

Prayer for Divine Searching

by J.R. Miller

The sermon emphasizes the importance of praying for divine searching, which requires courage and honesty, and leads to a deeper understanding of God's love and care for us.

Scripture: Psalm 139:1

Topics: "Self-Examination", "Divine Searching"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the profound significance of the prayer 'Search me, O God,' urging believers to invite God to examine their hearts and reveal hidden sins. He highlights the courage and honesty required to genuinely seek divine scrutiny, contrasting it with the superficial judgments of others. Miller reassures that God's omniscience is a source of comfort for believers, as He understands our struggles and offers mercy. The sermon encourages a willingness to confront our flaws and the transformative power of God's searching light in our lives, leading us toward everlasting life.

Transcript

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life." Psalm 139:23-24

This is an intense and deeply earnest prayer for divine searching! If we make this prayer sincerely, out of our heart, it will bring us into very close quarters with God. It will open every chamber, every corner, every nook and cranny of our life--to the eye that is omniscient. It takes courage to pray this prayer. Not all men can do it. Many people fear to look into their own heart. If by some divine revelation, we were made to see ourselves as we are, all the evil that is in us, all the hideous things that lurk in the depths of our being--our faces would blanch into deathly paleness! It takes boldness to ask God to search one's inner life--and show one one's sins.

It takes honesty, too, to pray this prayer. It means that every wrong thing we find in our heart, under the revealing light of God's Word and Spirit, we will give up and cast out. Some people do not want to find their sins, because they do not want to give them up. We cannot pray this prayer--if we are not willing and eager to have Christ save us from whatever evil way, whatever sinful habit, feeling, disposition, or temper--we discover in ourselves.

There is another thing to mark in this prayer. We ask God to search us. An ancient, much-praised maxim was, "Know yourself!" But no man can really know himself, in the depths of his being, unless God holds

the lamp to shine in the darkness. None but God can search us--and show us to ourselves.

This is not a prayer that our neighbors may search us. Men are willing enough, oftentimes, to judge their fellow-men, to expose their faults, and proclaim their sins. It is easier for most of us to confess other people's sins, than our own. The Pharisee was quite free in searching the publican, and declaring his wrong-doings, though he said nothing of his own sins. We might find those who would be willing to search us and point out our blemishes--but this is not what we are taught to do.

Men's judgments are imperfect, sometimes uncharitable, even unjust. There are lives that go down under men's condemnation, whom love would save. At the best, men are only very partial judges. They cannot see our motives, and oftentimes they condemn as wrong--that which is noble and beautiful; or they approve as right and praiseworthy--that which before God is unworthy. It is not enough to ask men to search us and to try us. If they should approve and commend us--their approval might be of no value to us.

But there is One who is perfect in wisdom, love, and righteousness, and whose judgments are unerring. We should always want to know what He thinks of our acts, words, and thoughts. Though all the world applaud what we do, and praise us without stint--if on His face there is no mark of approval, if we see there the shadow of disapproval; what a mockery is men's applause! If the world sneers, condemns, and blames; if men have only scorn and reproach; and if meanwhile, turning our eyes toward the heavenly throne, we see in the divine face the smile of approval, what should we care for the frowns of men? It is to God we should turn--for the searching of our life. No human approval can bless--when He does not bless; no human sentence can bind--when He sets at liberty.

It is better always to fall into the hands of God--than into the hands of men. God is kindlier and juster than men. Nobody understands us--as Christ does. Nobody knows our infirmities--as Christ knows them; and no one has such patience with them as He has. This blessed Lord of ours knows human life--by actual experience. He was tempted in all points like as we are; He knows how hard it is to resist temptation and to be good. He knows all the elements that enter into human struggle, and therefore is fitted for sympathy. We need not be afraid to open our heart to Him, for He will never be unjust with us. We need not fear to ask Him to search us; for if we truly desire to give up our sins when we discover them--we shall find Him most merciful and gracious.

All our life is open to God's eye. The old Psalm makes this wonderfully clear: "O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue--you know it completely, O Lord." Psalms 139:1-4. God's eye is upon us in our every movement, in our resting and in our working. "You perceive my thoughts from afar." He knows our thought not only when it has taken final form--but in its first dim rising. He sees the whole working of our mind, all our imaginations, feelings, desires, the secret springs of our heart--out of which flow all the streams of thought, imagination, wish, and acts.

Sometimes we come to the brink, and look down into the depths of our own being, and we see things that there appall us. We get glimpses of motives which seem to blot the beauty of our fairest deeds. We see shadowy shapes of evil lurking there, that are hideous to our eyes. We find in the abysses of our own heart, possibilities of sin that startle us. But all that our eyes see in our hearts, even in glimpses, God sees continually, and far more! He knows us infinitely better than we can know ourselves.

