

PSALM 139

This psalm sings of the omniscience and omnipresence of God, inferring from these attributes the omnipotence of God. For he who sees and hears the abominable deeds and words of the rebellious will surely deal with them according to his justice. This is not an abstract description of the Divine attributes, with a merely indirect purpose in view to be quickly forgotten. On the contrary, it throbs with warm emotion and deep feeling. It casts a clear light around Yahweh, and warns against that practical atheism which ignores the presence of God and thus makes shipwreck of the soul. For the pious believer in the Messiah, like David, it ends with the earnest prayer, "Search me," lest in one's own unsounded depths there might be some lurking iniquity, lest there be found beyond the present jurisdiction of his conscience some dark realm which only the Omniscient eye can explore. Seldom has any man ventured to expose himself so fully to the searching gaze of the Almighty or meditated so fittingly on His nature and being.

For the choir director. A Psalm of David.

- 1 O YAHWEH, You have searched me and known *me*.
- 2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar.
- 3 You scrutinize my path and my lying down,
and are intimately acquainted with all my ways.
- 4 Even before there is a word on my tongue, behold, O YAHWEH, You know it all.
- 5 You have enclosed me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me.
- 6 *Such* knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is *too* high, I cannot attain to it.

- 7 Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?
- 8 If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.
- 9 If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,
- 10 even there Your hand will lead me, and Your right hand will lay hold of me.
- 11 If I say, "Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, and the light around me will be night,"
- 12 even the darkness is not dark to You, and the night is as bright as the day.
Darkness and light are alike *to You*.

- 13 For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb.
- 14 I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well.
- 15 My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret,
and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth;
- 16 Your eyes have seen my unformed substance;
and in Your book were all written the days that were ordained *for me*,
when as yet there was not one of them.

17 How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them!
18 If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand.
When I awake, I am still with You.

19 O that You would slay the wicked, O God; depart from me, therefore, men of bloodshed.
20 For they speak against You wickedly, and Your enemies take Your name in vain.
21 Do I not hate those who hate You, O YAHWEH?
And do I not loathe those who rise up against You?
22 I hate them with the utmost hatred; they have become my enemies.
23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts;
24 and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.

PRAYER

O King of Glory, Lord and Maker of the world, you alone know all things, even all our thoughts. Give us not only a deep and abiding sense of your constant presence with us, but a comfortable assurance of your divine protection as well. Let the desire of pleasing you and the fear of offending you restrain us from all evil and lead us to all good. Let us keep in remembrance that none of the disguises that cloak our real character from our fellowmen avails with you. Mortify all our corrupt and worldly affections, and let all things spiritual live and grow in us through an abundance of your Holy Spirit. And as we approach the days of our departure from our pilgrim journey here on earth, make us more and more fitted for the joys of heaven, where we will worship our triune God, Yahweh, forever. We bring our petitions before you through the merits of our Redeemer, Jesus, who washed us from our sins in his own blood. Amen.