

Desperate for Godliness

Psalm 119:33-40

Imagine ... if you will ... a class of first grade students. They're sitting in a state-of-the-art classroom ... with all the latest technology at their disposal. In front of them ... on brand new desks ... are volumes of the very best first grade curriculum. But there is no teacher in the room. Though they have ... everything that they need ... at their fingertips ... they will not learn ... or grow ... or thrive ... without a teacher.

The verses ... read in our hearing ... that we'll be considering in this hour ... are a prayer ... a cry, in fact ... for a teacher.

*Did you notice ... in the Psalmists words ... a sense of desperation?

I get the impression that he is desperate for godliness ... or ... to become godly ... and live a godly life.

V. 40 makes this clear: *"Behold, I long for your precepts; in your righteousness give me life!"*

Each of the verses have a cause ... and an effect. The Hebrew letter "He" ... when added to the beginning of a word ... makes it causative.

So ... V. 33 in Hebrew would begin, "Be teaching me" ... V. 34 would begin "Be giving me understanding" ... and V. 35 would begin "Be leading me".

In preparing for this morning ... I read these verses over, and over ... and I keep getting the same impression. This guy is feverishly trying to keep from breaking the spiritual equivalent ... of Life Rule #1.

I'm sure you're acquainted ... to some degree ... with Life Rule #1.

There is no aspect of life to which it cannot be applied ... and it doesn't matter who you are ... because it applies to everyone.

Life Rule #1: Don't be stupid!

I think V. 39 bears out what I'm saying. It says: "*Turn away the reproach that I dread, for your rules are good.*" The word translated *reproach* is the word *disgrace*; in another translation it's rendered *shameful ways*.

The Psalmist is desperately pursuing godliness!

I see his desperation manifested in 2 areas ... that we can learn from:

1) He's Passionately Pursuing Spiritual Maturity.

Look again at the commitment he's willing to make in V. 33:

"Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end."

*Have you ever made God a promise like that ... "show me how to live for You ... and I will be faithful to the end"?

*How are you doing with keeping that promise?

Look at the logical next step in V. 34.

"Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart."

*Do you see it? He said, "Teach me ... and make sure I get it ... so I can follow You wholeheartedly.

Here is a truth about education ... any education: If no learning takes place, no teaching takes place!

*Teach me ... give me understanding ... lead me. Do you recognize it? That's one of the progressions ... one of the processes in the Christian life. Let's look at the last part, then I'll show you.

V. 35: *"Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it."*

This is one of the processes ... God using to develop and grow us spiritually. The Holy Spirit teaches us ... imparting wisdom and knowledge ... then He makes sure we understand ... then He leads us to where we can put what we've learned into practice.

**Say, dear friend ... what's God teaching you? Are you learning it?

Here's one of the marvelous things about our gracious and merciful God.

Time means less than nothing to the eternal one ... so as the Master teacher ... He'll teach you that same lesson over ... and over ... and over ... until you get it.

And the process is not a one-time thing ... He uses it time and again in bringing us to maturity in Christ.

The Apostle James ... says ... *"Be joyful, ... when you meet trials of every sort, because you know that the trying of your faith ... makes you patient. And patience when it has it's full effect ... will leave you mature and complete, lacking nothing."*

The Psalmist in our text is pursuing spiritual maturity.

Look again at V. 40: *Behold, I long for your precepts; in your righteousness give me life.*

This ... will be our desire ... when the teaching, learning, leading, process bears fruit in our lives.

But there's something else ... that the Psalmist is pursuing in the other four verses of our text.

Let's read them again: Vs. 36-39:

*“Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain.
Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your
ways. Confirm to your servant your promise, that you may be feared.
Turn away the reproach that I dread, for your rules are good.”*

2) He's Also Pursuing Spiritual Discipline.

*Do you see it? But he's not asking God to give him the strength or fortitude to discipline himself. He's asking that God work in his life.

Notice that he doesn't say, “O Lord, help me to incline my heart to your testimonies ...”. He says: “Lord, You incline my heart to your testimonies, so I won't be covetous.”

BTW, the ‘testimonies of God’ ... are the truths about His character.

“God is good!” That's a truth about His character. “God is gracious and merciful” ... a testimony of God.

Once again ... notice ... he doesn't say, “Strengthen me to be able to turn my eyes away from worthless things”. He says, “Lord, You turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in Your ways.”

*Looking at worthless things? If I'm supposed to suggest a verse to be memorized this week ... this is the one ... V. 37.

*Why ... you ask? Because ... our culture seems to thrive on looking at things that aren't worth looking at.

*Do you have a smart phone in your pocket or purse?

Dear friends ... church family ... beloved ... if you have a smartphone ... you possess a conduit ... a portal ... to unexplored worlds of pure foolishness. And some of it is so ... unbelievable ... that it's hard to look away.

*Do you know ... that there are YouTube channels ... and TV networks ... dedicated to showing videos of people discounting and defying Life Rule #1? And that doesn't even begin to touch the depths of moral degradation ... available with a few clicks.

Jesus said in Matthew 6:22: "*The eye is the lamp of the body.*"

We're warned in 1 John 2 that one of the enemies within us is "*the lust of the eyes*".

"Worthless things" ... in our culture ... is a category so vast ... we could talk all day and not scratch the surface.

But the psalmist cries out for a mentor to show him an alternative.

He says, "*Immerse my life in Your ways.*"

The Psalmist ... is pursuing spiritual discipline ... and in V. 38 ... he prays, "*Confirm to your servant your promise, that you may be feared.*"

But a clearer translation is: "*Establish Your word to Your servant, who is devoted to fearing You.*"

That "fear" is not terror ... it's reverential awe. And the word "promise" in the ESV ... is a reference to the entirety of God's word as the Psalmist would have understood it.

*Say ... Christian friend ... do you long for the precepts of God ... like in V. *40? Do you live ... in His righteousness?

*Let me ask you this ... are you pursuing spiritual maturity? Well ... I know eight verses you ought to pray.

*In a culture that denies moral absolutes ... and encourages individualism ... we don't really like to be disciplined ... do we?

But ... if you want God to do a powerful work in you ... so He can work powerfully through you ... I know eight verses you ought to pray?

If you're listening to me today ... and you've never placed your faith in Christ for the forgiveness of your sin ... and your thinking to yourself, "I don't get any of that". I want to say, "I know" ... the Bible says that you won't understand spiritual things ... yet. But ... what I do want you to know is: The God who teaches, gives understanding and leads ... loves you. And He made a way for you to be in right standing before Him ... through the blood that His Son ... Jesus shed on the cross. If you'd like to know more about that ... as this service ends ... there will be people waiting to share God's perfect love with you.

Could we please stand and pray together?