

Search my Heart...Psalm 139

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[0 : 00] Well, what a wonderful but challenging psalm before us tonight. The psalm includes some of the most comforting words in the Bible, I think.

But the psalm also includes some difficult words for us to cope with. When I was young, I remember being told to eat everything on my plate.

However unpleasant the Brussels sprouts were. I was told that children in Indy would be pleased to have these Brussels sprouts.

I would have been very happy for them to be sent. Along with the used tea bags. Thanks. Thanks. Thanks. And as I grew up, I learnt not only to be gracious in receiving presents I wanted to receive, but also mildly gracious in receiving presents I didn't want to receive.

Please don't give me handkerchiefs. I have boxes full of white handkerchiefs. If you'd like some white handkerchiefs, I'm very happy to pass them on to you.

[1 : 26] And so it is with the Bible. There are some parts of the Bible that bring great comfort and joy to us, and some parts of the Bible that we find more difficult to understand and to receive.

And that's true in our psalm tonight. You have the outline in front of you, and you might notice that of the five sections, the first three are about God.

You have searched me and known me. Where can I flee from your presence? You created me. And then two requests.

If only you would slay the wicked. And search me and know my heart. Well, before we get to the difficult bit, let's enjoy the cheerful bit.

You have searched me, Lord, 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.

[2 : 35] You are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue, you, Lord, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before. You lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is too lofty for me to attain. You might describe God as the inescapable God.

The unavoidable God. The God you can't hide from. The God from whom you cannot hide.

You cannot hide. We often think of ourselves or feel ourselves to be at some kind of distance from God. And we wonder how we're going to find God.

Or how we're going to get God to come near us. But in these two ways of thinking, we're wildly wrong.

[3 : 36] Because God is much bigger than we know. And says in Jeremiah, do I not fill heaven and earth?

God knows. God knows. God knows. And there is no part of your life unknown to God. In fact, God knows more about you than you do.

Because God doesn't just know us. You have searched me, Lord.

And you know me. God knows. So it's not that God notices us on the way past. No, God searches us.

That is, pays attention to us. To understand us. And listen to us. And to hear our deepest thoughts.

[4 : 36] And our deepest feelings. God pays you much more attention than anybody else. And God actually pays more attention to you than you do.

No wonder the psalmist says in verse 6, Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. And then this all-knowing God is a God who is always present.

Where can I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you're there. If I make my bed in the depths, you're there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, that's the east.

Settle on the far side of the sea, that's the west. Even there your hand will guide me. Your right hand will hold me fast. There is no escaping God. As the traffic sign says, you can speed, but you can't hide with all those cameras looking at us all the time.

It's very important to keep smiling and driving slowly, because you're always on candid camera wherever you are nowadays. There's probably one around the building somewhere. Even death is not an escape from God, is it?

[6 : 21] Because one day Jesus will return and there will be a resurrection day. You may be lying quietly in your coffin enjoying the peace and quiet, other than the munching of an odd worm.

And then you'll hear... It'll be an angel saying, time to get up now, dear. I don't want to get up.

No, it's time to get up. I don't believe in angels. Too bad. I don't believe in God. Time to meet him.

You might remember Jonah tried to run away from the presence of the Lord.

And how did the Lord bring him back? A storm? And a rather large fish? If you try to run away from God, you actually can't escape him.

He is the inescapable God. And that's a comfort as well as a bit of a threat. I think there are probably two occasions in my life in which I've tried to get away from God, to deliberately disobey him.

[7 : 43] On both occasions, I was grabbed by the scruff of the neck and dragged back, kicking and screaming. You searched me and known me.

Where can I flee from your presence? You created me. This is the ultimate knowledge, isn't it? You created me, verse 15... Verse 13, sorry.

In my inmost being, you knit me together in my mother's womb. I love that. With your knitting needles. God's busy knitting you together in your mother's womb. I used to knit, but I could never get beyond the end of the row.

I had to go to get my mother's help to turn around at the other end. But God is probably better at it than I am. I praise you because I'm 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. That's a poetic language. It means that we don't know the exact moment of conception, but God does.

[8 : 52] Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. Parents of a friend of mine said, We planned to have you aborted, but we didn't get round to it, so we ended up, you got born.

I said to him, Well, whatever your parents intended, God intended you. He gave you life.

He created you. We are not just created in general, but personally and intimately created by God.

And every day and every moment of every day is an intentional and purposeful gift to you from your loving Heavenly Father, because it's God who sustains you alive.

