



Neither Wings of Light nor Cloak of Night
Can Separate Me from God

PSALM 139

Introducing Psalm 139

- Ibn Ezra: Psalm 139 is the crown of all the psalms, being unequalled in the Psalter.
- 2nd of Psalter's last 8 psalms (Pss 138–145).
- Compare Psalm 138:6 with 139:2 and 138:7 with 139:10.
- David's intimate relationship to God reveals his complete trust in the God who is everywhere, all-knowing, all-powerful, and who created him in his mother's womb.

Introducing Psalm 139

- “How can a God so immense be so immanent? Such is the mind-boggling yet soul-comforting reality about our infinite yet intimate God.”

— Steven J. Lawson

Praying Psalm 139

- Thank You, Lord, for knowing all I do, think, and say. [vv. 1–6]
- Father, You never leave me nor forsake me. [vv. 7–12]
- How precious You are because of Your work in me, O God. [vv. 13–18]
- Keep me from thinking or doing anything contrary to You, Father. [vv. 19–24]

Understanding Psalm 139



- I. Deeds I Used to Do, I No Longer Do
(vv. 1–6)
- II. Places I Used to Go, I No Longer Go
(vv. 7–12)
- III. Thoughts I Used to Think, I No Longer
Think (vv. 13–18)
- IV. Companions I Used to Have, I No Longer
Have (vv. 19–24)

Understanding Psalm 139

v. 1 “You have searched me and known
me”: **tu me sondaste, e me conheces**

- See Notes.

Psalms 11

- 4 The LORD is in His holy temple; the
 LORD'S throne is in heaven;
 His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons
 of men.**
- 5 The LORD tests the righteous and the
 wicked,
 And the one who loves violence His soul
 hates.**

Job 7

- 17** What is man that You magnify him,
And that You are concerned about him,
- 18** That You examine him every morning
And try him every moment?

Jeremiah 17

- 9 The heart is more deceitful than all else
And is desperately sick;
Who can understand it?
- 10 I, the LORD, search the heart,
I test the mind,
Even to give to each man according to his
ways,
According to the results of his deeds.

Understanding Psalm 139

v. 1 “You have searched me and known *me*”: **tu me sondaste, e me conheces**

- Writers use this same language elsewhere in Scripture in pleas of innocence, confession of sin, and as an expression of trust.

Psalm 44

**20 If we had forgotten the name of our
God**

**Or extended our hands to a strange
god,**

21 Would not God find this out?

For He knows the secrets of the heart.

Psalms 69:5

**O God, it is You who knows my folly,
And my wrongs are not hidden from You.**

Psalms 142:3

**When my spirit was overwhelmed within
me,**

You knew my path.

In the way where I walk

They have hidden a trap for me.

Understanding Psalm 139

v. 2 “You know”: **Tu sables**

- Emphatic personal pronoun: “You, yes, You” or “You alone.”
- The same construction occurs again in verse 13.

Understanding Psalm 139

vv. 2–4 Divine Omniscience

- God knows the psalmist's thoughts, ways, and words.
- See Notes.

Understanding Psalm 139

v. 3 “scrutinize”: Cercas

- Literally, “winnow” or “sift.” God can discern between the wheat and chaff in our lives.



Understanding Psalm 139

v. 6 “It is *too* high, I cannot attain to it”:
tão alta que não a posso atingir

- “What he is saying is this: ‘I thank you that I have a Master whom I cannot comprehend.’ . . . What he is speaking of here is God’s omnipresence; and he is showing that this is the very thing that he does not understand, namely, how God is present everywhere.”

— Chrysostom

Understanding Psalm 139

vv. 7–10 Divine Omnipresence

- David is not really attempting to flee from God.
- He does not fear God's presence — he finds comfort in knowing that God knows everything about him and is everywhere he goes.

Understanding Psalm 139

vv. 7–10 Divine Omnipresence

- Some rightly fear a God who is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent.

Proverbs 15:11

Sheol and Abaddon *lie open* before the
LORD,
How much more the hearts of men!

