right now I'm down at this end and I have only the tiniest little bit left to live, but it's the big constant mistake of Christians is that they think if they come to Jesus when they're here, that maybe Jesus knows a bit of that which has gone on here, but the fact of the matter is that when Jesus sees me, he sees me from my death to my conception with all my stitching and all my wrinkles and all my shallows and all my depth.

[37 : 14] And when Jesus dies for me on the cross, the me he dies for is this me. And when the scriptures say that Jesus in a sense takes my life into him, his and takes my doom into him, it's as if Jesus takes all of this, all of it, even if my future is still another 40 years away, he takes all of it.

And he takes all of it with nothing left over. See, that's the wonder and the power of the gospel. Because God is all present and the image is there of conception and everything.

I don't have time to do it. It's both. It shows both that from conception, it talks about the time, God being present in all times, in all places and all seen. And so Jesus, when he dies for me on the cross, he sees it all.

He takes it all. My standing with God, the ability for me to stand before God has nothing to do with me, for my accomplishments, but only with Jesus taking it all in his person as he dies on the cross.

And he takes upon himself my life, including my doom, and offers me his life and his destiny. And so this psalm is both a riddle to show how it points to the cross, that Jesus actually, the all seenness of God means that Jesus takes it all on the cross.

[38 : 46] cross, and it also then starts to provide a little bit of a picture of what it means to understand that now as I go through my day in the presence of the all-present God and the all-seen God, on one hand he sees me, but he sees me clothed in the righteousness of Jesus.

That I have a type of eternal security based on his finished work that is completely and utterly unshakable. And that in a true sense in Jesus, this is how God now sees me when I put my faith and trust in Jesus.

And I need to confess my hatred to him. I need to say, God, the things that are going on in me. Am I living in light of what the gospel says?

Or am I living in rebellion about that? Show me the grievous ways in my life so that I might walk in the way everlasting. But it's only as we are gripped by the gospel that Psalm 139 can become a reality that we can grow into.

And understand it is not only a picture of what happens to us on the cross in the past, but a picture of our destiny in the future. You see, as we're gripped by the gospel, as we're gripped by the story of what Jesus does for us on the cross, it provides a push for us to move forward in life.

[40 : 29] It provides a pull for us as we see our destiny and the final way that God will see us. And it provides a way for us to understand as our lives are shaped by this good news of the gospel.

Please stand. Once again, I confess that I apologize for not being able to get this done in advance, but maybe it is that the Holy Spirit is pushing you in a particular way right now to say certain things to God.

And if I can be of any help in that, I'm going to try to be of help. I'm going to say slowly in a few moments this prayer. And I'm going to leave with pauses. And if it speaks into your heart, you can just quietly and silently repeat it after me.

And the prayer is going to be this. Dear God, please help me to be so gripped by the story of Jesus' death for me that I grow in a humble, trusting knowledge of the greatness of Jesus to save me immediately, eternally, completely, perfectly, and unfailing.

And maybe for some of us that's the beginning of our Christian walk. Maybe for some of us it's just a deepening and a commitment in the Christian walk. But if the Holy Spirit is moving in your lives to somehow respond to God in something like these terms, then quietly, silently pray that prayer.

[42 : 02] I will leave pauses. Dear God, please help me to be so gripped by the gospel, the story of Jesus' death for me, that I grow in a humble, trusting knowledge of the greatness of Jesus to save me immediately, eternally, completely, perfectly, and unfailingly.

Amen. Just continue bowing our heads. Father, help us to be gripped by the gospel, the story of Jesus. Father, you know those things in our lives that are overwhelming emotions for us right now.

We ask, Father, that they not be a ground for us to stay away from you and stay away from Jesus, but that we understand, Father, that they are invitations to come to Jesus, that they help to show us we really need him and we need your wisdom in our lives.

And we ask, Father, that you so lead us from self-deception and so lead us to trust your Son and trust your Word that we might come to the great wisdom that comes from trusting Jesus as our Savior and learning to follow him as Lord.

And we ask that your Holy Spirit fall on us and help us to be such a people and such persons. And we ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen. Amen. Amen.