If God lost attention for a moment, we would all die. In fact, if God lost attention for a moment, the whole universe would disappear. There'd be nowhere to live. But every day and every moment of every day is a gift of God.

Not a right, but a loving gift of our gracious Heavenly Father. So from God's perspective, every moment of every day is important.

[10 : 27] So we have to honour God's gifts, don't we? And thank him for the gift of every day.

And think how we can love him and serve him this day, and the next day, and the day after. There's a lovely Puritan prayer I read once, which I've made my own.

It was, may my last day be my best day of knowing and loving and serving you. I thought, well, I've no idea when my last day is.

So I've changed it to, not may my last day, but may this day be my best day of loving and serving and knowing you. Because this day might be my last day.

Thank you. Thank you. How wonderful to know that God loves us, our Creator, as our Creator, as well as our Saviour.

[11 : 33] God loves us, as our Creator, as well as our Saviour. So although his greatest gift to us is his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the minor gifts are gifts of creation.

But they're still wonderful gifts, aren't they? How precious are your thoughts, God!

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. Well, I've put down two contemporary issues in the notes.

One is, the first one is, God, you know me. I think, for most of us, at the most of the time, that is good news, but I think, for some people, it's bad news.

So, if you decide to live independently of God, then the fact that God knows you, and there's no escape from God, must be a frustration, and an embarrassment.

[12 : 42] If you decide to live away from God, distant from his love and his will, and his good purposes, then the inescapable God is a threat, and not a comfort.

And for people today, who imagine that, and are taught that, each individual is the center of the world, and that we are our own God, our own creator, our own maker, then this inescapable God, who knows all, and is everywhere, and who created us personally, is an embarrassment.

And, in one of the commentaries I read, there's a slight hint of that in the psalm. In verse 5, you hem me in behind, and before you lay your hand upon me. Might be, thank goodness you hem me in on every side, or there might be a bit of, give me a bit of wriggle room, as they call it nowadays.

And, verse 7, where can I go from your spirit, where can I flee from your presence, is a great comfort, but also, a great warning, isn't it?

Because, because you, you just can't escape God. You can't escape yourself, but even more, you can't escape God.

[14 : 04] But, but the other contemporary issue is this, what about slaying the wicked? It's hard to read these words.

If only you, God, would slay the wicked. Doesn't sound very Christian. Let's first of all, think about our natural response, to these words.

We, and I'm always talking generally here, of course, but we in the West, I think, in a liberal democracy, don't cope with the present evil, very well.

Real evil, I mean. We, we don't mind, and fictional evil. We enjoy watching that, and playing it. But, we don't actually like, the presence of evil.

And, in fact, we often find words, to describe, an unpleasant event, without using, the term evil. You might remember, years ago, the, the, there was a bomb set off, in the city of London, just near St. Helens Church, and, Dick Lucas, the rector of the church, was in the vicarage, when the bomb was set off.

[15 : 23] The, the car bomb was so powerful, that the car ended up, 35, uh, stories high, in a building, stuck in a building. So, it was a big blast. And, the police were there, of course, and they got, Dick out of the, rectory, the vicarage, and, uh, said, you'll have to, you know, go somewhere else to move, uh, of course, because all the windows, in the vicarage, were shattered.

And, uh, so they found him a taxi, and, um, the taxi driver said, oh, uh, what happened? And, uh, Dick said, oh, something dreadful, they set off a bomb.

And, the taxi driver said, that's not dreadful, that's sin. And, we in the West have an optimistic view of human nature.

Uh, uh, democracy depends on an optimistic view of human nature. And, we in the West are generally unprepared for intentional evil. It seems unnatural to us.

When the, um, Fort Arthur massacre happened, I don't know if you remember that, uh, and the, the man who committed the massacre, uh, when his paper, when his picture appeared in the paper, they used to change his eyes so he looked as if he was insane.

[16 : 46] Because people thought, well, only an insane man could do such an evil act. But, in fact, he wasn't insane. Uh, he intended, he was a person of perfectly rational thought.

He intended evil and he did it. But, we find it very hard to cope with that reality. And, we also underestimate the serious significance of deliberate and continued sin against God.

And, in this psalm, the, uh, the sin against God is not ignorant or accidental or occasionally. And, in order, then, to read the Bible when we don't like these nasty things, uh, we might read the Bible selectively and avoid the difficult bits.

Or, perhaps, we want, we hear too much bad news through the media. Because one of the curious things is that although we don't like bad news, we watch it all the time.