Jeremiah 23:24

**“Can a man hide himself in hiding places
So I do not see him?” declares the LORD.**

**“Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?”
declares the LORD.**

Amos 9:2

**Though they dig into Sheol,
From there will My hand take them;
And though they ascend to heaven,
From there will I bring them down.**

Amos 9:3

**Though they hide on the summit of Carmel,
I will search them out and take them from
there;**

**And though they conceal themselves from My
sight on the floor of the sea,**

**From there I will command the serpent and it
will bite them.**

Amos 9:4

**And though they go into captivity before
their enemies,
From there I will command the sword that
it slay them,
And I will set My eyes against them for evil
and not for good.**

Obadiah 4

**“Though you build high like the eagle,
Though you set your nest among the stars,
From there I will bring you down,”
declares the LORD.**

Hebrews 4

12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. **13** And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.



Understanding Psalm 139

v. 9 “take the wings of the dawn:
tomar as asas da alva

- “Though one should fly with the speed of light, he could find no recess where he would be beyond the reach of divine power.” — John Calvin
- Even moving at the speed of light to a far corner of the universe, the believer never leaves the perception, presence, power, or provision of God.
- God never leads where He cannot keep.

Understanding Psalm 139

v. 12 “Darkness and light”: **as trevas e a luz**

- Job 34:22 —

There is no darkness or deep shadow
Where the workers of iniquity may
hide themselves.

- John 3:19–21

Understanding Psalm 139

vv. 13–16 How do these verses relate to abortion?

- David is not talking about abortion, but the truths in these verses have everything to do with how a believer ought to view abortion.
- Compare Job 10:8–12.

Understanding Psalm 139

v. 13 “You formed my inward parts”:

Pois possuístes os meus rins

- People could no longer identify clearly with the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt and their preservation in the wilderness.
- But, they could identify with the wonder of birth.
- God knows me, because He made me!

Understanding Psalm 139

v. 14 “I am fearfully and wonderfully made”: **de um modo assombroso**

- Literally, “for I am fearfully wonderful.”
- The concise language demonstrates the emphatic declaration of wonder.

Understanding Psalm 139

v. 16 “all”: **todas**

- Literally, “all of them.”
- The psalmist refers either to all the parts of the fetus or to the “days” [**dias**].
 - Since “my unformed substance” (“my *golem*”) is singular: **o meu corpo ainda informe**
 - and since “days” is placed first in the second half of the verse,
 - the most likely antecedent is “days.”

Understanding Psalm 139

v. 16 “all”: todas

- Literally, “all of them.”
- Psalmist refers either to all the parts of the fetus or to the “days.”
 - God knows all of our days (their beginning, their number, their end, and their accomplishments) — He knew them even at the time of our conception and development within our mother’s womb.

Understanding Psalm 139

v. 17 “to me”: **me são**

- Better translated as “As for me” and placed at the beginning of the verse (where it occurs in the Hebrew for emphasis).

Understanding Psalm 139



v. 18 “When I awake”: **quando acordo**

- Psalmist falls asleep counting God’s thoughts concerning him. When he wakes up, he is still totally absorbed in his contemplation of God.

— Franz Delitzsch

- Whether the psalmist is asleep or awake, his thoughts are occupied with his great God, his Creator, his Judge.

Understanding Psalm 139

vv. 19–22 Final Thoughts

- “[I]n the thought world of the psalms, this section is not incoherent at all, no more, for instance, than the wish for the elimination of the wicked at the end of Psalm 104 or the references to the enemies in the midst of Psalm 23’s calm expression of trust.”

— James Luther Mays

Understanding Psalm 139

v. 22 “I hate them with the utmost hatred”:

Odeio-os com ódio perfeito

- The rhetorical question in verse 21 is another way of making this same declaration with equal force.
- Read Ephesians 5:1–21 in the light of Psalm 139.

Understanding Psalm 139

vv. 23–24 Back to the Beginning

- Verses 1 and 23 form an inclusio.
- The psalmist directs his last words at himself.
 - He prays that God would examine his thoughts and motives.
 - He wants nothing in common with God's enemies — whether in thought or in deed.
 - "As I hate the wicked in their way, so would I hate every wicked way in myself." — C. H. Spurgeon

Understanding Psalm 139

vv. 23–24 Back to the Beginning

- He prays for God to lead him “in the everlasting way” [**pelo caminho eterno**].
 - It is the “everlasting way” because it will not be brought to an end.
 - In contrast, the way of the wicked will come to a disastrous end.



Preaching/Teaching

Psalms 139

- The greatest of all comforts is to know that God knows and is there.
- No wonder God knows me — He made me!
- The closer we grow to God, the greater our distance from sin and the wicked.