



Psalms of David (Part 8)
Search me O God, Psalm 139
Dr Alex Himaya

It's great to be back with you, Woodland Hills, I love coming, for the last 15 years. You should not have trusted me 15 years ago. But it's good to be back. I was thinking about it this morning... actually, I was just praying and entering just a moment of thanksgiving, and I was thinking of you, of why I love coming here, and it's you. I love you. I have many friends that I've developed over the last 15 years that are part of this church and I love coming to see friends and I love Ted and his family.

I would just tell you I love pastors. For whatever reason, God uses me a bit as a pastor to pastors all over the country and you have a good one who is faithful He is faithful to the Word of God, is faithful to his family and is faithful to his relationship with Christ. I consider it a privilege to be friends with Ted and Amy.

I love golf, if I'm just honest with you. It's one of the reasons I keep saying yes to coming back to Branson because it's like a Mecca for golfers.

I got a twofer. I played golf at Cliff Hangers on Friday and got to witness Ted's first hole in one of his whole life. I will just say to you that I have two pastor friends. We've been playing golf for about five or six months each. We both had a hole in one in the last week, and I think I'm responsible for both of those.

I was videoing Ted and we were all jumping up and down like sixth grade boys when that ball went into the hole. It was like a minute of rolling, like a roller coaster and it finally went in the hole and we went bananas. On the video, he said, "Alex is buying me a shirt."

I said, "Ted, you don't know how this works. When you hit a hole in one, you buy everybody with you a shirt. That's how this works." He's like "That doesn't seem right and I said "welcome to golf."

Luckily, Cliff Hangers were out of shirts, so nobody had to buy anybody a shirt. I don't know why that's such a hot product, but I guess it's a hot product in Branson. So, if you have a shirt, maybe you could sell it on eBay, it's probably worth something.

But not only golf, you and Ted... I love that of all the places I travel and preach, this one, because of proximity to Tulsa, I don't have to fly. And I don't have to deal with TSA, and I don't have to deal with all of that. I love that they changed some of the rules like you don't have to take your shoes off anymore. I do, but you don't. They say it's random, but let's just be honest. They call that profiling, and it's people that look like me that did bad stuff all over the world. If it were rednecks that blew up buildings those of you in Branson would have your own line.

Last time I went to get on a flight, just two weeks ago on my way to do Egypt to do ministry in Egypt, the TSA agent said, "Dr, Himaya, we have good news and bad news. The good news is you get to get on the flight. The bad news is you have a swollen prostate." Some of you will get that on your way home, but it's a full medical exam that Middle eastern people like me go through on the way into a TSA scenario. That's a bad image that I've given you already, isn't it?

One of the things they haven't changed is the limit on baggage. That's not always a bad thing because traveling lighter is a good thing. And that's a spiritual principle actually. That walking through life lighter is a healthy thing. Getting rid of what the Bible calls strongholds, those things that have a strong hold on you just like the bag that you may take to the airport the next time you go, is difficult to manage, difficult to carry around, but we get used to it and eventually, if we carry them long enough, we now have a habit of getting used to it and we're kind of out of balance because we've learned to deal with those strongholds in our life and there is a whole lot of baggage in this world. and there's a whole lot of stronghold in this world and a lot of it comes from the enemy who only comes to kill, steal, and, and destroy. And let me tell you that he doesn't need a whole lot of help, but sometimes we give him help, don't we? Particularly in the area of guilt. We give him help.

Some churches like to paint a picture of God who is big and mean and is angry, or at least, at minimum, disappointed with you. And those churches love the words hell, and sin, and guilt. There's nothing wrong with any of those words, they are all Bible words, but if those are the only words you hear in church, eventually, you are going to be out of balance.