And, uh, during COVID, it was extraordinary. People would stay at home listening to the COVID statistics. How depressing. I'd prefer to watch a snail race than listen to COVID statistics.

[17 : 57] At least there might be a winner. Actually, I used to have snails when I was a little boy.

They were lovely pets. Um, because I used to think that carrying, carrying your house around you when you, or when you needed it, was a very clever thing to do.

I didn't know why more people didn't do that. Because, if something nasty happened, you could hide. Sensible idea. If you'd like to take it up, uh, uh, do tell me about it.

I'd love to know. And we may think, well, there's so much bad news in the world. We, we want to, we want church to be an escape from bad news. We want our quiet times to be pleasant times, not nasty times.

A friend of mine said to a parishioner who complained about something gloomy in a service, if you want a good time experience, go to the movies. Because in church, we ought to be facing up to evil. Should we not? Should we not? Should we not? We know evil exists. We know Satan exists. We know that evil thickens things happen in our world.

[19 : 12] We shouldn't be trying to run away from that, but rather facing that reality. Let's think about slaying the wicked within the Old Testament.

Just within the book of Psalms, you might notice that the two most important Psalms, most quoted in the New Testament, Psalms 2 and Psalm 110.

Notice the theme of God's judgment in these Psalms. I'll proclaim the Lord's decree, Psalm 2. He said to me, You're my son, You're my son, Today I have become your father.

Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of earth your possession. You'll break them with a rod of iron, you'll dash into pieces like pottery. 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, that is, the son of the Lord, God, or he will be angry, and your way will lead to destruction.

[20 : 16] For his wrath can flare up in a moment. And the wonderful end to that Psalm, Blessed are those who take refuge in him. There is no refuge from him, you see, no escape from him.

But it's those who take refuge in him, in the son of God, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, who are safe. Or Psalm 110.

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 splendor, young men will come to you, like dew from the morning's womb. 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'll crush kings on the day of his wrath. He'll judge the nations, heaping up the dead, and crushing the rulers of the whole earth.

[21 : 21] He'll drink from a brook along the way, and so he will lift his head high. So the book of Psalms is not just a book of happy songs. It's a book about reality.

That is, there is a great God, and there are enemies of this great God, and if the enemies of God do not submit to him, he will destroy them.

And that's a theme of the New Testament too, isn't it? So striking in the book of Revelation that the revelation is of the wrath of the Lamb.

Do you remember that in chapter 5? People are trying to escape from the wrath of the Lamb, that is, of the Lord Jesus Christ. And in Revelation, the only escape from the wrath of the Lamb is the blood of the Lamb.

And you might notice the psalm begins with the psalm of David, and actually it was the king's responsibility for imposing justice and punishment. I saw an anarchist sign in the local park, let's get rid of government and big business, and I thought, well, if you did that, I'm sure you wouldn't like the anarchy.

[22 : 48] That would follow. And in the Old Testament, God constantly warns that he will not be defeated, but will defeat the wicked, the bloodthirsty people who speak against him, misuse his name, hate him, and rebel against him.

And that is good news. Do you know the 20th century was the most bloodthirsty century human history? And the way the 21st century is going, it will probably eclipse it.

Will there be no justice in our world? Ever? Will the wicked and the corrupt leaders be never called to account? Well, one day they will, by God.

Praise God for that. These words in the Psalms are often described as cursing.

Please notice that David is not acting against these people, though he could as king. He's asking God to deal with them, and he's not cursing them. A curse is something you do by your own power.

[24 : 01] It's a prayer for justice. He's praying for God to act with his justice. in his world. What about the New Testament, then?

I was, one of the presents I got at Christmas was a jigsaw puzzle. Please don't give me another jigsaw puzzle. Because this is a vast jigsaw puzzle. It's a second-hand jigsaw puzzle.

And the kind person who gave it to me said, I should tell you one piece is missing. But see, what we're doing is trying to put this little piece of jigsaw puzzle into the bigger picture of the Bible.

We've done that with the Old Testament, trying to see where it fits in. Now we'll do it with the New Testament, trying to see it in the bigger picture of how God runs his world.

Well, as in the Old Testament, God continues to be kind to evil people. As Jesus says, he sends his reign on the righteous. He did rather well today, sending reign, I thought.

[25 : 05] Well done. He sends reign on the righteous and the unrighteous and calls us like him to love our enemies. In fact, God loved his enemies so much that he wants to make them into his friends.

Romans 5. If while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his son, so we were all enemies of God, but we've all been made friends of God, not just by a kind of handshake, but by the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross.

And Paul says, if while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled through the death of his son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life?