"Before a word is on my tongue--You know it completely, O Lord." God does not have to wait, as our neighbors do, until we speak--to know what is in our mind. The silent man may conceal his thoughts from his fellows--but he cannot conceal them from God. Unspoken thoughts--are open to Him. Words may hide the truth, disguise it or color it--but God knows the real thought that is in the word. Neither in the depths of the blue heavens, nor in the dark abyss of the grave--can one hide away from God. If we could take the morning sunbeams for wings, and fly away on them with all the swiftness of light to the remotest bounds of space--we could not get beyond the reach of the divine eye! If we creep into darkness so deep and dense, that no human eye can see us--still God sees us as clearly as if we stood in the bright noonday sunshine! Darkness hides not from Him. Night shines to His eye--as brightly as day.

To many people, this thought of God's omniscience only produces fear and terror. They wish they could hide from Him, or veil their life from Him, and flee to some place where He could not find them. They do not think of this truth as a comforting one--but as one to alarm them. To those who are living in sin, unreconciled to God--it surely is full of startling terror! Sin always wants to hide from God. But to believers in Christ, this truth of the omniscience of God, is one of great comfort. It is divine love which knows all our thoughts afar off, and our words before they are spoken, and that besets us behind and before. When we are told that we cannot flee from God's presence nor be in any place where He is not--it is meant to be a comfort. No greater blessing could be imagined than this! We can never be cast beyond the reach of His eye, nor out of His presence, nor beyond the clasp of His love. If by some sudden calamity we should be swept away to the uttermost parts of the earth, where no human friend can see us--we would still find God there, and His hand would lead us, and His right hand would hold us! Thus the truth is one of immeasurable comfort and blessing to us!

The Psalm speaks also of the preciousness of God's thoughts toward His people. It is wonderful that the great God should think about us at all. It seems impossible, when we remember His holiness--and our sinfulness, His glory--and our littleness, that He should ever think of us! It is pleasant for us to learn that someone on earth whom we esteem highly, has been thinking about us. The greater the person is, the more honored and distinguished among men--the more does it mean to us to discover that he has been thinking about us, that he is interested in us, that he cares for us in our need and trouble, and that he has been planning and thinking for our good.

The most shining hour in any life--is the one in which the truth breaks upon the consciousness, that God loves him; when one can say, "God loves me!" One of the sweetest comforts that ever come to anyone on earth is the revelation, "God is thinking about me--as really as ever my mother did." It is true, too. God thinks about us. He is our Father, and cannot but think of His children. Nor is it a mere occasional thought that He gives to us; more in number than are the sands--are His thoughts toward us. No earthly father thinks about his best beloved child--as God thinks of each one of us, even when caring for all the worlds! When we are in joy--He thinks of us, watches us, and breathes His blessings into our gladness. When we are in danger--He thinks about us, and reaches out His hand to deliver us. When we are in sorrow--He thinks of us, pitying us as a father pities his child, comforting like a mother, with compassionate love.

One who was ship-wrecked tells how he clung in the water to a piece of a mast--and floating off in the waves was soon utterly alone in the midst of the sea. He says the sense of his utter loneliness was the most awful element in his experience in those dreadful hours. In all the wide expanse--there was no eye to see him, no heart to give him a thought of care or pity. But God's eye saw him even there; God thought about him. Wherever we are, in whatever loneliness, in whatever distress or danger, we may say, "I am poor and needy--yet the Lord thinks upon me!"

No doubt there are things in us, of which God does not approve. His eyes see blots in our fairest deeds. It is said that the finest polishing men can give to a needle, reveals, under a microscope, roughnesses and irregularities which greatly mar its perfectness. So, to God's eye, the most lovely human life, reveals many flaws and blemishes. No doubt our most devout worship, has in it much sin. Our most unselfish love, is stained by selfishness. Our best work, is blotched by evil.

A painter saw an ugly stain on the wall he had been frescoing. He took a wet cloth to remove it; but the cloth was itself soiled, and left a blotch worse than that the painter had sought to remove. May it not be so with much of our work on other lives? Our own hands are unclean, and they stain where we thought to cleanse and leave touches of beauty. We know enough of our own heart to be sure that all is not with us--as it ought to be. Are we willing to have God search us and try our thoughts? Then are we willing to put away all the evil that God, by His Word and Spirit, may disclose to us in ourselves?

It is one of the infinite blessings of our life--that God does search us and try our ways. If He did not--we should never get home. In our lives, at the best, there is a great deal of chaff, compared to a very little wheat; if the chaff is not gotten out in some way, we shall never be fit for God's garner. Winnowing may be a painful process--but it is a blessed one, for in the end it leaves us cleansed and prepared for the holy life of heaven. So when God searches us and winnows us--we should be humble and quiet before Him, submitting to Him. We should continually make our prayer to Him, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life." Psalm 139:23-24

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