Did you know that in Jesus day, guilt and death were very similar. Like if you had a debt that you could not pay, you could be thrown in a debtors prison. And you would stay in that prison or stay in that jail until you or somebody you know could pay that debt off. And the point was very clear. Every debt has to be paid, but biblically, guilt is like a dept. You owe something to somebody and so you had better pay it off. And some of us are in these self-imposed prisons trying to pay back our debts. We've done something to God. We've done something against God or against his way, right? And we think because of that, we've sinned, we feel like we owe him something, so our guilt pushes us to try hard and to work that off in some way or by being good, and we know, theologically, we can never pay it back, but we feel like we have to try. so, consequently, it's exhausting. But the church, a lot of times, has made it even worse by trying to sell us on the idea that we can or we should pay it all back.

And then the Catholic tradition in church history literally led to paying for forgiveness. There was season in church history where they taught you could buy your way into heaven.

And in the fundamentalist world, the evangelical world, we know better than that, but we have just settled with feeling guilty all of the time, with a sense of we have to pay God back by being extra good. And consequently, it's like walking around with a headache all the time. Not even just a headache, but a migraine all the time because we know we can't live up to that standard, but we feel like we have to try. So, we sort of feel horrible all of the time.

David, in Psalm 38 said, "My guilt overwhelms me." Have you ever felt that way, Church. My guilt overwhelms me. It's a burden too heavy to bear. How many of you have ever felt that way? And we feel like our past is too heavy. We're bogged down by the guilt of bad decisions.

How many of you feel like God wants you to feel that way? Of course not. He wants better for us that's why Paul says, in the New Testament, in Galatians 5 – it is for freedom that "Christ set us free. In other words, his goal was freedom. He wanted you and I to be

free. He wants to set us free from the burden of guilt and the baggage that many of us are hauling around everywhere we go. And He wants us to be free. That's why Jesus said in Matthew 11 – Anyone who is weary, come to me. Anyone who is carrying a heavy burden, come to me and I will give you rest. What a beautiful word. "I will give you rest" And He said if you've got baggage, lay it down right here. If you've got burden and guilt, lay it down right here. If it's too heavy for you to bear, lay it down right here. And he says, "I have a solution for you and it's not a debtor's prison. And it's not more religion either. It's a relationship with me where I take those things off of your shoulders and off of you."

Here's where this baggage illustration breaks down. What Jesus doesn't want us to do is to check it in with an agent and take a claim check so that we can come back and get it later. That's not what he wants for us. He doesn't want you to wing check it where you can get it between different legs of life and get and bring it with you. He doesn't even want you to check it under the plane. He wants you to check it and leave it and never come back to it.

By the way, I don't know if you know, there's a place outside of Birmingham called unclaimed baggage. I love going there. This ruins the whole illustration altogether. I should not have told you about unclaimed bags. People like me go and take your baggage that you leave. And I don't know if you've walked through international airports all the time and see these Prada and Boss and all of these stores. I'm like, *who shops in these kind of stores in airports*. People do... and they leave it. And people like me go buy it for pennies on the dollar. And this ruins the illustration altogether.

Let me just tell you what the Bible has to say about guilt and baggage that keeps us locked up. We take these things and we want to hide them. Sometimes from God, sometimes from our spouse, sometimes from our parents or children, or some of you, from the police. And you want to hide these things down deep in the bag and you think that *I've got it in here and it's locked up*. I didn't just put it in here; I locked it up and now I've got it locked up in here and it can't get to me. It's hidden. But then you go about your day, and you bring it with you. and you think because it's hidden, or because you have it locked up, it can't get to you because you've hidden it.

Let me just say something to you. If you want to get rid of your guilt, you can't hide it.

What you've got to do is send your baggage through the X-ray machine like at the airport.

I don't know if you know this or not, but there was a day when we didn't have x-Ray machines at the airport. By the looks of you, many of you were around in the day where we didn't have X-ray machines? There were no X-ray machines. You could take a gun or knife or whatever with you on the plane. You could slowly assemble a bomb at your seat and they would ask you if you want more peanuts.