Or as Paul says in 2 Corinthians, to the Corinthians, be reconciled to God. And we're saved only through Jesus taking our sin on himself.

Behold, John the Baptist says, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Or in 1 Peter, he bore our sins in his body on the cross.

[26 : 14] Christ, I think that should be Christ rather than Chris, suffered once for all for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. And that is the scandal of the gospel, isn't it?

That even a wicked world ruler, a corrupt and voracious and violent world ruler, could become a Christian and be forgiven.

As Saul was on the way to Damascus, out to kill some more Christians. What a scandal that God forgave him.

What a wicked thing to do to kill God's people. What a scandal that God forgave him. But forgive him he did by the death of his son.

And we are not to take revenge. Romans 12, do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath.

[27 : 16] That is, let God sort it out. For it's written in the Old Testament, it's mine to avenge, I will repay. That's in Deuteronomy something. Somewhere there.

So God, we can trust the justice of God. We should also notice that those who oppose Christ are his enemies. Jesus said, whoever is not with me is against me.

And Paul writes, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. But Paul, quoting Psalm 110 in 1 Corinthians 15, tells us that what Jesus is doing now is ruling over his enemies.

Christ must reign until he's put all his enemies under his feet. That is, it doesn't say Christ must reign until all his enemies have given in and become nice people.

It says, he must reign until he's put all his enemies under his feet and the last enemy to be destroyed is death, which Jesus will destroy at his return.

[28 : 28] And those who oppose God, Jesus taught us, will suffer on the last day. Jesus said, Matthew 10, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

And if you know your Bible well, you'll know that the Hallelujah Chorus of Revelation 19, that's where Handel got his, you know, Hallelujah thingies from Revelation 19, is actually in the Bible a response to the destruction of wicked Babylon in chapter 18, which is the story of God's destruction of this world opposed to him.

All the aspects of the world which contradict his goodwill for humanity. But of course, the perfect justice of God will only be done, be achieved, when Christ returns.

That's why we don't live in the best of all possible worlds. We live in a world that is full of injustice internationally, but also within countries and also within families.

Until then, we have to suffer injustice just like Jesus. Jesus entrusted himself to him who judges justly. If anybody was an innocent sufferer, Jesus was, but he trusted himself to God who judges justly.

[30 : 03] Though, we may seek justice for ourselves. So, if you find your neighbours built on your property or you've been knocked over by a car, then it's, don't just submit to it, try and get justice for yourself as Paul did in Acts 25.

We should act with loving justice towards others. Paul says, love does no harm to a neighbour, so love is the fulfilment of the law. But of course, we may or may not like it, but every time we pray, your kingdom come, in the Lord's prayer, or come Lord Jesus, we're praying for God's justice, just future, when his enemies will be judged and his saints vindicated and rewarded.

So, although I probably wouldn't say off my own bat, if only you, God, would slay the wicked, I do pray, your kingdom come, which is a prayer that God will bring justice to this world.

And I regularly pray that God would bring down tyrants. I regularly pray that for the death of Mr Putin as he continues to attack Ukraine.

Why? Because he's killing people. It's an unjust act, but I want God to do something about it. The answer to my prayer may be no or not yet, but I'm still praying it.

[31 : 56] And please notice that these, the wicked, who are bloodthirsty people, that is, they're killing people, notice that they're, it's not so much David's enemies as God's enemies.

They speak of you with evil intent. They misuse your name. They are, verse 21, in rebellion against you. Do we hate them?

I'm not sure that we should hate them, but it's right to pray for God to judge them. Because Jesus says, don't hate your enemies, love your enemies.

So, as always, we have to read the New Testament in the light of the greater revelation, the Old Testament, sorry. We have to read the Old Testament in the light of the greater and clearer revelation we have in the New Testament.

The last thing I want you to notice is this. David has been praying, if only God, if only you, God, would slay the wicked.

[33 : 10] And then he prays, search me, God, and know my heart. Test me and know my anxious thoughts. how very appropriate.

Having pointed out to God the wickedness of other people, then David asks God to search him and find out any wicked way in him and any offensive way in him in verse 24.

And that's a great prayer to pray. If we want to get to know God better, we want to be more like the Lord Jesus, we want to be children of our loving Heavenly Father, then it's good to keep asking God to show us our sins.

We're so aware of the sins of others. Well, looking around, anyway, I am constantly aware of the sins of others. Not a present company except, of course, but in general, generally speaking.

But here's the great question, you see, the great request of God. Search me 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.

