

Counting God's Enemies As Mine

By Rev. Ronald Van Overloop

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Psalm 139
Preached on: Sunday, November 8, 2020

Grace Protestant Reformed Church

O-11225 8th Ave NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49534

Website: www.graceprc.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/graceprc

Our reading from the Scriptures this evening is found in Psalm 139. Our text are the verses 19 through 22.

1 [To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.] O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. 2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. 3 Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. 4 For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. 5 Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. 7 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? 8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. 9 If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; 10 Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. 11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. 12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. 13 For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. 14 I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. 15 My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. 16 Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. 17 How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! 18 If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee. 19 Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O Lord: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men. 20 For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. 21 Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? 22 I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies. [And now repeating the very first verse] 23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and

know my thoughts: 24 And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

May God bless our reading of his word.

We look at verses 19 through 22. We read them again. Psalm 139:19-22,

19 Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O Lord: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men. 20 For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. 21 Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? 22 I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.

First the reason for the selection of this passage of Scripture arose out of the Junior Mr. and Mrs. Adult Bible Study a week and a half ago as we were considering some of the parts that we found in Galatians 5 concerning the need to love our neighbor, and then the question arose concerning this passage in relationship to that and the question obviously was: does the command to love our neighbor as ourselves conflict with "Do I not hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? I hate them with a perfect hatred." So we look at this to, yes, clear up the possibility in our minds of a conflict but also as an application of our consideration of the cross of Christ.

If we would read this chapter all over again, there might arise the thought within some people's minds that after what we've read in verses 1 through 16 in particular and then the resulting thought of verses 17 and 18, all of a sudden he turned the page and talked about something totally different like it wasn't just turning the page of a book, it was a different book. But that's not the case. That's not the case. In the first part of Psalm 139, he is proclaiming the wonder and it's an amazing wonder of God's omnipresence. God is with me wherever I go. He's everywhere. But he doesn't just treat it as an objective thing, God's everywhere, but he treats it from the perspective of himself as an individual, as the Psalmist is walking through this life and he says, "Wherever I go, God's there. In fact, his hand brought me there. I'm not just going to find him there, he's the one who brought me in every place that I go."

So now just reflect. In all the circumstances of every day of your life and every part of every day that you've lived and you're conscious of, your Father, the Almighty God was there with you. He never left you. So that promise, "He will never leave me nor forsake me," it's always there. He is there with you and may that be something that encourages us concerning the tomorrows that we have in this world. He will be with us and not only that, but no matter what happens, no matter where we end up, he will have brought us there.

So he stands in amazement at the truth of God's omnipresence, then he deals with the truth of God's omniscience. God's not only everywhere present but God knows everything. God knows everything and he uses, again, not just a doctrinal truth but he applies it to himself by saying, "Before I was even conceived and as I was being

developed in the darkness of my mother's womb, he was fearfully and marvelously and wondrously making me. He knew me then. He knows every part of me." And that's when he gets to this point of 17 and 18, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee. Thy thoughts, O God, how manifold, more precious unto me than gold, the knowledge that you know me, my downsitting, my uprising, where ere I go. Thy thoughts, O God, are more precious unto me than gold." This morning, glory in the cross, nothing else. Hear the knowledge that God has of us is more precious to us than all the money in the world. I muse on their infinity, try to conceive of how high, how broad, how extensive they are. When the Psalmist says in the King James, "Thou compasses me," then that means, "Thou dost comprehend." God encircles in his mind, he encircles every part of us. He knows everything.

"More precious unto me than gold, and then awaking, I'm still with thee." When these thoughts about God's magnificence in practical application to him, then he turns around and he looks at those who don't have that, who don't marvel, who aren't awed, who aren't inspired and encouraged by the knowledge that God is everywhere and knows everything, and that's when he says, "That's the wicked," and here's the key: he so loves that God that first loves him, he so loves him that when he thinks of those who don't love him and ignore him and even speak blasphemously against him and rise up against him, he responds, he responds out of his devotion and love for God. So these words that are part of the text for tonight, we can't understand them, we don't get it unless we start with our being in awe and in love with our heavenly Father.

If somebody would do something to my wife, my children, or grandchildren, and they would speak negatively against them, I would hurt and I might react wrongly and I would be inclined to react and I would have to really hold myself to respond correctly and carefully, but my nature is to react against those who would hurt my wife, my children and grandchildren. That's the idea. Now let's look, first, then at those about whom he is speaking. In these four verses there is many different descriptions of them but let's say this first, overarching is this idea: they're not my personal enemies, they're not hurting me personally, they are God's enemies, they are my God's, my Father's enemies, it's what they've done to him, not to me but to him. That's what gets the Psalmist and us.