That all changed the day that somebody started hijacking airplanes. And then some fool tried to light his shoes on fire and ruined it for all of us. But there was a day where you didn't have that scenario, but what you and I need to do as believers is we need to run our baggage, we need to run our hearts through the X-ray machines that God had for us. We need to take our heart and hand it to the Lord and say, "God, run this through the X-ray machine." and then let him examine it and let him search, and let him find all of that stuff we have hidden.

In the Psalm I want to do today... David Psalm is the series we are doing. Psalm 139. If you have your Bible turn to Psalm 139. It's maybe the second most famous psalm in all of the psalms, behind Psalm 23. Psalm 139 has this verse in verse 23 that may be the most famous verse in the whole Psalm. I want to read that verse first and then we'll get a running start and backup and start at the very beginning.

***Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.***

***²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.***

David is saying to God, "Would you search me and would you find all the stuff in me. uncover all of my guilt. And if you study the life of David, you know there are a lot of things in his life that he should feel guilty over and that he was feeling guilty over and... That Hebrew Word for *Search* means a *deep examination*. The implication is this is going to take a while. And it's not because God has bad eyesight. It's because he wants to do a thorough search.

Now, let's back up and go to Verse 1. And as you go to Verse 1, I want you to keep in mind what we just read in Verses 23 and 24 where David is saying to God, "Search me, God, I'm giving you the go ahead to search me."

Now, Look at Verse 1 - ***You have examined me, Lord...Have... past tense
and you know Everything about me.*** In other words, he's already searched it.

He already knows what's in your heart and what's in my heart. He knows what's within us without even looking. So, when David asked him to search his heart, it's not for God's benefit, it's for David's benefit that God would do that for him. You and I are never going to ask God to search for something that's going to surprise him. Has it ever occurred to you that nothing has ever occurred to God? And never will. So, when we ask him to go searching, he already knows it's there. Asking him to search our hearts is not for him, it's for us. And hear me, God knows your heart and he knows your mind and he knows your intentions. He knows what you've done, he knows what you thought about doing. He knows what you're planning on doing. He knows all of that and he still loves you, and that's the amazing part of this Psalm.

But when you get to the end of this Psalm, David says, "Okay, God, I'm ready, search me. Take my heart and put it through your X-ray machine. Not because he needs God to give him a clean bill of health, he needs God to show him what's hidden there. He wants God to show him what the enemy has deposited there. He needs God to show him what has been placed there to sabotage him. He needs to uncover his guilt so that he can address it, asking God to search us, again, is not for God, it's for us. Now, let's do this thing, let's go through this psalm let's start at the very beginning and see how it is that God wants to handle all of our guilt.

***² You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.***

***³ You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.***

***⁴ Before a word is on my tongue
you, Lord, know it completely.***

A few things to unpack in these couple of verse is number one, God knows everything. He knows everything. That Hebrew word for everything it means everything. He knows all things.

But look at this. He says, "When I sit down and when I stand up." I love this because this is a very specific way of writing and reading in Hebrew, with an eastern, not western mindset. They use two extremes to mean everything in between. We do this with English when we say, "From head to toe." We don't mean your head and your toe, we mean everything in between. So, when he said, "when I sit and when I stand and everything in between. When I'm at home or when I go and everything in between.

When I get up and when I lay down and everything in between. What' he's saying is there is nothing that we can hide from God. He always has his eyes on us. For most of us, that's very comforting and terrifying. It's comforting to know that if we got into a jam and we needed him, he's there and he sees it. It's terrifying to know that at my worst, he's there and he sees it. Do you ever want to push pause on God? But he sees everything and I'm telling you that the fact that he knows everything about us and still loves us makes his grace amazing. And I'm so grateful for not good grace or above average grace. I'm grateful for amazing grace.