[34 : 33] So, I need to be aware of the plank in my eye before I keep on pointing out the little bits of specks of dust in other people's eyes.

things. In fact, the last two verses would be good verses for us to pray now.

Then we'll have time for some questions. So let's pray verses 23 and 24 together. search me, 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.

Through the Lord Jesus. Amen. If you don't want to say it out loud, then you can text me and I will ask it.

[35 : 47] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Peter, thank you so much. You're a national treasure and a treasure to the church, so thank you for your talk.

I've got two quick questions, but one is in relation to verse 23, where David says, So I guess in the 21st century, we're taught that anxiety is a mental illness that can be treated by various things, including medications.

What do you think David was thinking about when he used that term or used that phrase is he comparing it to sinful thoughts and the like?

And the second question was around, I really like your observation around human nature, the optimistic view of human nature, particularly, you know, democracy relying on an optimistic view of

human nature and that we're unprepared for intentional evil.

[37 : 20] How do you think this verse speaks to us in terms of how we should respond or indeed how Israel should respond to the attacks of October 7?

Well, there are lots of questions tied up in your two questions, dear brother. That was a very clever package, I thought. The first one, a general comment.

I think that we want to avoid unpleasantness and so taking a drug is a way of making it disappear or something like that.

There are some anxieties which are good and right. So Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 12 that one of the biggest burdens he carries is the anxieties of all the churches.

I mean, he's been shipwrecked and stoned and stuff like that, but at least if you've survived a shipwreck, you're still alive. But what he carries, the burden he carries every day is the worries, the anxieties about all the churches.

[38 : 35] And parents are rightly anxious about the welfare of their children. So there are really good and healthy anxieties to have. It makes us attentive. So having lightly grazed my nephew's car on Christmas Day, I've been praying more fervently that I would drive courteously, kindly, effectively and with better judgment since then.

So that's the way in which an anxiety is productive. But there are people who are clinically suffering from anxiety and it's a serious matter and if there are useful drugs to help them, then I advise them to take them.

If they're clinically anxious, then it's a good thing to take the drugs, I reckon. I'm on drugs myself for depression and I say grace every time I take them. Now, the second question.

Just give me the second question again, if you would. I guess you spoke about the optimistic view of human nature and particularly sort of it as an underlying factor of democracy and our inability to deal with intentional evil and I guess in today's this year or in today's day and age, you know, we saw acts of grotesque evil of Hamas attacking Israel and I guess is there anything that this psalm might say to us in terms of how we should respond to that type of evil?

From my perspective, I think both sides of that conflict have done bad things.

[40 : 33] So, I don't think either side has clean hands. The problem lies in that Muslim theology says that once land has been in Muslim hands as the holy land was in 652, was captured in 652, I think it was, AD, then it remains Muslim land forever.

Whereas the Jews, of course, Israel, depend on God's gift to Abraham of the land and that's a long-term kind of land possession issue.

land issue. And it's hard to see how it will be resolved. Though, I'd like to point out that actually there's a long-term land issue in Australia as well because Paul says in Act 17 that God allocates lands to nations and so presumably God allocated this land to the First Nations people and yet there's a competition on about the ownership of the land.

So, what I'm saying is there are many conflicts on, there's much conflict in the world today about the ownership of particular bits of land.

Is it right for people to defend themselves? Yes, it is. Is it right for nations to attack innocent people?

No, it isn't. So, what I'm praying for that situation is that God will bring his justice, I have no idea what that is, but I'm praying that he will, and that he'll restrain evil on both sides and comfort people on both sides who are distressed.

[42 : 28] I think I've probably done my best. Can I ask some questions? Sure. Can I ask some questions that depend on me? the idea of God knowing us and us being unable to expect from him seems comforting to me?

That's the question. But for someone who doesn't believe in God, it might be unsettling. Reminisce of a big brother, what advice do you have for someone thinking like that?

Yes, thank you, that's a great question. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I think I would say that God wants to be your friend. And if you'd like to be God's friend, all you have to do is turn around and welcome him.

So there are a million steps away from God, but only one step to come back to God. Only one step to find him, and that is to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. God is a threatening idea because we think we own this world, and so much so that we own the universe, and we're busy discovering bits of it. But of course it's been known forever by God, and in fact he made it. So it's a big reality adjustment that people have to undergo, I think. God is bigger than you are.

[44 : 04] You're in God's house, you're living in God's land, and he's here, he's not absent, he's around. That's a big adjustment for, I think, for Christians to make, and an even bigger one for non-Christians, people who aren't Christians.