He uses a general word first, wicked, verse 19. They are wicked. The Hebrew word that has been translated into the English "wicked" emphasizes that they do something contrary to the will of God and by doing that they incur guilt. So "wicked" implies the taking on to one of guilt. They've committed something that's contrary to the will of God and they are immediately worthy of eternal death, eternal wrath from God. So we see what they do to God but we also see that what they do to God earns a response from him. In his holiness, in his justice, in his love for himself as the highest good, he does respond and he responds by seeing them putting those evil deeds into the bank and they're earning interest, and they will receive a judgment one day. God may not exercise that judgment immediately, that's what the Bible calls forbearance, he doesn't respond immediately, and while he forbears, saves it up, Romans 2 speaks about treasuring unto ourselves wrath against the day of wrath, that not ourselves but the wicked treasure unto themselves wrath against the

day of wrath, that this is what's happening and they think they're getting away with it and that just spurs them on to greater evil. "I got away with it. It must not be wrong. I'm not going to be judged for it. I'm not being judged so I am free to sin." That's the word "wicked."

Notice, secondly, verse 20, "they speak against thee wickedly." They speak against thee wickedly. They are what the Bible calls elsewhere blasphemers. Openly, unashamedly they take God's name in vain. They empty it of its meaning. Now I want to be careful and not just picky but even the restaurant chain TGIF, Thank God It's Friday, or Thank Goodness It's Friday. Well, it's no difference whether you call it goodness or God, but you're emptying that name of all of its meaning, and they do that sometimes they use the expression "my God" so many times, they don't even know that they're saying it. But they take that one whom we love so much and they're slapping him and they're spitting on him and they're not even conscious of it because they've done it so often repeatedly and with so many others approving them or not condemning them. Many have those who openly mock God and mock the Scriptures and mock God's holy day, and that shows their wrath against God.

"They blaspheme against thee, they speak against thee wickedly." They don't mind destroying the faith and speaking evilly of the faith of God's people and of God's church. They even like to say that when we stand for the right of God's word, we're guilty of hate crimes that requires of us that we state our position carefully and wisely and biblically, but they want to make us look to be the enemies of the truth as they charge us with hate crimes. That's blasphemy.

Then in the end of verse 21 it's said of these that they "rise up against thee." They rise up against thee. They make themselves the determiners of what's right and what's wrong. Not God. No, God doesn't have the right to tell them what's right and what's wrong in their life. They will do it. Their answer so often under defense is, "I feel this way. I feel about it. I even think that this is right. Who are you to say that I am doing wrong?" But in doing that, they speak against and they rise up against our God. The epitome of rising up against God is antichrist. He puts himself in the temple of God proclaiming himself worthy of the praise that normally is given to God. He identifies himself as God. Antichrist will do just that.

So they believe that God doesn't know, God doesn't see, and the Psalmist has just been stunned by what God does know and what he sees and then he responds, "They rise up against him as if they don't even know how much he knows about them," and they carry themselves along with an arrogant boasting, a boasting pride, forgetting that they are creatures of the dust and to dust shall they return.

Finally, he identifies them in verse 19 at the end as "bloody men." Bloody men. Literally that means they kill, whether it's literally or with hatred. They're persecuted the saints. They've approved abortion. They have the right, they believe, to hate their personal enemies. They're bloody men.

Wicked, blasphemous, arrogant and rising up against God, bloody. These are those who, these words describe what they say and think about our Father. Our Father. When we count God's enemies as ours, what do we do? What about these? First of all, again we step back and we live in the knowledge, our thoughts, our response to all of this evil that we see is that we are to step back and see God's response. Just because they in their wickedness don't experience an immediate reaction from God condemning them, killing them, putting them in hell, flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, the Canaanites being destroyed by the armies of Israel, they think that God doesn't know and care and see. We know differently. The wicked, this is how he starts, "Surely," that's like in the New Testament, "Verily, verily, this is a truth. Surely there is nothing going to contradict this fact, them thou wilt slay." Maybe not today and maybe not tomorrow but God will slay them. They shall be judged.