Now, look at Verse 5

⁵ You hem me in behind and before... Don't you love that? He's out front and behind. You go before me and deal with what I need to deal with, and you walk behind me in case something is coming up behind me. You place your hand of blessing on my head. Now listen to what he says. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me and it's too great for me to understand. It's too much for my brain to comprehend. Don't you feel that way about the Grace of God? The amazing grace of God. Because with me, you get good grace, not amazing grace. I don't forget. But God has this amazing grace for us. And you know me. You know that I'm not great, but the only thing you want from me is greatness. That's too much for us to comprehend. God wants to know us and the best part of it is he knows us in every moment of the day. He knows the 3: PM me when I just nailed it in a meeting and I'm wide awake. And he knows the 3: AM me when I am wide awake and anxious and worried. And he loves me just the same. And he loves you the same. And he knows you individually and wants to know you individually and wants to relate to you and love you individually.

Look at Verse 7

and you lay your hand upon me.

***⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.***

***⁷ Where can I go from your Spirit? That's big time theology...
Where can I flee from your presence?***

***⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.***

***⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,***

¹⁰ ***even there your hand will guide me***, your right hand will hold me fast. In other words, David is saying, I can't go anywhere that God is not there. I can't go anywhere that I don't bump into God. If I go to the lowest depths or the highest heights, I keep running into God.

I did some research this week, by the way, The lowest place on the planet is called the Challenger Deep. The Challenger Deep is a part of the Mariana trench, just south of Japan. It's nearly seven miles below sea level. Just to put that in perspective, the average depth of the ocean is two and a half miles deep. On average across the whole world. This is almost three times deeper. Seven miles below sea level. And the pressure in that trench is so great that nothing can live down there. They say the pressure is eight cubic tons per square inch. That's a thousand times greater than the pressure you and I are feeling right now. So, whatever pressure you feel right now, in life, this is a thousand times that if you were to get down there and be down there. The equivalent is one thousand elephants putting their feet on your chest and crushing you like a tick full of blood. Only two people have been down there.

The other extreme is Mount Everest. Mount Everest is five and a half miles up. And it's the tallest point on planet earth and that area of atmosphere is called the death zone because there is not enough pressure to sustain life. Three hundred and forty people and counting have died trying to ascend to the summit of Mount Everest. It's so torturous that two hundred of those three hundred and 40 bodies just left there. Because they can't even get them down.

Are you getting this? It's humanly impossible to go down that far or to go up that far without some sort of aid – breathing or pressure added equipment. But even if you could, according to David, God's there. He's there. We cannot hide from him. You cannot run from him. And part of some of your problem is you've run from God for so long, you're convinced yourself you're faster than he is. As if he needs your permission or for you to look his way in order to get you. What I'm telling you is he's chasing you with his goodness and his greatness and surely his goodness and mercies are following you all the days of your life.

So, if you can't run and you can't hide, then why try? Look at Verse 11

¹¹ ***If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me...
and the light become night around me,"***

¹² ***even the darkness will not be dark to you;***

***the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.*** So, if we can't hide, then let's just let God shine his light on our heart and like David, can we declare open up my heart O Lord and let me see what you see.

¹³ For you created my inmost being;

you knit me together in my mother's womb. We don't need to discuss when life begins. The Bible makes it very, very clear.

¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;

your works are wonderful,

I know that full well. He knows exactly how you're built and exactly how you're bent. He knows what you're good at and what you are not good at. He knows what makes you laugh and what makes you cry. He knows all of that because he knitted you together and you don't get to decide, by the way, what you're good at and what you're not good at. He decides. And if you think you get to decide that, your view of the sovereignty of God is way too small. He decided that and he knows your physical attributes and your spiritual attributes. He knows all your gifts, all your passions, all your abilities... by the way, I found one of the greatest acts of worship is to study and try to steward the way that God wired me. To study why I think that's funny and why do I not think that's funny? Why does that make me cry and why does that make me angry? Why does that make me excited? And why do I get all jazzed up about that? And using that bent and using that shaping that he did in my mother's womb to make me into his image. And stewarding all of that... There is no one better at searching you than your maker who loves you and knit you together. Just in case you needed another reason to let God search your heart, look at Verse 17

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed body;

all the days ordained for me were written in your book

before one of them came to be.