Good evening, Peter. Is that on? Is this on? It is. Good evening, Peter. Good evening. Paul de Villiers, I have a question for you that my dad's been wrestling with, he's visiting from South Africa, and he was looking at verses 21 and 22, and says that we taught not to hate people. not to have hatred in our hearts. And yeah, he's just struggling with those two verses, and I'd like clarification about what's going on with David.

Yes, sure. Well, I think David is saying if there are people who are building against God, he's not joining them. So he's not aligning himself with those who are building against God and misusing his name.

[45 : 26] David uses the language of hatred, and I imagine that's because he does hate them. But in the New Testament we're told not to hate people. We're told that God loves his enemies, and we should do the same.

So that's a way in which, I mean, there are many things in the Old Testament that we don't do because we're told not to do them in the New Testament. Capturing the Holy Land would be one of them.

I mean, I don't think we're seriously thinking of going out and going over the Jordan and taking over the Holy Land that would only cause more confusion, wouldn't it? We're not building a temple, we're not keeping food laws, there are lots of things in the Old Testament we're not doing because we're told by the New Testament, the greater and clearer revelation, that now these things are not appropriate.

So, don't do it. Peter? Peter? Yeah? Making sure you could hear me. I wonder if you could say a little bit about how someone would go about achieving such deep connection or level of intimacy with God as described in this passage.

Yes, what a great question. I think the answer to that is not trying to make yourself feel it, but recognizing that God is doing it.

[47 : 05] God knows us. God surrounds us. God embraces us all the time. God provides everything for us. And if you want to get that into your system more, then turn that into praise and thanksgiving.

So, I would say to such a person, for the next 30 days, every morning and every night, say to God, I praise you and thank you that you made me, know me, and love me.

You could write out a prayer using the words of this psalm, praising God, not just saying, God, you do this, but I praise you that you have searched me and known me.

I thank you that you know when I sit down and when I ride. I praise you that not a word is on my tongue, but you, Lord, know it completely. I pray that you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I'm fearfully and wonderfully made. I thank you so much that all the days ordained for me were written in your book.

[48 : 21] So I'd engage in lots of, not God help me feel this, but I praise you, God, because this is what you're like. And I thank you that this is what you're like.

And the more we exercise praise and thanksgiving, the more we will own the reality we're praising God for. Yeah.

I forget, sorry, I've been talking so much this journey, I forget who I've said what to or what I've said who to. But I advised somebody recently to think, each night to think of three things to thank God for.

And each night to ask God to show him the next day three things to thank God for. So the more we kind of build thanks and praise into our lives, the less self-centered we will be and the less we'll evaluate things by how we feel rather than who God is and what God is doing.

self-centeredness is the enemy of happiness. God-centeredness is the great clue to happiness.

[49 : 50] And we thank God for his good gifts, we praise God for who he is. so it's good to thank God for all these things, that he does these things, but also to praise him because praise is more disinterested.

It's saying I'm praising you for who you are, not for what you've given me. That's why both praise and thanksgiving are really important to hold together and to do.

Peter, would you be willing to talk about the times of your life that you mentioned when you actually chose to flee from God?

Yes, well, not in great detail, if you don't mind. but one was that I wanted to commit a sin, which was very attractive to me, but which I knew God would not countenance, and so that was a big battle for me.

It went on, I suppose, for about three months. The other was I'd been in England, come back to Australia, went back to England for a holiday, and I decided I wanted to go back to England to work. [51 : 14] So I had this fight with God for a month, in which I kept on saying, I want to come back to England, I'm going to apply for jobs, and he kept saying, you can apply for as many jobs as you like, you won't get one.

So I was really angry every night, until I eventually caved in, and thought, well, I can't get around that. But now, of course, I'm really thankful that God rescued me on both occasions.

God, I pray, we join me. We praise you, great God, our wonderful creator.

Father, you personally and intimately created us. We desire to know all we can about you, while you know everything about us.

We desire to seek you, God, while you are everywhere. We thank you for today. Would you show us today and every day how we might serve and love you?

[52 : 37] We thank you, Father, for your just judgment. Thank you that you hold to account those who do evil. Thanks that you even forgive and love your enemies, which you've shown us in Christ's death for us.

Until the day Jesus returns, enable us to entrust ourselves to you, the one who judges justly. May we love our enemies until then in the way that you have loved us.

Father, would you search and know our hearts, show us our wickedness that we might put sin to death and live in the way of everlasting. everlasting. We pray this confident of your great love for us. Amen.