It struck me how we sing that in the very first Psalms. Psalm 1, Psalter 1, "The wicked like the driven chaff are swept from off the land. They shall not gather with the just nor in the judgment stand." Again, I said this to the young people this morning, I don't want them to do what I was guilty of, so many times I could sing these words and not realize what I was singing. I wanted them to catch the power of what the Psalms give to us. The first Psalm, the very first one. The second Psalm, Psalter 3, "The Lord will scorn them all. Calm, calm he sits enthroned on high. Soon his wrath will on them fall. Sore displeased, he will reply." Psalm 5, Psalter 9, "Thou, Jehovah, art a God who delightest not in sin. Evil shall not dwell with thee nor the proud thy favor win. Evildoers thou dost hate, lying tongues thou wilt defeat. God abhors the man who loves violence and base deceit." And then the next stanzas of Psalter 9 is also the first one of Psalter 10. Over against that in sharp contrast to what he says about the ungodly, "In the fullness of thy grace, to thy house I will repair, bowing toward thy holy place, in thy fear, in thy awe of thee I will worship there." Psalter 13, the 7th Psalm, "Establish the righteous, let evil depart. For God who is just tries the thoughts of the heart. In God for defense I have placed all my trust. The upright he saves and he judges the just. The Lord with the wicked is wroth every day. And if they repent not he is ready to slay. By manifold ruin for others prepared. They surely at last shall themselves be ensnared." Psalter 20, Psalm 10, "Do thou, O Lord, arise. O God, lift up thy hand. Forget thou not the suffering poor, the humble in the land. Their foes thou dost behold, their wrongs thou wilt repay. The poor commit themselves to thee. Thou art the orphan's stay." How many times do we sing those words? Maybe some of those tunes we might not very often but think of those words.

"Surely," verse 19 begins, "Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God." And again, we said it quickly before, just reflect. God's holiness, God's great glory that flows from his holiness is that he has the right to demand what's right for every one of his creatures and what's wrong for them, and he has the right to determine whether they're meeting that standard of right and wrong, and then he has the right to punish, and he not only has the right, he must. He must. If God does not respond in justice to the sins that are committed as violent violations of his being, then he's not God anymore, then he lost some of his holiness and his justice. His holiness demands of him that he respond in judgment. He hates the wrong. He will carry justice to the death of the unrepented sinner, and

remember that death is equal to God's eternal wrath and the experience of that wrath forever.

David, he responds like God does. When we understand that God is holy and glorious and just, and we understand by his grace what it is to be holy and just and what's right and what's wrong, then we because we so love him, we not only respond to those who do evil against him and do wickedly against him, but we also at the same time are blessed with that communicable attribute so that we know what it is to be holy and God's attribute demands that we then say, "God will surely slay them. He hates them forever in his wrath in hell." He did it in his counsel that determined their eternal destination. He does it throughout the course of their life. The unchanging God doesn't give some kind of love now and then will hate them forever in hell. He unchangeably is angry with them every day.

I read the Psalter numbers just as a quick way for myself to remember there's three. Psalm 5:5, "The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest," thou hatest, "all workers of iniquity." The previous verse, "thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness." Now what does he have pleasure in? Not in wickedness, in righteousness, and in justice. "Neither shall the evil dwell with thee." They don't dwell with him. He's not in communion with them. That he has communion with us is only because of the tremendous work of his grace in transforming us and giving us to know the real life of Christ, and he implants that within us so he can have communion with us but not with them. Psalm 5:5. Psalm 7:11, "God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day." Psalm 11:5, "Jehovah trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth."

David says, "I hate them that hate thee. What they do to someone whom I so love works within me that response, that just response." We hate them, once again, not because they're hating us, be careful, but because they hate our heavenly Father. And we're not ashamed of that hatred. Now how we have to express it we'll look at in a bit, but we're not ashamed and that's why it's a perfect hatred, it's a complete hatred. We're not ashamed to hate them.

Now how do we manifest this hatred? Do we join some army force and perform hate crimes? Or do we join the army in order to fight Muslims? One of the things that was powerful in this connection is the word that God gives in Romans 12. Now this is not the sins that are committed against God, that's Psalm 139, but the context says here is a little different but the response is the same. Here it's those who hurt us, those who touch us and the ones we love. He says this in Romans 12, "First recompense to no man evil for evil." Then he adds, secondly, "If it be possible as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." Then he hits the nail right on the head when he says, "Dearly beloved," we'll come back to those words, don't forget them, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves. Don't take vengeance on others but rather give place unto the wrath," literally give place unto, make room. When you fill yourself with wrath and you're going to get even with them, then you're not giving room for the wrath of God. And that's an interesting way to say it. In your mind, don't be so filled with anger that you don't have room in your thinking for

God's wrath, "for it is written, Vengeance is mine. I will repay, saith the Lord."
Vengeance is mine. I will repay. Give room, make place for his wrath in your thinking.
He will surely slay.

And now again when it comes to our hatred of them, what can we do? We can say that we hate them who hate him but how do we express that? We must learn to love God more. Love him. And you don't artificially make yourself love God more, you first think and dwell on his love for you. If you're going to go out on 8th at Lake Michigan Drive, then look at the sign. I think Jordan put it up, "We love Him because He first loved us." You want to grow in love? Then you think of his love for you. Stand amazed. There is that, I'm going to have to say it again, Canons 1, Article 13, we render grateful returns of ardent love to him who first manifested so great a love for us.

