

Poems, Prayers & Promises



Repentance, Prayer, and the “Way Everlasting”

Key idea:

The “way everlasting” is opened only to those who are tested and known by God. In other words, God works salvation for those who in faith turn away from their sins and turn to rely on God’s mercy in Jesus Christ.

Key text:

Psalm 139 (ESV)

⁰ *To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.*

¹ O LORD, you have searched me and known me!

² You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.

³ You search out my path and my lying down
and are acquainted with all my ways.

⁴ Even before a word is on my tongue,
behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.

⁵ You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.

⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is high; I cannot attain it.

⁷ Where shall I go from your Spirit?
Or where shall I flee from your presence?

⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there!
If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!

⁹ If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me.

¹¹ If I say, “Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light about me be night,”

¹² even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is bright as the day,
for darkness is as light with you.

¹³ For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother’s womb.

¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;

my soul knows it very well.

¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!

¹⁸ If I would count them, they are more than the sand.
I awake, and I am still with you.

¹⁹ Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God!
O men of blood, depart from me!

²⁰ They speak against you with malicious intent;
your enemies take your name in vain.

²¹ Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD?
And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?

²² I hate them with complete hatred;
I count them my enemies.

²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart!
Try me and know my thoughts!

²⁴ And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!

Key points:

1. Psalm 139 has a “doubleness” in much of its language. Its descriptions of God and David’s relationship with God can provide comfort to those who are repentant and suffering, and they can also provoke repentance in those who are hiding sin and avoiding God.
2. Many find Psalm 139:19–22 very difficult. But if we understand that the whole psalm is about relationship and that it points us toward repentance, then we can see that this stanza contains a fundamentally good petition of a man who understands God’s holiness in contrast to his own propensity toward sin.
3. Jesus is the Singer of Psalm 139. In other words, it is about him and points forward toward his work. But he has yet to “live out” verses 19–22, which speak not to his work of humiliation but to his return as exalted Judge of the living and the dead.

Questions for discussion/application:

1. What part of Sunday’s teaching stood out most to you? Why?
2. What is prayer? (BRCC Catechism 84)
3. Have you invited this all-knowing, everywhere-present Creator and Master of the universe to search you and know you and lead you in the “way everlasting” (again)?
4. What is one place or one area of life where you might act differently as you remember that God is your all-knowing and everywhere-present Creator and Master?
5. Can we, as people in the new covenant, pray all of Psalm 139?
6. What might a Christian prayer modeled on Ps 139:19–22 look like?
7. How would you explain David’s hatred to a child who asked about it in Psalm 139?