¹⁷ How precious to me are your thoughts, God! And you can say that word in an evil way like Lord of the Rings or whatever. You can say it in a freaky way like some fat cherubs that rest somewhere around Joplin. You can say it any way you want to say it, but this Hebrew word means valuable like gold or diamonds, or platinum. ***How valuable the thoughts of God are toward you and me. how precious are your thoughts about me O God.***

How vast is the sum of them!

¹⁸ Were I to count them,

they would outnumber the grains of sand

when I awake, I am still with you. I just want you to imagine, church, for just a moment. Let's just say all the religious takes are true, that God is mean and he's angry, and he doesn't love you. And he wants the worst for you, not the best for you. Imagine that for just a second. Where would you go with all of your guilt and your shame. What would you do with all of that? I hope you would be intellectually honest enough to admit that's not true, that's not at all what the Word says about your heavenly Father. It says his thoughts of you are precious, value like platinum in the spiritual world. He thinks the best of you and wants the greatest for you. Hear me today. No matter what you've done, you're worth saving. That's what God says about you. He sees the incredible value of you being in this world and you being a part of his family. And the heavy burden of guilt cannot compare to those types of thoughts. And it's enough. If it's all you got, it's enough.

Let's pray together...

I want you to imagine walking in the front door of the Castle out there is Jesus. And he's going to come into this auditorium and he's going to sit right beside you. In your mind's eye, I want you to feel his hand come around your shoulder and just grab the ball of you shoulder and pull you tight. Then, as he takes both your shoulders and turns you to toward him and he takes his palms and he puts them on your cheeks and he's looking at you eyeball to eyeball. What would he say to you? For some of you in your mind, *he* would be so upset. He died for me and I can't read my Bible. *He knows what I've done, what I was thinking, he just would be upset.*

Others know enough about him that *he's not going to be upset, he's just going to be disappointed. His heart has to break over me for what I've become.*

Still there are others that think *I'm not even sure he would acknowledge me. I think he would be apathetic towards me.*

Can I just tell you what he would say to you. We just read it in Psalm 139. With his hands on your cheeks, his eyes looking into yours, he would say, "Last night while you were sleeping, I thought about you a billion times. And my thoughts toward you, all of them were precious and were valuable. I love you and I want you in an intimate relationship with me." That is what he would say to you.

And David ends this psalm by saying – *Lord, lead me to everlasting life*

Maybe you're here today and you've never been led to that place where you know that you have everlasting life, and you know that Jesus is your Lord and your savior. I would love to lead you in a prayer right here, right now, helping you to trust Jesus Christ with your life.

Under your breath, right where you're seated here in the chapel, out there in the courtyard, watching online, would you just bow your head and would you just say,

Dear God, I know I'm a sinner. But today, I ask you to forgive me for all of my sin. Jesus come into my life, to be my Lord, My Savior, My forgiver. In the best way that I know how, I turn my back on my sin and I trust you alone, Jesus to save me. Thank you for saving me.

Before we say amen, can I just let you know that at every environment today, right now, men and women are coming who have come to pray with you. They'll have badges or buttons or lanyards on that indicate they would love to pray with you. If you just prayed to give your life to Jesus Christ, when everybody else is exiting whatever venue you are in, would you just come forward and just say "Would you pray with me.?" Let them know you've just given your life to Christ. Maybe you already knew Christ. There's an issue in your life. There is a burden in your life, and you just need somebody to pray with you about. When everybody else is going out the back door, you just come to the front of whatever venue you are in.

Father, we love you today and we give you all praise and all glory in Jesus name we pray, Amen and Amen.