Our love for him says we are not going to join with them in any of their evil deeds. We will admonish them. We will strive to set before them not what we think or what we feel but we will set before them the word of God. This isn't just what the church thinks, this isn't just what we think, this is what God says. So we set before them the words of him who is holy, and this is what his holiness sets forth is what's right and what's wrong for all men, all of his creatures. We don't flatter them with our favor, and we don't let our silence give them the thought that we condone what they're doing. We speak against them and admonish them when they speak maliciously to our God or against him or rise up against him, and we don't let our personal interest and our convenience or our honor make us hesitate to admonish them. But we also have to be really careful, remember how the Psalm started? "Search me." Do you see how it ends? "Search me." We'd better be careful that when we loudly condemn what they do, we are not secretly doing what we condemn them for doing. "Search me, O God, try thou my heart."

David makes it a personal matter when he counts God's enemies as his. They may have done no ill to him but if they do evil to his God, to our God, then we respond, and in our concern and love for God, we admonish them repeatedly, but more than that, let's throw out some other thoughts. We never are allowed to stop praying for them. It is so easy for us to become angry and express our hatred and I'm going to hate them with a perfect hatred, that we then don't pray and how, I was going to say stupid, how foolish, how foolish for us who know our limitations, we can't change a heart, but we know who can, and if we're not going to him and asking him to change that heart and we're just going to set before them admonitions, then we can't even say, "Well, I was faithful. I might not have been successful but I was faithful." No, we weren't. No, we weren't.

Very very striking, Article 15 of the Third and Fourth Head of the Canons of Dort. We start with this perspective even when we express our hatred of those who hate God. "God is not under any obligation to give grace to anybody. God is under no obligation to confer this grace upon any. How can he be indebted unto man. He therefore who becomes the object or the subject of this grace owes eternal gratitude to him and gives him thanks forever. Third, with respect to those who make an external profession of faith and live regular lives, we are bound after the example of the apostle to judge and speak of them in the most favorable manner for the secret recesses of their hearts are unknown to us."

So there's two categories of people in our lives. 1. Those who make an external profession of faith and live a life of amendment. And then there's the others. What's our attitude, what's our conduct, what are we to do about all those others? They're referenced here in Psalm 139, listen: as to others who have not yet been called, what an interesting way to look at them, they've not yet been called. Maybe God will call them. We don't know. With respect to others who have not yet been called, it is our duty, God-given duty to pray for them to God who calls the things that are not as if they were. "Let there be light." There was light. He just speaks and it is. He did that in us, soften that heart of stone, make it a heart of flesh, enlighten that mind, mold and shape that will. He speaks and it happens. As to all others who have not yet been called, it is our duty to pray for them to him who calls the things that are not as if they were. One more sentence in that article: when we hate those who hate him, hate our God, hate our Father, in no wise are we to conduct ourselves with haughtiness as if we have made ourselves to differ. Humility. Humility. Why do we know that homosexuality is wrong? God gave that to us. He opened our eyes to understand that that's what he says in his word. We appreciate that. We didn't do it and make ourselves different. He did.

Finally, the justification of this attitude toward the ungodly is that David, once again, is always governed and guided by his devotion to God and to godliness. He despises everything that's contrary to God beginning with himself. Yes, hate those who hate him, "Search me, O God. Try my heart. Is there any wicked way in me?" We hate sin against our God starting with ourselves. Instead of thinking about ourselves, we must focus on him who is the love of our life and his glory. Love God more and more. David's great love and joy in Jehovah and the great friendship that he had with him made him hurt when God was blasphemed. We are to be more sensitive to God and the hurt that's done to him than we are to the hurt that's done to us and that's not easy. Love for God and godliness is defective if it doesn't generate abhorrence of sin starting with me.

Now it doesn't silence us about others because we're not silent with ourselves. We're going to abhor and admonish ourselves and then them, but that's how we show our love for God. To hate a man for his own sake or for any evil that he's done to us is not what the text is talking about but we still do good to them, we still show them the mercies that God gives to us, we help them in their physical troubles but we're always praying for their repentance and for them to understand what it is to be loved by God so that their love for him will motivate them to make all the right changes in their life. God's grace does it that way.

So verse 21 is an appeal to God, "Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?" We take no pleasure in those that rebel against him. The God who is everywhere and the God who knows everything knows our feelings towards that which profanes him. That's why that appeal in verse 21. We're not neutral when it comes to what somebody does to our heavenly Father. We love him too much. Amen.

Our Father, in thy boundless love that has opened our eyes to the sinfulness of our natures and the sin that dwells within us, thou hast wrought within us a great and profound love for thee. May we continue to love thee, to be devoted to thee so much that we know the calling that it is to hate them that hate thee, but at the very same time to reflect thee, our Father in heaven, who causes the sun to rise on the just and unjust. Bless us so that we love thee more. For Jesus' sake. Amen.